

**Title:** New Landscapes: Exploring MOOCs as LIS and Professional Development Spaces

**Question:** What are the affordances and drawbacks of delivering professional development opportunities via a MOOC-like platform? Can LIS schools create a common space for learning, sharing and community-building?

**Convener:**

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**Brief Abstract:** (50 words)

As a professional development opportunity for a global audience, the Hyperlinked Library MOOC was designed to offer an online space for learning and community-building. Panelists will reflect on the MOOC, reporting on participants' sense of community, the technical and instructional design of the MOOC, and present reflections of its students.

**Extended Abstract**

*Description of the Theme*

In the spirit of this conference's theme, "Educational Entrepreneurship," this panel will discuss what is arguably one of the most entrepreneurial movements in higher education in recent time: massively open online courses, or MOOCs. The efficacy of MOOCs are debatable and scholarly research in this area is fledgling, but the opportunities they present as new platforms for online learning can extend our thinking in our respective library and information science (LIS) programs as we seek to engage new learners -- traditional and non-traditional alike. This panel will use a MOOC piloted in fall of 2013 to begin a conversation about this new environment for professional development of library and information science practitioners, fairly consider the strengths and weaknesses of MOOCs for LIS, and take stock of the instructional and technological design challenges associated with this learning environment.

*Background Information*

The idea for the Hyperlinked Library MOOC was created from a vision Stephens and Jones shared to transform the Hyperlinked Library course, a graduate offering of Stephens' at San Jose State University

in the School of Library and Information Science. The course was adapted to serve as a professional development opportunity for librarians, library staff, and professionals who work in archives and other types of information centers.

The course's content coverage is focused on developing user-centered, participatory services on the open web, where human connections and conversations can drive uses of LIS environments and offerings as well as lead to new forms of knowledge creation. The course's design reflects its subject matter: following Jenkins (2012) model of connected learning, students engage each other in a participatory online learning environment where they share a purpose, collaboratively produce artifacts, and are openly network for the world to view their progress and work. The course community includes students, instructors, learning guides, and content providers.

Using a customized version of the open-source blogging software WordPress with BuddyPress, a plugin that transforms the platform into social software, the learning environment for the MOOC affords students the opportunity to engage each other in a social, community-centered atmosphere of collaboration and content creation. The MOOC utilizes a badge system to "reward" participants for various achievements.

Groups of MOOC participants are given the opportunity to self select into "tribes" of people interested in the same topic, avenue of librarianship, or service population. The moniker was chosen to relate to Godin's concepts of groups and leaders. Godin (2008) argues that a tribe is simply "a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea"; a group needs only two things to be a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate" (p. 1). Also in the MOOC, SJSU SLIS students will serve as "participatory learning guides," a term that harkens back to Jenkins (2006) and the work of Thomas and Brown (2011).

### *Topic*

The topic of MOOCs in LIS programs is timely and the conversation is needed. Other than the Hyperlinked Library MOOC, only two LIS

MOOCs have been developed by LIS programs. With the completion of these MOOCs, it is time to engage in a scholarly conversation about the relevance in LIS programs.

### *Purpose of the Panel*

The intended purpose of this panel is to have an open discussion about the panelists' unique experiences planning, designing, administering, teaching, and researching a MOOC. The panel will help to begin a focused dialogue in LIS programs regarding MOOCs.

### *Expected Targeted Audience*

There are two primary audiences for this panel: 1) LIS school administrators and 2) instructors who may be interested in teaching a MOOC. As this panel will primarily reflect back on the experiences of and knowledge gained from a piloted MOOC, the practical knowledge to be shared will more fully enlighten administrators of the pitfalls and potentials of MOOCs, especially for professional development purposes. Curious instructors who may be intrigued by MOOCs but are unaware of how to design their course for such a unique environment, and they may be at a loss as to what technology is available: this panel will help to educate that type of instructor.

### *Panel Format*

Presenters will be provided 15-20 minutes to speak to the audience about their topic using whatever media is appropriate and useful. Presenters are asked to finish their presentations with three questions for the audience to consider. These questions should inspire the audience to consider how they would address the presenter's topic differently, extend the topic for future investigation, or encourage them to think heretical thoughts about MOOCs. These questions will help to frame a question and answer session to follow in the remaining 10-30 minutes of the panel.

### *References*

Godin, S. (2008). Tribes: We need you to lead us. New York: Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

Jenkins, H. (2012, March 1). Connected learning: A new paradigm [Web log post]. Retrieved from [http://henryjenkins.org/2012/03/connected\\_learning\\_a\\_new\\_parad.html](http://henryjenkins.org/2012/03/connected_learning_a_new_parad.html)

Thomas, D., & Brown, J. S. (2011). A new culture of learning: Cultivating the imagination for a world of constant change. Lexington, KY: CreateSpace.