

Editorial

Library school closures

Despite the alarming number of library school closures in the United States during recent years, news that yet another school is under threat has been greeted with special shock. The University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) has announced its intention to disestablish the school on 1 July 1994 and to discontinue both its master's and doctoral programs. The last class of students would be admitted in Fall 1993. The Graduate School of Library and Information Science (G.S.L.I.S.) is one of four professional schools at UCLA which have been targeted for closure.

The school at UCLA is internationally renowned and widely accepted as being among the top handful of its kind in the United States. Its faculty members are productive and influential, and both its Master's and Ph.D. programs strong. So what is the problem? The parlous State of California's finances are too well-known to require elaboration here. This financial crisis in turn is having a seriously adverse effect on the state educational system, including the tertiary university level. The closure of the four professional schools at UCLA is intended to save \$8 million, of which the G.S.L.I.S. closure will contribute thirty-five percent.

Financial crisis compels universities to re-examine their goals and objectives: too often the professional schools are then seen as lying on the academic periphery, making them prime targets for closure. Library schools can do little about their professional status. Unfortunately, such schools are also too frequently marginalized in other respects. They may be physically isolated on the campus, and are often administratively isolated as individual faculties rather than being part of a bigger discipline-based faculty. Their staff (and students) may have little teaching, research or administrative contact with the remainder of the university. At a time of retrenchment such academic units are particularly prone to disaster.

At UCLA the G.S.L.I.S. is now mustering its forces inside and outside the university to fight for its survival. Whether it can resist successfully this grave threat to its continuance still remains to be seen. It should be wished well by all in the library and information professions. One more school closure, and especially a school such as UCLA, would be bad news for all of us.

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Editor