

October 25th, 2013

Dear committee members of the Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel,

We at the University of Alberta School of Library and Information Studies are a small group, and, as students, we traditionally lack the ability to exert direct influence upon the current and future status of Canadian libraries and archives. Therefore, we are grateful for this opportunity as students to reflect upon our education and the state of LIS education in the future, and we thank you for taking the time to consider what we have to say.

To say that LIS education is currently in a state of change seems redundant. We have yet to encounter a person or author who would say that LIS education has ever not been intent upon refining and redefining itself in an effort to better serve LIS students. Perpetual conversations occur between faculty, students, and professionals regarding various emphases that have surfaced in the field, such as the drive toward greater integration between the “library” and “information” aspects of LIS, and the shifting role of the degree-holding librarian from the front-lines of library interactions to the primarily managerial or back-end positions. In short, there is an overarching drive to find a balance between the theory underpinning the LIS profession and the practice required to provide services to the members of our various communities.

It is in this vein that we find that our education is at times serving us well and, at others, leaving us feeling unprepared as we position ourselves to enter the workplace. The LIS profession has not yet come to a conclusion over the precise blend of theoretical understanding and practical skills it requires of its librarians. Our schools therefore attempt to provide us with a solid background in both the theory and application of LIS, but at times it feels unclear to us whether we are being prepared to be LIS theorists, practitioners, or both. One of the beauties of LIS education and the LIS profession as a whole is that we are given the tools with which to approach the profession and the latitude to decide the manner in which we do so. We believe, however, that everyone – students, faculty, professionals, and the public alike – would benefit from an LIS education that more clearly expresses the various needs that can be met by the LIS profession, and the variety of ways in which we can mold our educational experience to prepare us to become professionals who can meet and exceed those needs.

Again, thank you for the valuable work that you are doing to promote and protect the future of Canadian libraries and archives, and for allowing us the opportunity to be a small part of that effort.

Sincerely,

The University of Alberta Library and Information Studies Students' Association,

on behalf of the student body of the
University of Alberta School of Library and Information Studies