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
- **27** presenters
- **9** Planning Committee members
- **5th** annual conference
- **4 mos. of planning**
- **10 librarians**
- **3 UMSI faculty**
- **+ 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

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

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

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.

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

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