Training, Integration, and Identity: A Roundtable Discussion of Undergraduate and Professional Master's Programs in iSchools

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Professional students, whether undergraduates or masters' students, represent a significant portion of the iSchool community. How do iSchools effectively educate those students while continuing to develop successful research programs? This roundtable discussion will focus on how iSchools educate their professional students and engage them in the research aspect of their programs. Innovative approaches to training and integration will be the central theme of this discussion. In an iSchool – where students train for professions including librarianship, information policy, human-centered computing, preservation and researchers explore such topics as incentive-centered design, forensic informatics, computational linguistics, and digital libraries have both competing and complimentary goals – the potentials for collaboration, innovation, misunderstanding, and disharmony are all high.

The annual iConference provides a unique opportunity for us, as a community, to discuss the roles our professional students have in shaping our identity and our practices. The proposed roundtable will invite participants to discuss questions such as:
- What should the role of research in training information professionals be?
- How can we best engage professional students in our research?
- How do iSchools address the unique curricular challenges we face in preparing students for a very wide variety of careers?
- What do we want an Information degree to signal in the marketplace?
- What are some successes in which research and professional training have benefited one another?

Participants will share innovative approaches to professional education, best practices in engaging professional students in research programs, and remaining challenges. We intend roundtable participation to represent the diversity of iSchools' current programs. Confirmed participants include:
- Dr. Eileen G. Abels, Master's Program Director, Associate Professor, College of Information Science & Technology, Drexel University
- Dr. Judith S. Olson, Richard W. Pew Collegiate Professor of Human Computer Interaction and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, School of Information, University of Michigan

Each speaker will present introductory remarks highlighting some of the achievements and challenges they face in their home programs, after which discussion will include questions and input from the attendees. This will be an interactive forum proposing ideas for new approaches to education and integration of professional students. We encourage participants to discuss ideas that work (and those that don't!) in their schools. We will create and publicize a wiki space for pre- and post-conference participation as well.