
Collection-Related Courses in ALA-Accredited Master's Programs

A Description

CODES Collection Development Education Committee members:

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Education for librarianship has been receiving quite a lot of attention recently. Forums have been held, teleconferences organized, papers written. The population of the concerned include members of ALA's Reference and Adult Services Association (RUSA). One of RUSA's sections is the Collection Development and Evaluation Section (CODES), which has a standing education committee. One of the committee's charges is to identify and provide some continuing and in-service training, and the committee has taken that charge very seriously. Additionally, the committee is charged with monitoring and examining the offerings of ALA-accredited master's programs, and, if possible, communicating with those programs. A starting point for examination is the review of programs' curricula to see what kinds of collection management-related courses exist.

Most accredited programs have well-developed Web sites that can be viewed to determine what courses are offered and where they fit into curricula. The courses were reviewed in fall 2006. The first question to be asked is if programs have collection development or collection management courses. Fifty-two of the accredited programs have sufficient detail available at their Web sites to answer that question. The summary answer is that forty-six programs do have such courses, and six do not. The figure of forty-six having a course is the result of a fairly generous interpretation of course titles and descriptions. Serious interpretive effort is needed in many instances; such courses titles as "Collection Management," "Developing Library Collections," and "Resource Selection and Evaluation" are straightforward and are taken to constitute inclusion in the group having a course. The interpretive exercise is required when examining such titles as "Social Systems and Collections." The course description provided indicates that fundamental collection management topics are addressed, so such courses are included. The six programs deemed to have no course related to the topic have no titles or descriptions that can be interpreted as addressing the fundamental topics.

Seventeen of the fifty-two programs list additional courses on related topics. Twelve have courses on the preservation and conservation of materials; three have courses on intellectual freedom; and two have courses on publishing. There are some other courses offered as well (a few programs have more than one additional course). The existence of courses can be taken as encouraging, if one believes that collection management remains important professional knowledge (it can be assumed that members of the CODES Collection Development Education Committee believe that it is). A related question has to do with the frequency of course offer-

ings. There is still a positive interpretation that can be made. Forty-six of the programs have links to schedules that can be reviewed. Of those, thirty-nine have offered collection management-type courses within the most recent year. Five have not offered the course within the year, and the frequency of offering cannot be determined for two programs. Eleven of the additional related courses have been offered in the most recent year and six have not been offered; it cannot be determined for two courses.

The results of this review also are open to interpretation. It does appear that students at the majority of accredited programs have access to some course that deals with collection-related topics. That most of the courses are not required is a matter for discussion among professional librarians and educators. This discussion should occur under some official auspices (for instance, during an ALA Conference or an

Association for Library and Information Science Education conference). The review of the existence of courses, though, is a prelude to a more substantive discussion. Course titles and course descriptions are minimally informative; an exhaustive examination of course syllabi would be more enlightening. The professional side of the matter also requires consideration. The CODES Collection Development Education Committee is working on developing a description of the knowledge, skills, and values related to managing collections and the access to information that all beginning professional librarians should have. Committee members are striving to ensure that an encompassing conversation, based on the foregoing and future contributions, can lead to the most effective educational opportunities for master's students. Collaboration among librarians and educators is essential.