



## **Building the Body of Cultural Heritage Literacy within LIS Curricula: Challenges and Opportunities in an Evolving Global Knowledge Economy**

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### **Abstract**

*Among the educational requirements of professional preparation through curricula focused on cultural heritage information management are the definition, creation, proliferation, and usage of that body of research, scholarship, and creative work, which constitutes the core of “cultural heritage literacy.” Within the context of this curricular focus, core educational needs, questions related to building this core, and a basic structure for creating academic experiences in support this curriculum must be identified. As the nature and conceptualization of cultural heritage information continues to evolve in form, format, delivery, and management, so must a common understanding and development of educational experiences. A further exploration of how the LIS field can capitalize on the wealth of the global cultural heritage information management communities in creating, sharing, and attaining these common goals is of the essence.*

### **Introduction**

Cultural heritage information repositories increasingly are being housed, administratively, physically, and virtually within public, academic and special libraries, as well as museums and other cultural institutions. Places, spaces, and locations, physical and virtual, are evolving, creating a demand for a more cross-disciplinary approach to curricula development among these fields as they continue to organically morph and change. As the lines of distinction among systems of information management in cultural heritage institutions meld and integrate so must the professional preparation of archivists, curators, librarians, and other keepers of cultural phenomenological documentation and information. Indeed, as the lines of

distinction in research and education within an increasingly more global knowledge economy merge, so must an approach to the needs of this cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural, and cross-border-enhanced environment.

The Catholic University of America (CUA), School of Library and Information Science (SLIS), created a new curricular focus, Cultural Heritage Information Management (CHIM). This new course of study represents a departure from traditional archives/records management tracks or specializations offered by Library and Information Science (LIS) programs, as well as museum studies curricular foci offered through LIS and humanities based (history) curricula, in that it is not limited to educating in only one of these areas exclusively. This course of study offers students the best of these areas through its interdisciplinary approach. It is designed to introduce students to the cross-boundary nature of working in a cultural heritage institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The CHIM program not only allows, but encourages students to broaden their individual perspectives beyond what historically has been inferred through the professional nomenclature (i.e., librarian, archivist, or curator.) Students instead focus on how to identify and best serve the various clienteles of these institutions, regardless of position name or place identity.

Among the educational requirements of professional preparation through this curriculum are the definition, creation, proliferation, and usage of that body of research, scholarship, and creative work, which constitutes the core of “cultural heritage literacy.” Within the context of CHIM, this paper explores those needs, identifies the questions related to building this core, and outlines a basic structure for locating those sources of information in support this curriculum. As the nature and conceptualization of cultural heritage information continues to evolve in form, format, delivery, and management, so must a common understanding and development of educational source materials and structures. This on-going research further explores how the LIS field can capitalize on the wealth of the global cultural heritage information management communities in creating, sharing, and attaining these common goals.

## Background

### *Curricular Development of the CHIM Course of Study*

The individual fields of education in library and information science, archival science, and museum studies have long offered segregated approaches within generalist curricula, which purport to prepare students to be active professionals in a variety of cultural heritage information management environments. As a result, new professionals have been traditionally placed (or misplaced) in positions in museums, libraries, and archives based on the identity of their educational programs, not on the content of those programs and the resultant capabilities of the graduated professional. In addition, the traditional identities of these cultural heritage institutions no longer match their institutional function and form. These two situations, separate or combined, can contribute to institutional dysfunction. Increasingly, museums and archives are being administratively and physically housed within public, academic and special libraries. A converse phenomenon is also occurring as more and more libraries are being created, located (physically and administratively), and utilized in museums. As a result, the management of the contents and work of libraries, museums, and archives is integrating on many levels.

Places, spaces, and locations, physical and virtual, have evolved, creating a demand for a more cross-disciplinary approach to curricula development among these fields as they continue to organically morph and change. As the lines of distinction among systems of information management in cultural heritage institutions meld and integrate so must the

professional preparation of archivists, curators, librarians and other keepers of cultural phenomenological documentation and information. The paper, *Towards Hybridism in Curricula-based Cultural Heritage Information Management Education* (Choquette, 2007), presented at the 2007 International Conference on Hypermedia and Interactivity in Museums (ICHIM) conference in Toronto, investigates the change in the vision and mission, as well as the physical and administrative infrastructure of cultural heritage institutions and how this change is mandating a new understanding of what is needed in emerging cultural heritage information management professionals (<http://www.archimuse.com/ichim07/papers/choquette/choquette.html>).

Increasingly, the field of cultural heritage information management is enjoying an expanding interest. Recently a group of LIS faculty and professionals, museum curators and administrators, gathered in a workshop sponsored by Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) (<http://chips.ci.fsu.edu/>) to examine the educational needs of preparing cultural heritage information professionals who can work across the boundaries of libraries, archives, and museums to meet the information needs of users of all types of cultural heritage organizations. Through utilization of the Internet and the World Wide Web in creating virtual data and related metadata, libraries, archival collections, special collections, museum holdings, and other cultural heritage documentation materials can be disseminated to a vast number of users, researchers, students, and the general public, enhancing the role of the library, archives, special collections, museum, and cultural heritage information professional as educator, and provider of intellectual access to our collective global historical heritage.

A concentration in cultural heritage information management offers students knowledge and experience in the broad range of information sources that are defined by this rich area of study - from print to digital, and from the traditional formats to the virtual. The field encompasses collections of library materials, archival documents, manuscript materials, rare books, visual and moving images, ephemera and realia, multi-format museum art and artifacts, and other items and collections of new media. It reflects increased interest in digital archives and electronic records, area and interdisciplinary studies, as well as media and format collections including film and video, sound recordings, maps, prints and photographs, digital and other new media materials documenting our cultural heritage.

#### *Rationale*

The CHIM curriculum represents a departure from traditional archives/records management tracks or specializations offered by LIS programs and from museum studies curricular foci offered through LIS and humanities based (history) curricula, in that it is not limited to educating in only one of these areas exclusively. Indeed the CHIM program offers students the best of both areas through its interdisciplinary approach. It is designed to introduce students to the cross-boundary nature of working in a cultural heritage institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The CHIM program not only allows, but encourages students to approach collection materials and services in a non-partisan way, so to speak, to not limit their individual perspectives to what historically has been inferred through the professional nomenclature (i.e., librarian, archivist, curator.) Students instead focus on how to identify and best serve the various clienteles of these institutions, regardless of position name or place identity.

A traditional archives and records management program, such as the program recently opened at UNC Chapel Hill, School of Information and Library Science, Concentration in Archives and Records Management (ARM) (<http://sil.unc.edu/programs/armconcentration.html>), focuses on the role of the archivist and

records manager as specified in the theoretical archival literature; that being that cultural heritage materials are treated according to the rules of provenance and collection level arrangement, not considering bibliographic treatment as needed to provide access to some of these materials in certain places. CHIM explores a variety of cultural heritage environments and provides a rounded education grounded in both bibliographic and archival theory that will assist students in making decisions on intellectual access based on the diversity of place.

The CHIM curriculum also offers students a window into the experience of working with museum collections that are located in libraries and archives, and explores the crossover in treatment required for access, not offered through a traditional museum studies program, such as the new online program at Johns Hopkins University (<http://advanced.jhu.edu/academic/museum/>), which, in focus, does not address museum collections management within the context of information management. The CHIM program introduces students to curatorial work and conservation work as might be encountered in a library or archive, or another information repository within museums and cultural heritage institutions, and provides an introduction to post-graduate studies in preservation, conservation, and museum studies, such as the program at the University of Texas, School of Information, Kilgarlin Center for Preservation of the Cultural Record (<http://www.ischool.utexas.edu/kilgarlin/about.php>). Studies are further enhanced by the multitude of opportunities in the Washington/Baltimore area to work with some of the world's finest libraries, archives, special collections, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions through fieldwork, practicum, or volunteer arrangement. Through the CUA Center for Global Education (<http://cge.cua.edu/>), students have the opportunity to explore cultural heritage information internationally as well.

### *The Curriculum*

#### **Course of Study Cultural Heritage Information Management (CHIM) (as currently represented on the CUA/SLIS web site)**

The Cultural Heritage Information Management (CHIM) course of study is a unique program that is inclusive of library and information studies, archival studies, and museum studies as related to working in information repositories. Cultural heritage information management is concerned with the acquisition, organization, preservation, and access of information resources and artifacts that documents society's cultural life and legacy. The CHIM program is designed to introduce students to the cross-disciplinary nature of working in 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural heritage institutions, including libraries, archives, museums, and heritage sites, such as the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art, the American Folklife Center, the National Archives, and the Historical Society of Washington, DC, to name only a few locations. A concentration in cultural heritage information management offers students knowledge and experience in managing the broad range of information sources that are defined by this rich area of study, including analog and digital artifacts, and traditional formats as well as digital formats.

Studies are enhanced by the multitude of opportunities available in the Washington/Baltimore area to work with some of the world's finest libraries, archives, special collections, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions through field work, internships, practica, or volunteer arrangement. The CHIM curriculum also offers students a window into the experience of

working with museum collections that are located in libraries and archives, and explores the standards in treatment required for information access. The CHIM program provides students with broad exposure and knowledge in curatorial work and conservation work as might be encountered in a library or archive, and provides an introduction to additional post-graduate studies in preservation, conservation, and museum studies at several institutions. Additionally, students have the opportunity to expand studies internationally through SLIS's program opportunities overseas, offered in association with the CUA Center for Global Education.

### Curriculum

Each student is required to take four core courses along with appropriate mid-level and advanced courses. Required core courses for all students are:

#### *SLIS Core Courses (12 credits)*

LSC 551 Organization of Information

LSC 553 Information Sources and Services

LSC 555 Information Systems in Library and Information Centers

LSC 557 Libraries and Information in Society

In addition to the required core courses, students will consult with his/her advisor to build a concentrated program of study in cultural heritage information management by choosing from the following highly recommended and recommended elective courses:

#### *Highly Recommended (CHIM Core) (12 credits)*

LSC 630 Archives Management

LSC 740 Database Management

LSC 842 Special Collections

LSC 843 Art and Museum Libraries Institute

#### *Highly Recommended (CHIM Practicum) (3 credits)*

LSC 906 Practicum

It is highly recommended that students complete a 3 credit practical experience in a local cultural heritage environment, unless they come to the program already employed by a cultural heritage institution. Depending upon the student's interests and selected coursework, the institution would be an archive or library special collection, an art museum or art information repository, or another cultural heritage institution.

#### *Recommended Electives (9 credits)*

LSC 561 Oral History

LSC 601 History of the Book

LSC 606 Cataloging and Classification

LSC 608 Collection Development

LSC 609 Preservation

LSC 610 Internet Searches and Web Design

LSC 704 Humanities Information

LSC 712 Foundations of Digital Libraries

LSC 841 Rare Book Librarianship

### Professional Associations of Interest to CHIM Students

Professional associations are important sources of information about the profession, continuing education opportunities, scholarship support, and networking, and provide venues for presenting research. Most have student membership rates and special programs. Associations of interest to this concentration include:

American Antiquarian Society  
Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS)  
Association of College Research Libraries/American Library Association (ACRL)  
Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA)  
International Cultural Heritage Informatics Meeting  
Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC)  
Museums and the Web  
Rare Books, Manuscripts and Special Collections/American Library Association (RBMS)  
Society of American Archivists (SAA): Museum Roundtable; Oral History Roundtable  
Special Libraries Association

#### Publications of Interest to CHIM Students

*Archives and Museum Informatics*  
*American Archivist*  
*Archivaria*  
*Art Libraries Journal*  
*International Cultural Heritage Informatics Meeting Proceedings*  
*Journal of the Archives of American Art*  
*Museums and the Web Selected Papers*  
*RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Cultural Heritage*  
*The Moving Image*

#### Cultural Heritage Information Literacy

##### *Definition of Cultural Heritage*

If, as David Bearman describes, “cultural heritage, as distinguished from natural heritage, consists of objects created by, or given meaning by human activity” (Bearman 2002), then cultural heritage information professionals are individuals who are skilled at collecting, organizing, and providing access to that information created from the intersection of humans and objects. As stated in the CHIM Curriculum description, cultural heritage information management is concerned with the acquisition, organization, preservation, and access of information resources and artifacts that documents society’s cultural life and legacy.

##### *Information Literacy in a Growing Global Knowledge Economy*

Treating cultural heritage information management as a distinct discipline is gaining more attention and garnering more support from academic institutions as well as funding organizations. In May 2008, a group of LIS faculty and professionals, museum curators and administrators gathered in a workshop sponsored by Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) (<http://chips.ci.fsu.edu/>) to examine the educational needs of preparing cultural heritage information professionals who can work across the boundaries of libraries, archives, and museums to meet the information needs of users of all types of cultural heritage organizations. A result of this meeting was the funding of a new academic program at Simmons College in Boston, to educate cultural heritage professionals. The project, entitled, "Curriculum, Cooperation, Convergence, Capacity - Four C's for the Development of Cultural Heritage Institutions," was funded by the IMLS. As stated in the project description on the Simmons web site:

The Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College will partner with wide range of New England cultural institutions to incorporate museum informatics and data stewardship into its existing program of study. This project will build a curriculum designed to produce cultural heritage professionals who can successfully manage digital resources and provide online services in museums, libraries, and archives. The project will also provide scholarships and intensive, hands-on internships to 30 students, preparing them to work in these settings. ([http://www.ims.gov/news/2009/061709b\\_list.shtm#MA](http://www.ims.gov/news/2009/061709b_list.shtm#MA))

Of note in the description of this new and innovative program is the inclusion of a broad range of internships to prepare students through hands-on experiential learning environments. The program plans to partner with regional cultural institutions to provide these experiences; making this aspect of the program pivotal to educating and training cultural heritage information professionals for work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Also of note is the specific focus on managing digital resources and services among these institutions.

A cross-boundary practical experience that includes three separate hands-on internships of a shorter length in a library special collection; an archive; and a museum information or research center would enhance the level of understanding of the evolving nature of cultural heritage information management. Moreover, building an internship program that goes beyond regional facilities to offer global opportunities would embrace the nature of an evolving global knowledge economy. Developing shared experiences between the United States and other countries would build this body of knowledge on a cooperative level as well. Collaboration on not only practical experiences but on curricula development, specifically in digital initiatives, between United States LIS programs and international LIS programs would serve to foster a cross-boundary educational nature.

#### *Building the Body of Cultural Heritage Literacy: Challenges*

Investigating and developing new educational initiatives to build the body of cultural heritage information literacy is not without some difficult challenges. The segregated and intra-segregated nature of the respective fields of library special collections, archives, and museum research centers, has perpetuated these challenges. The field of archival science can attest to this issue. Working to include archival studies within LIS programs, whether through a specific “track” approach or by advocating for the Certified Archivist approach by “teaching the test,” the examination required by the Academy of Certified Archivists, has been an uphill battle. While many of the LIS, and Public History programs in the United States offer one or the other or a combination of the two, there exists not general agreement on an educational approach. Similarly, education in museum studies includes a variety of program-based experiences. Within the LIS field preparation to work in a museum library or research center has been provided mainly through a courses on art sources and services—not adequate preparation to work in a curatorial capacity in such an environment.

Another challenge is the ever-changing nature of the actual work within cultural heritage institutions and the core competencies required to prepare for these professional positions. Communication within and among institutions and organizations through publications and presentations is essential to continual awareness of changes in the field. Promoting professional colloquia and other information-sharing sessions within educational programs is essential to on-going learning about the nature of the work, thus providing information to faculty to use in refining curricula. Building public programs into the curriculum on an international level can only increase the economic capabilities of such shared experiences.



Surveying employers of recent graduates as to the level of preparation students bring to new professional positions can provide some insight as well.

As cultural heritage institutions as brick and mortar as well as virtual environments continue to morph, a demand for a more cross-disciplinary approach to curricula development is needed. This includes a sharing of resources. Consortial arrangements that offer students a greater selection of scholarly resources is not all that is needed. Education in cultural heritage information management requires an introduction, at least, to the creative and design aspects of the nature of materials managed by these institutions. Building experiences into the curricula that are closely related specifically to culture and heritage, as they relate to information management truly enhances the body of the educational structure.

However, mapping such experiences to core competencies as required by accrediting bodies, such as the American Library Association, Committee on Accreditation can be challenging. Working with the individual organizations, like the Society of American Archivists, the American Library Association, the Art Libraries Society of North America, and others, to share information about core competency requirements would assist programs in mapping to these requirements and constructively educating the accrediting organizations. Communication and collaboration on an international level through such organizations as IFLA would bolster such efforts on the national level.

#### *Evolving Global Perspectives, Cooperation, and Collaboration: Opportunities*

Capitalizing on the wealth of the global cultural heritage information management communities in creating, sharing, and attaining the common goals of improving and refining education and training in this area presents a plethora of opportunity. Developing distance education programs that allow students to engage in coursework from anywhere in the world has enormous benefits within any LIS program. Offering introductory courses whose literacy requirements can be displayed, conveyed, and perceived in a virtual environment provides an ease and freedom of location for faculty and students as well as the potential to increase enrollment for the program and the educational institution. Additionally, virtual presentations of LIS public programs and colloquia offer enhanced literacy opportunities as well.

However, the nature of cultural heritage information management requires that students *experience* these environments and the work therein. It is essential to provide students with face-to-face opportunities for academic and practical experiences and exchanges. Again, communication and collaboration on an international level through such organizations as IFLA and other international, discipline specific organizations would bolster such efforts on the national level. Developing internships for students internationally literally opens up the global physical dimension of life and experience that virtual education has yet to attain. Although the expense of such program development is often a deterrent, more and more institutions in the United States are staffing offices to work with faculty to provide international education. The Catholic University of America manages programs through the Center for Global Education, which builds programs at the institutional level and provides assistance to faculty in building international programmatic initiatives. Building joint LIS curricula and degree programs between the United States and other countries beyond just the “study abroad” semester break and summer sessions offers the opportunity of changing and building the body of cultural heritage information literacy for an evolving global economy.



### *Conclusion*

By transcending the boundaries of traditionally segregated educational environments and teaching the commonalities of the work within these information settings, students are prepared to perform as integrated professionals. By transcending physical and virtual global boundaries and giving students the opportunities offered by cooperative international education, students are prepared to work as global information citizens. Building and nurturing these bodies is of the essence to improving our evolving global knowledge economy.

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**Author's Biographical Note:**

Mary Edsall Choquette is an Assistant Professor in the School of Library and Information Science at The Catholic University of America. She is the Founding Curator of the Philadelphia Dance Collection, Temple University; former Assistant Curator in the Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University; and former Dance Archivist in the Music Division, Library of Congress. Choquette is Editor of *A Core Collection in Dance*. She has also published in: *International Cultural Heritage Informatics Meeting (ICHIM07): Proceedings*; *Dance Research Journal*; and *American National Biography*. Choquette holds a BA in dance from Stockton College, the MA in dance from Columbia University, the MLS from the University of Maryland, and the Ph.D. in dance from Temple University. She is the current ALA representative on the IFLA Arts Committee.