

**PUBLIC LIBRARIES**  
**A Specialization in the Masters in Library and Information Science Degree**  
**Graduate School of Library and Information Science**  
**Dominican University**

**Introduction**

Librarians who work in public libraries have a strong commitment to insuring equity of access to library materials, programs and services and to understanding and meeting the needs of the communities they serve. Of all types of libraries, public libraries are expected to offer the widest spectrum of educational (learning), informational, and recreational services. Many of the functions of public libraries are similar to those of other types of libraries, such as reference and instruction, collection management, access services, cataloging and classification, and information systems, but they may vary depending on the size and character of the community. For example, public libraries may be located in urban, suburban or rural communities with diverse populations and socioeconomic levels. Above all, public librarians must develop an understanding of community preferences for library roles and services, specifically including the promotion of reading and learning. Such awareness serves as a basis for sustaining the support needed to implement the electronic and other programs necessary to respond to changing needs and expectations. Public librarians must be familiar with the funding and budgetary patterns typical of public libraries, which may be based on municipal, district, county or regional models. All public librarians require the ability to promote reading and technological awareness. Additionally, as their careers progress, many public librarians develop an enhanced understanding of the necessity for expertise with marketing, public relations, advocacy, library legislation, and outreach to nonusers and the underserved. Many public librarians move into positions of responsibility, so a strong background in management is often desirable.

A useful source for information about public librarianship is the website for the Public Library Association (<http://www.ala.org/pla>), a division of the American Library Association. For those planning to work in Illinois, the web sites of the Illinois Library Association (<http://www.ila.org>) and the Illinois State Library (<http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/home.html>) can be particularly useful.

**Competencies**

In the current era of growing information self-service, the competencies that a public librarian should possess and exercise are becoming more oriented towards the support of a community's learning and recreational interests, specifically including the promotion of reading, responsive community programming, and technological awareness. In the area of information provision, public library programs mirror those of other librarians, although a growing tendency to serve as a community's technological learning center, in addition to a valuable resource in support of reading and lifelong learning, is clearly discernable.

## **Courses**

The selection of courses will depend on the particular area of public library work a student seeks to pursue.

### **GSLIS CORE (12 CREDITS-4 CLASSES)**

LIS 701 Introduction to Library and Information Science

LIS 703 Organization of Knowledge

LIS 704 Reference and Online Services

LIS 899 Capstone Course

### **REQUIRED MANAGEMENT COURSE (3 CREDITS-1 CLASS)**

LIS 770 Management of Libraries and Information Centers

### **Electives (8 courses - 24 credits; recommended):**

LIS 718: Storytelling for Youth and Adults

LIS 721: Library Materials for Children

LIS 722: Library Materials for Young Adults

LIS 723: Services for Children and Young Adults

LIS 740: Reference Sources in the Humanities

LIS 741: Reference Sources in the Social Sciences

LIS 742: Reference Sources in the Sciences

LIS 743: Reference Sources in Business and Economics

LIS 744: Government Information Resources

LIS 745: Searching Electronic Databases

LIS 748: Collection Management

LIS 753: Internet Fundamentals and Design

LIS 761: Public Relations

LIS 762: Literacy and Library Involvement

LIS 763: Readers Advisory Services

LIS 768: Library 2.0 & Social technologies

LIS 771: Public Libraries

Students should review the Reference Services, Cataloging and Classification and Youth Services in Public Libraries for Children and Young Adults sample pathways for suggested coursework to complete their degree requirement of 36 credits.