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)?

I felt that there was no variety in the questions. There were basically 2 questions that talked about management and 2 questions that discussed digital resources, information literacy and user behavior. The fifth question about “grey literature” was not even mentioned in any of my classes – core or otherwise.

The two questions that dealt with management and planning went along very well with the education I received in this program. The questions that dealt with digital information and resources were familiar to me and had been discussed in many of my classes. There was a question that referenced grey literature, which is a term that I was unfamiliar with and had not heard about in any of my classes.

Yes, for the most part. We covered everything in the comps questions in at least one of my classes (or the program in general) except for the question about “grey literature.” I recognized the term vaguely, but I would have remembered if we had covered it in any detail. I felt like the questions, except for that one, could have been answered with concepts that I learned in multiple classes, not just one specific class.

Somewhat. I ended up taking more KM cross-listed courses than traditional library fare (such as Young Adult Lit and Cataloguing), so a couple of the questions were completely unfamiliar to me. But I was able to study some of the current literature which helped immensely in answering the questions.

I felt like it had been a very long time between my management class and comps. I did not feel comfortable answering a management-based question. If there is always going to be a management question on the comps, there should be a stronger thread of management topics, issues, etc. in all classes, not just that one core management class. Here’s the big one: I answered the comps question about disaster planning having learned zero, nothing, nada about that in library school. I answered it based on materials I’d read about having a disaster plan for an archive collection and on information I learned in some FEMA training (about having disaster plans in municipalities so you can get federal disaster funds.) I’m not even sure what class we should have talked about that in. If we did talk about it, it was completely in passing or did not stick in any significant way. Again, this is a topic that should have a thread throughout classes – not just be mentioned in one.

Pretty much. Perhaps more emphasis on management in the exam questions than in the classes overall.

I felt that the first four questions were content that was included. The question about grey literature was something that I had never heard of or read about while studying current events.

No, I do not believe the exam questions were representative of the content I experienced in the courses taken for the Master of Library and Information Studies.

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

Wording was fine.

Yes
The wording seemed to be trying to make the questions more difficult than they needed to be. However, compared to some of the past Comps questions I have read, these were not too difficult to read and understand.

I felt that the questions were easily understood.

Yes.

There was one question of the five that required rereading several times prior to answering. Later discussions with fellow students who either passed the question or orally defended the same question indicated responses varied on content.

Yes, for the most part. I felt that the digitization question in particular was extremely well written. It told the student what parts of the issue to address while still allowing the student to add his or her own spin and unique thoughts to each of the sections. I think it would have been possible for some people to mistake the disaster question as asking about disasters in libraries in general instead of the narrower subject of implementing policy to deal with disasters, but I was able to identify what it was really asking.

Yes, as best I can remember.

Did you attend a comprehensive orientation session? Yes =5; No = 3
If your answer is yes, did the session appropriately represent the faculty expectations of student responses on the comprehensive exam questions?

It was never clear what exactly was wanted on the test. Some professors would say that we should begin studying for Comps 6 months before and some would say 1 or 2. Each professor that we talked to seemed to have a different idea of what they wanted and how they were going to read the questions. One of the most difficult parts about studying for Comps was that we were working so hard to memorize information for expectations that we were unsure of. It was difficult to know when we had truly learned what we needed to know from each subject. It was also difficult to know how to write the answers. Professors like different styles of writing and different ways for essays to focus on information, some are also incredibly particular about how the document is set up, and the information given to us before did not include much information about these things.

The session addressed the faculty expectations very well. “Read the question!” 😊

I only remember the student who passed talking about what she did to prepare. I got more information from professors teaching the classes I was enrolled in, then the info session.

I think I went to one (something…maybe not this) 2.5 years ago when I started the program. It was about how to choose between portfolio and comps. Other than that, I did not attend anything. I did read all of the stuff that was mailed out or available on the SLIS site about it. I wasn’t coming to campus because my classes were online and I live a great distance from Norman. As more classes are online, maybe this kind of meeting could also either be made available as a video online or could be conducted in Adobe Connect or something.

I don't really remember since I went to the orientation session last spring and managed to misplace my notes from it.

No. I was never able to get to one of the sessions. It would be nice if a synopsis of the sessions was provided online somewhere for people who can’t get to one to see what was covered.

Do you have suggestions that could help SLIS improve the comprehensive exam process for students?
I would have liked to see some essays that were considered passing in previous years, and the professors’ comments. The essays could still be anonymous, but seeing the structure of the essay would be helpful.

It might not be a bad idea to recommend attending the comprehensive orientation session both in the very first semester of taking classes, so as to have a good basis for deciding whether to go with comps, thesis, or portfolio, and then again in the next-to-last and/or last semester as a reminder of what the exam expectations are. It might be nice to get some kind of feedback on the exams, or at least to get a copy of one's answers once all the results are in for that semester. I will say I was very impressed by how rapidly the exams were marked and the results made available!

**There is so much literature out there, it would be helpful to have some suggestions on what journals and blogs would be most useful in preparing for the exams.**

The Comps Exam does not seem to represent what and how we are learning in this program. For the most part the program is set up as a professional degree offering applicable tools. And what we are being taught is how to use resources, how to search for information and how to deliver information to those who need it. Having a test that requires more of a memorization component and a spewing-information-as-quickly-as-possible component does not really give students a productive way to represent what and how they have learned. Perhaps a take home written test that allows for research would be a better way for students to represent their education. Many other library programs have this kind of exit exam and the students I have talked with who attended these programs are pleased with it.

The comprehensive exam should be eliminated because evaluating is too subjective, and students may not have been taught course material in an equivalent manner.

Make sure the advisors are more helpful in assisting the student with signing up for comps. My advisor never mentioned comps to me, and with only an e-mail to make me aware of the early due date for the application to take comps in the spring (which I erroneously deleted without reading), it came pretty close to the deadline before I was aware of the need to sign up so early. My advisor also went on sabbatical one semester while I was in the program without transferring me to another advisor, and that would have been the semester where I had the most time to prepare for comps.

I think that a take-home comprehensive exam would be nice, so that the student would have ample time to research the question since as a Librarian we are supposed to research. Or I think that if you keep it in the same format, it would be a good idea to let the students know what the questions are two weeks before the exam so that they could focus their research and study on specifics, instead of generalities.

As the SLIS program has more and more online classes, commuter students, and students from geographically diverse areas, the TIMING of the test might need to be changed. I had to get up at 5 am to get ready and to drive a long distance to Norman to test in the morning. Just something to think about. I did always appreciate when professors said things like “this is great fodder for a comps question” when we were learning about things in class. It helped direct my thinking about the test over several years. Also, having access to the old questions is really helpful, so thanks!