



Program Presentation  
for the Committee on Accreditation  
American Library Association

Master of Library Science  
Southern Connecticut State University  
2010

*Summary*

## **Introduction**

New Haven is an historic seaside city founded by English Puritans in 1637. Today, New Haven is a multicultural city of more than 130,000 people with a history rich in culture and learning.

Southern Connecticut State University, founded as a teachers college in 1893, is located less than three miles from downtown New Haven, near the historic Westville Village section of the city.

The University is a community of about 12,000 students, of which about 3,000 are graduate students, and more than 700 faculty, of which about 440 are full time. The University is accredited by the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

The mission of the University is to provide exemplary graduate and undergraduate education in the liberal arts and professional disciplines. As a diverse and comprehensive university, Southern is committed to academic excellence, access, social justice, and service for the public good.

In support of the University's mission, the Department of Information and Library Science provides exemplary education to develop leaders who collect, organize, preserve, manage, and disseminate information in all formats. We do this by instilling values and beliefs in service to our communities in a global society.

Southern's MLS program is the only ALA-accredited library program in Connecticut and one of three in New England.

## **Standard I: Mission, Goals, Objectives**

The Department has a clearly defined mission, goals, and objectives, in keeping with the values of the University. The program objectives are stated in terms of educational results to be achieved and align with the ALA Core Competences. The Department has a

comprehensive planning process that includes periodic retreats, monthly faculty and curriculum meetings, monthly meetings of other committees, and special meetings when needed. In addition, email and a Wiki have been used for distribution of information, discussion, and arriving at consensus. The departmental bylaws, the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and Senate documents outline the structure and govern operations of the Department. The bylaws are revised and updated to meet department needs and to align with most recent Collective Bargaining Agreement and other relevant documents.

The department publishes its mission, values, and goals on its website [www.southernct.edu/ils](http://www.southernct.edu/ils) and routinely seeks input from its constituents in order to align goals, objectives, and curricular initiatives with needs of the professional community it serves.

## **Standard II: Curriculum**

The MLS degree requires completion of a total of 36 credits, which is normally accomplished in 12 courses. All students in the program must complete a core consisting of six courses: *Introduction to Information Science and Technology*, *Foundations of Librarianship*, *Reference and Information Resources and Services*, *Information Analysis and Organization*, *Library Management or Management of School Library Media Centers (School Media Specialist program)*, and *Research in Information and Library Science*. Students select electives in Information and Library Science that are suited to their career goals.

The MLS curriculum is based on goals and objectives that align with the ALA Core Competences. The curriculum and courses are routinely reviewed and updated based on input from employers, alumni, students, and the field and literature.

Evidence includes course offerings and enrollments over the past seven years; mapping of curriculum change; sample course outlines and syllabi; internship documents; and samples of student work, specifically capstone portfolios, research proposals, and outcome research reports. The evidence shows a continuous and sustained curriculum review and appropriate revisions based on input from constituents.

ILS offers courses both on campus and online. Approximately ninety percent of courses are offered online to students in Connecticut, New England, and around the world.

Only one MLS degree is offered; there is no difference between on campus and online courses. The admission process and acceptance standards are identical and the same course outlines and syllabi are used whether a course is taught online or on campus.

Students may take online courses, on campus courses, or hybrid courses as appropriate to their schedules and needs. Decisions on whether a course is offered online, on campus, or as a hybrid integration of the two depends on the nature of the course content and student preference as determined by registration patterns. Approximately 12-18 percent of

courses in the MLS program are held on campus, depending upon the semester. Generally, in any one semester, no more than one course is offered as a hybrid.

Online courses offered by the ILS are capped at 20 students; enrollment in ILS 580 Research in Library and Information Science is capped at twelve.

Findings from a variety of surveys reinforce the positive aspects of the program and curriculum. Of the students responding to the NEASC [New England Association of Schools and Colleges] self study survey, 92% agree that the program of online courses leading to the MLS degree have appropriate rigor and breadth for the degree.

A recent (December 2009) analysis by an ILS graduate student (Ian Dunbar) of full text written comments of employers, alumni, and students in the latest surveys concluded students greatly appreciate that the MLS degree can be completed in part or in whole through online courses but they can feel isolated from campus. Attention needs to be directed to communication systems that make students at a distance feel a sense of community within the program. Alumni and employers stressed the importance of a greater focus on library management and administration as well as a required internship program to provide professional experience to those students who lack that background. Both students and alumni express gratitude for being given the opportunity to participate in surveys as it makes them feel they are part of the process and connected to the program.

### **Standard III: Faculty**

The ILS department has a diverse faculty with varied backgrounds and a broad range of expertise. The faculty is 55% female, 64% minority, and 50% international. The faculty holds graduate degrees from 12 different schools with ALA-accredited programs and brings subject specializations in biology, education, English, geology, history, human services, instructional technology, languages and literatures, law, journalism, and math and sciences. One member of the faculty was awarded a Fulbright Teaching and Research Fellowship, another was elected to the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences.

The full-time faculty is diverse in its background and specialties, giving the MLS program breadth and variety needed to teach the core courses and assure that the core competencies are well covered.

ILS has a strong pool of highly qualified practitioners from academic, public, school, and special libraries who provide the program with expertise to round out the program's goals and objectives. The Collective Bargaining Agreement sets goals of a 20 percent cap on part-time faculty, with exceptions permitted when a fulltime faculty member is on leave. Summer teaching is optional for fulltime faculty. Over the past seven summers, 58-92 percent of the fulltime faculty has elected to teach at least one course, ensuring consistency in courses and curriculum year-round.

The high priority the university and program attaches to teaching, research, and service is expressed in the criteria for promotion and tenure. Faculty are very active in research and scholarly activities, sharing their work with others in published articles, workshop and conference presentations. Scholarly activities of the faculty interact with other disciplines and include as a whole a sustained record of accomplishment in teaching, research, and publication. Faculty members are not designated as teaching faculty or research faculty. The Collective Bargaining Agreement makes each faculty member responsible for contribution in each of the areas of teaching, creative activity, university and department service, and professional participation. Further, the relationship or weight among the areas is defined as teaching (10), creative activity (5), university and department service (4), and professional participation (2). The promotion and tenure process at Southern Connecticut State University is conducted by peer review. The process begins with departments electing faculty to serve on the Department Evaluation Committee (DEC); there is also a university-wide Promotion and Tenure Committee elected from the university faculty.

The faculty engages in a balanced variety of research and scholarship. Fulltime and part-time faculty produced over 134 publications in past five years. This includes four books, five chapters of books, 49 journal articles, 71 presentations at state, national and international levels. The average production is more than 10 per faculty member. Some articles were translated and published in foreign countries. Most of the research done by ILS faculty centers on the special areas they teach. Faculty received more than 23 grants since completion of the last review in 2004 and initiated or were involved in more than 18 funded research projects.

#### **Standard IV: Students**

The ILS department supports a comprehensive recruitment plan. The program is listed in Peterson's Graduate Programs in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Brochures and catalogs are distributed by the university throughout the state of Connecticut, and to selected agencies in New England. The Graduate and Continuing Education Office regularly sends representatives to Career Day programs at colleges and universities and carries out a marketing campaign through journals, newspapers, and television. Various members of the department distribute materials, talk to individuals, and speak to groups at conferences and meetings including Connecticut Library Association, New England Library Association, and Yale University. Faculty members have met with current and perspective students while attending international conferences in Abu Dhabi, China, Italy, Tanzania, and Turkey.

Eighty-four percent of the ILS students are working toward the Master of Library Science degree and another eight percent toward a post-Master's Sixth Year Diploma in Library Information Studies.

Students in the ILS program learn about the online offerings primarily through one of three sources. The majority seems to learn about the program from students currently in the program. Other sources include the American Library Association (ALA) website and the US News listing of ALA-accredited programs that have online learning options.

Admission standards of the Department of Information and Library Science generally exceed the standards of the University and compare favorably with standards at many selective graduate programs around the country.

The student population is fairly diverse across age groups with over a quarter (26.9%) in their 20s, 28% in their 30s, 29% in their 40s, and 16.2% over fifty years of age. Student enrollment is culturally diverse with 76.3% white, 4.7% black or African American, 1.7% Asian, 1.4% Hispanic or Latino. A number of students are registered with the Disabilities Resource Center.

Approximately 60% of the students in the MLS program reside in-state, 38% out-of-state, and 2% are international students. Approximately 90% of the MLS students enroll part-time and approximately 84% choose to take the online sections of courses [based on fall 2009 enrollments, excluding internships].

Each year the department offers a limited number of assistantships. Graduate Assistants work 15 hours per week during each semester primarily as Teaching and Research Assistants to the faculty. Additional employment opportunities are available through the University's work/study program and through research grants awarded to department faculty members.

ILS students are eligible to compete for an \$8,000 Graduate Research Fellowship or a \$16,000 Graduate School Graduate Assistantship. This is a very competitive competition; a number of ILS students have been awarded either a Fellowship or an Assistantship over the years.

Scholarships available annually include New England Library Association Scholarship, H. W. Wilson Foundation Scholarship, the Baker and Taylor Grassroots Award, and the Sage Family Trust. Two alumni/ae scholarships have been established and are administered through Alumni Affairs: the Eula J. Davies Scholarship (library science) and the Elma Jean and John Wiacek, Jr. Scholarship (library science).

After being accepted into the MLS or other ILS graduate program, the student must complete a Planned Program (plan of courses the student will take) in order to be considered matriculated. The Admissions Committee assigns each student an advisor from the fulltime faculty. Each student is expected to contact their advisor to discuss choice of program electives and career goals and to guide the student through their course of study. Students are encouraged to seek information from many sources (faculty, practitioners, employers, job ads) before finalizing the program or changing their planned program as their goals or interests shift. Students are expected to follow the approved program of study.

To graduate from the MLS program, all students must complete five core courses (six core courses for students admitted beginning 2009-2010) and seven elective courses (six for those admitted beginning 2009-2010) with a grade of "B" or higher in each course. A course can be repeated once in an effort to achieve a grade of "B" or higher. Failure to receive a grade of "B" or higher in a core course, or if the cumulative grade point average falls below 3.0, may result in academic probation and academic dismissal.

#### **Standard V: Administration and Financial Support**

The state and university has weathered several economic downturns since 1996. In spring 2009, the state faced another economic crisis. Through these financially trying times, the ILS department was able to retain all faculty positions and gain two new positions since 1996. In Fall 2009, however, one faculty member and the dean of SCILS accepted retirement packages. The ILS department adjusted teaching schedules to maintain the program and to uphold its commitment to matriculated students.

As part of the School of Communication, Information and Library Science, ILS faculty interact constantly with faculty from other schools through university committees including the Faculty Senate, the Undergraduate Curriculum Forum, the Graduate Council, the Sabbatical Leave Committee, and the Promotion and Tenure Committee.

ILS faculty members have taught in other departments and schools. For example, one faculty member taught courses in the Science Education program, one taught in computer science, and another is presently teaching in the Women's Studies program as well as serving as President of Graduate Council.

Both the chairperson and the dean have prescribed roles in evaluation of faculty members and other areas. The relationship between the chairperson and the dean are outlined in the "Collective Bargaining Agreement" and the "SCSU Faculty Handbook."

The faculty itself establishes policy that governs operation of the department through committees that include, among others, Admissions, Curriculum, Sabbatical Leave, Personnel, and Evaluation. Membership on committees is normally elected by a vote of the faculty (Sabbatical Leave, Personnel, Evaluation) or made up by volunteers (Curriculum, Scholarship); terms of service and responsibilities are spelled out in the departmental bylaws. There is provision for appointment to committees when volunteers have not achieved a minimum number.

Autonomy regarding intellectual content of the curriculum and decisions regarding promotion and tenure of faculty is governed by the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Board of Trustees and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), representing the faculty, and is overseen by the University's Faculty Senate.

The dean is an appointment position and serves at the pleasure of the President. Chairpersons are selected through a process that involves both the faculty and the dean, with faculty showing their preference for one or more of their colleagues and the dean selecting from the faculty's choices.

The department's support staff operates the ILS department office. The department's Technical Center, which contains 20-networked computers is maintained by the Office of Information Technology staff. Various OIT personnel around campus provide user support for faculty and students.

The major source of funding for the department is the University, which provides support from a central budget for full- and part-time faculty and clerical staff, and which provides discretionary funding or operational expenditures, including educational equipment, office supplies, Graduate Assistantships, University Assistantships, University Student Employees, and other discretionary spending. The University provides substantial support to the department. Contribution for personnel costs including faculty, clerical support and student employment totaled over \$ 2.14 million in 2008-2009.

#### **Standard VI: Physical Resources and Facilities**

The University is in the midst of a \$230 million plan to transform the center of campus. Engleman Hall, which houses the University's administration as well as classrooms and department and faculty offices, has been expanded, with more space devoted to academics. In January 2006 the new Michael J. Adanti Student Center, adjacent to the Buley Library building, opened as the hub of the student community.

Construction began in 2005 on the Hilton C. Buley building that would double the square footage of the Library and upgrade technology research tools. The first phase of the Buley renovation, construction of a 135,000-square-foot addition, has been significantly completed. Among the highlights of the \$61.3 million project are two-story reading rooms with views of West Rock. Work should be completed after revised architectural plans are approved and additional funding secured.

A new phase of campus construction projects, estimated at \$1 billion, is expected to include three academic buildings, including a fine arts center, as well as an administrative building, three parking garages, and various facility renovations.

ILS controls one computer lab, with a capacity of 30 students. When not in use as a computer lab, it can be converted into a smart classroom. The ILS computer lab, which is maintained by the Information Technology department, includes an instructor's computer connected to a ceiling-mounted LCD projector and a Smart Board.

Online classes meet through *Blackboard Vista*, a learning management system containing a set of tools that facilitates the creation and delivery of online instruction. *Blackboard Vista* supports Southern's strategic goals for a campus-wide enterprise implementation

that can scale as large as needed and provides flexible support for a broad range of learning styles, teaching methods, and course formats. *Blackboard Vista* can be used to create fully online courses or supplement existing courses on campus.

The University maintains a number of services to support instruction and scholarly activity.

The Hilton C. Buley Library houses a collection of more than 600,000 volumes, maintains vendor contracts with approximately 100 online databases, and provides access to over 50,000 electronic journals. In 2008, a new library building opened and all collections, staff and computing resources were moved to the new space. Plans are underway for renovation of the old library building that would double the size of the library space on campus. The new library building has a library instruction classroom with more than 20 computers and a large LCD screen for demonstrations. It has more than 20 computers in the reference area plus additional computers on each floor for catalog searching. There are many study rooms and collaborative study areas in the fully wireless library building.

Buley Library serves the Southern Connecticut State University campus and distance students around the world. The library has established the position of Distance Education Librarian with a Quick Link prominently displayed on the library's homepage. The Distance Education Librarian provides various modes for contact: phone, email, MSN Messenger and AIM, Skype (Internet telephone), one-on-one online webchat, and co-browsing. Reference Desk and Subject Specialist Librarians are available via phone, email, or web forms. Databases are accessible through Website-based login. Document delivery, tutorials, FAQs, electronic reserves, guides for visiting other libraries, translation aids, and other resources are available from the Library Homepage for Distance Education.

IT has established phone and email help service for students and established procedures to accommodate students who do not come to campus.

Most university facilities and services were designed for on-campus delivery to students. The first courses offered online by the department were an evolution of the off-campus classroom which addressed student needs to shorten long commutes to class. As students from outside a commuting distance began to enroll in the program, the department became an advocate for services delivered at a distance: This also benefited local students with complex schedules who found it challenging to get to campus when service offices were open.

We have found service offices open to amending procedures to accommodate distance students. In addition, several ILS faculty members have taken workshops in Universal Course Design so that some accommodations are inherent in the structure of the course. The department has referred students, when appropriate, to a wide range of services including the Disabilities Resource Office (which now will complete intake interviews via phone in order to establish support needs of students whether attending classes on

campus or online), Center for Adaptive Technology (including fitting prosthetic extensions for missing digits and software that will permit the student to compose, edit, and submit work electronically through use of voice only), Student Supportive Services (which has assisted students in balancing home-work-school needs to supporting them through personal issues and traumatic events), International Student Office (including helping students obtain/maintain needed paperwork and immigration status), and Veteran Services.

## Synthesis

**Challenges.** The physical environment presents a challenge: Renovation of the building is behind schedule. The temporary facilities have reduced office space. Due to the limited space, many department records were put into storage in another building and others were purged. The faculty has greatly reduced space for personal reference libraries and archives of student work. The greater barrier to the utilization of the space, however, is the lack of privacy. Most walls are temporary and do not reach the ceiling, allowing sounds to travel the length of the floor. Confidential conversations cannot take place and acoustics frequently create startling effects that give uneasiness to working in the department.

Earlier this month (January 7, 2010) an update on the renovation and expansion of Buley Library was issued: Southern plans on bidding the remaining work this spring with construction to start in the late summer. While not ideal, the temporary facilities are serviceable; and construction will soon begin, including a more permanent and desirable location for the program.

**Strengths.** Over and over again data, observations, and input from constituents confirm our key strengths are our curriculum, our faculty, and our leadership.

Our curriculum has a long and strong history of being centered around required courses that align with the newly adopted ALA Core Competences.

Our faculty brings a breadth of experience and a record of scholarship to their teaching. The department has a long history of leadership that enables it to weather shifts in organizational structure with resilience and flexibility.

We also have strengths in services provided students on campus and at a distance. Buley Library maintains resources, services, and staff for distance access and, despite the reduced and temporary space in which ILS is currently located, we have a dedicated 30-computer lab and high-tech classroom for our on campus classes.

Our program has a history of sustained enrollment and stable faculty lines, despite the changes economic conditions. Growth has been reasonable and sustainable. While the

current fiscal crisis has brought some changes in resources, they are not outside of fluctuations the department has successfully withstood in the past.

**Limitations.** We do have two situations that we list as limitations: one vacant faculty position due to retirement; and one faculty member on loan to other units within the university. The faculty member who retired late last spring taught in and directed a specialty sixth year program outside of the MLS curriculum. Were it not for the current hiring freeze, we would advertise for a new faculty member in one of three areas identified by constituents as needing expansion: library management and administration, archives, and youth services. One faculty member has been tapped for leadership roles within the university. These include serving as an interim program director of an undergraduate initiative and as president of the Graduate Council. While these are duties with a timeframe, without the current hiring freeze, we would have pursued a special (non-tenure track) fulltime appointment rather than increase the percent of part-time faculty.

**Opportunities.** Based on input from constituents, there are three curricular opportunities we have begun to explore: an advanced certificate in library management and administration; a series of courses in archives and records management; and an advanced certificate in youth services and literacy.

Another opportunity is the migration of departments in the current school to other schools, and the possibility of new arrangements within the university. This is brought about by the governor's imposed ten percent cut in administrative confidential level staff, which include school deans. The department is in the midst of informational meetings with the deans of the other schools to explore commonalities, challenges and opportunities. The faculty will share its findings with the Provost who anticipates announcing the new organizational structure and where ILS will be relocated by the end of March 2010.