

INFORMATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE WHAT LIS PROGRAMS PREPARE YOU FOR

As an academic who teaches in a LIS program, DR BHUVA NARAYAN is often asked if libraries and the knowledge and skills acquired in LIS programs are relevant in the digital age. In response, she stresses that the fundamental role and value of libraries in society hasn't changed and that the intellectual access to content in all formats provided by libraries is simply empowered by the internet and other ICT technologies.

As Norwegian writer Jon Bing said in *American Libraries* magazine (28 May 2009), 'To ask why we need libraries at all, when there is so much information available elsewhere, is about as sensible as asking if roadmaps are necessary now that there are so very many roads.'

LIS education already imparts the skills needed to work in a fast-changing technological environment. Libraries continue to be early adopters of new technologies and innovations – 3D printing, makerspaces, multimedia production and video games in learning. The origin and development of the internet and search engines are intrinsically linked to library information retrieval systems, and the LIS field continues to contribute to developing better search interfaces, including semantic searches. Louis Rosenfeld (co-author of *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web*) and Peter Morville (co-author of *Search Patterns*), both graduates of LIS programs, have influenced web design and how the information on websites is organised and accessed. ALIA now considers information architecture as a core knowledge area for students in its accredited courses. The majority of commercial and database-driven websites are organised around some form of faceted classification originally developed more than 80 years ago by librarian Dr SR Ranganathan.

Many LIS graduates work not only within GLAM industries, but also in internet-focused companies and digital social media, information management and knowledge management roles. As organisations increasingly digitise materials, the need for LIS skills is paramount; one only has to look at the emerging discipline of digital humanities. LIS graduates are best equipped to tackle the complex, large-scale information problems faced by organisations and government. LIS graduates work in all digital environments – information design, information visualisation and data visualisation. And, of course, building digital libraries, repositories and databases, and finding innovative ways to make information accessible is second nature to LIS graduates.

LIS programs train their graduates in user research, community engagement and in various information-use contexts. With increased media convergence in the digital world, the digital skills and knowledge acquired



Dr Bhuva Narayan is a Senior Lecturer at University of Technology, Sydney

in LIS programs are increasingly valuable in media organisations such as news libraries, television archives, content repositories and even in market research and communications. With skills in areas like user research, LIS graduates can investigate and build a detailed picture of the requirements of an organisation and its users – making them invaluable to organisations in all industries.

LIS programs also train their graduates in research methods and conceptual and critical inquiry. Many LIS graduates go on to do higher degree research and are leading the way in several information-related social science research areas such as health information literacy, privacy literacy, social media studies, social inclusion, social advocacy and social justice.

In short, if you're studying in an LIS program, you are studying for a lifelong career and not just training for a job. Be proud of it and be an advocate for the information professions; it is a career requiring singular abilities and knowledge. 🌟

DR BHUVA NARAYAN, AALIA

Senior Lecturer, Information and Knowledge Management program

University of Technology, Sydney, NSW

Member of the ALIA Research Committee

