

**Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements  
School of Library and Information Science  
Graduate Program in Library and Information Science  
Academic Year 2011-2012**

**Introduction**

The purpose of SLIS's MSLIS program is to educate highly competent and ethical librarians and information professionals with the essential knowledge and practical skills necessary for successful careers in libraries and information environments. The program provides professional education and supports lifelong learning in the tradition of The Catholic University of America. The school envisions that our graduates will become an innovative leader with professional values informed by the CUA core values of reason, faith and service; and the SLIS values of collaboration, community, innovation and excellence.

To ensure quality and relevance to the LIS discipline, the SLIS faculty built the program around six core competencies derived from those demanded by the profession: professional identity, management, resources, services, information organization, and technology. These competency areas are described at: <http://slis.cua.edu/res/docs/about/accreditation/documents/sliscoompetenciesadopted20080326.pdf>. These core competencies incorporate the foundational knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by professionals graduating from the program. The MSLIS curriculum reflects these core competencies so as to address the philosophy, principles, and ethics of the field of library and information science.

As an ongoing effort, the SLIS faculty collects and analyzes data from a comprehensive examination and an exit survey to assess students' learning in these core competencies. Both of these instruments provide an important source of information for faculty as they work to improve the program. This report summarizes SLIS's key assessment results, and program improvements and assessment plan which have been implemented in fall 2012.

**Part 1: Key Assessments**

**1. The Comprehensive Examination Results**

One of central indicators of students' learning in the program is the comprehensive examination required for completion of the MSLIS degree. It is designed for students to demonstrate mastery and comprehensive understanding of the core knowledge of the LIS profession. It is offered three times per year.

The analysis of the comprehensive examination results is one key assessment by the School's faculty in ensuring that students are mastering the program objectives. It informs whether curricular improvements for the program are desired. Thus, the SLIS faculty members analyze the comprehensive

examination each semester to evaluate the extent to which the students in MSLIS program demonstrate mastery of knowledge.

Data on the SLIS pass/fail rate for the past three academic years are provided below in Table I. The data show that the comprehensive examination pass rate has decreased around 7% from AY 2009-2010 to AY 2011-2012.

**Table 1. MSLS Program Comprehensive Examination Results (AY 2009 – AY 2012)**

Academic Year	Fail		Pass		Total
	N	%	N	%	
AY 2009-2010	6	6.3%	89	93.7%	95
AY 2010-2011	13	13%	86	87%	99
AY 2011-2012	13	13.83%	81	86.17%	94

## 2. Assessment by Comprehensive Examination Rubric

The SLIS rubric for comprehensive examination was developed by SLIS faculty in 2008 to determine how well students could demonstrate their learning outcomes according to the following traits: knowledge of theoretical principles, application of theoretical principles to practice, reflection on professional values, knowledge of the literature, and written communication ability. The rubric is intended for the program-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading.

After each examination per semester, two competency areas were selected to assess with one representative comprehensive exam question. In AY2011-2012, answers in Resources (twice), Services, Technology, and Professional Identity (twice) were analyzed while answers in Management and Information Organization were analyzed in summer 2012 for use in the next academic year. One faculty member who was a leading faculty in the selected competency area analyzed answers to one selected exam question, using SLIS comps rubric in a scale of 3 (3 being exceeding expectations, 2 being meeting expectations, and 1 being below expectations). While this approach has a limitation in gathering assessment data from a body of faculty, the faculty found that there was no significant difference of assessment done by one faculty or multiple faculty members. This is attributed to clear assessment criteria in the rubric.

Data in Table 2 show a mean of each trait in each competency. Overall, students were competent in written communication meeting the expectation in all competency areas. Answers in the Services area were found to be above expectation in all traits. On the other hand, answers in the Technology area were just meeting the expectation. There was an improvement of quality of answers in the Resources area between the summer and the fall.

**Table 2. Mean of Each Trait by Competency Using a scale of 3**

Competency	Time	Knowledge of Theoretical Principles	Application of Theoretical Principles	Professional Values	Use of Literature	Written communication	Mean
Resources	Sum 2011	1.93	2.10	1.87	2.00	2.03	1.99
	Fall 2011	2.50	2.75	2.33	2.33	2.58	2.50
Professional Identity (PI)	Sum 2011	2.00	1.67	2.17	2.33	2.17	2.07
	Spring 2012	2.63	2.00	2.32	1.79	2.16	2.18
Services	Fall 2011	2.71	2.58	2.75	2.5	2.46	2.60
Technology	Spring 2012	2.05	2.2	1.95	2.05	2.2	2.09
Mean		2.30	2.22	2.23	2.17	2.27	2.24

Table 3 below shows detailed analysis of assessments in different levels in all traits. In the Services area, more than 50% of all students exceeded expectations in all traits. On the other hand, around 20% of students demonstrate below expectations in all traits except written communication skills in the Professional Identity area. For the Technology area, about 20% of students were below expectation in demonstrating a solid understanding of how technological knowledge could enhance the values of the profession.

**Table 3. Assessments in Competencies at Different Levels**

Trait	Competency	Level						Mean	SD	Total N
		Exceeding Expectations (3pts)		Meeting Expectations (2pts)		Below Expectations (1pt)				
		N	%	N	%	N	%			
Knowledge of theoretical principles	Resources	4.5	24	16.5	66	2.5	10	2.14	0.53	23.5
	Services	18	75	5	21	1	4	2.71	0.55	24
	Technology	2	10	17	85	1	5	2.05	0.39	20
	P.I	7.5	51	3.5	30	1.5	19	2.32	0.75	12.5
Application of theoretical principles to practice	Resources	7.5	35	14	58	2	7	2.29	0.56	23.5
	Services	16	67	6	25	2	8	2.58	0.65	24
	Technology	4	20	16	80	0	0	2.2	0.41	20
	P.I	2	11	7.5	62	3	27	1.83	0.59	12.5
Reflection on the	Resources	2.5	13	18	75	3	11	2.02	0.48	23.5
	Services	20	83	2	8	2	8	2.75	0.61	24

professional values in the LIS field	Technology	3	15	13	65	4	20	1.95	0.6	20
	P. I	5	43	6	37	1.5	19	2.24	0.78	12.5
Use of literature	Resources	3	13	18.5	81	2	7	2.06	0.43	23.5
	Services	14	58	8	33	2	8	2.5	0.66	24
	Technology	4	20	13	65	3	15	2.05	0.6	20
	P. I	3.5	36	4.5	35	4.5	29	2.06	0.8	12.5
Written communication	Resources	4.5	23	17.5	71	1.5	6	2.16	0.5	23.5
	Services	14	58	7	29	3	13	2.46	0.72	24
	Technology	5	25	14	70	1	5	2.2	0.52	20
	P. I	2.5	19	9.5	79	0.5	3	2.16	0.45	12.5

(Note: An average was calculated for each trait in Resources and PI as these competencies were assessed twice in the academic year.)

### 3. Graduate Exit Survey Results

An exit survey was sent to graduates in May, 2012. One of the survey questions asked students to rate their perception on how well the school prepared them in the six competency areas. As shown in Table 4, students perceived that they were prepared “very well” in the Professional Identity area (72.7%, 32 responses out of 44 students) whereas only 38.6% of students (17 responses) felt that they were prepared “very well” in the Technology area.

As Table 5 shows, more than 70% of students reported feeling positively about their overall experience with SLIS curriculum except their experience in workshops and colloquia offered by the school. About half of students (52%, 23 responses) expressed positive feeling of workshops and colloquia.

**Table 4. Students’ Perception on their preparedness in SLIS competency areas**

How well do you feel SLIS has prepared you in these competency areas? (Check one for each row)				
Answer Options	Very well	Adequately	Not adequately	Response Count
Professional Identify	32	10	2	44
Management of information organizations and services	23	18	3	44
Information Resources	25	19	0	44
User Services	27	16	1	44
Information Organization	29	12	3	44
Information Technology	17	22	5	44
<i>answered question</i>				<b>44</b>

**Table 5. Students' Perception on Experience with SLIS Curriculum**

Overall experience with SLIS curriculum: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Check one for each row)						
Answer Options	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response Count
The SLIS program covered the subject areas I was interested in.	12	24	6	2	0	44
The scheduling of courses (days and times) met my needs.	12	21	6	4	1	44
Instruction in the four core courses provided a solid foundation.	12	19	7	5	1	44
The SLIS special programs, workshops, and colloquia added to the quality of my educational experience.	13	10	21	0	0	44
The quality of instruction was above average.	6	27	7	4	0	44
<i>answered question</i>						<b>44</b>

#### 4. Summary

The detailed analysis of comps rubric data tell us that our students demonstrate strong mastery of knowledge in the Service competency area while the Technology competency is just meeting the expectation. Overall, our students demonstrate a good written communication skill in the comprehensive examination. A perception of students on their experience in SLIS curriculum is very positive.

However, there is a concern about an increase in fail rate over the past three years of comprehensive examination. To improve the pass rate, faculty will need to examine academic performance in 4 core courses, the course taking pattern, and overall GPA of these failing students. This investigation will give faculty insight into whether there is any relationship between academic performance and comps performance and what academic support the school should provide students during their course taking to better prepare them for the comprehensive examination.

While students had a positive feeling about their learning in most of the competency areas, they felt less prepared in the Technology area. It suggests that there are weaknesses in the students or the program in the Technology area. The findings also show that while students' perception on their learning on the Professional Identity area was very positive, about 20% of students did not meet the expectation of demonstrating their knowledge in all traits except Written Communication skills in the Professional Identity area. These findings suggest that the faculty need to discuss how to improve student learning and foster the development of competency in Professional Identity and Technology areas.

Overall the program has been successful; however, we will continue to monitor student performance as well as student perceptions of quality. The SLIS faculty will address the problems and offer suggestions for improvement.

## **Part 2: Program Improvement and Assessment Plan**

### **1. Changing comprehensive examination format**

The faculty modified the format of the comprehensive examination from writing multiple essays in-class based on memorization into writing a research paper in a take-home format. The purpose of writing a paper is to have students demonstrate the competencies required by the question and reflect learning from coursework, knowledge of the literature, analytical ability, and the ability to synthesize knowledge or ideas from various sources. This new format was considered not only to reduce student's stress level, but also to emphasize writing skills and the professional value of research. This format was implemented in the fall of 2012. The faculty also modified the previous rubric to reflect new expectations of paper quality. The faculty will use this rubric to collect assessment data while grading papers. A rubric is available in the appendix 1. All information of the new SLIS comprehensive format is publically available at <http://slis.cua.edu/courses/comps/index.cfm>.

### **2. Plan for reviewing advanced-level courses**

In AY 2010-2011 the faculty conducted a thorough review of 25 mid-level courses. The reviews resulted in 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. The faculty will continue a thorough review of 11 advanced-level courses in 2013.

### **3. Planning outcomes assessment**

The faculty created a two-year plan of academic program-level student learning outcomes assessment. To obtain a good understanding of the learning, development and growth of students, the faculty felt that the program needed a systematic, holistic, and ongoing method of gathering, analyzing and using information from various sources about the program and measuring program outcomes. The program has begun to implement this plan to measure some outcomes annually and to measure all priority outcomes at least once over two consecutive two-year review cycles (Appendix 2).

## **Appendix 1: SLIS Comprehensive Examination Essay Rubric (Sept, 2012)**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Fails to Meet Expectations</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b>
Demonstrated understanding of relevant information, principles and concepts	Response demonstrates unsatisfactory knowledge and understanding of required courses and issue(s)/problem(s) raised in the question. There are major	Response demonstrates satisfactory knowledge and understanding of required courses in regard to issue(s)/problem(s) raised in the question. There may	Response demonstrates superior knowledge and understanding of required courses in regard to issue(s)/problem(s) raised in the question – and in the

	inconsistencies and/or inaccuracies; overall knowledge is unsatisfactory. Fails to provide or provides impractical solution, opinion, or analysis to issue(s)/problem(s) raised in the question	be minor inconsistencies and/or inaccuracies; however, overall knowledge is satisfactory. Provides basic but practical solution, opinion, and/or analysis to issue(s)/problem(s) raised in the question	broader LIS context. Provides thoughtful and detailed solution, opinion, and/or analysis
Demonstrated ability to apply relevant theories, principles and concepts appropriately in response to the question	Response demonstrates inappropriate application of theoretical and/or professional principles and concepts to the question. Response fails to apply any theoretical and/or professional principles to the question	Response demonstrates satisfactory application of the appropriate theoretical and/or professional principles and concepts to the question. Some connections may be unclear or in appropriate – but overall application is satisfactory	Response demonstrates superior application of the appropriate theoretical and/or professional principle(s) and concepts to the question
Demonstrated ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate relevant principles in response to the question	Response does not provide sufficient synthesis or analysis of ideas. Conclusion does not adequately support ideas raised in the question	Response demonstrates satisfactory ability to analyze, synthesize and evaluate critical and relevant information. Response may or may not demonstrate an understanding of theoretical and/or professional principles in a broader LIS context	Response demonstrates superior ability to analyze, synthesize and evaluate critical, relevant, and consistent connections from theoretical principles to practice
Ability to locate and retrieve relevant, appropriate, and authoritative information	Response demonstrates inadequate integration of information literacy skills, inadequate use of primary and secondary sources and citations. Response fails to utilize the literature to support/strengthen discussion. References are incomplete and there are significant errors using APA	Response demonstrates adequate evidence of broad information literacy skills including a variety of primary and secondary sources. In most cases student integrates relevant research, demonstrates understanding and uses it appropriately (quantitative evidence, quotations etc.) Cites to a sufficient number of sources correctly throughout most of the essay. Complete and correctly cited references using APA – There may be instances of minor inaccuracies in citation and in application of the sources	Response successfully integrates information literacy skills, demonstrates superior understanding and uses it appropriately (quantitative evidence, quotations etc. Uses a variety of appropriate primary and secondary sources showing different perspectives. Complete and correctly cited references using APA
Ability to analyze and synthesize the	Response does not provide sufficient synthesis or analysis	Response demonstrates adequate conclusions that	Response demonstrates succinct and precise

information found	of ideas of information located. Conclusion does not adequately support ideas	show an analysis and synthesis of ideas and information. Some of the conclusions are not supported in the literature review or other information sources	conclusions that show a superior analysis and synthesis of ideas based on the information located from the and other sources
Ability to communicate clearly and effectively in writing, with use of graphical elements if appropriate	Response is poorly organized and lacks focus/clarity. Discussion is difficult to follow. Fails to demonstrate the satisfactory written communication skills	Response is satisfactorily organized & intelligible, although there may be minor issues with flow and/or organization. Demonstrates satisfactory to good written communication skills	Response is well organized and flows logically. The answer is clearly written, easy to understand, and demonstrates superior written communication skills

### Appendix 2: SLIS Assessment Plan:

Program learning outcome	Source of assessment	Time of data collection
<b>Goal # 2-</b> Are skilled in the use of information technologies and articulate the role of information technology in facilitating information management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSC555</li> <li>• Databases management</li> <li>• Digital libraries (sum 13)</li> <li>• Lib. Tech &amp; Project management</li> <li>• (exit survey; alumni survey; employer survey)</li> </ul>	2012 fall – 2013 spring
<b>Goal #3 -</b> Demonstrate a commitment to the philosophy, principles and legal and ethical responsibilities of the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSC557</li> <li>• (exit survey; alumni survey; employer survey)</li> </ul>	
<b>Goal #7-</b> Articulate the economic, political, cultural, and social importance of the information profession:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSC557</li> <li>• LSC772 Marketing</li> </ul>	
<b>Goal #1 -</b> Are skilled in organizing, disseminating, managing and preserving information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSC551</li> <li>• Cataloging</li> <li>• Metadata</li> <li>• Collection Development; Preservation;</li> <li>• Digital Curation</li> <li>• (exit survey; alumni survey;</li> </ul>	2013 fall – 2014 spring

	employer survey)	
<b>Goal #4</b> - Are capable of serving information seekers in a global society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSC553</li> <li>• Use and Users</li> </ul>	
<b>Goal #5</b> - Appreciate education and service as integral to the role of the information professional in society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSC553</li> <li>• Information Literacy</li> </ul>	
<b>Goal #6</b> - Interpret and apply research results from library and information science and related fields	Comps rubric for writing trait	Every year
<b>Goal #8</b> - Are dedicated to professional growth, continuous learning, and applying new knowledge to improve information systems and services to meet the needs of information users in society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alumni survey</li> <li>• Employer survey</li> </ul>	2013

(Note: Comps data will be used for appropriate objectives based on rubric scores and content analysis)