

GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISED FIELDWORK

LIS 6946

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE**

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FIELDWORK AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ENGAGED REFLECTION

"Supervised Fieldwork" at the School of Library and Information Science requires 120 hours on-site under the guidance of a supervisor who is a recognized information professional. It is a 3 credit graduate course. The "Guidelines" delineate procedures to be followed.

Supervised fieldwork provides an opportunity for students to integrate theory and practice from courses to an organization context. This opportunity to observe, participate, and perform independently in a supportive environment is especially useful for students without previous experience in the field. It also benefits those who desire to make a change to a new area of specialization.

Engaged reflection on the experience is an important part of the supervised fieldwork. In the spirit of service learning the fieldwork is intended to help the student gain (1) further understanding of the profession as practiced; (2) an expanded appreciation of the contextual and social significance of librarianship; (3) an enhanced sense of civic responsibility that demonstrates an understanding of the institution and its constituency.¹

¹Edward Zlotkowski, "Pedagogy and Engagement," In *Colleges and Universities as Citizens*. Ed. Robert G. Bringle, Richard Games, Rev. Edward Malloy, CSC (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon 1999)

ROLE OF FIELDWORK IN THE EDUCATION OF THE STUDENT

Graduates of the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) will begin their professional careers in many different types of libraries and information agencies. The diversity of their appointments cannot be addressed individually in the SLIS curriculum which stresses a broad and integrated approach to preparation for professional employment and leadership in a variety of libraries and information agencies. Fieldwork provides students an opportunity to pursue an interest in a specific type of library or information service within the provisions of the curriculum. Students learn how the education provided within the theoretical framework of graduate study can be applied to specific situations such as special, academic, or public libraries as well as information agencies or information centers within large organizations.

USF CATALOG DESCRIPTION

LIS 6906 Supervised Fieldwork (3) PR: Consent of Instructor. A minimum of 120 hours of supervised experience in an approved cooperating library. Includes practice work, seminar sessions and individual conferences, and a summary report interpreting and evaluating the field experience. Normally students enroll in this course during their last semester of studies. Arrangements for taking this course should be made with the fieldwork coordinator in the semester preceding the one in which the fieldwork is to be completed.

THE COLLABORATIVE ASPECT OF SUPERVISED FIELDWORK

Supervised fieldwork involves the collaboration of three different individuals operating from three different points of view: **the student, the fieldwork coordinator** and **the site supervisor**. Courses taken at the SLIS encourage the development of understanding through discussion and practice. Fieldwork students can observe and share professional situations in which foundations and experience are brought together. The student will work closely with the site supervisor on agreed upon projects and assignments discussing with both the supervisor and the fieldwork coordinator just how principles and theory are integrated in a specific setting. The fieldwork, taken near the end of the Master's degree program, gives students the opportunity for professional experience while still in a situation where mentoring, advice and support are available. A final report reflecting on the fieldwork is required. This report should provide evidence of the student's understanding of the social context in which the library operates.

GOALS AND PURPOSE OF THE SUPERVISED FIELDWORK

The purpose of the fieldwork is to provide the student with experience under the supervision of an information professional in a library or information-related environment. The experience will be configured to the needs and career objectives of the individual student and will permit opportunity for evaluation of both theory and practice. The primary purpose of the fieldwork is to provide a reflective learning experience for the student. The fieldwork will enable students to develop confidence in their ability to perform well and to apply the theory learned in courses. They will have a better understanding of professional procedures since they will have been in an internship role that encourages inquiry and reflection.

STRUCTURE OF THE FIELDWORK

The structure of the fieldwork will vary depending on the needs and background of students, and on the size and organization of the site library. Most students will spend about 75% of the time in the role of an 'intern' working at various assignments, and spend the remaining 25% of their time concentrating in one specific area on a project or specialization. In other cases, particularly those where students have had some experience, or if conditions warrant, this percentage may be adjusted with the student concentrating on a project or specialization. This will be worked out by the student, fieldwork coordinator and site supervisor.

Upon completion of Supervised Fieldwork, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the type of library or information center in which the student worked, providing details about the mission and goals.
2. Describe the administrative organization, resources, services and clientele of the library or information agency.
3. Relate classroom instruction in the graduate program to applied professional practice.
4. Perform duties in a representative range of functional areas (information services, automated systems, materials selection and acquisitions, technical services, etc.) or in one or more areas of concentration.
5. Show, through one or more evaluations by supervisors, that he/she had a successful experience and has worked collaboratively with staff in the agency in which the fieldwork was done.
6. Reflect upon the experience in communication with the coordinator and in the final report. This reflection should include discussion of the library and its involvement with the organization and/or constituents it serves.

THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT

The Supervised Fieldwork is a three-credit course and involves content that is equivalent to other three-credit courses in the School of Library and Information Science. Students should begin working on a plan for the fieldwork **the semester before** enrolling as detailed in the section, "The Steps to Initiate and Complete the Supervised Fieldwork."

It is the responsibility of the student to discuss goals with the fieldwork coordinator and to work with the coordinator in identifying a site supervisor. Since supervised fieldwork is available in all types of libraries: (public, academic, special) and information agencies, the fieldwork coordinator will suggest acceptable sites or approve a site that the student may suggest. Students should develop clear, succinct goals and draw up a plan of what they intend to accomplish. The final approval is the responsibility of the fieldwork coordinator.

After the initial contact is made by the fieldwork coordinator, students should:

1. prepare a resume
2. contact the Fieldwork Coordinator; kmccook@chuma.cas.usf.edu
3. schedule an appointment to meet with the site supervisor to acquaint the site supervisor with their goals and their objectives, bring a copy of these guidelines or provide website: <http://www.cas.usf.edu/lis/>

4. work with the site supervisor to develop a supervised fieldwork plan and work schedule (The schedule of hours to be worked should be included in the plan. Students will spend a minimum of 120 hours over the course of the semester at the site.)
5. discuss the plan and submit it to the fieldwork coordinator
6. submit the signed plan (Form - Supervised Fieldwork Plan) to the School of Library and Information Science Program Assistant to receive a permit to register

THE ROLE OF THE FIELDWORK COORDINATOR

The fieldwork coordinator will discuss with the student the purpose, objectives, duties and responsibilities involved in the fieldwork. The fieldwork coordinator will recommend and introduce the student to the site supervisor.

While the fieldwork plan will be worked out jointly by the student and the site supervisor, the fieldwork coordinator should assist when needed. The coordinator will approve the "Supervised Fieldwork Plan."

The fieldwork coordinator will keep in close touch with the student during the progress of the fieldwork, and will be available for help and guidance and to discuss the progress of the fieldwork. The fieldwork coordinator will read students' logs regularly and evaluate the written fieldwork report. The fieldwork coordinator, in consultation with the site supervisor, will evaluate the student and assign a grade.

THE ROLE OF THE SITE SUPERVISOR

Site supervisors should hold a degree from an ALA-accredited LIS program or equivalent and should have served in their present capacity for at least a year. It is the responsibility of the fieldwork coordinator to be acquainted with the qualifications of the site supervisor.

Site supervisors will be provided a copy of this document. They will work with the student as the plan for the fieldwork is developed and will help the student work out a plan that agrees with the defined purposes of fieldwork.

It will be necessary for the site supervisor to be certain that the appropriate administrator on site is consulted and that permission for involvement in the fieldwork is approved. In some cases this permission will be obtained by the site supervisor, while in others it may be more appropriate that this permission be obtained by the fieldwork coordinator.

Site supervisors should explain professional responsibilities and be willing to work and guide the students as interns rather than employees. The site supervisor may choose to place the student under other library professionals' supervision during the fieldwork experience, depending on the duties assigned.

The site supervisor should confer with the fieldwork coordinator and the student shortly after the fieldwork has begun. The site supervisor should discuss with the fieldwork coordinator any difficulties that arise during the course of the semester.

The site supervisor should introduce the student to the library or information center, including a tour with explanation of general functions, goals and rules. The community served is an important factor for operation and should be discussed with the student. If the student is in a large library, the tour should include an introduction to the library as a whole and its staff. Students may concentrate on the unit in which they are placed and learn how the work of that unit articulates with the rest of the library or information agency.

Students will be introduced to the work of the unit: a student in acquisitions, for example, would learn about collection development, the methods used to acquire materials: by purchase, subscription or gift and the progress of materials through the department. In these situations the site supervisor may delegate to others in the unit explanation of procedures.

In all libraries or information agencies, students will learn about the role of the library in the larger organization of which it is a part, for example: community, university or company, and be introduced to its strengths and problems. At the conclusion of the field experience, site supervisors will discuss the student's performance with the fieldwork coordinator.

STEPS TO INITIATE AND COMPLETE SUPERVISED FIELDWORK

- Students will **first** consult the faculty fieldwork coordinator. The student and fieldwork coordinator will discuss several options for the student to explore, field sites in the area of interest to the student, and projects that meet specific goals. All fieldwork must be carried out under the direction of a site supervisor. A number of students will have never worked in a library or information agency, some will have worked part-time as students, others will have worked in support staff capacities and their experiences in regard to administration will vary. For those with less work experience, emphasis should be on the administrative and technical details of operating a library or information agency. For those students who have substantial work experience, emphasis might be placed on a specific work area. In all cases, however, there should be an operational component and a focus, although the amount of time devoted to one or the other will, and should, vary. In cases where a specific area of focus is to be the major component of the fieldwork, both the fieldwork coordinator and the site supervisor should be satisfied that the student has adequate operational experience.
- The student will provide the fieldwork coordinator with a current resume.
- The fieldwork coordinator will contact an appropriate site supervisor and will let the student know that it is time to contact the site supervisor.
- The student, prior to contacting the site supervisor, will undertake a background study of both the type-of-library and of the individual library to which assigned.
- The student will contact the site supervisor, provide a current resume, and present a tentative plan of work. As a general rule, the plan of work for students in the library or information center should be rotated through the major areas and departments to ensure appropriate breadth of experience and understanding of the system as a whole. Within each unit or department, the student should receive orientation and instruction and be given problems and tasks representative of the principal objective involved.

Each student may identify a project or specialization appropriate to their interests and needs, subject to review by the site supervisor and fieldwork supervisor.

- After filling out the "Supervised Fieldwork Plan" (Appendix I) and schedule in consultation with the site supervisor, the student will obtain final approval from the fieldwork coordinator. If a project or specialization is to be completed, this should also be described and attached to the Plan. (See Appendix II) Upon receiving approval the Supervised Fieldwork Plan will be drawn up and signed. The fieldwork coordinator will then approve the student to register in the Supervised Fieldwork course.
- After registration for the Supervised Fieldwork, the student will meet or e-mail the fieldwork coordinator on the progress of the fieldwork.
- LOG OF WORK
Bi-weekly, beginning the second week of the semester, the student will send to the fieldwork coordinator, by e-mail or post, a report of work accomplished. Students will maintain this "Log of Work" as an ongoing record. The log is a chronicle of events and impressions. It will aid the student in preparation of the field experience report and will allow the student to evaluate the experience. The log is a record of growth and development
- FINAL REPORT
By the last day of classes, before the scheduled final examination period for the term registered, the fieldwork coordinator must receive a hard copy of the final report from the student. (Cover sheet to be used is in Appendix III) ONE COPY should be given to the Site Supervisor; TWO COPIES should be sent to the Fieldwork Coordinator. A final grade will be assigned by the fieldwork coordinator based on evaluation by the site supervisor, conferences with the fieldwork coordinator, and the student's final report. The format of the report is at the discretion of the fieldwork coordinator.

The final report should include:

- a summary of the fieldwork, based on the log and fieldwork plan goals
- descriptions of the type of library and details about its mission and goals
- information about the administrative organization, resources, services and clientele of the library or information agency

The field report should be a reflective summary of the role the library plays in serving the organization or constituency with attention to the social context.

EVALUATION OF THE SUPERVISED FIELDWORK

Throughout the field experience all of those involved will evaluate the performance of the student. Site supervisors are selected because they represent outstanding professional models and are leaders in the profession who can evaluate the learning process. The fieldwork coordinator

evaluates the student and the field report. This approach assures that practice reflects theory together with its sound application. The fieldwork program meets the same rigor as other graduate courses and is subject to the same evaluative criteria.

After students have completed the fieldwork they should submit **ONE COPY** of their final report to the site supervisor and **TWO COPIES** to the fieldwork coordinator. The final report **MUST** include a filled out copy of the "Supervised Fieldwork Final Report Cover Sheet" (See Appendix III). The site supervisor will confer with the fieldwork coordinator to evaluate the student's performance. Criteria to consider: initiative, ability to apply principles to practice, interaction with library users, interaction with staff, capacity to work independently, and flexibility. Site supervisors may render their evaluations in writing, via e-mail or in a face-to-face or telephone conference with the fieldwork coordinator.

The fieldwork coordinator will assign a grade based on:

- site supervisor evaluation
- log of work
- final report

Remember: Final Reports should include reflection upon the social context of the community and/or constituents served.

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Note:

Revised Fall, 2000.

The faculty of the School of Library and Information Science would like to express our appreciation to the many librarians and former fieldwork students who reviewed and commented upon drafts of these "Guidelines."

These "Guidelines" have been developed in accordance with the position paper of the Association for Library and Information Science Education: "**Guidelines for Practices and Principles in the Design, Operation, and Evaluation of Student Field Experience in Library and Information Science**" as developed by the Information Organization Heads Task Force on Internships and Field Experiences and adopted by the Association for Library and Information Science in June 1983; and as reaffirmed October 14, 1990.
