Wading in before Diving in: Preparing Library Students for Professional Participation

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What is QuasiCon?

What: Unconference + professional-like conference = QuasiCon

Who:
• Host: American Library Association (ALA) student chapter
• Attendees: Library and Information Science (LIS) students and professional librarians

When: Annually in February, since 2012

Where: University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI), Ann Arbor, MI

Theme for 2016: What Libraries Can Do for You!

Why is a student-led conference needed?

LIS students need ...
• an introduction to professional conferences during graduate school
• experience giving presentations to a professional audience
• space to informally discuss ideas, outside of the classroom
• to learn how to network in a low-stakes yet professional-like environment
• an opportunity to engage in service work

QuasiCon 2016 by the numbers

47 attendees
10 librarians
27 presenters
3 UMSI faculty
9 Planning Committee members
+ 1 keynote speaker
50-60 volunteer hours per member
90 bagels, 2 sheet cakes, and countless cups of coffee and tea!

Benefits of a student-led conference

For library students

As presenters
• Learn to submit a conference proposal
• Prepare visual aids; practice presenting
• Experience presenting and addressing audience questions
• Add presentation to their CVs

As attendees
• Choose among conference sessions
• See a model for professional presentations
• Gather ideas for their own presentations and projects
• Network with professional librarians
• Interact with professional organizations

As members of the Planning Committee
• Develop valuable skills: marketing, fundraising, proposal evaluation, event planning, project management, and service work

For professional librarians

• Hear the range of interests of students
• Glimpse the current LIS curriculum
• Scout future talent for their library
• Recruit for professional organizations
• Share their expertise from the field
• Demonstrate professional engagement and lifelong learning
• UMSI alumni: Reconnect with their alma mater

QuasiCon promotes...

• Diversity
Attendants explore online resources during a presentation of data visualization and literacy

• Information literacy
Attendees participate in the scholarly conversation, one of the frames in the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education.

• Inclusion
QuasiCon is free and open to the public. Held at UMSI, the conference is accessible to all UMSI students.

Lessons learned

✓ Create a diverse Planning Committee. Each member brings unique strengths, experiences, and professional network
✓ Send targeted requests, which yield more responses than blanket email requests
✓ Provide food for attendees, including those with dietary restrictions. Ending the day with cake has been a hit!
✓ Pick swag that adds value to the conference
✓ Build a support network
✓ Assess the impact of the conference by gathering attendee feedback
✓ Collect suggestions for improvement from the Planning Committee members

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