Library and Information Science, MA

Students who pursue the Master of Arts in library and information science gain an understanding of the foundations of library and information professions, including the history of the fields, ethical and philosophical concerns, and principles of stewardship for a variety of forms of documentation and records. Students are taught the theory and practice of strategic management within information organizations, preparing them for careers and leadership in a broad variety of information organizations. They gain the knowledge needed to anticipate future trends in information access and organization. Students study 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.

The MA in library and information science has held continuous accreditation from the American Library Association since 1971. The degree prepares students to work in public libraries, K–12 school libraries, academic libraries, law libraries, archives, and special collections.

The School of Library and Information Science combines online education with on-campus opportunities and collaboration allowing online students to participate in real-time learning experiences with their on-campus classmates. Both full- and part-time enrollment options are available for on-campus and virtual coursework. For more information about the online program option, see Online MA in LIS on the School of Library and Information Science website. Not all coursework for this program is taught in person. On-campus students will be required to take some online coursework to complete the degree requirements.

Learning Outcomes

Gateway Knowledge

Students will understand the historical, social, cultural, and civic contexts of various library and information service roles in the United States, and students will internalize key values of the profession such as intellectual freedom, information equality, and community well-being. Students will also learn best practices in professional communication and development.

Information Resources

Students will understand the lifecycle of recorded knowledge and information from creation to use and the best practices for developing collections—including acquisition, selection, purchasing, processing, storage, and deselection—with special attention to emerging formats and genres of information resources.

Lifelong Learning and Continuing Education

Students will understand that lifelong learning and continuing education are organizational goals for libraries and information centers to provide as well as professional goals for library and information workers to seek out. Students will understand best practices for professional development and also best practices for teaching and learning in libraries and information centers.

Management and Administration

Students will understand best practices for project and team management, strategic planning and communication, organizational workflows and assessment, library advocacy and development, and community partnerships and engagement.

Organization of Recorded Knowledge and Information

Students will understand how to evaluate, represent, and organize information and knowledge across cultures and communities as well as how to devise, maintain, and use systems of organization in both physical and digital environments toward efficient discovery and retrieval by diverse users.

Reference and User Services

Students will understand the techniques for discovering, retrieving, evaluating, and synthesizing information from diverse sources, and students will understand methods for learning and describing the information needs of various users and communities and how libraries and information centers can work with these communities toward meeting their needs.

Research and Evidence-Based Practice

Students will understand the methods of intervention-oriented research and assessment methods in libraries and information centers, and students will recognize, evaluate, and apply the different types of evidence that information professionals use to measure the success of services, practices, and facilities.

Information Equity

Students will understand that a central value of libraries and information centers is to mitigate information inequality, and students will endeavor to improve library and information practices through informed, respectful, and inclusive interventions that recognize and centralize social difference across race, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, socioeconomic status, nationality, religion, age, education, literacy, and other vectors.

Technological Knowledge and Skills

Students will understand and identify the technological infrastructure that enables library and information services, and students will be able to evaluate existing and emerging technologies toward inclusive and effective practice.

Requirements

The Master of Arts in library and information science requires 36 s.h. of graduate credit. Students must maintain a minimum Graduate College program grade-point average (GPA) of 3.00. Students must earn a grade of B-minus or higher in all core courses and a grade of C or higher in elective courses. Courses may be repeated one time if a student receives a grade below the stated threshold; however, the original grade will still contribute to the cumulative GPA. If the second completion does not result in a minimum qualifying grade, the student will be ineligible to complete the MA in library and information science at the University of Iowa.

See the School of Library and Information Science Handbook on the School of Library and Information Science website for further details.

Students may apply a maximum of 12 s.h. of graduate transfer credit from non-University of Iowa institutions and 9 s.h. transfer credit from a University of Iowa graduate program. These courses must be in library and information science or areas related to the degree and are subject to applicable rules and approval by the curriculum committee. Approval is based on the course's content, currency, and applicability to a student's program.

The program may be completed fully online or through a mix of online and in-person courses. Please check residence criteria for any joint degrees and certificates. Most of the online coursework is delivered synchronously and is designed to be completed in two years with an enrollment of 9 s.h. during each of 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.

A thesis option may be available; interested students should contact the program for more information.

The MA in library and information science requires the following coursework.

Requirements	Hours
Core Courses	15
Electives	21

The curriculum includes two levels of coursework. Core courses consist of five required courses that provide a solid grounding for all successive coursework. Students select elective coursework consisting of seven courses for 21 s.h. or a combined electives course total of 21 s.h. based on their areas of interest. This two-level arrangement allows students to concentrate in an area that most closely matches their professional goals.

Core Courses

Course #	Title	Hours
All of these:		
SLIS:5010	Libraries, Culture, and Society (taken in student's first semester)	3
SLIS:5030	Information Organization	3
SLIS:6115	Introduction to Research Methods in Library and Information Science	3
SLIS:6170	Management, Teams, and Leadership	3
SLIS:7900	SLIS Graduation Seminar	0
One of these:		
SLIS:5020	Public User Services and Technology	3
SLIS:6140	Academic User Services and Technology	3

Electives

Course #	Title	Hours
With their advisor's guidance, students select seven courses for 21 s.h. or a combined course total of 21 s.h. from these:		

Course #	Title	Hours
SLIS:4150	Introduction to Book Studies	3
SLIS:4910	The Book in the Middle Ages	3
SLIS:4920	The Book in Early Modern Europe	3
SLIS:5041	College and University Libraries	3
SLIS:5042	Public Libraries	3
SLIS:5044	School Library Media Administration	3
SLIS:5200	Innovation and Technology Methodology	3
SLIS:5220	Resources for Children	3
SLIS:5230	Resources for Young Adults	3
SLIS:5400	Community Archives	3
SLIS:5450	Reader's Advisory: Practices, Resources, and Media	3
SLIS:5520	Studies in Book History and Technologies	0-3
SLIS:5530	Preservation Management	3
SLIS:5535	Book Conservation	3
SLIS:5600	Reading Culture: History and Research in Print and Digital Media	3
SLIS:5630	Introduction to Special Collections and Archives	3
SLIS:6020	Literacy and Learning	3
SLIS:6040	Media Production Workshop	3
SLIS:6130	Community Engagement	3
SLIS:6140	Academic User Services and Technology	3
SLIS:6145	Digital Preservation and Stewardship	3
SLIS:6150	Information Behavior	3
SLIS:6250	Cataloging and Classification	3
SLIS:6255	Rare Book Cataloging	3
SLIS:6330	Collection Development	3
SLIS:6335	Metadata Theories and Applications	3
SLIS:6345	Stewardship of Information and Collections	3
SLIS:6350	Archives: Theory and Practice	3
SLIS:6355	Advanced Topics in Special Collections	3
SLIS:6370	Topics in Book Studies	3
SLIS:6411	Special Topics in Library and Information Science	3
SLIS:6490	Information Policy and Ethics	3
SLIS:6520	Practicum in Libraries and Information Centers	3
SLIS:6530	School Library Media Practicum	3
SLIS:6570	Independent Study	1-3
SLIS:6580	Thesis	0-6

Students may choose to satisfy up to 6 s.h. for the degree with an approved practicum (SLIS:6520 Practicum in Libraries and Information Centers). Students may repeat the practicum once for a total of 6 s.h. Placements must be preapproved by the practicum faculty lead. For more information, see the School of Library and Information Science website.

Specializations

To earn the degree, students do not need to select an area of specialization. However, programs often are designed around particular career goals, and the school offers courses in the following specialized focus areas that students may choose to take to prepare them for working in a specific area of library and information science.

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 are often required. Since librarians in this setting usually are considered academic faculty members, a second master's or other advanced degree is recommended.

School Libraries

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 for technology-enabled student learning; offer reading guidance; provide reference service; and manage the library media center. In the state of Iowa, school librarians are referred to as teacher librarians.

The University of Iowa offers a state-approved program leading to endorsement as 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 MA degree.

Licensed teachers employed in Iowa schools may enroll in a distance education program that leads to an MA in library and information science and endorsement for teacher 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 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.

Combined Programs

Undergraduate Degree/MA

Students working on an undergraduate degree at the University of Iowa who are interested in earning an MA in library and information science may apply to a combined undergraduate degree and MA degree program. The Undergraduate to Graduate (U2G) program enables students to begin work on the MA as they complete their baccalaureate degree and complete both degrees in five years. Students admitted to the program may count 12 s.h. toward both their undergraduate degree and the MA.

Separate application to each degree program is required. Applicants must be admitted to both programs before they may be admitted to the combined degree program.

For more information, visit Undergraduate to Graduate (U2G) on the Graduate College website.

MA/JD

The School of Library and Information Science and the College of Law offer a combined Master of Arts/Juris Doctor program. Students in the combined program may apply a limited amount of credit toward both degrees, thereby completing the combined program with fewer semester hours than if each degree was completed separately. Students enroll in 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. For more information about the JD, see Juris Doctor, JD (College of Law) in the catalog. Elective courses also are available through the College of Law for students who wish to specialize in law librarianship but who do not want to pursue the JD.

MA/MFA in Book Arts

The School of Library and Information Science and the Center for the Book offer a combined Master of Arts/Master of Fine Arts in book arts. The combined program allows students with a strong interest 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 combined with expertise in library and information science can be an asset for those focused on careers in special collections libraries and archives.

Students in the combined program earn both degrees by completing fewer semester hours than if each degree was completed separately. Separate application to each degree program is required. Applicants must be admitted to both programs before they may be admitted to the combined degree program. For more information, see the MFA 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 certificate in combination with the MA in library and information science.

MA/Certificate in Book Arts and Book Studies

The Center for the Book and the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) collaborate to offer the Certificate in Book Arts and Book Studies/MA library and information science program. The combined program enables students to earn an MA in library and information science and a Certificate

in Book Arts and Book Studies. It requires admission to the School of Library and Information Science MA program and the Center for the Book certificate program.

The MA/Certificate in Book Arts and Book Studies 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 coursework. 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 coursework, or from another unit with approval from the SLIS advisor.

Admission deadline is Feb. 1 for fall entry. For more information, see the Certificate in Book Arts and Book Studies in the catalog.

MA/PhD in English

The combined MA in library and information science/PhD in English program prepares students for careers in academic libraries as humanities subject specialists, reference and instruction librarians, first-year experience librarians, special collections librarians and curators, and archivists. It also enhances the research profiles and methodological toolboxes of digital humanists as well as archival historicists, in addition to improving pedagogical skills. Offered by the Graduate College and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; see the PhD in English in the catalog.

Admission

Applicants begin the admission process by submitting an online graduate application through 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 curriculum vitae, and other appropriate criteria, as well as an applicant's grade-point average (GPA). Applicants for admission to the MA program should have a GPA of at least 3.00 on a 4.00 scale. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test scores are not required. Admission is competitive.

Completed applications should be received by Feb. 1 for priority 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 is often 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 on the Graduate College website.

Career Advancement

School of 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 other opportunities 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) website and the annual Placement and Salaries 2022 report on the Library Journal website.

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

Library and Information Science, MA

Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		
36 s.h. of graduate level coursework must be completed; up to 12 s.h. of graduate transfer credits allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. [a]		
Graduate College program GPA of at least 3.00 is required. [b]		
Students must earn a grade of B-minus or higher in all core courses and a grade of C or higher in elective courses.		
Students may design their program around particular career goals such as Public Librarianship, Information Processes, Medical Librarianship, Youth Services, Archives and Media, and Academic Librarianship by working with their advisor to determine coursework and sequence.		
Students may pursue select degrees, certificates or a certification simultaneously in less time than would be required to complete the programs of study independently. [c]		
	Hours	**0**
First Year		
Fall		
SLIS:5010	Libraries, Culture, and Society [d, e]	3
SLIS:5020 or SLIS:6140	Public User Services and Technology [e] or Academic User Services and Technology	3
SLIS elective [f]		3
	Hours	**9**
Spring		
SLIS:5030	Information Organization [e, g]	3

SLIS:6115	Introduction to Research Methods in Library and Information Science [e]	3
SLIS:6170	Management, Teams, and Leadership [e, h]	3
	Hours	**9**
Second Year		
Fall		
SLIS elective [f]		3
SLIS elective [f]		3
SLIS elective [f]		3
	Hours	**9**
Spring		
SLIS:7900	SLIS Graduation Seminar [i]	0
SLIS elective [f]		3
SLIS elective [f]		3
SLIS elective [f]		3
	Hours	**9**
	Total Hours	**36**

a Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.

b Graduate College program GPA is comprised of all courses that are approved degree requirements. If a student takes more than the minimum required number of semester hours to complete the degree, but all courses taken are eligible to count toward the degree, those courses will be included in the Graduate College program GPA.

c Students can complete a combined degree with the SLIS MA and either a Juris Doctor or the Book Arts MFA, or may consider the SLIS MA with the Book Studies/Book Arts and Technologies certificate, Informatics certificate, or Public Digital Humanities certificate. The SLIS MA may also be combined with the School Library Media certification.

d Course should be taken during the first semester of the program.

e SLIS core course.

f Students must complete 21 s.h. of SLIS elective graduate coursework. Work with an academic advisor to determine coursework and sequence. Additional information can be found in the General Catalog and on department website.

g Course should be taken during the second semester of the program.

h Course can be taken in either year one or two based on individual schedule.

i Students will complete and submit a capstone portfolio during their final semester. If they are graduating in the summer, they will submit their capstone portfolio during the previous spring semester.