

School of Library and Information Studies
University of Alberta

Survey of Practicum Supervisors in the MLIS Program 2015-2017

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Survey Background

A feedback survey was conducted of professional practitioner colleagues who supervised or co-supervised University of Alberta MLIS students enrolled in LIS 590 Practicum during the past three years. The five most recent offerings of this senior MLIS option were included in the survey, from the fall 2015 to the spring 2017. More information about the Practicum is found on the School's course web page at <https://www.ualberta.ca/school-of-library-and-information-studies/courses/practicum-lis-590>.

During the period covered by the survey, a total of 49 Practicum supervisors and co-supervisors volunteered their time, energy, and mentorship in partnering with the School to provide 46 senior MLIS student placements (14 placements were through the online teaching and learning stream and 32 were through the on-campus stream). These School partners worked in a wide range of locations across Canada and internationally, in both archives and libraries; all past and prospective placement sites are listed, in geographic clusters, on the School's course webpage (see above link), although students are free to find any other eligible site that meets their needs.

At the time of the survey, 42 potential respondents were identified as still active in the same workplaces (4 had retired or left in the intervening period and 3 were on extended research leaves). The survey was open from June 27 to July 26, 2017, with one follow-up reminder on July 17th; a targeted extension to August 4th was offered for a small number of prospective respondents who had used auto-vacation notices.

The survey consisted of 10 questions designed to provide feedback on experiences, perspectives, and suggestions, as part of the School's ongoing self-assessment program that includes the Practicum as an important component of community engagement with our colleagues in professional practice. Supervisors were promised confidentiality and a summary of findings. Toni Samek helped develop the web-enabled survey instrument (see Appendix), with technical input from Matt Cheung, Learning Facilitator with Technologies in Education; they also field tested the instrument.

A total of 28 supervisors and co-supervisors contributed to the survey, out of the 42 eligible survey participants, for a response rate of 67%. During the five offerings over three years of the Practicum that were encompassed by the survey, 21 of the 28 respondents said they supervised or co-supervised one Practicum student each (75%). Seven respondents (25%) reported multiple supervisor experiences: four supervised or co-supervised 2 students each, two had 3 each, and one had 7. Altogether, the 28 survey contributors reported supervising or co-supervising 42 student placements during the three years covered by the survey.

Survey respondents are gratefully acknowledged, as is their willingness to continue engaging as supervisors (and co-supervisors) with UAlberta MLIS Practicum students. Since the inception of the School's MLIS Practicum more than two decades ago, in 1995, our professional partners have supervised almost 600 students in 60,000 hours of Practicum placements. These partnerships with the School are deeply appreciated by all SLIS faculty and students!

Key Findings

Over 80% of responding supervisors and co-supervisors said that students were “well prepared” for their placements. One said, “Our student worked at the standard of a new librarian in our Library. We worked on refining skills in a variety of areas and orienting to our system rather than teaching basic skills.”

Almost all of the respondents said that their Practicum students could count on positive job references as a result of the placement experience. One said, “My practicum student was exceptional. I felt very lucky to have them.” Two respondents noted they had offered their students temporary positions – high praise for students’ Practicum experiences.

Overall, responding supervisors and co-supervisors said the School’s approach to the pedagogy of the Practicum resonated positively with them (which was elaborated in the survey as emphasizing leadership and self-leadership skills; socialization to professional values; networking and relationship skills; observing how communication, decision-making, and information-sharing occur; learning how to acquire tacit as well as formal knowledge about workplace culture and staffing relationships; and building self-confidence in career planning).

A few responses offered more qualified support for the Practicum pedagogy described. But the great majority of respondents said, variously, that these are core skills for the profession, a good fit with their institutional practices, or, aligned with personal experience as a professional.

One respondent endorsed the focus on relationship-building, stressing, with particularly compelling force, that: “You need to do a good job as part of that but doing an amazing job while not building relationships kind of negates the point. Students who get this are always going to do way better than those who don’t.”

We were very curious as to why so many Practicum supervisors, whether across Canada or around the world, were willing to take on the added workload of supervising and mentoring a student. Almost all of the respondents described multiple benefits of having a Practicum student.

These benefits represented not only a rich diversity of perspectives, but were also intermingling and reciprocal. As one respondent noted, the Practicum was “a mutual learning experience.”

Many of the perceived benefits described simultaneous contributions to both the institution and to the individual supervisor. A particularly noteworthy finding was the many mentions of professional benefits to the individual Practicum supervisor or co-supervisor, such as opportunities to build supervisory and mentoring aspects of their own CVs; to develop team project skills; to talk to students; and to make lasting professional connections.

The benefits reported by respondents clustered into several broad themes, many of which were reciprocally interrelated. The theme clusters that emerged were:

- bringing a different perspective, with fresh eyes
- gaining new knowledge
- helping and mentoring new professionals
- giving back to the profession, and especially SLIS

- undertaking library projects and activities
- opportunity to vet potential employees, first-hand look at a potential new staff member
- developing personal professional skills.

The benefits that responding supervisors and co-supervisors reported in the survey are particularly meaningful as clues for Practicum students themselves in informing and guiding their interactions with both supervisors and other workplace colleagues.

Equally significant for students contemplating an MLIS Practicum were the many respondent reactions to the survey question asking supervisors and co-supervisors to describe “in a nutshell” their key take-aways from the Practicum experience. Almost all of the respondents offered enthusiastic and laudatory observations about the mutual benefit of a Practicum experience. One respondent expressed it this way: “It’s an energizing experience with benefits to both parties.”

Another respondent commented, “Learning and sharing, evaluating differences, the opportunity in itself was a personal as well as professional highlight!” And still another said, “Practicum placements provide tremendous benefits to both student and supervisor and are a crucial aspect of our professional education and development. And we should do more of them!”

Many respondents focused their take-aways on the qualities of their Practicum students. They described them, variously, as being: enthusiastic, “like a breath of fresh air”, confident and competent, bright and motivated, a pleasure to work with, thoughtful, attentive, interested, professional, bright, engaged, well prepared, and energetic.

One respondent explicitly noted that the interest and engagement of the student “made a significant positive impact on my experience as a supervisor.”

One particularly germane take-away for prospective supervisors is that, “Students work quickly, so be as available as possible to answer questions.” Several expressly noted they would be happy to take other students in the future. One respondent said, “I wish I was asked more often!”

A few take-aways are noteworthy for the School as related to its MLIS curricular framework and content, as well as to its Practicum pedagogy. One respondent specifically noted that the UAlberta MLIS curriculum “appears to be keeping up with workplace trends.” Another mentioned the “ease of setting up the administrative part of the practicum (good communication and expectations made clear).” And another respondent thought the program seemed very well organized and found the supporting information helpful.

Four in 10 survey respondents said they had supervised students in other MLIS programs, and a few commented about perceived differences such as more and clearer communication and more emphasis on leadership and workplace setting in the UAlberta approach.

In terms of the information provided by the School to prospective supervisors and co-supervisors about the Practicum (curricular vision, mentoring focus, learning outcomes, pedagogy, timelines, forms, practicalities), almost all of them reported it was satisfactory, with varying observations such as very thorough; lots of follow-up contact; timely; clear expectations; and, “soundbites” to help get management support.

Finally, there were a few suggestions for improving the UAlberta MLIS Practicum, such as: make it longer so that students can “really dig in” to projects, leadership, and a more meaningful contribution; encourage more actual tasks; ensure projects are interesting and beneficial for students by providing more direction in terms of scheduling activities and projects; and hold a practicum fair.

Survey Results, by Question

Student Readiness for Practicum

A key finding from the survey is that over 80% of responding supervisors and co-supervisors (23 out of 28) reported that students were “well prepared” for their placements, while 4 said they were “somewhat prepared.” One supervisor said the student was “somewhat unprepared.”

Verbatim comments by survey respondents (n=28) about student preparedness were as follows:

- My student was extremely organized and ready to work on a variety of projects, and required minimal supervision once the details of the various tasks were explained.
- Our student worked at the standard of a new librarian in our Library. We worked on refining skills in a variety of areas and orienting to our system rather than teaching basic skills.
- The student got familiar with our library and took the initiative to approach us for the practicum.
- The student was eager, ready to learn anything, and open to suggestions. They did start out hoping to just learn our Library Assistant position (not a Librarian position), but was open to changing their mind when I made suggestions about opportunities for Librarian level duties.
- The student was juggling a paid library position (shift work), classes and the practicum. As a result they frequently requested changes to the practicum schedule we jointly established early on.
- Students are generally aware of Archives; are interested and keen although somewhat unprepared insofar as they have not really undertaken any grad level archival studies courses.

Job References

Another key finding echoes the respondents’ perceptions of student preparedness. The survey queried participating supervisors and co-supervisors as to whether they did, or if asked would have been able to, provide the student(s) with a positive job reference as a result of the Practicum experience. Almost all of the respondents said yes.

One respondent said, “I learn so much from their perspectives and expertise, and the interest and enthusiasm with which they approach their placements.” Another mentioned their student was “exceptional,” and two noted they had offered their students temporary positions – high praise for students’ Practicum experiences.

While a small number of respondents expressed more qualified support, only one supervisor said that in good faith they could not provide a positive reference.

Verbatim comments by respondents (n=27) about giving a job reference were as follows:

- My practicum student was exceptional. I felt very lucky to have them. They were (and continue to be) an asset to our organization.
- Felt I had learned enough about the student to provide a clear estimation of abilities and potential.
- First I hired the student in a temporary position (non-professional), and then I provided a reference in a permanent position elsewhere in the province. I can't recall if this was a professional position or not, though.

- I was asked and was happy to. We also offered them a temporary position later, but they were employed elsewhere at the time.
- There was enough time for the student to complete projects, and for supervisor to observe the work of the students.
- To some degree. Would depend on the position they were applying for.
- The situation in my country differs from the Canadian one, as our professionals are being regarded as 'Librarians' when they obtain a 4-year degree in Library and Information Science. They do not need to specialize first, obtain a master's and only then be a 'librarian.' Having a postgraduate degree (honours or masters), on top of the first library science degree, would assist in furthering a library and information science career.
- I would be more than happy to provide a good reference for one of the students but I couldn't in good faith provide one for the other.

Supervisors' Perceptions of Practicum Pedagogy

Overall, responding supervisors and co-supervisors said the School's approach to the pedagogy of the Practicum resonated positively with them. The School's approach was elaborated in the survey as emphasizing "leadership and self-leadership skills in the workplace and on socialization to professional values, with grounding in placement opportunities for senior MLIS students to be able to: cultivate networking and relationship skills; observe how communication, decision-making, and information-sharing occur; learn how to acquire tacit as well as formal knowledge about workplace culture and staffing relationships; and build self-confidence in career planning."

One respondent noted this is a very valuable addition to the School's MLIS program and that "these are core skills for the profession that are difficult (if not impossible) to instil in a classroom setting." They added that the statement "is a good fit with our institutional practices." Another commented that this pedagogy "aligns strongly with my experience of a librarian – so-called "soft skills" really augment the power and scope of librarian interactions with others."

One respondent endorsed the focus on relationship-building, stressing, with particularly compelling force, that: "You need to do a good job as part of that but doing an amazing job while not building relationships kind of negates the point. Students who get this are always going to do way better than those who don't."

At the same time, a few responses offered more qualified support for the Practicum pedagogy described. One respondent reminded us that the approach is a laudable goal but does not replace "nuts and bolts key knowledge." Similarly, another commented that it is "a good start" but should include opportunities to take on real tasks, which would "provide more information about the aspects you describe than observation would on its own." One respondent noted it was an ideal approach to a practicum "even if perhaps in the amount of time given it is difficult to cover all the aspects." Another noted success with the described pedagogy depended on each placement and the assigned projects. One respondent endorsed the approach but did not think it was clear from the Practicum placement process.

Respondents' verbatim comments (n=26) about the School's approach to Practicum pedagogy were as follows:

- It resonates very well.
- I heartily support this approach.
- Entirely!

- Completely.
- Fully.
- Greatly. I wish I had had the opportunity when I was in library school.
- Deeply. I think these are core skills for the profession that are difficult (if not impossible) to instill in a classroom setting. This is a very valuable addition to the SLIS program. The statement is a good fit with our institutional practices.
- Great.
- This resonates well - it's the professional soft skills that can't be taught in a class setting so these practicums offer a good setting for this.
- This approach resonates very strongly with me. These are the things that students express to me and colleagues when we talk about what they would like to get out of the placement, and which we strive to provide for the students. And I feel that these are the very things that a practicum placement can provide which may not be gained otherwise.
- Very much so. I believe the focus of the practicum should be relationship building. You need to do a good job as part of that but doing an amazing job while not building relationships kind of negates the point. Students who get this are always going to do way better than those who don't.
- I found that this pedagogy aligns strongly with my experience of a librarian – so-called "soft skills" really augment the power and scope of librarian interactions with others.
- As a graduate of UWO's MLIS program, and a participant in their co-op program, it resonates very much! I had a similar transformative learning experience in that program.
- This is very important – taking the theory and practical and putting into practise, seeing what and how this all fits in the real library setting.
- I fully support this pedagogy as I believe that mastery of the above listed competencies are essential to workplace success.
- I think this was reflected in the student's approach to the practicum.
- There is a difference between the workplace culture in my country and in Canada, yet the student adapted 100% and was confident in the sharing and learning and networking situations.
- It was important that the student embraced these values and used the placement opportunities to develop those skills. The approach is a good fit with our library values as well.
- We certainly had no issues with our practicum student in this regard. They were professional and well-liked, and fit in well in our organization.
- This is an ideal approach to a practicum even if perhaps in the amount of time given it is difficult to cover all the aspects.
- This pedagogy is extremely important, but its success depends on each placement and the projects that are assigned to the students.
- It does, but I don't think that was clear from the Practicum Placement process.
- It resonates somewhat; is a laudable goal, however, does not replace nuts and bolts key knowledge.
- I think this approach is a good start, but I would include opportunities to take on real tasks – research projects or more practical work – which I think were very valuable for the student I supervised, and provided more information about the aspects you describe than observation would on its own. See Lave and Wenger's Legitimate Peripheral Participation work.
- To some degree.

Benefits Derived from Practicum

We were very curious as to why so many Practicum supervisors and co-supervisors, whether across Canada or around the world, were willing to take on the added workload of supervising and mentoring a student. Almost all of the respondents described multiple benefits of having a Practicum student. These benefits represented not only a rich diversity of perspectives, but they were also intermingling and mutually reinforcing, like the many surfaces of a prism. As one respondent noted, the Practicum was “a mutual learning experience.”

Many of the benefits described contributions to both the institution and to the individual supervisor. A particularly noteworthy finding (and one that, I confess, was very pleasantly surprising) was the many mentions of professional benefits to the individual Practicum supervisor or co-supervisor. Among other benefits, they cited opportunities to build the supervisory and mentoring aspects of their CVs; to develop team project skills; to talk to students; and to make lasting professional connections.

Comments clustered into several broad themes, many of which were reciprocally interrelated. The theme clusters that emerged were:

- bringing a different perspective, with fresh eyes ["They challenge me to think differently about what we do, and to think about doing what we do differently." "Helped me better articulate and therefore understand tacit knowledge that underlies my practice." "Their questions allowed me to revisit and reconsider some of our priorities here. There's nothing like a fresh pair of eyes!"]
- gaining new knowledge ["We get to hear about current trends in librarianship and pedagogy, and about experiences in other locations." "Learning more about what they're learning in library school - opportunity to mentor and share knowledge."]
- helping and mentoring new professionals ["Provide perspective/context on learning on-the-job." "Mentoring a new professional, exposing them to the work that I do, which is not traditional library work, and networking."]
- giving back to the profession, and especially to the School ["We give back to the community, help enrich future professionals." "Being able to give back to SLIS is an added bonus!" "Raising the profile of the UA MLIS graduate program."]
- undertaking library projects and activities ["Moving a lower priority project forward, setting up a project for future completion." "As long as I'm willing to invest in finding meaningful projects, the library also benefits from the time spent by the student." "Added personnel to help with Library activities." "Our team does not have a lot of time to do analysis/study of new literature. It is very useful to have students help with this."]
- opportunity to vet potential employees; first-hand look at a potential new staff member
- developing my professional skills ["Build the supervisor and mentoring aspects of my professional CV." "Helps me remain connected to the field in a different way." "Allowed me to work on a team, developing projects in the library." "I asked for feedback from my practicum student and learned things about my own management style that I'm not sure my own staff would have felt comfortable sharing." "Make connections that will last over time is a wonderful benefit."]

The insights respondents shared are particularly meaningful and noteworthy as clues for Practicum students themselves in informing and guiding their interactions with both supervisors and their other workplace colleagues.

Verbatim comments by respondents (n=27) about perceived benefits of engaging with Practicum students were as follows:

- Being able to provide perspective/context on learning on-the-job – giving back. Helping support a new professional. Gaining from the student's perspective and sometimes challenged by their perspectives.
- Our librarians benefit from the up to date knowledge the students bring. Our student was a lovely person and a great person to have here.
- Have an opportunity to vet potential employees, nice to get outsider impressions of our services, processes, and procedures.
- Engaging with student brings different perspective to work and existing processes.
- It allowed me to work on a team, developing projects in the library.
- It was a mutual learning experience. After visiting the UAL in 2015, it allowed me as supervisor to try and fill 'the gaps' that I experienced during my visit to the UofA, by really exposing the student to as many aspects of professional librarianship as possible - focusing on similarities, differences but also uniqueness in the academic library environment.
- Opportunity to develop and implement a small special project for the student to work on. Also an opportunity for us to learn from the perspectives and questions that the student brings with them.
- Raising the profile of the UA MLIS graduate program, and the positive opportunity that student placement can contribute in the workplace.
- Questions asked by the practicum student allowed me to revisit and reconsider some of our priorities here. There's nothing like a fresh pair of eyes! I also learned a lot from the student about what's new in the field.
- Personally, I really enjoy it. I like talking to current students and keeping in touch with my alma mater. I benefited greatly from my own practicum, so providing that opportunity to current students will remain a priority for me. As long as I'm willing to invest in finding meaningful projects, the library also benefits from the time spent by the student.
- We give back to the community, help enrich future professionals, and get material processed and described that we otherwise might not get to.
- It is important for me as a professional to have the opportunity to develop my supervisory skills.
- Learning more about what they're learning in library school - opportunity to mentor and share knowledge.
- Added personnel to help with Library activities. Opportunity to work with someone who may be more exposed to emerging trends of standards and best practices.
- The students do a great job completing important projects in our library.
- Moving a lower priority project forward, setting up a project for future completion.
- Assistance with special projects, another person to help out in a number of different capacities; first-hand look at a potential new staff member.
- Mentoring a new professional, exposing them to the work that I do, which is not traditional library work, networking.
- It is an opportunity for me to develop mentoring skills, to look at our work with fresh eyes, and to build the supervisor and mentoring aspects of my professional CV.
- Promote 2-year institutions and have additional staff hours for special projects. Also feel it is important to give back to profession.
- It is always refreshing to work with trainees.
- Our team does not have a lot of time to do analysis/study of new literature. It is very useful to have students help with this.
- I believe I gain a tremendous amount from working with the SLIS practicum students. I learn so much from their perspectives and expertise, and the interest and enthusiasm with which they approach their placements. They challenge me to think differently about what we do, and to think about doing what we do differently. Having an opportunity to work with new professionals and make connections that will last over time is a wonderful benefit. And being able to give back to SLIS is an added bonus!
- Helped me better articulate and therefore understand tacit knowledge that underlies my practice.
- I asked for feedback from my practicum student and learned things about my own management style that I'm not sure my own staff would have felt comfortable sharing. It helps me remain connected to the field in a different way.

- We get to hear about current trends in librarianship and pedagogy, as well as hear about experiences in other locations.
- None really...In my view and the view of the organization, this is really about the student.

Practicum Supervisors' Key Take-Aways

The survey asked respondents to describe “in a nutshell” their key take-aways from the Practicum experience. Almost all of the responding supervisors and co-supervisors offered enthusiastic and laudatory observations indicating mutual benefit. One respondent expressed their nutshell take-away in these terms: “That it’s an energizing experience with benefits to both parties.” Another said it was “refreshing to have the energy and enthusiasm of a practicum student.” Another commented, “Learning and sharing, evaluating differences, the opportunity in itself was a personal as well as professional highlight!” And still another said, “Practicum placements provide tremendous benefits to both student and supervisor and are a crucial aspect of our professional education and development. And we should do more of them!”

Many respondents focused their take-aways on the qualities of their Practicum students. Among the many positive attributes mentioned were: enthusiasm, like a breath of fresh air, confident and competent, bright and motivated, a pleasure to work with, thoughtfulness, attentiveness, interest, professionalism, bright, engaged, well prepared and professional, energy and enthusiasm. One respondent explicitly noted that the interest and engagement of the student “made a significant positive impact on my experience as a supervisor.”

One take-away particularly germane as advice to prospective supervisors was, “Students work quickly, so be as available as possible to answer questions.”

Several respondents expressly noted they would be happy to take other students in the future. One respondent said, “I wish I was asked more often!”

Noteworthy take-aways, from the School’s perspective, related to its curricular and pedagogical frameworks. One contributor specifically noted that the UAlberta MLIS curriculum “appears to be keeping up with workplace trends.” Another mentioned the “ease of setting up the administrative part of the practicum (good communication and expectations made clear).” Another thought the program seemed very well organized and found the supporting information helpful.

Verbatim comments by respondents (n=21) about their key take-away from their Practicum experience were as follows:

- MLIS curriculum appears to be keeping up with workplace trends.
- Being able to share my experience as a Librarian in a museum and discuss with the student their views on the Librarianship field.
- Confirmed that we would be happy to take another student in the future!
- Students are enthusiastic and are like a breath of fresh air.
- Ease of setting up the administrative part of the practicum (good communication and expectations made clear). Meeting and sharing a library with a confident and competent new professional.
- Learning and sharing, evaluating differences, the opportunity in itself was a personal as well as professional highlight!
- Positive experience.
- MLIS students are great asset to library work, and it is rewarding to provide a safe yet challenging learning environment for the students.

- If you get a good student who is bright and motivated, much can be accomplished in 100 hours.
- I wish I was asked more often!
- The students are a pleasure to work with and I am so pleased to offer "real world" experience that they can note on their CVs.
- Students work quickly, so be as available as possible to answer questions.
- Very much appreciated the thoughtfulness, attentiveness, interest and professionalism displayed by our MLIS Candidate. We were intent on providing as wide an experience as possible so that our practicum student came away with as full a picture as possible as how the library departments work together to provide and support our programs and services.
- This was an excellent experience. We hosted a bright, engaged student who was interested in our area of library work and I think that made a significant positive impact on my experience as a supervisor. I think that our student also received some valuable real-world experience and made some professional connections that will serve them in their future career.
- The student was well prepared and professional and therefore completed a significant project for our institution.
- The program seems very well organized. I found the supporting information helpful.
- Practicum placements provide tremendous benefits to both student and supervisor and are a crucial aspect of our professional education and development. And we should do more of them!
- That it's an energizing experience with benefits to both parties.
- Definitely mutually beneficial. I would do it again.
- It is refreshing to have the energy and enthusiasm of a practicum student in the office.
- The quality of the experience really depends on the quality of the student in the particular work environment I function in.

Supervisory Experience in Other MLIS Programs

Four in 10 survey respondents said they had supervised students in other MLIS programs, and a few commented about perceived differences such as more and clearer communication and more emphasis on leadership and workplace setting in the UAlberta approach. Verbatim comments (n=7) were as follows:

- I felt that in the case of the UAlberta there was more communication between the supervisor, the student and me prior to the start of the practicum.
- There was more emphasis on leadership, workplace setting, and social aspects of library work in the practicum.
- Communication ahead of time was clearer with UAlberta.
- Other practicums have been from UBC and were archives specific.
- I have had students from Western. Those are co-ops, full time and paid.
- Universités de Montréal has provided us with some very strong metadata students (seems to be one of their strengths). We have hired some individuals after having hosted their co-op students.
- It's been a few years so I didn't notice any differences of significance.

Information for Practicum Supervisors

In terms of information provided to prospective supervisors and co-supervisors about the Practicum, 27 of the 28 respondents reported it was satisfactory. The survey question specifically mentioned a wide variety of aspects: curricular vision, mentoring focus, learning outcomes, pedagogy, timelines, forms, practicalities, or other concerns. One respondent said that the information provided was "very thorough" and there was lots of follow up contact. Others commented that information was timely, expectations were clear, and there were "soundbites" to help get management support. Only one respondent said the information provided was just "somewhat" satisfactory, and that timelines could be more clearly articulated.

Verbatim respondent comments (n= 28) about the information that was provided by the School about the Practicum were as follows:

- Very thorough and lots of follow up contact - thanks, Alvin!
- I received timely and clear instructions of what is expected of me and what is expected of the student.
- The documents provide great info (scope, purposes, insurance, etc.) and "soundbites" to get buy-in and support from management.
- Really appreciated the contact and information throughout the process.
- The information was adequate and Dr. Schrader was able to fill in any information gaps.
- It would've been helpful to have more clear timelines on the different steps (forms, interview, etc)...like, "have x done by y date."

Suggested Practicum Improvements

Finally, we asked respondents for suggestions that would improve the UAlberta MLIS Practicum. A small number suggested the Practicum should be longer so that students could "really dig in" to projects and leadership and make a more meaningful contribution. One suggested that more actual tasks should be encouraged. Another respondent asked for more direction in terms of scheduling activities and projects so as to ensure they are interesting and beneficial for students. Other suggestions were to provide as much advance notice as possible; hold a practicum fair; and avoid overlap with the preceding (winter) term.

Verbatim comments by respondents (n=17) asking for suggestions to improve the Practicum were as follows:

- I cannot say enough how happy I was with the student that was placed at my Library. The student was smart, hard-working, and open to learning. Additionally, the student's academic background provided a strong foundation for the work the student engaged in during the practicum.
- The information provided by you in advance of the practicing was complete and helpful. Thank you!
- It has been a privilege to host a student. They certainly brought a new and fresh perspective on the stereotyped image of a librarian. We enjoyed their presence and passion and excitement to eventually have the opportunity to start their career.
- We went through the real-life employment practices before agreeing to the placement, e.g. interview, resume submission, and reference checking. We hope it was a good "practice-run" for the student and we're glad that we invested the time and efforts to have mutual agreement about the placement.
- Thanks for allowing me to work with your student. It was a pleasure and very beneficial to our library.
- Thanks for the opportunity!
- Thanks for giving us the opportunity to host a student - it was an educational and enjoyable experience.
- No, it was good, and I would certainly work with another student from the program.
- The MLIS practicum program is professionally managed and I will look forward to participating in the future.
- Make it longer so students can really dig in to projects and take them from start to finish. Would allow them to fully integrate into the workplace culture and actually give them an opportunity to learn and practice their leadership, communication and decision-making skills.
- The practicum seemed a bit short - typically with other programs we host a student FT for 2-3 months which allows them to make a more meaningful contribution.
- Good program, would encourage more actual tasks, but know there's a fine line between that and exploitation.
- More direction in terms of scheduling activities for students during their practicums and how to ensure that the project is interesting and beneficial for students.

- As much notice as possible is always beneficial. (Planning in early summer for fall placements, and planning in early fall for winter placements would be ideal).
- Have a practicum fair where potential supervisors pitch ideas and are matched with students.
- One minor point that has been noted by some students during the spring practicum this year (2017) was that the start date overlapped with the end of term. I don't know if that can be changed but if so it would be ideal. It is a wonderful program and I appreciate the opportunity to participate in it!
- Students who are interested in Archives really do need a more and better understanding of archival principles and practices.

Survey respondents are gratefully acknowledged, as is their willingness to continue engaging as supervisors (and co-supervisors) with UAlberta MLIS Practicum students. Since the inception of the School's MLIS Practicum more than two decades ago, in 1995, our professional partners have supervised almost 600 students in 60,000 hours of Practicum placements. These partnerships with the School are deeply appreciated by all SLIS faculty and students!

Appendix. UAlberta MLIS Practicum Supervisors Survey*

1. How many UAlberta MLIS Practicum students have you supervised over the 3 years from the Fall 2015 offering to the Spring 2017 offering, inclusive?
1__ 2__ 3__ 4 or more__
2. In which term(s) did you supervise a UAlberta MLIS Practicum student?
Fall 2015__ Winter 2016__ Spring 2016__ Fall 2016__ Spring 2017__
3. How prepared do you think the student(s) you supervised was (were) for a UAlberta MLIS Practicum placement?
Well prepared__ Somewhat prepared__ Somewhat unprepared__ Not prepared__
Please feel free to elaborate: _____
4. Was the information satisfactory as provided by the School's Practicum instructor about the UAlberta MLIS Practicum – curricular vision, mentoring focus, learning outcomes, pedagogy, timelines, forms, practicalities, other concerns?
Yes__ No__ Somewhat__
Please feel free to elaborate: _____
5. Have you supervised students in other MLIS programs?
Yes__ No__
If yes, were any aspects of the UAlberta MLIS Practicum noticeably different?
6. The UAlberta MLIS Practicum pedagogy focuses on leadership and self-leadership skills in the workplace and on socialization to professional values. This pedagogy is grounded in placement opportunities for senior MLIS students to cultivate networking and relationship skills; observe how communication, decision-making, and information-sharing occur; learn how to acquire tacit as well as formal knowledge about workplace culture and staffing relationships; and build self-confidence in career planning.
To what extent does this approach resonate with you? _____
7. Considering your experience working with one or more UAlberta MLIS Practicum students, did you or would you, if asked, have been able to provide the student(s) with a positive job reference?
Yes__ No__ Not sure__
Please feel free to elaborate: _____
8. What benefit do you derive from supervising UAlberta MLIS Practicum student(s)?
9. In a nutshell, what was your key take-away from your UAlberta MLIS Practicum supervisory experience?
10. Do you have any suggestions for improving the UAlberta MLIS Practicum, or any other feedback you'd like to share with us?

* The branching questions as worded here do not encompass the skip logic design built into the web survey.