

# Continuing Education—XVII

More than half the accredited library schools in the United States, as one facet of their effort in continuing education, are offering a post-master's certificate program. The total number of such programs and the number of graduates seem to be growing slowly. For academic librarians who may be thinking about such a formal program as the next step in their continuing education, a brief review and prospect may be helpful.

The need for something between the basic professional degree and the doctorate has long been felt. Before around 1950 the B.L.S. was the basic degree, offered at the postgraduate level and corresponding to other professional bachelor's degrees that required an undergraduate degree for admission (bachelor of laws, bachelor of divinity). In this period at least two schools, the University of Chicago and Berkeley, offered a sixth-year program leading to the master's degree. After the M.L.S. replaced the B.L.S., these second-level master's degree programs were phased out.

In 1961, Columbia University School of Library Service began to offer a certificate for advanced study not leading to the doctorate. Schools with doctoral programs could offer the certificate to students who began doctoral study but stopped before completing all the requirements. Schools with or without doctoral programs could offer the certificate to students who wished to study on an advanced level in a formal program. By 1979 thirty-two schools were offering such a program.

A telephone survey shows the following comparison with the State University of New York at Albany.

1. Typical enrollments are small, 5 to 15 students actively pursuing the certificate in any given year. Consequently, enrollment in the thirty-two schools is probably between 300 and 400 students. Albany's active enrollment, between 15 and 20 students, was reached quickly after the program was announced; if the experience of other schools is duplicated, the enrollment will level off at this point.

2. The full-time student is rare but not unknown. One school used three HEW fellowships for certificate students. Academic sabbaticals are being used increasingly for advanced study. Several schools are advertising the availability of financial aid for full-time students. In its first year Albany had one full-time student, and it expects three more in its second year.

3. The preponderance of enrollment is from academic librarians, with school librarians next. Public and special librarians are rare.

4. Program requirements range from 24 to 36 semester hours. Generally the requirements can

be completed in an academic year, rather than the calendar year typical of the M.L.S.

5. The typical program is a specialization program, individually tailored to a student's professional goals, and taking advantage, as the M.L.S. typically does not, of the offerings of the entire university or college.

6. The most common specializations are in two areas: in administration, management, planning finance and in new technologies, automation, systems analysis. At Albany one other specialization has emerged: library instruction, user education.

7. In schools offering the doctorate a movement from the certificate program to the doctoral program is possible, though not usual.

8. Students are using the certificate programs in two ways: as evidence applying for promotion, tenure, merit salary increases and as a way of changing career directions, e.g., from school to special librarianship.

9. The professional acceptability of the certificate remains an unknown. In spite of eighteen years of experience, the total number of graduates remains small. Deans and directors with whom I talked could give instances in which the certificate had been equated with a second master's degree, but they were unwilling to make any generalizations. In view of the substantial number of academic librarians enrolled in such programs, the question of professional acceptability and usefulness would seem to merit study and discussion.

How are employers evaluating the certificate in comparison to an equivalent effort devoted to single courses, workshops, preconference institutes, etc.? In comparison to a subject master's degree? In comparison to an M.B.A. or an M.P.A. degree?—Robert S. Burgess.

*Editor's Note: Robert S. Burgess is professor, School of Library and Information Science, State University of New York, Albany, New York. ■■*

## Chinese-American Librarians

John Yung-hsiang Lai, associate librarian in the Harvard-Yenching Library, Harvard University, was recently elected president of the Chinese American Librarians Association, an affiliate group of the ALA. The association's purpose is to promote better communication among Chinese American librarians in North America and to support the development of Chinese and American librarianship.

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