

Pre-plan

PhD Library and Information Sciences

Needs within library education, libraries, and information agencies

- Critical Needs in Library Education The federal Institute of Museum and Library Services attests to shortages in master's graduates to staff libraries and qualified faculty to staff schools of library and information science in stating: "The current shortage of school library media specialists, library school faculty, and librarians working in underserved communities underscores a looming crisis in librarianship, as fewer faculty are being prepared to educate new librarians and a greater number of professional positions are going unfilled." (IMLS, 2004) Of the 56 ALA accredited LIS programs in North America, only 33 offer the Ph.D. Annually there are more faculty position vacancies than there are new Ph.D. graduates to fill those vacancies. This deficit is acutely felt by schools committed to developing a diverse faculty as the number of minority students receiving Ph.D. degrees in LIS continues to be very small.
- Critical Needs in Education Approximately 40% of the SLIS master's graduates return to Florida's K-12 school systems as school librarians, and recent research in Florida (Baumbach, 2004) indicated that 25% of total school librarians and 40% of secondary school librarians are in the state's DROP retirement program. This crisis in Florida is mirrored nationwide and the growing need for new school librarians carries a concomitant need for Ph.D. level library educators with specializations in school librarianship and in library services for children and young adults.
- Critical Needs in Health Professions and Emerging Technologies in Health Care Increasingly, the health consumerism movement has compelled individuals to become more active participants and decision makers in their own health care. Faculty with specializations in medical informatics, consumer health information, and applications of communications technology to health information needs are sought by LIS schools to conduct interdisciplinary work in helping users become discriminating consumers of health information.

Goals

- To contribute to solving critical needs in library education through the recruitment and education of practicing professionals as potential faculty qualified to teach library science
- To offer a doctoral program integrating research, theory, and practice in LIS with specializations in youth services, school libraries, and medical informatics.
- To provide educational opportunities to a diverse selection of students with potential for exceptional contributions to higher education in the theory and practice of librarianship
- To extend the opportunity for doctoral training to non-traditional students not able to suspend their employment or current family commitments to achieve a doctorate in a traditional program of studies.

Unique

The program will have a non-traditional multi-modal delivery model allowing students to maintain employment and complete coursework over the first two years with employment as teaching assistants through the dissertation phase.

Interdisciplinary

Four areas LIS faculty have already established interdisciplinary relationships are education, health sciences, information technology, and communications. The Department of Education Measurement and Research has agreed to admit LIS doctoral students to their research methods courses.

The proposed LIS Ph.D. program would align well with the strategic directions of USF and the Florida Board of Governors. It would address pressing needs within library education and libraries, primarily an unmet demand for faculty with both professional experience and education in research and pedagogy at the graduate level. It would provide doctoral-level educational opportunities to a diverse selection of students who would then become a source of supply for the professoriate in peer ALA accredited programs. A doctoral program integrating research, theory, and practice in library and information science with specializations in youth services, school libraries, public libraries, and medical informatics within the context of a major urban center would be a unique opportunity for students in the southeastern United States, and a unique opportunity for USF.