

Positioning Master's Programs in Library and Information Science: A Template for Avoiding Pitfalls and Seizing Opportunities in Light of Key External and Internal Forces

Clifton F. Conrad and Kim Rapp-Hanretta

At the same time that professional master's programs in fields like library and information science (LIS) are experiencing unprecedented growth, there are emerging pressures on master's education. In broad strokes, this paper identifies the major external and internal forces influencing professional master's education and, in turn, proposes a framework for avoiding potential pitfalls and seizing opportunities in positioning master's programs in library and information science for the foreseeable future. After examining four internal and five external forces affecting master's programs, the paper reviews and then critiques a trio of popular models for responding to these forces. The paper concludes by advancing five courses-of-action aimed at helping LIS program faculty and administrators respond to the external and internal forces acting on their programs.

There has never been a more exhilarating—and challenging—time to be engaged in master's-level education. Once referred to as either a "Ph.D. steppingstone" or a "consolation prize," the master's degree has gained widespread acceptance among students, alumni, employers and, albeit grudgingly in some instances, faculty. Today, nearly one out of every four degrees in higher education is a master's degree and nearly ninety percent are awarded in professional fields of study—a trend fueled in no small part by the rapid growth of continuing professional education as well as marketplace demands for entry-level master's-educated students. Library and information science, a field at the vanguard in providing entry-level professional training at the

master's level in Canada as well as the United States, appears to be situated in an enviable position at the dawn of the new millennium.

Yet ironically, at the same time that professional master's programs in such fields as LIS are experiencing unprecedented growth, there are emerging pressures on master's education. Current and prospective students as well as employers are demanding more and more of master's programs and both the federal government and state governments are reducing their financial commitment to master's education. Within universities, there are mounting pressures such as the need to accommodate students with diverse academic and cultural backgrounds and pressures from central administrators imploring faculty to engage in more entrepreneurial behavior. All of this leaves professional master's programs—not least in LIS—in a precarious position. On the heels of a period of

This paper was the Keynote Presentation at the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) Annual Conference, January 15-18, 2002, New Orleans, LA.

Conrad, Clifton F. and Rapp-Hanretta, Kim. "Positioning Master's Programs in Library and Information Science: A Template for Avoiding Pitfalls and Seizing Opportunities in Light of Key External and Internal Forces." *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 43 (Spring, 2002), pp. 92-102.

unprecedented growth, we face an unfamiliar landscape.

It is tempting for many of us in higher education to blithely dismiss external and internal forces for change. After all, since the founding of Harvard College in 1636, our universities have long been largely self-defining and we have led a remarkably privileged existence that has enabled us to shape our own destiny free from much outside interference. From our perspective, that period is rapidly coming to an end. Today, universities face unprecedented definition by outside forces and societal demands along with internal forces no less compelling. It is imperative that those of us invested in professional master's education recognize and adapt to these forces, in concert with the corresponding challenges and opportunities they present, by situating our master's programs within the terrain of the twenty-first century.

The animating purpose of this paper is to advance a template for positioning master's programs in the field of LIS in light of the major external and internal forces influencing professional master's education. To this end, the paper identifies the major external and internal forces influencing professional master's education and, within this context, proposes a framework for avoiding potential pitfalls and seizing opportunities in positioning master's programs in library and information science. Accordingly, the paper is divided into three parts. First, we examine the major forces—including four external and five internal forces—operating on master's programs in this country. Second, we consider a trio of increasingly popular models in higher education for addressing these forces and suggest that while each of these models may appear promising each

may turn out to be anchored in pitfalls instead. Third, we advance five courses-of-action aimed at helping LIS program faculty and administrators respond to the external and internal forces acting on their programs in order to avoid potential pitfalls and seize opportunities for successfully navigating the contemporary and emerging landscape of professional master's education. In part, the paper has been shaped by the national study of master's education led by one of the authors of this paper that culminated in the book entitled *A Silent Success*.¹

Forces Shaping Master's Education Programs

External Forces

Anchored in a contemporary landscape marked by rapid change and innovation, emerging demographic shifts and changing lifestyles are already beginning to significantly affect how we teach and learn in higher education. The 2000 census projected that by 2025 people of color will represent almost 40 percent of the U.S. population. At the present time, 83 percent of college and university students are outside the traditional ages between the 18-22 year old cohort, and that percentage is expected to rise within the next few years.² According to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for Communication Policy, at least 50 percent of U.S. households own a personal computer and 72 percent of Americans have some type of online access in their homes.³ Last year, over 18 percent of restaurant dining experiences were "drive-thru" and 38 percent of those meals were eaten in the car.⁴ Because they reflect fundamental changes in people's needs and expectations, such visible

Published four times a year by the Association for Library and Information Science Education in Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall at 11250 Roger Bacon Drive, Suite 8, Reston, VA 20190. Telephone: (703) 234-4146.

Editor Joseph J. Mika (Wayne State)
Assistant Editor Chricinda M. McGee (Wayne State)
Column Editors Mary T. Kim (Kent), Research Record
Jana Varlejs (Rutgers), Continuing Education
Ling Hwey Jeng (Kentucky), The Visible College
Mohammed M. Aman (Wisconsin-Milwaukee),
International Library Education
Marcella Genz (Florida State), Book Reviews
Patricia E. Feehan (South Carolina), Association
News and Views

Editorial Board Delia Neuman (Maryland), Chairperson
David Carr (North Carolina)
June Lester (Oklahoma)
Barbara Moran (North Carolina)
Joseph J. Mika (Wayne State)

ALISE Board of Directors Elizabeth Aversa (Tennessee), President
Peter Liebscher (Catholic), President-elect
Prudence Dalrymple (Dominican), Past President
Patricia E. Feehan (South Carolina), Secretary-Treasurer
Ann Curry (British Columbia), Director
Diane Barlow (Maryland), Director
Laurie Bonnici (Florida State), Director

Manuscripts, letters, and editorial correspondence are invited for publication and should be sent to the Editor, Library and Information Science Program, Wayne State University, 106 Kresge Library, Detroit, MI 48202-3939; www.lisp.wayne.edu/jelis/index.html. Subscription inquiries should be sent to the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* Publication Office, Lockbox# 4641, P.O. Box 85080, Richmond, VA 23285-4641; www.alise.org.

The *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* (ISSN 0748-5786) is published four times a year for \$120 domestic, \$135 foreign per volume by the Association for Library and Information Science Education, Lockbox# 4641, P.O. Box 85080, Richmond, VA 23285-4641. Periodical postage paid at Arlington, Virginia, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, Lockbox# 4641, P.O. Box 85080, Richmond, VA 23285-4641.

Journal of Education for Library and Information Science



Spring 2002

Volume 43, Number 2

ISSN 0748-5786

Papers from the ALISE Annual Conference January 15-18, 2002 Hotel Monteleone, New Orleans, Louisiana

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| Positioning Master's Programs in Library and Information Science: A Template for Avoiding Pitfalls and Seizing Opportunities in Light of Key External and Internal Forces | 92 | Clifton F. Conrad and Kim Rapp-Hanretta |
| Response to Dr. Clifford Conrad's Keynote Speech | 105 | Delia Neuman |
| Library and Information Science Schools in Canada and USA: A Webometric Perspective | 110 | Heting Chu, Shaoyi He, and Mike Thelwall |
| Organizational Realignment of LIS Programs in Academia: From Independent Standalone Units to Incorporated Programs | 126 | Charles R. Hildreth and Michael Koenig |
| Thresholds of Access: Paratextuality and Classification | 134 | Stephen Paling |
| Undergraduate Programs in Information Science: A Survey of Requirements and Goals | 144 | Colin Koteles and Caroline Haythornthwaite |
| The Role of Technical and Professional Communication in the LIS Curriculum | 155 | Don Latham |
| Measuring the Success of Internships in an Archives Education Program | 164 | Jeannette A. Bastian |
| Characterizing the Core: What Catalog Descriptions of Mandatory Courses Reveal About LIS Schools and Librarianship | 175 | Ray Irwin |

© 2002 by the Association for Library and Information Science Education. "Teachers may make multiple copies of individual articles for classroom distribution. All other rights reserved."

Positioning Master's Programs in Library and Information Science: A Template for Avoiding Pitfalls and Seizing Opportunities in Light of Key External and Internal Forces

Clifton F. Conrad and Kim Rapp-Hanretta

At the same time that professional master's programs in fields like library and information science (LIS) are experiencing unprecedented growth, there are emerging pressures on master's education. In broad strokes, this paper identifies the major external and internal forces influencing professional master's education and, in turn, proposes a framework for avoiding potential pitfalls and seizing opportunities in positioning master's programs in library and information science for the foreseeable future. After examining four internal and five external forces affecting master's programs, the paper reviews and then critiques a trio of popular models for responding to these forces. The paper concludes by advancing five courses-of-action aimed at helping LIS program faculty and administrators respond to the external and internal forces acting on their programs.

There has never been a more exhilarating—and challenging—time to be engaged in master's-level education. Once referred to as either a "Ph.D. steppingstone" or a "consolation prize," the master's degree has gained widespread acceptance among students, alumni, employers and, albeit grudgingly in some instances, faculty. Today, nearly one out of every four degrees in higher education is a master's degree and nearly ninety percent are awarded in professional fields of study—a trend fueled in no small part by the rapid growth of continuing professional education as well as marketplace demands for entry-level master's-educated students. Library and information science, a field at the vanguard in providing entry-level professional training at the

master's level in Canada as well as the United States, appears to be situated in an enviable position at the dawn of the new millennium.

Yet ironically, at the same time that professional master's programs in such fields as LIS are experiencing unprecedented growth, there are emerging pressures on master's education. Current and prospective students as well as employers are demanding more and more of master's programs and both the federal government and state governments are reducing their financial commitment to master's education. Within universities, there are mounting pressures such as the need to accommodate students with diverse academic and cultural backgrounds and pressures from central administrators imploring faculty to engage in more entrepreneurial behavior. All of this leaves professional master's programs—not least in LIS—in a precarious position. On the heels of a period of

This paper was the Keynote Presentation at the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) Annual Conference, January 15-18, 2002, New Orleans, LA.

About the Authors

Clifton F. Conrad is Professor of Higher Education, and Kim Rapp-Hanretta is a doctoral student in Higher Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

unprecedented growth, we face an unfamiliar landscape.

It is tempting for many of us in higher education to blithely dismiss external and internal forces for change. After all, since the founding of Harvard College in 1636, our universities have long been largely self-defining and we have led a remarkably privileged existence that has enabled us to shape our own destiny free from much outside interference. From our perspective, that period is rapidly coming to an end. Today, universities face unprecedented definition by outside forces and societal demands along with internal forces no less compelling. It is imperative that those of us invested in professional master's education recognize and adapt to these forces, in concert with the corresponding challenges and opportunities they present, by situating our master's programs within the terrain of the twenty-first century.

The animating purpose of this paper is to advance a template for positioning master's programs in the field of LIS in light of the major external and internal forces influencing professional master's education. To this end, the paper identifies the major external and internal forces influencing professional master's education and, within this context, proposes a framework for avoiding potential pitfalls and seizing opportunities in positioning master's programs in library and information science. Accordingly, the paper is divided into three parts. First, we examine the major forces—including four external and five internal forces—operating on master's programs in this country. Second, we consider a trio of increasingly popular models in higher education for addressing these forces and suggest that while each of these models may appear promising each

may turn out to be anchored in pitfalls instead. Third, we advance five courses-of-action aimed at helping LIS program faculty and administrators respond to the external and internal forces acting on their programs in order to avoid potential pitfalls and seize opportunities for successfully navigating the contemporary and emerging landscape of professional master's education. In part, the paper has been shaped by the national study of master's education led by one of the authors of this paper that culminated in the book entitled *A Silent Success*.¹

Forces Shaping Master's Education Programs

External Forces

Anchored in a contemporary landscape marked by rapid change and innovation, emerging demographic shifts and changing lifestyles are already beginning to significantly affect how we teach and learn in higher education. The 2000 census projected that by 2025 people of color will represent almost 40 percent of the U.S. population. At the present time, 83 percent of college and university students are outside the traditional ages between the 18-22 year old cohort, and that percentage is expected to rise within the next few years.² According to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Center for Communication Policy, at least 50 percent of U.S. households own a personal computer and 72 percent of Americans have some type of online access in their homes.³ Last year, over 18 percent of restaurant dining experiences were "drive-thru" and 38 percent of those meals were eaten in the car.⁴ Because they reflect fundamental changes in people's needs and expectations, such visible

changes in our society—more diversity, more technological advancement, and faster-paced lifestyles—are already affecting colleges and universities. Students are demanding more from master's education: more access, more flexible programs, more relevance. To wit, the ever-increasing pace of their lives invites short, fixed degree programs that provide maximum benefits. There are many for-profit institutions ready to provide the full range of "customer services" to students, and their numbers stand to continue to grow markedly if mainline universities fail to live up to students' expectations. In addition to the new diversity and demands of students, master's programs are being reshaped by the diversity and demands of new information. As the amount of information generated by academic, technological, and professional enterprises continues to increase, students and employers expect much of this material to be included in programs. This, coupled with students' preference for shorter program length and more convenience, is already significantly affecting programs.

Another external force shaping professional master's programs today is the changing expectations of employers and the new corporate culture. Today's employers increasingly expect students to leave the university prepared with the specialized skills and knowledge necessary to join the workforce with minimal additional training. Once employed, students are expected to keep current by becoming continuous, lifelong learners in their respective fields. This external force places a two-fold pressure on master's programs. The first is to create a strong but fluid and highly relevant program in which the currency of knowledge attained by learners will be self-evident based on when a student leaves the master's program and what that student intends to do with his or her degree. The second pressure related to employer expectations and corporate culture that programs face is an increase in demand for continuing education. Just as businesses now expect their employees to keep up with changes in their

fields and changes in technology, they similarly expect professional master's programs to provide that requisite knowledge and training. If master's programs are willing to take on this responsibility, a looming increase in non-traditional, part-time enrollments will require the creation of new continuing education programs and courses as well as a restructuring of our delivery systems. All of this is further compounded by the fact that people now change careers from roughly three to seven times over the course of a lifetime. As people transition to different fields, they will increasingly look to the university to help them—through master's programs and continuing education offerings in general—make that transition.

Technology is another external force influencing master's programs, especially those programs that are at the forefront of technology use and education in the university such as library and information science. Technological changes occur so quickly that a system implemented one term can now become obsolete the next. Still, technology has become a basic tool in our everyday lives, both at work and in the home. Students and employers expect university programs to have the most recent hardware and software available, regardless of price. Our master's graduates are expected to enter the workforce as leaders with the most up-to-date training available. The importance of technology in society and in the workplace spills into university curricula, where programs often decide whether their role is one of training or educating. In addition to reflecting on the value of current technology to students' professional lives, programs must also contemplate the role of technology as it relates to teaching and learning. Many programs have wholeheartedly embraced new technologies, creating program and course webpages, on-line courses, and distance education programs. While it is advantageous in a technologically-centered world to be as current as possible, many of these programs have responded with little foresight, uncritically embracing technology

and thereby endangering their reputation and financial security.

The last external factor we identify here is changing patterns in educational financing. Many of our universities have been facing substantial financial pressures since the 1980s, with the percentage of state and federal revenues allotted to higher education institutions decreasing steadily. According to Reynolds: "Measured in constant 1997 dollars...research grants increased from \$9.8 billion in 1975 to \$16.2 billion in 1996, while all other direct federal support for institutions of postsecondary education (excluding aid to students) dropped to the same amount (\$16.2 billion) from \$22 billion in 1975."⁵ These trends affect master's programs in myriad ways. For one, if federal money comes earmarked for research, teaching and learning can suffer. The university is forced to stretch its financial resources further, and many programs may not receive yearly budget increases. Some may even see a decrease in the level of funding, and a number of smaller programs may be faced with the loss of their departmental identity altogether. These financial limitations inhibit master's programs from implementing changes and innovations that can improve program quality and responsiveness, especially in fields that rely heavily on new technologies and information. To be sure, with the downturn of government funding has come an increase in the amount of corporate dollars available to universities. This new source of revenue, though desired and often actively sought after, must nonetheless be welcomed with trepidation since these dollars may also undercut successful program enhancement. Although it is often necessary for professional master's programs to have a relationship with corporations and businesses in the communities their graduates will serve, the money offered by private corporations can tempt programs to significantly alter their curricula. When faced with a loss of funding, a program may opt to provide its students with a compromised course of study that includes addressing the needs of

"sponsoring" corporations rather than the needs of faculty and students.

Internal Forces

Five major internal forces are now beginning to affect master's education: the changing nature of knowledge production and dissemination; the rise of the entrepreneurial university; over-socialization of faculty and students; shortage of qualified faculty; and internal pressures to reorganize. The first of these, the changing nature of knowledge production and dissemination, is in many ways a direct result of the external force of technological change. Still, it holds internal implications. For example, students today are more likely to search the Internet than a card catalog—even an electronic one—for the information they need for class or a project. University students, faculty, and staff are becoming more computer-savvy and expect instant access to information, including research-relevant materials and student records. Information is being shared and expanded on at a much quicker rate than it can be printed. The rate at which articles and books are written has increased, which means that libraries' budgets are being stretched, and alternate means of publishing such as electronic journals are being rapidly developed. Each day more information becomes available that must be made available on our campuses. Students and scholars can no longer simply turn to a book in the library for up-to-date information, and master's programs must find ways to fit this explosion of knowledge and the responsible use of it into their curricula.

Budget cuts and shrinking student populations have given rise to the entrepreneurial university—another major internal force affecting master's programs. All branches of the university are now encouraged to generate income, either by procuring research grants or through the sale of goods and services. This new ethos of "profit or perish" has, in significant ways, changed the profile of the university from a community of scholars to more like that of an outlet

mall. The internally-supported transition from a publicly subsidized university to a self-sustaining multiversity—at least in the public sector—has threatened the self-image of many post-secondary institutions and has contributed to the pernicious notion that colleges and universities must be all things to all people.

Another internal force that is greatly shaping master's programs today concerns the socialization of new faculty and students. Although new students and faculty are often brought into a department because of the diversity in thought they exhibit, the structure of our professional communications and rewards systems are often so rigid that these "bright lights" quickly become like those surrounding them—highly over-socialized, lonely specialists—or they leave. This culture leaves master's programs with little opportunity for renewed vitality or creativity. Ideas that may sound intriguing and potentially beneficial to the long-term health of the program quickly become mere pipe dreams in an over-socialized environment.

The current shortage of qualified faculty is related to the problem of over-socialization, but it is also a separate internal force pushing master's programs to re-think the current faculty make-up and needs of their departments. In the face of severe shortages, programs may need to hire part-time adjunct instructors, including local practitioners. Ph.D.s from a variety of other fields may now be invited to teach courses within what may have once been considered a specialized field; the teaching loads of full-time faculty may have to be increased in some departments, leaving little time or resources for research; and current students may be groomed for academic careers in order to cope with the high number of current openings in certain fields.

Finally, university-wide pressure to reorganize can also affect master's degree programs. Impending forced mergers of schools or departments, or calls to eliminate program duplication threaten the independence, and indeed the existence, of master's programs that are part of those targeted schools or departments. Programs that find themselves

in this risky position may become staunch supporters of the status quo, refusing to relinquish the little autonomy they have, or they may be driven to create new partnerships and find new ways of sharing resources with other departments.

Potential Pitfalls: Three Models of Change and Innovation in Master's Programs

Individually and collectively, the forces identified above invite—even require—those of us invested in master's education to consider serious reevaluation of our programs if we are to maintain, much less enhance, our positions in such a turbulent environment. Drawing on the lessons of programs in similar circumstances as well as our own observations on a wide range of changes and innovations currently taking place in master's education, it seems likely that faculty and administrators in LIS will give consideration to three alternative models of change and innovation: virtual programs, corporate training programs, and service station programs. On the grounds that each of these appears attractive but is fraught with potential pitfalls, we briefly examine each model—including its proclaimed benefits—and then suggest its limitations as a strategy for addressing the external and internal forces influencing master's programs in library and information science.

Virtual Master's Programs

In fields from education to business and engineering—and in private institutions as well as public universities—programs from throughout the nation are turning, albeit in varying degrees, to a "virtual program" model. Notwithstanding the considerable variation in these programs, these programs are centered around the twin axes of high-technology and convenience of course delivery. Compared to traditional on-campus delivery at designated times and places, students in these program are often attracted to the flexibility of the programs—flexibility

that enables students to tailor programs around their personal and professional lives. And faculty, too, can benefit in myriad ways—from using technology to exert more control over their own lives to using technology in ways that enable them to interact more effectively with students in innovative pedagogical ways. Although the jury still remains out, there are observers of the higher learning who suggest that, over time, "virtual programs"—in comparison to traditional programs—may experience considerable savings in expenditures through relying extensively on technology rather than human capital.

Notwithstanding these putative benefits, we are strongly persuaded that the path of a "virtual master's program" is fraught with potentially grave dangers. For one, the costs of implementing such programs can be considerable. For example, new staff are often required to set-up and sustain computer technology as well as train and support faculty in its advanced uses. Moreover, technology is expensive and, because upgrades are regularly needed, costs are not fixed but remain subject to change. For another, current faculty are often ill-prepared to adapt to fundamentally new ways of teaching and learning. For still another, the confluence of major entrepreneurial initiatives in the for-profit sector at the master's level—from Bob Jones University to the University of Phoenix—ensure that competition will be fierce among those institutions anchoring their programs in "digital technology." Already many master's programs are suffering losses in the Social Darwinist competition for students in the fields of business and education. Still, the entrepreneurial successes of some of the new "virtual programs" make it seem likely that an increasing number of master's programs in fields such as library and information science—witness the innovative distance programs established at Syracuse University and the University of South Carolina—will be introduced. Selective use of technology is one thing; sweeping technological reform of master's programs

is quite another. On balance, we would urge on the side of caution rather than falling prey to the intoxicating presence of high-technology.

Corporate Training Programs

In response to changing employer expectations and a new, ubiquitous corporate culture, programs may also be tempted to adopt the corporate training model. This model revolves around the current needs—and dollars—of business and industry. The leap from a traditional to a corporate model is often not so far, as many corporations already have a strong presence on campus, from athletics suppliers to book publishers to research supporters, and the rewards of those involved with these newcomers can seem plentiful. In addition, most universities are already encouraging individual programs to be entrepreneurial in their everyday activities of administering, teaching, and learning. At first glance, then, teaming with business and industry can seem a wise choice, especially for professional programs. Dollars lost from the university's central administration can be made up by grants and other means of support from corporations, and graduates will be assured the most up-to-date training in their fields and an eager market for their skills. Even faculty may witness increased opportunities to benefit from such an arrangement through expansion of their own knowledge and training, funding for their research projects, and speaking engagements.

The benefits of this model seem considerable—for example, the partnership of universities and businesses on some campuses has seen buildings for executive education spring up practically overnight. But again, this is a road—we are convinced—that is in most cases best traveled by someone else. While the visible short-term benefits are appealing, the potential pitfalls for future restrictions on programs that adopt this model are looming, especially in regard to smaller programs such as many of those in library and information science. As a program adopts the corporate training model, it

may find that the impact of having the bulk of its funds come directly from business and industry may be that the corporation can essentially dictate—if not through direct control, than through what Wolff terms “carrots”⁶—how its program will carry out its mission of teaching and learning. Increasing reliance on outside funds will make a program appear “self-sufficient” to the university and may lead to a decrease of university dollars, thereby forcing the program to become ever more reliant on the corporate model. It is not only simply dangerous to rely heavily on the livelihood, integrity, and goodwill of corporations; it can be an affront to our own distinctive contributions to society and institutional strengths. We must continue to recognize that the strength of the professional master’s program lies in our ability to critique and improve upon current systems and processes already in place. Without our current ability to stand above the fray, we will lose our positions of autonomous, respected programs in the service of our students and professional communities. Although we appreciate that some partnering between businesses and professional master’s programs can be desirable and, in some instances, may even be necessary, we would also suggest that a wholehearted embrace of the corporate training model will ensure that the needs and values of the corporation can easily become predominant in our curricula.

Service Station Programs

This model was applied to the university as early as 1930 by Abraham Flexner, and was later revived and refined by Clark Kerr in his discussion of “the multiversity” in *The Uses of the University*.⁷ Within the context of professional master’s programs, this model suggests that the incorporation and coordination of a variety of activities aimed at pleasing any number of constituents is the preferred course in an ever-changing world. The appeal of adopting the service station model is considerable, and not least because many of our programs are already

adhering to this model in some way by trying to please students, faculty, staff, employers, and the general public through the adoption of new courses, certificate programs, and outreach activities. The widely-accepted mantra to be indispensable in a time of increased cutbacks and accountability is understandable, as is the attempt to anticipate and then address the needs of constituents who live in a fast-paced and service-oriented world.

From our perspective, being all things to all people is probably not the way to survive the myriad external and internal forces making demands of master’s programs. Instead of securing professional master’s programs a place of leadership in the 21st century, the service station model will most likely water-down programs, filling them with overextended and unresponsive faculty and ambivalent, “dabbling” students. While responding to constituents and becoming a center for change and innovation are admirable qualities in a master’s program, we advise that the service station model be avoided. Instead, we suggest that internal reflections on outside needs followed by conscientious decision-making is a much more useful approach for navigating major internal and external forces influencing master’s education.

Courses-of-Action for Positioning LIS Master’s Programs

In light of the external and internal forces acting on master’s programs and mindful of the limitations of popular models of change and innovation, we conclude by advancing five courses-of-action aimed at positioning LIS master’s programs to avoid pitfalls and seize opportunities for the foreseeable future. We briefly outline each course-of-action and indicate how it might contribute to positioning master’s programs.

Know Thyself: Forge a Programmatic Identity
As a beginning point, we think it imperative that everyone invested in LIS master’s programs seriously conjoin the question of

identity. At the field level, that would mean reaching consensus on the mission and programmatic identity of LIS. From our perspective, the Kellogg-ALISE Information Professions and Education Reform Project (KALIPER) made a meaningful stride in that regard in the report it published in early 2000. Most significantly, the report suggested that “LIS schools proclaim their domain as covering cognitive and social aspects of how information and information systems are created, organized, managed, filtered, disseminated, routed, retrieved, accessed, used, and evaluated.”⁸ While we are persuaded that this definition could serve as a useful starting point for advancing the identity of the field, the KALIPER report seems to fall markedly short of giving full expression to this underlying sentiment—instead retreating into a diffuse and amorphous “user-centered” perspective that suggests that the “user” is the one aspect of the field that ensures its distinctiveness. While serving “users” or “clients” is surely a part of defining programmatic identity, forging an identity anchored in defining the “character” of the program—its purpose and aims and programmatic identity rather than simply who it serves—is critically important. In particular, the field of LIS needs to address such key questions as: What is our history and what part of that history do we want to carry into the new century and what part, if any, has become obsolete? What should be the “heart and soul” of our programs beyond our clientele? Within the context of greater programmatic identity across the field, individual programs will then be better positioned to address the specific goals and objectives in their LIS programs as well as such subsidiary questions as “who”—libraries, users of knowledge and information, our profession—should be served? As a point of departure, we would suggest that LIS *qua* field retain a major focus on librarianship—if you will, the traditional mooring for the field—while at the same time anchoring the field in preparing graduates with the knowledge and skills needed to develop and sustain robust information environments.

Given the absence of a clear and compelling programmatic identity for LIS at the master’s level, it is small wonder that individual programs are tempted to be “all things to all people.” And no less telling, that individual programs seem to be moving in different directions. To wit, some programs are currently reaching out to make programmatic connections with non-traditional field partners such as computer science, engineering, psychology, and women’s studies, while others—at most—are reaching out to such conventional partners as history and education. While interdisciplinary connections merit serious consideration, we would strongly suggest that—as a matter of First Principle—LIS programs consolidate their identities before uncritically embracing new interdisciplinary relationships. Without such consolidation, we fear that programs will be adopted by other fields or, at the least, unwittingly suffer from the limitations of “corporate training” and “service station” models. LIS, as a field and within many individual programs, clearly needs to forge a much clearer identity if it is to survive the external and internal forces of the coming century.

Embrace Change and Innovation in Alignment with Programmatic Identity

From specific courses to the entire curriculum, the last several years have seen considerable change and innovation within selected master’s programs in library and information science. At the course level, for example, some programs have introduced new courses that go beyond traditional settings—such as the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill’s innovative courses entitled “Web Databases” and “Information Security.” Other programs have transformed traditional core courses, such as the University of Toronto’s cataloging course, which has been reconceptualized into a new course called “Representing, Organizing, and Storing Information.” And perhaps most significantly, a number of programs have begun to hire faculty in joint positions who represent a wide range of disciplines ranging from art and design to electrical engineering and

computer science. For example, the University of Michigan and the University of California-Berkeley, as well as the University of Puerto Rico, have all embraced multidisciplinary faculty hiring. To be sure, other programs seem to have eschewed significant change and innovation, preferring instead to maintain their traditional commitments to conventional notions of librarianship.

The considerable amount of change and innovation in library and information science signals a field that is responsive to many of the emerging pressures of the new century. Certainly joint faculty appointments suggest a creativity in that such appointments at once address faculty shortages in the field and concurrently infuse the field with new and potentially exciting perspectives—not to mention the changing face of knowledge production and dissemination in library and information science. From our perspective, the movement toward interdisciplinarity is one of the signature features and genuinely meaningful developments in LIS. Notwithstanding these changes and innovations, some of them appear to be scattered in many different directions—both across the field writ large as well as within programs. As such, they can pose a major threat, individually and collectively, to field and programmatic identity. Carried to excess, they could unwittingly lead to a service station model of master's education. To maintain a programmatic identity, it is critical that changes and innovations be aligned with the ethos and animating purposes of that identity.

Re-Conceptualize High-Quality Programs and Related Practices

Traditionally in higher education, program quality has been conceptualized in terms of "inputs:" good faculty, good students, and good resources "naturally" will lead to a high-quality program. For the most part, this has been a convenient definition, for it has enabled us to deflect questions about what goes on inside of our programs—the so-called "educational black box"—and what graduates of our programs can actually do

upon completion of their studies. But today, students and employers are demanding that we develop programs that provide meaningful learning experiences for students that have significant effects on their learning both in the short and the long-run.

Rather than defining high-quality programs in terms of inputs, we propose that high-quality programs—in LIS and in other fields as well—be defined as those programs that provide enriching learning experiences that positively affect students' growth and development. In *Emblems of Quality*, Haworth and the first author of this paper used this definition and developed an "engagement theory of quality" that was anchored in seventeen attributes of high-quality master's programs. Based on our research, we identified a range of practices within the "black box" of master's programs that promote student engagement, including:

- The recruitment and retention of diverse and engaged faculty who infuse diverse scholarly and experiential points of view into their teaching and who are strongly committed to student learning.
- The creation of participatory learning environments in which students are challenged and supported to take risks in their learning.
- The use of interactive teaching and learning strategies, including critical dialogue, integrative learning, mentoring, and cooperative peer learning—all of which actively involve students in contributing to their own and others' learning.
- Connected curricular requirements, including the completion of a professional residency—such as a practicum, internship, or assistantship—and a tangible product, such as a thesis or project.⁹

We also found that engagement needs to go beyond faculty-student relationships and the formal curriculum. Particularly at the master's level—where master's degrees in fields such as LIS are or should be closely linked to the non-university workplace—engagement between master's programs

and their graduates is critical. In our research on master's programs, we identified one approach to community engagement that we found especially compelling in terms of student learning and development: a collaborative approach to engagement. In this approach, faculty and administrators view their master's programs as being of the region or community of which they are a part.¹⁰ Unlike many of their colleagues in other master's programs, faculty regularly see their programs and the communities they serve in interdependent terms, actively seeking to work the interface between academe and the workplace by participating in joint research ventures, collaborative partnerships, and educational exchanges. Faculty in these programs seldom see knowledge as "theoretical" or "applied," preferring instead to emphasize to their students the interrelatedness of knowledge, research, and practice.¹¹ In Schon's terms, faculty in this set of programs design curricula and learning experiences that prepare their graduates as reflective practitioners within their respective professions.¹²

In short, we suggest that engagement—of learners and their learning environments, both in and outside of the university—is an important touchstone that should be given consideration by faculty, administrators, and students, and other key stakeholders, in reconceptualizing high-quality and, in turn, giving it expression. Not least significant, we anticipate that students will continue to press for more active forms of learning and engagement. Moreover, employers can be expected to press for more collaborative approaches that are anchored in bridges that better connect programs with the problems and realities that define professional practice in the non-university workplace.

Incorporate Assessment into Program

Design: Document Student Learning

Consonant with our predicted emphasis on engagement, we expect that there will be increasing demands placed on faculty and administrators to document the value of master's degrees to students, employers, and

institutional administrators. In the coming years, we foresee that assessment will no longer be a mere optional activity but instead will be one virtually required of programs. As we see it, students and employers will be attracted to those programs that clearly demonstrate and communicate the value they add to their graduates, and institutional administrators will fuel accountability by demanding such evidence in making resource allocations among competing priorities on their campuses.

To be sure, some programs are involved in assessment at the master's level and we suspect that LIS programs are ahead of programs in many other fields. But most assessments in higher education are less focused on what graduates are learning, much less on the ways in which programs are contributing to those learning outcomes. In the highly-competitive marketplaces of today and tomorrow, where a premium is placed on graduates who are highly-skilled and who are either being supported financially by employers or are paying out-of-pocket for master's degrees, both students and employers are asking probing questions about the "value" and "outcomes" of master's programs.

We strongly urge LIS master's programs to embrace systematic approaches to ongoing assessment—with particular emphasis on student learning outcomes. We find helpful Angelo's definition of a systematic assessment program: one that provides an "ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning... [that] involves making our expectations explicit and public; setting appropriate criteria and high standards for learning; systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards; and using the resulting information to document, explain, and improve performance."¹³

Developing new measures, or indicators, of quality in master's programs is critical, we believe, for those involved in master's programs in library and information science. Especially if we are to define high-quality programs in ways that embrace a

collaborative approach to engagement that results in student learning outcomes, current indicators will no longer suffice. After all, traditional assessments almost always focus on program inputs and rarely on student learning experiences much less learning outcomes—at least beyond graduation and placement rates. Some of our own research, as discussed in *Emblems of Quality in Higher Education*, provides such a set of quality indicators that might be a useful point of departure for assessing master's programs in library and information science.¹⁴

Ensure a Community both Fiercely Intellectual and Sacred

Many external and internal forces, as well as the three emerging models we described above, have unwittingly caused the university to move from being host to a community of scholars to architect of a home for often lonely and isolated specialists. This loss of community has been felt throughout the university in recent years, and it seems to us that programs in LIS, as well as in other fields, must take seriously the notion of developing a robust intellectual community within their own programs, as well as provide a sacred space for that community to grow. As a minimum, an intellectual community should boast several demanding, but ultimately rewarding, attributes. The first is simply to have a space in which the community of truth is practiced. In this space, the subject rather than the instructor is central. Truth-seeking in this space is motivated by a genuine interest in the subject by all participants, great care and enthusiasm for the subject—especially on the part of the instructor—and an expectation of rigorous debate and analysis from all. To ensure that it is a sacred place, integrity and respect for all participants as well as for the subject being studied must be present. An intellectual community must also encourage interdisciplinarity and cross-disciplinary perspectives. Limiting ourselves solely to the interpretive and analytic lenses of our own field constrains both our

understanding and sense of wonder of the subject. Closely aligned with this attribute is the next: an intellectual community should be "dimensionless," encouraging conversation among and between teachers and students—including those of the past that are encountered through books and other materials and those of the present that are outside the walls of academe, such as practitioners. This seems especially pertinent in a field such as LIS where practitioners and faculty are so closely aligned. To move beyond the antiquated division between theory and practice, and to allow our work to encompass and address both, is essential in an intellectual community. Similarly, a true "dimensionless" community must break down barriers between teachers and learners and invite the teaching and learning into a seamless web in which what is being shared is infinitely more important than who is sharing it.

From rising costs, political pressures, and public scrutiny to the influx of part-time and nontraditional students to the emphasis on highly-specialized research and the growing entrepreneurialism among faculty, the pressures currently acting on master's programs threaten to erode all sense of community in many programs. It is our belief that building a genuine community within our programs—a community that is at once intellectual and sacred—will help protect both our programmatic identities and our financial and intellectual capital. We have learned that there are LIS master's programs that exhibit the primary attributes of such a community—at least one of them: this program, which one of us has been able to observe as a participant-observer over the last six years, happens to be housed in the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Under the leadership of a committed faculty, engaged students, and a talented chair of the department, this program has been carved out and sustained such that at its epicenter is a community that seems to be at once fiercely intellectual and a sacred place. It is a model—doubtless there are other LIS models as well—of how thoughtful and passionate and

disciplined faculty and students can go about creating a genuinely intellectual community.

A Concluding Note

The major forces, external and internal, affecting master's education require a response from faculty and administrators in master's programs in library science. Consonant with describing these forces, we have critiqued alternative models and proposed five courses-of-action. In advancing a template for positioning master's programs in library and information science, we invite the responses of LIS members in light of your field-specific knowledge and experience as part of a continuing conversation.

In closing, we take the liberty of emphasizing the salience of master's degrees to higher education in general—and library and information science in particular. Within the last several decades, the master's degree, more than any other level of education, has been responsive to changes in the nature of knowledge, work, and the economy by providing educational experiences that have at once addressed the needs of the professoriate, professionals in the field, and employers. Yet, even at this juncture, the success of the master's degree continues to be, at best, "a silent success" within academe. We continue to believe, as *The Washington Post* mentioned in a lead editorial on *A Silent Success*, that the master's is "academe's secret weapon."¹⁵ The challenge in library and information science is to at once build on and extend the solid foundation that you have already developed.

References and Notes

1. Clifton F. Conrad, Jennifer Grant Haworth, and Susan B. Millar, *A Silent Success: Master's Education in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
2. James J. Duderstadt, *A University for the 21st Century* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 7.
3. University of California at Los Angeles Center for Communication Policy, "2001 UCLA Internet Report Finds Declines in E-Commerce, Major Concerns About Online Privacy and Credit Card Security" Online. Available: <http://www.ccp.ucla.edu/pages/NewsTopics.asp?id=29>. Accessed November 29, 2001.
4. The Food Institute Online, "The Food Institute Report Online Industry News, March 12th Update." Online. Available: <http://www.foodinstitute.com/nonpages/sampdig.htm#thru>. Accessed March 12, 2001.
5. Alan Reynolds, "The Real Cost of Education: Who Should Pay it and How?" Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, Inquiry Number 4. Online. Available: <http://www.popecenter.org/inquiry/4reynolds.html>.
6. Robert Paul Wolff, *Four Models of a University* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 53.
7. Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).
8. Joan C. Durrance, "KALIPER: What the Field Says About LIS Education at the Dawn of a New Century: An Introduction." Online. Available: http://www.alise.org/nondiscuss/KALIPER_conf_2000_report.htm.
9. Jennifer Grant Haworth and Clifton F. Conrad, *Emblems of Quality in Higher Education: Developing and Sustaining High-Quality Programs* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997).
10. Jennifer Grant Haworth and Clifton F. Conrad, "Conformity or Subversiveness: Alternative Approaches to Professional Master's Education in Regional Colleges and Universities," *Metropolitan Universities* 3 (1992): 8-19.
11. Jennifer Grant Haworth, "The Master's Degree: Seeing What's Visible But Not Yet Seen," Presentation to the Canadian Association of Graduate Schools, 25 October 2001.
12. Donald D. Schon, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
13. Thomas A. Angelo, "Transforming Assessment: High Standards for Higher Learning," *AAHE Bulletin* 48 (1996): 3-4.
14. Haworth and Conrad, *Emblems of Quality in Higher Education*.