

INTRODUCTION

1997 ALISE Statistical Report

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This volume is the eighteenth annual statistical report on library and information (LIS) education published by the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE). Its purpose is to compile, analyze, interpret, and report statistical (and other descriptive) information about library/information science programs offered by schools that are members of ALISE. Although the purpose has remained unchanged since the 1980 inception of this report and the five sections of the report -- faculty, students, curriculum, income and expenditures, and continuing education -- are unchanged, the project has inevitably expanded as new data elements have been added. The present edition numbers 354 pages in smaller type from previous editions and reports information about 57 member schools offering degree programs in library and information science that have been accredited by the Committee on Accreditation of the American Library Association (ALA). Only two of the nine institutional members whose graduate programs are not accredited by ALA have chosen to provide information for this year's report. This information is separately reported in most chapters. No information was collected for the eight international ALISE affiliate members.

In 1994, Anne Woodsworth began her excellent summary by noting the perspective taken by other authors of this section. She, like Jane Hannigan in 1990, chose to place emphasis on suggestions for improvement, although her comments highlight key data in each of the five sections as well. Because many of her suggestions and recommendations resonate with our own notions, we will use them as a jumping off point to discuss present and prospective changes to the *Report*. We will comment on these changes under the following headings: Participation, Uniformity of presentation, Database search and retrieval capability, Coordination and cross-checking for accuracy, New measures of productivity and Further collaboration with ALA/COA, Periodic reporting of infrequently changing data, Availability of the statistics over the Internet, and Use of the *Report*.

About This Report

Participation. The primary audiences for this report over the years have been researchers and administrators seeking comparative data. The value of the data for these audiences is reduced by the fact that data reporting is voluntary and not all schools report each year and those who do report do not always provide data in each category. In this edition, we have addressed this problem in part by listing in each table all the schools who are eligible to report to make it clearer who is reporting and who is not and by calculating table averages based on the number of schools actually reporting. Qualifying and explanatory comments about the data are more liberally provided. In the future we hope to provide a mechanism for adding missing data to past years and for correcting school reporting errors after publication.

The participation of ALISE members in this *Report* whose graduate degree programs in library/information science are not accredited by ALA has dropped over the years until in the past three years only one or two schools in this category have reported data. As the intent of the *Report* is to provide comparative data, we propose to urge all eight schools in this category to participate next year; their data will be reported in a separate section at the end of that year's report.

Uniformity of Presentation. Woodsworth (1994 *Report* summary) commented on the uneven approaches used by individual authors in the various sections and argued that this unevenness frustrates easy identification of major trends. For the 1997 *Report*, we have concentrated on creating a more uniform appearance, worked to unify definitions and the order of data presented in the various tables, and attempted to label reported data consistently throughout. In future years we will propose greater uniformity in the amount and placement of analyses and summaries within the sections. We will be assisted in this task by the section authors and a newly formed Steering Committee (June Lester, chair; Mary Jo Lynch and Howard D. White).

Database Search and Retrieval Capability. From the first, the plan for the statistical project has been to develop and maintain the data in a machine readable file and to provide access at cost to interested parties. The vision of a searchable database with error-correcting mechanisms has proved difficult to achieve but is the primary goal of the present editors. This year we have used MS Access to develop a database of the student data beginning with the 1996-97 data. We will add to this section next year and expand the database to include financial data and possibly faculty data as well. We estimate the development of a completely manipulative database for the quantitative data in the *Report* will take at least three years.

The need to provide greater coordination among sections and to cross-check for accuracy will be easier to meet once all the data are contained within a single database. The database will also make it easier for schools to identify a subgroup cohort of 10-12 similar programs to use for comparison purposes. Leigh Estabrook suggested in her 1993 summary to that year's *Report* that ALISE consider grouping schools in categories like, for example, "Big Ten/Public Institutions, Two-year programs, Programs with Significant Investment in Distance Education, Programs in Private College and Universities" (330). Woodsworth in her 1994 summary also urged that the statistics be "shaped to enable cohorts of like schools to more readily identify one another" (5). A manipulative database would make it possible to create these kind of categories with minimal effort.

New Measures of Productivity and Future Collaboration with ALA/COA. The Committee on Accreditation (COA) of ALA and the ALISE Statistical Project have collaborated in the data collection effort. This partnership appears to have reduced the amount of duplicate work required of the schools in providing the data, increased participation by the schools, and also produced greater uniformity of data definitions. We anticipate this partnership will continue in the future. As COA focuses its attention on productivity measures, we will likely add some of the data to calculate these measures to the *Report* in the future. These additions may include, for example, placement data and faculty productivity data.

Periodic Reporting of Infrequently Changing Data. The 1992 *Report* contained two appendices showing admission requirements and core courses at the member schools. These short reports are good examples of data that do not need to be reported each year. Curriculum changes and distance education plans and practices are other areas where periodic reporting may be more informative than annual reporting. The editors, authors, and Steering Committee members will be considering possible topics and schedules for periodic reports of this nature. Your suggestions on this approach are most welcome.

Availability of the *Statistical Report* over the Internet and Other Changes. It would be relatively easy to collect the data and publish the *Report* on the Internet. Whether this information is something that schools wish to have publicly available in this fashion is being discussed. The financial implication is also something that the ALISE Board will need to address. With the guidance of the Steering Committee and the ALISE Board and with feedback from the deans and directors, there will likely be other changes in the way we collect and report the data. In future years, we anticipate that many of these changes will be reflected in the *Report*.

Use of the Report. The 1997 *Report*, as is true of previous editions, presents a snapshot of library and information science education. Although inaccuracies and gaps in the data suggest it be used with caution, we believe the statistical data reported here are of value to researchers, administrators, new and established faculty, students, and reporters. The data can be used to examine a single school by accumulating its various data points throughout the *Report*. It can be used to compare a school's relevant statistics to peer schools or to the field as a whole. It can be used to examine a particular aspect, as for example, Kathleen de la Peña McCook and colleagues were able to do in examining the data on minority participation in LIS education in their recent report, *Planning for a Diverse Workforce in Library and Information Science Professions* (Tampa: Univ. of South Florida, 1997). We believe that it is possible to use the *Report* to take an overall look at the field and have done so in a summary chapter. In future years, we will invite others to undertake this task.

It is clear that change is afoot and tracking the change will require some change in the data collected. The editors of past editions of this *Report* have been conservative about change -- the 1997 *Report* is remarkably similar to the first *Report* published in 1980 -- and rightly so. Yet change is needed -- not only in the manner in which the data are collected and made available, but also in the data categories and periodicity of reports. We will respond to the need for change with the advice and counsel of the Steering Committee, the deans and directors, the ALISE Board, field researchers, and others who make use of the *Report*.

