MLA SIG Meeting Minutes- 9.17.10

Members Present
Paul Chasen, BCPL staff, UMD Student
Michael Fitzgerald, UDC
Barb Cheadle, UMD Student
Jan Danek, MD Historical Society, UMD Student
Amanda Youngbar, St. John’s College Library Staff, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Student
Amanda Bena, ACLS staff, Clarion Student
Tammy Martz, AACPL staff, Clarion student
Cynthia Dennis, BCPL staff, Clarion student
Dennis Nangle, UMUC staff, UMD student
Kate Sigler, UMD-Clii staff, UMD student
Joseph Thompson, W. MD Regional Library

Introductions
Joe provided a background of the SIG; it had been previously defunct for approximately ten years, and Joe recently came on board to revitalize the interest group. He will serve as the chair of the interest group until June 2011.

Drafting the SIG Mission
Attending members collaborated and drafted a tentative mission for the group on-the-fly, with Joe writing bulleted descriptions of what the attending members thought should be included in the mission statement. See below:

1. Networking – f2f and online
2. Connecting students with field study, internships
3. Mentoring
4. Programming
5. Encouraging people to go on for their master’s degrees
6. Encouraging diversity
7. Sharing awareness of jobs – what positions do and specific open positions (with mentoring)
8. Cooperating with other MLA units
9. Making SIG members better aware of MLA and its mission
10. Being a conduit for info about various ALA-Accredited university programs

Joe said that he would take these ideas and draft a more formal version to include on the SIG website.

Programming
After Paul touched on programming during the mission brainstorming session, Joe wanted to explore that topic further. He emphasized that he thought it would be a good idea to create a program in some capacity during the group’s inaugural year, to kick off on the right foot. The
The group agreed, but still spent a significant amount of time discussing the scheduling and nature of future SIG programs.

**Frequency**

Joe explained that, in addition to the annual conference in May, various associations and committees affiliated with MD libraries (such as MLA and ACRL MD) also host various programs throughout the year. The question was then raised, “how many programs do we see the SIG organizing this year?” Barb said that for the first year of the SIG, since we weren’t quite familiar with the schedule, that we should focus our energies on creating a strong program for MLA. The rest of the attending members agreed.

**Types of Programs**

Dennis shared with the group that it was difficult to conceptualize the amount of programs the SIG could coordinate in a year without knowing what kinds of programs we would be creating. So a conversation and brainstorming session began, with Joe taking down the various suggestions the group offered. See below:

1. How to select courses that will be useful to me
2. What are the different tracks available to MLS candidates?
3. How to switch from one career, one degree focus to another once you get your job.
4. An open discussion – panelists who had been through MLS programs, other professionals who are working, etc.
5. How to network effectively, how to get involved in MLA, how to get in to the bigger Maryland library community?
6. What can you expect of an interview process for various kinds of libraries?
7. Cover letter, resume building, how does applying for a library job differ from the general interview?
8. A day in the life kind of panel – what do particular types of librarians do? How has the MLS actually helped you?
9. Speed dating (not really dating): Use guiding questions? Would need to match people to others of like interest.
10. What can universities do to make the MLS more relevant?
11. Should we have a table/poster for SIG in the registration area?

The topics were diverse and ranged from panel discussions to a speed-dating formatted meet-and-greet among mentors and directors. However, the group decided on an overarching topic that not only covered several suggestions at once (specifically, suggestions 5-8), but also was geared toward the various demographics the SIG is aiming to attract. The program will focus on the topic of job searches and career building in Maryland libraries. The group hopes to include brief explanations of position descriptions, how to properly use library lingo when drafting a resume/cover letter, and effective interview strategies.

**Planning Committee**

Tentatively, the program planning committee consists of:
Joe emphasized the point that participation in any facet of these SIG-related endeavors is supporting the group; one shouldn’t feel that they have to actually speak at these programs to get involved.

**SIG Meeting Format and Scheduling**
Joe suggested this format going forward for rest of the year: one in-person, online, and College Park-located meeting each semester. The group unanimously agreed to this format. Since the 9.17 meeting counted as the in-person meeting for the Fall semester, the SIG will only meet online and once at College Park before the end of the semester. The online meeting for the Fall semester will likely take place in early November. Three more meetings will take place in the Spring, following the same format.

**Technology Needs for Online Meeting**
Joe recommends the SIG use Doodle to schedule forthcoming meetings, and those familiar with the scheduling tool agreed to that approach. Joe also explained that state libraries have virtual rooms available through Wimba, so the SIG will use that tool to conduct virtual meetings. For attendees, there is no software to install; however, Joe recommends a significant amount of prep time in Wimba (especially as a first-time user) to ensure that various browser plug-ins and other compatibility issues are resolved before the meeting is scheduled to begin.

**Mentoring Program**
Joe explained that there is actually a completely separate entity within MLA that was originally formed to provide mentoring opportunities to students-- the Student Interest Mentoring Group (SIMG). However, much like SIG, not much has been developed through SIMG in a number of years. Joe proposed that the SIG absorb SIMG, and the attending members all agreed. However, since the SIG is still trying to become established, a formal mentoring arm of the SIG will likely move very slowly this year, and perhaps get more aggressively developed next year.

**Web Page/Communication Action Items**

**MLA Site**
The SIG has a home page within MLA now! (Check it out here). Joe remarked that the MLA webmaster is very responsive if/when we need to make changes to the site. Since the group formalized the SIG’s mission earlier in the meeting, Joe will update the page with that information. He called for volunteers to be the liaison between the SIG and the MLA webmaster.
when changes need to be made, but no one present was prepared to serve in that capacity. Therefore, Joe continue to be the SIG webpage administrator.

**Facebook Site**
The SIG also has a “likeable” page on Facebook. Cynthia (along with Donna O.) volunteered to be the administrator for the site, which will allow her to update the site with various status updates, upcoming events, photos, etc. Joe remarked that multiple users can have admin rights, so Cynthia could share the responsibility with other SIG members.

**SIG Logo**
Joe pointed out that the current SIG logo is the words “Student Interest Group” written by hand on MLA stationery, and asked for volunteers to design a new logo for the group. Dennis volunteered, and will post drafts of the logo design to the listserv for feedback and eventual (hopefully!) approval.

**Open Discussion**
Joe opened the discussion by asking the attending members their motivation for attending the meeting and getting involved in the SIG. Amanda Y. mentioned general curiosity and many of the attending members agreed; they simply wanted to know what the SIG was all about and how they could get involved. Amanda B. also explained that, as an online student, she looked to the SIG as a place for her to connect with individuals who know what she’s dealing with as an MLS student.

Jan mentioned that she viewed the SIG as a kind of “lab” to prepare her for future participation in associations, specifically MLA. It’s a bit intimidating to barrel into committee/interest group/programming projects as a student without really knowing what to expect. Joe admitted that Jan’s observation was one of his “ulterior motives” for re-establishing the SIG, and was excited to see that goal echoed in many attending members.

Dennis said that he hoped that the SIG could repair a key flaw in many MLS programs in the area: a distinct lack of professional context and real-life experience integrated into the coursework. Dennis hoped that the SIG could possibly connect students with Maryland libraries to create internships. Many of the attending members from online institutions reverberated this thought.