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

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

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**What is QuasiCon?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What:</th>
<th>Unconference + professional-like conference = QuasiCon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Host:</strong></td>
<td>American Library Association (ALA) student chapter</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attendees:</strong></td>
<td>Library and Information Science (LIS) students and professional librarians</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>When:</strong></td>
<td>Annually in February, since 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Where:</strong></td>
<td>University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI), Ann Arbor, MI</td>
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**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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**QuasiCon 2016 by the numbers**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>47</th>
<th>attendees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>presenters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Planning Committee members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>annual conference</td>
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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!

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**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

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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

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**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

Attendees 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.

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**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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**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