

THE CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH PERCEIVED QUALITY IN SCHOOLS OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE: AN UPDATE AND PREDICTION

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A previous study of mine undertook to examine the characteristics associated with perceived quality in schools of library and information science [1]. An empirical model was developed, using the statistical technique of discriminant analysis, which predicted correctly in fifty-six of fifty-seven cases whether or not a school would be ranked. In this study, "ranked" was defined as having a top-quality master's program or having faculty who contribute significantly to the advancement of the profession, as reported in both of Herbert White's perception studies [2, 3]. This model (canonical correlation = .8849) was based on consideration of the following variables, listed in order of their correlation (given in parentheses) with the discriminant analysis function [1]:

1. The half-life of the school's doctoral graduates, or the number of years between 1986 and the year the school graduated 50 percent of its doctoral graduates (.50).
 2. The total budget of the school (.43).
 3. All income *not* from the school's parent body, that is, grant funds, continuing education income, endowment income, and so forth (.33).
 4. The age of the master's degree program (.29).
 5. Faculty research output (.28).
 6. The number of full-time equivalent students (.27).
 7. The presence of a separate library school library (.24).
 8. A leadership quotient measuring the dean's professional leadership (.22).
 9. The core curriculum, or the percent of the curriculum required of all students (-.17).
 10. The number of media and/or computer center support staff in the school (.16).
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Discriminant
Analysis
Scores

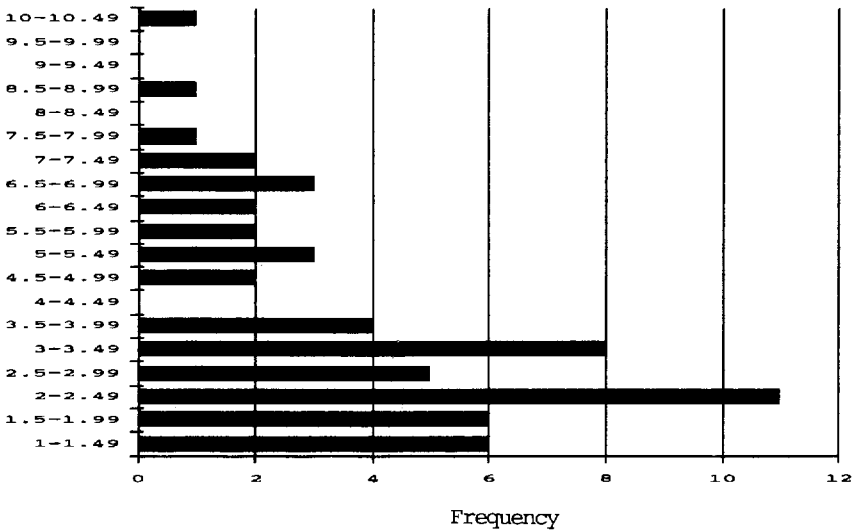


FIG. 1.—Histogram depicting distribution of discriminant analysis scores

11. An index of a program's rigor ($-.09$).
12. The number of contact hours students have with professors, calculated by multiplying the number of credit hours required to graduate by the number of weeks per term ($.05$).
13. The average salary of the school's graduates for that year ($.04$).

The present article reports a test of this model using current data in order to predict, were a perception study to be done today, which schools would be ranked. This analysis was limited to the first six variables listed above, since they are the most important; that is, each explains more than 7 percent of the variance. Where possible, each has been updated. Variable number 4 was recalculated to 1992; numbers 2, 3, and 6 were taken from the 1991 Association of Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) statistical report [4]; number 1 was updated to 1990, also using the 1991 ALISE statistical report; and number 5 was left unchanged. Utilizing the unstandardized canonical discriminant function coefficients from the previous study, new discriminant scores were computed for each accredited school (except Columbia and Brigham Young, each of which has announced its closing) listed in the 1991 ALISE statistical report.

In the original study, the scores had a range of 8.87, from -3.82 to 5.05 . In this update, scores have a range of 9.25 , from a low of 1.10 to a high of 10.35 . It is not possible in this study to demarcate exactly the two groups of ranked and unranked schools. The histogram shown in figure 1, however, presents a rather clear picture. In the original study, sixteen schools were predicted to be ranked; here, seventeen schools have scores above 4.5 and forty schools have scores below 4.0 . In alphabetical order, those schools that the formula predicts would be ranked now are University of California, Berkeley; University of California, Los Angeles; Florida State University; University of Illinois; Indiana University; University of Maryland; University of Michigan; State University of New York at Albany; University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; University of Pittsburgh; Rutgers—The State University; Simmons College; Syracuse University; University of Texas at Austin; University of Toronto; University of Western Ontario; and University of Wisconsin—Madison.

In the future, this empirical model can be used in concert with or possibly in place of White's perception model.

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