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**A model for designing library media preparation programs based on national guidelines :
*Information power and the University of Maryland***

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Abstract :

Building on the theories and principles of Information Power : Building Partnership for Learning (1998), the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland, held a one-day conference to gather data to feed into a comprehensive review and potential restructuring of the College's School Library Media program. The results suggest important directions for the library media field, as well as illustrating how Information Power can be used as a conceptual framework for identifying the needs of the field and for planning preservice programs and strategies to meet them.

Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning (1998) presents the national guidelines for library media specialists within the United States. Developed by a joint committee of the American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology—the two organizations that represent North American school

library media specialists—the document describes the ideal library media specialist for the first part of the twentieth century and suggests a detailed outline for preparing students in graduate school library media preparation programs to achieve that ideal.

Building on the theories and principles of *Information Power*, the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland held a one-day conference to gather data to feed into a comprehensive review and potential restructuring of the College's School Library Media Program. Eighteen invited participants and four observers from the College represented the worlds of practice, supervision, professional organizations, and academic preparation programs. College faculty and administrators working with the Program were in attendance, as were current students and personnel from within and beyond the State of Maryland who were graduates or had some other affiliation with the program. Officers from both organizations that published *Information Power* participated, as did several members of the committee that had developed the document. One visitor from a continent other than North America gave the meeting a slight “international” flavor.

With the help of a facilitator and of decision-support software that allowed them to express their views anonymously, participants addressed five questions, two of which were related to the College's specific agenda and three of which addressed broader topics of interest to an IFLA audience:

1. What are the most important challenges and opportunities that school library media specialists and related professionals entering the field will face during the next decade?
2. What are the most important types of knowledge, skills, and abilities that we need to develop through graduate education . . . to prepare professionals to address these challenges and opportunities?
3. How should [we] provide for the development of these types of knowledge, skills, and abilities—through courses, field study, and other approaches?

Electronic answers were captured for all the questions, and the resulting printouts were subjected to content analysis according to the constant comparative method to identify the most important findings related to each question. Transcripts of the discussions following the electronic-input sessions were also analyzed according to this method. The seven initial coding categories were the main topics covered in *Information Power*: collaboration, leadership, and technology (the three overriding themes of the document that are infused throughout); learning and teaching, information access and delivery, program administration (the three main functional areas for library media programs); and connections to the learning community (larger issues related to such programs). Several phases of analysis involved various groupings of responses into these categories and a number of subcategories and resulted in a number of major findings. The full process and findings were published in a technical report (Neuman, 1999) and in a journal article (Neuman, 2001). A more expansive discussion of the conference and of several additional findings can be found there. The following findings are particularly germane to the topic of this workshop:

1. Issues related to the two functional areas of (1) teaching and learning and (2) program administration provide the most pressing challenges and opportunities for current and future library media specialists. Preparation programs must address these two areas in depth to provide graduates the knowledge and skills they will need in the field.
2. Information access—the third functional area—remains core and offers opportunities for expanded emphases as well. The emergence of increasing concerns about (1) ethical issues related to information use and (2) a need for students to understand how to evaluate information

and information resources critically and effectively suggests important foci for preparation programs.

3. Within learning and teaching, curricular emphases should include the following, in descending order of importance according to the frequency of participants' responses: learning theory, information literacy, curriculum/instructional design, the use of technology for instruction, teaching skills, reading/literacy, assessment of student performance, and attention to special needs/diversity. Reading/literature, which received comparatively less attention in the electronic data than in the discussions, should continue to be an important focus.

4. Within program administration, curricular emphases should include the following, also in descending order of frequency of mention: communications/public relations, management, policy and political issues, budgets and funding, and professional development.

5. Technology is a particularly important area to emphasize, especially as it relates to (1) the library media specialist's role; (2) to issues of equity; and (3) to the library media specialists's responsibility for integrating technology into instruction, maintaining a balance between electronic and traditional resources, and staying abreast of the latest developments.

6. Leadership is a fundamental area of expertise, and preparation programs must continue to develop in this area. Collaboration is both a topic in its own right and a format for emphasis—for example, in team projects, interdisciplinary courses, and cross-listed courses to provide opportunities for students in library media preparation programs to work with other preservice educators on such issues as collaborative instructional planning and delivery.

7. A wide array of approaches to delivering curricular topics might include traditional and internet courses, seminars and institutes, teleconferences and workshops, and guest speakers and internships. Experiential learning, distance learning, and mentoring are key elements of a preparation program for the twenty-first century.

In general, these results suggest important directions for the library media field as well as illustrating how *Information Power* can be used as a conceptual framework for identifying the needs of the field and for planning preservice programs and strategies to meet them. Professional preparation programs that adopt an *Information-Power* centered approach can be confident that they are at the forefront of educating library media specialists for the information age.

References

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