Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
School of Library and Information Science
Graduate Program in Library and Information Science

AY 2010-2011

Key Assessment Findings

Key Assessment: The Comprehensive Examination Results

The faculty of the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) do an analysis of the comprehensive examination each semester to evaluate the extent to which the students in the Master's of Science in Library Science (MSLS) program demonstrate mastery of the School's six (6) competency areas: Professional Identity, Management, Resources, Services, Information Organization, and Technology. The competency areas for the SLIS program are described at: http://slis.cua.edu/res/docs/about/accreditation/documents/sliscompetenciesadopted2008 0326.pdf. Data on the SLIS pass/fail rate for 2010-2011 is provided below in Table I. The data show that the SLIS pass rate for the comprehensive examination is 87%, which is lower than the 93.7% of AY 2009-2010.

The analysis of the pass/fail rate for the comprehensive examination results is one key assessment by the School's faculty to ensure students are mastering the program objectives and to inform curricular improvements for the program in areas where student mastery is less than desired. The big increase in fail rate is a concern of the faculty. It may have something to do with the fact that three new faculty members joined SLIS in this academic year. The faculty will analyze the change in fail rate thoroughly in 2012 and decide what actions are needed to improve pass rate.

Table 1. MSLS Program Comprehensive Examination Results (AY 2009 – AY 2011)

Period	Fail #	Fail %	Pass #	Pass %	Total
AY 2009-2010	6	6.3%	89	93.7%	95
AY 2010-2011	13	13%	86	87%	99

Competency Areas

The program at SLIS targets six competency areas. For the purpose of the comprehensive examinations, individual questions tend to require students to draw on their knowledge from more than one competency area. The analysis of the comprehensive examination data included an analysis of the questions students answered. A total of 30 questions were asked in AY2010-2011 (10 questions per examination), and many questions covered more than one competency area. Of the six competency areas, students showed a preference for answering questions related to Services, Technology and Professional Identity during the AY 2010-2011 period (see

Table 2). Data suggest students may have felt more prepared in information services and technology. Of the 99 students who took the examinations, 13 students failed, and the competency areas where they had difficulties were Professional Identity and Services.

Table 2. Comps Answers by Competency Area

Competency Area	Total Answers
Services	202
Technology	143
Professional Identity	137
Resources	106
Management	95
Information Organization	80

Assessment by Comprehensive Examination Rubric

SLIS developed an evaluation rubric for comprehensive examination in 2008 and has been using it to determine how well students can demonstrate their learning outcomes by the traits for assessment: Knowledge of theoretical principles, Application of theoretical principles to practice, Reflection on professional values, Knowledge of the literature, and Written communication ability. After each examination the faculty analyze answers in two competency areas, using a scale of 3 (3 being 3 being exceeding expectations, 2 being meeting expectations, and 1 being below expectations). In AY2010-2011, answers in Resources, Services, Technology, Management and Information Organization were analyzed. Data in Table 3 show that answers in Resources, Services, Technology, and Information Organization met faculty expectations. Answers in the Management area, however, were found to be below expectations. The faculty will discuss these summary data in January 2012 to discuss how to improve student learning and foster the development of competency in the Management area.

Table 3. Rubric Assessment by Competency

SID	Knowledge of Theoretical Principles	Application of Theoretical Principles	Professional Values	Literature	Written Communication	Time
Resources	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.5	2.8	Sum 2010
Services	2.05	2.15	1.85	2.4	2.3	Sum 2010
Services	2.87	2.2	2.6	2.53	2.6	Fall 2010
Technology	2.00	2.21	2.07	2.14	2.21	Fall 2010
Management	1.9	1.7	2.0	1.7	1.9	Spring 2011
Info. Org.	2.86	2.79	2.86	2.29	2.57	Spring 2011

Curriculum Improvements

(1) Review of 25 mid-level courses

The findings from the comprehensive examination analysis support the faculty's initiatives to continuously improve student achievement through the curriculum by enhancing opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of Professional Identity and Services within the SLIS curriculum. In AY 2010-2011 the faculty conducted a thorough review of 25 mid-level courses in Information Organization, Services and Resources, Technology, and Professional Identity and Management. The objectives of the review were to

1. Determine if these courses is necessary for achieving SLIS Program Objectives and developing SLIS competencies.
2. Ensure course content to incorporate the latest knowledge of research and professional practice.
3. Make explicit the role of information technology in the course.
4. Identify course objectives and specific learning outcomes.
5. Align course objectives with SLIS Program Objectives and the SLIS competencies.
6. Recommend new courses or course deletion if necessary.

The reviews were completed in spring 2011, and the outcomes included the deletion of two outdated courses, the change of several course titles to reflect course coverage fully, and clear statements in course syllabi on how technologies were used to enhance teaching and learning.

(2) Changing comprehensive examination format: The current format of the comprehensive examination requires students to memorize a lot of information and write essays in a test environment under much time pressure—two essays in three hours per day for two days. Many students have reported that the stress of the examination made it difficult for them to communicate what they learned. Taking this feedback into account, the faculty explored the possibility of portfolio and thesis as alternate formats for the examination. The faculty decided that a take-home examination would be a much better solution. The plan was to develop the new approach fully in the fall of 2011 and implement the changes in fall 2012.

(3) Introduction of new program delivery format. Most SLIS students work part-time or full-time while pursing the master's degree. To provide students with the flexibility and convenience they need, the faculty made creative use of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

(a) **eSLIS**: SLIS began preparing faculty members to offer synchronous learning in summer 2010. Adobe Connect was selected for this mode of learning and full-time and part-time faculty members were trained. In fall of 2010 several courses piloted eSLIS and received very positive outcomes. Key findings include

- 66% of the respondents indicated that they were comfortable with eSLIS as a system for online learning, that eSLIS sessions gave them the flexibility they needed to pursue their education, and that eSLIS should be integrated into future SLIS course offerings.
- 33% of the respondents indicated that they preferred face-to-face sessions for classes requiring technical or hands-on skills.
- 50% of the respondents indicated that 3-4 eSLIS sessions throughout the course of a semester was an appropriate use of online synchronous technology.
- Over 75% of the respondents indicated that the level of technical training and support they received prior to and during eSLIS classes was appropriate to their needs. In addition, over three fourths of the respondents indicated that they had the appropriate home computer and Internet requirements necessary to participate in eSLIS sessions. Overall, respondents indicated that technical issues were minimal and did not disrupt the effectiveness of eSLIS sessions for most students. However, for the few who did experience technical issues, it could be quite disruptive.
- 75% of the respondents indicated that the instructor was well trained and well prepared to teach eSLIS classes.
- A majority of respondents indicated that instructors had retained sound pedagogical methods while adapting their classes the eSLIS format. Overall, respondents were pleased with instructor performance with online, synchronous teaching via eSLIS.

(b) **OWL**: In spring 2011 the faculty developed an Online and Weekend Learning (OWL) program in which students do most of the course work online on Blackboard or through eSLIS, and meet one Saturday a month (4 Saturdays a semester) for face-to-face interaction. OWL program was designed for students preparing to be generalist and students focusing on school library media (SCHOOL OWL). The new OWL program was launched in fall 2011 with 12 students. Besides the standard course evaluation, SLIS will conduct a focus group discussion with OWL students in December 2011 to seek feedback on the program.

(4) Launch of a new master's degree program in Information Technology, with a concentration in Health Information Technology. With a grant from the Dept. of Labor, SLIS launched a new master's degree program in health information technology in fall 2011. The program began with 20 students. In spring 2012 15 new students were recruited to the HIT program. Several courses in the MSLS program are crossed listed with the HIT program, providing opportunities for students in one program to benefit from the other. The HIT program emphasizes management of information technology for the purpose of improving patient care and support medical research. Professional identity, Management, Information Organization, Information Technology and Information Services are the target competency areas.

(5) Cultural Heritage Information Management revised: The faculty revised the course of study in Cultural Heritage Information Management to prepare students for careers in libraries, archives, and museums. The emphasis of this concentration is the application of information technology for the purpose of information organization, access, and management. The strengths of this concentration and the school's connection to cultural heritage institutions in the Washington area have attracted many students to this program.