



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
TENNESSEE  
KNOXVILLE

# Unconventional careers in consulting for LIS professionals

Devendra Potnis, PhD

Associate Professor

School of Information Sciences

College of Communication and Information

# Overview

1. Why consulting?

2. Goal of this talk

3. Types of consulting opportunities for LIS professionals

4. So what?

# 1. Why consulting?

Changing needs of patrons and communities libraries serve

- Pandemics like COVID-19
- Natural disasters like floods and earthquakes

Rapidly changing technology landscape and subsequent opportunities and issues

- Mobile technologies, Artificial intelligence, Cloud computing, Cybersecurity, etc.

Benefits for libraries

- New partnerships with businesses and NGOs
- “Doing good” for the society
- Enhanced public image and perceived value
- More funding from government agencies and private grants

Benefits for librarians

- Additional source of income
- Lifelong learning opportunities

## 2. Goal of this talk

- This talk presents four types of consulting opportunities for librarians based on my empirical research and teaching practices



### 3. Unconventional career opportunities

- A. Mobile technology consultants
  - Project MISSILE funded by IMLS
- B. Information consultants
  - INSC 542: Social Informatics
- C. Financial, digital, & information literacy consultants
  - Project FILTER funded by ALISE and OCLC
- D. Farming consultants
  - Project “Rural libraries for digital inclusion of farming communities” funded by IMLS

## 3A. Librarians as mobile technology consultants

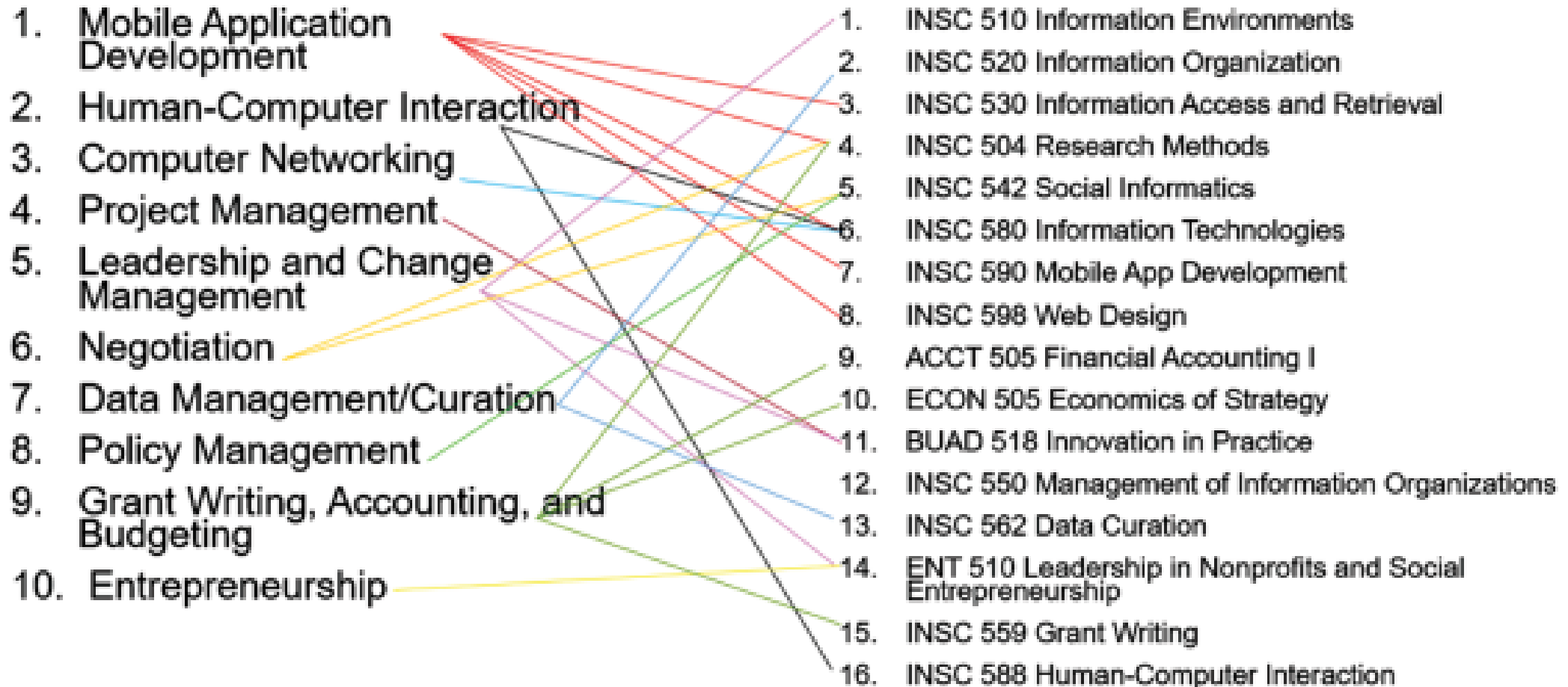
Ten competencies needed for librarians to serve as mobile technology consultants for businesses and NGOs

Project MISSILE (Mobile Information Skills and Solutions in Library Education)

- Federally funded project:  
<https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/re-22-16-0038-16>

## Competencies

## Courses at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville



**Figure 1:** Mapping competencies on MISSILE coursework at the University of Tennessee. Created by Potnis and Allard (2018) under <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>.

# Publications related to my grant

- Potnis, D. & Allard, S. (2018). [Developing MISSILE curriculum to train LIS students as mobile technology consultants](#). *Association of Library and Information Science Education 2018 Conference*, Denver, Colorado, 66-69.
- Potnis, D., Allard, S., & Cortez, E. (2018). [Proposing interdisciplinary curriculum for developing mobile technology consultants for libraries & not-for-profit organizations](#). *10th Annual International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies (EDULEARN18)*, Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 7476-7480.
- Potnis, D. & Allard, S. (2018). [Training LIS students as mobile technology consultants for libraries and not-for-profit organizations](#). *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 59(4), 253-264.
- Potnis, D., Regenstreif-Harms, R., Deosthali, K., Cortez, E., & Allard, S. (2016). [Skills and knowledge needed to serve as mobile technology consultants in information organizations](#). *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 57(2), 187-196.
- Potnis, D., Cortez, C., & Allard, S. (2015). [Educating LIS students to serve as mobile technology consultants](#). Poster presentation at the Centennial Celebration of the Association for Library & Information Science Education Conference, Chicago, IL.



## 3B. Librarians as information consultants

INSC 542 Social Informatics course at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville

- <https://sis.utk.edu/dp/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2021/01/INSC-542-Social-Informatics-Syllabus-2021-1.pdf>

Field project questionnaire for public librarians to serve as information consultants for for-profit and not-for-profit organizations

Outcome: Pro-bono consultation of students with over 55 for-profit and not-for-profit organizations

- <https://sis.utk.edu/dp/community-engagement>



## 3C. Librarians as financial, digital, & information literacy consultants



- We developed and assessed a toolkit for librarians to serve as financial, digital, & information literacy consultants for patrons who earn less than \$2 a day in developing countries
  - Unified mobile, financial, and information literacy toolkit
    - <https://sis.utk.edu/dp/toolkit>

# 3D. Librarians as farming consultants

- Equipping librarians to consult with local farming communities for digital inclusion
- Goals of our planning grant
  1. Collect and analyze ICT needs of farming communities
  2. Gather and assess the willingness, capabilities, needs, and challenges of rural libraries to meet the ICT needs of farming communities in Tennessee
  3. Identify challenges and solutions for rural libraries to collaborate with the 4-H network to better serve farming communities

4H - Head, Heart, Hands, and Health: <https://www.4-h-learns.org/whatis4H>
  4. Identify interdisciplinary courses, guest speakers, and practicum opportunities as part of building a certificate program on “Digital Inclusion of Farming Communities” for librarians
- Federally funded grant proposal
  - <https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/re-252320-ols-22>

## 4. So what?

There is rarely any guidance for librarians to venture into unconventional careers

This talk fills in the gap with research-based, data-driven guidance for librarians

Questions?

Comments?

Email me at [dpotnis@utk.edu](mailto:dpotnis@utk.edu)

