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*Jackson County Library*

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# Emporia State University Oregon M.L.S. Program

by *Kim Wolfe*  
*Jackson County Library*

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## THE SLIM DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM

The School of Library and Information Management (SLIM) Distance Education program was born out of the need for library education in states where the Master of Library Science (M.L.S.) degree was not offered by local post-secondary institutions. SLIM developed an out-of-state delivery system at the request of state library and higher education representatives in Iowa. In Fall semester of 1988, 45 students began weekend classes in Sioux City, more than 200 miles from their home campus in Emporia, Kansas. Since then, SLIM has delivered library education in seven Midwestern and Western states. More than 400 students have earned the ALA-accredited degree in the distance program since then. SLIM Programs are now offered in Nebraska, Colorado, Utah, and Oregon.

The distance education program includes a combination of face-to-face classes, Internet courses and courses that utilize a combination of instructional technologies. However, most classes are face to face with the faculty and students meeting in one location. Faculty from Kansas and adjunct faculty from all over the United States fly out to teach classes held in an intensive weekend format. Regional coordinators administer the site and logistics for both ESU and the regional site. The total degree program is 42 credits taught over eight semesters, requiring approximately three years to complete.

People are the primary focus of the SLIM curriculum. In response to our rapidly changing technological society, the curriculum focuses on how to best fulfill the information needs of individuals, local groups, and global communities. Theory classes lay a strong foundation, drawing from primary concepts of the Information Transfer Model, the psychology of information use, diffusion of information, organizing and accessing information, and managing information systems. Tools classes equip the student with the tools of the trade, including reference, cataloging, online searching, and organizing information. Application courses provide an opportunity to apply the concepts, theory, and tools to experience. Electives include courses in current issues in the profession and allow students to focus on a specific area of interest.

Designed with the non-traditional adult learner in mind, distance education classes follow an intensive weekend format, Friday from 6 to 9 p.m., Saturday

from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 8 a.m. to noon. Classes are held approximately once a month or sixteen weekends per year, depending on the semester schedule. The typical SLIM student has family and employment obligations that limit the amount of time available for a traditional college schedule. Many are already working in libraries or library-related businesses. One of the advantages of the distance program is that students are admitted only in the beginning of a program cycle rather than each semester. Going through the entire program as a cohort creates strong bonds and builds an excellent professional network.

Each regional site has an on-site coordinator dedicated to meeting the needs of the students at the distance site. The regional coordinator serves as faculty advisor to students enrolled at that site and also serves as site administrator and liaison between ESU and the state library and higher education organizations. Time is set aside during class weekends to meet with the student group or with individuals for administrative and advising needs. A listserv, web site, and Watts line are dedicated to each distance site. Since each site is unique and each cohort has a distinct personality, site arrangements vary from state to state. SLIM strives to meet the unique needs of each regional site. The ESU/SLIM Distance Education Program was honored by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) in October with the 1997 NACADA/ACT Outstanding Institutional Advising Program Award. The national award is given in recognition of innovative or exemplary practices that have resulted in the improvement of academic advising services.

## THE OREGON PROGRAM

The Oregon M.L.S. Program began in Fall 1994 after representatives from the Oregon State Library, Oregon Library Association (OLA) and the Oregon State System of Higher Education (OSSHE) determined the need for an M.L.S. program in Oregon. After a review of the available distance education programs, ESU was chosen and asked to deliver the program to Oregon. The Oregon M.L.S. Planning Committee wrote a proposal for an LSCA start-up grant to subsidize student tuition, contribute toward technology costs for classes, and enable development of classes using two-way interactive video.

Oregon's program is unique for SLIM in its partnership with OSSHE schools. In this partnership, two Oregon schools, Portland State University (PSU), and Western Oregon University (WOU), offer courses to SLIM students. Three required courses were taught by PSU and WOU faculty, and Oregon SLIM students enrolled at either school to take classes. Additionally, several PSU and WOU courses are approved by SLIM for transfer credit toward the M.L.S. degree. Furthermore, ESU students may transfer an additional six semester credits from Oregon graduate schools toward their degrees. Another unique aspect of the Oregon partnership is the OSSHE Interinstitutional Library Council's policy to provide OSSHE

library cards to ESU students, enabling them to use any of the eight OSSHE libraries.

The admissions process in Oregon began in Spring 1994. Eighty-six students were admitted to the Oregon program from all over the state. Students and faculty met in September 1994 for orientation and the first M.L.S. course. Two sections of all required classes were offered. The majority of classes in Ore-

gon have been held at the PSU campus. To meet the needs of the many students living in the Willamette Valley or traveling from the south, a number of classes have been held at the University of Oregon campus in Eugene, and one class has been offered in five locations statewide through WOU via two-way interactive video.

Students have a variety of elective courses to choose from, including on-site, Internet and graduate transfer classes from Oregon graduate schools. Several electives are offered entirely over the Internet. Many students choose to take independent study courses with a faculty member in order to focus on an area of interest. A practicum option is also available. Practicums involve 120 hours (three semester credits). Students develop a proposal, meet with a site representative and SLIM representative for approval of a practicum project and submit a log and product at the end of the semester. Ten practicums have been completed in Oregon libraries. The practicum is especially successful for students without prior library experience or students seeking experience in areas other than their current expertise. The practicum is a mutually beneficial opportunity for the student and the site library. Projects have included development of library web pages, development of bibliographic instruction modules, systems analysis, evaluation, and recommendations for new or existing services.

Sixty-four students have graduated from the first cohort of the Oregon M.L.S. Program. Students were joyful as they participated in the 1997 summer commencement exercises held in Portland on July 26 with an audience of 400 friends and family. ESU President Robert E. Glennen, SLIM Dean Faye Vowell, and ESU faculty and distance coordinators; Jim Scheppeke, Deborah Jacobs, Jon Root and members of the Oregon M.L.S. Planning Committee; Oregon faculty and many OLA and OSSHE representatives joined in the celebration. Students have been successful in finding professional positions in Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Idaho, California, and Minnesota. Others are being promoted by their current employers.

And the future? Because of the program's success and the growing number of individuals on the interest list, the Oregon M.L.S. Planning Committee, OSSHE, and the Oregon Educational Policy and Planning Department approved a second Oregon Program. Sixty students attended the first Oregon II class held September 5.

It has been an opportunity and challenge to develop the Oregon M.L.S. Program and a pleasure to work with Oregon library and higher education representatives in offering this unique program to students in Oregon. The program has been a successful venture for all involved. Recent graduate, Althea Pribyl, sums it up: "Besides a shiny new diploma, I've gained a network of friends and professional contacts throughout the area and a set of cutting-edge skills, knowledge, and values ... that will serve me well whatever I do in the future." **Q**



## M.L.S. Program Graduates

Anderson-Torgrimson, Paige  
 Barclay, Kevin  
 Bryk, Katinka  
 Cain, Bridget  
 Chapman, Greta  
 Chess, Jon  
 Ciscell, Joanne  
 Cordero, Ann  
 Corry, (Patricia) Jane  
 DeShazo, Kristina  
 Dregson, Julie  
 Dunham, Kathy  
 Elteto, Sharon  
 Feinman, Todd  
 Ford, Peter Conner  
 Frederiksen, Linda  
 Gibson, Daniel  
 Gies, Berneeta  
 Griffin, Andrea  
 Guidinger, Jayne  
 Hadid, Peggy  
 Hall, Madelyn G. P.  
 Hausauer, Carol  
 Hirsch, Bonnie  
 Hodge, Angela A.  
 Hoogesteger, Theresa  
 Hoven, Nancy  
 Huffine, Beth Anne  
 Jenkins, Susan  
 Kasimor, Kathryn  
 Kern, Kristen

Kunkel, Marita  
 Kunz, Karen  
 Lambert, Linda  
 Larsen, Thomas  
 Lewis, Johndy  
 Macomber, Jeanne  
 McCulley, Carol  
 Martin, May  
 Nordgren, Karen L.  
 North, Pamela  
 Ostertag-Holtkamp, Barbara J.  
 Parpart, Jerrie  
 Pashak, Laura Sani  
 Pribyl, Althea  
 Rasmussen, Frances Northup  
 Reed, Donna  
 Rhodes, Glenna  
 Richards, Georgia  
 Roberts, Shirley  
 Schriver, Beverly  
 Sexton, John  
 Skogseth, Kelly  
 Smith, Kathy  
 Straube, Karen  
 Townes, Jean  
 Truman, Rob  
 Valentine, Friday  
 White, James T.  
 Wise, Mary Frances  
 Worsham, Daphne  
 Wykoff, Carla

## Student Reflections On The Oregon M.L.S. Program

"The SLIM experience has been the opportunity of a lifetime. Library school has provided entrance into a profession which fulfills my service orientation needs. The ESU/SLIM program has also helped me realize the goal of being the first person in my family to receive a Master's degree. Between full-time work and school, it has been a tough three years filled with constant change, but if I had to do it all over again I certainly would. The program has opened my eyes to the many opportunities in the information professions, and I would definitely recommend it to others."

*Friday Valentine, Blackwell North America*

"We entered the Emporia State University M.L.S. Program as strangers; we are graduating as friends. For me, the best thing about this distance learning adventure was the network of friends and colleagues you amass. These individuals become your support group, study group, resources, and later, part of your invisible college."

*Madelyn Hall, Southwest Washington Medical Center Library*

"The M.L.S. program helped me to understand the basic philosophy of librarianship and the importance of the user perspective in the services we provide wherever we are employed. It gave me a chance to learn more about how other types of libraries function—what their issues and concerns are, what their roles are in their communities. In particular it gave me the opportunity to appreciate the way an academic library meets the needs of its core users, the students and faculty, as well as the community at large from a perspective beyond the constraints of my work as a cataloger. The best part of the distance program was the developing of the invisible college of fellow students that offer a network of resources, support, and friendship all over the state."

*Kris Kern, Portland State University Library*

"The greatest benefit for me of getting an ALA-accredited M.L.S. degree through Emporia State University was that all course work was done without disrupting my work schedule or family commitments. The weekend intensive format allowed me to continue working in my job at the community college library. I frequently used my library as a living laboratory for course assignments and discussions. Doing so gave me a far better understanding not only of how my library operated but how other academic libraries operate as well. Elective classes allowed me to focus my studies on areas that were of interest to me. A practicum at Washington State University at Vancouver gave me instructional experience that I was immediately able to put to use when working with students at Clark College. Although I hope to find professional

work in an academic setting, the Emporia program gave me a strong theoretical framework for library and information management that I feel I could carry successfully to non-academic environments."

*Linda Frederiksen, Clark Community College*

"For me some of the most valuable parts of the SLIM program were the experiences of learning with and from my classmates. Because we were unremittingly with the same people, we got to know each other very well. Working in small groups and experiencing them progress from ego-filled individual ideas to finished products was inspiring, thrilling, and sometimes scary."

*Jane Corry, Multnomah County Library System*

"They say ignorance is bliss, but if I had known then how much this program would take over my life for the next two and half years, I might not have applied. The SLIM program turned out to be a great, possibly life-changing experience, though. Library science is quite different from my original hazy notions, especially now since librarians are becoming a bridge between the information technologies and the users.

Our classes were held mostly at Portland State, and teachers would fly in from Kansas or elsewhere to teach us from Friday evening to Sunday noon. They're not called weekend intensives for nothing! There were also several electives taught via internet, using web pages and listservs, but the majority were traditional college courses, so everyone in the cohort got to know and work with each other at some time during the program. The cooperative aspects were probably the best things about this program. Though we were from widely scattered areas of Oregon and Washington, a bond developed among our cohort that I have never experienced in a traditional college. Their ideas, generosity and moral support made the classes less daunting and often truly exciting learning experiences.

And the results? Besides a shiny new diploma, I've gained a network of friends and professional contacts throughout the area and a set of cutting-edge skills, knowledge and values, including that of critical thinking, that will serve me well whatever I do in the future."

*Althea Pribyl, Blackwell North America*

"I have really benefited from my time in the ESU/SLIM program. My level of service to the public and dedication to the profession have greatly increased in intensity and quality since entering the program in September 1994. I am really looking

*See Student Reflections page 12*

## For more info ...

For more information regarding the Emporia State University School of Library and Information Management call 800-552-4770 or consult the web page at [www.emporia.edu/S/www/slim/slim.htm](http://www.emporia.edu/S/www/slim/slim.htm).

### Other M.L.S. degrees offered by distance delivery:

#### *Syracuse University*

Syracuse has eleven independent study degree programs, one of which is the Master of Library Science from the School of Information Studies. The degree program combines short on-campus residencies and self-paced study completed at home. The M.L.S. is a 26 credit program stressing both theory and practice of library science. For more information call (315) 443-1713 or 1-800-442-0501, e-mail [SUCEIST@UC.SYR.EDU](mailto:SUCEIST@UC.SYR.EDU), or visit [istweb.syr.edu](http://istweb.syr.edu).

#### *University of Arizona*

The School of Library Science has developed a program for teaching courses entirely over the internet utilizing the world wide web, listservs, e-mail, and FTP. For further information call the School of Library Science at (520) 621-3565 or visit [www.sir.arizona.edu](http://www.sir.arizona.edu).

For more information on ALA-Accredited Library Schools call ALA at 1-800-545-2433 ext. 2153 or visit [www.ala.org/alaorg/oa/uslis.html](http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oa/uslis.html).

## Student Reflections

*(continued from page 11)*

forward to contributing to our field as a professional in all senses of the word. An extra, unexpected bonus was the bonding between the members of the Oregon cohort. The mutual respect and support we give one another has been vital to me during the program, and I hope will continue long after the graduation ceremony."

*Karen Nordgren, Portland State University Library*

"One of the unexpected benefits of driving the five hours from Southern Oregon to Portland for the MLS classes was spending some of that time on the road discussing theories and models and considering them in the context of our own work and personal situations. Each trip became a part of the weekend process: both as an opportunity to share our understanding of the readings and projects we'd done since the last class, and to recognize on our return trip what we'd accomplished during the weekend. It didn't keep us from counting down the number of remaining trips, or figuring how far around the globe we could've driven in those hours, but it was certainly a big part of our distance learning.

Additionally, the emphasis on presentations enabled us to become adept at speaking before the group. To me, that was a major success for everyone."

*John Sexton  
Jackson County Library System*

## Chapter Report


*(continued from page 4)*

other players to the table to support, rather than detract from, each other's efforts.

### **SOLD-OUT SESSIONS**

Lillian Gassie, chair of the Louisiana Library Association (LLA) Continuing Education Committee, pursued a similar strategy in publishing the inaugural issue of its *CE Newsletter* this fall. The online newsletter touts LLA's own series of computer workshops, as well as providing a listing and registration information for programs offered by other organizations. The computer workshops—which covered topics such as basic operating systems, troubleshooting, and desktop publishing—were all over-subscribed in advance of the registration deadline. Based on the success of this initial offering, LLA hopes to be able to expand offerings in other parts of the state.

Like many chapter programs, these workshops were offered on a cost-recovery basis. The success story resulted from a combination of offering the right product and making sure the word got out. Members were surveyed for program preferences, and disseminating registration information via an attractive, accessible form not only resulted in full sessions, but in the beginnings of an ongoing information network. An online survey is being used to build a CE database for use statewide.

You don't have to take my word for it. See for yourself at [www.ucl.usl.edu/~wxw9898/ce.html](http://www.ucl.usl.edu/~wxw9898/ce.html). 

*Christine Watkins is a freelance writer and project consultant in Chicago. This article is reprinted by permission from American Libraries, Jan. 1997, p.11.*