

INTRODUCTION

FOR THE PAST SEVENTY-ONE YEARS, the School of Library and Information Science (school) has played an important role supporting the mission of the University of Kentucky (university, UK). A land-grant, Carnegie Foundation designated Research I University, UK is the flagship institution of higher learning in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, with the primary mission of enhancing the quality of life of the state's citizens. The school has been an integral part of the university by providing excellence in library and information science education, research, and service. Through both its on-campus and distance-learning efforts, the school has provided graduate-level, professional training to students from a variety of backgrounds. The high caliber faculty has a demonstrated record of quality research productivity, innovative teaching, and service to the commonwealth. Moreover, faculty serve the profession nationally and internationally. The school continues to evolve to meet new challenges in information studies and librarianship, and it has been an important resource for individuals seeking to become contributing members of the information profession. The following *Program Presentation* reflects, in the context of the *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library & Information Studies*,¹ how the school has continued to respond effectively to an ever-changing professional and academic environment.

Background

In 1993, the College of Library and Information Science combined with the College of Communications to form the College of Communications and Information Studies (college).² The school director, Timothy Sineath, reports to the college dean, J. David Johnson. The primary instructional and administrative locations are at UK's main campus, in Lexington, where three new "smart" classrooms are now available to the school, the first phase of a project that, when completed, will bring together classrooms and administrative and faculty offices in renovated space.³ Other instructional sites include Northern Kentucky University and Louisville. Moreover, courses offered in non-traditional formats (e.g., via the World Wide Web, interactive television, or through other distance-learning technologies) are being developed to further meet the accessibility needs of our student population. To this end, the school council is planning to offer a distance-learning version of the program by 2005.⁴

The school offers three forms of the master's degree: the Master of Science in Library Science (MSLS) and the Master of Arts (MA), plans A and B. Most students elect the MSLS degree, which requires satisfactory completion of 36 credit hours and of the final written examination. The MA degree, plan A, requires satisfactory completion of 36 credit hours (a minimum of six hours of which must be in a cognate area), demonstration of a language competency, and a thesis which substitutes for six elective hours. Within the last two years, two students have completed the thesis option track, and two others are in the final stages. The MA, plan B, is the same as plan A, except six hours of advanced bibliography or technical services coursework may be substituted for the thesis.

¹ American Library Association, Committee on Accreditation, *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library & Information Studies*, 1992.

² The College of Communications comprised the Department of Communication and the School of Journalism and Telecommunications.

³ Information about the project is provided in the discussion of physical resources and facilities.

⁴ The school council comprises the faculty of the School of Library and Information Science.

Over the last seven years, enrollment in the master's program has ranged from 184 to 236, which either meets or exceeds what faculty has deemed optimal enrollment, 180-220. This year, enrollment is 236, the highest it has been during the seven years. Since 1996, the school has graduated approximately 75-100 students per year.

Faculty of the school have a strong record of scholarly achievement, quality teaching, and service to the community and profession. New faculty hires have allowed for enhanced coverage of such areas as school media and medical informatics, and senior faculty continue to play a major role in library and information science scholarship; for example, Dr. Lois Chan's continued high-profile involvement with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and Dr. Donald Case's 2003 American Society for Information Science and Technology, Best Information Science Book of the Year award. Also, faculty have developed strong interdisciplinary relationships with colleagues from other units in the college and across campus. Scholarly publications have grown out of collaborations with faculty in the Department of Communication, and several of our faculty are co-investigators on grants with communication, the College of Medicine, and Jefferson County, Kentucky, Public Schools. Drs. Case, Ling hwey Jeng, and James Andrews are members of the college graduate program, which offers a Ph.D. in Communications and Information Studies. As such, they advise doctoral students, serve on dissertation and thesis committees, serve on various graduate program committees, teach cross-listed courses, and serve as guest-lecturers in classes or for colloquia. School faculty demonstrate high quality teaching as well. Two of our faculty, Dr. Chan and Professor Joseph Miller, won the college's annual Outstanding Teacher Award in recent years. Moreover, teaching evaluations have been consistently above the college average. Faculty of the school also contribute greatly to the community and profession through numerous service activities, from serving on library advisory boards, to acting as the sole trainers of school media specialists in the state.

The challenges facing the school are not unlike like those being addressed in programs throughout the country. Despite fiscal, administrative, and academic barriers, the school has continually improved in quality and progressed towards achieving its mission. Recent achievements include completing phase one of its facilities renovation and specific plans for finalizing the facilities. Also, we have successfully hired new faculty and are adopting measures to increase compensation and improve retention of new scholars. In addition, we have increased access to the program through distance-learning initiatives. In general, the school continues to fulfill its important role in the state as the sole ALA-accredited program for library and information studies.

Process for Preparing the *Program Presentation*

Preparing for accreditation review has been a continual process for the past few years. A more formal review of the master's program began as early as fall 2002, during a faculty retreat that focused on curriculum review and reconsideration of the school mission statement. During the May 2003 meeting of the school council, the general structure of the accreditation review was discussed and a plan for developing a *Program Presentation* was presented. Faculty members were appointed to study teams generally defined by elements of the *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library & Information Studies*. During the summer, the director sent a letter to the members of the school advisory council, to advise them of the forthcoming review and to solicit their comments and suggestions.

At the first fall meeting of the school council, in August 2003, the standards and accreditation review were addressed again in greater detail, and a plan was devised to prepare the *Program Presentation*. A timeline was developed for completing and reviewing drafts of the various sections, and for preparing and reviewing final versions of the sections. Student and alumni members were identified for each study team. During September and October, members of each team collected data, and drafts were distributed and subsequently discussed in detail at weekly school council meetings.

Following discussion of a draft section at a school council meeting, the draft was revised to reflect agreed-upon changes, and the section was then forwarded to the *Program Presentation* editor, whose role it was to achieve consistent format. As the editor completed a section, it was made available to faculty for review, following which the editor made any required changes. On Friday, November 21, the draft *Program Presentation* was delivered to Dean David Johnson, for his review and comments. On Monday, December 1, Dean Johnson's comments were incorporated; the draft *Program Presentation* was duplicated and bound; and copies were sent to the Office for Accreditation, to External Review Panel Chair Hiram Davis, and to the nine members of the school's advisory council. On December 10 comments were received from a member of the advisory council. On December 18 Director Sineath participated in a conference call to discuss the draft *Program Presentation* with Office for Accreditation Director Ann O'Neill and ERP chair Davis. Revisions were then made to prepare the final *Program Presentation* for delivery early in February 2004.

