

Integrating Community-Based Learning with LIS Education

Abstract

Drexel University's College of Computing and Informatics (CCI), in collaboration with the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Drexel Lindy Center for Civic Engagement, and the Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships, will develop and implement a project on the enhancement of Library and Information Science (LIS) programs focusing on community engagement. The goals of the project include: 1) developing a community-based learning model for LIS education and share the model with other LIS programs nationwide; 2) developing and implementing a post-baccalaureate Community Catalysts Certificate that can be stand-alone or integrated into an ALA-accredited LIS degree program; and 3) educating twelve IMLS Community Catalysts Fellows who will have skills and knowledge in design, development, and management of community-based service projects for libraries.

The rapid growth of the digital society has ushered in fundamental changes to libraries and librarianship. Libraries of all kinds have been moving toward becoming more fully realized community centers, with growing emphases on promoting community engagement, learning, and collaboration. This project will address both the need to focus on community-based librarianship and the need to provide community-based learning in LIS education. Community-based learning (CBL) is a form of experiential learning that utilizes an intentional pedagogical approach to integrate academic learning with community engagement. All CBL experiences share three common elements: engagement with the community; utilization of critical reflection to enhance students' learning of course content and understanding of the community; and an explicit connection of community engagement to course learning outcomes.

In this project, three CBL graduate courses will be designed and developed for LIS education:

- Design Thinking for Digital Community Service
- Data Analytics for Community-based Data and Service
- Community Service Capstone Project

Students who complete these three courses will earn a post-Baccalaureate Certificate on community engagement to be developed in this project. The credits earned in this certificate are fully transferable to a LIS degree, thus providing library paraprofessionals a new pathway to advance their careers through the certificate or a full LIS degree. The new courses and certificate will enrich our LIS curriculum and expand our capability for educating the next generation of library and archival leaders. The community-based learning model developed in the project will be transferable to other LIS programs. The courses, teaching materials, and tools created for community-based learning will be shared with the LIS community openly to create sustainable impact.