

## **Portfolio and Special Project FAQ**

### **What is the Portfolio?**

All students in graduate degree or certification programs at SCSU (including the Department of Information and Library Science) are required to submit a portfolio in their final semester of coursework. The portfolio can be viewed as a substitute for a thesis, albeit one that is often somewhat shorter and which contains a number of additional brief documents. Students must pass a portfolio review to be considered eligible for graduation or recommendation for certification.

### **What is in the Portfolio?**

The portfolio will include a special project and a number of supporting documents.

These documents include:

- \* The Special Project itself (see next item in this FAQ for details)
- \* A description of major landmarks in your MLS studies, such as field experiences, internships, and independent studies.
- \* Examples of significant course projects. It is not recommended that you include every paper or project, just major or significant ones. Two or three of the papers you are most proud of are adequate. These papers or projects should be introduced with a brief contextual or explanatory note.
- \* Organizational materials like a Table of Contents and other navigational aids to help the reader find his or her way through the portfolio are greatly appreciated. Similarly, continuity and sequels help the natural flow of a complex document like this.
- \* Each student should also include a serviceable resume. It is strongly advised that each student consult practitioners or faculty in developing the resume.

### **What is the Special Project?**

The special project is a research paper or report of a project that includes the application or drawing together of knowledge and skills acquired in the graduate program.

The project may be completed in connection with any course taken in the MLS program. Students often use the paper they prepared for ILS680 Evaluation and Research as their

special project but it is not necessary to use that paper for this project. The special project may be completed as an independent study, field project, practicum or even outside of course credit

In addition to the actual paper, each special project must also include the following:

- \* Identification and listing of 5 - 9 key concepts and skills the student gained over the course of his or her planned study and that are applied to the special project.
- \* Identification and listing of the courses in the student's planned study that contributed to this knowledge and skill set
- \* Discussion of how the student applied this knowledge and skill set to the special project.
- \* Documentation of the special project itself.
- \* When feasible, the special project may also include supporting assessment documents, such as letters from practitioners who benefited from the project's implementation.

The format and structure of the special project will vary according to the nature of the project. But as the capstone project in Graduate School it should include

- Background and/or problem statement
- Context and conceptual underpinning of the project
- Review of literature related to this project
- Description of the project itself
- Conclusions
- Bibliography

The final project should be in the context of a graduate level research project (since it stands for the thesis). As such it is important to have background info, contextual info of the project, and especially a bibliography. In other words, it should include the elements of a graduate paper.

### **Who is my advisor and what do they do for this Document?**

See the ILS website for information on selecting or changing your advisor. Normally students select an advisor early in their MLS studies. Advisors are often associated with specific tracks within the program of study (public, academic, special, school library) or with a functional specialty (cataloging, preservation, etc.) but personal affinity or other factors can play a role in selecting an advisor.

The advisor will guide you in course selection and planning your program of study. With respect to your portfolio, your advisor will guide you in the procedure and approve acceptance of your project and other documents in the portfolio.

If you have any questions, consult your advisor or the ILS office.

### **How long should it be?**

It should be long enough to do the job without padding or fluffery. As is usually the case in graduate-level papers, quality is more important than quantity.

What are the procedures for submitting the portfolio?

The schedule for submission and other important dates can be found on the ILS Website.

The most important thing is that you keep your advisor apprised as to your progress and that there are no surprises when the final portfolio is submitted. You will probably want to discuss your plans with your advisor via email, phone, or personal visit before you begin. Then you will want to touch base at major junctures or when there are significant changes in direction.

Allow the advisor at least two weeks to review the final portfolio.

### **What physical format should I submit these documents in?**

The portfolio is normally submitted as a CD-ROM and is retained in the department. Preliminary drafts or secondary copies may also be submitted as a webpage or paper document.

### **Can I see examples of Portfolios?**

Sure. Email or call the ILS office for specifics.

### **What is the schedule for submitting Portfolios?**

All important dates and schedules are posted in the ILS website. Contact the ILS office if there are problems or conflicts with the schedule.

Students taking ILS680 in their final semester and who plan to use the ILS680 paper as their special project will normally be granted leniency in submitting their portfolio. Let your advisor know if this is your plan and keep your advisor informed as to your progress in the course.

### **What happens if I mess this up?**

If you follow the guidelines presented here, there will be no problems and you will graduate with hugs and smiles all around. Failure to complete a quality portfolio in a timely manner will require the ILS to deny the student's application for graduation, as required by the SCSU Graduate College.

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