Designing Future Library Leaders

Statement of Need

The Syracuse University School of Information Studies and the University of Washington Information School requests $86,169 from the Institute of Museum and Library services to convene a year-long National Forum on design thinking and methods in master's level library education programs. Master's level library education prepares students to be not just practicing librarians, but future leaders in the library world. In the 21st century, these future leaders require new skill sets. A recent report on the future of MLIS education notes an increasing need to foster graduates that are collaborative, creative, socially innovative, flexible, and adaptable problem solvers—characteristics which are demonstrated by people with backgrounds in design.[1] The Aspen Institute's recent report on the future of public libraries emphasizes the need for libraries to foster new organizational cultures that emphasize innovation, calling out design thinking as an integral part of this paradigm shift.[2] Incorporating design thinking into master's level library education, as called out by IMLS's Community Anchors project category, is critical in bridging connections between LIS education and these new models of 21st century librarianship, a key component of advancing learning in libraries.[3]

Embracing design methods and ways of thinking in librarianship may help address some of these issues and position libraries and librarians in strong roles in the 21st century information landscape. Yet explicit integration of design thinking and methods appears to be a curiously absent topic in master's level library education. Design is conspicuously absent from textbooks on research methods for librarians, absent even from recent publications. When design is discussed in the context of librarianship, it is often relegated to architecture and space planning. Tomorrow's library leaders need more than this limited perspective. They need explicit education in design thinking and methods. How can master's level library education fill this void?

Performance Goals and Objectives

We seek to understand the current state of design thinking and methods in master's level library education. The project focuses on the following goals: 1) identifying gaps in existing MLIS curricula; 2) exploring possible approaches to design in master's level library education, and 3) offering concrete, actionable recommendations for incorporating design into master's level library education.

Project Design

To achieve the above goals, we propose a national forum on design thinking and methods in master's level library education organized by Syracuse University and hosted by the University of Washington in Seattle. This forum brings together expert library educators, design educators and professionals, and library employers to

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[1] Bertot, J.C., Sarin, L.C. and Percell, J. (2015). "Re-Envisioning the MLS: Findings, Issues, and Considerations." College of Information Studies, University of Maryland College Park. http://mls.umd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/ReEnvisioningFinalReport.pdf

[2] Garmer, A. K. (2016). "Libraries in the Exponential Age: Moving from the Edge of Innovation to the Center of Community." The Aspen Institute, Washington D.C. http://csreports.aspeninstitute.org/documents/Libraries_Exponential_Age.pdf

[3] Hill, C., Proffitt, M., and Streams, S. (2015). "IMLS Focus: Learning in Libraries." Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri. https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/imlsfocuslearninginlibrariesfinalreport.pdf

discuss what elements are necessary to incorporate design into MLIS curricula. This forum will have three major phases, each reflecting one of the project goals:

1) A **field scan** across all ALA-accredited programs. This review of the contemporary landscape of master's level library education will reveal the ways in which current curricula align with or diverge from concepts inherent to design thinking and methods. The results of the scan will offer an understanding of the current state of the field. They will also help identify potential forum participants and serve as a springboard for suggestions and recommendations as to how design topics might best be incorporated in master's degree programs in librarianship.

2) A **national forum** on design in master's level library education. The forum will include 12-15 participants comprised of educators from ALA-accredited programs and design schools, library employers, and design professionals. Participants will meet for 2 days in Seattle to review and discuss the results of the field scan, identify aspects of design education relevant to MLIS education, share professional experiences, and brainstorm curricular approaches. Participants will be invited based on identification from the field scan and/or notable identification with design thinking in libraries.

3) Production of **sample syllabi and course inventories** that capture and communicate ways in which educators can incorporate design thinking into their own MLIS courses and programs will be a concrete result from the forum. These materials, which will be incorporated into the final project report, be made freely available on the web for easy use by instructors in MLIS programs and other interested parties.

National Impact

The forum addresses a key need in master's level library education: laying a foundation to fill the void of instruction in design thinking and methods. The outcomes of this project include a thorough understanding of the current state of design education in the library field; connections among educators, employers, and design professionals to discuss the integration of design thinking and methods into master's level library education; and useable example syllabi and curricular materials offering a foundation for immediate application of design in MLIS programs. As a result of this forum, significant changes will be set to occur nationwide as MLIS degree programs increasingly adopt and incorporate design thinking and methods into their curricula. Such new and innovative educational approaches in turn stand to impact graduates of MLIS programs across the nation. As these future library leaders face increasingly difficult challenges, their education in design thinking for librarianship will be what informs their decision-making and problem-solving in the 21st century.

Estimated Budget

A total budget of $86,169 is requested to support planning activities and logistics for the 2-day forum and the necessary infrastructure. This request includes $15,450 in travel support for 15 invited attendees; $3500 (University of Washington) for the event's room, and technology; $15,450 in salary support for Dr. Clarke who will organize and direct the forum; $9545 for one Graduate Assistant to manage the data and documentation from the field scan, assist during the forum, and provide web support for collaborative work and dissemination; $4663 in fringe benefits; $2060 in direct travel support for Dr. Clarke and the student to attend the forum; $17,892 for 12 credits of tuition for the Graduate Assistant; and $17,609 in indirect costs.

Additional project activities will be supported by graduate student assistants through alternative funding streams.