

Spring 2010

Accreditation or Certification

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PRISM

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COA announces accreditation actions

The Committee on Accreditation (COA) of the American Library Association (ALA) has announced accreditation actions taken at the 2010 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Boston.

Continued accreditation status was granted to the following programs:

- University of Alabama
- McGill University
- North Carolina Central University
- University of South Carolina
- Wayne State University

The next comprehensive review visit at each institution is scheduled to occur in 2016.

The following institutions have programs that will be visited in the spring 2010 academic term. The accreditation decisions will be made by the COA at its meeting at the 2010 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC.

- University of Michigan
- University of Rhode Island
- Southern Connecticut State University
- Texas Woman's University
- University of Toronto

The following institutions have programs that will be visited in the fall 2010 academic term. The accreditation decisions will be made by the COA at its meeting at the 2011 ALA Midwinter Meeting in San Diego.

- University at Albany, SUNY
- Clarion University of Pennsylvania
- Drexel University
- St. Catherine University
- Simmons College
- University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

ALA accreditation indicates that the program meets or exceeds the *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*, established by COA and adopted by ALA Council. The accreditation process involves rigorous, ongoing self-evaluation by the program and verification of evidence through an external review. COA evaluates each program for conformity to the *Standards*, which address mission, goals and objectives; curriculum; faculty; students; administration and financial support; and physical resources and facilities. The *Standards* can be found at www.ala.org/ala/educationcareers/education/accreditedprograms/standards/index.cfm.

A complete list of programs and degrees accredited by ALA can be found at www.ala.org/ala/educationcareers/education/accreditedprograms/directory/index.cfm. Individuals who would like more information about a particular program should contact the program.

The ALA COA is a leading force in accreditation, having evaluated educational programs to prepare librarians since 1924. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) recognizes ALA COA as the authority for assessing the quality of education offered by graduate programs in the field of library and information studies.

By Karen L. O'Brien, Director, ALA Office for Accreditation

Statistical reporting: summary of changes in ALA-accredited programs 2008-2009

The summary report of changes in ALA-accredited programs from fall 2008 to fall 2009 is now available at

<http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/accreditation/Statistical%20reports/ss2008v2009.pdf>, and it's good news, especially considering the troubled economic climate. The figures, extracted from reports submitted to the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) <<http://www.alise.org>>, show strong gains in enrollment, particularly minority students, with an increase of 278 compared to 81 in 2007-2008. Faculty numbers increased, as well as overall income. These strong gains should provide a strong platform to weather uncertainties ahead.

The University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies has applied for a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in partnership with ALISE and ALA. If awarded, the project would enable schools to prepare and submit the annual statistical questionnaire online and to generate standard and customized reports. Danny Wallace, EBSCO Chair in Library Services at the University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies, is Principal Investigator on the project. Dr. Wallace expects IMLS to announce in June whether or not it will fund the project.

COA continues consideration of policy norm regarding External Review Panel size

LIS program representatives (mostly deans, directors and chairs) at the ALISE 2010 Annual Conference in Boston followed up on an inquiry last year in Denver regarding how many visiting reviewers are really necessary. A recent shift in policy norm to six on-site reviewers rather than four has proven unpopular with some programs, especially with many budgets dwindling.

The published process (AP3,

http://www.ala.org/ala/educationcareers/education/accreditedprograms/standards/AP3SecondEdition_revised11-20-09.pdf) affords flexibility on how many reviewers are deployed. A program head may discuss the number of visiting panelists needed for a review with the Chair of the External Review Panel and the Director of the Office for Accreditation a year before the visit when submitting the Plan for the Program Presentation.

The number of panelists needed is determined by circumstances and the breadth of evidence, including the number of campus sites, student population, and number of faculty. Results of a web-based survey now being conducted of experienced external review panelists will provide some guidance.

While a show of hands in the previous year's meeting at ALISE in Denver showed a majority in favor of moving from six to three visiting panelists, what surfaced in subsequent conversations

with program representatives, COA, and Office staff was that panels of four as a norm might make better sense.

The way a four-person panel could play out is that three panelists would take primary responsibility for investigating compliance on two standards and secondary responsibility on two other standards. The chair, instead of taking on specific standards, would provide leadership by consulting with the program on the Program Presentation plan and draft, providing logistical expertise by scheduling review activities, and editorial guidance by compiling and formatting the ERP report.

Precandidate and Candidate programs

There are four programs seeking initial ALA accreditation. The Master of Library and Information Science program at the College of St. Catherine is in candidacy status with a visit this fall and a decision on Initial Accreditation status to be made at the 2011 ALA Midwinter Meeting in San Diego. The Library Information and Media Studies (LIMS) program at Chicago State University, the Master of Library Science program at East Carolina University, and the Master of Information Studies program at the University of Ottawa, Canada, are in precandidacy status.

Programs in precandidacy status report annually on progress to reach candidacy status, and are expected to be ready to enter the comprehensive review process within three years, although a one-time three-year extension may be granted (*Accreditation Process Policies and Procedures*, 2nd ed, I.7.3 (d)). The Office is in frequent contact with these programs, and COA keeps abreast of developments through review of annual progress reports.

Comment on the Standards

COA will conduct a web-based survey on the Standards in May 2010. The survey will be distributed to a variety of stakeholders. If you are not contacted directly by email to participate in the survey, please post your comments at the Standards comment collection website at <http://www.oa.ala.org/accreditation/>.

Ways we can connect in person

If you're in Washington, DC during the ALA 2010 Annual Conference this summer, don't miss the COA program on Sunday, June 27 from 4:00 – 5:30 at the Marriot Metro Center to hear from DC-area accreditors on their approaches to standards review and the use of competency statements.

The Office is offering a general reviewer training at Annual Conference on Friday, June 25, from 9:00am until noon, followed by an appeals process session from 2:00pm until 3:00pm. Please get in touch with Laura Dare, 312-280-2435 or ldare@ala.org, if you are interested in attending either session.

By Vicki L. Gregory, Chair, ALA Committee on Accreditation, and Professor, School of Library and Information Science, University of South Florida

Accreditation or certification?

Accreditation and certification can easily be confused. Broadly defined, accreditation is for the program while certification is for the individual. Back in my administrator days when I was hiring librarians, I remember how an applicant's work or research record might cause me to wonder what the LIS program from which they graduated had been doing or (mostly) not doing. Accreditation cannot ensure, nor is it intended to be a method of ensuring, that every student who graduates from an accredited program will be a great librarian or information professional.

ALA accreditation is intended to ensure that an LIS program exposes its students to what they need to know to be good librarians or information professionals and provides opportunities to develop those skills. Unfortunately, such exposure and opportunities do not necessarily mean that students absorb all the LIS values, attitudes, and skills that were introduced in their master's program. This ultimately affects their ability to navigate through today's tough job market to find a position commensurate with their skills and desires. To some degree this is unavoidable. Many of the characteristics that veteran librarians hope – and perhaps expect – to see in new librarians involve personality traits that do not necessarily result from coursework. A new MLIS graduate should know what the profession expects, but may or may not buy into those values, and their attitudes may or may not demonstrate the flexibility, innovation, and leadership that hiring managers desire.

Certification of individuals, as is the case for K-12 school librarians, would be an approach to ensure that every person claiming to be a professional librarian is competent. As a profession, however, we have eschewed this approach and chosen accreditation of programs rather than certification of our beginning librarians. Many professions (such as law, accounting and medicine) utilize the comprehensive individual testing approach leading to professional certification and eligibility to practice the profession, with graduation from an accredited program a prerequisite for taking the examination. In the case of librarianship, accreditation assumes a more central role.

The Committee on Accreditation is presenting another program in a series to help you better understand the issues behind accreditation. The program will be held at ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., on Sunday, June 27, 4:00pm – 5:30pm, location to be determined. The program will feature two accreditors from outside the LIS discipline, who will discuss accreditation and how it is carried out in their respective fields. Laura Rasar King, Executive Director of the Council on Education for Public Health, will discuss their more prescriptive standards introduced in 2005. Crystal Calarusse, Academic Director of the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and

Administration, will discuss that organization's new 2009 Standards, which are somewhat similar to those utilized by COA with respect to LIS programs. COA anticipates that this discussion will be of interest and assistance to the LIS profession and of benefit to the members of COA as they develop a new, updated set of standards. Please come and participate in the discussion.

Spotlight on Process and Policy: Formation of External Review Panels

By Laura Dare, Assistant Director, ALA Office for Accreditation

In each issue of *Prism*, this column focuses on an aspect of process or policy of ALA accreditation. This edition's column explores how panelists are selected and approved for specific reviews. We hope you find it informative. If you have an idea for a future column, please send it to Laura Dare, ldare@ala.org.

Forming an External Review Panel (ERP) is one of the most important – and challenging – aspects of coordinating the comprehensive review. Because accreditation is a peer-review process, the panel as a whole must have the experience and expertise to understand the context of the program. This column will explain in more detail how panelists are selected for specific reviews.

Approximately 18 months before the review visit, the Office for Accreditation begins the panel formation process. By that time, the ERP Chair has been selected and has already been working with the program on the development of the Program Presentation.

We start by looking closely at the program: the administrative structure, areas of academic specialization, how the program is delivered, etc. For example, a primarily distance-education program with a medical informatics specialization at a large, public university would have different review needs from a face-to-face program with a specialization in archives at a small, private institution. We also consider any special areas of focus that the program has identified.

The typical panel has six members: three LIS faculty and three practitioners of library or information science. The LIS faculty members bring knowledge of higher education and experience in implementing the Standards. The practitioners bring knowledge of professional practice and field experience – they are the people who employ graduates and have first-hand knowledge of what those graduates should know and be able to do. The diversity of the panel is another consideration.

We strive to place one – and only one – new (inexperienced) person on each panel. It is critical to expand the pool of experienced reviewers, but inexperienced panelists, though trained, generally require extra mentoring by the ERP Chair.

Next, we consider areas of expertise. When people apply to serve as an ERP, they self-select areas of specialization and experience from a list of 28 choices. We review those areas as well as the résumés and vitae on file to find people who would be best qualified to evaluate the program.

Finally, we look at panelist evaluations from previous reviews. At the conclusion of a review, panelists evaluate each other in such areas as knowledge of the Standards, higher education, and LIS issues; productive work with the review team; productive interaction on site with program representatives (faculty, administration, students, alumni, employers); analytical and writing skills; and completion of tasks. The LIS program undergoing review is also asked to evaluate the work of the panel.

What precludes someone from serving on a panel? We eliminate from consideration people with known conflicts of interest with either the institution or the program faculty, people from the nearby geographic area or from “competing” programs, and people who have not participated in an ERP training session. People who participated in a previous review of the program are also excluded.

So, how do we keep track of all this information? We have a database of reviewers that has quite a bit of information on each person: contact information, areas of expertise, panel experience and training, ethnicity, and relevant employment history. There are approximately 280 people in the ERP pool, but at any given time at least 60 are identified as “inactive,” for a number of reasons.

Once the initial panel has been selected, the Office proposes it to COA for approval. Later in the process, the program reviews the prospective panel for any conflicts of interest, and then people are invited to serve on the panel. Building a panel is a bit like constructing a house of cards - at any point in the process, the house can collapse if one card, or in this case – person, is removed. With approval or acceptance needed from so many people, we often need to find replacements during the approval process.

We are always seeking new reviewers. Many people have told us that serving on a review panel is one of the most rewarding professional development activities of their career. LIS faculty have told us that ERP experience is especially helpful when it comes time for their own comprehensive review. If you are interested in being a member of the ERP pool or know someone you’d like to recommend, please refer to the External Review Panelist qualifications and application form

(<http://www.ala.org/ala/educationcareers/education/accreditedprograms/resourcesforerp/ERPform.cfm>) and plan to attend the training session at the 2010 Annual Conference (see the News and Announcements section below for details).



News and Announcements

ALA-accredited registered trademark

The process for trade marking the “ALA-accredited” logo has been completed and the logo is now a federally registered trademark. It may look like a minor difference (old = ™, new = ®), but failure to use the ® symbol can affect our right to recover damages for infringement. If you are using the logo on any web pages, brochures, or other products, please ask us for a new kit, which has the logo in several different formats along with guidelines for use. All ALA-accredited programs are encouraged to use the logo. Please send requests to Kerri Price, kprice@ala.org.

External Review Panel training at 2010 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC

Date: Friday, June 25, 2010

Time: 9:00am – 12noon

Location: To be determined – an announcement with location information will be sent to members of the ERP pool as soon as available.

Current and potential External Review Panel (ERP) pool members are invited to attend a basic training on the role and responsibilities of the ERP in the ALA accreditation process. Attending training is a prerequisite to participating in a comprehensive review.

Attendees will learn about the review process, the relationship of the ERP to the Committee on Accreditation (COA), and the *Standards for Accreditation*. Standard V: Administration and Financial Support will be the special focus at this session.

Please RSVP to Laura Dare, ldare@ala.org, and include “ERP Training” in the subject line.

ALA Accreditation Appeal Process training at 2010 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC

Date: Friday, June 25, 2010

Time: 2:00pm – 3:00pm

Location: To be determined – an announcement with location information will be sent to members of the ERP pool as soon as available.

Experienced External Review Panelists (two or more on-site visits) are invited to attend training on the accreditation appeal process and policy. People who complete this training will be eligible to serve on an Appeal Review Committee. This training is also useful to people serving on review panels where the accreditation decision could result in an appeal (initial accreditation review or review of program on conditional status).

Please RSVP to Laura Dare, ldare@ala.org, and include “ERP Appeal Process Training” in the subject line.

**Committee on Accreditation program at the 2010 ALA Annual Conference:
Accreditor Perspectives on Standards Development**

Date: Sunday, June 27, 2010

Time: 4:00pm – 5:30pm

Location: To be determined

The COA will moderate a panel discussion with accreditors of the professional degrees in Public Health and in Public Affairs and Administration, who will offer their perspectives on standards review and the role of competency statements.

Standards review comment collection

As part of its charge to develop and formulate standards of education for library and information studies, the COA reviews the *Standards for Accreditation* on an ongoing basis. Part of this five-year review process entails gathering comments from stakeholders. The COA continues to solicit comment via the Standards Review comment collection site, <http://www.oa.ala.org/accreditation/>. We encourage you to read previously posted comments and contribute your own.

Survey of experienced External Review Panelists regarding panel size

Do you think an external review panel could function as effectively with fewer members? Do you think the panel's work could be accomplished in the same amount of time? Would you be willing to serve on a four-member panel?

The Office for Accreditation is conducting a brief opinion survey of experienced panelists who completed service on a review panel between 2006 and now. Survey instructions were emailed on April 6. If you served during this time period but did not get the email, please contact Laura Dare (ldare@ala.org). Results will be shared with the COA for its consideration. Your comments are very much appreciated. The survey will be active until April 30.

New External Review Panelists sought

The Office for Accreditation seeks experienced library and information professionals to participate in the accreditation process as External Review Panelists. We are particularly in need of librarians and educators with specializations and experience in the following areas:

- Archives and records management
- School library media
- Public librarianship
- Information science
- Information technology
- LIS graduate program administration
- Service to diverse populations

- French language skills
- Spanish language skills

Find out more about what's involved in serving on an External Review Panel at http://www.ala.org/ala/educationcareers/education/accreditedprograms/resourcesforerp/ERP_service_info.cfm. If you are interested and meet the minimum qualifications, please complete the External Review Panel Member Information Form (available at http://www.ala.org/ala/educationcareers/education/accreditedprograms/resourcesforerp/ERP_form.cfm) and plan to attend the training session in June at the 2010 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC.

If you know someone who might be interested in serving as an External Review Panelist, please encourage him/her to apply or send a recommendation to Laura Dare, ldare@ala.org.

NCATE/AASL program review training at the 2010 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC

Date: Friday, June 25, 2010

Time: 1:00pm – 4:00pm

Location: To be determined

New and experienced reviewers are invited to this session featuring Margie Crutchfield, Associate Vice President for Program Reviews at NCATE. Reviewers will learn about the NCATE process, Standards review, and appropriate assessments. Attendees will study a sample report and participate in a review exercise. Please RSVP to Laura Dare, ldare@ala.org.

New reviewers can find out more about the AASL/NCATE program review process at <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aasleducation/schoollibrarymed/informationprogram.cfm>.

NCATE/AASL: Update and comment collection on the draft revised ALA/AASL Standards for School Librarian Preparation at the 2010 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, DC

Date: Saturday, June 26, 2010

Time: 12:00pm-1:00pm

Location: To be determined

Plan to attend this open session to learn about the proposed revised *ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Programs for School Librarian Preparation*. The draft revised standards will be submitted for approval to the NCATE Specialty Area Studies Board in October 2010. Participants will receive a progress update on the revision process and will have an opportunity to comment on the draft revised Standards.

Comment collection on the draft revised *ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Programs for School Librarian Preparation*

As part of the process for revising the Standards, the AASL/NCATE Coordinating Committee seeks comment from a wide range of constituents, including school librarians and educators at school librarianship programs. Links to the draft Standards, the comment survey, and more information about AASL/NCATE recognition and the Standards approval process can be found at <http://www.ala.org/aasl/NCATEstandards>. Comments will be collected until August 1, 2010.

External Review Panelists Acknowledged

External review panelists contribute substantial time and energy to the accreditation process to assure quality in LIS education. We extend our appreciation to the following panelists who served during the fall 2009 academic term.

Chairs

- Andrew Dillon, University of Texas at Austin
- Olivia Frost, University of Michigan
- Sydney Pierce, Catholic University of America
- Betty J. Turock, Rutgers University
- Blanche Woolls, San Jose State University

Panelists

- Rosann Bazirjian, University of North Carolina – Greensboro
- William Caynon, Kent State University
- H. Frank Cervone, Purdue University Calumet
- Michele Cloonan, Simmons College
- Diane Covington, Carnegie Mellon University
- Ann Curry, University of Alberta
- Jean Donham, University of Northern Iowa
- Mirah J. Dow, Emporia State University
- Jennifer Jung Gallant, Elyria Public Library System
- Tula Giannini, Pratt Institute
- Gabriel Gomez, Chicago State University
- Steven H. Hagstrom, Tarrant County College
- Mary E. Helms, University of Nebraska Medical Center
- Dale McNeill, Queens Library
- Anne C. Moore, University of South Dakota
- C. Allen Nichols, Wadsworth Public Library
- Scott Nicholson, Syracuse University
- Jennifer Paustenbaugh, Oklahoma State University
- Patricia Promis, University of Arizona

- Sheri Ross, St. Catherine University
- Linda Smith, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- Delmus E. Williams, University of Akron
- Arthuree R. McLaughlin Wright, Howard University Libraries
- Joyce C. Wright, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

AASL/NCATE Recognition News

Fall 2009 AASL recognition decisions

The following programs, which are part of NCATE-accredited education units, were nationally recognized as meeting the *ALA/AASL Standards for Initial Programs for School Library Media Specialist Preparation*.

- Northern Illinois University, Library Information Specialist
- University of Delaware, School Library Media

Thanks to the following program reviewers and auditors who served during the fall 2009 semester:

- Audrey P. Church
- Gail Dickinson
- Melissa Gardner
- Dorothy Elizabeth Haynes
- Diane Kester
- Johan Koren
- Eloise M. Long
- Babara Jo Ray
- Andre Maria Taylor