

Title: Going Forward: Positioning Library and Information Science Graduate Programs for 21st Century Practice

Organizer: Dr. Ashley E. Sands, Institute of Museum and Library Services

Key Participants: Additional IMLS staff and expert moderators will be identified and included if the proposal is accepted

Abstract:

Building on the challenges and opportunities identified in a recent meeting and report, IMLS seeks to engage iSchool participants in tangible steps toward further developing a diverse workforce of librarians. Rather than seeing one another as competitors in the recruitment of iSchool students, this session will bring together participants from across library and information science programs to identify concrete actions aimed at addressing the grand challenge of diversifying the field. Participants are encouraged to brainstorm priorities, build relationships with other attendees, and develop actions plans for the future.

Description:

Purpose and Intended Audience

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is a federal grant-funding agency also tasked with conducting policy research, analysis, and data collection to enhance the Nation’s museum, library, and information services. The importance of the information gathering is to identify national needs, trends, and best practices alongside communities in an effort to improve museums, libraries, information services, and cooperative networks.

Highly pertinent to iConference attendees, the IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian (LB21) Program’s purpose is to develop a diverse workforce of librarians by recruiting and educating the next generation, developing faculty and library leaders, and enhancing the training and professional development of the library workforce. The session brings together IMLS and the iSchool community to encourage and support actionable steps toward the successful recruitment, education, and retention of the next generation of library professionals.

The session is intended to build upon and extend recent work focused on the future of library and information science (LIS) graduate education and the role of the IMLS LB21 program. The recent discussions include an IMLS Forum held in November 2017, the meeting’s follow-on report released in June 2018¹, and an IMLS-led

¹ Sands, A. E., Toro, S., DeVoe, T., & Fuller, S., and Wolff-Eisenberg, C. (2018). Positioning Library and Information Science Graduate Programs for 21st Century Practice. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Museum and Library Services.

discussion at the February 2018 ALISE annual meeting. One year later, IMLS encourages the re-engagement of decision-makers in LIS programs to discuss best practices toward implementing the goals identified in the follow-on report.

The targeted participants for the session include iSchool Deans, department chairs, and faculty, particularly those faculty who sit on student recruitment and curriculum revision committees. Broadly, attendees are asked to consider: How can we identify, develop, and refine strategies to recruit, train, and retain diverse professionals? The session is intended to alert or remind faculty and administration of the important themes that arose previously and to provide time to develop relationships and action plans between and among decision-makers across iSchools to address these challenges and opportunities through collaborative approaches.

Proposed activities

The session will concentrate on attendee input. A short presentation will describe IMLS, the recent information gathering sessions, and the 2018 report findings. While attendees are encouraged to read the report prior to the session, preparation is not necessary to participate.

Quickly following the stage-setting, attendees will be asked to break into small groups. There will be five small groups, one for each of the Going Forward topics identified in the report:

- Communicating the value of an LIS education
- The identity of an LIS education
- Building relationships between practitioners and educators
- Increasing diversity and retention of LIS students and practitioners
- Infrastructures and sustainability

Attendees will be asked to self-select into the small group topic they are most interested in discussing. Attendees in each small group will be asked to consider actionable steps toward addressing their chosen topic through each of three ways: steps that can be taken to *recruit* a more diverse iSchool student body, steps to ensure iSchool students are *educated* in an inclusive environment, and steps to ensure iSchool faculty and practitioners are *hired and retained* in an equitable manner.

The topics are intentionally broad enough to enable attendees to approach each topic as they see fit. Following acceptance of this proposal, one moderator will be identified for each of the five small groups to serve to ensure the discussion is productive and to record notes in a shared document.

Each small group will then report back to the larger room, highlighting the most tangible and important points from their conversation. A second set of breakout groups will then be determined based on the specific action items the whole group discussion determines are highest priority. Participants will again self-select and move to their new small group based on the challenge or opportunity they are most interested in addressing. Small group participants are encouraged to develop relationships and strategic steps forward with the other group members. The purpose here is to begin inter-iSchool dialogue toward initiating positive change in how the LIS field recruits, educates, and retains iSchool students, faculty, and practitioners.

A long-form blog post will be developed and distributed via the IMLS website as a follow-up to the session. The session serves as a practical follow-up to the findings in the IMLS report from one year ago, encouraging the development of actionable steps iSchools can take individually, and more importantly among one another, to address the grand challenge that is ensuring a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workforce.

Relevance to the conference

The session is relevant to all iSchool faculty and administrators involved in the recruitment and education of Master's and Doctoral students in LIS. The session is devoted to building on the foundational conversations held last year and moving those conversations forward by identifying and encouraging relationship-building and actionable steps for iSchool faculty and administrators. Of particular interest to this year's iConference theme, the session is intended to encourage diversity in the profession as well as be performative of inclusive participation for all attendees. One of the most critical grand challenges LIS, the intent of this session is to further advance and diversify iSchool recruitment, education, hiring, and retention.

Duration: One 90-minute session

Special Requirements: None