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)?

_Sometimes. Most questions were covered in the content area, but some were not. A question about library 2.0 was never covered in content area, and had I not stayed abreast of the professional literature, I would have failed that question._

Yes

Yes

not really

_Yes. However, the main objectives in the questions were rooted in LIS 5033. Other courses augmented those objectives with further details. At one point my study group was questioning if it would be wiser to move up the comprehensive examination because it had been close to 2 years since some of us had taken LIS 5033._

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

_Yes._

Yes

Yes

fairly easy to comprehend

_The wording was easier than expected. I had prepared for trickier questions. Trickier questions as in the focus the of the question might be disguised by secondary questions._

Did you attend a comprehensive orientation session?
Yes

Yes

No

Yes

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

No, I originally was developing the portfolio, but when Dr. Latrobe suggested that I change to the comp exam, there were no sessions to attend.

Yes

Yes. The session was very helpful to me.

Yes. The faculty expectations were presented as well as possible. It is difficult without specific examples to draw from for a clear statement of expectations. I left the orientation feeling slightly confused due to perceived vagueness of the expectations, but how can you make something so subjective clear other than to provide a rubric for assessing responses to the exam.

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

I found the OU SLIS blog and joining a study group very helpful.

I would also like to add that I believe the cohorts were treated unfairly by making their portfolios and comp exam evaluations tougher than those students not on fellowship. This was proven when Dr. Martens told one portfolio student that he/she had passed the first time it was presented but the following requests to change the portfolio were because “we were just playing with you.” No cohort passed the first time as most of the non cohort students did.

Secondly, I believe I was screwed on my defense of my first comp exam. During a very nervous time defending, the set up was less than ideal. It was a video conference, I could only see one professor, and in the evaluation I was told that I “knew the buzz words”, but not the depth of information needed.

Finally, the 2-hour directed study to prepare me for the exam was a farce. The instructor gave me little direction, and I am not sure that the articles and chapters written about were even fully evaluated. Every time I sent one in, the reply was, you’re doing just fine.

Yes. The first one would be to ask open-ended questions on this form to avoid smart-alecks like me who might be tempted not to elaborate just to make a point.

As for comps, I find it interesting that throughout the program it was stressed that librarians should take various learning styles and preferences into account, yet comps is only offered at one time of day: morning. Given that we are “trained” to be night-owls (or at least late-afternoon-owls) due to the combination of later class times and evening-heavy online participation, having to suddenly perform earlier in the day was a bit odd. Also, for those of us who have to travel to the test-taking site, the morning test time means that we have to either spend the night in a
hotel (unfamiliar bed, noises, breakfast, etc.) or arise very, very early in order to travel that day—both of which put us at a disadvantage during the test.

More information on what to expect in case of needing to defend would also be nice (perhaps at the orientation session) as it is not a process that gets talked about much and so there is less collective information floating around. Comps are nerve-wracking because there is so much riding on them; a defense is worse because not only is there the pressure to pass, but there is the added disadvantage of the unknown. And why are they blind? If I’m giving an instruction session, I have some idea of at least the demographics of the students in the class, if not more. If I’m presenting at a professional conference, I would tailor my comments to the audience: SIGALO is not NASIG, despite the commonality of being serials-focused. In the same way, I would develop different arguments and examples depending on whether the faculty I’m addressing specialize in academic or public libraries, or in knowledge management. I was lucky that what I planned on saying fit the faculty on my committee. Not everyone can be so lucky.

Megan Beard’s wiki about comps provides lots of tips, and the Survivors’ Stories were invaluable to me. If the SLIS webpage could have a link to it, or if some professors could contribute to the wiki, students would really appreciate.

The coursework examines theoretical and academic content, while the comps questions focus more on real library scenarios.

Investigate using a rubric so that students will know exactly what the faculty will be looking for in the assessment process. 
Schedule the exam on a ‘quiet’ day. For a brief period the grounds crew was working with weed whackers
Provide ear plugs. I bought several pair and handed them all out to test takers. Provide water too.
Return the exam results to students faster. (Probably not possible, but worth bringing up)
Reinstitute the Summer examination. There may only be a few people that take it in the Summer, but it should be offered none the less.