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Recruiting and preparing the next generation of school library

The specific purposes of this project were to determine the status of: (1) school library media preparation programs in colleges and universities in the United States; (2) distance education opportunities for prospective SLMSs; (3) internships in school library media preparation programs; and (4) activities school library media preparation programs and state education agencies are undertaking to recruit SLMSs. This research updates part of Harada's 1993 research that sought to discover the status of school library media preparation programs in ALA accredited schools and extends the focus to include programs that prepare SLMSs outside ALA accredited schools (Harada 1996).

Method

The first activity of the project was development of a database of preparation programs for SLMSs. The aim was to include all programs (both ALA accredited and non-ALA accredited) in the United States that prepare SLMSs for K-12 schools either through degree or certification only programs. (ALA accredited programs are NCATE approved through an agreement between the two organizations. A list of programs that are currently approved by NCATE as a result of participation in the AASL/NCATE process is available on the [AASL Web site](#).) This study was not limited to ALA and NCATE accredited programs because a number of ALA-accredited programs are located in colleges or universities that are either not NCATE approved or do not choose to participate in the NCATE approval process.

ALA's Library and Information Studies: Directory of Institutions Offering Accredited Master Programs (ALA 1999) was used to identify ALA accredited programs. Identification of non-ALA-accredited programs was more difficult; there is no agency or institution that maintains a current list of such programs. A number of sources were used to compile the initial database of programs not accredited by the ALA, including the American Library Directory 1994-2000 (ALA 1999) list of library preparation programs and training courses; a list of school library media preparation programs compiled by Marilyn Shontz (1998), who headed the AASL/NCATE review process from its inception until 1998 (1999); a list of AASL/NCATE-accredited programs obtained from Julie Walker (1999), executive director of AASL; and a list of NCATE-accredited institutions that offer undergraduate programs in school library media obtained from NCATE (Thomas 1999) were used to compile the initial database of programs not accredited by the ALA.

An item at the end of the questionnaire asked respondents to list the names of all other institutions in their state that currently prepare SLMSs. As questionnaires were received, cross checks were conducted to ensure that programs listed in response to this item were included in the database. If a program was not in the database, it was added and a questionnaire was immediately sent to that college or university.

*One of the 32 ALA-accredited respondents did not answer this question

Respondents from non-ALA-accredited programs were asked if the education unit in their college or university was accredited NCATE. Sixty-eight respondents (almost 81 percent) indicated that their education units were accredited by NCATE and sixteen respondents (19 percent) indicated that the education units at their institutions were not NCATE-accredited. ALA and NCATE have a reciprocal agreement that extends NCATE accreditation to those schools that are accredited by ALA.

Respondents were asked to indicate their total number of faculty by checking off ranges (e.g., fewer than five, five to ten, etc.). None of the respondents reported fewer than five or more than twenty-five full-time faculty. ALA-accredited schools were then asked to report the number of full-time faculty concentrating in school library media courses (see table 2). The schools reported no full-time faculty in the school library media area. Of those schools, one has hired a full-time faculty member since this survey was completed. There were differences in how this question was interpreted. One respondent who did not answer the question commented that their program was fully integrated. Another respondent, who reported "none," made the same comment. Yet another reported over five faculty specializing in school library media with the explanation that the program was integrated. It can be safely assumed that in most ALA-accredited programs students preparing to become SLMSs are enrolled in courses with students who are preparing for other career paths and that faculty with a background and interest in school librarianship teach core and required or other courses taken by school library-media students. Twenty-four of the thirty-two ALA-accredited schools (75 percent) responding to the survey reported one or two faculty members whose area of specialization is school library media.

Table 2. Number of Full-time Faculty

Table 3. Use of Adjunct or Part-time Faculty to Teach SLM courses in ALA Accredited Schools (N=31)*

Total Faculty	No	Occasionally	Once a Year	Every Term
Fewer than 5	--	--	--	--
5-10	2	2	5	4
11-15	1	4	--	6
16-20	--	--	2	3
21-25	--	2	--	--
More than 25	--	--	--	--

*One of the 32 ALA accredited respondents did not answer this question

Of the eightyfour non-ALA -accredited programs that responded to the survey, sixty (82.1

72 Non-ALA-Accredited Respondents

Table 8. Visits to Interns by Faculty (N=100)

	ALA -Accredited	Non-ALA -Accredited
None	6	6
1 Visit	11	

completed through distance education courses. Respondents from twenty (65.6 percent) ALA-accredited schools and forty (52.4 percent) non-ALA-accredited programs indicated that at least some courses were available through distance education options (see table 9)

Table 9. Percentage of SLMS Preparation Program Available through Distance Education (N=65)

	ALA -Accredited	Non-ALA -Accredited
Less than 10%	1	

Other

4

7

Single-purpose preparation programs for SLMS are often small programs with only one or two faculty members who must cover as many as four courses each semester. To find out if such programs might be interested in leasing the rights to use courses through distance education technologies from ALA-accredited schools or NCATE-accredited programs, both versions of the survey included a question asking respondents about this possibility. Of the thirty ALA-accredited respondents, seven (21.9 percent) answered "yes," six (18.7 percent) answered "no," and nineteen (59.3 percent) answered "don't know." Of the eighty-four non-ALA-accredited programs responding, twenty-four (28.5 percent) answered "yes," twenty-nine (34 percent) answered "no," and thirty-one (36.9 percent) answered "don't know." Another question asked respondents who answered that they would consider leasing courses which topics they were most interested in securing.

respondents (from both ALA and non-ALA-accredited programs) to these surveys reported that at least part of their school media certification program was available through distance education offerings. Eight ALA-accredited programs and eleven non-ALA-accredited programs indicate that the entire school library media preparation program at their institution was available through distance education. Such opportunities have the potential to make qualification for certification as a SLMS a possibility for individuals who live in rural areas of the country without preparation programs nearby and who are unable to relocate. Even though more distance education opportunities are becoming available, many require a summer residency or periodic trips to campus for class sessions. This can prove a hardship for those holding demanding jobs or with family obligations.

The overwhelming majority of both ALA and non-ALA-accredited respondents also indicated that an internship is a requirement of their school library media programs. Preparation programs will face challenges in identifying best practice sites for their students who may be located in other states and in arranging faculty supervision of such internships. Designing meaningful field experiences for part-time students who are working full-time presents another set of challenges.

Recruitment to the profession is a concern on national, state, and local levels. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than a quarter of librarians who hold a master's degree will reach the age of sixty-five by 2009. Shortages loom for public, academic, and school libraries over the next several years. ALA President John W. Berry reports that we are facing a "recruitment crisis" (2002, 7). Evidence of the important connection between school libraries and student achievement (Library Research Service 2002) and the national visibility of school libraries (Institute of Museum and Library Studies 2002) highlight the need for state departments of education, school districts, professional associations, and school media preparation programs to join hands in finding ways to recruit and educate the next generation of SLMSs.

Especially important will be identifying, recruiting, and preparing individuals who are willing to work in traditionally underserved areas. Several projects funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Studies (IMLS) hold promise as possible models. For example, the University of Maryland and the District of Columbia Public Schools received an IMLS grant in 2003 to prepare teachers and paraprofessionals as SLMSs in the District of Columbia (University of Maryland 2003). Participants will retain their current employment positions, enroll in the University of Maryland's College of Information Studies as part-time students, and be supported in a special mentoring program. A similar program at the University of South Florida will target students who are committed to working as SLMSs in Florida's underserved and ethnically diverse communities (University of South Florida 2003). These projects, along with a number of projects funded by IMLS in previous years, are being coordinated together.

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Appendix A. Survey Sent to ALA -Accredited Programs

Instructions: Please answer the questions below by placing an X in the appropriate space and/or write out your responses where requested. If you have anything else you would like to add, you may include an additional page with those comments or explanations. Please return this questionnaire by Friday, November 19. Thank you very much for your help.

1. How many fulltime equivalent (FTE) students are currently enrolled in your master's degree program in library and information science?

- less than 50
- 51–100
- 101–150
- 151–200
- 201–250
- 251–300
- more than 300

2. What proportion are fulltime students? (Count students taking three or more courses per semester as fulltime students.)

- less than 10%
- 10–25%
- 26–50%
- 51–75%
- 76–100%

3. How many students graduated with a master's degree in library and information science from your program during the 1998-1999 academic year? (Include summer 1999 graduates.)

- less than 25
- 26–50
- 51–75
- 76–100
- more than 100

4. How many of the students who graduated in the 1998 academic year are now employed or are seeking employment as school library media specialists? (Please estimate if exact figures are not available.)

- none
- less than 10%
- 10–25%
- 26–50%
- 51–75%

76–100%

5. How many fulltime faculty members do you have?

- less than 5
 5–10
 11–15
 16–20
 21–25
 more than 25

6. Of your fulltime faculty members, how many teach primarily courses for prospective school library media specialists?

- none*
 1
 2
 3
 4
 5
 more than 5

*If NONE, please explain: _____

7. Do you use adjunct faculty or parttime faculty to teach courses for prospective school library media specialists?

- no
 yes, occasionally
 yes, once a year
 yes, every term

8. Would you consider leasing the rights to use courses via distance education or from other ALA-accredited institutions for your school media preparation program?

- yes
 no
 dont know

If YES, in what areas would you be interested? Check all that apply.

- SLM program administration
 children's/YA materials
 technology
 information literacy

curriculum integration
 other _____

9. Do you offer a concentration or specialization in school librarianship?

yes
 no

10. If YES to item 9, does this lead to state certification or license?

yes
 no

If NO to item 9, please skip to item 12.

11. Can a student who does not hold a valid teaching certificate qualify for initial certification as a school media specialist at your institution?

14a. Has your unit undertaken activities to recruit prospective library media specialists into the profession?

- yes
 no

If YES, please describe: _____

14b. Has the department of education in your state, individual school districts, or library professional organizations undertaken activities to recruit prospective library media specialists

- yes
 no
 dont know

If YES, please describe: _____

15. Do you deliver any of your courses required for school media certification a distance education?

- yes
 no

16. If YES to item 15, how are distance education courses delivered? Check all that apply.

- faculty travel to distance site
 two-way video and audio
 oneway video, twoway audio
 Internet
 other _____

If NO to item 15, skip to item 18.

17. Approximately what percentage of courses required for school media certification are students able to complete through your distance education program?

- 10%
 25%
 50%
 75%
 100%

18. Are students working toward school media certification required to complete an internship? (For purposes of this survey, an internship is defined as field experience under the sup

If YES, in what areas would you be interested? Check all that apply.

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13. Approximately what percentage of courses required for school media certification are students able to complete through your district education program?

- 10%
 25%
 50%
 75%
 100%

14. Are students working toward school media certification required to complete an internship? (For purposes of this survey, an internship is defined as field experience under the supervision of a professional.)

- yes
 no

If NO to item 14, please skip to item 20.

15. How many on-site hours of work are required?

- less than 50 hours
 50–60 hours
 61–70 hours
 71–80 hours
 81–90 hours
 91–100 hours
 101–150 hours
 151–200 hours
 over 200 hours

16. Are there any exceptions made for students already working as library media specialists on temporary or out-of-field permits?

- yes
 no

If YES, please explain _____

17. Do you have part-time students who have full-time jobs (including teachers) working toward school media certification?

- yes
 no

18. If YES to item 17, please explain how such students complete an internship?

19. How many times does the college or university faculty make visits to students enrolled in internships?

- no visits
- one visit
- two visits
- three or more visits

20. Is the education unit at your college or university accredited by NCATE?

- yes
- no
- dont know

21. Please list the names of other institutions in your state that offer school media certification programs:

22. Name of person completing this survey: _____

Position: _____

(Your name is requested for recording purposes only. All responses will be kept anonymous.)

23. Would you be willing to discuss this further in a phone interview?

- yes
- no

Phone number: _____

Please mail the completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided. Thank you for your assistance with this project.

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School Library Media Research (ISSN: 15234320) is the successor to School Library Media Quarterly Online and the predecessor School Library Research, an official journal of the American Association of School Librarians. The purpose of School Library Media Research is to promote and publish high quality original research concerning the management, implementation, and evaluation of school library programs. The journal also emphasizes research on instructional theory, teaching methods, and critical issues relevant to the school library profession. Visit the [website](#) for more information.

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