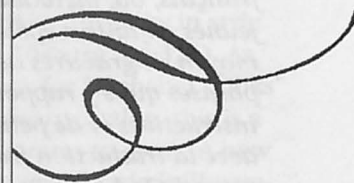# A LOOK AT TODAY'S LIBRARY
STUDENTS AND FACULTY

by Alberta Davis Comer

M any articles have been written about the changes that have occurred in libraries in the past thirty years. A number of changes also have taken place within library schools during this same time frame. In this series, we will talk to a SLIS faculty member and a current student to find out about today's Indiana library schools. In this first installment, I traveled to Indiana University-Bloomington (IUB) to visit with Debora Shaw, associate dean and professor of library and information science, and Emily Cooper, first year SLIS student. My questions to them are in italics, with their answers following.

DEBORA SHAW

Dr. Debora Shaw, known by friends and colleagues as Ralf, has taught at IUB since 1988 and has served as associate dean since 1995. Her research interests include scholarly communication and the design and impact of electronic information sources. Ralf and I met in her office in the SLIS wing located in the Herman B Wells Library.

Have things changed much at SLIS in the past 20 years?

People who went to library school 10 or 20 years ago may assume that, although they themselves have changed, things at SLIS are the same—but they aren't. And with the rapid changes in our field, it's good to have the school committed to the new realities.

How have library students changed in the past 20 years?

Students come to school with more technology savvy now. They apply to the school online; they use e-mail; they use the syllabi posted on the web. They are sophisticated in knowing what it means to be a librarian. Many come here with a strong commitment to academic libraries; others see the importance of public librarianship and giving back to their local communi-

ties. Others may want to learn about different libraries once they get here. Some realize the importance of technology and the increased job options and choose to complete a dual degree: Master of Library Science and Master of Information Science. Most interns are placed in libraries, but some choose placements in positions as diverse as the rare book trade or an industrial setting such as an IT startup or the university computer services. Students today realize that they need to understand the complex environment of libraries and learn to involve appropriate stakeholders to solve problems and preserve the library as institution. Students use technology in many ways that simply did not exist ten years ago: Web pages are much more sophisticated, for example, and computer-based interaction is a common way of providing information services. Also, today's students may think differently about information privacy. People use social software to share opinions or personal information; even a few years ago, many SLIS students would have been surprised by this acceptance of "invasion of privacy."

How have library teaching faculty changed in the past 20 years?

After the addition of the M.I.S. degree, SLIS hired new faculty to teach in this area. Over the past few years, however, most SLIS hires have been focused on adding professors who will strengthen the MLS course offerings. As practicing librarians are well aware, it is increasingly important for students to be "fluent" in their understanding and use of information technologies. Even students who want to breathe the air of the rare book stacks need to know how to use technology, for example, how to use the Internet to find book dealers and how to publicize their collections to users.

Classes are taught differently from the lectures many SLIS alums will remember. Students increasingly expect to collaborate with their classmates and to have opportunities to develop technical and critical thinking skills with considerable guidance from their instructors. This is a change not just in SLIS but across higher education. Teachers need to make sure that students are afforded the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. Students expect this. More mature, returning students,

perhaps already with library experience, may view SLIS as a place to develop their technology skills. Younger students, with less work experience, may need more emphasis on managerial strategies.

EMILY COOPER

Emily Cooper graduated from IUB with a double undergraduate degree in English and sociology. Pursuing M.L.S. and M.I.S. degrees, she continues the trend in graduate school. After receiving her undergraduate degree from IU-Bloomington, Emily joined the U.S. Army as an intelligence specialist and was posted to South Korea with the 524th MI Battalion Bravo Company, a counter intelligence unit.

Why did you decide on library school?

Once my Army stint was completed, I moved back to Bloomington, my home since early high school, and pondered what I should do. I wanted to attend graduate school. I chose library school because it fit my personality and my interests. I wanted to be in a field that was dynamic and that had opportunities for someone like me, someone extremely organized and people-oriented.

Tell me about library school.

When I first started, I was terrified. In my computer introductory class, L401, a lot of things get dumped on you. However, once I got over my fear, I loved the class. In 401, I got a good handle on UNIX and Boolean operators and, in general, how to search effectively. I also learned HTML. I now have an appreciation of all the work that can go into creating webpages. I'm taking many technology classes, but I'm also taking library classes. Last semester I took *Information Sources and Services* [Reference Services]. I learned about the reference interview, and I learned to make a pathfinder [subject guide]. I found the answers to most reference assignments were online. That's the way patrons expect us to find answers, and it's the way new librarians expect to locate answers to patrons' questions. We had only one assignment that required us to use print resources. I love both the M.I.S. and M.L.S. sides of the program. I want to be able to use both skill sets in my career.

Are you working while you are attending school?

Yes, I am working in the SLIS Information Commons [the former SLIS Library] as a computer consultant. I help SLIS students with a variety of problems, from UNIX to HTML. This summer I will be working at St. Charles School [a private secondary school located in Bloomington] teaching the older students how to use HTML. Last summer I taught a gaming class at the school.

What are your future plans?

I would like to have an internship next fall with a business, maybe constructing websites and working with online search engines. Once I graduate, I'm not sure which direction I'll go. I'm interested in the private sector, but I'm also interested in academic libraries.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alberta Davis Comer is the associate dean at Indiana State University Library. She serves as the editor of *Indiana Libraries*.