GROWING LOCAL: {Partnering Libraries with Library Schools to Expand the Profession & Develop Professionals}

(Poster presented by Meagan Lacy and Andrea Copeland at ACRL 2013)

**problem:** There are over 50 residential, ALA-accredited library and information science programs in the United States and Canada—many on campuses with robust library systems. Despite their proximity, however, libraries and SLIS departments tend to operate separately. Rarely do they share their knowledge and expertise in intentional ways, and hardly ever do they collaborate on scholarly projects or research. How can academic librarians and LIS faculty work together to improve LIS education?

**solution:** Librarians and SLIS faculty at Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis addressed this problem by establishing the joint conference on Research, Scholarship, and Practice. Organized by librarians, SLIS faculty, and SLIS students, the conference provides students and librarians with the opportunity to formally present and discuss their research. Most importantly, the conference gives students an occasion—a reason—to combine theory with practice; they can apply their coursework in research methods in a real way. The submissions and peer-review process orients them to both the professional culture and professional expectations. By practicing their presentation skills in a relatively mild, non-threatening environment, students can begin their careers in librarianship with the advantage of having had this experience. Student attendees also benefit from the conference since they are exposed to experts in their field—not only librarians and faculty, but also nationally recognized guest speakers. Finally, the conference gives students, librarians, and faculty a chance to network and pursue collaborations. As a result, several mentoring relationships and scholarly collaborations have occurred—between students and librarians and between faculty and librarians.

**description:** The half-day conference is held in the spring (late March) and includes a keynote speech, two to four presentations, a poster session, a panel discussion, and lunch. Planning begins at least one year prior to the event. Keynote speakers must be selected in April and booked by early summer. The bulk of the organizing, however, takes place at the beginning of the semester—in late August, early September. Students and librarians who want to present must submit a 200-word abstract and 800-word paper including reference (initial data is fine). Poster submissions require a 200-word abstract as well. Librarians and LIS faculty select the presenters according to specified criteria in early February.
how to do it:

1. Find partners

The conference planning committee is comprised of three librarians (one of whom is the co-chair), two SLIS faculty (both of whom teach research methods in the department of Library & Information Science), and two to three LIS students. The IUPUI University Library’s Business Manager/Fiscal officer is also, in effect, a planning member since she handles our budget.

2. Find money

- Keynote speaker (honorarium and travel): $2,500
- Food (for 85 people): $1,500
- Swag: $300

The annual cost for the research conference is about $4,300. The conference was initially funded through an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) 21st Century Librarian Program Grant. It continues to receive funding through the IUPUI University Library, the IUPUI chapter of ALISS, Academic Libraries of Indiana (ALI), and ASIS&T.

3. Find spaces

The conference is held in the University Library’s auditorium (and therefore free of charge). The continental breakfast is held in the lobby. The poster session and lunch is held in a nearby meeting room. We expect about 85 registrants each year.

4. Find and confirm a keynote

At least one year prior to the conference, book the keynote speaker. You will not only increase your chances of getting the speaker of your choice, but doing so will also help you establish a conference theme, which in turn helps with marketing. For instance, our keynote speaker for the 2013 conference was Nancy Roderer, the Co-Director of a National Library of Medicine-funded post-doctoral training program in informatics at Johns Hopkins. This choice led to the decision to also host a panel discussion featuring information professionals on the topic of consumer health information: a data management librarian, a health sciences librarian, a professor of nursing and informatics, and a research informationist from the IUPUI medical library.

5. Create a website

At the beginning of the academic year, create a conference website. Include a conference description, the name of the keynote speaker and his or her bio, important deadlines, submission guidelines and submission forms (for both posters and presentations), registration forms, and organizers’ contact information. As the date of
the conference approaches, also provide the presenters’ names and their bios and the conference schedule.

Generally, our deadline for presentation and poster submissions is late January, and we notify presenters within two weeks of this date. Our deadline for registration is early March—enough time to coordinate with campus catering. We invite LIS students and librarians across Indiana to attend, but we cap registration at 100 participants.

You can view our conference site at: http://ulib.iupui.edu/SLISULconference

6. Market and target

To solicit presenters, the LIS faculty directly target students in their research methods courses. Students enrolled in research methods courses the prior semester are required, as a minimum, to submit a poster. University Library librarians invite their own librarians as well as librarians throughout the state through email listservs. Postcard mailings are also used to obtain librarian participation. ALISS calls for participation through its listserv and Facebook.

7. Finalize details

After the presenters and posters have been chosen, set a firm schedule (and post it to the conference website). Also:

- Coordinate catering—at least one month in advance. We offer a continental breakfast (pastries and fruit) and a lunch. During the poster session, we rearrange leftover breakfast items for attendees to snack on.
- Choose a conference emcee
- Coordinate keynote’s travel and hotel
- Create a conference program
- Fill swag bags (with swag, programs, evaluation forms, etc.)
- Find more student volunteers for conference day (to handle registration table, food)

8. Evaluate

Don’t forget to gather evaluations! Hold a post-conference meeting to review them and to outline changes for the next conference. Changes we have made as a result of evaluations: Better food, an expanded definition of “research” (to encourage, for example, historical research and not just qualitative and quantitative research methods), a panel discussion to identify current topics and practices in librarianship.