

Digital Space and Place:

How LIS students connect and collaborate on critical issues

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Introduction

The acquisition of the accredited MLS degree is often accompanied by additional experiential learning opportunities, both formal and informal. While participating in internships, scholarship programs, fellowships and positions of service, library students learn how to engage in a professionally networked community. Arguments of substance take place in different arenas among different actors, often among individuals who are formative to the LIS students' early professional experience.

Conclusions about the terms of engagement, appropriate topics and where these conversations can and should take place are gleaned through a blend of observation and practice. By listening to how others communicate on topics pertaining to library and information science, library students begin to practice engagement of their own, forming their own professional identities in the process.

This poster explores the different ways in which students are able to connect across programs with the broader student and professional community.

Methodology

"Power is not something you may possess and hoard. Either you have it in practice and you do not have it – others have it – or you simply have it in theory and you do not have it."

–Bruno Latour

Bruno Latour's "The Power of Association" outlines a new way of understanding the power relationship between actors. In a precursor to his formative Actor-Network Theory (ANT), Latour argues that power is not a commodity upon which the rules of supply and demand can be conjured. Rather, power exists in every person and the manifestation of power is made visible through the exertion of an individual's influence either in support of or against certain actors, institutions or ideologies.

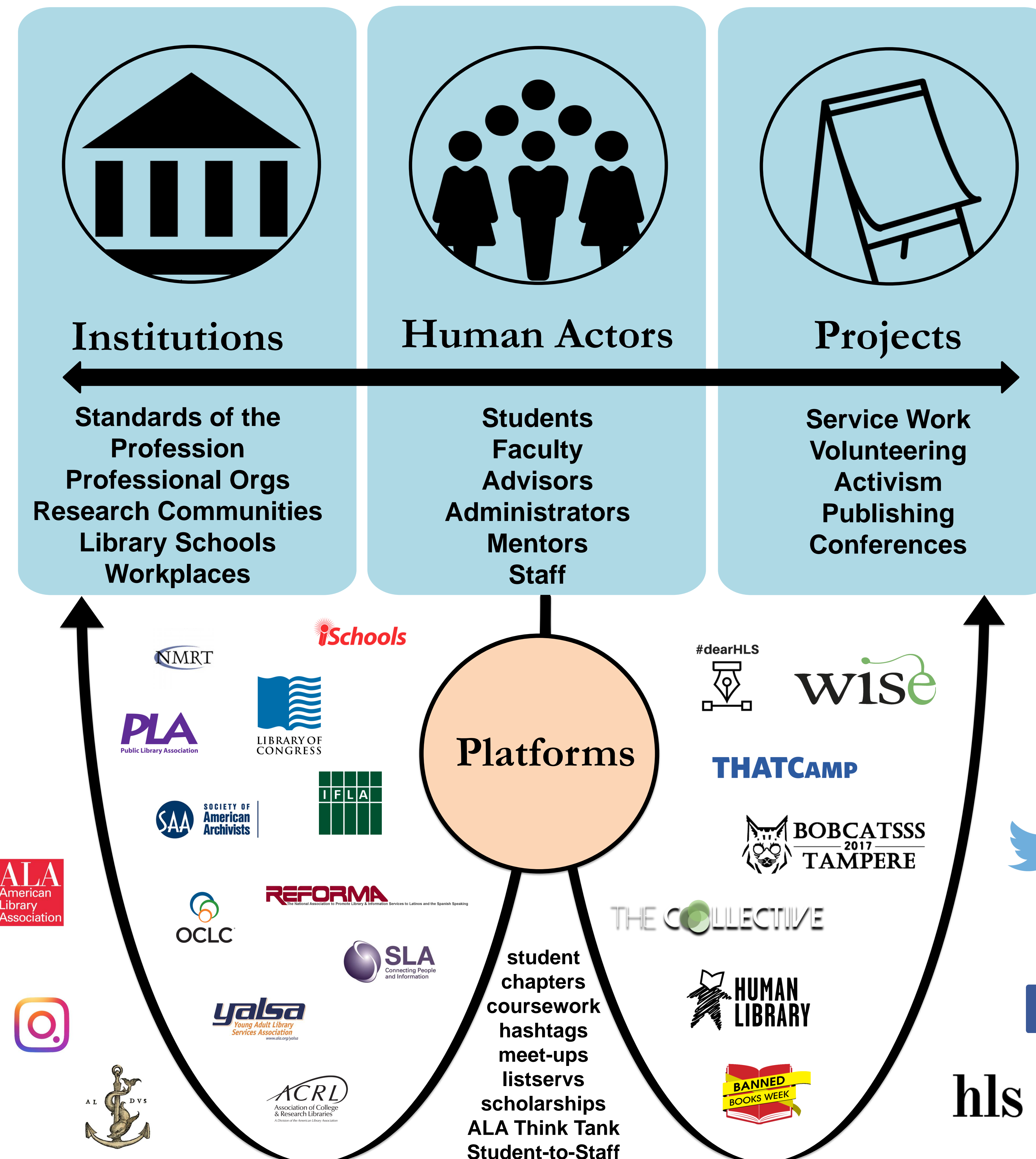
For professionals, the channels by which power is exerted are well established. We read and subscribe to academic journals and professional organizations. We present at conferences. We write to peer-reviewed publications.

Students are not yet indoctrinated to "how things are" in the LIS profession. As such, these young professionals tackle critical issues in new ways, both in how they approach controversial topics and the forms these expressions take. By acknowledging students as agents of change, this approach invites the reader to consider new or innovative roles that students may adopt as a part of their transition into a practicing information professional.

Visualizing LIS Education Networks Across Platforms

One way to conceptualize the relationships between critical issues and change agents is a networked map of LIS education. Human actors, institutions and projects are identified as change agents, subjects capable of invoking power for the purpose of addressing the status quo. Change agents rely upon the agency of one another to orient themselves to the LIS education network. Platforms transcend the boundaries between different change agents, providing opportunities to collaborate and connect.

Whereas change agents are subjective, and difficult to shift outright, platforms are fluid and open to adaption. Students who seek cultural or attitudinal shifts in LIS education must find a suitable platform (or combination of platforms) to engage other change agents.



Identifying Critical Issues

On certain topics, students are more likely to seek to platforms with which to engage other change agents, especially on topics that relate to personal experience or professional aspirations.

Emerging Fields

- Information management
- Data curation
- Digital preservation
- Distance education
- Electronic publishing

Marginalized Voices

- Citizenship status
- Sexual orientation
- Religious affiliation
- Ethnicity
- Class
- Race
- Gender

Due to their central relationship to LIS education, library school administrators and faculty have prominent roles in shaping how library students engage with these critical issues. As such, faculty and administrators should provide adequate room for these issues at their institutions through various platforms, including coursework. The greater exposure and practice students have in engaging with these issues, the better prepared they will be to serve as leaders in the information professions.

Future Work

This study could be expanded to accommodate for diversity of change agents within a category, longitudinal analysis and a working definition of institutional change and how it might be measured with confidence..

Works Cited

Latour, B. (1986). "The powers of association." *Sociological Review Monograph*, 32(2), 264-280.