

Library Science Strategic Plan 2022-2027

INTRODUCTION

Library science is one program of the School of Information Science at the University of Kentucky. Classes in library science began at the University of Kentucky in 1918; the library science program was accredited by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1942. Today, the library science program is housed within the School of Information Science, part of the College of Communication and Information. Library science has been continually accredited by the ALA through the present day, and it remains the only ALA-accredited library science program physically located in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The library science program is now offered exclusively online.

As one component of the School of Information Science, library science is integrated with Information Communication Technology (ICT), and Instructional Communication and Research (ICR) is also housed within the School. Faculty teach across programs and research collaboration is frequent. In addition, the library science program actively supports and collaborates within the School, the College of Communication and Information, and the University. When the pandemic began in 2020, the School of Information Science helped lead the university community into online education, an area of strength for the School.

SWOT ANALYSIS

In the following analysis of the library science program, we describe its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Strengths

1. **Top ranked program and specialties.** Overall, our program is ranked #17 in Library and Information science by U.S. News & World Report. We also rank #3 in Health Librarianship, #11 in School Library Media, and #12 in Services for Children and Youth. Students may also explore interdisciplinary opportunities by taking classes in ICT or ICR, or by pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Instructional Communication.
2. **Flexible online program.** Fully online and asynchronous classes provide a flexible learning environment. Courses are offered year-round, students can begin in any semester (fall, spring, or summer), and students can choose to follow a specialized or general program of study while taking classes full- or part-time. Students can also complete the graduate certificate in Instructional Communication within the context of the LIS program without taking additional courses.

3. **Faculty and staff who care.** Collegial faculty and staff who work together to answer questions and solve problems. We care about student success and provide a high-touch, supportive approach.
4. **Student opportunities.** The program offers enrichment activities for our students including an annual student conference and an alternative spring break program.
5. **Varied faculty research areas.** Faculty research spans several key areas in LIS (especially where the program is highly ranked); faculty are (emerging) leaders in their respective areas.

Weaknesses

1. **Meeting shifting elective interests:** The electives the program offers do not always match the shifting interests of the students. Elective courses considered essential to library science may include programming, policy, research methods, archives, cataloging, digital humanities, and library budgeting/staffing.
2. **Insufficient resources.** Enrollment has grown significantly more quickly than program resources. We utilize part-time faculty's practical expertise as much as possible to add to the curriculum and provide more courses for students. Still, the program does need additional resources to maintain or continue program growth.
3. **Lack of physical facilities.** The School (and program) are currently out of space needed for staff and faculty offices.

Opportunities:

1. **Offer new specializations for our students.** We have the opportunity (especially as we hire new faculty) to expand our course offerings in several different directions. We could also create new specialties/concentrations. We should highlight the unique strengths of our faculty. This may appeal to new groups of students.
2. **Utilize our alumni and external stakeholders.** We have an extensive network of alumni who could serve as mentors, practicum supervisors, and in other roles. We also have many external stakeholders (including KDLA staff, KY libraries, etc.) to whom we could extend more opportunities for engagement with our program. We could use this to improve the marketing of our program and degree.
3. **More collaboration and partnerships with library practitioners/field.** We have several part-time and full-time faculty with existing strong ties to the library field and have hired additional faculty with strengths in this area. We can continue to build this aspect of the program.
4. **Promote research opportunities for students.** There are structured research opportunities for students such as independent studies. We can promote these opportunities and increase student participation.

Threats:

1. **De-professionalization of librarianship.** Some libraries are reducing or changing the (accredited) degree requirements for certain jobs; all types of libraries face budget restrictions which make hiring non-degreed librarians more attractive.
2. **Competition from other LIS programs.** Especially with the likely decline in future enrollment, competition from other ALA-accredited library science programs is likely to be a strong threat to our current enrollment numbers. A decline in enrollment could threaten the existence (and certainly the growth) of our program. In addition, many other programs offer an online option and ALA continues to accredit more programs.
3. **Lack of control over the unit's resources.** The LIS program (and SIS overall) does not control its finances/budget, decisions to fund faculty lines, hire staff, space, etc. This means we lack the agility and freedom to make needed and appropriate decisions

regarding those resources. Because of this, we may face a future where we lose some resources.

4. **Encroaching political interests.** There are increasing attacks through politics and social media on libraries, educational organizations and other civic institutions. Growing efforts to undermine intellectual freedom place libraries and librarians at risk. This threatens an informed citizenry. This environment could have long lasting negative effects on community engagement and program enrollment.

Vision

Current vision:

Empowered by information.

Transformed by learning.

Driven by research.

Mission

We prepare the next generation of information professionals to be leaders in the field through innovative curriculum, research, and professional services. We conduct high quality research that impacts the information fields and aids practitioners.

Core Values

1. Accessibility
2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
3. Intellectual Freedom
4. Interdisciplinarity
5. Professional Growth
6. Service

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

In the following section, we describe four goals for the library science program, along with several objectives to help us accomplish each goal.

1. Instill stronger equity, diversity, and inclusion across our curriculum, student body, and research initiatives.
 - a. Create an action plan of items based on bi-annual curriculum diversity audit, to be implemented in the year following the audit. (Evidence: audit report, curriculum committee report)
 - b. Plan and execute specific student recruitment practices for marginalized populations (such as HBCUs, HSIs, individuals with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ populations in our regional area). (Evidence: recruitment plan, promotional materials)
 - c. Propose a school-level award for demonstrated DEI-related activities. (Evidence: award, research summaries, publications)
2. Further emphasize the uniqueness and strengths of our curricular options.
 - a. Increase enrollment by 5% in the graduate certificate in instructional communication. (Evidence: enrollment numbers)
 - b. Assess viability of adding a second certificate for MSLS students, including conducting a UK landscape scan. (Evidence: environmental scan, feedback from students, report on viability)

- c. Revisit lists of concentration-themed courses to assure currency, relevancy, and thoroughness. (Evidence: updated concentrations, feedback from students)
3. Prepare students to be professionals and leaders in the field and support students' career aspirations with excellent teaching, advising, service and support.
 - a. Create a bi-annual audit of practical skills developed and assessed in coursework. (Evidence: list of practical assignments, audit report, curriculum committee report)
 - b. Form an ad hoc committee with faculty and staff to develop concrete ways to improve career preparation and advising commitments and assistance. (Evidence: committee report)
 - c. Better use of University professional career services. (Evidence: collaborate with UK career services)
 - d. Maintain high satisfaction with student support (Evidence: exit survey)
4. Promote excellence in research that advances discipline knowledge and evidence-based practices in library and information science.
 - a. Maintain or increase program scholarly activity. (Evidence: annual number of publications in professional and academic venues, monthly report from ADR)
 - b. Propose a school-level annual award to recognize unique, quality scholarly activity. (Evidence: award, research summaries, publications)
 - c. Expand visibility of faculty research in library/practitioner communities. (Evidence: participation in local/regional conferences and other venue, services to practitioner communities, recognition from local/regional bodies)