Planning for Learning and Assessment
School of Library & Information Science 2011/2012

1. What general outcomes are you seeking?

The Master of Library Science (MLS) program prepares students to become reflective practitioners who connect people and communities with information by assuming leadership roles, participating in policy development, and staying abreast of technology. (Updated August, 2011.)

Upon completion of the MLS program, graduates are prepared to:

- Engage users to:
  - Analyze and identify the information needs of a variety of age, academic, and socio-economic groups
  - Apply search strategies for effective and efficient access to information
  - Support and educate users to locate, produce, evaluate, and use information, resources, and tools
  - Evaluate information services
- Develop and manage library information resources
  - Design and apply policies and procedures that support the selection and acquisition of information resources in order to meet the needs of a community, institution, or organization
  - Manage, evaluate, and preserve physical and virtual collections of information resources
- Represent and organize information resources
  - Understand and effectively apply principles of representation and systems of organization in order to provide access to resources that users need in a variety of environments
- Manage and lead human and financial resources in libraries and other information organizations
  - Perform managerial functions, including planning, budgeting, organizing, performance evaluation, teamwork, and leadership
  - Communicate effectively to a variety of audiences
  - Apply theories of organizational behavior, organizational structure, and environmental context effectively in demanding, dynamic situations
- Conduct and analyze research
  - Design, conduct, interpret, and take action based upon research and evaluation related to the acquisition, representation, organization, use, and dissemination of information needed for the development and management of libraries and library tools
- Employ information technologies in effective and innovative ways
  - Implement and evaluate information and communication technologies for

efficiency, usability, and value to users
- Approach professional issues with understanding
    - Comprehend the social, political, ethical, and legal aspects of information creation, access, ownership, service, and communication
    - Anticipate emerging trends; mediate and implement innovations

2. How would you know it if you saw it?

Assessment of student learning occurs both within courses and as a component of program evaluation. Suggestions from students, faculty members, alumni, employers, and others interested in the next generation of information professionals are funneled through the Curriculum Steering Committee. As a *steering* committee, the CSC considers issues such as the required grade for core courses, prerequisites for courses, or new courses to be developed and added to the curriculum. Proposals developed and debated within the CSC move forward to the faculty as a whole for discussion and decision.

In program evaluation, the school assesses the achievements of students with respect to the stated learning outcomes for each program. (The Indianapolis campus offers the MLS degree program alone.) Student participation in this assessment is an expectation of their degree requirements.

This occurs in two forms: On both campuses, students in required courses take pre- and post-tests to assess initial mastery and subsequent gain with regard to the program goals as instantiated in the required course. The associate deans direct the pre- and post-tests, which were developed through individual faculty experimentation in 2010-2011. For Fall 2011, IUPUI students in three courses are completing pre- and post-tests: S501 Reference - Support Users and Approach professional issues with understanding program goals. Similar assessments will be conducted in Spring 2012 for: S503 Representation and Organization and S505 Evaluation of Resources and Services. The results of those pre-/post-tests are still being analyzed.

An additional approach is used at Indianapolis, consistent with the campus's emphasis on summative, multiple-point, and multiple-format evidence and the school's interest in supporting part-time students and distance education. SLIS Indianapolis faculty developed an electronic assessment matrix, employed in conjunction with the student-designed electronic portfolio. Participation is required for students admitted from fall 2011; those who matriculated earlier are encouraged to prepare portfolios a well.

Students deposit evidence of their skills within the assessment matrix (organized by program goals), which is part of an Oncourse worksite. The cells of the assessment matrix contain instructions orienting students to the program goals and the process of documenting their accomplishments. For each learning outcome, students select items (documents, websites, projects, papers, etc.) that represent mastery of that outcome. These can come from required courses, elective courses, or internships.

From the student perspective, each has his or her own matrix. From the administrative side, these cells can be aggregated by matrix outcome (row), so that a reviewer can see all artifacts (with commentary) submitted for each goal. Reviewers can access all or a random selection of student work relevant to each program goal. Because the portfolio is a graduation requirement, the

achievements of all students—strong and weak, memorable and less distinctive—are included. The ability to select a random sample makes the evaluation process both reasonably representative and yet not an undue burden.

For each program goal a faculty reviewer can easily download the items submitted; then assess the extent to which the desired goals are being achieved (and documented). Areas of strength and weakness can be addressed, for example by program or course changes. Data from the assessment include both a numeric rubric scale (not demonstrated, deficient, minimal, outstanding, and comments. Practitioners can also be involved in the review, to reflect the needs of the profession; students will be involved in Curriculum Steering Committee review of the results of the analysis with subsequent program improvements. A pilot project in 2009-2010 showed the workability of this approach and the faculty approved the inclusion of pre-/post-tests in core courses and ePortfolio at Indianapolis structure in fall of 2010.

Evaluation Process

SLIS has been able to take advantage of its two-campus status with respect to assessment of student learning. The Indianapolis campus has a culture and commitment to this kind of assessment and the SLIS faculty members from that campus have led efforts within the school to investigate measures that would be appropriate for SLIS students. Those discussions and the experiments they encouraged provided a head start for SLIS Bloomington faculty when that campus decided to require similar assessments.

The dual approach SLIS has adopted reflects differing campus expectations; the intention is that the combination of e-portfolios and pre-/post-tests will provide complementary perspectives to demonstrate where SLIS is succeeding in its educational mission and where attention is needed. So far, students have willingly taken part in these assessment activities. All SLIS faculty members are involved as well – from both campuses, both master's degree programs, and those responsible for required courses and the electives that build on the foundation laid in the required courses. The procedures will continue to evolve as faculty members gain experience with the assessment methods and funnel findings into ongoing course development. These assessments, coupled with the other sources of information developed through ongoing planning activities, will help to guide the continuing evolution of the courses and the programs.

3. How will you help students learn it?

The program has a set of required courses for all Master of Library Science students in the program that corresponds with the first five outcome areas. Students also have baseline technology prerequisites upon entry to the program that can be demonstrated by submitting a portfolio or successful completion of S401 Computer-Based Information Tools. Technical expertise and understanding of professional issues are woven throughout the curriculum in the required and elective courses. In addition, students are encouraged to undertake a service learning project (Course number S605, Internship in Library and Information Science). Assessment by an outside practitioner is incorporated into this process along with a student reflection/self-assessment component.

4. How could you measure each of the desired behaviors listed in #2?

A number of direct and indirect measures are employed to assess learning outcomes. As students complete the program, they are sent an exit survey designed to gather information about the quality of the program. In 2011 an annual (SLIS Curriculum) survey of students was begun. The survey is administered through the Curriculum Steering Committee; a standing committee of the school populated by members of both campuses. The School's alumni board is consulted on an ongoing basis to determine whether our teaching is relevant and adequate for current practice. Anecdotal information is also received from graduates during alumni gatherings to ascertain whether the program adequately prepared them to acquire a professional position and meet the demands of that position. Finally, the ePortfolio is designed to assess the program as a whole to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. See also, ***Evaluation Process*** above, under Question 2.

5. What are the assessment findings?

The most frequent concern expressed is an indirect student outcome: a desire for better advising and to a lesser extent, more practice or evidence-based coursework. Although all students in the program are assigned a faculty member as their advisor, they would like better advising. As a direct indicator of student learning outcomes, the data from the pilot study of the ePortfolio indicates that the program may be focusing too much attention on one system of organizing information without demonstrating other options and not enough attention, for some, on technology applications.

6. What improvements have been made based on assessment findings?

Faculty members have been informed of all of these findings. Advisors have been reminded of their role, and training has been provided on the various available systems to help them better access information about their advisees. Those whose teaching relates to the organization and representation of knowledge and information were made aware of the results of the ePortfolio pilot study, and modifications are being made in those courses. Finally, a number of faculty members have added technology applications to their assignments (development of blogs, wikis, etc.) as well as service learning projects into to their assignments rather than traditional print-based papers. Ongoing assessment will determine whether these changes have improved student outcomes. New faculty hires will include those with technology oriented skill-set pedagogies.