DATE: June 26, 2005  
TO: ALA Council  
FROM: Ling Hwey Jeng, Chair of Task Force on Library School Closing  
SUBJECT: Final Report

The Task Force was established by the Council at 2004 Midwinter Conference in response to the announcement of library school closing at Clark Atlanta University. It was extended at 2004 Annual Conference for one year to 2005 Annual Conference.

The Task Force was charged:
- to develop strategies for ensuring continuity of LIS education and recruitment for minorities in Georgia, and
- to further develop long term strategies for preventing further LIS closure;

During the year of 2004-2005, the Task Force focused on the second charge; i.e., to develop long term strategies for preventing further LIS closure. In doing so, the Task Force identifies three areas to which special attention is given:

Area 1: An "early warning system" for threatened schools, and a revisit of LIS accreditation process;
Area 2: Collaboration with ALISE on leadership and political training for deans, directors, and program chairs (and potential ones), and other scholarly exchange activities.
Area 3: Library education advocacy involving LIS educators, alumni and practitioners.

As an action item for the Council's approval, the Task Force recommends the following seven specific strategies for preventing further library school closure:

**STRATEGY 1: Early warning sign system (Area 1)**
Enhance the current biannual accreditation reporting system by implementing an action plan that allows closer monitoring of early warning signs of a potentially threatened library school and by establishing a mentoring system to take proactive corrective actions early. The following are identified as warning signs for a threatened library school:

1. Loss of, or conditional, accreditation  
2. Enrollment and/or faculty size falling below campus critical mass  
3. Out of touch with local regional constituency  
4. Lack of visibility at state/national LIS conferences  
5. Loss of alumni support  
6. Campus budget cut  
7. Lack of visibility of administrators/faculty on campus  
8. Lack of financial support to attract strong leader

**Recommendation:** Refer Strategy actions. to Committee on Accreditation for consideration and
STRATEGY 2: Quality Control of ALA Accreditation (Area 1)

Implement an independent review mechanism to ensure consistency and quality control in COA accreditation decisions and actions, and to communicate to the LIS programs and their parent institutions with assurance of the quality and credential of ALA accreditation.

Specifically, the Task Force strongly advises that ALA revisit the following items under "Recommendation 2 Establish and Apply Standards for Accreditation" from the Congress on Professional Education I which are pertinent to the issue of LIS accreditation:

2.1. explore the possibility of an independent board for Accreditation

- in planning the Congress it was obvious that there is a wide range of national and international associations concerned with the accreditation process funded and managed by the American Library Association; it is critical that discussions be held to explore the feasibility of a collaborative, independent board comprising, and supported by, all the primary players, including ALA and its divisions and partner groups

2.2. determine whether ALA is accrediting programs for librarians only or also for other information professionals, including specializations

- the Standards for Accreditation apply to library "and information studies" yet there is some question as to whether this is [a] "librarianship" under a different name, or [b] librarianship expanding into other areas, or [c] a broader range of information professionals, including, for example, archivists, records managers, researchers, Internet managers and trainers

2.3. examine the process for accreditation as applied in other professions to determine and apply "best practices"

- several alternative models, such as from accounting, education, law, medicine, etc. were presented during the Congress, each with considerations for improving the current accreditation process for library and information studies; these should be examined for their possible replication

2.4. clarify and strengthen the process for the cyclical review of the Standards for Accreditation

- the profession and its practice is undergoing significant change yet the revision of Standards is viewed as an event rather than as an ongoing process; the "new II Standards are still being applied for the first time to programs last accredited eight years ago yet revision is necessary to address concerns, experiences and trends, Standards must address collaborative planning, outcomes-based evaluation and pedagogy

2.5. clarify and "mainstream" the criteria and management of the ALAINCA TE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) process for school librarians who choose that route

1 Congress on Professional Education: Focus on Education for the First Professional Degree. Available at http://www.ala.org/ala/hrdrbucket/1stcongressonpro/1stcongresssteeringcommittee.htm
• the NCATE process, recognized by ALA, should be managed by the Office of Accreditation where the Association’s expertise and resources reside

2.6. promote knowledge and understanding of the accreditation process, specifically that it is outcomes-based and is critical to the profession

• there is a serious lack of understanding of the current Standards and the process for their application that needs to be addressed if there is to be meaningful dialogue between educators and practitioners; promotion of the process should also increase the perceived value of accreditation

2.7. strengthen the mechanism(s) which exist for involvement of the profession in the accreditation process

• more professional members need to participate in the accreditation process if it is to become more broadly-based and better understood

2.8. strengthen the rigor of the accreditation process including training for site visitors

• the rigor of the application of the standards is dependent on the quality of the site visitors and their training; the current process provides for an orientation of site visitors rather than training in the standards and the evidence which is necessary to assess their attainment

2.9. ensure that core competencies and Standards are met by each accredited program

• while various components of the Standards are important, even essential, to the quality of a program—e.g., curriculum, faculty, students, administration, resources—the bottom line for consumers is whether the core competencies of the profession are evident in graduates; this needs to be addressed specifically

2.10. find ways to provide relevant consumer information about the review of programs to potential students, employers and other stakeholders

• more than one third of programs reviewed now receive fewer than the full term between external on-site reviews yet no information is provided to consumers about the reasons for these decisions as they apply to potential students and employers; improved access to accreditation information for each program is necessary

Recommendation: Refer Strategy 2 to ALA Executive Director, for review on status of implementation of COPE I recommendations mentioned above, and for further referral to appropriate offices and committees for follow-up actions.

STRATEGY 3: Grassroots network for LIS programs (Area 2)
Enlist ALA Chapters and regional library associations to support their local LIS programs, by establishing state level coalition of LIS educators, alumni and practitioners for advocacy and promotion of library education at the local level.
Recommendation: Refer Strategy 3 to Chapter Relations Committee for consideration and outreach to Chapters.

STRATEGY 4: Networking platform for dialogues between LIS educators and practitioners (Area 2)

On Tuesday, June 28, 2005, the ALA Office for Diversity and ALISE will co-sponsor the "National Dialogue on the Curriculum of Readiness for the 21st Century Librarian", a summit funded in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The summit will begin at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m., in conjunction with the 2005 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. The summit will be held in the McCormick Place Convention Center, Room S102d.

Programs such as this above announcement should be a regular feature at ALA Annual and Midwinter conferences. LIS education should also be a regular discussion topic at the Education Assembly. Another platform that could be explored and better publicized is the Library School Reunion events on Sunday evening.

Recommendation: Refer Strategy 4 to Committee on Education, Office for Diversity, and HRDR for further consideration.

STRATEGY 5: More and regular presence of library education in ALA print and online publications (Area 2)

Create a regular column in American Libraries, both print and online versions, to provide (a) news in LIS education, (b) issues regarding LIS education, and (c) profiling of individual LIS programs.

Recommendation: Refer Strategy 5 to American Libraries Advisory Committee for consideration and actions.

STRATEGY 6: Equity of Access of Library Education (Area 2)

As more and more academic programs are becoming available online through distance learning, many higher education institutions are beginning to use a two-tier system in tuition fee setting: one for on campus students and the other for students choosing online education. Specific statistics should be gathered in terms of the discrepancies in tuition fees (in-state v. out of state, on-campus v. online) of LIS programs, in order to identify potential inequity in student access to library education.

Recommendation: Refer Strategy 6 to HRDR, Office for Diversity, and Office of Research and Statistics for consideration and actions.

STRATEGY 7: Collaboration with ALISE (Area 3)

Email announcement from Tracie Hall, Director of ALA Office for Diversity, May 17, 2005
Further dialogues are necessary in partnership with ALISE to explore the following issues:

(a) **Leadership training and development:** ALISE held a leadership training workshop for LIS deans/directors during its 2005 Annual Conference in Boston. It is understood that another workshop will be held in 2006 Annual Conference in San Antonio. ALA should explore with ALISE possible partnership opportunities in leadership training and development.

(b) **Growing new LIS programs:** Although more and more library schools are making MLS degree program available online via distance learning, all LIS programs are limited in the number of students they could accept due to limit in faculty and curriculum resources. ALA and ALISE should jointly explore the possible advocacy role in establishing new LIS programs, especially in regions where there is no library school.

(c) **LIS faculty exchange systems between LIS programs as well as between library schools and practicing libraries:** One way to enrich the faculty of a library school and to reduce the isolation of the LIS program is to establish free and open intellectual exchange among LIS educators. The intellectual exchange between the LIS educators and practicing librarians can increase the scholarly communication with balance between LIS theories and practices.

**Recommendation:** Refer Strategy 7 to ALA President-Elect Michael Gorman, for consideration for possibly holding a high level library education summit in 2006 with representatives of all related associations to explore the three issues.

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