

**University of Rhode Island**  
**Graduate School of Library and Information Studies**  
**LSC 595: LIS Practicum**  
**Summer, 2009**

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**Catalog Description:** Directed field experience applying theory to practice in libraries, information centers, and related organizations. Jointly supervised by a member of the faculty and a professional in the cooperating institution.

**Goals:** Students will put theory into practice, and will reflect on the professional implications of their practice. Settings will vary: the instructors will help students arrange placements in public libraries, college and university libraries, special libraries, and other information services as appropriate. Within institutions, students may work on special projects or routine assignments in public services, technical services, archives, instruction, or other areas. Qualified mentors at each site will mentor students and help assess their performance. Selection of setting and task will be tailored to each student's career goals and interests.

Therefore, the [GSLIS Educational Outcomes](#) emphasized in this course will vary with individual students' site selections, work assignments, and reasons for undertaking the PFE.

- Goal 1 (Professional Ethics) will be included in every student's PFE; the student will choose which ethical issue or issues to address, and which assignment in the PFE portfolio (journal, on-line discussion, or poster session presentation) provides best evidence of the outcome.
- Other goals will be referenced as appropriate to each PFE. Again, the student, in consultation with the site supervisor and faculty supervisor, will choose which outcome or outcomes are most relevant, what activities will best support the desired outcome, and what products will provide the best evidence for assessment of the outcome.

For each student placement, a document signed by instructor, site supervisor, and student will specify the educational objectives to be met and activities through which those objectives will be met.

It is intended that both students and hosts should benefit from the practicum.

**Requirements:** Students must have completed 18 credit hours' work toward the MLIS with an average of B or better. Individual placements may require specific course work.

**Procedures:**

1. Site agreement: Form (attached) allows students and site supervisors flexibility to identify and define appropriate objectives and activities in support of GSLIS Educational Outcomes. Instructors will help design rubrics for evaluation of each student's designated outcomes. Instructor, site supervisor, and student will sign when agreement is reached. The original document will be kept in the student's GSLIS dossier; copies will be kept by student, instructor, and site supervisor.
2. Communications:
  - a. Whole class: Online discussion forum; face-to-face orientation; poster session.
  - b. Instructors/individual student: WebCT mail preferred; e-mail; telephone 401-874-4641 (Eaton) or 401-874-4646 (Carson). Students will submit assignments when due, and will contact instructors if questions and concerns arise. Instructors will respond to students' questions or concerns during the semester as promptly as possible (usually within three business days), and will evaluate student work (usually within two weeks).

- c. Instructors/site supervisor: e-mail, [geaton@uri.edu](mailto:geaton@uri.edu) or [chcarson@uri.edu](mailto:chcarson@uri.edu); telephone, 401-874-4641 or 874-4646. Instructors will notify potential site supervisors of student's wish to interview; will help negotiate practicum agreements with supervisors; will respond to supervisors' questions or concerns during the semester; and will consult formally with supervisors at midsemester. Supervisors will assess student work at site, based on agreed activities and outcomes; will contact instructor if questions and concerns arise; and will write letter of assessment by the last class.
3. Records: Portfolios will be kept on file in GSLIS for up to seven years.

## Assignments

Instructors will assign grades, with input from site supervisors. Each student's grade will be based on rubrics for separately negotiated activities and products, as appropriate to the individual placement.

### Allocation of credits for assignments:

- 1) Journal: from 15% to 35% (45% less amount allocated to poster session presentation). A student whose practicum is process-based (e.g., concentrated on experiencing the daily routine of a public desk or a technical services position) will probably want to place more weight on this assignment.
- 2) Participation in face-to-face and online seminar: 5%.
- 3) Presentation of projects at poster session: from 15% to 30% (45% less amount allocated to journal). A student whose practicum is product-based (e.g., concentrated on completing a special project for the host site) may want to place more weight on this assignment.
- 4) Portfolio structure: 15%. The portfolio will include the original agreement, the journal, selected posts from the online discussion board, and (in some portable form!) the poster session presentation. Its structure will include a table of contents and brief essays highlighting the significance of each item; see below for assignment description.
- 5) Site supervisor's letter of assessment: 35%

**Initial agreement:** This document is a prerequisite for the professional field experience; it spells out what you and your site supervisor will do to achieve your educational objectives for the course. Fill in the agreement form either online or by hand. Specifically, it will include:

- Contact information for all 3 parties to the agreement.
- Administrative information (credit hours, dates, brief description of PFE).
- Major objectives, corresponding to the GSLIS Educational Outcomes—including Outcome 1, Professional Ethics, and between one and three other outcomes appropriate to your own PFE. You may rewrite broad GSLIS outcomes to fit specific type of library/information service.
- Specific activities to be carried out in support of objectives.
- Specific products to be presented as evidence of activities. The assigned products are listed on the agreement form, followed by a space for your input. Your PFE may develop in unplanned ways. Amendments to the agreement may be negotiated by student, site supervisor, and faculty supervisor; any assignment changes will be based on the principle that assignments should 1) promote reflection on ethical practice, 2) provide meaningful evidence of student achievement, and 3) not add unnecessarily to student workload.
- Signatures of student, site supervisor, and faculty supervisor (if you are unable to collect these by the due date, substitute e-mail confirmation and forward the signed document ASAP).

**Journal** (15% to 30%): One of the major benefits of doing a practicum is the opportunity to observe a workplace, participate in its activities, and reflect on the experience. The journal is a systematic record of these observations and reflections about the practicum experience. **Note that the Journal provides an opportunity to reflect on the ethical and professional values relevant to your PFE**, although you may choose to meet this course requirement in another assignment. A student whose PFE is based less on special projects and more on the experience of daily routines in a library or information service may

have fewer tangible products to present, but may have a very rich journal. The conclusion, reflecting on how fully the practicum outcomes have been achieved, is the student's final report on the experience.

**Journal content:** A journal entry should be made for each time the student works at the site. Each entry should note the number of hours worked that time, and a running count of the total hours accumulated thus far. But beyond that, the journal is a record of what is being learned. It should encompass the total PFE, including interpersonal and organizational issues as well as tasks performed. Journals will be evaluated on the basis of how well they describe and reflect upon such matters as the following:

- How student was introduced into the organization and what type of orientation.
- What happens - What takes place, including day-to-day routines and critical incidents
- Tasks - Major tasks and accomplishments that day
- Issues - Issues or problems that arise for the student or in the organization and how they get resolved
- Staffing - Staffing patterns or levels of staffing, and their effects on how work is done
- Physical environment - How physical layout, furniture, noise, temperature, light, etc. affect service or ability to carry out responsibilities
- Resources – Perceived adequacy of funding, its effect on collections, services, ability to carry out projects and duties
- Social climate - Interactions among workers; overall social climate (friendly, distant, etc.)
- Users - Types of users served; typical needs of patrons
- Staff/user interactions – Nature of contacts; frequency; content covered; pace or pressure
- Service philosophy – Perceived standards or orientation toward service
- Challenges - Particular challenges for this organization and how they are being met
- Management style - The management style practiced by mentors and others
- Kind of supervision received – Direction, training, feedback, access, and mentoring
- Meetings - What takes place at meetings the student is invited to attend
- Developmental progress - Development of skill and confidence in carrying out duties
- Explanations and hypotheses - Generally, why things seem to be the way they are
- Critical perspective - How things might be done differently or more effectively
- Self-evaluation – Strengths and weaknesses; how one might have made different choices if one were doing it over
- **Ethical implications of any and all of the above**

**Format:** Your final journal submission will be a major part of your portfolio. It will be listed in the table of contents, and it will have an introduction and conclusion:

- Introduction: In a brief (three-paragraph) essay, highlight the activities and reflections that most contributed to your progress toward the GSLIS Outcomes specified in your agreement.
- Conclusion: In a brief essay, reflect on the professional meaning and implications of what you experienced and learned during the term.

Journals should be uploaded to the LSC 595 Portfolio assignment in TrueOutcomes at midterm (draft) and at the end of the term (as part of the portfolio, for final grading).

**Participation (5%):** *Attendance at the scheduled face-to-face orientation and the end-of-term poster session will be required.* Exceptions for good reason must be arranged with the instructors in advance. Participation in class discussion face-to-face and online will contribute to the final grade.

Opportunities for interaction and comparison with other sites this semester will include:

- Orientation session at beginning of semester
- Online discussion
- Culminating poster session, showcasing significant student projects and insights (graded separately)

The participation grade will be based on WebCT discussion. Posts on topics of the kind suggested for "journal content" will count. (For purposes of quantity, posts on administrative issues – e.g., questions

about the syllabus – may be counted as half posts, if they are useful and significant.) Consider this discussion as a kind of group blog, or as practice for your journal, or a way of tapping the collective wisdom.

**Project Presentation** (15% - 30%; reciprocal of journal): The object of the poster session is to communicate the important things you've learned from your practicum experience in a broader professional context. A typical poster session communicates in two or three ways. If you've attended exhibits at library conferences, this will sound familiar:

- A visual (usually a poster, but variations are possible) display clearly explains the project or content. Your poster should include your name, site location, site supervisor's name and title, project title, and a one-paragraph abstract. The session will probably be in the Galanti Lounge, with posters set up on small tables around the periphery of the room.
- The presenter stands beside the display and gives a very short "talk" about it to individuals who stop and are interested in the subject.
- The presenter may provide a handout—a summary page that will remind the audience both of content and of the presenter's talents.

If you are doing a product-oriented PFE, you will probably want to show-case the project. This is a chance to demonstrate what you have created (a database? a website?), how it supports the service provided by your host site, and how it fits in the broader professional context (for instance, does it confirm or disprove the CW in professional literature?).

If you are doing a process-oriented PFE, you will probably take a different approach – how can you display the hours you spent interacting with children at the desk, or helping genealogists locate the resources they needed?

Whether your PFE is product-oriented or process-oriented, you may choose this assignment as one in which you address the professional ethics outcome.

Elements that can add dimension to your presentation:

- **Literature review** – Review several current articles related to your topic. For each article include full citation and one paragraph on article perspectives specific to your topic – thus, not an abstract of the whole article.
- **Research** – use observation, interviews, discussion, anecdotal evidence, data collection (statistics, policies, other pertinent documents), comparison to other similar sites that you have experienced and draw on your literature review.
- **Critical analysis** – this demonstrates your ability to analyze and think about what you are doing and thus you go beyond the descriptive to discussion that shows how you think about and have evaluated your work environment and experience.
- **Illustration** – can you clarify your meaning with a photo, drawing, or other related graphic?

Do not try to capture your whole PFE in one poster – be selective, and focus on one important angle. Your primary audience may include future PFE students, GSLIS faculty, site supervisors, and local librarians and information specialists.

Several sites give good advice about how to construct a research poster; see for instance <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/speaking/poster/> and [http://cte.umdj.edu/career\\_development/career\\_posters.cfm](http://cte.umdj.edu/career_development/career_posters.cfm).

Your poster session presentation will be included in your LSC 595 portfolio. If your poster session files can't be incorporated in your main file – for instance, if you generated handouts, graphs and/or other visuals, or a PowerPoint presentation if you used one – you should upload them separately to the LSC 595 Portfolio assignment in TrueOutcomes. Adapt your material with a view to preserving content, clarity, and convenient access.

### Portfolio structure: (15%)

The object of the portfolio is to gather and reflect on the meaningful evidence of what you've learned and accomplished from your PFE. Your portfolio will contain the following items, many of which are separately graded.

- A table of contents. (Specify % assigned to each assignment; this should match your final signed agreement. Specify assignment(s) to be graded for professional ethics outcome.)
- Separately graded items:
  - A copy of your signed agreement.
  - Your completed PFE journal.
  - Your selection of your most significant posts to the WebCT discussion.
  - Your poster session (content of poster; handout; talking points or transcript of short "speech").
- Sections graded as part of the "structure of the portfolio" include several brief essays:
  - An essay to introduce the journal, summarizing what you did and how each of your major activities was intended to advance your desired educational outcomes.
  - An essay to introduce your WebCT posts (optional; include if you would like to highlight significance of your contributions to discussion).
  - A concluding essay, reflecting on what you achieved over the semester (both in terms of your contribution to service at your host site and in terms of your own professional growth).
  - Any other material that you feel is helpful in describing, analyzing, and making sense of your semester's journey.

Portfolios should be uploaded to the LSC 595 portfolio assignment in TrueOutcomes. You may also post them to your TrueOutcomes e-Portfolio for future use. You may want to use a combination of handout, transcript, and photos to document the poster session. Adapt your material with a view to preserving content, clarity, and convenient access. GSLIS will retain portfolios for up to seven years.