A History of the School of Library and Information Sciences

The School of Library and Information Sciences of North Carolina Central University was authorized by the State Legislature in 1939 when the charter of the then North Carolina College for Negroes was amended for the purpose of allowing the establishment of graduate and professional programs at the College. That amendment established the program in library education and the mission of educating African American librarians for the state of North Carolina.

In the fall of 1939, the College offered a course of study through the Department of Library Science. The School of Library Science was organized as a professional school in 1941. Three programs were offered during the first two years of the operation of the School of Library Science. The professional program for the Bachelor of Library Science (B.L.S.) degree was established for persons holding a baccalaureate degree at the time of entrance, and undergraduate majors and minors were offered through the College of Arts and Sciences.

The undergraduate major was discontinued in 1943. Ten years later, in 1953, the School awarded its final B.L.S. degree. The master's program in Library Science was initiated in 1950, with the first Master of Library Science (M.L.S.) degree being awarded in 1951. The master's program in Library Science was originally accredited by the American Library Association in 1975. The name of the school was changed to the School of Library and Information Sciences in 1984. In January, 1989, the School began offering a joint degree program in law librarianship and legal information systems. Beginning with the 1990-91 academic year, the School now offers an interdisciplinary program in Information Science leading to the Master of Information Science (M.I.S.) degree. The SLIS also offers a Joint Degree Program with the School of Business (M.B.A./M.I.S.) www.nccu.edu/Academics/graduatestudies/index.cfm

The first part-time faculty for the program was Parepa Watson, Librarian for the Shepard Library, and Assistant Librarian, Marjorie Shepard, the daughter of founder, Dr. James E. Shepard. The first course was a general one in school librarianship. In 1939 Mary Peacock Douglas, State Library Advisor, came to the school and organized a program for school librarians, forming the nucleus of the School of Library and Information Science. That same year North Carolina College for Negroes received authorization from the North Carolina General Assembly to establish a Department. By 1941, the school began operating as a professional school. The faculty continued to grow, but most notably during the 1970s and then started peaking again at the turn of the century with the continuing trend remaining.

The Deans of the School are as follows:

Susan Grey Akers 1941-1946
Dorothy Williams 1946-1947
Benjamin F. Smith 1947-1949
Daniel Eric Moore 1949-1963
Evelyn B. Pope 1963-1970
Annette Phinazee 1970-1983
Benjamin F. Speller 1983-2003
Robert Ballard 2003-2005 (Acting)
Irene Owens 2005-present

SLIS Mission and Goals
Based on the School’s vision of “promoting access to information for all humanity,” the SLIS mission is “to prepare professionals to become leaders who can advance the library and information sciences in a diverse and global society.” This mission is reflected in a curriculum designed to educate future leaders in the library and information science profession. The School’s mission and vision for graduates of library and information science is pursued through continuous, coordinated improvements and changes in the curriculum. The four goals of the SLIS are listed below and are supported by objectives based on the NCCU Strategic Plan and UNC Tomorrow for the Twenty-First Century:

- To provide an environment that enhances the professional and intellectual growth and development of faculty and students in an arena of global competitiveness, the SLIS strives to prepare individuals who are capable of performing effectively in professional positions in the library field.
To promote and sustain high quality and innovative teaching through the implementation of technology throughout the curriculum, the SLIS will provide an environment that enhances the professional and intellectual development of students.

To promote faculty and student participation in scholarly and creative activities that contribute to the knowledge base of the profession, the SLIS supports research, publication, and participation in professional organization.

To strengthen participation in the development of literate and informed communities through faculty and student engagement in public service, the SLIS program includes experiential learning activities that promote the development of literate and informed communities, and supports continuing education.

Thus, the mission of the SLIS is augmented by major student-oriented goals that prepare individuals to perform effectively in positions in the library profession, and to provide an environment that enhances students’ professional and intellectual development. Strengthening the learning environment for all students includes increasing the diversity of the student body, supporting distance learning, recruiting lifelong learners, and continuing the School's historical commitment to provide educational opportunities to African-Americans.

Facilities

The School of Library and Information Sciences office, library, classrooms, computer laboratory, distance learning center, and other facilities are located on the third floor of the James E. Shepard Memorial Library. The SLIS Library, founded along with the school, has grown exponentially over the years to keep abreast of the School’s curriculum and other program initiatives.

The Library maintains a collection of working resources required in the instruction of library and information sciences that includes monographs and reference works, videotapes, DVD’s, specialized journals and serials (printed and electronic), newspapers, and defined access to electronic bibliographic databases. The SLIS Library is open 77 hours per week. Online resources are available to faculty, students and staff 24/7 through the library's website from both on campus and virtually any off-campus location that provides access to the Internet. The SLIS Library owns approximately 40,000 volumes -- 37,381 books, 6,871 bound periodical volumes, 460 reels of microfilm, and 19,047 microfiche. The Library subscribes to 456 journals and other serials and has access to over three million volumes through consortium and other arrangements. The reading room provides group and individual study areas for 30 users, and additional seating for five in easy chairs and two sofas located near the Easy Readers Collection. The School maintains two special collections. The William Tucker Collection is a collection of children’s materials and contains both primary and published materials by African American authors and illustrators. The published materials are often signed first editions and many are out-of-print. The Black Librarians collection comprises personal papers donated to the School by African American Librarians. These collections support research and documentary studies relating to the leadership development and professional contributions of African Americans to librarianship.

The Library’s collection is available for on-site usage in an open stack arrangement. The electronic collection is also freely available through on-campus networked computers. From off-campus, a simple authentication procedure through a proxy server or Web VPN (virtual private network) grants access to faculty and students from any computer with Internet access. All computers located in the school afford access to several databases that are identifiable to the fields of library and information science, including Library Literature, LISA, and ERIC.

A part of the current Digital Library Initiative of the SLIS is to process, and later digitize the major special collections of the library to make these materials (many of which are rare and one of a kind items) more readily available on the World Wide Web.

**Grants**

Grants to the SLIS rose dramatically in the 1970s, including donors such as the U.S. Office of Education, the Xerox Corporation, and the Andrew Mellon Foundation. In more recent years grants have again increased as represented in Chart I below:
Grants Summary Focus
The focus on the grants has been on Early Childhood Education, Recruitment of Minority Students, Medical Librarianship, and the Digital Libraries initiative. The largest grantor to date has been the prestigious Laura Bush Twenty-First century grants program from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in Washington, D.C.

Accreditation – The SLIS is accredited by the prestigious American Library Association (ALA) receiving its first in 1975 and has been accredited consistently every seven years since, receiving its most recent in 2010. The American Library Association office for Accreditation:

- Ensures fair and equitable accreditation reviews of library and information studies programs,
- Provides external review and validation of master's level library and information studies programs,
- Promotes diversity and inclusiveness in library and information studies education,
- Consults and assists in the development and advancement of library and information studies education,
- Communicates with constituencies regarding activities,
- Anticipates and prepares for the changing environment and the future needs of constituencies,
- Manages our operations and resources to be effective, responsive and relevant.

Current Standing and Special Initiatives
The School of Library and Information Sciences (SLIS) is currently the only program of its type in an Historically Black College or University (HBCU). The first Library Science program in an HBCU was at Hampton University (1925-1939). The Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Studies closed in 2005, having been in existence since 1941.

Digital Librarianship
The SLIS is expanding its offerings consistent with market demands. In addition to its two joint degree programs with Law and Business, the SLIS is now focusing on, and fulfilling market demands for the Information and Digital Age with an imminent specialization in Digital Librarianship.

For the current course in Digital Librarianship the SLIS has acquired additional space for its Digital Laboratory. The Digital Laboratory has been established as a course-based, class project production center. Currently, there is one digital library course (LSIS 5420-Introduction to Digital Libraries) using the lab. The goals of the new digital library laboratory are:

- To serve as a center for NCCU-SLIS digital library education and practices
- To serve as a support center for NCCU campus units’ digitization projects
- To serve as a training or continuing education center for NCCU campus units and beyond to hold workshops and training.
The Digital Libraries Laboratory
Trained graduate students in the SLIS will be able to help other campus units with digitization projects in terms of software use, scanner use, metadata creation, etc. The SLIS has digital content management software, called CONTENTdm, which can be shared with other campus units’ digital library projects. The laboratory has seven to ten work stations equipped with computers, scanners and software to deliver digitized materials to the World Wide Web.

Digitizing Special Collections
In addition to establishing a curriculum in Digital Librarianship, the SLIS is interested in digitizing its own history and special collection of Black Librarians whose collections are housed in the SLIS archives. Much progress has been made in digitizing the SLIS history through Dr. Yoo’s LSIS 5420 class projects. Students in Dr. Yoo’s first class also presented their project at the 2007 North Carolina Library Associations (NCLA) Biennial Conference held in Hickory, NC. As a result of such digitization, materials will be available in a format that students and researchers can use in the current Digital Age. Further, the SLIS, once it has digitized its own special collections plans to lead in assisting NCCU and other North Carolina HBCUs in digitizing their special collections. To that end, the SLIS is collaborating with the North Carolina African-American Archives Group (NAAAG) and the ten HBCU libraries in assisting them with the digitizing of their collections using the NC ECHO grant.

Using Digital Libraries to Decrease Health Disparities
One of the largest digital libraries available in the world is the National Library of Medicine (NLM). A special, grant-based effort has been made by faculty in the SLIS to promote use of the NLM. Specifically, health science digital library programs in North Carolina communities where health disparities exist have been supported by grants and SLIS faculty efforts. The Eagles E-Health project was a two-year project and continued effort to disseminate information about the resources available through the NLM into communities and the college campus at North Carolina Central University (NCCU). In a collaboration between the School of Library and Information Sciences and the Public Health Education Department at NCCU, a training process was developed to teach healthcare professionals and volunteers to share resources available in the databases of the NLM. Supported by a grant from the NLM and the United Negro College Fund Special Programs (UNCFSP) Corporation, a cross-disciplinary research team of faculty, staff, and students developed training and a methodology to assess the effort using intervention evaluation analysis tools.

International Librarianship
Lessons learned from two prestigious Laura Bush 21st century Library Grants have taught us that it is not only important for students to understand diversity locally and nationally, they must also understand diversity on an international level. Therefore, the course in Global Library Systems and the Study Abroad course both have been introduced and conducted by Dr. Ismail Abdullahi. Dr. Abdullahi recently published a textbook on International Librarianship entitled, *Global Library and Information Science: A Textbook for Students and Educators* (2009).

The SLIS is well positioned for distinguished continuing contributions and to the field of Library and Information Science and to the American and International librarianship.

Prepared by Irene Owens, Ph.D.
Sources: NCCU Archives, SLIS Archives, and SLIS records
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