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

Thielen, Joanna; Stuit, Martha

http://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/118063
**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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendees</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMSI faculty</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenters</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMSI students</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours per member</td>
<td>50-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Committee members</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual conference</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagels, sheet cakes, and coffee</td>
<td>90, 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**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**

Keynote speaker: Jennifer Taggart, Assistant Head of Youth Services at Bloomfield Township Public Library and Library Journal Mover & Shaker

Presentation: Creating inclusive programming and collections for patrons with special needs

**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.

---

**Acknowledgements**

- ALA student chapter at UMSI
- QuasiCon's founders (UMSI graduate students during the 2011-12 academic year)
- Members of the Planning Committee
- All attendees

---

**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

---

**Attendees explore online resources during a presentation of data visualization and literacy**

- Attendees explore online resources during a presentation of data visualization and literacy

---

**QuasiCon 2016 gave attendees dry erase markers to use on the whiteboard tables during the unconference discussions**

- QuasiCon 2016 gave attendees dry erase markers to use on the whiteboard tables during the unconference discussions

---

**Diversity**

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

**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.

---

**Acknowledgements**

- ALA student chapter at UMSI
- QuasiCon’s founders (UMSI graduate students during the 2011-12 academic year)
- Members of the Planning Committee
- All attendees

---

**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