

# Field Experience Handbook

Master of Library Science Program

Field Experience Instructor:  
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Cope Administration Building 116  
1301 East Main Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37132  
Marian.Wilson@mtsu.edu; or 615-898-2185.

The MTSU policy on non-discrimination can be found at [www.mtsu.edu/titleix](http://www.mtsu.edu/titleix).

## FIELD EXPERIENCE

The Field Experience is an integral part of our Master of Library Science Program. It provides hands-on experience and the opportunity to put knowledge into practice.

To get started, download the Field Experience Handbook and print the appropriate field experience application. Each of your placements requires an application. All students must submit a field experience application before they start the experience.

After approval by the instructor, the field experience may be started up to 4 weeks in advance (See p. 6). Please check with the instructor to understand what is required when doing this. Starting early is not a requirement and is recommended only when fulfilling the required hours during the semester is not possible.

### CONDITIONS FOR TAKING THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

- **You have taken at least 4 library science courses, and you have a 3.0 GPA in the library science courses completed.**
- **If you are seeking school library endorsement you will complete your field experience in a school library. Endorsement students need to demonstrate appropriate library media specialist competencies as assessed by the TEAM rubric.**
- **Endorsement students will gain experience in at least two schools of different grade levels.**
- **For each field placement you must select a different sponsor library. If placed at your own library, you must offset the hours (work an additional hour for each practicum hour).**
- **You have applied by the deadline, requested the permit to enroll [if needed], and enrolled before classes begin for the semester of field experience.**

The field experience for the degree and/or the endorsement requires you to complete 3 credits of LIBS 6550. Each field experience covers 100 clock hours. LIBS 6550 is a 3-credit course which *must* be taken once to fulfill the requirements. If the student believes that they can benefit from completing another field experience, then they may register once again for LIBS 6550 as an elective. Field experiences are culminating experiences that bring together all you have learned in your classes. Ideally, they should be taken at the end of your program. If you are seeking endorsement, you must complete your hours in a school library. Students not seeking school library endorsement may seek field experiences from a variety of library types including public, academic, archival, business, etc. Some institutions (such as Nashville Public Library) have their own application process. You must gain

approval from them as well as MTSU. Please submit a copy of your application along with the institution's application if applicable. It is your responsibility to submit your application(s) to the institutions and follow their directives if, when, and where necessary. Field sites should be arranged by the student. If you need help finding a placement, please contact Holly Hebert at [holly.hebert@mtsu.edu](mailto:holly.hebert@mtsu.edu). Contact the librarian at the chosen site to inquire about placement. The director or principal at the site must agree to your placement.

The instructor takes this charge from these oversight entities seriously. Please do not try to 'slide by' or be minimally committed to the experience. Any hint that you are doing so will be interpreted as evidence that you are not committed to this profession and should not continue in the program.

The LIBS 6550 course lays out all requirements at the beginning of the semester. It is your responsibility to fulfill all the requirements by completing each of the assignments. Your best work is expected. Do not forget that a field experience also might lead to an invaluable professional reference you may use once when you are engaged in your professional job search.

The placement site is approved unless one of the faculty members contact you. Contact your instructor for guidance as you get started.

# FIELD EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS

## DURING YOUR PLACEMENT

Your field experience is very important. Please remember that sponsors are doing this out of the goodness of their heart. It is extra work for a sponsor to host a field experience student. We trust you to make the time worked worthwhile. When you interview or get a library job, a poor field experience will be apparent. The library world is a small place. A good field experience can open the door to future connections and jobs.

## FIELD EXPERIENCE HOURS

The field experience is a required professional experience for the **MTSU M.L.S.** degree. If you feel that you cannot fulfill the requirements of the field experience, you should **not** enroll in the library science program.

Keep track of all hours, whether work hours or observation hours.

Sponsored and Observation hours require an email from the library to the university instructor stating the days and hours worked. The email may be sent at the end of the experience.

### HOURS FOR THE FIELD EXPERIENCE

- **No fewer than 60 hours in the host library**
- **No more than 40 hours in observations at other libraries.**
- **These two components must total 100 hours for each field experience**
- **Endorsement students will complete all hours in school libraries**

## THE HOURS YOU HAVE TO WORK

- It is recommended that the 60+ hours should be worked in at least 3-hour sessions. Shorter work sessions are generally not productive.
- Observations can be completed in as little as 1-hour sessions. Visit different types of libraries (not including the primary site).
- If you are the librarian of record at a library, you can use that library for one field experience. It can be the primary library for the 60 hours. Those hours must be offset.

## THE FIELD EXPERIENCE APPLICATION PACKET

The COMPLETE application includes:

- The completed and signed Field Experience Application including required signatures. The second application only needs the application pages.
- A copy of your teacher license, if seeking endorsement as a school librarian.

The application packet must be completed and submitted by:

- April 15 for summer field experiences (start in mid-May-Aug)
- August 15 for fall field experiences (start when fall semester starts)
- January 5 for spring field experiences (start when spring semester starts)

**Background checks may be required by the library (not required by MTSU)**

Please complete, scan, and send all application materials to:

Holly Hebert [holly.hebert@mtsu.edu](mailto:holly.hebert@mtsu.edu)

If you need to send by regular mail, please use this address:

Womack Educational Leadership Department  
Master of Library Science Program  
Middle Tennessee State University  
1301 E. Main Street  
MTSU Box 0091  
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Please make sure that you share assignments with the sponsor so that they will know what is expected of you and them. The **sponsor letter** is what you give them when you are arranging the field experience. The assignment materials are in the course website. Your instructor may be able to provide a syllabus before the class starts.

**Nashville Public Library and Ingram have additional requirements for their field experiences (called internships). Please inquire directly with these two organizations about these requirements, not with the MLS Program.**

## IF YOU CHOOSE TO START WORKING YOUR HOURS PRIOR TO THE SEMESTER OF ENROLLMENT IN THE FIELD EXPERIENCE:

- You will not have access to an instructor since instructors work only during the semester for which they are hired.
- You will not have access to the class until the semester of enrollment begins. Contact the instructor for the syllabus and required assignments.
- Without access to the course, you will only know some of the specifications for the class.
- The option to work in advance of the semester is a concession given so that you can tailor the field experience to meet your needs. If you decide to work hours in advance, you need to understand and accept the consequences of the conditions.
- Permission and a signed Memorandum of Understanding are required (see page 7 below).
- You may start accumulating hours up to one month in advance of the start of the semester.
- Observation hours can be completed any time during the semester.

If you are the 'librarian of record' at your field experience site, then the hours you work in your own library can be used as field experience hours only if those are unpaid hours. You may add hours to your day or add weekend, school break, or holiday work that will cover the hours you count for field experience. In other words, you must 'exchange' hours spent in field experience for paid hours. The arrangement can be discussed with your employer and a log of exchanged hours must be kept and signed by the administration in your library. University policy does not allow paid field experience hours. Exchanged hours may be book fairs, program planning, weekend activities, lunch duty, meetings that are outside of work hours, etc.

### SCHOOL ENDORSEMENT ONLY: COLLABORATIVE TEACHING

Teaching in a **collaborative** environment is an essential skill. Course standards emphasize the teaching component of school librarianship. The sponsoring librarian must understand this and guarantee opportunities to teach library skills in collaboration with a teacher. Failure to teach the required lessons will result in an unsuccessful field experience. Do not engage in a field experience that has no such opportunity.

**REGARDING WORKING BEFORE THE SEMESTER OF ENROLLMENT BEGINS**

**MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING**

- These hours are within one month in advance of the semester time frame (verified by the librarians or principal).
- I will not have access to an instructor since Instructors work only during the semester for which they are hired.
- Observations at libraries outside of the sponsoring library must be completed within the \_\_\_\_\_ of the semester (with 4 weeks in advance + the first 4 weeks, you have 8 weeks to complete the observations) In other words, those hours are normally completed BEFORE I start work at the sponsoring library. I will make sure to complete at least 7 hours of observation in this pre-semester time frame.
- I will not have access to the class D2L website until the semester of enrollment begins.
- The fieldPortfolio due date will depend upon when I finish my 100 clock hours; therefore, I might enter the semester with my fieldPortfolio due almost immediately.
- The option to work in advance of the semester is a concession given so that I can tailor the field experience to meet my needs. If I decide to work hours in advance, I understand and accept the consequences of these conditions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Library Science Program Director or Instructor  
(signed when received and added to application file)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Library

\_\_\_\_\_  
Library Address including street, city, state, and zip code

## Field Experience Application

Please print out the next 4 pages, complete the two application pages with your field experience sponsor, scan, and email back to Dr. Holly Hebert at [holly.hebert@mtsu.edu](mailto:holly.hebert@mtsu.edu)

Please leave the sponsor letter with your Field Experience Sponsor.

Thank you!



# FIELD EXPERIENCE APPLICATION – PAGE ONE

## APPLICANT INFORMATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Workplace

\_\_\_\_\_  
Job Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
MSTU Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

## COURSE INFORMATION

Semester (Check one):  Fall  Spring  Summer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Year

**LIBS 6550 - 3 CREDITS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Course

\_\_\_\_\_  
CRN#

\_\_\_\_\_  
Number of credits this semester (including field experience)

Yes  No  
Is this your first Field Experience?

## SPONSOR INFORMATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
Proposed Sponsor Library

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Librarian's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Librarian's Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Librarian's Phone

# FIELD EXPERIENCE APPLICATION – PAGE TWO

## REQUIRED SIGNATURES

I have read and agree to the guidelines for the Field Experience courses (LIBS 6550). I agree to contact Dr. Holly Hebert if I have any questions or concerns.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervising Librarian at 60-hour host library

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## REFERENCES FOR HOST LIBRARY TO CONTACT

### REFERENCE #1 PRINCIPAL OR EMPLOYER

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

### REFERENCE #2 CO-WORKER

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

Dear Field Experience Sponsor,

Thank you for agreeing to sponsor an MTSU Master of Library Science (MLS) student in your library this semester! The field experience is an opportunity for them to participate in the day-to-day life of the profession and help initiate them into the wonderful profession that we practice.

The MTSU program is grounded in the ALA Competencies and ALA/AASL/CAEP School Librarian Preparation Standards (2019). We work diligently to teach the students both theory and practical applications. In these days of high-stakes accountability, librarians must have a sound grasp of the “why” along with the “how” of library practice and librarianship. We rely upon the field experience to teach the daily routines and the depth of thinking and analysis required by librarianship. Here are some examples of the relationship between the coursework and the field experience.

- The cataloging class teaches the foundation of creating a basic cataloging record (ISBD, AACR2, MARC, LCSH, and RDA) in a MARC record format. In your library, they can use a specific automated system that handles circulation, catalog record input, and reporting.
- Lesson plans or library programming plans are created in several classes. In your library, students should implement programs/lessons, practice collaboration, practice management of user behaviors, and assess the success of their programs/ lessons.
- Students have explored 75-100 pieces of literature for children and young adults. In your library, they can practice Reader’s Advisory, reading aloud, selection, and evaluation of this literature.
- Students have examined current library policies and written policies based on case studies. In your library, they will see the application of policies.
- Students have interviewed various stakeholders. In your library, they can see how the groups fit together to create a library and its services.
- The field experience is planned as a time of application of skills, knowledge, and dispositions learned in coursework.

These are some of the activities that students should experience while under your supervision:

1. Attendance at various stakeholder meetings and discussions with users.
2. Preparation of programming. In a school library, the MTSU MLS student teaches lessons in order to integrate information literacy skills into a curriculum area. Collaboration should be present.
3. Instruction and practice in the use of technology that your library may use.
4. Performance of and notes on processing routines. A few hours of this is sufficient.
5. Cataloging with an integrated library system such as Polaris or Follett. Since school systems across the state use many different ILS products, our program does not teach the use of a specific ILS.
6. Collection management—book repair, inventory, shelf management, weeding, etc.
7. Planning and executing special events such as book fairs, maker fairs, author events, etc.

8. Budget planning—share how you receive and allocate your budget
9. How interactions with boards, governmental bodies, friends’ groups, parent groups affect the library.

The activities listed above will expose students to the wide range of experiences that library professionals encounter in the workplace. You may assign the student to any activities with which you need assistance or to activities that you think are valuable to their training.

Repetitive project type activities are discouraged since they are focused often too narrowly to provide the genuine learning that is the goal of the field experience. If you have a project to be completed and would like to assign the student to it, please limit it to only a portion of the field practice experience time frame. You also will have to ensure that opportunities are provided to fulfill the required elements. The best experience is hands-on. Please let the student participate and fulfill duties as much as possible. Discuss the “why” of decision making as you go through the day. Because the student has so much to learn from you, it is necessary that professional librarians are present when they are working with your library.

### THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENTS ARE NEEDED:

#### FOR STUDENT (POST IN DROPBOX):

- **FORMATIVE SELF ASSESSMENT:** (instructions provided in D2L)

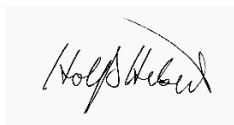
#### SPONSORING LIBRARIAN

#### (EMAIL TO THE UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTOR AND STUDENT)

- **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:** A **mid-practice summary** of the student’s performance. Please email this to the university instructor. **The student will provide the forms.**
- **SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:** Assessed at the end of the field practice experience. **The student will provide the forms.**
- **EVALUATION OF LESSONS (School Library students) OR PROGRAM (Generalists students)**

The instructor and I are available at all times during the placement should there be any issues of concern. Thank you so much for your contribution to the education of future librarians!

Sincerely,



Holly Hebert, Ed.D., M.L.I.S.