

## **SI 643: Professional Practice in Libraries and Information Centers**

**Winter 2006—3 credits**

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### **Course Description**

SI 643 builds on the conceptual framework of information needs and the use of information provided in SI 501. In that course the focus is on techniques that information professionals use to understand the needs of people who employ a wide variety of information systems. The emphasis here is on professional practice occurring both in institutional settings (including public, academic, special, and school libraries and information centers) and directly between information professionals and clients (such as information brokers).

SI 643 prepares students for need-based, client-centered professional practice in a variety of information environments in a period of change. Professional practice consists of a variety of functions and practices which increase client access to information and knowledge. It is based both on an understanding of user information constructs and on knowledge of information systems and services.

Martha Kyrillidou, Director, ARL Statistics and Measurement Program states: "The need to create the new library, to reinvent or reconceptualize, is real and many are engaged in trying to do just that. Possible models to emulate are available by looking either backward, learning from the historical perspective, or looking forward, learning from newly gained insights into the operation of future libraries." Martha Kyrillidou. "From input and output, etc." JAL, 2002 (v.28):42-46.

Louise Blalock, the director of Hartford Public Library, states that "today's challenge is to *reinvent the library* to respond to community needs and aspirations, and yet to retain the core values of intellectual freedom, free and equitable access, and trust and mutual respect. The social change we are experiencing is as powerful as the technological change, and equally a driving force in the need to reinvent ourselves. *How do we do that? By getting as close to the community as we can, paying attention to what they say, and participating in community organizations: listening, learning, linking.*"

SI 643 asks "What is the core of professional practice? How can information professionals anticipate and shape outcomes?" Professional practice can effectively build on theoretical frameworks, relevant research, with approaches and strategies designed to increase access to information and knowledge.

### **Course Objectives**

SI 643 participants will:

- Examine the roles and problems undertaken by librarians as information professionals. In the process we will look at knowledge domains, theoretical

frameworks, competencies, the challenges faced by professionals who practice in physical and virtual environments.

- Explore the issues and problems encountered by information professionals who seek to increase access to information.
- Consider factors that influence professional practice.
- Discuss professional approaches that meet changing needs.
- Explore professional practice across different environments and a variety of uses of information, becoming familiar with a range of strategies that can be used to increase people's access to information.
- Gain skills in communicating professionally.
- Consider the influence of ethics and values on professional practice.

### Course Methods:

- Lectures, discussion of strategies and approaches. Written and oral presentation of ideas.
- Required readings and participation in class discussion,
- Leadership of class discussions.
- Student research paper and presentation.

University Course Reserves; Digital and Print. A group of core readings are from: "Research Questions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." *Library Trends*. Spring 2003. Plus additional print and digital materials on course reserve. Most of these articles are in digital form.

### Course Requirements:

#### 1. Participation

15%

This means active, relevant participation in class discussions based on preparation by reading all assigned articles and making meaningful comments as these articles are discussed. **You must read and be able to discuss all articles assigned for a particular week.**

#### 2. Job Analysis and Competencies Paper: DUE JAN 27

20%

This paper should be based on **an examination of job ads, relevant articles, websites, and appropriate competency statements.** It is an initial look at the problems librarians undertake as information professionals.

- Compare ads for comparable positions in several different libraries or information environments. **Choose jobs that require some experience. Do not choose entry level jobs. Do not choose library director positions.** One of the aims is to determine the competencies required of experienced librarians. Examine at least **four detailed ads** for a particular type of job (such as an information literacy librarian in a college library, outreach librarian in a public library, medical informationist, school library media specialist, etc.) in such journals as *Library Journal* or one of the library job websites. Include the job ads as an appendix to your paper.

(job site example)

<http://www.ala.org/ala/education/empopps/careerleadsb/hotjobsonline/hotjobsonline.htm>

- To give you a sense of the job area you are exploring: **Read at least 3 articles** that touch on: a) this particular environment, b) the professionals who work in it and the problems they seek to solve as well as the knowledge, skills needed to do this job. Incorporate your reading into the paper and the class discussion.
- Incorporate as appropriate professional association or other competency statements that have been developed for this job type. Most can be found with a Google search.

Armed with knowledge from the ads, the background articles, and any relevant competency statements, *write an analysis of the job area*. This report should include:

- the demands and expectations of this particular information environment
- the problems this particular type of information professional focuses on (e.g., specific focus of the job),
- the kinds of activities that the librarian would be likely to carry out
- relevant information about the clientele or constituency
- Address the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes needed for this job (competencies), Indicate the competencies needed for this type of job incorporating the job ads and appropriate articles. Incorporate support from relevant competency statements. Is there agreement and/or disjunct between what the ads say they want and the relevant competency statement(s)?
- Discuss the values implicitly or explicitly expressed in the job ads and the articles.
- Note and discuss salary and job conditions. (continues on next page)

**Cite your resources**, e.g., articles, websites, ads etc. used in your research in the text. Include a resource list. Include copies of the ads as an appendix to your six page (or so) report.

Paper due Jan 26. We will discuss it in class. Turn it in at the end of class after our discussion.

### **3. Seminar leadership**

25%

As part of a three person team you will make a short presentation and lead a discussion on the readings two to three times during the semester. When you sign up for these leadership responsibilities, please print your name on the sign-up sheet and include your email so that you and your group can set up a planning time outside of class.

Read all the articles (as usual). Your team of 3 will discuss a particular article or two articles as marked within the framework of the topic of the week and the other articles. Each person on the 3 person seminar leadership team will, *in addition, select and introduce to the class a related article*—either one that you have carefully chosen from the bibliography attached to the assigned article or one that you have carefully chosen on the topic from a database search. Part of your seminar leadership will be to engage the class in relevant discussion of & interaction with the articles of the day, in particular the article you have chosen to lead.

Each seminar leader will prepare a one page commentary on his/her chosen article, providing full bibliographic information about the article (and your name) at the top and distribute it to the class—one for me as well. You should introduce this article to the class, indicating its contributions to the topic and, as appropriate, more broadly. There are approximately 30 students in the class.

In addition, submit your article comment electronically. Drop it in the Inbox of the 643 Folder on the "Courses" server. Naming convention: your last name and the week. Durance\_wk1. Each group of three will have approximately 20 minutes for their presentation. To prepare for your leadership session you and the other two leaders should plan your 30 minutes ahead of time so be sure to plan to meet sometime during the week before your leadership presentation. Make sure when you make your presentations that *each member* of the group is introduced.

**4. Unobtrusive observations** DUE Feb 23 15%

Conduct two unobtrusive observations of a reference interaction—an in-person reference question and a digital e-reference question. *Complete and return data collection instruments in rough form and turn them in with your analytical paper in digital format.* For digital reference observation include transcripts/email.

**ANALYTICAL PAPER:** Provide a two-three page single spaced analytical paper. Comment on key success-failure factors. Compare interactions. Relate observation experience components to course readings and relevant articles. Include the instrument that you filled out as well as a short bibliography. Submit your paper electronically. Naming convention last name and UO, e.g. durance\_UO

**5. Synthesis paper and formal presentation** 25%

This is an analytical, reflective paper that addresses one or more professional practice problems or issues. Clearly state the problem you are addressing in the opening paragraph. Use headings to set off different topics. This is considered a formal paper. It requires well considered arguments, should be based on a well conducted literature review and include a strong analysis of the literature cited. To be accompanied by an oral presentation of highlights and a handout that in some way distills your findings. DUE April 6.

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