PRISM Everything on One Page

published by the Office for Accreditation at the American Library Association

COA Announces Accreditation Actions

The Committee on Accreditation (COA) of the American Library Association has announced accreditation actions taken at the 2003 ALA Annual Conference under the 1992 *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*.

Actions taken continue the accreditation of the following graduate programs leading to the first professional degree in library and information studies. The next program review is scheduled for spring 2010:

- Master of Science in Library Science offered by the Department of Library Science, Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

- Master of Science (Library and Information Science) program offered by the College of Information Science and Technology, Drexel University.
- Master of Information program offered by the School of Information, University of Michigan.
- Master of Library Science program offered by the Department of Information and Library Science, Southern Connecticut State University.
- Master of Information Studies program offered by the Faculty of Library and Information Studies, University of Toronto.

For information about a particular program, contact the school.

Contact information and a complete list of programs and degrees accredited by COA can be found in the Directory of Institutions

accredited by COA can be found in the Directory of Institutions Offering Accredited Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies.

The following institutions have programs being reviewed in the fall 2003 academic term:

- University at Albany-State University of New York
- Simmons College
- Texas Woman's University
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

The American Library Association is a leading force in accreditation, having evaluated educational programs to prepare librarians since its creation in 1924. ALA's Committee on Accreditation is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accrediation (CHEA) as a reliable authority to determine the quality of education offered by graduate programs in the field of library and information studies.

Faculty and Administrators Integral to Reviews

By Joseph J. Mika, Director, Library & Information Science Program, Wayne State University and External Review Panelist

Accreditation is a collegial process, so who better to assist in an accreditation external review process than faculty and administrators-- who better to understand the role of faculty than faculty? Who can better appreciate the agonies, joys, and nuances of administration than another administrator-- and fully appreciate the vagaries of higher education than those whose lives are daily immersed in that environment? Faculty and administrators bring a wealth of experience to the accreditation process – most have been involved in library and information studies education and higher education at institutions besides their own and therefore can evaluate a program from multiple perspectives.

Individuals chosen for accreditation visits, whether on-site or off-site,

have considerable experience in teaching and/or administration. These reviewers are volunteers, involved in the process because they truly wish to better library and information studies education. As the eyes, ears, and reporters for the Committee on Accreditation (COA) they can be of immense assistance to the school visited, the university, to ALA and thus the profession. But even more importantly, members of accreditation teams benefit the faculty, students, and administrators of the programs themselves.

Often individuals on the External Review Panel (ERP) have been chosen because they possess an expertise shared in common with the visited program. For example, one dean requested that I be assigned to a committee visiting his school because he wanted to be assured that at least one ERP member be from an urban public university. Schools with strong information components frequently ask for more information science representation on the ERP assigned.

So, what are these faculty and administrators looking for during an accreditation visit? What are they evaluating? Overall, both the faculty member and the administrator are looking for ongoing planning, self-evaluation, and use of outcomes assessment within the program, the curriculum, and processes involving students, faculty, and the administration of the program and its facilities.

The ERP therefore analyzes the program presentation, institution and program documents, the faculty, the students, the program's budget, plus other areas by asking questions that prove that there is quality within the program and that graduates obtain a professional degree in accordance with the ala standards for accreditation.

The panel attempts to determine if the Program Presentation had diverse, multiple, and wide-ranging participation in its preparation – or whether it was written by one person (and definitely not by one program administrator!). The panel evaluates the process that guided the Program Presentation and the school's preparation for accreditation review. Basic questions are asked by the panel prior to the actual visit and onsite during the visit, and include:

- Who worked on the program presentation?
- What process was used in the preparation of the program presentation?

Knowing how their own school's mission, goals, and objectives support their institution and program allows ERP faculty and administrators to assess whether the program successfully supports the

parent institution's mission, goals, and objectives and how this is accomplished within the organization.

Therefore the panel asks:

- How were the program's mission, goals, and objectives formulated?
- Is it possible to discern the mission, goals, and objectives in other areas reviewed – the curriculum, financial support, students, etc.?

Knowledge of one's own curriculum and what is taught in order to obtain an educated and prepared professional allows for an evaluation of the program's curriculum to determine if it is in concert with Standard II.

- When was the last curriculum review?
- What courses have recently been added; deleted; why?
- Does the teaching expertise of the full and part-time faculty match the curriculum?

The LIS field is relatively small. As faculty and administrators we know each other, therefore we talk among ourselves honestly, and this aids the process in obtaining an accurate assessment of the program.

Not to be overlooked is the ability of faculty on the ERP to assess, discuss, and evaluate their faculty colleagues. ERP faculty members are able to evaluate their colleague's credentials, scholarship, and teaching because they have operated in the same arena and have similar credentials.

ERP faculty and administrators can also analyze and evaluate resources, having themselves also participated in, or been the subject of, student evaluations of teaching, alumni surveys, employer feedback, etc.   In evaluating the program the ERP asks:

- How are faculty hired? Reviewed? Tenured? Promoted at this institution?
- What has been the success rate in securing positions? In replacing faculty? In promotions and tenure within the program as compared to other programs on campus?
- What are some of the faculty's most recent publications?
- What do the students think of the faculty?
- Are faculty involved in the university at large and in the

profession?

In reviewing admission procedures, student programs of study, student policies, and the overall environment that the program provides, who better than those ERP members that administer and teach in similar environments to ask:

- How are students admitted? Advised? Reviewed?
- What student organizations exist?
- What do the students think of the program, the faculty, the curriculum, the dean/director, resources available, and their classrooms and labs?
- Is there a student assessment process?

It is easier to understand and evaluate the administration and financial support of the program for an ERP member who is an administrator. Often faculty members have been former administrators and know which questions to ask to determine institutional support for the program.

- Is there anything unique about this program?
- How is the program funded? Is the funding sufficient to accomplish the school's mission, goals, and objectives?
- What is the future of the program?
- Are the activities of the program well conceived and funded?
- How financially supportive is the parent institution's administration of the program?

Being an administrator at one institution, and understanding the roles of president, provost, graduate dean, etc., provides for rapport and respect from the administrators of the institution under review. This allows the ERP to ask university administrators questions that seek to discover how others consider the program across campus and how the program is viewed by the parent administration.

- What does the administration think of the program?
- Do the administrators know the director/dean? The faculty? The staff?
- Where does the program stand in relation to other graduate programs on campus?
- Do other programs on campus respect this program? How do the faculty compare with faculty in other campus programs?

- Is this an active and visible program?

An appreciation for one's own program can be gained by visiting the facilities and seeing first-hand the physical resources of the reviewed program. Unfortunately, sometimes this process leads to the ERP member coming away jealous of the school's facilities and resources. The ERP looks at the following:

- What do the classrooms look like? The labs? Faculty offices? Administration offices?
- Is there a student lounge? An auditorium?
- Are there computers for all faculty? Printers? Supplies? Graduate assistants?

The ERP will see much of the above in person. Other areas may require review of reports or files.

In the final analysis, it is not just evaluation of the program that is shared by the ERP with the program administration and faculty, but informal (if not formal), suggestions for enhancement of the program – by those who share the same jobs – faculty and administrators.

Those faculty and administrators participating on ERPs also benefit, as they take home with them observations of what is liked, successful, and creative at the reviewed program, and what they would like to replicate at their own institution.

This is what we bring to the accreditation process … the collegial eye of faculty and administrator.

Determining Sufficiency for Standard VI. Physical Resources and Facilities

By <u>John Philip Mulvaney</u>, Library Director,

Northern State University and External Review Panelist

Standard VI of the Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies, 1992, discusses physical facilities, instructional and research facilities, their staffing and the services provided. It tries to ensure that the program "has access to physical resources and facilities that are sufficient to the accomplishment of its objectives." How, then, do LIS programs measure sufficiency?

Program Presentations tend to concentrate solely on inputs: numbers of staff, numbers of volumes, computers, etc. Rarely do they mention, much less focus on, outputs. Inputs ought to be a given. We are dealing, after all, with major universities who are, in the US at least, regionally accredited, and all of which should have sufficient and convenient libraries and computer labs.

The more interesting questions are rarely addressed in program presentations responding to Standard VI, or the other five Standards, for example, shouldn't the campus library be viewed by the library school as more than one among many sources of possible part-time student employment for its students? How does the LIS program work with the campus library and its librarians to educate its students? What do LIS students learn from having to use these libraries and how (other than to locate materials for assignments) do they use them? Surely the answer here should be qualitatively different from the answers students in other disciplines would give.

Similar questions arise concerning computer laboratories. Beyond the basics of e-mail, word processing and online searching, how and why do LIS students use them? What benefits to students do LIS programs see from all of the high-powered multi-media computers available? And how do the LIS programs ensure that their students benefit? Programs are frequently engaged in publication activities or in sponsoring institutes or centers. Again, how do students benefit? And, how do LIS programs justify their significant expenditures in all of these areas? If this Standard is to have any meaning, that meaning can only be found in the benefits that students receive from these facilities.

LIS programs often compete with other programs, both graduate and undergraduate, offered by the same school. The Standards show little interest in these additional programs, other than to say on p.3, "A school's mission is relevant to master's program review; when the school offers other educational programs, the contribution of those

programs is also relevant." We need to be concerned about the effects, both positive and negative of these other programs on the LIS program. In this context, inputs are important. How is "sufficiency" determined in this context?

These problems are compounded when speaking of distance students. If LIS students on campus benefit from these facilities, how do students off-campus benefit? How do they participate in the production of a journal or in the activities of an institute? How do they use the on-campus library? Or, how is their use of other libraries ensured? More particularly, how is their knowledge of such resources (on-line and print), necessary to be a successful practicing librarian, ensured? Or, can quality LIS programs educate librarians who in the course of their education never have been required to set foot in a library?

From the COA Chair: PERSPECTIVE

Letter from New COA Chair, Robert

Wedgeworth

Dear Colleagues:

As you may know, ALA President Carla Hayden has appointed me Chair of the Committee on Accreditation (COA) for the 2003-2004 association year. This is my third year as a member of the Committee so I will be able to maintain continuity with the leadership that Jane Robbins and Carla Stoffle provided over the past two years.

Although we have lost some valuable members due to completion of terms and the pressures of work, we continue to have a strong, experienced group of library educators, practitioners and representatives of the general public that comprise the Committee.

Library education is being challenged once again by the weaknesses in financing higher education. As a result the situation in which an accredited program finds itself can vary significantly from one year to the next. In this climate our concept of continuous accreditation can be helpful in alerting programs, provosts and presidents to the need for appropriate interventions.

Continuous accreditation is practiced by COA primarily through its review of the annual statistical reports and the biennial narrative reports. Each fall COA reviews each of these reports and responds to every submitting institution as the reports warrant. The framework for the review, as it is for all of COA's activities, is the Standards for Accreditation.

We welcome comments and suggestions from the library education community and the professional field as to how we can make this process more meaningful and effective. Do the metrics of the statistical reports indicate what COA and the programs need to know? Is there too much emphasis on inputs as distinct from outcomes? Would it be helpful to require electronic submission of all statistical and biennial reports? These and other questions are continually discussed within the Committee.

In early September I had the privilege of representing ALA at the semi-annual conference of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) held in Scottsdale, AZ. There was a thorough discussion of what the association can and should do for its members, followed by a seminar on legal aspects of accreditation. It was a useful refresher for me to recognize that ALA has built a solid accreditation program that is educationally and legally defensible. With your

assistance we can build an even more impressive program. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Robert Wedgeworth

Dr. Wedgeworth is President of Proliteracy Worldwide http://www.proliteracy.org in Syracuse, New York. He can be reached by phone at 315-422-9121 or at rwedge@proliteracy.org.

Committee on Accreditation and Office for Accreditation Announcements

by Renee D. McKinney , OA Program Officer

New COA Members

This fall, the Committee on Accreditation and Office for Accreditation welcome four new members!

Barbara Barstow joins the Committee on Accreditation with a long history of service to ALA and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). Ms. Barstow is the Children's Services Manager for the Cuyohoga County Public Library in Parma, Ohio and has served as an External Review Panelist since 1995. Her four-year term on COA runs through the 2007 Annual Conference and is not renewable.

The Committee's new public member is Paula J. Fenza. Ms. Fenza is Grants Manager at the Mather Institute on Aging in Evanston, Illinois. Her term on COA runs through the 2005 Annual Conference and is renewable for another two-year term.

Danny P. Wallace also joins the Committee with a remarkable record of ALA service, including a long history of involvement with the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA). Dr. Wallace is Director of the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Dr. Wallace has served as an External Review Panel Chair since 1996. His four-year term on COA runs through the 2007 Annual Conference and is not renewable.

Ann C. Weeks rounds out this list of accomplished new Committee members. Dr. Weeks is both an ALA Councilor and an active member of the American Association for School Librarians. Dr. Weeks is Professor of the Practice in the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park and has served with distinction on two External Review Panels. Her four-year term on COA runs through the 2007 Annual Conference and is not renewable.

Please join us in welcoming COA's valuable new members!

Accreditation Process Policies and Procedures Published

In June 2003, COA published the final version of Accreditation Process Policies and Procedures (AP3). This complete version includes the appeal process approved by the Executive Board at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in January 2003, a draft of which was included in the interim version of AP3 sent to the deans of accredited programs in August 2002. AP3 incorporates and supercedes the 1995 documents An Overview, Guidelines for the Program Presentation, Guidelines for Appeals, and Guidelines for External Review Panels.

There are several new organizational features in AP3 intended to make it easier to use and to provide direct access to specific sections.
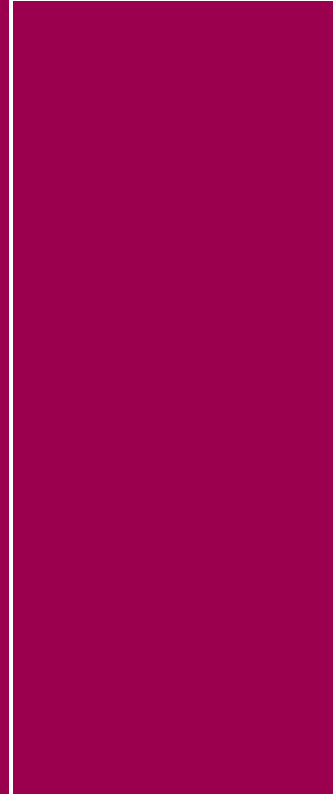
AP3 features:

- A detailed table of contents
- Fourth-level section numbering
- Timelines for the Program Presentation, ERP report, and the entire comprehensive review process
- A detailed index

Although the information in AP3 has been extensively reorganized and edited, the basic accreditation process has not changed. AP3 incorporates procedural changes that COA implemented since 1995, includes more details about the accreditation process, and describes new policies and procedures.

AP3 is available on the Office for Accreditation web site at http://www.ala.org/accreditation. You may also contact the Office for Accreditation 312-280-2432 to request a print copy.

COA Holds First Training for New Appeal Process

At the June 2003 joint ALA/CLA Annual Conference in Toronto, COA held its first training for over thirty established External Review Panelists on the new accreditation appeal process.

Topics covered in the training included the history and background of the COA's appeal process, major features and changes in the new appeal process, an explanation of the roles and responsibilities of Appeal Review Committee (ARC) members, and key concepts in the appeal process. The training also featured presentations by former Appeal Review Committee members James Rettig, University Librarian, University of Richmond and Philip Turner, COA member and Dean, School of Library and Information Sciences, University of North Texas.

The new appeal process is available on the Office for Accreditation web site at
http://www.ala.org/ala/accreditation/accredstandards/ap3.htm#Appeals.