

What About Librarianship in LIS Curricula?

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ABSTRACT

Over the past 20 years, Library and Information Science (LIS) programs have greatly diversified what they teach beyond librarianship to include many related, relevant topics, like information needs, human computer interaction, information policy, or knowledge management. As they have done so, many LIS programs have re-positioned themselves within universities as I-Schools with explicit teaching and research agendas addressing information broadly—and even dropping the “L” word from their names. However, this intellectual expansion raises important questions: How important is librarianship to the curricula of a School or Department of LIS or to an I School? How important is librarianship to graduates of these I-Schools or LIS Schools and Departments? To what degree is librarianship specific to the curricula of these Departments and Schools, providing them an educational niche distinct from those occupied by other information educators, such as Departments of Computer Science or Communication?

Possible answers to these questions are: First, librarianship provides something essential to people by addressing perennial limits people have as to intellectual content, e.g. by addressing people’s inability to consume all existing content by putting it into smaller, understandable content collections. Second, at least historically, most graduates in LIS or I-Schools have worked in libraries because they provide librarianship, a service essential to people, making librarianship very important to the graduates’ careers. Third, librarianship either is or can be a niche very specific or even unique to LIS Departments or I-Schools, providing them a great curricular opportunity. This SIG Session will address these questions and their proposed answers, spurring conversation and consideration of these important issues.

ALISE TAXONOMY RESEARCH TOPICS

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