

Re-envisioning Management Education and Training for Information Professionals

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The evolving demand for workforce skills has often been a topic of discussion at various professional library and information science (LIS) conferences and in the academic literature. Although LIS schools tend to highlight the goal of preparing future members of the LIS profession to be effective leaders, a management and leadership curriculum gap still exists worldwide. Most LIS schools are still falling short when it comes to offering advanced management courses on a regular basis as identified in international studies. Consequently, this lack of adequate management education and training in LIS schools tends to contribute to the development of “accidental managers.” A review of the online program and course descriptions of the 58 American Library Association (ALA) accredited graduate schools demonstrates the current landscape of LIS education in relation to the demand for leadership and management skills and the increasing significance of these competencies for information professionals. This research also shows how regular interaction and engagement with the LIS professional community resulted in the development of an online advanced certificate program in management for information professionals. Although this study primarily reviewed LIS schools in the U.S. and Canada, it has wider implications given the need for advanced management courses expressed in the literature worldwide. It is vitally important for LIS schools to bridge the existing gaps in LIS education in order to meet professional demands for leadership and management skills, and this paper demonstrates one way in which LIS schools can accomplish this.

Keywords: management, leadership, information professionals, LIS education, workforce skills, community engagement, LIS professional community

Introduction

The library and information science (LIS) profession is currently navigating through a protracted period of change fueled by rapid technological innovation. The changing nature of information and its distribution and the growth of online education is correspondingly impacting community expectations for libraries. These societal changes require that LIS graduates are equipped with new workforce skills needed by employers (American Library Association, 2014). The evolving demand

for workforce skills have often been a topic of discussion at Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE), American Library Association (ALA), Special Libraries Association (SLA), other professional LIS conferences and meetings, and in the professional and academic literature.

Although ALA-accredited LIS education programs seek to prepare emerging LIS professionals for careers in the field, there still appears to be a gap that exists between curricula and the needs of the profession with regards to leadership and

management skills (Saunders, 2015). According to the ALA “Core Competences,” leadership and management skills are essential for LIS professionals (ALA, 2009). Similarly, the SLA “Competencies for Information Professionals” highlights the importance of effective management for special libraries (SLA, 2016).

Discussions with the LIS professional community on the topic of evolving workforce skills for LIS graduates inspired this research. We decided to gather and analyze data on management courses offered by ALA-accredited schools in the United States and Canada. This article discusses the background research and administrative processes behind the journey of the development of an advanced certificate in management for information professionals in the Division of Library and Information Science (DLIS) at St. John’s University.

There are three main purposes of this article. First, this article reviews the relevant management literature in the LIS discipline, which demonstrates the increasing significance of leadership and management skills for both midlevel information professionals and the next generation of information professionals. Second, this research shows how regular interaction and engagement with the LIS professional community resulted in the development of an advanced certificate program in management for information professionals. Third, this article presents the findings of the research conducted in reviewing the online program and course descriptions of 58 of the 60 American Library Association (ALA) accredited graduate library and information schools. This review was done in order to determine the advanced management certificate program we wanted to develop in DLIS for information professionals. Finally, our discussion emphasizes the need for re-envisioning management education and training in LIS schools and calls for regular engagement with the LIS community partners in this initiative.

Review of Relevant Literature

Needs Assessment for Management Education and Training in the LIS Profession

The ALA “Core Competences” document has dedicated an entire section to administration and management. This section is divided into five subsections, which detail the various management capabilities LIS professionals are expected to have. The competences include planning, budgeting, managing teams and personnel, assessment of library services, networking, and transformational leadership (ALA, 2009). This gamut of skills clearly indicates the importance of management training for LIS professionals. However, it begs the question of whether or not a suggested competency is an adequate assessment of whether a librarian or information professional has the management or leadership skills. As explored below, many members of the field are not as well prepared for management and leadership tasks as needed. In addition to the American Library Association, LIS professionals also consider management to be among the most vital skills within the field, naming management skills as one of the top five essential attributes for library leadership (Le, 2014).

The international LIS community also expresses a desire for more management training, supporting an increase in management and organizational guidance along with knowledge management education in LIS curricula (Hazeri, Martin, & Sarrafzadeh, 2009). This need for management is expressed by librarians in a wide range of library types as a necessary step that would allow them to best serve their patrons and communities (Mehra, Black, Singh, & Nolt, 2011). Even those who are positioned as library leaders are seen to be in need of further management skills (Le, 2014). To be a successful library leader, LIS professionals believe that strong leadership and management skills are incred-

ibly essential (Dewey, 2012; Le, 2014; Winston & Hazlin, 2003). These skills are not only in demand currently but are expected to increase in importance within the coming years. Particularly, the emergence of the digital age is leading to an increased demand for a diverse range of management and leadership skills (Le, 2014).

Due to the changing landscape, new facets of management skills are increasingly required for those in leadership roles to effectively lead as LIS professionals. A relevant example is the growth of Learning Labs and Makerspaces within libraries. These have emerged along with the digital age and have naturally led to a demand for a wider skill set, including skills in management and leadership (Koh & Abbas, 2015). As trends continue to emerge within the digital age, it is ever more important for LIS professionals to possess comprehensive management skills so that they can be adequately equipped to lead, as the needs and trends that are relevant to libraries continue to widen and diversify. Management and leadership skills are expected to both increase in demand within the LIS profession in the next five years (Hicks & Given, 2013) as well as in the next twenty (Schwartz, 2016). This indicates that these key skills will continue to increase in importance in both the short- and long-term growth of the profession.

Identifying Gaps between LIS Education and Professional Demands for Leadership and Management

Although LIS programs tend to highlight the goal of preparing future members of the LIS profession to be effective leaders, there appears to be a gap between this goal and the management skills that new and midlevel LIS professionals possess (Hicks & Given, 2013). Saunders (2015) states that less than one half of all ALA-accredited LIS education programs require students to enroll in management courses. This clearly highlights that there is a gap between the desired goal to create new LIS

professionals who are skilled leaders and managers and the outcome of this initiative. Rather, these skills are considered to be the two aspects of LIS education that are in the greatest need of improvement (Hicks & Given, 2013).

A review of three Master's programs in digital libraries in Nordic and Baltic countries offers an approach for teaching and training information professionals in the areas of knowledge management, human resource management, project management, and leadership (Macevičiūtė, 2011). A research study conducted in South African Library and information science (LIS) schools concluded that there is a need to strengthen knowledge management (KM) offerings in the LIS curriculum. They recommended close association with practitioners to keep abreast of the emerging trends of the job market and the evolving needs of information organizations (Ondari-Okemwa & Minishi-Majanja, 2007).

De Grandbois (2013) reviewed the curricula of various LIS schools in 26 different countries, and found that a majority of these schools (19 out of 26) do offer management courses. However, there is wide variation in the content, number, and types of management courses they offer. The study also reveals that LIS schools do not offer enough management courses that meet the needs of today's information professionals. The research participants in the de Grandbois (2013) study recommended that LIS schools educate future information professionals in such areas as "people management, communication skills, management of services and resources, soft skills, and self-management," (p.339) among others. Mackenzie and Smith (2009) also highlighted that management courses in LIS programs were falling short in teaching people-related soft skills. Line (2007) suggested the need for developing social, communication, economic, problem-solving, and political skills in future graduates. Similar ideas were expressed in a few other studies, emphasizing that LIS schools fall short in developing busi-

ness acumen (Hazari, Sarrafzadeh, & Martin, 2007), financial literacy (Burger, Kaufman, & Atkinson, 2015), and management and leadership skills by not exposing students to a variety of management courses (Matteson, Musser, & Allen, 2014; Matteson, Schlueter, & Hidy, 2012).

There is some criticism of a common pedagogical approach in LIS schools that over-emphasizes theoretical aspects at the expense of exposing students to practical management education. This approach can cause information professionals to be ill-prepared to deal with organizational and management problems when they work in information organizations. Furthermore, this emphasis may have the effect of making management courses “uninteresting” (Line, 2007, p.33) and out of touch with reality. Students may also have a perceived dislike for managerial responsibilities that dissuade them from pursuing management courses (Holley, 2015).

Instead of entering the profession with a solid foundation in management and leadership skills, there is significant evidence that most professionals are forced to acquire these skills on the job or through practical applications, such as internships (Hicks & Given, 2013; Rathbun-Grubb, 2016; Saunders, 2015). There are many issues that arise as a result of this skill gap. Firstly, there is a lack of motivation among many LIS professionals to seek leadership opportunities (Rathbun-Grubb, 2016). For LIS professionals without a strong foundation in management and leadership, it is more difficult to find career success, either in finding jobs after graduation or in upward growth, which can hamper this motivation as well (Rathbun-Grubb, 2013). A lack of qualified applicants for management and leadership positions leads to what Saunders (2015) categorizes as “accidental managers” (p. 439), or LIS professionals who have worked their way up the ranks in their organization without actively seeking such leadership positions. These all indicate that additional skill building in leadership and management is

valuable and relevant for LIS professionals.

Summary

There appears to be a consensus in the literature that a majority of LIS schools offer a required management course to their students. There also appears to be an inadequacy of advanced management courses available to help students develop their leadership and management skills. Although a few LIS schools offer advanced management courses, there are marked differences in the content, type, scope, and frequency of the courses offered. The literature also indicates that future information professionals will need more training in people related soft skills in order to successfully lead and manage information organizations. There is also an emphasis on the need for incorporating engaging pedagogical approaches in LIS management courses to encourage students’ desire to learn. In addition, students need the correct balance of theory and practice to equip them to pursue leadership positions in their future career. Although the need for developing curriculum in close association with LIS practitioners is highlighted, there appears to be a lack of adequate published scholarly activities in this area. This background sets the stage to discuss an initiative at St. John’s University to develop the management and leadership potential of current and future information professionals.

Initiative for Re-envisioning LIS Management Education at St. John’s University

In response to the current and future needs for leadership and management skills and the current gaps between LIS programs and the professional demands for these two skills sets, DLIS at St. John’s University developed a 15-credit online Advanced Certificate in Management for Information Professionals (CMIP) pro-

gram. The certificate program consists of the management course required for the MS LIS, and courses in knowledge management, marketing/advocacy, project management, and a project leadership capstone course. This certificate program aims to equip midlevel information professionals with the leadership and management skills that are so essential to the field and are expected to only grow in demand in the coming years. It addresses this clear need to bolster the leadership and management skills of professionals so that they acquire these proficiencies without struggling to learn them within a position where management is already required or expected. Furthermore, the certificate program aims to help LIS professionals gain or build upon these skills, which will be beneficial for them and for the LIS profession at large, as it will increase the skill of current and future library leaders and managers.

The following sections provide a glimpse at the background and behind-the-scenes processes, which resulted in the advanced certificate program. This brief discussion gives the context for the advanced certificate program envisioned. The value of partnering with the LIS professional community in curriculum development is emphasized. This is followed by a discussion of the findings of our research reviewing the online program and course descriptions of 58 of the 60 ALA-accredited graduate library and information schools.

Genesis of the Advanced Certificate in Management Idea

The DLIS advanced certificate evolved from a series of meetings over a twelve month period between the DLIS advisory boards and DLIS faculty. The DLIS Advisory Board consists of twenty academic, public, and special librarians and representatives from DLIS faculty, students, and staff. The Law Librarianship Advisory Council (LLAC) consists of six LIS professionals, Dr. Rajesh Singh

and Dr. James Vorbach from the faculty. The LLAC advises and monitors the law librarianship specialization in the MS LIS program. In an open discussion in spring 2015, the problems observed by council members in the field and the need for an advanced certificate program was first discussed. An outline for the advanced certificate was prepared by R. Singh and J. Vorbach and approved by LLAC. Subsequent meetings of the DLIS Advisory Board and DLIS Faculty approved the continued development of the advanced certificate.

Identifying Management Skills for Information Professionals

We organized meetings with LLAC from fall 2015 through fall 2016 in order to work out the details in the advanced certificate's proposal. The meetings zeroed in on the workforce skills needed by future LIS graduates. The skills highlighted by our board members were project management, marketing and advocacy, knowledge management, leadership, strategic thinking, and developing relationships with vendors, community partners, and so forth. This skillset closely resembled the findings highlighted in a recent study done by Bertot, Sarin, and Percell at the University of Maryland (2015). They acknowledged that the LIS profession is undergoing a shift that "de-emphasizes the physical collections" of libraries and focuses "more on individuals and the communities they serve" (2015, p. 3). As a result of this transformation, Bertot *et al.* found that it is highly desirable, and is becoming a necessity, for future information professionals to possess the following four competencies: the "ability to lead and manage projects and people," to "work and train others to use a variety of technologies," to have a "strong desire to work with the public," and to be capable of "relationship building among staff, patrons, community partners, and funders" (Bertot *et al.*, 2015, p., 4-5).

The discussions with board members

also revealed that the emphasis should be on providing a balance of theory and practice in the curriculum. It was also suggested that it would be beneficial to offer the advanced certificate program to both midlevel information professionals and MS LIS students.

Institutional Approval Process

After several iterations, revisions, and administrative steps at the division, college, and university level, the proposed Advanced Certificate in Management for Information Professionals was approved by St. John’s University in November 2016. Thereafter, the certificate was sent to the New York State Education Department (NYSED), and after undergoing additional revisions, the certificate was approved by NYSED in January 2017. The advanced certificate program is scheduled to begin in the Spring 2018 term, allowing time for promotion and recruitment.

Management Training and Education in LIS Programs: Study Methodology and Findings

The online program and course descriptions of 58 of the 60 American Library

Association–accredited graduate library and information schools were reviewed in spring 2016 through summer 2016. Two programs were excluded because of language barriers—Montreal University (French) and the University of Puerto Rico (Spanish). In particular, we reviewed the management course offerings and certificate programs of various library and information science (LIS) schools in the United States and Canada. The following sections and charts show some of the results:

Required versus Advanced Management Courses

A majority of LIS schools (47) do mandate that students take a basic or foundational management course as a requirement for their graduate degrees (Figure 1). It was also found that 11 ALA-accredited graduate programs do not require a basic or foundational management course as a degree requirement. Instead, a majority of these schools provide an optional management course in their curricula. There is one program that does not provide any management course to their students.

The review reveals that a substantial number of LIS schools (40) have listed a number of advanced management courses

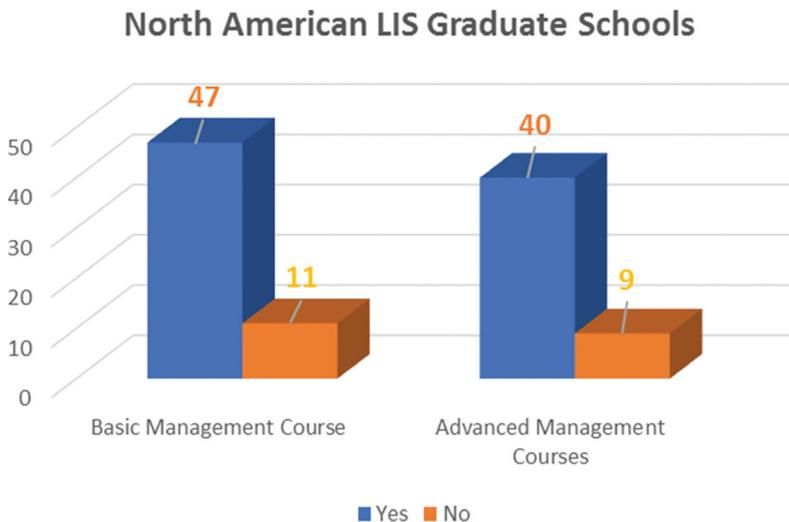


Figure 1. Required versus Advanced Management Courses.

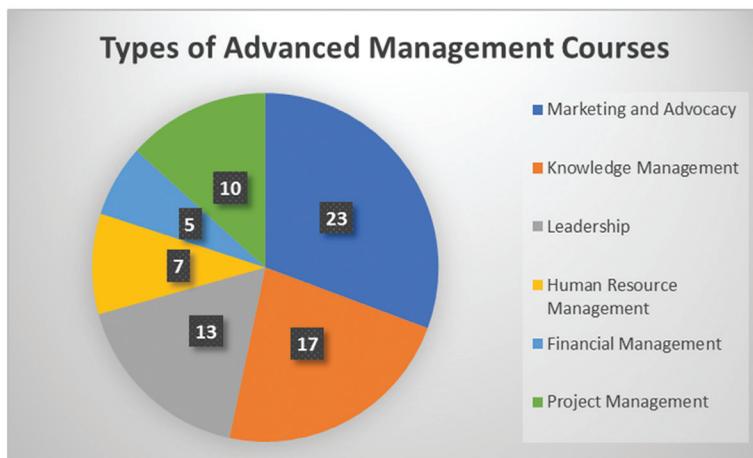


Figure 2. Types of Advanced Management Courses in LIS Schools.

in their curricula, but none of them are required. It was also noted that a few LIS schools (9) do not offer any advanced management courses.

Types of Advanced Management Courses in LIS Schools

A significant number of schools (23) have listed marketing, advocacy, or public relations courses in their curricula (Figure 2). It was interesting to find that a knowledge management course is increasingly becoming a part of regular course offerings in LIS schools (17). However, a project management course is provided only by a few schools (10). While a course in leadership is listed by 13 LIS programs in their curricula, advanced courses in human resource management and financial management are offered only in seven and five LIS schools respectively.

Certificate/Specialization/Concentration in Management and Leadership

Most of the LIS schools offer management courses; however, few offer a certificate in management for information professionals. Two LIS schools provide a certificate program in public library administration that is open only to those who have already completed their MLIS and

possess some work experience in libraries. Two LIS schools offer a certificate, specialization, or concentration in management and leadership while one LIS program offers specialization in management. It is important to emphasize that a few LIS schools have listed a number of management courses to their current LIS graduates, both required and elective in their curricula. These management courses are offered under various labels such as “concentration,” “leadership and management program of study,” “specialization in management,” and so forth. At the same time, it is also important to note that from reviewing the online curricula and course catalogue descriptions, it was not easy to ascertain the existence of actual certificate programs and the frequency of course offerings of the advanced management courses in LIS schools (Figure 3).

Discussion

The literature review and findings presented in the previous sections highlight the need for discussion of the re-envisioning of management education and training in LIS schools in further depth. Moreover, this section will also discuss the importance of regular interaction and engagement with the LIS professional community, as partners in curriculum development,



Figure 3. Certificate/Specialization/Concentration in Management and Leadership.

in addition to highlighting the challenges, opportunities, and benefits likely to be encountered.

Re-envisioning Management Education and Training in LIS Schools

Management and leadership are important skill sets for anyone in any profession, but for information professionals that may find themselves in management or leadership positions sooner rather than later, having competence and skills in these areas is necessary from the very beginning of their careers. Regardless of the importance of both skill sets for information professionals, management is often perceived as bad and boring while acquiring leadership skills is celebrated (Ryan, 2016). Despite the separation between management and leadership, it is evident from research that the two are seen to be closely intertwined. Due to rapid changes in technological innovations, communities’ rising expectations for experiential services, and other societal factors, including retirement of baby boomers, information professionals are increasingly likely to be promoted into managerial and leadership positions. This transition requires a blend of management and leadership skills in order to be successful. However, information professions suffer from a lack of manage-

ment and leadership training, which consequently contributes to the production of “accidental managers.” This situation begs the question of how well are LIS graduate programs providing management training and promoting the development of future library leaders.

Because leadership and management skills are considered critical to the healthy functioning of information organizations, one might assume that students pursuing their graduate LIS degrees always receive management training. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily the case in North America, and some students still begin their careers never having studied how to be an effective leader or manager. Although more than two thirds of the schools surveyed do indeed mandate at least one introductory course in management of information organizations as a requirement for graduation (Figure 1), an examination of the data for advanced management courses (Figure 2) reflects Crandall and Gershenfeld’s (2006) observation that most LIS schools are still falling short when it comes to “encouraging promising students to enroll in the advanced management and leadership courses, [and] requiring more than a minimum exposure to the principles of management and leadership” (p. 3). Similar findings were revealed in a few other studies, emphasizing that LIS

schools put more effort in developing business acumen (Hazari, Sarrafzadeh, & Martin, 2007), financial literacy (Burger, Kaufman, & Atkinson, 2015), and management and leadership skills by exposing students to a variety of advanced management courses (Matteson, Musser, & Allen, 2014; Matteson, Schlueter, & Hidy, 2012). It is apparent that a lack of offering advanced management courses on a regular basis may be the major and only detrimental factor for discouraging students to develop their management and leadership potential. This challenge can be mitigated by providing advanced management courses on a regular basis in LIS schools.

Technological innovations, societal expectations for experiential information services, and the growth of online programming have significantly impacted the role of information professionals regardless of the type of information organizations they work for. These societal changes require that LIS graduates are equipped with new workforce proficiencies, including effective marketing/advocacy, project management, and collaborative skills desired by employers (ALA, 2014). Our discussions with the advisory board members and the literature review highlight the importance of offering marketing and advocacy, project management, and knowledge management courses frequently. Similar findings were revealed in a recent study conducted at the University of Maryland (Bertot, Sarin, L., & Percell, 2015). It is critical that the LIS schools acknowledge and address the emerging trends in the scholarly literature by redesigning and re-envisioning management and education training in LIS schools.

There is no dispute that focused management training in an academic setting provides a solid foundation and greater understanding of various leadership and management issues, concepts, theories, and viewpoints than the less in-depth professional development initiatives that may occasionally be available during the careers of information professionals. In spite of the challenges, such as the wide vari-

ety of ages and experience levels typically found among LIS students and a shortage of specialist full-time faculty members, learning management and leadership skills provides students an essential understanding of both the inner workings of information organizations and the greater picture of what goes into the planning, organizing, designing, and implementation of services.

Learning activities in the advanced management courses in the new certificate program include problem solving with case studies on a variety of management topics. This instructional approach grounded in theory and practice can immensely help expand the horizon of students' critical thinking skills. Consistent with this approach, the educational experience in DLIS requires students to create a variety of highly relevant artifacts, including but not limited to a strategic plan, marketing plan, knowledge management action plan, advocacy campaign proposal, change management plan, and so forth. The instructional guidelines are provided to students in a way that requires a blend of creativity, collaboration, negotiation of ideas, and reflections of their own learning to complete their course assignments. This approach is one of the possible ways to re-envision management education and training in LIS schools. This will eventually help produce trained information professionals equipped with leadership and management skills needed for today's workforce.

Curriculum Development and Engagement with LIS Professional Community Partners

Through regular discussions with our community partners—the LLAC—we developed a certificate program that was unique to our needs in terms of the composition of the courses, the number of courses, and the format of course offerings. Furthermore, our engagement with the professional community ensured that our program clearly articulated the prac-

tical utility of each course, resulting in a unique course artifact from each course (e.g., a strategic plan, a knowledge action plan, a project proposal, and a marketing/advocacy plan, etc.) and leading to a culminating “project leadership capstone” course experience. Finally, as a result of regular interaction with the members of our LLAC and advisory board, we developed a program that also targets midlevel information professionals.

A regular interaction with LIS professional community partners resulted in the inclusion of various perspectives from the practitioners’ viewpoint. The discussions highlighted that providing a solid balance of theory and practice would be the right approach to enhance the managerial and leadership potential of information professionals while also incorporating issues of social justice, responsibility, and ethics, elements of St. John’s University’s Mission Statement. In addition to getting the buy-in and engagement of LIS professionals in the development of certificate program, their involvement also strengthens the validity of program assessment. Moreover, this engagement of the LIS professional community may also assist schools in identifying experts in management areas who might be willing to teach courses as adjuncts.

As is the case with any collaborative effort, we also experienced some challenges. It was time consuming to coordinate and organize virtual meetings with LLAC who were participating from different geographical locations. On many occasions, we organized more than one virtual meeting on the same topic so that every member had opportunity to participate and contribute to the discussion. There were also moments when it was challenging to find consensus among too many “great” ideas. However, we managed to overcome these challenges by engaging our LIS professional community in developing an advanced certificate in management for information professionals that serves the students, school, university, and our com-

munity partners at large. In addition, the findings from this have implications for designing similar programs in other LIS schools or for re-envisioning an existing management and leadership programs in LIS curricula.

Conclusion

Clearly, information professionals require management and leadership skills. However, most LIS schools are still falling short when it comes to offering advanced management courses on a regular basis. Things are looking up for those students interested in becoming future leaders in the information profession. Each year, there is more attention devoted in the literature and at professional conferences to developing leadership and management potential in information professionals in LIS schools. As more people discuss the issue, a robust management education and training is sure to become both more cohesive and more available to students on a regular basis in their LIS programs. This will eventually help produce trained information professionals equipped with management and leadership skills rather than “accidental managers.” It is vitally important for LIS schools to bridge the existing gaps in LIS education to meet the professional demands for leadership and management skills. This requires the leadership in LIS schools in partnership with the LIS professional community to make a case for developing the management and leadership potential of future graduates and to equip them with the skills they need in today’s evolving workforce.

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