Library and Information Science, M.A.

Students who pursue the master's degree in library and information science gain an understanding of the foundations of the library and information profession, including the history of the field, ethical and philosophical concerns, the information cycle, principles and procedures for dealing with a variety of information carriers, and the theory and practice of strategic management. They examine future trends, with emphasis on cutting-edge technological concerns. Students study the discipline’s research base, gaining heightened awareness of the synergism between library and information science and other disciplines, as well as the close relationship between research and practice. Finally, students become knowledgeable about the factors that underlie users’ information needs and appropriate strategies to assist them.

Requirements

The Master of Arts in library and information science requires 36 s.h. of graduate credit. A thesis option is available for students who seek additional research experience.

The master’s degree program is designed to be completed in two years with enrollment of 9 s.h. during the fall and spring semesters. The School of Library and Information Science strongly recommends that students not register for more than 12 s.h. during fall and spring semesters and 8 s.h. during summer sessions. The program also may be completed through part-time study.

Students may apply a maximum of 12 s.h. of graduate transfer credit in library and information science or related areas toward the degree, subject to the approval of the transfer credit committee. Approval is given course-by-course and is determined by the course’s content, currency, and applicability to the student’s program.

The curriculum includes a proseminar and three tiers of course work. Tier I consists of four required courses that provide a solid grounding for all successive course work. For Tier II, students select four of the ten courses listed, based on their areas of interest. In Tier III, students may earn up to 12 s.h. in electives chosen with guidance from their advisors. This three-tier arrangement allows each student to concentrate in an area that most closely matches the student’s professional goals.

The Master of Arts in library and information science has held continuous accreditation from the American Library Association since 1971.

The M.A. with a major in library and information science requires the following course work.

Proseminar

Tier I Courses

Tier II Courses

Tier III Courses

Total Hours

Proseminar

Tier I Courses

Tier II Courses

Tier III Courses

Total Hours

36

Proseminar

Students must enroll in the proseminar during their first semester, along with Tier I courses SLIS:5010 Cultural Foundations and SLIS:5020 Computing Foundations.

SLIS:5000 Proseminar in Library and Information Science 0

Tier I

All of these:

SLIS:5010 Cultural Foundations (taken in student’s first semester) 3
SLIS:5020 Computing Foundations (taken in student’s first semester) 3
SLIS:5030 Conceptual Foundations 3

One of these:

SLIS:5041 Contextual Foundations - College and University Libraries 3
SLIS:5042 Contextual Foundations - Public Libraries 3
SLIS:5043 Contextual Foundations - Special Libraries 3
SLIS:5044 Contextual Foundations - School Library Media Administration 3

Tier II

Four of these:

SLIS:6020 Literacy and Learning 3
SLIS:6100 Data Management and Visualization 3
SLIS:6110 Evidence-Based Practice in Library and Information Science 3
SLIS:6130 Community Engagement 3
SLIS:6150 Information Behavior 3
SLIS:6170 Organizational Management 3
SLIS:6330 Archives and Media 3
SLIS:6335 Metadata Theories and Applications 3
SLIS:6345 Stewardship of Information and Collections 3
SLIS:6490 Information Policy and Ethics 3

Tier III

With their advisor’s guidance, students choose 12 s.h. in Tier III electives. Courses from Tier I and Tier II also may be selected as electives.

SLIS:4150 Introduction to Book Studies 3
SLIS:4910 The Book in the Middle Ages 3
SLIS:4920 The Transition from Manuscript to Print 3
SLIS:5200 User Education: Multimedia 3
SLIS:5210 Reference and Information Services 3
SLIS:5220 Resources for Children 3
SLIS:5230 Resources for Young Adults 3
SLIS:5240 Resources for Adults 3
Special Libraries and Information Centers

Special libraries serve corporations, private companies, government agencies, technical and academic institutions, museums, medical facilities, and information management consulting firms. They are organized to anticipate and quickly respond to the specific information needs of their users. Special librarians are information resource experts who collect, analyze, evaluate, package, and disseminate information to facilitate accurate decision making. Knowledge of information technology and the ability to design services suitable to the parent organization are professional necessities. In addition, substantial subject expertise may be required.

School Teacher Librarian

School teacher librarians provide instruction to students in accessing, evaluating, and using information; collaborate with teachers on the use of resources in instruction; provide leadership in the use of instructional and information technologies; offer reading guidance; provide reference service; and manage the library media center.

The University of Iowa offers a state-approved program leading to endorsement as school teacher librarian K-12. In order to fulfill state requirements for this endorsement, students must hold or be eligible for a teaching license and must complete a designated sequence of courses that leads both to certification and to the M.A. degree.

Licensed teachers employed in Iowa schools may enroll in a distance education program that leads to an M.A. in library and information science and endorsement for school librarianship. Contact the School of Library and Information Science for details.

Students who are interested in school libraries but lack a valid Iowa teaching license may earn licensure as a school teacher librarian by completing 30 s.h. in the College of Education. The Master of Arts in library and information science with teacher licensure requires 66 s.h. of credit. Students must apply and be admitted to both programs.

Joint Degrees

The School of Library and Information Science offers a joint Master of Arts/Juris Doctor with the College of Law. The primary goal of this joint program is integration of the two areas of study. Students in the joint program may apply a limited amount of credit toward both degrees. Up to 9 s.h. in law may be applied toward the M.A. in library and information science; up to 6 s.h. in library and information science may be applied to the J.D. Students in the joint program take law courses their first year and begin taking School of Library and Information Science courses in their second year. Separate application to each degree program is required. Applicants must be admitted to both programs before they may be admitted to the joint degree program. For more information, see Juris Doctor in the Catalog. Elective courses also are available for students who wish to specialize in law librarianship but who do not wish to pursue the J.D.

The School of Library and Information Science also offers a joint Master of Arts/Master of Fine Arts in book arts with the Center for the Book. The joint program allows students with strong interests in the physical book to acquire training in the book arts, book history, and material book studies. The earned expertise in the production and legacy of the book as a physical artifact can be an asset for those focused on careers

SLIS:5520 Studies in Book History 3
SLIS:5530 Topics in Preservation 3
SLIS:5600 History of Readers and Reading 3
SLIS:5900 Health Informatics I 3
SLIS:6120 Natural Language Processing 3
SLIS:6140 Digital Environments 3
SLIS:6145 Digital Preservation and Stewardship 3
SLIS:6160 Search and Discovery 3
SLIS:6250 Beginning Cataloging and Classification 3
SLIS:6320 Topics: Conceptual Structures/Systems 1-3
SLIS:6370 Topics in Book Studies 3
SLIS:6380 Analysis of Scholarly Domains 3
SLIS:6490 Information Policy and Ethics 3
SLIS:6520 Practicum in Libraries and Information Centers 2-3
SLIS:6530 School Library Media Practicum 3
SLIS:6570 Independent Study 1-3
SLIS:6580 Thesis 0-3
SLIS:6585 Design, Visualization, and Mapping 3-D Environments 3
SLIS:6590 Digital Humanities Capstone 3
SLIS:7290 Digital Humanities Theory and Practice 3

Specializations

Students’ programs often are designed around particular career goals. Following are examples of possible specializations.

Public Libraries

Public libraries provide informational, educational, and recreational materials and a wide range of services for a diverse clientele. Although public libraries receive the bulk of their funding from local taxes, they also may be organized on a regional or statewide cooperative basis. The variety of uses, services, materials, and organizational structures of public libraries makes this a challenging area of librarianship. Public librarians need to develop skills in analyzing the communities they serve, designing comprehensive marketing plans to meet their needs, implementing the plans in a cost-effective way, and evaluating the success of their efforts.

Academic Libraries

The academic library, whether in a community college, a four-year college, or a university, provides information services in support of the parent institution’s teaching, research, and public service missions. These services include instruction in the use of the library and its resources. Management skills and subject or language competence often are required. Since librarians in this setting usually are considered academic faculty members, a second master’s or other advanced degree is desirable.
in special collections librarianship. The joint degree program requires a total of 81 s.h. of credit. For more information, see M.F.A. in Book Arts in the Catalog.

Students interested in a librarianship career with a more general interest in the physical book should consider the book studies, book arts and technologies/library and information science (BLIS) certificate program under “Certificate Opportunities” below.

In addition to the joint degree programs above, informal joint programs may be arranged between departments. A minimum of 60 s.h. of graduate credit is required for a joint master's degree program.

Certificate Opportunities

The Center for the Book and the School of Library and Information Science collaborate to offer the book studies, book arts and technologies/library and information science (BLIS) program. The program enables students to earn an M.A. in library and information science and a certificate in book studies. It requires admission to the School of Library and Information Science M.A. program and the Center for the Book certificate program. Admission deadline is February 1 for the following fall. The joint M.A./Certificate in Book Studies/Book Arts and Technologies offers multiple pathways into professional engagement with artifacts available in archives and libraries, such as rare and artist books. Students select courses that enable them to gain skills and knowledge in areas of service such as conservation, cataloging, instruction, and outreach. The combined program requires 51 s.h. of course work. Students take 27 s.h. of SLIS courses; 15 s.h. of book arts, studies, and technologies courses; and the remaining 9 s.h. may be taken in either SLIS or Center for the Book course work, or from another unit with approval from the SLIS advisor. For more information, see Certificate in Book Studies/Book Arts and Technologies in the Catalog.

M.A. students in library and information science also have the opportunity to earn the Certificate in Informatics. Specialty areas include bioinformatics and computational biology, geoinformatics, health informatics, and information science.

Students also may apply to earn the Certificate in Public Digital Humanities. The program requires 15 s.h. of graduate credit and offers credentials to students who plan to incorporate digital technology into their future research, training, or careers.

Separate application to each certificate program is required. For more information, see Programs and Degrees on the School of Library and Information Science website.

Admission

Applicants begin the admission process by submitting an online graduate application through the Office of Admissions. Applicants then receive a HawkID and can upload the remaining application documents through MyUI. Transcripts of all academic work, a written statement of purpose and goals, a résumé or curricula vitae, and three letters of recommendation are required. Applicants to the teacher librarian program are asked to include a copy of their current teaching certificate. The admission committee considers each applicant’s letters of recommendation, statement of purpose, résumé or curricula vitae, and other appropriate criteria, as well as an applicant’s grade-point average. Applicants for admission to the M.A. program should have a g.p.a. of at least 3.00 on a 4.00 scale. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores are not required. Admission is competitive.

Applicants whose first language is not English must score at least 81 (Internet-based) on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Applicants with TOEFL scores below 100 on the Internet-based test are required by the University to take an English Proficiency Test if admitted to the program. In place of TOEFL, the school also accepts International English Testing System (IELTS) scores of 7.0 or higher, with no subscore below 6.0. Applicants who submit IELTS scores are required to take an on-campus English proficiency evaluation.

Completed applications should be received by February 1 for consideration for fall admission. Decisions of the admissions committee are announced approximately six weeks after the application deadline. Late applications are considered if places are still available. Financial aid often is not available for late applicants. Admitted students are assigned a faculty advisor for program planning during their first semester.

Applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations of the Graduate College.

Financial Support

The School of Library and Information Science typically offers partial-tuition scholarships and one-quarter-time graduate assistantships. To be considered for scholarships or assistantships, applicants must meet the M.A. program’s grade-point average requirement for admission (see Admission [p. 3] in this section of the Catalog). Prospective students must submit letters of application for scholarships before February 1. At the discretion of the admissions committee, limited graduate assistantships may be offered to incoming students based on academic merit and prior experience. In addition, available assistantships are advertised as they become available; students should apply for specific assistantships.

For information on departmental scholarships, contact the School of Library and Information Science or visit its website to learn about available opportunities. Part-time employment usually is available in the University of Iowa Libraries or other campus units.

Applications for student loans, work-study eligibility, or other financial assistance should be submitted directly to the University's Office of Student Financial Aid.

Career Advancement

Library and information science graduates have many options for employment. Alumni hold positions in public, school, special, and academic libraries as well as other information settings. They serve in varied roles, such as information consultant, database manager, library administrator, webmaster, network coordinator, cataloger, children’s librarian, school library media specialist, and archivist.

The school shares announcements of national and international job opportunities through an electronic mailing list. In addition, the Library and Information Science Student Organization (LISSO) sponsors talks by speakers versed in areas of librarianship as well as workshops on résumé writing, social media networking, and interviewing. Internships and the school’s practicum courses provide students with hands-on experience that may enhance their job prospects.
For recent information on library and information science placement, see the Library Research Service (LRS) article and the Library Journal's annual Placement and Salaries 2016 report.