Course:
IST 601 The Information Environment Call #3755
Day and Time: Tuesday/Thursday 4:15-7:45

Instructor:
Name Carol Anne Germain
Title Information Literacy Librarian
Office Location LI 141A
Phone; e-mail 442-3590 cgermain@albany.edu
Office Hours Tuesdays and Thursday 12-1; Wednesdays 3-5; Reference Hours – Wednesdays 5-8 (Uptown; AND by appointment (don’t be shy)

Description:
IST 601 provides a theoretical background for students entering the information/library science professions. Through guest speakers, field trips, a variety of readings, class discussion, lectures, and writing assignments, students gain knowledge of the critical themes in the field, such as information seeking, users, environments, policies, and ethics.

Prerequisites: None. This is the introductory course for the masters program.

Course Objectives and Competencies Expected:
Upon completion of this course, students should be fluent and able to discuss:

- The historical, social and economic context of formal and informal information activities, technologies and services;
- The different types of formal settings—political, economic, institutional, educational, technological—within which information is processed;
- The ways in which information is created, organized and distributed, and how it is sought by users;
- The critical issues within the information profession, such as ownership, privacy, free access, cost, censorship—and the ethical and social conflicts involved.

Student Responsibilities:
Each student is expected to contribute to an environment conducive to the learning of all students. This contribution includes, but is not limited to:

- Respecting the opinion of others
- Being prepared to participate actively
- Taking responsibility for your learning and progress in the course
- Seeking help from the instructor as needed
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC/Field Trip (FT)</th>
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<tr>
<td>6/26</td>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>Husted 204</td>
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<td>6/28</td>
<td>2 Professional Associations &amp; Involvement Research Process</td>
<td>Husted 204</td>
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<td>7/3</td>
<td>3 Grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/5</td>
<td>4 Marketing</td>
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| 7/10 | 5 Albany Molecular Research FT* Internet | 26 Corporate Circle  
albany, NY 12212  
http://www.amriglobal.com/directions/ |
| 7/12 | 6 New York State Library FT | 222 Madison Avenue |
| 7/17 | 7 Information Ethics  | Husted 204 |
| 7/19 | 8 University at Albany Special Collections FT | 1400 Washington Avenue, uptown campus Top floor – Science Library |
| 7/24 | 9 Albany Public Library FT Delaware Branch | 331 Delaware Avenue |
| 7/26 | 10 NYS Library Systems FT* Capital District Library Council Upper Hudson Library System | 28 Essex Street  
albany, New York 12206  
http://www.cdlic.org/About_CDLC/directions.shtml |
| 7/31 | 11 Albany Medical College, Schaffer Library | 47 New Scotland Avenue  
Library Lobby |
| 8/2  | 12 Class Presentations | Husted 204 |
Guest Speakers
Throughout the semester there will be many guest speakers and field trips. These professionals are coming on their own time and sharing their experiences with you. Please be respectful. During sessions which include guests, students should:

- listen attentively to guests. They should address guest speakers by their appropriate titles, and respond when asked for questions and opinions;
- act and behave in the class as they would at an interview for a potential job position with that guest speaker;
- be prepared for the guest speaker, this includes reading assigned materials and drafting appropriate questions/comments;
- refrain from eating and drinking.

Course Requirements and Grading

Course materials are available through Blackboard, you can access this through your MyUAlbany account. If you have problems with access or navigation please let me know.

Email: Each student is expected to have an email account for this class. This is the best method of communication with the instructor concerning assignments, questions, and readings.

*When sending email please include IST601 and your last name in the subject header (ex: IST601 Germain).

SIST-L it is recommended that each student subscribe to the Department of Information Studies listserv
http://www.albany.edu/cci/informationstudies/ist_listservs.shtml

Grading

45% Assignments (see below)
30% Final Project
25% Presentation (Poster or computer-based)

Attendance : Students are expected to attend all 12 sessions of this course. You will be allowed one “free” absence (life happens) but for each additional absence one grade level (includes minuses and pluses) will be taken from the final grade.

Plagiarism – PLEASE DON’T
Assignments
Assignment A (100 points) due July 5th
Select one of the following 4 options for assignment A

I. Letter To The Editor
The library budget in your community (school, public, academic or special) is about to be cut significantly. As a citizen, prepare a single page Letter To The Editor, 150 words or less, using one or two appropriate quotes and/or statistics. Both the contents and presentation should be creative and unique.

II. Listserv
Subscribe to a professional listserv in library or information science. Review the listserv's archives and monitor a particular discussion that lasted for 10 or more postings. Write up a one page brief describing the list and the major threads of the discussion. Also, write up an email response that you would contribute to the conversation.

III. Timeline
Create a timeline of events relating to libraries/books; business/technology; libraries/technology, etc. covering appropriate times (i.e., ancient to present), with a minimum of 30 dates – please describe the event in a short paragraph. You may use whatever format you like: i.e., web page, Word document, Excel, PowerPoint.

IV. Information/Library Profession
Write a paper highlighting why you chose this degree program; the responses you got from friends/family regarding this choice; and what your dream job in this profession will be and how you plan on getting there!

Assignment B (200 points) due July 12th
Select one of the following 2 options for assignment B.

I. Select an article from any peer reviewed journal in information or library science. Using the instructions, from the web page Reviewing a Manuscript for Publication, by Allen S. Lee (at http://www.people.vcu.edu/~aslee/referee.htm), critique the article you chose. With your submission include a copy of the article and the manuscript requirements of the publication.

II. Select an information/library science profession that you are interested in pursuing, and do research on key employment trends. For the first part of this assignment, you should examine at least 20 recent detailed job postings related to your profession, and then write up a summary of trends, such as: salaries; future prospects for employment and advancement, minimum qualifications, preferred skills and abilities, etc. You also should do additional research using information/library science literature and talking with professionals. You should also explore what associations and listservs,
professionals in this specialization belong to.

The second half of this assignment is for you to reflect on the list of desired and required qualifications for potential candidates and relate these to your own abilities. You should explore your strengths, and possible weaknesses. You should then set specific long and short term learning objectives. You should specify which goals you hope to achieve through coursework, learn on the job or how you hope to meet them.

**Assignment C (150 points) due July 26th**

Select one of the following 4 options for assignment C

I. Marketing Project
   Choose an information/library product (e.g. software package) or service (e.g. new book titles) that you believe should be promoted. In a 4 page proposal outline:
   - The product or service with in-depth description
   - Benefits of the resource/service
   - Current marketing strategies (if any)
   - Audience and target audience(s)
   - Promotional needs (e.g. advertising space, promotional materials, etc.)
   - Budget
   - Evaluation criteria for marketing effort
   REMEMBER: Be Creative!!!

II. Grant Proposal
   Select a grant, scholarship or award application in information or library science (it’s best to pick something that fits your desires, for example GSO, ALA scholarships, etc. so you have the opportunity to use it!) Follow the required guidelines and complete the application. If the specs require reference letters, simply provide a list of references, you do not need to get letters. Please include a copy of the guidelines with your proposal. Note: Only submit **one copy** of the proposal, even if the guidelines call for multiple copies.

III. Information Technology
   - Access the library catalog (Minerva) and identify and describe briefly three books on UNIX, Linux, or the Open Source initiative.
   - Use Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, identify and describe briefly three major professional journals devoted to UNIX, Linux, or the Open Source.
   - Access Associations Unlimited and identify and describe briefly three major professional societies devoted to systems administration, UNIX/Linux servers, or the Open Source movement. In your description, note the cost of dues, conference opportunities and other available benefits.
Final Project (300 points) Due August 2nd
Select one of the following two options for your final project.

A. Field Project
This assignment is designed to provide you with an opportunity to investigate a selected information environment in some detail. You are free to choose the environment that you would like to study, with a few reservations. You may not study a place where you work or have worked—you will learn more if you choose an environment that you do not know. You will probably find it helpful if the environment is conveniently situated for home or work access, but make sure that it is large enough to provide sufficient information for your study. Consider this project a way to “scope out” a possible internship or job interest while fulfilling the requirements for this course.

1. Make an initial (anonymous if possible) visit to the environment to determine whether it will be suitable for your purposes and to get a feel for the atmosphere.
2. Collect copies of materials they have on display. You might append these to your final paper.
3. Introduce yourself as a MSIS/CAS student, explain the project, and ask if you can make an appointment to talk to a senior member of the professional staff. (See introductory letter.)
4. Read all the materials you have collected, and anything else you can find about your environment before the interview so that you will sound informed and interested.
5. Come prepared with a list of topics you wish to discuss, and questions that you wish to ask. Try to cover all the information that you need at this one meeting so that you will not need to go back. Do get a telephone number or email address, and permission to contact your interview person if you do find that you need more details.
6. You might ask permission to study the environment in more detail—be a fly on the wall—if it is not a truly public space. In an open environment like a public or academic library you can just go back to make more observations.

The Paper
The paper should run between 7 and 10 type written pages (maximum) double-spaced, single-sided. Appendices are not included in the page limit, BUT they should all be referred to in the text. For your report you will need to cover the following topics:

- **Background**
  What is the environment that you are studying? What population does it serve? What are the information needs of these people? Does the institution you are studying have any data on who does (and does not) use its services? Where is it located? What is its external environment?

- **History**
  Give at least a paragraph on the history of the organization. How long has it been around? Has its mission changed over time? Its location? Look for a few pertinent facts. There is a lot of difference between a 150-year-old library and a 3-year-old computer software company.

- **Management**
  Is there a mandated management body? Who is on it and what is the role of the head manager? What are the responsibilities of this group, and how well are they
qualified to fulfill them? Is there an official policy document on management?

• **Funding**
  If this is a public sector organization, what is its budget and from where does funding come? How has funding changed over the last years? Is the budget sufficient to meet the organization’s needs? If this is a private sector organization you will be able to look up annual reports although some businesses are hesitant to give you information on market share. Do the best you can with getting financial information.

• **Collections**
  Size and makeup of the information that is being organized and used. Different types of materials collected (any recent changes or developments?) Do they have special collections? If so, what are they?

• **Staffing**
  Numbers of professional and nonprofessional staff. How their roles differ. Where they fit in the management structure. Are these sufficient to provide efficient service? Has there been much staff turnover in recent years (and what might be the reasons)? Again, if you’re working with a private sector organization, this information might be hard to obtain. Do the best you can based upon the interview and any observations you make.

• **Technology**
  How involved is the organization in using technology to do its business? What areas are automated and how? How has the introduction of technology changed staff roles? Are there new positions or have the old staff learned the job?

• **Services**
  What new services has the organization introduced in the last few years (if any)? Were these in response to technological developments, user requests, or perceived need? Are they especially related to particular user groups or aimed at the general population?

**General Impressions**
What were the general issues that surfaced during your fieldwork? Were there surprises, interesting facts, procedures that you would recommend to others?

**Consultant’s Suggestions for Improvement**
Finish your paper by serving the role of a consultant hired to make improvements in the environment you have studied. What needs to be changed and how? What works really well and should not be changed? This is a truly subjective part of the paper. You’ll have to spend more time thinking than writing. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of this organization in serving its customers?

There is no bibliography required for this paper unless you have looked up additional materials on the environment, or used someone else’s ideas in order to make a point or compare a similar situation. Label appendices (A, B, C) in the order that you discuss them in your paper. Feel free to combine topics above or rearrange them as seems appropriate for your environment.
**B. Research Study**

Select an information/library science topic of your choice that is extremely exciting and important to you, and develop a comprehensive annotated bibliography spanning 2004 to present (seminal work in the subject area may be older); only use research studies. Research studies mean they must have collected data and report on the data found. These do not include “how to” or editorial compositions.

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, chapters, articles, WebPages, and documents reflecting research studies. Each complete citation is followed by a descriptive /evaluative paragraph (about 150-200 words). Your final annotated bibliography should contain approximately 15-25 sources.

Here are the steps you should follow to successfully complete this assignment:

- Select a bibliographical style that you will use. Most likely this will be APA or Chicago, but whatever style you choose be consistent.
- Choose a narrow information/library topic of your choice that is of extreme importance to you personally and/or professionally. You may run the topic by me for approval if you are unsure if it is narrow enough.
- Identify every research study citation you can find on the topic. You will need to use the research databases the Libraries’ subscribe to for a comprehensive search.
- Determine if the topic needs to be narrowed down or broadened. If you are finding hundreds of citations on the topic, consider narrowing it down. If you find less than 15, it’s too narrow.
- Examine and review the actual research items found. To do this you must read the whole empirical study.
- Write a concise annotation that summarizes the major points and/or findings for each citation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the key points, relevance, accuracy, methodology, and quality of the source cited. Your annotations should be descriptive and critical, and make the reader aware of the author's perspective, articulation, appropriateness of expression, and authority.
- Include one sentence on the value of each item. Include all citations for items you were unable to physically or virtually obtain with a notation stating such.

In addition to the annotated bibliography, write a 1 page essay which summarizes your findings. Note any gaps in the literature; similar research strategies across the resources; suggestions for future research, etc.

**Presentation (Poster or computer-based)(250 points)**

Over the six weeks of the course, you will learn about many information environments and professions. In your interactions with information professionals you will discover that many of these individuals will comment on what they didn’t learn in graduate school. This is your opportunity to explore these professional voids and learn more about them now. Pick one of these topics and do some research to acquire this
knowledge. In your presentation you will share what you have learned with your “colleagues.” Basically, your presentation will include:

- What you wanted to learn
- How you learned more about it
- Key points of what you leaned (main part of presentation)
- Additional venues to learn more

You may present this information in a poster session or via a computer-based presentation. Poster sessions are table-top displays using a set of poster boards. Computer-based presentations should be scroll through Power Point, web, or other application. All of these presentations will be displayed during our last class session (August 2) and since they are stand-alone, the class can browse the presentations. These presentations may include printed materials, graphics, and additional handouts (highly recommended).

You may work on this project by yourself or in groups of two. Very often a group project allows for more discussions, more creative thinking, and a better final product on the presentation.

**Additional information on creating poster sessions can be found at:**
