For Immediate Release

ONE-TIME, THREE-YEAR DIGITAL LIBRARIANSHIP PROGRAM ANNOUNCED AT EMMORY UNIVERSITY

A select group of North Georgians soon will have a one-time opportunity to earn an accredited master’s degree in library and information science (MLIS) from the University of North Texas – without ever leaving their home state.

Emory University, the University of North Texas and the Atlanta University Center’s Robert W. Woodruff Library will offer the three-year, distance-learning degree curriculum between 2008 and 2010 using a $700,000 grant from the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program. Graduates of the distance-learning opportunity, which is accredited by the American Library Association (ALA), will develop special expertise in digital knowledge management, says Martin Halbert, director of library systems for the Emory University Libraries.

“Librarians of the future must be able to create, use and preserve not just paper, but digital text, audio and video, as well,” Halbert said. “They may be working with digital photographs of rare books, or sets of computer data collected by researchers. Digital knowledge management ensures that the librarians of tomorrow create, collect and care for such material appropriately, and that they are well-versed in the computer systems they’ll be using.”

This one-time degree program will be announced Sat., Sept. 29 during Emory’s Homecoming Week, to mark Emory’s new opportunity to contribute to librarianship education.

A total of 35 candidates of diverse backgrounds will be accepted into the program. Scholarships of $12,800 per person will be available, said Herman Totten, Dean of the University of North Texas School of Library and Information Sciences.

“These scholarships will enable many students to fulfill their dream of completing an accredited master’s degree,” Totten said. “We are very thankful to our colleagues at the Robert W. Woodruff Library of Emory University for their support of our program.”

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The Atlanta University Center’s Woodruff Library is deeply interested in collaborating with Emory’s Woodruff Library on this project and in other capacities, said Loretta Parham, Director and CEO of AUC Woodruff Library.

“This opportunity to train and support a new generation of library professionals is an especially golden one,” Parham said. “Developing digital librarians and providing scholarships to AUC students and library staff, as well as the larger community, is so timely, and will generate great excitement throughout Atlanta and Georgia.”

In addition to their online coursework, students will attend workshops locally that are taught by leaders in the field of digital libraries; serve digital library internships; and enjoy networking opportunities in preparation for their job searches.

The one-time program provides the only an ALA-accredited education option based in North Georgia. The entire state is home to 385 public library branches and other service outlets, including 20 bookmobiles, according to the Georgia Public Library Service. That figure does not include other types of libraries, such as those in private schools, colleges and those run by the federal government.

Graduates of the program will help meet a portion of the growing national need for librarians. Librarianship has one of the highest median ages of any occupation – 47 years old, according to the ALA. Based on U.S. Census data, more than 25 percent of all librarians with master's degrees will turn 65 before 2009. This data does not take into account early retirement, death or other reasons for leaving the profession before reaching 65.

The Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program, administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, has funded 2,913 master’s degree students, 178 doctoral students, 1,166 pre-professional students, and 5,629 continuing education students.

Those interested in being considered for the program offered through Emory can learn more at either of two information sessions in Atlanta:

7 p.m. Monday, October 15, 2007
White Hall, Rm. 206
201 Dowman Drive
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia, 30322
Phone: (404) 727-6868

7-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 16, 2007
Robert W. Woodruff Library
Atlanta University Center
Virginia Lacy Jones Exhibition Hall
111 James P. Brawley Dr., S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30314
Phone: (404) 978-2000
Or, they may visit the following conference booth:

Thursday and Friday, October 18 and 19, 2007  
Georgia Council of Media Organizations Conference – Georgia Library Association  
Booth 305  
Jekyll Island Convention Center - Caldwell Hall  
1175 N. Beachview Drive  
Jekyll Island, Georgia, GA 31527  
For more information, contact Yvonne Chandler at 940-565-2445, or via email at chandler@lis.admin.unt.edu; or, contact Charlotte Thomas at 940-369-7275, or via email at cthomas@lis.admin.unt.edu.

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The Emory University Libraries in Atlanta and Oxford, Ga., are dedicated to fostering courageous inquiry among students and scholars at Emory University and around the world. The nine libraries' holdings include more than 3.1 million print and electronic volumes, 40,000-plus electronic journals, and internationally renowned special collections. Visit the libraries online.

Emory University is one of the nation’s leading private research universities and a member of the Association of American Universities. Emory is known for its demanding academics, outstanding undergraduate college of arts and sciences, highly ranked professional schools and state-of-the-art research facilities. Emory is ranked as one of the country's top 20 national universities by U.S. News & World Report. In addition to its nine schools, the university encompasses The Carter Center, Yerkes National Primate Research Center and Emory Healthcare, the state's largest and most comprehensive health care system.

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