WERE THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM QUESTIONS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CONTENT INCLUDED IN THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES UNDERTAKEN DURING YOUR MASTER’S PROGRAM (NOT NECESSARILY IN ANY SPECIFIC CLASS)?

Yes

One question, the ethics question, was representative of the content. The other two I answered were briefly covered in several classes but were core issues in the library world. Because of this I had read articles related to the issues of metadata and copyright.

Yes

I can’t say that they were. I passed comps because I read dozens of library blogs and a few years worth of American Libraries and Library Journal. If I had relied on my notes and textbooks for this particular batch of questions I would not have passed. I think this is highly dependent on which instructor a student has for each core class. Different instructors are teaching the core classes very differently, so it’s not necessarily a level playing field.

I feel that most of the questions were covered although I didn’t remember learning much about Library 2.0. Copyright issues for digital materials could also be covered more in our classes. Otherwise, yes, I believe the questions were pretty representative of my learning experiences.

The management/research methods question on Library 2.0 was the only question that seemed directly related to course work. I was able to pull in information from the textbook as well as articles that I had recently read. The metadata question came a little bit from organization of information but without outside reading and the cataloging class I would not have known how to answer this question. Additionally, the ethics question may have come a little bit from the last week of the majority of classes but I was only able to answer this primarily from material gathered off the ALA website. Though I had prepared for copyright issues which I learned primarily about in the collection development class, I did not have any coursework on digital licensing. I would have had to rely on what little outside reading and work experience I had in the area to answer this question. This was the reason I chose not to answer this question even though I had spent quite a bit of time learning about copyright.

The professional development question appeared to come generally from the masters program but only in the sense that the principles at issue are ingrained in us as students on how to stay relevant and up to date. I would say the questions kind of come from course work but without outside readings in addition to this I would have been unable to answer 3 of the 5 questions asked.

Yes, the questions were representative of the content that I was exposed to while completing my master’s program.

I have been in the program since 2005 so the four core classes may have changed since I began. I tried to watch e-reserves offered for those classes for the last year or two. I don’t remember any of the subject matter of the comps questions being “thoroughly” taught in any classes. We had a little bit about copyright and a little bit of reading to do on Library 2.0 in the current class I am taking. I am not sure that we have done anything with that reading other than it being on a list.
I have never heard professional development discussed in any class and wrote only from experience as a teacher and as the wife of a professional person. I don’t remember anyone ever discussing the ALA core values or anything about metadata. (maybe the definition, that’s all)
I happened to study the information on the ALA website and as much as I could gather up about censorship, intellectual freedom, information literacy (have never had it in class—maybe just a little)
I bought a basic first MLIS course book down at the University of Southern Mississippi bookstore that helped me organize my thoughts and to review. It had good information on censorship, intellectual freedom, information literacy, copyright, and other basics that I thought I needed to review or read. That helped me a lot. It is an excellent book.
I was surprised that metadata and Library 2.0 were asked. I expected topics that were not quite so new. I saw a book offered through Neal Schuman on the front cover of its most recent catalog. I checked out a brand new book on Library 2.0 from my local library but ran out of time before reading it. In trying to decide what to study, I put some of the more basic areas before it. There was just so much that needed to be reviewed. I just really didn’t expect a question on something that seemed so new to me.

With one exception, the questions had been addressed at least once, if not continually, during the program. In my opinion, though, each of the instructors emphasizes particular points in their courses. The questions were not necessarily representative of the emphasis.

**Was the wording of each of the exam questions easy for you to understand?**

Yes

Yes, they were.

Yes

The wording was not difficult. The questions were a bit broad so I was afraid that my answer would not be the specific response the readers were looking for.

Yes, I had no problem understanding the wording of the questions.

I would say that after having examined a number of past exam questions I became used to how questions were asked. For example, the Library 2.0 question could have been answered only about Library 2.0; however, I knew from reading old questions that this was really a management/research methods question. This allowed me to look at how to better answer a question about implementation and not Library 2.0. I would say the questions are not easy to understand, but you must have the examples in order to prepare for how to correctly read them and answer them. For example, in the Library 2.0 question, it asked for information on internal and external groups one would involve in implementation. In order to be sure I answered the question, I knew that I wanted to label groups as internal and external using those exact words. So I think the questions and how to answer them takes some getting used to.

Yes. The questions were easily understood.

The wording was easy to understand.

Yes, the wording of each of the exam questions was easy for me to understand.

**Did you attend a comprehensive orientation session?** Yes = 6; No = 3

If your answer is yes, did the session appropriately represent the faculty expectations of student responses on the comprehensive exam questions?
Yes

The session did not really help me as much as talking to other librarians that had already passed the exam.

Yes

No, I couldn’t get a babysitter for that evening. I did go to 2 OLISSA study sessions.

Yes I did attend two study sessions held by OLISSA. I believe that the study sessions appropriately represented the faculty expectations for the comps questions. They helped me to pull out topics that are commonly found on comps such as copyright and metadata.

I attended an orientation session my first semester in the program, but I had not attended one since.

Yes. However, I think that it should be expressed to each student when they enter the program that it is important to weigh each option before choosing an end of program assessment.

No, live too far away.

I did attend a comprehensive orientation session, and I believe that the session appropriately represented faculty expectations of student responses.

Do you have suggestions that could help SLIS improve the comprehensive exam process for students?

It would have been helpful to have 3-5 examples of passing answers to previous comps questions.

No, because every student approaches learning and studying differently. The comp exam prep work made me cover many key issues on my own which means I will retain it for future job experience. The program as a whole helped me learn to research and ask questions. The information was not spoon fed to us in class, which it should not be in a master’s level program. The program should give us a base to build on so when we are in the work world we know how to reason.

No

Personally, I liked that this batch of questions dealt with practical applications in the work place. However, many of the practical applications are not addressed in the coursework and the focus is much more on the theoretical. Many students are not yet working in a library setting at the time of comps so the test seems biased against them. Perhaps the program should place a greater focus on current events and challenges in the day to day life of librarians.

I know that it’s been tried before, and was abused, but it would be less stressful for students to receive a list of possible questions that they can focus on before taking Comps. I would also recommend maybe having a reserved time in the computer lab a week before the test to show students how things are going to be (a step by step run through) when they actually take the test. This may take some of the nervousness out of the testing day. I would also maybe start the test at 9:30 am instead of 8:30.

No

Have the questions only come from core classes, but have more structured and consistent syllabi for these classes. The pressure to study just everything in librarianship or that may have been covered in these classes or the section of the class offered since one took the class is crazy. Even law schools construct study guides throughout their careers that enable students to have a base from which to study. There is not as structured a way to begin encountering all the information again. This is the most stressful part of the exam.
Additionally, I would encourage you to keep encouraging OLISSA to offer large and small comps study group sections. The time spent bouncing ideas off of each other was so beneficial to me and I think to the fellow attendees that I did not regret one iota of time spent in there.

Giving the students more opportunities to formally meet and analyze the content that could be presented in the comps questions would be helpful.

I really think that requiring a good comprehensive book (like the one I bought) and some boundaries on the questions would help students be more successful. I understand that it is important for everyone to be current when they graduate, but we are all taking different courses.

One thing that I have realized about this field is that it is very broad. I have a master’s in another field and it is more specific to one area. It was much easier to prepare for comps for that master’s than for the MLIS.

I also would warn students that they may be typing on Word 2007. I had never typed on it and spent the first 30-45 minutes trying to figure out how to set up my paper. I never did but was thankfully advised by Dr. Martens to just start typing and just be concerned about the content. I was nervous before it started but really felt like I was sunk when I struggled with the typing. I don’t have 2007 at home or even on any of the computers at my school. I don’t think any in our school district are 2007. I know that a university is expected to be more current but I would have found a way to be prepared for it if I had been forewarned. (Or was I and I overlooked it?)

Thank you for asking students for their opinions on this exam!

As a side note to this question, I would like to add a bit of information. With hindsight, I would have chosen a different method for my end of program assessment. For me, the portfolio option would have been more valuable.

At the time I entered the program, the portfolio was somewhat downplayed and discouraged. I wonder if this is still the case and if other students might benefit from a reassessment of the treatment of this option. I read recently that universities are taking different approaches to the comprehensive exam, including take home examinations. In my professional work, I would research and prepare any response that was so critical to my success. I would suggest that alternatives, like a take home exam, could both meet the purpose and philosophy of the comprehensive exam and more accurately reflect a student's likely professional practice.