

Certificate in Community Informatics

Students can participate in the Community Informatics (CI) program on either a full- or part-time basis, as an on-campus, in-Chicago or LEEP (online) student.

After satisfactory completion of 3 Community Informatics courses (12 credits) as part of the Master of Library Science program, students may apply online to receive a certificate. All CI classes are also available to students not working towards the CI certificate. This coursework will introduce them to:

- ways that diverse communities work to address their problems,
- theories that adequately account for the complexity and diversity of distributed collective practice,
- tools to mediate work on concrete tasks within communities,
- effective processes for developing shared capacity in the form of knowledge, skills and tools

With this foundation, recipients of LIS degrees with a CI certificate may work in a variety of settings such as public and school libraries, non-profit organizations, cultural heritage groups and municipal government as librarians, youth media instructors, researchers, and community information referral, for example. We especially encourage access to and participation in careers in library and information science for students traditionally underrepresented in graduate study and research.

What is Community Informatics?

Community informatics (CI) focuses on the space between two concepts, community<--> informatics. The arrows (<-->) stress that reciprocity must characterize relationships that emerge out of these concepts, because the balance of power among groups is often unequal and resources are used differently. There is a critical need to understand not only how communities access, create, organize and share information, but also the types and qualities of connections between and among communities. We team with community members who spearhead both the naming of issues within a community and the processes leading to solutions. People involved in CI use insights from fields such as sociology, planning, computer science, critical theory, women's studies, library and information science, management information systems, and management studies to empower personal, social, cultural and economic development of and within communities. We prioritize collaborations with marginalized communities to create solutions to the most serious crises threatening society as a whole: poverty, health, violence, food security, etc.

CI at UI

Students in CI work with community members, faculty and other students to build innovative community technology centers and networks, software, and library services in local, national, and international communities. Coursework focuses on theory, research, and practice in community informatics, social entrepreneurship, and community library and information services. Students are prepared to apply what they have learned to the creation of information services across a wide range of community-based and public interest organizations.

The CI program has unique strengths and expertise that come from fifteen years of university-campus partnerships with people in East St. Louis, Chicago, and north Champaign. The project-centered approach helps students apply what they are studying to real-world situations that involve community partners in meeting local needs. Students have the potential for sustained relationships with communities.

Course load

The master's degree program requires 40 hours of graduate study, including two GSLIS core courses, "LIS 501: Information Organization and Access" and "LIS 502: Libraries, Information, and Society." Students pursuing the CI certificate take an additional three courses in any order. "LIS 518: Community Informatics," is required and 2 others are selected from a recommended course list. To complete the certificate, students choose electives that meet their interests and needs. Since each person's background, goals and interests are different, other elective courses may be applied toward the certificate after approval. Contact Sharon Irish (slirish@illinois.edu) for more information.

See the master's degree program information for rules governing how the remaining hours in the master's program may be earned. The CI faculty are willing to talk to prospective and current students about what courses will best meet student needs. Refer to the LEEP Online Education information for the specific requirements for the online degree program.

Curriculum

GSLIS Core

LIS501 Information Organization and Access (4 hours)
LIS502 Libraries, Information, and Society (2 or 4 hours)

Required CI Certificate Course

LIS518 Community Informatics (4 hours)
Recommended CI Elective Courses (take at least 2)

Highly Recommended:

LIS 418 Community Engagement
LIS 519 Social Science Research in LIS

Also Recommended:

LIS 451 Intro to Network Systems
LIS 490DD Digital Divide: Policy, Research and Community Empowerment
LIS 490GIG Geographic Information Systems
LIS 590BTW Serving the Child in Schools and Community
LIS 590CE Civic Entrepreneurship
LIS 590ITB Information Technology and the Black Experience
LIS 590ST Strategic Information Management

Students may also supplement their program of study by taking other LIS electives, or electives outside GSLIS and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Community Informatics Initiative

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