

SPECIAL LIBRARIES

A Specialization in the Masters in Library and Information Science Degree
Graduate School of Library and Information Science
Dominican University

Introduction

The MLIS degree offered at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Dominican University prepares graduates for professional positions in the field of library and information science. Students may focus their study in a variety of specializations in order to acquire expertise in a specific aspect of the profession.

The faculty has prepared descriptions of several different career paths along with suggested groups of courses from which students may select. These samples are not substitutes for faculty advising, but are representative examples. Students should always consult their advisor when outlining a specific course of study.

Special libraries focus on the interests inherent in the institution they serve. Libraries in hospitals, corporations, associations, museums, and other types of institutions are all special libraries. In many cases, they are not open to the public. A special library's collection may be narrow in scope, but it will have depth within the specialty it covers. Special libraries are involved in capturing strategic information, analyzing markets, and developing databases, documents, policies and procedures. Special librarians must understand the language and culture of an organization and know business and financial practices. Effective response to clients with qualitative and quantitative value to information services is a fundamental necessity.

Special librarians should have skills and competencies to succeed in knowledge economy as they are held accountable with measurable results in organizations. To satisfy special library needs, more and more interdisciplinary approaches are in practice in the services of special libraries and there are challenging issues in the identification, acquisition, management and sharing of information within an enterprise—activities central to library and information profession and the modern business world. Information is power, but only if it is readily accessible—organized, analyzed and delivered to meet an organization's needs.

Competencies

Competencies for special library professionals are outlined and discussed in many documents. The most important one is by the Special Libraries Association (SLA). SLA has identified competencies for information professionals which include not only special librarians but also knowledge managers, chief information officers, web developers, information brokers, and consultants. According to SLA, professional competencies are “the practitioner's knowledge of information resources, access, technology and management, and the ability to use this knowledge.”

Professional competencies are listed under four headings, each requiring specific skills: a) Managing Information Organizations; b) Managing Information Resources; c) Managing Information Services; and d) Applying Information Tools and Technologies.

In terms of personal competencies, every information professional needs to:

- Seek out challenges and capitalize on new opportunities
- See the big picture
- Communicate effectively
- Present ideas clearly; negotiate confidently and persuasively
- Create partnerships and alliances
- Build an environment of mutual respect and trust; respect and value diversity
- Employ a team approach; recognize the balance of collaborating; lead and follow
- Take calculated risks; show courage and tenacity when faced with opposition
- Plan, prioritize and focus on what is critical
- Demonstrate personal career planning
- Think creatively and innovatively; seek new or “reinvent” opportunities
- Recognize the value of professional networking and personal career planning
- Balance work, family and community obligations
- Remain flexible and positive in a time of continuing change
- Celebrate achievements for self and others

Details can be obtained at the website: www.sla.org/content/learn/comp2003.

COURSES

To pursue special librarianship in the area of business, corporate, information professionals, students are recommended to complete the following courses:

GSLIS CORE (12 CREDITS-4 CLASSES)

LIS 701 Introduction to Library and Information Science

LIS 703 Organization of Knowledge

LIS 704 Reference and Online Services

LIS 899 Capstone Course

REQUIRED MANAGEMENT COURSE (3 CREDITS-1 CLASS)

LIS 770 Management of Libraries and Information Centers

GENERAL ELECTIVES (24 CREDITS – 8 CLASSES)

LIS 716 Communication for Leadership

LIS 732 Indexing and Abstracting

LIS 737 Online Information Systems

LIS 741 Reference Sources in the Social Sciences

LIS 742 Reference Sources in Sciences

LIS 743 Reference Sources in Business and Economics

LIS 745 Searching Electronic Databases

LIS 750 Information Storage and Retrieval

LIS 751 Database Management

LIS 752 Networks

LIS 753 Internet Fundamentals and Design

LIS 754 Information Systems Analysis and Design

LIS 755 Information Policy

LIS 756 Organizational Analysis

LIS 757 Knowledge Technologies

LIS 761 Public Relations

LIS 774 Special Libraries

LIS 781 Reference Sources in Health Sciences

LIS 789 Advanced Topics in Knowledge Management

LIS 799 Practicum

LIS 880 Knowledge Management

LIS 882 Metadata for Internet Resources