

MLIS and Library Media Certification: What's the connection?

This document is intended to explain the basics of school librarianship in the State of Georgia in relationship to the Masters in Library and Information Science degree at Valdosta State University.

Librarianship is a multi-faceted profession. Preparation to be a librarian will include basic core knowledge and skills, delivered through an ALA accredited program. Most coursework and degrees in librarianship are at a graduate level, usually Master's Degree. Preparation to work in more specialized areas of librarianship, such as academic librarianship (college), public librarianship, medical librarianship, or special librarianship, require specialized courses and field experiences, as determined by the MLIS program.

In Georgia, the specified knowledge and skills, as well as field experiences, required for **school librarianship** are determined and published by the State of Georgia, rather than by the MLIS program. In this context, "school" means pre-kindergarten through grade 12 in a *public* school. (Some independent schools require only the MLIS degree for their librarian positions. If you want to work in an independent school, check with the school to find out what they require.) The reason for this is that school librarians in Georgia, called **media specialists**, are considered school personnel, and are required to be certified by the State, in the same way, and by the same body (Georgia Professional Standards Commission), as teachers are certified. The MLIS program can grant a **degree**, but they can't grant **certification**.

To be eligible for media specialist certification, an MLIS student must show evidence of having skills addressing the specific requirements of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), the school personnel certification body of the State. As a baseline, the student must also satisfy minimum requirements for all school personnel, including a "Serving Learners with Diverse Needs" course at the undergraduate or graduate level, passing or exemption of the standardized, basic skills, GACE I test (exempted by a 1000 score on the SAT, or a 1030 score on the GRE), and proof of technology proficiency through a standardized State of Georgia course or instrument. If the student has State of Georgia certification in a teaching, leadership, or service field, it is likely that these baseline requirements would have been fulfilled.

The pathway to library media certification starts with enrollment in a PSC-approved program, nearly always housed in a College of Education. For many years, the approved library media program at Valdosta State University has been offered through the Instructional Technology (IT) program, both as an MED (Masters of Education) degree, or as an "add-on" certification for those students who already held a Master's degree in another field (usually a teaching field). This program is currently housed in the Department of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology in the Dewar College of Education. The IT – Library Media program offers the courses and supervises fieldwork; however, the program can't **grant** certification, they can only **recommend** a candidate to the GaPSC for certification.

The MLIS program and the IT program have worked together to designate the best pathway for an MLIS student to be eligible for certification recommendation upon graduation. Because there are multiple institutions involved in this process, there are a considerable number of special circumstances and requirements. **The MLIS advisor should be considered the authority for guidance of each individual student.**