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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendees</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenters</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Committee members</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual conference</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMSI faculty</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Librarians</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keynote speaker</td>
<td>+ 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer hours per member</td>
<td>50-60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mos. of planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bagels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheets of cake</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cups of coffee and tea</td>
<td>无数</td>
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</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
- Attendees participate in the scholarly conversation, one of the frames in the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education.

- Information literacy
- QuasiCon is free and open to the public. Held at UMSI, the conference is accessible to all UMSI students.

- Inclusion
- 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

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