LAM at Universities: Convergence in Graduate Education

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ABSTRACT
This poster presents preliminary results from a one-year project to study the convergence of Library and Information Studies, Archival Studies, and Museum Studies (LAM) education in ALA-accredited graduate programs in North America. This mixed-methods study resulted in a survey of graduate programs, and an on-going series of interviews with key knowledgeable persons within those programs. Initial results reveal a tension between the desire to formalize ties among LAM graduate programs at universities and the desire to adhere to the inherent cultures of Libraries, Archives, and Museums.

Keywords
LIS Education, Archival Studies, Museum Studies, Education.

INTRODUCTION
There is a need for information professionals who can work across the boundaries of libraries, archives, and museums to meet the information needs of all users—including library patrons, museum visitors, the general public, and other professionals—in all cultural heritage organizations. Educating individuals with the ability to meet these diverse information needs poses serious challenges to library and information studies, museum studies, and archival studies programs. This research study is intended to gather initial data concerning the current state of Library and Information Studies (LIS), Archival Studies, and Museum Studies graduate programs at universities, and the degree to which those programs overlap. The results of this study extend our understanding of how LAM graduate programs collaborate to produce students capable of meeting information needs in 21st century cultural heritage institutions.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF STUDY
During the past decade, increasing attention has been paid to the convergence of libraries, archives, and museums (LAM) in education and practice—through articles, conferences, workshops, and initiatives such as the recent themed issues of Library Quarterly (80:1), Museum Management and Curatorship (24:4), and Archival Science (8:4). These conversations frequently center on the opportunities digital media afford to integrate collections and encourage collaboration across the “silos of the LAMs” (Zorich, Waibel, & Erway, 2008).

While archival education has a lengthy history of integration within the library and information studies (LIS) curriculum (Cox & Larsen, 2008), the convergence of museum studies and LIS has received relatively less attention, despite research demonstrating the value of LIS expertise for museum information professionals (Marty, 2007; Marty, 2008). While museum studies programs have taken steps to introduce courses that address 21st century skills, a disconnect still exists between the skills taught and those demanded by employers (Duff et al., 2009; Trant, 2009). On the horizon, the digital environment presents even greater challenges that will require museum studies programs to bridge the gap between traditional curricula and new areas of focus (Ray, 2009; Tibbo & Duff, 2008).

Despite commonalities in education, practice, and purpose in libraries, archives, and museums, formal and informal opportunities for students and faculty to collaborate through LAM coursework or research remain unmapped. This study is intended to deepen our understanding of the convergence of LAM in graduate education, and to document the opportunities, benefits, and challenges of collaboration between LAM graduate programs by answering the following research questions:

RQ1. What universities with ALA-accredited graduate LIS programs also have Archival Studies or Museum Studies programs?

RQ2. What types of relationships exist between LAM graduate programs, and how do those relationships manifest?

RQ3. What are the perceived benefits and disadvantages of LAM graduate program relationships within universities?
METHODS
The researchers began with a review of the LAM education literature, providing the necessary information to construct general concepts for exploration. Based upon the articulated priority of strengthening the understanding of how LAM graduate programs collaborate, the researchers formulated an online survey. The survey consisted of 16 multiple choice questions designed to identify types of LAM graduate program relationships, three short answer questions to identify specific program titles, and two open-ended comment questions. Researchers performed a content analysis of the graduate program websites at each of the ALA-accredited graduate programs in North America, and invited knowledgeable persons at each institution to complete the survey. The researchers designed the survey to obtain basic data concerning the existence and nature of LAM relationships in graduate programs, and to inform the generation of questions for subsequent interviews. The online survey offered respondents an opportunity to volunteer for the interview portion of the study that consisted of seven open-ended questions designed to prompt responses during a 45-minute dialogue between key personnel and the researchers.

Survey Data Collection and Analysis
The survey was administered online through Qualtrics between February and May 2014. The survey population, n=58, consisted of key knowledgeable personnel at ALA-accredited graduate programs; 26 personnel completed the online survey yielding a response rate of 44.8%. Data from the online survey was analyzed using SPSS. The online survey results generated several patterns that the researchers used to craft the interview questions.

Interview Data Collection and Analysis
Nine online survey respondents self-selected to participate in the interviews. Data collection and analysis of interviews with these individuals is currently underway. Interviews are conducted online, using Skype, and are audio-recorded using CallRecorder. The audio recordings are transcribed, and a thematic content analysis is being performed.

FINDINGS
The results of this project are two-fold. In the survey, the findings present a numerical picture of LAM graduate education. In the interviews, the survey data is complemented by qualitative data, providing a more comprehensive picture of current LAM education.

Survey Findings
To identify universities with LAM graduate programs (RQ1), the researchers asked respondents about the existence of these programs at their universities, see Table 1. To understand the degree to which LIS programs have a formal relationship with museum studies or archival studies programs (RQ2), researchers asked questions about the administration of the LAM graduate programs at each university, see Table 2.

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<th>Museum Studies n=25</th>
<th>Archival Studies n=23</th>
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Table 1. Is there a museum studies or archival studies program at your university?

Respondents answered that archival studies programs were primarily located within LIS programs, and that museum studies programs were primarily external to LIS programs. The category “Other, please specify” led to responses such as “The Masters level specializations are all on equal footing within a single School of Information,” and “We also have a separate Master of Archives and Records Administration degree program.” None of the respondents indicated that their LIS program administered museum or archival studies jointly with another department.

To identify the tangible benefits of LAM graduate program relationships (RQ3), the researchers explored the degrees and certificates offered by the institutions. Identifying the types of degrees and certificates available to students is an important step in understanding the ways in which LAM program relationships manifest. The researchers asked questions concerning the degrees ALA graduate students could earn through their universities, see Table 3.

Several trends are apparent from the data collected concerning degrees: no respondents indicated that graduate minors were available; a separate master’s degree in museum studies was common, yet a separate master’s degree in archival studies was reported only once. The category “other, please specify” evoked answers such as “we have courses but no separate degree or certificate.”

Further data concerning the manifestation of the LAM program relationship (RQ2) was drawn from two questions focused on less formal ties than degrees or certificates.

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<td>Another Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other – Please Specify</td>
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Table 2. Who administers the museum studies and archival studies at your university?
Respondents were asked about participation in social events such as lectures, brown bag lunches, or conferences; joint faculty research and publishing endeavors; cross listing of courses and co-designing of courses. Respondents were also given the opportunity to indicate that there was no informal relationship between LAM programs at their university. All respondents who indicated that a museum studies or archival studies program existed at their university also indicated that there was some level of relationship between these programs and LIS, even if minimal.

Respondents were also asked two questions regarding the roles their students could have within their communities as part of the LAM programs. In response to the question, “LIS students involved in the Museum Studies or Archival Studies program at your university pursue internships, fellowships, or volunteer at which of the following institutions?” answers provided indicate a higher level of community involvement within the archival studies program, see Table 4.

**Interview Results**

Although the survey yielded numerical data concerning relationships between LAM graduate programs, the survey format obscured the complexities of these relationships, and further data was drawn from an on-going series of interviews with knowledgeable personnel. In particular, these interviews allowed the researchers to obtain in-depth information about the perceived benefits and disadvantages of LAM program relationships in universities (RQ3).

The interviewees were asked, “Thinking about universities in general, what would the ideal relationship between LIS, Archival Studies, and Museum Studies look like to you?” This question provoked interesting answers. One interviewee described the ideal LAM graduate program relationship as “symbiotic – resource sharing, curriculum sharing.” In contrast, another interviewee described the information professionals who would participate in LAM graduate education as individuals who saw the “synergies” between libraries, archives, and museums.

Interviewees were also asked, “What new benefits would this offer? How is this different from what you already have? What would allow you to reach this point? Who is leading these efforts? Is there a formal plan? Is it just happening? Is there a champion?” These questions provoked different answers. One interviewee believed that the future of LAM graduate programs is dependent upon “understanding that those three [LAM] programs are really different, different methodologies, different theories.” She saw the need for the field to see the differences between LAM graduate programs; in stark contrast, another interviewee saw the need for the field to see the commonalities between LAM graduate programs. She indicated that the future of LAM graduate programs is dependent upon people who see the bigger picture, who have the expertise in their area, but are also able to see how information plays across all three disciplines. The online survey revealed none of these complexities of answers, yet provided the framework for asking the very questions that generated these dialogues.
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The responses to the initial survey confirmed the researchers’ intuitions that a tight relationship exists between LIS and Archival Studies programs, while Museum Studies programs stand at a distance. The initial analysis of interview data suggests that a consensus has yet to develop about what to do with this state of affairs. The differences of opinion partially fall along disciplinary lines, but suggest that program administrators (especially in LIS) may hold a different view from faculty. Further analysis of interview data may reveal the perceived benefits of administrative consolidation of LIS, Archival Studies, and Museum Studies programs beyond the benefits for students and faculty.

The historical roots of the divide between LIS, Archival Studies, and Museum Studies also deserve attention (Urban, 2014). Future research may involve examining the Carnegie classification and distribution of LAM graduate programs, the disciplinary affiliations of museum studies programs, and the role these affiliations play on collaboration with LIS and Archival Studies programs. Additional in-depth case studies of LAM graduate programs, such as Duff, et al. (2009), can further contextualize the attitudes observed in the researchers’ initial interview data.

CONCLUSIONS

The convergence of Libraries, Archives and Museums has yet to be formalized in graduate education. Important benefits and challenges lie ahead for LIS programs that seek to acknowledge the impending convergence. This study reveals the numerical picture of current LAM convergence in graduate education, and complements it with essential insights from LIS personnel who envision the convergence of LAM graduate programs.

REFERENCES


