



## Programrapport

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| <b>Programmets namn: Master in Library and Information Science: Digital Library and Information Services</b> | <b>Ladokkod: BMDD118h &amp; BMDD118h1</b> |
| <b>Antal högskolepoäng: 120</b>  | <b>Årskull: 2018</b>                      |
| <b>Programansvarig: Elena Maceviciute &amp; Rachel Pierce</b>  |   |

### *Kommentar kring svarsfrekvens i studentvärderingen*

This report is based on the following material:

A student evaluation questionnaire which was made available during the last weeks of the spring semester 2020. 6 of 31 students who had access to the questionnaire have filled it out. The low number means that it is difficult to generalize to all students' views of the programme based on the evaluation. The program coordinators also held a short meeting in zoom for those defending their theses after the thesis defences were complete. 3 students attended, and discussion topics from this meeting can be used with caution in the report as well.

Course reports from all courses attended by the students in BMDD118h have been consulted, excepting those for Technologies for digital libraries 2 and the Master's thesis course (which is not yet ready). These course reports are generally quite descriptive and useful, though a few are simply reproductions of the questionnaire responses from students.

### *Analys av:*

#### **Studenternas möjlighet till ansvar och delaktighet**

Students can make their voices heard in course evaluations for each course. In general, very few students fill out the course evaluation questionnaires, which means that they form an unreliable basis for making assessments about the students' views of the courses and program, although they can be an indication of how students have experienced the program and point to issues that need to be addressed at the course and program level. Students also communicate with programme and course coordinators both online and during the residential weeks.

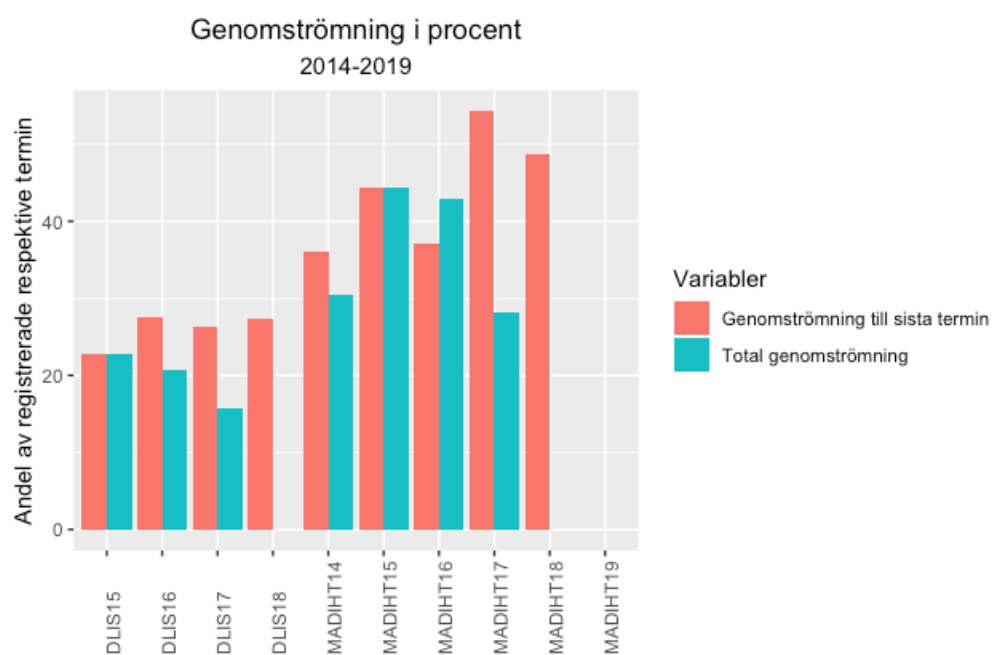
Students have the right to be represented in the Programråd, and Swedish-speaking students were invited to volunteer as representatives. However, no student could take on the task. Since 2019, a student representative from the Bachelor's programme has been involved.

Students currently have limited access to completed course reports. They are not particularly easy to find, and many students are not aware that they are available. There is a general problem with students not understanding the Swedish educational system and its representation in various university digital portals. The variety of platforms in use – PingPong, Ladok, Kronox, the program and course portal – is confusing to many students. There is also confusion about the way in which grading functions well into year two of the program. Greater availability of materials like course

reports and program reports needs to account for this lack of basic information about both the Swedish university system and the role of course and program reports in this system. A lack of understanding about how this information is used may contribute to lower response rates for course evaluations in this program as compared with other programs.

### Innehåll, undervisningsformer, examination och progression

The progression of students is relatively stable. There is, as with previous years, a lower progression rate for students from the Ugandan exchange program, indicating that these students need more support to complete their studies. The generally lower rates of progression and graduation in the DLIS program compared to the MADI program are generally attributable to the majority of students combining work and family life with studies.



Overall, the students who have replied to the questionnaire seem fairly satisfied with their studies. But as stated, the response rate for the questionnaire was quite low, but the number of students who submitted their thesis at the end of the spring term of 2020 was nine students, and these are the students most likely to submit answers to the questionnaire. Three in total submitted answers. Beyond this limited representative value, the responses are included for their descriptive value.

#### How, in your opinion, does the educational program you are now finishing relate to the learning outcomes of the program?

Fairly irrelevant: 1

Fairly relevant: 1

Highly relevant: 4

One comment noted that “The program design was excellent, logically building on the content which went before as I progressed through.” Another noted that the scope of the program is short, while the time students have is limited, and the introduction of theoretical perspectives earlier in the program would be useful.

#### How does the program relate to the expectations you had on it when you started the program?

Very different compared to my expectations: 1

Fairly different compared to my expectations: 3  
Very similar compared to my expectations: 2

One of the “very different” answers is connected to the comment “This program was way better than I had expected!” Another was very happy that there was more technology skills learning than expected.

**To what extent has knowledge about/from the professional field of e.g. digital libraries been integrated into the courses, in your opinion?**

Fairly limited extent: 1  
Fairly substantial extent: 1  
Substantial extent: 4

**Overall, what is your impression of the pedagogical design in the courses and the program?**

Has not worked very well: 1  
Has worked fairly well: 2  
Has worked very well: 3

One student commented that some of the instructions, e.g. of assignments, in PingPong could be more instructional. One student also commented on the fact that Swedish and English was mixed in the discussion forum of a course which was offered to both DLIS and MADI students. This blending is considered good by some students and confusing by others. Generally, it is best if information that is presented in Swedish because it relates to events in Swedish (and in Sweden) is at least partially translated, to that all students have access to the basics.

The importance of the residential week for students who need to catch up on their math skills in order to follow the course content in the Information Retrieval 1 course was highlighted in the course report. This point should be considered in light of current Covid-related restrictions that prevent the program from having on-campus meetings. It is as of right now difficult to say when on-campus meetings will be possible and safe for all students in the program. Conducting workshops and lessons about statistics and other subjects that students find difficult may be even harder in digital environments. One thing students uniformly report is the greater comfort they have with subjects after they have had on-campus meetings for the first two courses in the program, Technologies of Digital Libraries 1 and Information Retrieval 1.

In some of the course reports (Interaction Design, E-books) students pointed out that they found it problematic to study two courses in parallel. This is a viewpoint that has been brought up by previous students as well. This opinion seems to be related to a perceived lack of connections between the courses that run parallel. Teachers have been working on more concretely connecting courses and explaining how the program is structured as a whole, but work clearly still needs to be done in this area.

There were also comments in a couple of course reports (IR2, Interaction design) on group work, offering the view that this kind of work can be difficult to achieve at a distance, without in-person interaction. Group work is rare in the program, but it is important to consider the ways in which it affects student learning and the ability of teachers to grade individuals fairly, as well as the opportunities for group social cohesion provided by this teaching format.

**How satisfied are you with your education?**

Fairly unsatisfied: 1  
Very satisfied: 5

Students liked the breadth of the program, preferring variation and coverage of lots of topics within the field of digital libraries and information services. One student responded that he or she

particularly like the on-campus aspects of the program. Students also liked how engaged the teachers seems to be, specifically mentioning the more computer science-oriented courses. These courses also worried one student, who believed that knowledge of HTML and CSS amongst other skills might be a prerequisite for completing the program.

Regarding individual courses, students were quite positive about the Technology of Digital Libraries 1 course, indicating that the changes that have been made to the course between 2017 and 2018 were effective. Some of the comments indicate that delaying the material often presented in the introduction week on campus might be better if moved to later in the semester – this will be tested for the course in 2020, since Corona has required the program to move all teaching online. The same is true of the two Information Retrieval courses. In terms of courses that students do not perceive as fitting into the program, Technologies of Digital Libraries 2 has been identified. The course has been revised and will be given in a new form during the fall 2020 semester.

Timing is also an issue with the Research Methods course for two reasons. First, the course needs to be partially completed early enough to assign supervisors for the thesis class (often the same teachers involved in grading for the Methods course), which creates a squeeze for the students, who must complete a pilot study that is submitted before the end of the term. Second, the Technologies of Digital Libraries 2 course has required a longer research paper due at the end of the semester, which students often put off because this course is not required to proceed to the Thesis course.

Negative comments focused on PingPong's unwieldy structure and difficulties with some assignments that relied too much on PingPong's discussion forum. One student also had trouble with the structure of both the thesis course and the defense process, which involved opposition from both another student and an examiner. These comments indicate that more might be done to prepare students for the defense part of the thesis. This comment also came up during the oral evaluation, with one student suggesting that an example of the textual part of the opposition be made available to students ahead of time, to provide a template.

Students are generally positive about the resources they are required to devote to the program, though they note that the program is demanding and requires that they make decisions about what to focus on themselves. Most find the teachers readily available for questions and feedback via assignment modules, course discussion modules, and via email.

**To what extent have you been able to devote the time necessary to finish assignments and courses?**

Fairly limited extent: 3

Fairly substantial extent: 2

Substantial extent: 1

These answers and other interactions with students during the semester indicate that Covid-19 has affected the amount of time many students (who often work or have families) have been able to devote to their studies during the last semester. In this sense, student resources have recently been diminished, as students struggle to keep up with changes at home and in the workplace while also devoting time to studies. This situation may also affect program statistics in the opposite direction, as new students with more time for studies because of Covid-related restrictions and layoffs. In sum, the effects of the pandemic on student work is currently difficult to assess. But within the free answers to the questionnaire, students mention responsibilities outside of their education, especially children and work.

Parting comments from students were positive, with one student noting that “Everyone is clearly very committed, outgoing with support and generous with their time and expertise. It was a good balance of being enjoyable, interesting and challenging.”

The majority of the teachers in the program have obtained PhDs, and only those with doctoral educations may be responsible for courses. Many of those involved in program teaching are engaged in research projects of various kinds, publish, are active in research groups, and bring their interests into the (digital) classroom. This helps with keeping course content updated and ensuring that the program moves as the field of Library and Information Science develops.

There are many different ways in which research is taken into account from the perspective of students. Current research is presented to them, and there are several classes that require students to engage in their own research, which requires that they learn to seek out and evaluate scholarly literature and engage in research processes. This work culminates in the Methods course and Thesis course, where students first execute a pilot project, the results of which can then be used as a launch pad for thesis research work and the production of a thesis text of original research.

Based on the course evaluation, students seem to have the impression that the education made use of theory and research. However, the verbal evaluation during the thesis day involved a discussion of one student's wish for more theory and theoretical perspectives. The general approach has been to integrate theory into individual classes, rather than devoting a class to theory within the field of Library and Information Science, but this is certainly an area that could be more directly addressed in revised versions of the Digital Library Management course.

**To what extent has theory and LIS research been integrated in the courses, in your opinion?**

Fairly limited extent: 1

Fairly substantial extent: 2

Substantial extent: 3

The comments here were positive, noting that students could use literature from earlier courses in their thesis work, and observing that this integration “underpins the entirety of the program.” This observation is borne out in comments in various course evaluations, including those of the Research Methods course and the Information Retrieval 2 course. The Digital Library Management course is generally praised for establishing a baseline for research within a number of key themes that are then extended – some more explicitly than others – through the program. The thesis course's

**Resurser**

The programme contains ten courses, all of which are core courses. Six are 7.5 credits, three 15 credits and one accounts for 30 credits. The courses had all in all nine course coordinators, eight of whom hold a PhD. In total, the program is comprised of 2,836 teaching hours according to TFU, allocated across 10 courses. This number overestimates to some extent how many hours are specific to the international master's program, since the courses Digitising Cultural Heritage and Interaction Design are also elective courses within the Swedish-language program MADI, and Interaction Design 1 and Research Methods are combined courses with MADI. Additionally, this number includes hours that are not yet entirely decided, as the Thesis course hour allocation is not yet complete.

Apart from the course coordinators, the students meet a number of teachers in the courses. This includes a large number of teachers who are involved as supervisors or examiners in the Research Methods course and the Thesis course. There are several courses that regularly require more resources. These include the Digitising Cultural Heritage course, the Digital Library Management course, and the Research Methods course – all the 15 hp courses. Both the Digitising Cultural Heritage and Research Methods courses are rated very highly by students, and their costliness is considered to pay off later in the program, through better and more efficient thesis work.

The Research Methods course is costly in other ways and may require further resources in the future. Because the course is immediately followed by the Thesis course, this has created problems for allocating work for students in a fair and manageable way and assigning supervisors for thesis work. Students must pass the Methods course to begin thesis work, so their grade must be determined far

enough in advance to facilitate supervisory allocation while also giving students enough time to do their work. Given that the course builds on skills learned in previous semesters, it is not entirely clear how this problem can be solved, but one thing that might help is more hands-on help with the pilot study paper that determines grades for the course and can serve as a testing ground for thesis topics and methods. This would require added hours and, potentially, a larger teacher base. The students are, however, largely positive about the course itself.

Besides the Research Methods course, the Digital Library Management course also indicates a need for expanded resources for simplification and revision. This course needs to be updated, both to bring the literature up to date and to adjust the course to bring it in line with other updates to the program, so that it can once again serve as an introduction to the program writ large. This role as a program introduction is also stymied by scheduling issues. A large problem with the course in the past two years is its scheduling at full pace for period 4. This shift to giving this 15 hp course within the span of one period was a temporary solution to scheduling issues with Interaction Retrieval 1, which is also given within MADI, but this new schedule means that students do not have a course that also functions as a program introduction until halfway through the first semester. The scheduling choice also reduces the amount of time students have to write and hand in a large number of assignments (5 in total, alongside 2 seminars) and reduces the amount of time teachers have to grade these assignments. This is a schedule that many students experience as very stressful, especially because the Digital Library Management course is a prerequisite for the Research Methods course, which is then a prerequisite for writing a thesis.

#### **Användbarhet och förberedelser för arbetslivet**

The answers to these questions are very varied, although especially the answers to the second question indicate that there are perhaps some limitations to how much the students have perceived a relation between knowledge of the professional field and from the education. One student, in a comment, suggests that some type of more practical field work be included in at least one of the courses, and gives the example of visiting an organisation to do observations and interact with staff and users and to discuss this in a seminar.

In response to these kinds of concerns, both current cohorts of students have been introduced to recent graduates of the program during their introduction days for the fall 2020 term. These meetings were well-received by students. New students primarily discussed issues related to the job market, study habits, program structure, the social aspect of studies, and thesis writing as a challenge. The returning students talked with graduates about thesis writing and the job market, with a specific focus on the relative saleability of thesis topics and programming skills. This group also discussed how to network to get a job.

One drawback of these kinds of discussions is that they can become focused on a Swedish context, which ignores the international character of the program's student body. More work needs to be put into reaching out to former students residing and employed in countries other than Sweden, in order to avoid an exclusive focus on the Swedish job market and employment rules.

#### **If you work professionally within a field of relevance to the program, have you had any use of your studies and the courses in your professional capacity?**

Fairly limited extent: 1

Fairly substantial extent: 3

Don't know/not professionally active in relevant field: 2

One student notes that "I'm working with the digitization of cultural heritage materials. Especially the digitization course last spring has been highly relevant to that work. I have learned a lot of valuable things." This comment reflects the general sense that the Digitising Cultural Heritage course is a site where the program skills come together in a cohesive way. Overall, the answers demonstrate that the program is still largely seen as relevant to the job market, although some updates are necessary.

## *Övrigt*

The last year represents a shift in responsibilities, as Rachel Pierce took over from Helena Franke as program coordinator, ahead of Elena Maceviciute retiring. In addition, Covid-19 has presented an array of challenges for both teachers and students. Though the program is largely given as a distance program, elimination of the campus week presents some problems and some opportunities. Everyone in the program is working together and within their course groups to find solutions for problems with, for example, researching social science phenomena via distance, conducting computer science workshops, and finding fair accommodations for students whose work and family lives have been complicated by the pandemic. This is a learning opportunity.

Additionally, there is ongoing work on developing a new masters program that would replace this international program. This work will be used to support improvements to the current program, regardless of whether a new program is implemented. Such improvements would concern updating program content, fixing chronic issues with the distance between courses focused on computer science and courses that are reading-focused and seen as by students as falling within a social science and humanities field. There are also updates that need to be enacted concerning program and course content, given the changing nature of the field of digital library and information science. The scope of “the library” is changing alongside evolving digital tools and platforms, and these developments need to be reflected in our course and program offerings. Program development work is focused on these issues.

## *Eventuella förslag till förändringar*

- More discussion between course coordinators of courses running parallel to each other should be instituted to ensure that work loads are distributed more equally between the courses and that any existing synergies can be exploited. This is relevant not just within the program but between MADI and DLIS, especially concerning the first semester of work for students, when the two themes of computer science and social science seem most distinct from one another from the point of view of students. The number of program teacher meetings has been increased to three per semester to allow for these discussions.
- In particular, Digital Library Management and the Research Methods course require attention. Both have issues with planning. The Digital Library Management course used to function as an introduction the program writ large, and there is currently no replacement.
- Theoretical perspectives and LIS research can still be clarified further, although this needs to be done on a course-by-course basis. There is an opportunity for a more theory-centred Digital Library Management course, if resources are provided for an update there. However, any major revisions should be conducted in tandem with the team developing a new Masters program, so that this work is not wasted if the program is replaced.
- Instituting program coordinator office hours once a month might improve communication between faculty and students, as well as providing an outlet for student concerns, given that they are not on campus and are thus far less likely to get involved in student organizations. A trial run has been instituted for the fall 2020 semester.
- Any temporary solutions for the conditions presented by Covid-19 should be evaluated properly, so that we can all learn from them. The program may find new ways to deliver courses that are beneficial to students because we have been forced to test out new methods and tools. As of right now, the effects of the pandemic are hard to discern. Feedback from students is integral here, and hopefully office hours will help with identifying these effects.

- As noted, a new program is currently in the early stages of development. This program would substantially change the content and student makeup of the current program. Regardless, information and ideas from this development work can be used in the development of the current program.
- It would be a good idea to construct a list of graduates willing to talk to current students. This network would be useful for a number of reasons, including access to more job advice and tips about how to make it through the program. This work has been partially started with the 2018 program evaluation, but a more systematic approach would be helpful. Students might be approached during the Thesis course about their willingness to be contacted by new students.