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

Thielen, Joanna; Stuit, Martha

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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
- 10 librarians
- 3 UMSI faculty
- + 1 keynote speaker
- 50–60 volunteer hours per member
- 4 mos. of planning
- 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

**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

**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

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