University of Missouri-Columbia School of Information Science and Learning Technologies Syllabus and Practicum Guide for 7381 Practicum in Information Agencies

Course Description
Prerequisites for Admission to the Practicum
Course Objectives
Course Requirements
Supervision of Practicum
Payment for Services
Individual Conferences
Absences
Evaluation
Guidelines for Developing 7381 Practicum Learning Plan
Practicum Responsibilities
   The Student will:
   The Supervising Librarian/Archivist will:
   The SISLT 7381 Practicum Director will:
Evaluating the Supervising Librarian/Archivist
Resolving Problems
   Practicum Dismissal Policy (Adopted November 5, 2010; Effective January 17, 2011)
Practicum Waivers
Contact Information
Course Description

2-3 cr. hrs. Provides a supervised work experience for master's degree students in a public, academic, or special library. Prerequisite: departmental consent. Grading is satisfactory/unsatisfactory.

Prerequisites for Admission to the Practicum

Plan in Advance. Contact one or more potential practicum sites and talk to individuals who might supervise your practicum. Then, contact the 7381 Practicum Director to discuss possible placements and potential supervising librarian/archivist. While you may suggest possible practicum sites to the Practicum Director, the final decision regarding placement rests with the Director.

Important Note: Practicum placement is not permitted at the site where you are currently employed. The supervising librarian/archivist must have an ALA-accredited MLS or equivalent degree. A supervising archivist must be certified by the Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA) or have an equivalent degree with appropriate experience. If the practicum is completed in an information agency that does not normally
employ professional librarians, the practicum must be supervised by an information professional who holds an appropriate graduate qualification. Consult with your faculty advisor and the Practicum Director concerning the appropriateness of your proposed supervision.

Complete a copy of the Practicum Application and forward it to the 7381 Practicum Director during Early Registration for the semester in which you plan to enroll in the practicum. Consent to enroll will not be given until all required materials are on file.

Completion of the following course requirements:
- 7301 Introduction to Information Technology
- 7302 Organization of Information or 7312 Cataloging and Classification
- 7314 Reference Sources and Services
- 7315 Management of Information Agencies
- Additional courses that would be particularly useful in preparing students for their particular practicum experience (ex., 7416 Information in Health Sciences for a student planning to work in a medical library during the practicum). Such additional courses will be identified in consultation with the Practicum Director and your faculty advisor.

Submission of the completed Practicum Learning Plan.

**Course Objectives**
To provide opportunities for students to:
1. Participate in a variety of activities and situations that are comparable to those of a professional position within an information agency.
2. Engage in critical thinking exercises and problem-solving related to professional challenges.
3. Identify personal areas of strength and areas for continuing professional development.
4. Engage in experiences that will provide opportunities to combine classroom theory and on-the-job practice in a professional context and to demonstrate and test their professional skills.
5. Develop professional attitudes and effective interpersonal relationships in a library/information agency environment.

Course Requirements

- Complete the requisite number of hours for the practicum placement. The length of time in the field placement and course credit varies with individual student needs and objectives. Minimum time in the field for 2 credit hours is 90 clock hours. Minimum time in the field for 3 credit hours is 135 clock hours.
- Develop a written Practicum Learning Plan with goals and objectives for the practicum experience. Identify your goals and objectives in consultation with your supervising librarian/archivist. Goals/objectives should include 2-3 projects/learning activities for a 2 credit hour practicum; 3-4 projects/learning activities for a 3 credit hour practicum. Include a written day/time schedule with the Learning Plan. The student and supervising librarian/archivist must sign the Learning Plan indicating that both have discussed the Plan and are in agreement regarding the activities and experiences included. You must submit the Practicum Learning Plan draft for approval by the Practicum Director before receiving course consent and beginning your practicum.
- E-mail the 7381 Practicum Director a minimum of 3 to 4 times during a 2 credit hour practicum; 4 to 5 times during a 3 credit hour practicum. In these communications, reflect on your practicum experience. This is not a description of
practicum activities. You are to evaluate and analyze what you are learning as you work toward achieving the goals/objectives you identified in your Learning Plan. Your final evaluation/analysis, which should consider the entire practicum, must be a formal paper, no more than 3 pages in length.

- Ask your supervising librarian/archivist to contact the Practicum Director with an informal appraisal of your performance at approximately the midpoint of your practicum.

- Ensure that all paperwork is submitted promptly to the 7381 Practicum Director the end of the practicum period. You will not receive a grade for the course unless all forms have been completed and are submitted to the Practicum Director before the close of the semester. You are responsible for the following items:
  - Copy of the supervising librarian's/archivist's Final Evaluation of your performance as a practicum student.
  - Your final summative evaluation/analysis of your practicum experience and reflection on your progress toward your goals/objectives. The Final Evaluation/Analysis should be word-processed, no more than 3 pages in length, double-spaced, 12 point type, with margins of at least one-inch.
  - Student Evaluation of the supervising librarian/archivist.
  - 7381 Course Evaluation.

**Supervision of Practicum**

The supervising librarian/archivist at the placement site will direct and guide the activities of the student on a day-to-day basis. The 7381 Practicum Director will communicate with the supervising librarian/archivist on an ongoing basis. A site visit may occasionally be scheduled.
both to provide opportunities to consult with the student and the supervising librarian/archivist, and to provide the Practicum Director with an opportunity to observe the student working in the practicum setting.

**Payment for Services**
- Practicum students will not receive direct payment for services rendered to the library or information agency.
- Supervising librarians/archivists will not receive direct payment for instruction or supervision provided a practicum student.

**Individual Conferences**
Individual conferences may take place at the time of a site visit or upon the request of the student and/or supervising librarian/archivist.

**Absences**
You must inform the supervising librarian/archivist of any absence prior to the absence. In the event that an emergency absence occurs, contact the supervising librarian/archivist as soon as possible. Generally, excused absences include personal illness or illness of an immediate family member, death in the family, interviews for potential employment, and other significant events. Consistently late arrival at the practicum site is inappropriate. Three late arrivals are considered an unexcused absence that will be reflected in your grade for the course.

**Evaluation**
Evaluation entails a variety of criteria. These criteria are reflected in the Final Evaluation form. Since the practicum experience is a University course, the Practicum Director is responsible for assigning the final grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. The grade assignment results from the continuous evaluation conducted throughout the practicum placement by the supervising librarian/archivist and 7381 Practicum
Director. The grade of Satisfactory is intended to identify performance at or above the average expected performance. A grade of Unsatisfactory signifies that the performance of the practicum student is unacceptable in one or more areas, and that the student has been notified that the performance is unacceptable. Assistance and support have been offered to improve the performance but the student has failed to take advantage of the help offered and/or has not improved his/her performance to a satisfactory level by the end of the field placement. Facets of performance of the practicum student to be considered by the supervising librarian/archivist include:
  ◦ Work performance,
  ◦ Relationships with other personnel,
  ◦ Relationships with patrons/clients,
  ◦ Work attitudes.

Because of the unique nature of the relationship, the supervising librarian/archivist plays a significant role in the evaluation; however, because the practicum is a University course for which academic credit is awarded, the Practicum Director has the final authority and responsibility for assigning a grade. Practicum grades are recorded and the Final Evaluation is placed in the student's file.

**Guidelines for Developing 7381 Practicum Learning Plan**

1. Develop the Practicum Learning Plan in consultation with the supervising librarian/archivist. Realistically assess your professional development as a beginning librarian. Use your previous library experience and a review of your LIS course work to uncover gaps in your experience. If you are currently working in a library or information agency, consider your work setting as well as the practicum in identifying objectives.

2. Include the following information:
- Name, address, contact phone number and e-mail address during the practicum period.
- A list of all courses (by course number, name and semester taken) that you have completed to date towards you master's degree. Place an asterisk beside any courses you did not complete through the University of Missouri-Columbia (MU courses include our courses taken through MU Direct, and courses taken at St. Louis, Kansas City or Springfield).
- Name, address, contact telephone number, and e-mail address of the supervising librarian/archivist.
- Name, address, and contact telephone number of the practicum site.
- Beginning and ending dates of the practicum experience.

3. Based on your self-assessment and consultation, identify potential learning objectives for the practicum and prioritize them. The objectives should be specific and measurable and include timelines. Describe exactly what you hope to achieve or obtain during the practicum (ex., I expect to become involved in at least three children's programs during my practicum.) Develop a plan of action and strategies for achieving each objective. Goals/objectives should include 2-3 projects/activities for a 2 credit hour practicum, or 3-4 projects/activities for a 3 credit hour practicum.

4. Identify resources needed to achieve the objectives and the persons involved.

5. Submit a draft of the Practicum Learning Plan to the Practicum Director. After the Director has reviewed and approved the Plan, a course consent will be issued that will enable you to enroll in the practicum.
6. Make any necessary revisions to the Learning Plan. Sign and date the Learning Plan and have the Learning Plan signed and dated by the supervising librarian/archivist. Submit the Learning Plan to the Practicum Director.

7. Revisit your Learning Plan throughout your practicum and again at the close of your field experience placement. Assess your progress toward the areas targeted for growth. In the final analytical paper concerning your field experience, summarize each goal or objective along with an evaluation and analysis/discussion of progress made or achievement. Any difficulties or barriers should be included in the discussion.

**Practicum Responsibilities**

**The Student will:**

- Develop the Practicum Learning Plan in consultation with the supervising librarian/archivist at the initial meeting and develop an outline of planned practicum activities that support the identified professional development goals.
- Submit a signed copy of the Practicum Learning Plan to the Practicum Director before beginning your field experience along with the day/time schedule.
- Consult with the supervising librarian/archivist regarding any special requirements related to the host information agency.
- Adhere to all policies and rules of the host information agency (daily arrival and departure times for professional staff, etc.)
- Communicate, dress and act as a professional. Exemplify professionalism in dealing with confidential information.
- Become familiar with the information agency, its services and materials.
- Perform appropriate professional level duties and responsibilities according to the Practicum Learning Plan under the direction of the supervising librarian.
• Assume responsibility for the quality of the practicum experience. Be proactive. Seek out involvement possibilities.

The Supervising Librarian/Archivist will:
• Orient the practicum student to the information agency's policies and procedures.
• Orient the student to the profession and provide opportunities for participation in professional activities and personal professional development.
• Provide the practicum student with a designated personal workspace, along with any materials such as policies and procedures manuals, guides, emergency procedures, daily schedules, etc.
• Enable the practicum student to assume increasing responsibility for activities in the information agency.
• Provide the practicum student with continuous evaluation, both in conferences and incidentally.
• Confer with the 7381 Practicum Director at the midpoint of the student's placement to discuss perceptions regarding the student’s progress, exchange information and seek suggestions if necessary. This may be done by telephone or e-mail.
• Prepare the formal final written evaluation. Confer with the student about the evaluation. Forward the evaluation or submit the evaluation electronically to the 7381 Practicum Director. Both the supervising librarian/archivist and the student should retain a copy of the final evaluation for their personal records.

A practicum generally involves a "round-robin" of experiences in the library or information agency (for example, a student could spend 20 hours of the field experience in the reference department, 20 hours cataloging, 20 supervising support staff and student workers, etc.). However, the supervising librarian/archivist might, in some circumstances, prefer to provide instead a more specialized practicum. With the permission of the 7381 Practicum Director, a practicum may be
concentrated in one department or information agency (for example, in Archives or in children's services).

Although it is recognized that professional information workers will from time to time perform routine tasks, it is not the purpose of the practicum to provide students opportunities to work extensively at tasks that should be expected of support staff. Work assignments and/or projects should not be designed with the intention of clearing up backlogs of clerical tasks accumulated by the site.

**The SISLT 7381 Practicum Director will:**

- Act as liaison in acquainting the supervising librarian/archivist and other personnel with the nature and purpose of the practicum experience.
- Assist with the identification of prospective supervising librarians/archivists and the assignment of practicum students.
- Provide pertinent materials to practicum students, supervising librarians/archivists and other individuals as appropriate.
- Provide practicum students with information regarding course objectives, requirements, activities to be evaluated, grading practices and policies.
- Consult with the student's faculty advisor on the advisability of a practicum waiver for a SISLT student, based on the student's prior work experience in libraries and information agencies.
- Receive and discuss the Learning Plan with the student.
- Confer with the supervising librarian/archivist at regular intervals to discuss the needs of the practicum student.
- Assist the student and supervising librarian/archivist with the process of evaluating progress, especially in the area of reflective self-evaluation.
- Evaluate the total environment where the practicum student is placed.
- Assist when and if problems are encountered in any aspect of the placement.
• Oversee preparation of the final evaluation and determine the final grade after consulting with the supervising librarian/archivist.
• Establish and maintain a database of potential practicum sites.

Evaluating the Supervising Librarian/Archivist
The supervising librarian/archivist and Practicum Director have the primary responsibility for evaluating the practicum student's performance. Similarly, the practicum student has a right and responsibility to assess the effectiveness of the supervising librarian/archivist. Practicum students complete formal evaluations of their supervising librarian(s)/archivist(s). Data collected from these evaluations are used to assist in improving field-based experiences. Because students are assured anonymity when completing these forms, individual evaluations are kept confidential. Data are analyzed annually and a summary of findings is compiled at the end of each school year.

Resolving Problems
Despite the best intentions and efforts, problems sometimes arise between the practicum student and the supervising librarian/archivist. If the problem cannot be resolved through discussion, the following steps must be taken in the order listed:
• Contact the Practicum Director. The Director will discuss the matter with each party, individually, and arrange and coordinate a meeting for all concerned parties.
• If no satisfactory resolution is reached, the LIS Program Coordinator will be contacted. The Program Coordinator will discuss the problem with each party, individually, and coordinate a meeting of all concerned parties.
• If the problem is not resolved at this point, the Program Coordinator will determine further action.
Note: Early identification of problems is important as it can serve as a preventative measure. Supervising librarian/archivist should notify the Practicum Director if:

- The practicum student is not making adequate progress.
- The practicum student fails to report to the assignment.
- The practicum student is chronically late or absent.

**Practicum Dismissal Policy (Adopted November 5, 2010; Effective January 17, 2011)**

All MU library science students are considered guests of the libraries, information agencies and school districts in which they are placed. A practicum supervisor may, at any time, request that a student not return.

- **Incompletes:** If a student must terminate a practicum for reasons other than cause, such as a student or host librarian illness, the student may be given an incomplete and placed in an alternate practicum or internship at the discretion of the LIS practicum supervisor.
- **Dismissal for Cause:** A student who is dismissed for cause by a practicum or internship supervisor will receive an F for the course from the LIS practicum supervisor and will not be placed in a second practicum.

**Practicum Waivers**

A student in the master's program who has had significant professional level work experience in one type library or other information agency before entering SISLT may:

- Choose to do a two to three credit hour practicum in a different type of library or information agency.
- Seek a waiver from the requirement of completing the practicum. The waiver will normally be discussed during the advisement process, and will be approved **only if** the student can provide documented evidence of significant professional level work experience. The waiver must be approved by the student's SISLT faculty advisor.
Contact Information
If you have questions after reading this guide or need additional information, contact the 7381 Practicum Director at the University of Missouri.