

---

## Introduction

ALISTAIR BLACK AND EMILY J. M. KNOX

---

It is a sad fact that far fewer people survive to celebrate a platinum wedding anniversary (seventy years) than they do a diamond anniversary (sixty years). No doubt that is the main reason why the former is much less well-known than the latter. Thankfully, the marriage of the doctoral program in library and information science to what is now the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois has lasted long enough to achieve platinum status—due to the longevity of both parties, as well as their compatibility.<sup>1</sup> Of course, to wait to celebrate the marriage at the three-quarters-of-a-century mark might have proved even more impactful, but then the opportunity would have been lost to use the platinum anniversary to signal the recent change (2016) of name of the school—now, the School of Information Sciences—as well as the changing complexion of the doctoral program that the change of name partially represents.

The school's adoption of the *information sciences* rubric is reflected in the great diversity of doctoral studies now undertaken in it. The information sciences spectrum, as Marcia Bates (2015) illustrates, is one of great width, stretching—to cite just a handful of disciplines and subdisciplines—from library science, museum studies, bibliography, archival science, and the sociology of information, to records management, information management, information science, data curation, data analytics, information systems, and informatics. Nowadays, the research interests of the school's doctoral students map fairly closely onto this spectrum, effectively *spanning the information sciences*—hence the title of this issue of *Library Trends*.

This width contrasts markedly with the relatively constricted nature of the original doctoral program. Compare, for example, the titles of the first ten doctoral theses awarded in the school during the period 1951 to 1957 to the titles of the most recent ten (2015–2016):<sup>2</sup>

LIBRARY TRENDS, Vol. 65, No. 4, 2017 (“Spanning the Information Sciences: A Celebration Marking Seventy Years of the Doctoral Program in the School of Information Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,” edited by Alistair Black and Emily J. M. Knox), pp. 467–472. © 2017 The Board of Trustees, University of Illinois

- The Use of Library Materials in Doctoral Research: A Study of the Effect of Differences in Research Method (1951)
- Regulations Relating to the Book Trade in London from 1357 to 1586 (1953)
- The Development of Reference Services in American Research Libraries (1954)
- Alexander Gill, The Elder, High Master of St. Paul's School: An Approach to Milton's Intellectual Development (1955)
- The Influence of Scholars on Research Library Development at the University of Illinois (1955)
- A Study of the Problem of Complete Documentation in Science and Technology (1956)
- Characteristics of Libraries in Selected Higher Military Educational Institutions in the United States (1957)
- Professional Development of Reference Librarians in a University Library: A Case Study (1957)
- A Study of Certain Factors in Institutions of Higher Education Which Influence Students to Become Librarians (1957)
  
- Capturing the Context of Digital Literacy: A Case Study of Illinois Public Libraries in Underserved Communities (2015)
- Deliberating Environmental Policy: Information Seeking and Use in Canada's House of Commons Standing Committees (2015)
- Design Problems in Crowdsourcing: Improving the Quality of Crowd-based Data Collection (2015)
- The Genesis of Youth Services in Public Libraries in China, 1912–1937 (2015)
- Libraries and the System of Information Provision in the 1930s United States: The Transformation of Technology, Access, and Policy (2015)
- Methods Metadata: Curating Scientific Research Data for Reuse (2015)
- The Community Informatics of an Aging Society: A Comparative Case Study of Public Libraries and Senior Centers (2016)
- Educational Hypercomics: Learners, Institutions, and Comics in E-Learning Interface Design (2016)
- Encoding Power: The Scripting of Archival Structures in Digital Spaces Using the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model (2016)
- Latinas in Telecommunications: Intersectional Experiences in the Bell System (2016)

Whereas in the 1950s the dominant themes were libraries and the book, today, in the early twenty-first century, these have been supplemented by multiple considerations arising from digital society and its technolo-

gies. Arguably, there has also been a shift in terms of greater interdisciplinarity.<sup>3</sup>

This year, 2017, marks the seventieth year of the program, as well the seventieth anniversary of the initiative to inaugurate it. The decision to scope out a doctoral program was made in the fall of 1947. In October, the director of what was at that time Illinois Library School, Robert Downs, hosted a meeting on the University of Illinois's Urbana campus of the deans and directors of the five "type 1" library schools: those at the universities of California, Michigan, Chicago, Columbia, and Illinois. The meeting was keen to discuss and promote the academic, as well as vocational, dimension of library studies.<sup>4</sup> This meeting (in fact, it was labeled a "conference") "made clear the general character of the changes soon to take place in library education," including the emergence of three new types of professional training being pioneered—*independently*, it was stressed—by the last three of the five institutions listed above.<sup>5</sup>

A new curriculum was proposed, comprising a four-year undergraduate program in library science, a fifth year of study leading to a Master of Science degree, and "an advanced program of study and research leading to the Doctor of Library Science degree."<sup>6</sup> At the University of Illinois, this new triumvirate of library education and training was signed off by the Graduate College and the Senate, and by the Board of Trustees in April 1948. In response Illinois Library School proclaimed that in creating a new curriculum, it had "retained its position of positive leadership in the field of education for librarianship."<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, a few weeks before the meeting, in alignment with the fresh start that was being contemplated, the faculty had discussed the idea of changing the name of their unit to "School of Library Science." They were told that at the time, fourteen schools throughout the country had adopted the term *library science* in their names, while thirteen retained the term *library school*. Despite the growing popularity of the use of the term *library science*, which had first been promoted during the 1920s by the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago (Buckland, 1996), it was reported that "the faculty seemed to be against a change, feeling the present title quite satisfactory."<sup>8</sup> In fact, it was not until 1959 that the name "Graduate School of Library Science" was adopted (renamed "Graduate School of Library and Information Science" in 1981).

In the following month, a similar conference took place for library schools on the West Coast.<sup>9</sup> In considering doctoral degrees, the conference concluded that such degrees were "not generally needed by, nor useful to, the library administrator in his administrative capacity"; rather, it was observed, the degree was "needed by library school instructors, particularly those in schools offering the master's and doctor's degree," although it was also seen as attractive to "those few persons in large libraries

who are investigating library problems, that is, who are doing ‘library research.’”<sup>10</sup> Similar thinking regarding the possible final professional destinations of successful doctoral candidates would likely have informed those planning a doctoral degree at Illinois Library School.

A first draft of the doctoral program was issued in January 1948.<sup>11</sup> It is worth quoting the document at length. The draft “strongly urged” that

the definition of a research study acceptable as a thesis for the Ph.D. degree be set at a level high enough to compare with the work done in other fields. . . . To the many problems of librarianship, baffling and intriguing as they are at the same time, the only sure tool available to us, as a teaching institution, for their analysis at the verbal level is research, research, and more research. It takes but a casual review of the history of other fields (foremost of all and with good cause the physical and natural sciences) to perceive the tremendous potential and incalculable vistas which lie before us in the equal development of our own field as a body of scientific knowledge. . . . The principal and generalized approaches are at hand in the companion social sciences. If the Ph.D. program in librarianship is to fulfill our hopes it must in part be rooted solidly in a respect for and encouragement of only the best research of which our most fertile imagination is capable of conceiving and our best minds able to perform. The price may be high at first in student mortality [attrition] but the reward rich in the inducement to bright young people, in the creation of an infinitely fertile body of scientific knowledge of our subject area, and in well-deserved regard of our professional and academic peers.<sup>12</sup>

It was envisaged that successful doctoral candidates would be characterized by three traits. They would demonstrate

(1) productivity in research into the problems of librarianship, to be secured mainly by high-level training in the methodology of social science research, by the cleansing discipline of the successful completion of an independent and full-scale research study, and by the student’s absorption of a gnawing spirit of vivid sensitivity to the accurate identification and correct and precise formulation of the problems of the profession matched by an equally vivid and disciplined ability to hypothesize logical and feasible avenues for their investigation; (2) a readiness . . . to assume and perform with competence if not also with brilliance the duties and responsibilities of key professional and administrative positions of an advanced level . . . this readiness to be based on a saturation in and complete digestion of the literature of ideas on the current library scene; and (3) the ability and incentive to provide professional leadership to subordinates in their professional growth and development, to colleagues in their joint effort to consolidate and improve the services and status of librarianship, and to laymen in their conception and use of the role of print and communications in our society, all this in obedience to the dynamic of the professional worker but in conformity with the social ethic.<sup>13</sup>

It is clear from this draft statement that in proposing a doctoral program there was a determination to raise the status of librarianship, or library

science, to bring it into line with the status enjoyed by disciplines in the sciences and social sciences, as well as to build capacity and authority in leadership beneficial to both the library profession and the society it served.

The new doctoral program appeared in Illinois Library School's "Announcement: 1948–1949" (its prospectus) in 1948.<sup>14</sup> The first doctorate was awarded in 1951, at which point, on the insistence of the Board of Trustees of the university, the name of the degree was changed from "Library Science Doctorate" (essentially a professional degree) to "Doctor of Philosophy, Library Science." With the demise of Chicago's Graduate Library School in the 1990s, the School of Information Sciences of the University of Illinois now has the oldest extant doctoral program in library and information science in the United States. Extracted from this historic program, we are delighted, therefore, to present the work of a selection of current doctoral students, some of it coauthored with advisors.

## NOTES

1. For coverage of the diamond anniversary, see School of Information Sciences, "Doctoral Program Celebrates Major Milestone" (2008); see also Lancaster (1992) for an outline history of the doctoral program.
2. For the full list of dissertations (1951–2016), see School of Information Sciences, "Completed Dissertations" (2016).
3. For a discussion of the history and shape of early doctoral studies in library science in the United States, see Danton (1959).
4. "Agenda for the Conference on Type 1 Library Schools," in University of Illinois Archives, folder 18/1/3, box 37, p. 3.
5. Illinois Library School, "Annual Report (1947–48)," in University of Illinois Archives, folder 18/1/819, box 2, pp. 5–6. The meeting took place on October 29–30, 1947.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
8. Illinois Library School, "Faculty Meeting Agenda, October 2, 1947," in University of Illinois Archives, folder 18/1/3, box 37.
9. "Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference on Education for Librarianship, Berkeley, 14–15 November 1947," in University of Illinois Archives, folder 18/1/3, box 37.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
11. "First Draft of Outline for Library School Doctoral Program, January 1948," in University of Illinois Archives, folder 18/1/3, box 33.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
14. Illinois Library School, "Announcement: 1948–1949," in University of Illinois Archives, folder 18/1/801, box 2.

## REFERENCES

- Bates, M. J. (2015). The information professions: Knowledge, memory, heritage. *Information Research*, 20(1), paper 655. Retrieved from [InformationR.net/ir/20-1/paper655.html](http://InformationR.net/ir/20-1/paper655.html)
- Buckland, M. (1996). Documentation, information science, and library science in the USA. *Information Processing and Management*, 32(1), 63–76.
- Danton, J. P. (1959). Doctoral study in librarianship in the United States. *College and Research Libraries*, 20(6), 435–458.
- Lancaster, F. W. (1992). Advanced studies at Illinois. In W. C. Allen & R. F. Delzell (Eds.), *Ideals and standards: The history of the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science* (pp. 173–179). Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

School of Information Sciences, University of Illinois. (2008). Doctoral program celebrates major milestone. Retrieved from <https://ischool.illinois.edu/articles/2008/10/doctoral-program-celebrates-major-milestone>

School of Information Sciences, University of Illinois. (2016). Completed dissertations. Retrieved from <https://ischool.illinois.edu/academics/degrees/phd/dissertations>

---

Alistair Black is a full professor in the School of Information Sciences of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of *A New History of the English Public Library* (1996), *The Public Library in Britain, 1914–2000* (2000), and *Libraries of Light* (2017), a socio-architectural history of public libraries in the UK in the long 1960s; is the coauthor of *Understanding Community Librarianship* (1997), *The Early Information Society in Britain, 1900–1960* (2007), and *Books, Buildings and Social Engineering* (2009); and is the coeditor of volume 3 (covering the period 1850 to 2000) of *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (2006). He was chair of the Library and Information History Group of CILIP (1992–1999) and of the IFLA Section on Library History (2003–2007). He was the editor of the international journal *Library History* from 2004 to 2008, and the North American editor of *Library and Information History* from 2009 to 2013. His current research projects include a study of information management in the Intelligence Branch of Britain's War Office, 1873 to 1914.

Emily J. M. Knox is an assistant professor in the School of Information Sciences of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests include information access, intellectual freedom and censorship, information ethics, information policy, and the intersection of print culture and reading practices. Her book *Book Banning in 21st-Century America* was published in 2015; it is the first monograph in the Beta Phi Mu Scholars Series. She is the editor of *Trigger Warnings: History, Theory, Context*, which was published in June.