LBSC 724
Public Library Seminar
Spring 2011

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During the course, please contact me via Blackboard email.

Office hours: 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. on February 7, March 7, April 4, and May 2.
   Hornbake Rm. 4111H(The Emeriti Office)

This course is a combination of face to face lectures/discussions and asynchronous use of Blackboard. The four face to face lectures will be on February 7, March 7, April 4, and May 2. March 1, April 5, and May 10 from 5:30 to 8:15 p.m. As soon as I have a classroom number, I’ll send you the info via the Announcements. All other classes will be via Blackboard. Please use the Blackboard drop box for submitting all assignments not related to the Portfolios. All assignment deadlines are set for 11:59 p.m. on the date due.

SYLLABUS OUTLINE
1. Introduction
2. Course Goals
3. Course Format
4. Assignments
6. Grading
7. Course Units

1. INTRODUCTION
   Welcome to LBSC 724 Public Library Seminar. This course is intended for students interested in pursuing a career in public library service or who have an interest in the role and contribution of the public library to society. It is expected that students will have taken LBSC 635 Management and Administration for Information Professionals, or a similar course or have had
experience working in a public library. This course, offered primarily on the web, provides opportunities for discussion in online fora, and for regular interaction. The four face-to-face meetings provide opportunities to invite guest experts to meet with the class and for students to interact in real time. In addition to course content and real-time interaction, students will gain skills in interacting in a virtual environment. Those skills are transferrable to the work environment and other professional activities.

COURSE GOALS

The goals of the course are as follows.
Upon completion of the course, students will:
- understand how the public library has evolved
- be familiar with the various roles it plays in today’s communities
- be familiar with the many constituencies with which the public library interacts
- develop skills to plan, implement, and evaluate public library programs
- apply communication and leadership skills.

Managing technology is a pervasive theme. Each area of public library activity is, in some way, supported by technology. The use of technology as a management tool is not something to be learned separately as it is basic to all operations. Why we do what we do at the public library, to bring people and information together, remains a constant. The tools we use to do this have expanded to include a wide range of technologies. Our task is to identify the need, determine if a technological solution is appropriate to that management need or to solving a management problem and, if so, to incorporate it in our activities. And we need to review our technological decisions continuously to assure that they meet the intended need in the best possible way and if not, to replace them with a more appropriate solution.

3. COURSE FORMAT

Becoming familiar with the technology of online instruction will be a useful tool to you as public librarians responsible for staying current with issues in the field and for providing lifelong learning experiences for staff. The course is not a static entity. The syllabus, the readings,
and the assignments provide a structure upon which inputs including those from your discussions, your experiences, readings you have identified, plus the instructor’s comments, will inform and enrich the structure. Before you begin, if you are not familiar with Blackboard, the following orientation opportunities are available:

Blackboard:

http://www.blackboard.com

ELMS Login Screen

http://elms.umd.edu See Student Resources Tab.

Intro to ELMS on the course site.

If you have problems with Blackboard, call 301-405-1400 Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or email elms-help@umd.edu. If you continue to have difficulties, please let me know.

The course is divided into fifteen units, each of which focuses on a particular topic or topics. Each course unit includes required readings, lecture notes (available in the Course Content section), and assignments. Some of these assignments require brief written responses to questions posed by the instructor. Other assignments will be completed by participating in on line discussion fora. Your course project is a portfolio developed over the semester that will include written assignments and other components relevant to public libraries.

On line fora:

There will be four on line fora in the course, each of which serves a different purpose.

1. Discussion topic forum. For several of the course units, there is a discussion related to the topic for that week. Discussion questions will be posed to start the discussion. Students will contribute to the discussion by asking additional relevant questions, by responding to questions, and by indicating sources of information relevant to the question. Each class member is expected to contribute substantively to the discussion at least three times. Because of class size, please be judicious in the number of times beyond the three required contributions that you make. But, when you have a cogent comment, please share it.

2. Class Bio forum. Please provide a short mini-biography with information about
yourself you are willing to share with the class; your name, undergrad/grad major (s), where you are in the program, particular public library area of interest, career goals, and what you hope to gain from the course. Please post your mini-bio on Blackboard by Tuesday, January 25 so that it will be available at our first face to face meeting.

3. **Ask Dr. P.** This provides a place where you can post public questions about the course or about assignments. For private communication, use email.

4. **Water Cooler.** This provides a place for students who wish to alert the class about an event, a reading, etc. Students can also share information of interest to the class via the E-mail option where they can send messages to one, several, or all members of the class at once.

**Announcements.** This is a separate section in Blackboard. I use it to provide additional information to the class including information about the course schedule, syllabus, or assignments. I will also use it to share a particularly relevant new reading, announce a lecture, etc. Please check the announcements section regularly. Students who wish to share information of interest to the class can use the **Water Cooler** or the email option.

4. **READINGS.**

   Required Text,

   Prentice, Ann E. *Public Libraries in the 21st Century* Santa Barbara, CA. Libraries Unlimited, 2011. It is available at the UMD Bookstore or on Amazon.com. It will also be on reserve for the course.

   Required readings from books and periodicals are listed under each course unit and are available via the Reserve Desk. The majority of the readings are available on websites and these are listed in the appropriate unit. They do not appear in the reading list. For those available in hard copy only, I will include comments on their content in the lectures.

   Be sure you check articles in *Library Journal*, *Public Libraries*, *American Libraries* and other journals both in the library field and in related fields for articles of interest about public libraries. Look at web sites and blogs In numerous assignments, you will be asked to locate articles, blogs, and web sites relevant to the topic under discussion. An important tool for public librarians is a working knowledge of the publications in and related to the field of public librarianship so that you are able to stay current.
5. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

The course is divided into fourteen weekly units. For each weekly unit, students are expected to do the readings and complete the assignments for that unit. Units typically include a lecture, required readings, a portfolio assignment, and/or group discussion.

**Portfolio** Each student will be asked to build a portfolio as her/his semester project. The following provides an outline of tasks, when due, and a rationale for this project. I will also provide, under course documents, a brief statement of the assignments and dates due. This does not replace the following info. It just provides a one page summary for your convenience.

1). Select a public library. This can be a main library or a branch library. It can be one in which you work, where you go, or one you have always wanted to know more about. This will provide you with a context for identified assignments and each identified assignment will be part of your portfolio. The information you gather for these assignments will provide input to the discussions. (If several students select the same library, it may be necessary to have a second choice. We will be able to determine this soon after you submit your choice of library on January 31.)

As a courtesy, it would be appropriate to ask the librarian at the library you wish to select if he/she is willing to let you use the library as the focus of your portfolio. This serves two purposes; it explains why you are so interested in the library and are asking questions and it provides the librarian an opportunity to explore aspects of the library from your perspective.

2). Sources of information may include documents, interviews with staff, interviews with library users, personal observation local newspaper reports, the library’s website, blogs, etc. Please identify your sources.

3). Assignments for your portfolio will be described in each unit in which there is a portfolio assignment

4). Copies of portfolio assignments will be submitted at the beginning of face to face meetings on March 7, April 4, and May 2. Place assignments in a manila folder on which your name is prominently placed. Keep the originals in your portfolio. I will review the assignments and email comments to you. This allows you to revise your portfolio if you wish. Any revisions should be emailed to me so that I can keep my copy of your portfolio up to date.

5). In addition to the required assignments, you may add additional information you find relevant such as a periodical article, information on community activities that relate in some way
to the library, photos, diagrams, etc. Please provide me with citations, or if short articles the article you have included. These will enrich your study of the library you have selected and your contribution to discussions. The additions will be part of your portfolio grade. Please include only those items that add something substantive to the portfolio. Quality and relevance trumps quantity.

6). Because you have the opportunity to revise and resubmit assignments, it is quite possible that you will receive an A grade on your portfolio.

7). The purpose of the portfolio is to provide you the opportunity to build a case study of the library you have selected and thus to have an overview of how that particular library relates to its community, is managed, and looks to the future. It can then serve as a model for looking at other public libraries. We will discuss this at our February 7 meeting.

**Group Discussions** For each unit that has a discussion session, the instructor will pose one or two questions to start the discussion. The discussion session will last from 9:00 a.m. on Monday through 9:00 p.m. on Thursday. Students will have the instructor’s initial questions on the previous Friday. The discussion session will not be open for postings from Thursday at 9:00 p.m. to Monday at 9:00 a.m. While the discussion session will not include additional contributions in the Thursday to Monday period, students can read any comments that have been made at any time during the course.

Each student is expected to respond substantively three times during the discussion period to:

- contribute added relevant information
- pose additional relevant questions, and
- stay on topic.
6. GRADING

Grades will be assigned in the following manner.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in topics under discussion reflecting</td>
<td>35%</td>
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familiarity with issues and readings. Each member is expected to participate in each session. (And I keep track of participation)

All discussions will take place only within the week specified. No credit will be given for late posts. All short papers will be due within the time specified. No credit will be given for late submissions.

7. COURSE EVALUATION

Your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility you hold as a student member of our academic community. Your feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing online, at Testudo, the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, dates for evaluations will be announced. You can then go directly to the website <www.courseevalum.umd.edu> to complete your evaluation.

8. COURSE UNITS

Unit 1 January 24-27

A. Introduction.

History of the public library movement in the U.S.

Readings:

B. Governance Issues

We will discuss the way in which public libraries in Maryland are organized. This state has a system of public libraries that is based on the county. There will also be a discussion of variations among states in the ways in which public libraries are organized.

Readings:


Lecture Notes:

See Course Content File

Lecture Notes released Friday, January 21.

In preparation for the discussion of the state’s role in public libraries, go to the MD Division of Library Services Website and review the information you find there. This will provide you with information on state level public library organization, management and services. We will also refer to this information throughout the course.

Unit 2 Public Library Governance and the Role of the Trustee Jan. 31- Feb. 3

This unit deals with the ways in which public libraries interact at the local, regional, and state level with one another and with local government. It also discusses the trustee form of governance of which there are numerous variations depending largely on the history of the library and its founding.

In preparation for the discussion of the state’s role in public libraries on February 7, go to the Maryland Division of Library Services Website and review the information you find there. This will provide you with basic information on the ways in which Maryland libraries are organized at the state level. (Irene Padilla, the MD State Librarian has been invited to join us on February 7 to discuss the role of the state vis a vis public libraries. More on this later).

Readings:


Miller, Ellen G. and Patricia H. Fisher. Library Board Strategic Guide: Going to the Next Level. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007. (Skim the topics) [Pat Fisher is a former member of the Baltimore County Public Library Trustees. She is also a library consultant and an iSchool
MLS graduate]

Also check ALA’s Recommended Websites - Librarians, Trustees, and Educators.

Lecture Notes:
See Course Content Folder

Lecture Notes released, Friday, January 28

Assignment:

Portfolio Assignment #1. Identify the library you have selected for your portfolio and provide information on when it was founded, who was involved, important milestones, etc.

Portfolio Assignment #2. Learn what type of governance your library has. Does the library have trustees? Are they advisory or administrative? How are they selected? What criteria are used for selection? How often do they meet? What are their terms of office? Are there documents outlining roles and responsibilities? You will have more questions but this is a beginning. [If you have selected a MD library, you will need to ask these questions about the County library as branches are part of the county library system.] Do branch libraries have advisory boards?

The two assignments will be due in hard copy on March 7. (See p. 5 for additional information.)

Unit 3 The Library in the Community February 7-10

The public library is an integral part of its community. How well it serves its community is reflected in the attitudes toward the library, the extent to which it is funded, and the pride local residents have in their community.

Readings:

Prentice, p. 35-61.


Lecture Notes:
Assignment:

From the literature, select an article that illustrates the connection between the library and the community. Use this article to inform the discussion. [the first time you participate in the discussion, include the citation for the article]

Questions to start group discussion.

1). What do members of the community want from their library? Has this changed over time? Are community members satisfied with library services?

2). How do librarians learn about the needs, wants, interests of the community?

3). Communication is very important to this interaction. How can the library assure that there is an adequate flow of information between the library and its community?

Unit #4  Library as Virtual Place  February 14-17

At one time, the discussion of library as place focused on buildings, on print collections, on meeting places with chairs, tables, and lectern. A librarian presided over the place and was available to help those interested in finding information. In the 21st Century, the library also needs to stake out a virtual place that encompasses web sites, blogs, virtual services, and virtual meeting places.

Readings:

Prentice, p. 61-72.

Look up Public Library Blogs on the web.

Look at ALA Recommended Websites: Librarians, Trustees, and Educators. Focus on an area of particular interest to you.

Lecture Notes:

See Course Content Folder

Lecture #4 released February 11.

Assignment:

1). Look up any 3 public library web sites on the web and evaluate them according to the following criteria;
-amount of information
-types of information
-ease of use
-the success of the website as a virtual place

Which website would you recommend as the most user friendly, and why?

2). Look up any 3 public library blogs and evaluate them according to the same criteria? In the Discussion Session labeled websites, identify the one website you found most helpful and say why. In the Discussion Session labeled blogs identify the one blog you found most helpful and indicate why you selected it. Please post before 9:00 a.m. February 14. And limit your posting to one paragraph for each posting. During the discussion period, please comment on the blogs/websites in terms of the extent to which they appear to meet user needs. How would you improve, change them.

Unit #5 Library as Place February 21-24

The library as a place of bricks and mortar continues to be an essential component of the library and for many individuals it is the only place. What does the library building say about the community it serves? How do we plan for the library building, its spaces and places? How do we maintain the building?

Readings:


Skim the April 2007, 2008, and 2009 issues of American Libraries. This is the annual architecture issue and provides an excellent overview of library building over the previous year. The issues also include articles, illustrations, etc.

Lecture Notes:

See Course Content Folder.

Lecture Notes Released Friday, February 18.
Assignment:

1). Assignment #3 for your portfolio - look at the library you have selected in terms of the following criteria;

- where it is located in the community
- design of the building - e.g. modern, traditional
- does it have “green” features
- how is the internal space organized and is it easy to navigate, is it flexible
- is the building well maintained
- is it a pleasant place to be.
- is there additional information you wish to add

Note: one of the easiest ways to visualize how friendly the library is is to do a wayfaring chart that takes you from library entrance to where you want to go. Are there directions? Can you see your destination? How would you change the chart? One student in an earlier course has a daughter who uses a wheel chair. Navigating a library while seated can be an entirely different experience.

Assignment due in hard copy March 7.

Unit #6 Demographics February 28-March 3.

The subject of demographics covers two main areas; the demographics of the library staff and the demographics of the community served. Sam Clay, Director of the Fairfax, VA Public Library will share with you how his library identifies the information and service needs of an area that includes well more than 100 languages and cultures. He will join us on Monday, March 7. (More on this later.)

Readings:

The Future of the Librarian in the Workforce

http://www.libraryworkforce.org/tiki-index.php

This important resource is continuously updated and provides basic statistical data on the state of librarianship.

2). Sam Clay, Director of the Fairfax Co. Public Library will discuss with us the
demographics of the community his library serves. This library has a particularly diverse service area and Sam has a great deal of experience in addressing the role of the library in identifying groups within the community, developing ways of providing service, and how one evaluates the programs. This includes service to different age groups, different interests, immigrant groups, etc.

Readings:

Prentice, p. 51-57

“Serving non-English Speakers in U.S. Public Libraries,” This study administered by ALA’s Office for Research and Statistics completed in 2007 is available at www.ala.org/nonenglishspeakers/

Lecture Notes:

See Course Content Folder.

Lecture Notes released, Friday, February 25

Assignment:

Portfolio Assignment #4. What are the demographics of the community your library serves? What sources of data are used to determine this? How often is the data revised? Has the library conducted a community analysis? What plans for special groups exist, are being planned? To what extent has 2010 census data been used? Assignment due in hard copy April 4.

Unit #7 Public Library Policies

March 7-11

Public library policy outlines procedures to be followed by the library in specifically identified situations. They are developed by the library administrative board and the library director and provide guidance in areas including materials selection, confidentiality, internet access, etc.

A useful way to approach this unit is to go to the web and pull up “Public Library Policies.” You will find an extensive list of policies that have been prepared by the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington [State]. And look under Personnel policies to see the many policies that deal with staff issues.

Readings:

Prentice, p. 25-35.
Lecture Notes:

See Course Content folder
Lecture Notes released Friday March 4.

Assignment:

Portfolio assignment #5. select three library policies from the Washington list in an area of interest to you, e.g. books and materials selection and review. Ask for a copy of your library’s policy on the same topic. What are the common elements, different elements? Were you to write a policy on this topic, how would it differ from those you have reviewed. Assignment due in hard copy on April 4.

Unit #8 Public Library Organization and Staffing March 14-17

Public library services are divided in numerous ways; geographically, by subject, by function. They are also divided between technical services, those services that make materials available by describing them and placing them in the collection so that they are available for use, and public services, those activities that provide the connection between the collection and the user. They are also divided by the anticipated users, e.g. service to children, young adults, and adults. Public library programs are developed by public service librarians to serve specific needs and interests and ages. Programs include reference services which can be divided further into specific including reader’s advisory programs, bibliographic instruction, etc. Organization charts are intended to provide an overview of the elements of the organization and to show their interrelationships. Programs vary according to the needs of the community served, and they vary over time.

The major aspects of library staffing are covered in LBSC635. We will discuss here aspects of staffing that are unique to the public library, e.g. the role of the library director as a member of municipal government, the role of volunteers in the library, and the need for expanded staff development.

Readings:

Prentice, p. 35-50,103-119,145-156.


Lecture Notes:

See Course Content Folder

Lecture #8 released Friday, March 11.

Assignment: No assignment.

SPRING BREAK MARCH 20-27

Unit #9 Public Library Programming March 28-31

Public library services are divided between technical services; those services that make materials available by describing them and placing them in the collection so that they are available for use, and public services; those activities that provide the connection between the collection and the user. They are also divided by the anticipated users, e.g. service to children, young adults, and adults. Public library programs are developed by public service librarians to serve specific needs and interests and ages. Programs include reference services which can be divided further into specific activities such as reader’s advisory programs, bibliographic instruction, etc. Programs vary according to the needs of the community served. And they vary over time.

Readings:

Prentice, p. 73-102, p.121-144.


Lecture Notes:

See Course Content Folder
Lecture Notes Released Friday, March 18.

Assignment:

Portfolio Assignment #6. For your portfolio and to inform the discussion, select a department of the library, identify the programs available, talk with the department head to determine that individual’s philosophy of service, and ask if there are priorities among the programs, e.g. if the budget is cut, which programs would be most affected either positively or negatively? How is program information made available to the public? How heavily are programs used? How are they evaluated? Portfolio assignment due in hard copy Monday, April 4.

Questions for Discussion:

1). Who decides which kinds of programs to develop? Who decides on content?
2). What influence does demographics have on programming?
3). How are programs evaluated and how are evaluation results used?

Unit #10  Program Evaluation  April 4-7

Jim Fish, Director of the Baltimore County Public Library and James Cooke who is the Library’s Project Manager will join us. They will continue the discussion of Programming to include Program Management and Program Evaluation.

The public library collects data to determine how resources are spent and what the community receives from the tax dollars spent on the public library. Program evaluation is not only good for business, it is an important accountability and public relations tool.

Readings:


Check the following entry by the Milwaukee, Wisconsin Public Library, “Rethinking Libraries for the 21st Century” <http://www.mpl.org/file/community_index.htm>

Assignment:

Portfolio Assignment #7. Consider the following questions. This assignment will be informed by Unit 11 as well as Unit 10.

1). How does one/can one determine the value of the public library?
2). How do you show funding agencies and the community that the public library is a valuable asset worthy of funding?

Portfolio assignment due in hard copy on May 2,

Unit #11 Financial Planning April 11-14

The financial crisis has hit public libraries particularly hard. Because the library is not seen as being as critical to the public as fire and police services, it is always at risk and this is particularly true during a financial downturn. It is crucial that the librarian understand both the political process and how to deal with finances in order to move ahead or, in some cases, just stay alive.

Readings:


Prentice, p. 181-207.

Lecture Notes:

See Course Content Folder
Lecture Notes Released April 8

Assignment:

See Unit 10 Assignment

Unit #12 Technology April 11-14
While technology is a component of each program and activity in the library, it is helpful to look at it separately as this allows us to focus on issues that may not emerge as clearly when we are looking at technology as a tool. Nearly every day, we hear of or experience new ways of finding information, new ways of concealing information, and new and different ways we can communicate, do our jobs, etc. that involve not just the technology but also very important social issues.

For public libraries, one of the most important studies, and it is an ongoing study, is the Public Library Funding and Technology Access Study. Dr. John Bertot of the iSchool faculty is the principal investigator for the “Public Libraries and the Internet 2008: Study Results and Findings.”

Readings:
Public Library Funding and Technology Access Study. Find it on the web at <www.ala.org/plinternetfunding>

Also go to Wikipedia and look at information on RFID. It is an excellent example of how technology applied to circulation systems has greatly improved efficiency and with many fewer circulation staff members.

Lecture Notes:
See Course Content Folder
Lecture Notes Released, Friday, April 15.

Assignment:
Portfolio Assignment #8, identify an activity in the library you are studying that has been affected by technology, e.g. faster service, fewer staff needed to accomplish, and describe the benefits. Also identify an activity that would benefit from a new approach. Perhaps the solution includes technology and perhaps not. Discuss how you might go about implementing the change. Due in hard copy on May 2.

Unit 13  The Public Library and Professional Societies  April 25-28

Professional associations serve a number of purposes. They provide a way for
professionals with similar interests to meet and share information. They are a means of mentoring new professionals, of provided continuing education, and are a force for advocacy.

In this assignment the readings and the assignment are intertwined. Therefore there will not be separate sections for them.

1). Check the following web sites to see what each of the following professional associations offers the librarian. American Library Association, Public Library Association, Maryland Library Association, Citizens for Maryland Libraries. Also check the web sites of the American Society for Information Science and Technology and the Special Library Association. Identify two professional associations in areas of importance to public librarians, e.g. the Maryland Association of Non-Profit Organizations. Also look at the website for ALA’s Washington Office. You may want to look at some of the ALA divisional associations in addition to the PLA such as LITA.

2). Talk with the librarian and ask to which professional associations s/he belongs and why. Identify the position the librarian holds, e.g. children’s librarian, reference specialist.

3). Prioritize the associations in terms of your interest and indicate your reasons. Which associations would you be interested in joining? Which association web sites will you check on a regular basis?

4). This will be the basis for the discussion session April 25-28 and for Portfolio assignment #9 due on Monday, May 2.

Unit 14 Looking Ahead

One of the many things that became evident during the two years I was writing the text you are using is that the public library does not stand still. To survive and prosper, it must grow with its community and in many ways provide leadership for the community’s growth. As Marilyn Johnson said “the librarian is the organizer, the animating spirit behind it, and the navigator. Her job is to create order out of the confusion of the past, even as she enables us to blast into the future.”

Our final class discussion and our final guest speaker, Lynn Wheeler, Director of the Carroll Co. Public Library will lead a discussion that will focus on “what’s next for public libraries both positive and negative, and how do we provide leadership as we move into ever more interesting times. What are the possible directions for the next year, five years, ten years? What is
likely to change and what is likely to remain the same? What should we look out for?

Please be prepared with questions for our speakers.

We will continue the discussion on line from May 2-5.

Readings:


Lecture Notes:

None.