BRIDGING THE GAP: LIBRARY SCIENCE EDUCATION AND THE NEW ENGINEERING LIBRARIAN

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Introduction

The terminology of engineering is enough to frighten the novice librarian without science background away from academic engineering librarianship. A successful transition from graduate student to practicing engineering librarian requires a complex set of skills and knowledge. Efforts to recruit bright young people into the engineering library profession can be fruitful when they unveil the requirements for entering the profession. Substantial support and assistance of experienced librarians is critical and the establishment of support groups for various professional development needs can provide a vehicle for discussing common concerns.

Statement of the Problem

- More than 150 engineering branch libraries across the United States.
- Lack of interest among library school students to undertake a career as academic sci/tech librarians.
- Some universities don't require MLS/MLIS/MIS degree when announcing available library positions.
- Graying of the library profession is a reality ; there is a need for recruiting sci/tech librarians.

Research Questions

- ‣ Why do not library science graduates get into the science/technology (sci/tech) librarianship?
- ‣ How can we give them the information and inspiration they need to sail toward this horizon of our profession?

Methodology

1. The catalogs of all ALA-accredited library schools were surveyed to identify which schools listed science and technology courses and what is the frequency of course offerings.
2. Dual degree programs were indentified at the same institutions to determine to what extent library graduate students were exposed to the opportunity to explore a path to sci/tech librarianship.
3. Graduate assistants working at the Engineering and Physical Sciences Library (EPSL), University of Maryland, were surveyed in order to determine the role of mentoring plays in retention to the field.

Data Analysis

1. 1 in 3 of the ALA-accredited LIS programs could a full-time student expect to have even the opportunity to take a sci/tech course from the point they entered the program until they graduate. The ratio will drop lower if these courses are cancelled due to lack of minimum enrollment. This means that a very large percentage of LIS students never have the opportunity to take a sci/tech course during their studies in a given LIS program, even they had the interest.
2. 11% of **all** ALA-accredited LIS programs offer dual degree programs in the sciences.

ALA-accredited programs	57
Conditionally accredited	4
Excluded	None
Sci/tech course listing	42 programs (73.7%)
Offerings within one year period from universities offering sci/tech courses	25 (59.5%)
Dual degree offerings in all subjects	27 (47.3%)
Dual degrees offering in sci/tech only from universities offering dual degrees	6 (22.2%)

3. Mentoring played a vital role in exposing graduate students to sci/tech librarianship. The hands-on practice opened them to areas of the profession that they had not considered before.

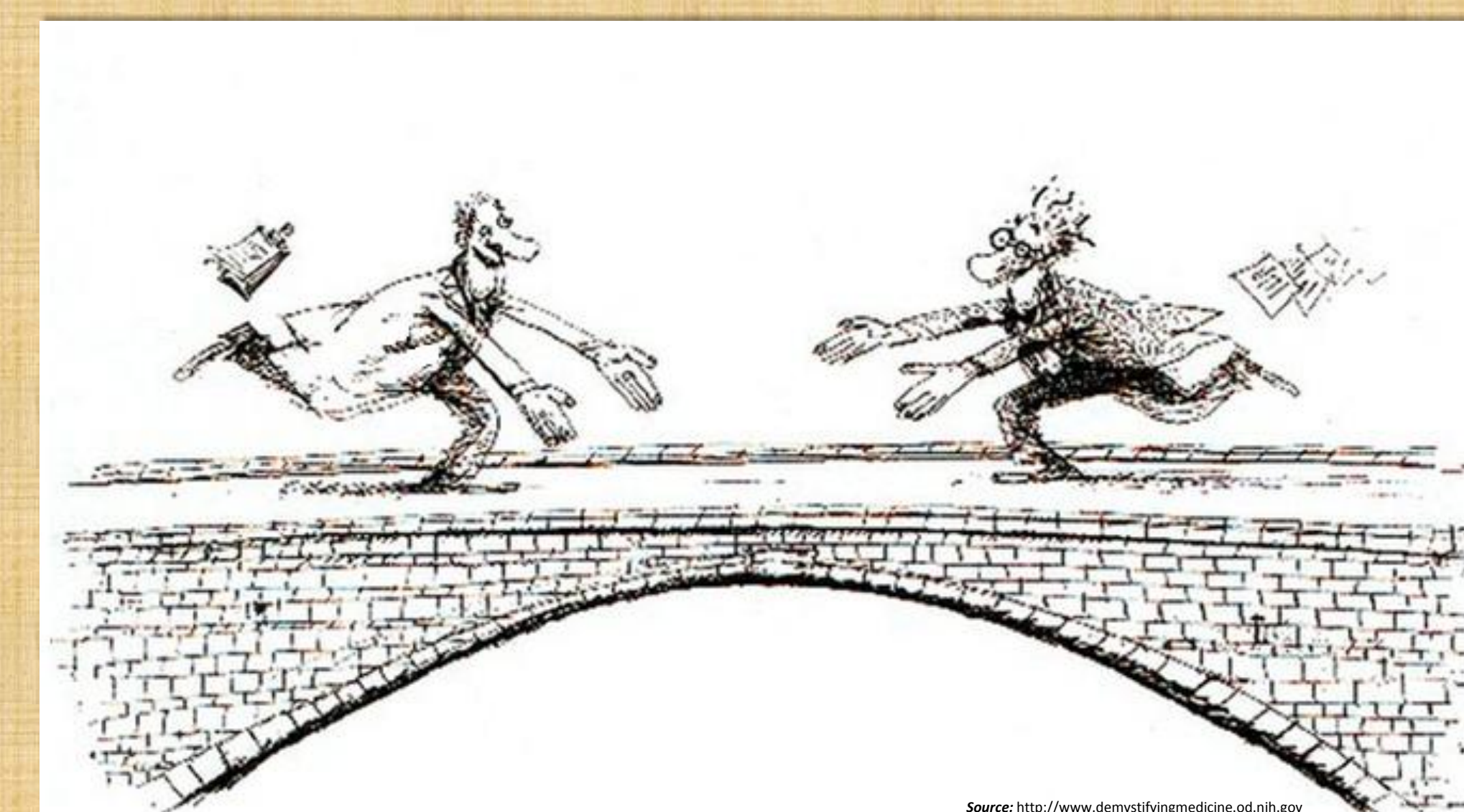## Recommendations

For Library Schools:

1. Update curriculum and offer online classes.
2. Offer a science and technology course along with a support in this area.
3. Develop internships.
4. Coordinate tours and meetings of science libraries through the LIS student associations.

For Library Managers and Supervisors:

1. Unpaid internship or field study.
2. Paid annual graduate assistantship.
3. Paid hourly student assistants.

For *Both* Library School Educators and Library Managers:

1. Retire outdated practices.
2. Have a presence at job/information fairs for students with sci/tech background.
3. Establish partnerships between themselves.
4. Building student and science librarians retention programs .
5. Networking with professional associations in mentoring and retention of science librarians .

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