RESEARCH METHODS WITHIN THE MLA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOLARLY INQUIRY IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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1   ABSTRACT

This pilot study analyzes research methods courses offered within North American MLA programs and their potential implications on scholarly inquiry within landscape architecture. Despite more emerging landscape architecture faculty holding doctoral degrees than in previous generations and emergence of some landscape architecture doctoral programs, the MLA is still widely regarded as the discipline's terminal degree. In published landscape architecture academic position announcements—which typically list doctoral degrees as not required, but preferred credentials— the MLA is assumed to be sufficient training for meeting the research/creative scholarship outputs demanded by many university tenure and promotion processes. This study analyzes research methods courses offered within North American MLA programs and their potential implications on scholarly inquiry within landscape architecture. Direct content analysis of selected research methods course syllabi provided insights on stated course learning outcomes, methods covered, course delivery format, student-generated deliverables, and their relative apportionment toward course grades. Because research questions are necessarily aligned with corresponding research methods, the range of methods that emerging academics are formally taught may impact the range of scholarly inquiries they pursue, the resulting peer-reviewed products they produce, and ultimately their access to a complete range of scholarly dissemination venues. A broad analysis of how MLA programs educate emerging academics in the craft of research illuminates potential implications for the discipline's ability to effectively pursue its full range of possible scholarly inquiries and presents opportunities for future research.

1.1   Keywords
Research Methods, Scholarly Productivity, Faculty, MLA.