Special Topics -- Special Libraries and Information Centers  
LIS 690-205  
Spring 2012  
Online

Instructor:  Anne K. Abate, Ph.D.  
Email:  anne@librarydiscountnetwork.com OR anne.abate@uky.edu  
Office Hours:  By Appointment  
Phone:  (513) 530-9874 (work and home)

Course Description:  
Starting with the characteristics and early development of special libraries, this course will provide a comprehensive view of the special library and information center in organizations today. Standards, levels of service, and types of services provided will be explored. The impact of technology on special library services and staffing in special library and information center settings will be analyzed. The course will include several required and optional visits to special libraries.

Required Readings:  
Students will assist in locating readings for the course. See the Deliverable: “Reading Selections” for more information.

Other readings will be assigned as needed.

Exit Competencies:  
By the completion of the course, the student will be able to:  
**Demonstrate an awareness of issues and current problems facing special libraries and information centers.**  
**Demonstrate an awareness of some of the aspects of the management of a special library.**  
**Provide a perspective on the services and collections available in special libraries.**  
**Recognize and evaluate the future challenges of special libraries.**  
**Interact with colleagues in the online environment, debate the issues and reach consensus.**  
**Demonstrate virtual team skills through working with fellow students on class projects.**  
**Demonstrate preparation, research, organization, and presentation skills.**  
**Produce stimulating material in the completion of all assignments.**

Engagement with the Course:  
This is a very complicated online course with many components. These are designed to help you through the learning process. They will engage you in a variety of ways: research, writing, discussion, presentation, exploration, teamwork. It is important that you engage with the course materials on a regular basis. Weekly interactions are required and essential. If you have something that will distract you from the course for more than a few days, please contact me in advance to discuss alternatives for that period of time.
**Deliverables at a Glance:**

- Participation (online and during class library tours)
- Discussion Questions
- Preliminary Test on Syllabus
- Topic List
- Reading Selections and Discussion Question Development
- Special Libraries Literature Research and Sharing (3 articles with abstracts)
- Identification of Target Libraries
- Reaction Pages to Library Tours (3 or more)
- Library Profile
- Special Library Proposal

**Deliverables in Detail:**

**Participation:** Class participation is important in this course. You must be prepared to participate online every week. Part of participation is completing any assigned reading or research before the start of class discussions or chat sessions. Participation during each student presentation and asking questions on tours will also contribute to the participation requirement. Share your knowledge. Another important way to earn participation credit is to participate actively on the class discussion lists. Students are encouraged to read all of the postings and are expected to participate on a regular basis. There is a minimum expectation for responding which will be detailed on each discussion. Scoring on participation will be based on both quantity and quality of your engagement in the opportunities available.

There will be several online synchronous sessions scheduled during the term using Adobe Connect. Initially, these will be to answer questions about the course. Later, they will be used to explore some of the topics together in chat. Near the end of term, student presentations will be conducted using this format. More information on these sessions and a schedule will be established in the first few days of the term.

**Discussion Questions (asynchronous participation):** An important element of participation in this online course is the class threaded discussion on Blackboard. There will be required discussions every week, as well as optional open discussion areas. For a large part of the term, we will engage in guided discussions about the topics surrounding the readings and tours via the Blackboard threaded discussion. Discussions will be prompted by weekly questions inviting you to approach the topic from a specific perspective. You may also want to compare the topic to your own work environment. The questions serve as advance organizers to encourage critical thinking and informed participation. Due by Tuesday evening each week, specific discussion questions (requiring a 150-300 word response) will be assigned to individuals. The time specified for the initial posting ensures that all participants have ample opportunity to interact during the rest of the week.
You must read and respond to at least two other questions from your fellow students. At the end of each week, you will submit a short summary of what you believe are the most important things you learned that week and how it relates to your job. Assigned readings and responses to discussion questions should take place during the week in which they are assigned in order to get the most benefit from the discussions. Instructions and due dates for each week will be clearly articulated on the discussion lists. Open discussions are invited in the “Student Lounge” area. You are welcome to start your own topics in this area as well. Questions about the course should be posted in the “Anne’s office” area. The “Student Lounge” and “Anne’s office” discussions are not required, but are provided for your benefit.

**Preliminary Test on Syllabus:** After you read this syllabus, please take the test that is available in Blackboard. This is a complicated course structure with many elements. Reading the syllabus and becoming familiar with the Blackboard site are important components. The Preliminary Test is required and will count for part of your grade.

**Topic List:** After the first week when we explore the environment and you become comfortable with the structure, students will prepare a list of topics that address the current issues of special libraries and information centers. These topics will be selected from a review of current conferences, journals, the Internet and other sources (a list of potential sources will be provided). The list must include at least 5 topics with VERY brief explanations of their importance.

**Reading Selections and Discussion Question Development:** As there is no required text for this course, the reading materials will be taken from the current literature in this field. Readings will be selected by students to highlight issues in all areas. Each student will select a specific subject area from the list provided on Blackboard. Several students will be assigned to each subject area. Each student will locate an informative article, case study, or other material that explores that subject in adequate depth. Your recommended selections should be turned in to me for approval at least a couple of weeks before the subject is scheduled to be covered in class discussion. All selections must be approved by me before they are shared with the class. In every case, we are seeking recent materials that reflect the current state of the profession. Exceptions will be made for subjects on the history of the field, or outstanding and lasting contributions. Sources may include the special library literature (Information Outlook), other library industry periodicals (Library Journal, Library Administration and Management, Information Today, Computers in Libraries, etc.), or websites with substantive content. Readings may be found on the open Internet or through the full-text databases available to UK students. In all cases, readings must be freely available to all students without fees or registration. Each selected reading should be equivalent to three printed pages of text and must be from a credible, reliable source.

After approval of your personal selection, each student will assist me in crafting questions relevant to the selected reading. Questions should be finalized at least one week before they are due to be posted to the class. The weekly online discussions will be prompted by the questions inviting all students to approach the subject from a specific perspective. During these discussions, you may also want to compare elements of the readings to your own work environment. The questions serve as stimuli to encourage critical thinking and informed
participation. Readings and questions will be posted by the instructor to start off each subject discussion area.

**Special Libraries Literature Research and Sharing:** In order for you to become more involved with the literature and issues of special libraries and information centers and develop your own thoughts about the issues, three articles will be required on current special library issues. A one-page abstract of the article with a full citation are to be submitted in the appropriate discussion area. In this way, you can share your research with your fellow students. The due dates will be found on calendar. The selected articles must be at least three pages of text. Abstracts must be one-page, single-spaced. Abstract articles of your choice on any topic related to the field of special libraries and information centers. Sources include general LIS periodicals (*Library Journal, American Libraries*, etc.), technology periodicals (*Online, Internet World, Internet Magazine*, etc.), library sector periodicals (*C&RL, Legal Information Alert*, etc.), academic journals (*Library Trends, Legal Reference Service Quarterly, Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, etc.) Feature articles from *Information Outlook* (published by the Special Libraries Association) are recommended. Articles may be found on the Internet but must be the equivalent of three printed pages of text and must be credible, reliable sources. If you are uncertain of the credibility of an Internet source, please clear it first by sending an email to me with the URL. I will let you know if it measures up. All articles must be published within the last year. The first three-quarters of the abstract should highlight the main point of the article and discuss the key issues and conclusions. The last paragraph should be your own reaction to the article including its value and relation to your own organization or to society. You must relate the implications of the article to current practice and to your own situation to earn full credit. Article abstracts will be graded on **content, clarity, grammar, spelling, and readability**. The selection of the article to abstract will also be considered in grading along with following the instructions above.

**Identification of Target Libraries:** You will be responsible for identifying special libraries in your area that will be scheduled for tours by the students in your area. Further details on this assignment will be provided in the first weeks of the term.

**Reaction Pages to Library Tours:** We will be visiting a number of special library facilities during the semester. Optional visits may also be scheduled. You will only be responsible for the visits designated as mandatory for your area, but you are encouraged to attend any visit in addition to those. You will write a one-page reaction paper for each library visit. Highlight the facility, staff, parent organization, topics brought up by the host information professional, specific issues or concerns of that type of facility, and your own opinions on those issues. Each submission should be approximately one page, typed, single-spaced, with one inch margins. Each reaction page will be due one week following the library tour in the appropriate area of Blackboard.

**Library Profile:** You will make arrangements to visit a special library or information center on your own, prepare questions for the visit, and write a brief profile of the library. I must approve your selection. Please secure approval before making final plans for the visit. Your profile should be of sufficient quality to be published in a professional newsletter. Photos are not required, but you are welcome to submit photos to enhance your description of the facility. You will present a summary of your profile to the class during a chat session and lead a discussion list
regarding the issues facing the facility. Dates of presentations will be assigned based upon the schedule of students’ visits to facilities. Further details on the content and format of the profile will be provided during the term.

Special Library Proposal: Select an organization, real or imagined, for which you will propose the development of a special library. You may select any type of organization that would benefit from the resources of a special library. If you are using a real organization, do not select one that already has a library or information center, unless you are proposing a major upgrade or change to the facility. Choose an organization or field that is interesting to you and of which you have some knowledge (or can locate the information in the literature). In order to make sure you are on the right track, your first submission for this assignment will be a one-paragraph description of your idea. The due date for this preview is listed on the calendar.

Your final proposal should include at least the following:

- A description of the parent organization, the environment, and the population to be served. This should be where you state the reason for your proposal.
- Space requirements for the proposed facility including opening day space and prediction of future growth (if any). Include plans for such things as staff space, user space, materials housing, equipment, etc.
- A projected budget for the information center being proposed. This does not need to be a detailed budget, but should include all major categories (materials, staff, equipment, space) and should be in line with what the parent organization could logically afford. The budget does not need to be formal, but it should be adequate to indicate all of the requirements for your proposed facility.
- A description of the services you are proposing to provide to the organization. Why will this facility help the organization? Are the needs currently being met in some other fashion? Why do they need to spend the money in this way (why not just increase their bandwidth to the Internet)?

Make sure you include references to the professional literature to support your proposal. This may include literature appropriate for the specific industry in which your proposed facility will operate, or general library literature, or descriptions of specific special libraries and information centers similar to the one you are proposing. Include a bibliography of all works consulted, whether cited in your proposal or just used for background information.

Your proposal should be a professional package in whatever format would be appropriate for the parent organization to which you are making the proposal (memorandum, formal proposal, binder with attachments, etc.). Your proposal should begin with an executive summary (remember that this is usually all that the management will read anyway). Lengthy proposals with support materials should include a table of contents.
Grading:

Point totals will be distributed as follows:

Participation 8 points
Discussion Questions 10 points
Preliminary Test on Syllabus 2 points
Topic List 5 points
Reading Selections and Discussion Question Development 5 points
Current Special Libraries Issues Research and Sharing (3 article abstracts) 15 points
Identification of Target Libraries 5 points
Reaction Pages to Library Tours 5 points
Library Profile 20 points
Special Library Proposal 25 points

A 90 to 100 points
B 80 to 89 points
C 70 to 79 points
E less than 70 points

Timeline:

See the Blackboard Discussion Lists for assignments. Additional assignments will be opened up for you as we progress through the term. Most firm due dates are posted on the calendar in Blackboard for your convenience.