

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

MASTER'S RESEARCH PAPER HANDBOOK

1999-2000

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MASTER'S RESEARCH PAPER HANDBOOK

Master's Research Paper/Thesis Option

Each student pursuing the Master of Library Science (MLS) degree is required to complete either a Master's Research Paper or a Thesis. The decision to pursue the thesis or the research paper is made in consultation with an academic adviser early in the student's course of study. Students electing the thesis option should consult the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses* for guidance.

A web-version of this handbook is also available at the School's website
[<http://www.slis.kent.edu>]

The Nature of the Master's Research Paper

The Master's Research Paper provides an opportunity for a student to explore the application of a research methodology to address a problem or question in library and information science. The topic for the Master's Research Paper is developed in consultation with a faculty member acting as Research Paper Adviser.

The major purpose of the Master's Research Paper is careful application of an appropriate methodology to a relevant topic. A Master's Research Paper is not required or expected to result in new knowledge. Any topic in the broadly defined field of library and information science may be explored in the context of a Master's Research Paper. Although any research methodology may be employed, action-oriented research projects that address pragmatic problems or lead to evaluation of library and information center processes, programs, and services are preferred. The potential to guide decision-making in libraries and information centers is a fundamental consideration in selection of a topic for a Master's Research Paper. The topic is not required to be original in conception, nature, or methodology; appropriate replication of valid previously conducted studies is acceptable and encouraged. .

Objectives of the Master's Research Paper

The objectives of the Master's Research Paper are to enable each Master of Library Science (MLS) student to:

1. complete an independent experience in investigating an area of interest;
2. permit a more in-depth, specialized treatment of a topic than is usually possible in a formal classroom setting;
3. develop facility in identifying a problem area, determining data needed to solve the problem, and critically interpreting the results;
4. improve skill in organizing results of an investigation to produce a cohesive product;

5. identify appropriate means for evaluating library and information center operations and solving specific problems.

Prerequisites for the Master's Research Paper

A student may enroll for Master's Research Paper credit (LSCI 61098) only after completion of the four required core courses (LSCI 60001, LSCI 60002, LSCI 60600, and LSCI 60604) and approval of a Master's Research Paper Proposal. A signed approval form (Appendix A) must be on file in the Kent office before a student is permitted to register for the research paper.

Completion of courses related to the student's area of specialization or anticipated research paper topic may be helpful but is not required.

Master's Research Paper Grading

Credit for LSCI 61098 Master's Research Paper is awarded on an Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) grading basis. A grade of In Progress (IP) may be awarded if the student and Research Paper Adviser agree that additional time beyond the semester of enrollment is required for successful completion of the Master's Research Paper. A Request for IP Grade form specifying the requirements for completion and anticipated completion date, which will under no circumstances exceed one year from the end of the semester of enrollment, must be signed by the student, the student's Master's Research Paper adviser, and the student's Academic Adviser. Failure to complete requirements for changing the IP grade to a grade of S by the completion deadline will result in a change from IP to U.

A final grade for LSCI 61098 will be recorded only when the following steps have been completed:

- the final version of the Master's Research Paper has been approved by the Research Paper Adviser,
- one error-free copy of the paper printed on acid free paper has been submitted to the School for the University Archives,
- a second error-free copy has been submitted to the School,
- a disk copy of **two data files** has been submitted to the School for the School's Master's Research Paper archive and database,
 - file 1 contains the abstract in ascii format (See Appendix D)
 - file 2 contains the full paper in either WordPerfect or Microsoft Word format,
- and \$1.00 has been paid for the acid-free binder used by the University Archives.

The Master's Research Paper Adviser

Each student is responsible for identifying a Research Paper Adviser to guide in the identification of an appropriate topic, development and approval of the Master's Research Paper Proposal, conduct of the research project, and preparation of the final Master's Research Paper. The Research Paper Adviser is usually a full-time faculty member of the School. The student's Academic Adviser may serve as Research Paper Adviser, but there is no fixed expectation that a student's Academic Adviser and Research Paper Adviser will be the same faculty member. The Master's Research Paper is a complex process requiring more than a single semester for completion. Early identification of a Research Paper Adviser is essential to the timely completion of the Master's Research Paper.

The Master's Research Paper Proposal

The specific nature of the Master's Research Paper Proposal is agreed to by the student and the Research Paper Adviser. A suggested proposal format is included in Appendix B of this *Handbook*. Adherence to the proposed format is a minimal requirement for the Master's Research Paper Proposal and is not in itself a guarantee of approval. It is recommended that the proposal be submitted well in advance of the required deadline to allow for revision to comply with recommendations or requirements of the Research Paper Adviser. Receipt of the proposal by Research Paper Adviser by the required proposal deadline does not constitute a guarantee that the student will be able to complete the Master's Research Paper by the corollary final submission deadline.

The Master's Research Paper

The Master's Research Paper is an official document of the School representing and reflecting an essential student learning experience. Rigorous standards of research conduct and presentation of results are employed throughout the Master's Research Paper process. It is recommended that draft and final versions of the Master's Research Paper be submitted well in advance of the stated deadlines to allow for revision to comply with recommendations or requirements of the Research Paper Adviser. Receipt of the final version of the Master's Research Paper by the required final submission deadline does not guarantee that the student will be able to complete the degree during that semester.

The length of a Master's Research Paper is a function of the specific topic addressed, the methodology employed, and the analytical and expository processes required for effectively presenting the results and implications of the study. There are no fixed minimum or maximum page lengths. The typical Master's Research Paper length is approximately thirty word processed, double-spaced pages.

Style Manual

Conformance with a recognized manual of style is essential. The required style manual for Master's Research Papers is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th edition, revised by John Grossman and Alice Bennett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

Research Involving Human Subjects

Master's Research Paper projects employing questionnaires, interviews, observation, or other methodologies involving human research subjects must conform to the University's *Administrative Policy Regarding Research Involving Human Subjects* (policy 3342-3-02), which mandates prior approval by the University Institutional Review Board. A student developing a topic involving human research subjects is responsible for working with a Research Paper Adviser to determine the procedures for human subjects approval review. Human Subjects approval must be obtained before data collection procedures begin and may take a significant amount of time. It is recommended that the Human Subjects Review form be included with the research proposal submitted for the Research Paper Adviser's approval. Human Subjects Application materials and sample consent forms are available in the SLIS office as well as at the web of Research and Graduate Studies [<http://www.kent.edu/rags-alpha/human>]. Sample cover letters meeting Human subjects requirements are included in Appendix H of this handbook.

Master's Research Paper Deadlines

The Master's Research Paper process begins with selection of a Research Paper Adviser, which should take place no later than the beginning of the semester prior to that in which graduation is anticipated. An individual faculty member may be unavailable during a given semester while on Faculty Professional Improvement Leave; while working on a special assignment for the School, College, or University; or for other reasons. Availability of faculty to serve as Research Paper Advisers during the summer may be limited. The student is responsible for verifying that the Research Paper Adviser is expected to be available during the semester when completion of the Master's Research Paper is anticipated.

The dates below represent final deadlines for the Master's Research Paper. Completion of the various stages in advance of the stated deadlines is to the advantage of the student.

* Deadline	Anticipated Graduation Semester
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	Spring	Summer	Fall
Selection of Research Paper Adviser	September 15	February 15	April 15
Proposal to Research Paper Adviser	November 15	April 15	June 15
First Draft to Research Paper Adviser	February 15	June 15	September 15
Final Draft to Research Paper Adviser	April 15	July 15	November 15
Approved Final Copies, Disk and Archive Fee to SLIS Office	May 1	August 1	December 1

Students planning to graduate in the term during which they complete their research paper must remember to apply for graduation **no later than** the Friday of the first week of the semester.

*

Individual Research Paper Advisers may impose deadlines in advance of the stated deadlines. **Deadlines can be extended only with the approval of the student's Research Paper Adviser.** Extension of any deadline may result in delayed graduation.

APPENDIX A.

**Kent State University
School of Library and Information Science**

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF MASTER'S RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL

(This form must be typed; handwritten requests will be returned.)
(Required deadlines are listed in the *Master's Research Paper Handbook*)

Proposal Summary

Student Name: _____
Student Address: Street/Apt _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Telephone (W): _____ Telephone (H): _____
Date of Request: _____ E-mail Address _____

Proposed Master's Research Paper Title _____

Please attach 1) a 300-word abstract describing the topic or problem to be addressed and a timeline for completion of major stages of the research project, and 2) a complete copy of the Master's Research Paper proposal for approval by your Research Paper Adviser.

Approval

Research Paper Adviser: _____

Approved _____ Not Approved _____

Signature _____ Date _____
Research Paper Adviser

Acknowledgments

Signature _____ Date _____
Academic Adviser

APPENDIX B.

Suggested Master's Research Paper Proposal Elements

1. A working *title* that is succinct but indicative of the nature of the study.
2. A *problem statement* that describes the study in terms of its importance, scope, and potential for action.
3. A preliminary *literature review* that provides context and background for the study.
4. A statement of the *objectives* for the study that includes research questions, hypotheses, when appropriate, key assumptions, and operational definitions.
5. A statement of the *methodology* for the study that defines the general methodological area as well as the specific design, population and sample identification, data collection instruments and data gathering procedures.
6. A description of techniques to be used for quantitative or qualitative *data analysis*, including specific analytical tools.
7. A *work plan* that outlines the sequencing, flow, and timeline of the study.
8. A predictive statement of *anticipated results* and their relationship to the problem being studied.
7. Depending on the requirements of the research paper adviser, proposal *appendices* may include cover letters, human subject review application, sample tables illustrating proposed data analysis, etc.
8. A *bibliography* that lists works cited in the proposal.

APPENDIX C.

ARRANGEMENT OF FRONT MATTER OF FINAL RESEARCH PAPER

1. Abstract (See sample abstract page in Appendix D)
2. Blank page
3. Title page (See sample title page in Appendix E)
4. Blank page
5. Approval page (ii) (See sample approval page in Appendix F)
6. Blank page
7. Table of contents (iii)
8. List of illustrations (if any)
9. List of tables (if any)
10. Acknowledgments, if any
11. The Introduction should begin pagination in arabic numerals

APPENDIX D.

SAMPLE ABSTRACT PAGE

Author: Daniel L. Martin

Title: An Evaluation of a Stiff Plastic Cover Protector for Paperback Books after Five Years of Service

Semester: Spring

Year: 1996

Adviser: Dr. Mary T. Kim

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a self-adhesive stiff plastic protector for paperback books which The Ohio State University had begun using in 1990. Using records that had been stored of the books treated, 132 books treated July-December 1990 were inspected early in 1996, as well as 47 unbound copies and 31 bound copies of the same volumes. The type and extent of wear on the treated books was observed and described. There was no evidence that the product caused damage to book spines. Twenty-five treated books had light damage and one was rebound. Matched pairs of treated and unbound or bound volumes were compared. Of the pairs, 86% of the treated books were in good condition compared to 29% of the unbound copies; and 72% treated compared to 84% of the bound copies. The data was consistent with the treatment being an effective way to prevent cover damage to paperback books. Within the five-year span studied, treatment was comparable to library binding of new paperbacks in wear resistance. The findings were consistent with earlier studies on the durability of reinforced, unreinforced, and bound paperbacks.

APPENDIX E.

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE

**LIBRARY SERVICE TO THE DISADVANTAGED
IN THE DETROIT PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1970-1980**

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library
and Information Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library and Information Science

by

Jane Doe

May, 1989

APPENDIX F.

**SAMPLE APPROVAL PAGE
FOR FINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

Master's Research Paper by

Marjorie C. McBlank

B.S., Baldwin-Wallace College, 1990

M.L.I.S., Kent State University, 2000

Approved by

Adviser _____ Date _____

APPENDIX G.

COVER LETTERS

SAMPLE 1

(PRINTED ON SLIS LETTERHEAD)

Re: Name of Project

June 12, 1999

Dear Librarian:

I am a graduate student in the School of Library and Information Science at Kent State University. As part of the requirements for my master's degree I am conducting a study about the information needs of academic librarians. The enclosed questionnaire elicits information that will help me to discern the major sources of information used by librarians to perform their jobs and to conduct their personal research. This information would be useful to both theorists and practitioners in the field of library and information science.

Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed as you do not need to sign your name to individual questionnaires; only the investigator has access to the survey data. There is no penalty of any kind if you should choose to not participate in this study or if you would withdraw from participation at any time. While your cooperation is essential to the success of this study, it is, of course, voluntary. A copy of the results of the study will be available upon request.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at (216) 672-2782 or Dr. Marcia Zeng, my research adviser, at (216) 672-2782. If you have any further questions regarding research at Kent State University you may contact Dr. M. Thomas Jones, at (216) 672-2851.

Thank you very much for your cooperation; it is much appreciated. You may return the questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope to me at the following address:

Jane Doe
123 Terrace Drive
Kent, Ohio 44240

Sincerely,

Jane Doe
Graduate Student

COVER LETTERS
SAMPLE 2
(PRINTED ON SLIS LETTERHEAD)

January 3, 199x

RE: Bridging the Gap between Librarians and Corporate Training

Dear Corporate Librarian:

Employee training and development activities within corporations have grown to include provision of remedial education and basic skills training, e.g., reading, writing, arithmetic, computer skills/applications, etc. Increasingly, this training is being done by use of distance learning technologies such as video, broadcast transmission, interactive multi-media, self-directed print materials, etc. While human resource training professionals typically administer training activities, corporate librarians can provide a valuable service in terms of locating, evaluating, selecting, and providing access to educational and training resources within the corporate library.

As a graduate student in the Kent State University School of Library and Information Science, I am conducting a survey to compare the respective policies, methods and selection criteria used by corporate librarians and human resource training managers in locating, evaluating, and selecting distance learning-based educational and training resources at the remedial/basic skills level. The purpose of the study is to determine the compatibility between the processes of both groups of professionals in order to develop an effective collection in support of corporate training and development goals. **Your opinion is essential!**

The enclosed questionnaire is **brief** (less than ten minutes of your time will be required to complete it). **Confidentiality** and **anonymity** are guaranteed, and there is **no risk or penalty involved** in participating or withdrawing from this study (please see reverse side for details).

Your **voluntary** cooperation and prompt response are greatly appreciated. A stamped, self-addressed return envelope is included for your convenience.

Very truly yours,

Jane Smith
Graduate Student/Principal Researcher

P.S. Please return the questionnaire by January 17, 199x

(Reverse Side of Sample 2 Cover Letter)

Bridging the Gap between Librarians and Corporate Training is a study being conducted in partial fulfillment of my Master's degree in Library and Information Science (MLS). As the principle researcher, I will be the only person with access to the returned questionnaires. Your confidentiality is assured as neither your name nor that of your company will be requested on the questionnaire. Return envelopes have been coded in the event that follow-up reminders become necessary; however, upon receipt of each questionnaire, the return envelope will be discarded. At the completion of the survey, the mailing list will be destroyed.

There are no apparent risks from participation in this study since your opinions are being requested anonymously, and the subject matter is not of a sensitive or proprietary nature. As indicated previously, your participation is essential to the successful completion of this study but it is entirely voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate.

This study has been approved by Kent State University. If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, the study itself, or the results of the study, please contact me, YOUR NAME, at (614) 999-9999, or my research adviser, RESEARCH PAPER ADVISER'S NAME, at the KSU-SLIS Columbus Office, (614) 292-7746. If you have questions related to Kent State University's rules for research, please contact Dr. M. Thomas Jones, Vice Provost and Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, at (216) 672-2851.

APPENDIX H

RESEARCH PAPER REQUIREMENT CHECKLIST

The times in parentheses following the item are *suggestions* only, unless otherwise indicated. Be aware that individual research paper advisers may require more specific deadlines than the ones suggested here.

- ___ Complete LSCI 60604 Research for Decision Making in Libraries & Information Centers.
- ___ Find an appropriate Research Paper Adviser (*at least* a month before submitting the proposal) to discuss the topic and possible Human Subjects Review requirements.
- ___ Submit proposal to Research Paper Adviser. Include "Request for Approval of Research Paper Proposal" (see Appendix A). (For timing, see "Deadlines" on page 6 of this handbook)
- ___ Submit "Application for Approval to Use Human Subjects in Research" to research paper advisor if human subjects are involved in your research, (e.g., if you are doing surveys or interviews for your research). This should occur at approximately the same time that you submit your Proposal to your Research Paper Advisor.
- ___ Obtain all necessary signatures on the "Request for Approval of Research Paper Proposal" form.
- ___ Submit signed "Request for Approval of Research Paper Proposal" form to SLIS office, obtain registration information, and register.
- ___ Sign up for graduation (the first week of the semester you plan to graduate)
- ___ Submit first draft of research paper (see "Deadlines" in page 6 of this handbook)
- ___ Obtain approval of research paper adviser for final draft of research paper (see "Deadlines" in page 6 of this handbook)
- ___ Submit the following:
 - two error-free copies of the research paper on acid free paper
 - one disk containing **two data files**:
 - file 1 contains the abstract in ascii format (See Appendix D)
 - file 2 contains the full paper in either WordPerfect or Microsoft Word format,
 - \$1.00 for the acid-free binder used by the University Archives.