

Library and Information Science

# **Practicum Handbook 2008-2009**

University of Denver—Morgridge College of Education  
Denver, Colorado

*Library and Information Science Practicum Handbook 2008-2009.* (2008). Denver, CO: University of Denver Morgridge College of Education, Library and Information Science Program.

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Dear Student,

Welcome to the practicum experience! You are about to begin one of the most exciting and fulfilling aspects of your degree plan. The practicum experience is an opportunity for you to apply some of the theory learned in class to the actual workplace while working under the supervision of professionals. The field mentor, faculty supervisor, faculty advisor, and practicum coordinator are all cheering for your success.

Your practicum experience can be one of the most important career enhancing choices you make. You have an opportunity to creatively build your resume and develop a professional portfolio by carefully choosing your practicum site, field mentor, and special project. Students choose practicums for a number of reasons such as:

- Experiencing the general aspects of work in an information setting
  - Example: Rotation in various departments of a public library
- Completing a special project with a unique learning experience
  - Example: Colorado Digitation Project groundwork
- Understanding different types of information-providing agencies
  - Example: Colorado Library for the Deaf and Blind
- Developing an area of expertise with a large project
  - Example: Summer Reading Programs

Your practicum experience can launch your career or help you develop an expertise in a particular area. It can open doors to a special experience in a particular institution. It can provide an opportunity to work closely with an expert in the field. I challenge you to choose carefully and make it the best possible experience for your new career.

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# The Practicum Experience

The practicum is a planned learning experience with a minimum of 100 hours of fieldwork.<sup>1</sup> It is an experiential learning opportunity for students to apply the theoretical classroom lessons to a supervised work experience in a library or information agency.

It is advisable for students to spend a quarter planning the practicum. The planning includes selecting a site and field mentor, writing goals and objectives, facilitating approvals, and scheduling the work.

## Practicum Definitions

- *Field Mentor*—the specialist in the library or information site working with the student
- *Faculty Supervisor*—classroom instructor who works directly with the student and field mentor
- *Faculty Advisor*—counselor to the student throughout program including practicum ideas
- *Practicum Coordinator*—manager of the practicum infrastructure including the site database, mentor approvals, permanent files, and handbook updates. The practicum coordinator is also the faculty supervisor.

Currently the roles of *Faculty Supervisor* and *Practicum Coordinator* are filled by the same person.

**Practicum Sites.** Various practicum sites are available to students depending on their areas of interest and specialization. Opportunities for experience include fields of medical, law, art, music, public, school, and academic libraries. The student should select both the practicum site and a field mentor in consultation with the faculty supervisor. The practicum coordinator and/or the faculty supervisor must approve sites and field mentors.

**Practicum Goals.** The student determines their own specific goals and objectives with support from the field mentor and approval of the faculty supervisor. The goals of the practicum experience are to:

- Provide students with an opportunity to translate theoretical knowledge into professional practice
- Assist students in the clarification and development of professional goals
- Enable students to identify professional and interpersonal strengths and weaknesses
- Help students in the development of professional areas of interest
- Support students in the expansion of their professional networks and
- Encourage students to contribute in a positive way to the professional agencies, institutions, and organizations of the community.

**Course Learning Objectives.** At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to effectively interpret and apply theory
- Identify their professional strengths and weaknesses and their area of interest
- Develop and clarify professional goals
- Contribute in a positive way to the operations of a library or information agency
- Meet the individual goals and objectives for the practicum experience

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<sup>1</sup> Students seeking K-12 school library media licensure do 160 hours of fieldwork with 80 hours each in elementary and secondary school libraries (LIS 4910 and LIS 4911).

# Students

The practicum experience is customized for each student. The student, field mentor, and faculty supervisor work together toward the achievement the mutually agreed upon goals and objectives.

**Student Eligibility.** Students must complete 38-quarter hours, including the core classes, before enrolling in the practicum. Most students enroll in the practicum during the last or next to last quarter of study. All students are required to complete four credit hours of practicum experience.

**Enrollment Guidelines.** The standard class required for all LIS masters students is LIS 4910, a four-quarter hour credit class. Students in the K-12 school library (SL) program enroll in the following two-credit courses: LIS 4911 Elementary Practicum (children birth through age 12) and LIS 4912 Secondary Practicum (middle school, junior high or high school; ages 13-18). Students interested in work with children and teens in public libraries may also enroll in LIS 4911 and LIS 4912. The LIS 4911 and LIS 4912 require 80 hours at each level, a standard for school library programs with work in both school and public library youth programs.

**Course Requirements.** Students must meet requirements for four credit hours of practicum experience including class meetings, a minimum of 100 hours of on site work, and completion of all required paperwork. The work during the practicum must be unpaid. A paid internship cannot substitute for the practicum experience. [Paid internships are often available as a supplementary work experience. Students may apply for independent study credit by writing a report of the internship or project research or methodology.]

**Requirements.** Before beginning the fieldwork students are required to submit an application/coversheet with goals and objectives attached. During the quarter practicum students must submit a reflective learning journal (posted weekly), time sheet, site evaluation, final report and any additional work requested by the faculty supervisor.

**Class Meetings.** There will be a meeting of practicum students at the beginning and the end of each quarter and during the quarter as scheduled by the faculty supervisor.

**Grades.** The faculty supervisor determines the final grade with input from the field mentor. Students must earn at least a “B” grade.

**Student Responsibilities.** The following “Student Checklist” lists expectations of students enrolling and preparing to enroll in the practicum experience.

# Student Checklist

## *6 to 12 months before the Practicum*

- Attend the fall Showcase of Opportunities to meet representatives of libraries and information settings
- Attend a Practicum Information Session (**required**)

## *8-16 weeks before the Practicum*

- Discuss practicum ideas with your faculty advisor
- Inform the practicum coordinator of your intent to do the practicum

## *6-8 weeks before the Practicum*

- Identify a practicum opportunity or use an existing site from the practicum database
- Initiate the pre-placement interviews with potential field mentors
- Discuss options with the faculty supervisor
- Verify approval of the field mentor with the practicum coordinator **OR**
- Request field mentor(s) to submit a resume to the practicum coordinator
- Register for the class (es) (K-12 SL students and/or students working with children and teens register for both LIS 4911 and LIS 4912)

## *3-4 weeks before the Practicum*

- Identify goals and objectives and/or overview of the practicum project
- Review proposed goals and objectives with field mentor and the faculty supervisor

## *1-2 weeks before the Practicum*

- Plan your work schedule
- Prepare paperwork for the first class (application, goals & objectives, description of site for Blackboard)

## *During the Practicum*

- Attend scheduled classes
- Submit required paperwork on time
- Report promptly to the site, complete all required hours, and maintain a time sheet of hours worked
- Prepare the learning journal reflecting on activities and learning
- Submit journal entries to the faculty supervisor in a timely manner as requested
- Schedule the site visit at a time when both field mentor and faculty supervisor can attend
- Discuss the field mentor's evaluation of your work at the end of the quarter
- Complete a written report at the end of the practicum experience addressing each objective
- Complete and submit all paperwork required by the deadline

Students can begin thinking about potential practicum sites and field mentors early in their academic work. Students are encouraged to talk with the faculty supervisor at any time before and during the practicum experience. Faculty advisors often have helpful suggestions for practicum sites and field mentors.

**Principles of Ethical Conduct.** While no set of guidelines can address every potential situation, the basic principles for the practicum lie in the understanding that students and faculty not only represent themselves, but also represent the University of Denver Morgridge College of Education and the library and information science profession. Each person involved in the practicum experience is expected to demonstrate responsible, ethical, and professional behavior in setting goals, meeting responsibilities, and addressing problems. Principles include the following.

- *Propriety.* The practicum student should maintain high standards of personal conduct in the capacity of identity as a student of the University of Denver.
- *Competence and Growth.* The practicum student should strive to become proficient in professional practice and performance of professional functions and activities.
- *Service.* The practicum student should regard as primary the service obligation to the agency, institution, or organization.
- *Integrity.* The practicum student should act in accordance with the highest standards of professional integrity.
- *Development of Knowledge.* The practicum student should take responsibility for identifying, developing, and fully utilizing knowledge for professional practice.
- *Scholarship and Research.* The practicum student engaged in study and research should be guided by the conventions of scholarly inquiry.
- *Confidentiality.* The practicum student should respect the privacy of information users and hold in confidence all information obtained in the course of professional service.
- *Respect, Fairness, and Courtesy.* The practicum student should treat colleagues with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith.
- *Commitments to the Agency or Institution.* The practicum student should adhere to the commitments made to the agency, institution, or organization.
- *Integrity of the Profession.* The practicum student should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession.
- ***Professional Dress.* The practicum student should dress appropriately for the standard of the library or institution where they are working—generally more formal than attending class.**

# Field Mentors

The field mentor is the on-site person in the agency or institution who, in cooperation with the faculty supervisor, directs the on-site practicum experience.

**Selection Criteria.** To be considered for appointment as a field mentor, a professional resume must be provided. The resume will describe the person's educational background and professional work experience. It should indicate the applicant's past and current involvement in professional activities including research, presentations, continuing education, and service in professional organizations.

Field mentors must have:

- Earned an MLS, MLIS or the equivalent
- Completed a minimum of two years in professional practice
- Expressed interest in teaching and or mentoring students
- Agreed to participate in the instruction, guidance, and supervision of practicum students
- Scheduled time to plan appropriate learning experiences, provide continuous feedback, evaluate work performance, and schedule conferences with practicum students and faculty supervisors

**Field Mentor Benefits.** Serving the profession as a field mentor can be a personally rewarding experience including opportunities to:

- Sharpen professional knowledge and skills through the field mentor process
- Develop teaching skills
- Strengthen ties with the University of Denver and the Library and Information Science program
- Contribute to the development of standards through the mentor process
- Contribute to the institution by mentoring students who bring new ideas, stimulation and/or projects to the work setting

**Field Mentor Responsibilities.** The following general responsibilities are expected of field mentors

- Interview the practicum student and approve the placement
- Assist the student in establishing appropriate goals and objectives
- Meet with the practicum coordinator and/or the faculty supervisor
- Coordinate and approve a work schedule for the student
- **Provide the student with instruction and continuous, specific, helpful feedback on work performance** (Most important! A rule of thumb is one hour for every ten hours of student work.)
- Report any problems with the student's performance to the faculty supervisor
- Plan and implement the education experience of the student in accordance with the goals and objectives mutually agreed upon
- Manage the practicum experience within the philosophy, function, and services of the agency, institution, or organization in accordance with its policies and procedures
- Complete and sign the evaluation form and the student timesheet at the conclusion of the practicum

## Faculty Supervisor<sup>2</sup>

The faculty supervisor ensures a quality learning opportunity for the student and successful collaboration with the agency or institution. As a knowledgeable professional in the field, the faculty supervisor understands the importance of the practicum and is charged with helping the student and field mentor identify appropriate experiences, which enable the student to develop as a successful professional.

### **Faculty Supervisor Responsibilities.**

- Reviewing and approving each student's practicum application, goals, and objectives
- Working with students after they register for the course
- Identifying and collecting student paperwork at the first and last classes
- Conducting an on-site visit<sup>3</sup> to each practicum site student once during the period
- Collecting and completing administrative documents
- Meeting with each student as needed throughout the practicum experience
- Reviewing each student's written report addressing the ways in which the objectives were met
- Evaluating agencies in terms of their appropriate effectiveness as field learning sites
- Evaluating the performance of field mentors and students

## Faculty Advisors

The role of the faculty advisor in the development of the practicum will vary from student to student. The faculty advisor can assist the student in making wise choices in designing the practicum experience.

### **Faculty Advisor Contributions.**

- Encourage the student to begin early planning to maximize the practicum experience
- Suggesting relevant sites and/or field mentors in the areas of interest
- Discuss appropriate goals and objectives to complement the student's degree plan

## Practicum Coordinator

The coordinator has the responsibility for seeing that the practicum experience runs smoothly by maintaining communication with students, field mentors, faculty supervisors, and university administrators.

### **Practicum Coordinator Responsibilities.**

- Overseeing the upkeep of a practicum database of sites and field mentors
- Maintaining contacts with potential field mentors
- Updating the practicum handbook
- Assisting students in choosing appropriate sites and field mentors
- Making initial contacts with field mentors for approvals and orientations
- Serving as the program liaison to the faculty supervisor or serving as the faculty supervisor
- Managing completed practicum files
- Troubleshooting difficult practicum situations
- Reporting practicum information to the director of the program

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<sup>2</sup> Currently the Faculty Supervisor and the Practicum Coordinator roles are filled by the same person.

<sup>3</sup>Telephone conference calls may substitute for site visits when sites are out of state, out of driving range, or circumstances prevent an on-site visit.

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**Practicum Application**

(To be submitted by the student to the Faculty Supervisor *before* beginning fieldwork)

*Student Information*

Student \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Quarter \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Hours \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning and ending date of Practicum Experience \_\_\_\_\_

*Site Information*

Library or Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

*Field Mentor Information*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

*Brief Description of Practicum Plan (Attach Goals and Objectives)*

Student _____	Date _____
Advisor _____	Date _____
Faculty Supervisor _____	Date _____

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**Practicum Time Sheet (Example)**

(To be completed by the student and submitted to the Faculty Supervisor at the end of the quarter.)

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Site \_\_\_\_\_

Field Mentor \_\_\_\_\_

	Weekly Hours	Cumulated Hours	Field Mentor Contact (Approximately 10% of time)
WEEK #1			
WEEK #2			
WEEK #3			
WEEK #4			
WEEK #5			
WEEK #6			
WEEK #7			
WEEK #8			
WEEK #9			
WEEK #10			

Totals

Comments:

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Field Mentor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Cover Sheet for Field Mentor Information

(Copy as a cover sheet with the field mentor resume attached)

Name of Field Mentor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Library or Organization \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

## *Education*

Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Institution \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

## *Experience*

- |  | <i>Yes</i> | <i>No</i> |
|--|------------|-----------|
| • Work in area of expertise                  |            |           |
| • Recognition of professional accomplishment |            |           |
| • Publication in the field                   |            |           |
| • Professional presentations                 |            |           |

*Supervision Experience* *Yes* *No*

*Do you want to be a field mentor for a DU LIS student?* *Yes* *No*  
*Why?*

*Comments:*

Practicum Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Field Mentor Experience (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

# University of Denver Library and Information Science Program

## Evaluation

(To be completed by the field mentor and submitted by the student to the faculty supervisor.)

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Practicum Site \_\_\_\_\_ Field Mentor \_\_\_\_\_

The field mentor completes the evaluation and discusses it with the student. Both student and field mentor must sign the evaluation. The form must be returned to the faculty supervisor for review. The faculty supervisor, in consultation with the field mentor, will assign the student's grade.

Rate each competency using a scale of 1 to 5

- 5 = Always exceeds expectations
- 4 = Frequently exceeds expectations
- 3 = Generally meets expectations
- 2 = Occasionally meets expectations
- 1 = Rarely meets expectations
- NA = Not applicable

### *Professionalism and Competency*

1. Accepts professional responsibility to learn	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. Completes assignments in a professional manner	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. Honors schedules, appointments, and deadlines	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4. Demonstrates professional knowledge and behavior	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5. Remains open to feedback and evaluation	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6. Organizes, plans, and completes work efficiently	1	2	3	4	5	NA
7. Recognizes personal strengths	1	2	3	4	5	NA
8. Recognizes areas for improvement	1	2	3	4	5	NA
9. Demonstrates initiative and resourcefulness	1	2	3	4	5	NA
10. Maintains ethical behavior	1	2	3	4	5	NA
11. Communicates clearly in writing and speaking	1	2	3	4	5	NA
12. Works cooperatively with other staff members	1	2	3	4	5	NA

*Comments on professionalism and competency*

*What were the student's particular strengths?*

*In what area(s) might the student improve?*

*General comments*

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Field Mentor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Practicum Checklist**

(To be completed by the faculty supervisor.)

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Field Mentor \_\_\_\_\_

Site Name and Address \_\_\_\_\_

*Before the Practicum Experience*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Student Application
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Field Mentor Approval
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Student Goals and Objectives
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Resume, CV, Portfolio site

*During the Practicum Experience*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Class meetings: #1, #2, #3
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Blackboard Class Discussion Postings: #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, #10
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Faculty Site/Telephone Visit with Field Mentor: Date \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Meeting with student (may be done at the site visit): Date \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Student Reflective Learning Journal (8-10 postings @ one per week/ 8 hours work)

*By the end of the Practicum Experience*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Student Report
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Student Time Sheet
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Student Site Evaluation
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Field Mentor Evaluation

Faculty Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_ Final Grade \_\_\_\_\_