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!

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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

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<th>QuasiCon 2016 by the numbers</th>
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<td>47 attendees</td>
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<td>27 presenters</td>
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<td>10 librarians</td>
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<td>3 UMSI faculty</td>
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<td>1 keynote speaker</td>
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<td>9 Planning Committee members</td>
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<tr>
<td>50–60 volunteer hours per member</td>
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<td>4 mos. of planning</td>
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<td>90 bagels, 2 sheet cakes, and countless cups of coffee and tea!</td>
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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

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

**Benefits of a student-led conference**

**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.

**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
- UMSI Alumni