EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL

REPORT

on the

Master of Library and Information Science Program

at the

University of British Columbia

School of Library, Archival and Information Studies

Submitted to the

American Library Association

Committee on Accreditation

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INTRODUCTION

This report represents the collective effort of the members of the External Review Panel (ERP) constituted by the American Library association (ALA) Committee on Accreditation (COA) to examine the Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) program at the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies (SLAIS), the iSchool at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The observations and presentation of evidence which follow are based on the SLAIS self-study program presentation (PP) document, including complementary materials, an on-site visit conducted November 13-15, 2016, in-person interviews conducted with senior UBC administrators, librarians, SLAIS professors, both full-time and part-time, and meetings with students, alumni of the program, and employers who have hired its graduates.

The initial plan for the review was discussed in a teleconference involving the SLAIS Acting Director, the Director of the ALA Office for Accreditation, and the ERP chair. This was followed by the submission of a draft SLAIS Program Presentation which was forwarded to all ERP members for comments and constructive criticism. Conscientiously adopting all suggestions, the SLAIS Program Accreditation Working Group then finalized their Program Presentation, delivering it to the ERP in advance of our site visit.

The significance of the outcome of this review for the future of the SLAIS program and its students was reflected in the composition of this ERP team, consisting of seasoned members, all of whom had prior experience in this regard, some having chaired prior reviews and served on adjudicating committees associated with the accreditation decision appeals process:

- Clément Arsenault, Director, School of Library and Information Science, Université de Montréal

- Rick Block, Metadata Librarian, Lemieux Library and McGoldrick Learning Commons, Seattle University
- Kenneth-Roy Bonin, ERP Chair, Senior Fellow, Faculty of Public Affairs, Carleton University
- Christine Jacobs, Chair, Information and Library Technologies Department, John Abbott College, Montreal
- Joe Janes, Associate Professor, University of Washington Information School
- Joanne Marshall, Distinguished Research Professor, School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In addition, as per established practise when reviewing a program at a Canadian university, the team was accompanied by an observer, Jenny Benedict, Director, West Vancouver Memorial Library, appointed by the Canadian Library Association (since restructured as the Canadian Federation of Library Associations).

As a general introduction to our report, attention should be drawn to a few noteworthy considerations concerning the context, character and the areas of concentration that distinguish this review. The first is the period of transition in which the University currently finds itself. The new UBC President took office only a few months before the ERP site visit. As with the SLAIS Director herself, acting appointments and others covering for absent administrators determined who would meet with us from the offices of the Provost, the Dean of Arts, and the University Librarian. While this might suggest instability at first glance, the offices were represented by continuing senior members of the administrative team in each case, committed to the sustainability of policies for which they remain responsible in returning to their permanent positions. Secondly, the tone adopted by those we interviewed, and likewise throughout the prepared Program Presentation document itself, reveals a marked reluctance to engage in any overt self-promotion. The self-study and its complementary materials provide a wealth of information to digest, with the importance of certain points not always readily evident in the main text. Never exaggerated, evidence sometimes simply cites an electronic source or

references an appendix. Finally, the COA decision to grant SLAIS only conditional

accreditation, following its previous review, directed observations to shortcomings in compliance

with *Standards I.2, II.7* and *IV.6* as they refer to program objectives stated in terms of student

learning outcomes, curriculum evaluation including assessment of student achievements, and

such evaluation applied to program development. These received due attention, as confirmed in

this report, but conscious of our mandate and, recognizing that things can and do change, even

over the course of a few years, the ERP conducted a comprehensive examination of evidence

associated with all six ALA accreditation *Standards.*

STANDARD I: Mission, Goals and Objectives

The issues of non-compliance that were previously associated with elements of this *Standard* are

addressed concisely in the Introduction to the Program Presentation (PP, pp. 3-6) and

comprehensively in subsequent discussion of other *Standards*. The *Plan for Removal of

Conditional Accreditation Status* (PP, Appendix 1) is supplemented by two *Conditional Status

Progress Reports* (PP, Appendices 2 and 3). The Program Presentation outlines an on-going,

broad-based consultative planning process (PP, pp. 29-33), as graphically depicted in Figure I-C

(PP, p. 31), and confirmed as an implemented and sustainable effort in the *iSchool Guidelines for

Planning and Assessment* (PP, Appendix 6).

Corroboration in this regard is particularly evident in the results that the process has achieved. As

an academic unit within the Faculty of Arts, reporting through its Dean to the UBC Provost /

Vice-president Academic, SLAIS has mapped its mission, goals and objectives (PP, pp. 9, 10) to

those of the Faculty and the University (PP, Table I-A, pp. 13, 14). This was supported by an

external review (reported in Appendix 5) involving the extensive participation of constituents

and stakeholders, both external and internal (PP, pp. 11, 12). The only exception to complete synergy in this respect mentions international engagement (PP, p. 12), which the iSchool has not yet formally adopted as a major focus, notwithstanding a very strong contingent of foreign students already enrolled in its courses. The MLIS program mission and goals are based on learning outcomes, and the iSchool graduate competencies mirror those of the ALA, and the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (PP, pp. 10, 11). Reflecting the graduate program academic oversight provided by the UBC Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS), the MLIS program also subscribes to the G+PS *Graduate Student Strategy and Operational Plan* framework (PP, pp. 14, 15). In summary, the SLAIS proof in practice submitted in relation to this *Standard* proposes a record of accomplishments rather than a desiderata list of things yet to be achieved.

SLAIS enjoys a confirmed lead over other academic units in the Faculty of Arts, and in the UBC generally, with reference to the definition of student learning outcomes and in the recognition of their utility to curriculum planning. This speaks specifically to the COA requirement that program learning outcomes align themselves to graduate competencies. Illustration of this orientation shows the link established between course objectives and specific competencies (e.g., PP, Figure I-A, p. 17), based on curriculum mapping exercises identifying relevant courses and even particular assignments (PP, pp. 16, 17). A chart provides the complete mapping of MLIS graduate competencies with the ALA *Standards I.2.1 – I.2.10* (PP, Appendix 13). Table I-B (PP, pp. 17-22) shows how this applies to core and elective courses. Attainment of these competencies must also be measured to indicate the level of student learning achieved. To demonstrate compliance with this ALA requirement, SLAIS recurrently and publicly reports its evaluation results (see cited websites, PP, p. 23). The metrics and consultative methods

employed in these efforts are extensive, as outlined in Table I-C (PP, pp. 24, 25), but also include

assessment data used for curriculum development (PP, Table I-D, pp. 25-9, and Appendix 51).

During interviews, senior University administrators overtly applauded SLAIS success in these

realizations, noting that the iSchool has implemented a "most explicit and thorough thought-

through approach…" to the challenge of applying learning outcomes to curriculum development

(Interview, Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies), and that it could serve as a "model

for the Faculty" (Interview, Acting Dean of Arts). Similarly noting the impetus provided by the

ALA accreditation process in developing what the SLAIS Learning Outcomes Assessment

Committee (LOAC) described as "a way to systematically show that we work this way"

(Interview, LOAC), the UBC Associate Vice-provost and Associate Vice-president, Academic

Affairs contended that the "iSchool could be a leader" in planning, having already adopted

sustainable initiatives in experiential learning, co-operative education and indigenous studies

"way ahead" of the rest of the University (Interview, AVP).

In addition to such accolades acknowledging accomplishments in systematic review, planning

and development, indications that this momentum is sustainable include an established five-year

planning cycle (PP, p. 29 and Table I-B, p. 30, 31), a functioning Learning Outcomes

Assessment Committee with formal terms of reference requiring regular reporting (PP, p. 31, 32

and Appendices 7 and 9), as well as further realizations discussed under the sections of this

report dealing with *Standards II – Curriculum* and *IV – Students*.

<u>STANDARD II</u>: Curriculum

SLAIS program planning is directly linked to its goals and objectives. There is evidence that the

planning and development of the curriculum is systematic and consistent, based on documented

and well-established feedback mechanisms. The graduate competencies cover the range of theories, principles, practices and values necessary for the provision of library and information services (PP, pp. 10, 11, 31, 39-47, 49; Appendices 6, 7 and 10; Interviews with Director, Curriculum Committee, Assessment Committee).

Four core courses required in the first year, plus a required course in management, ensure that all students are exposed to a broad introduction to the basic knowledge and processes in the field of library and information management. Interviewed students spoke appreciatively of the strong foundational knowledge built through these courses. The elective courses cover the range of curricular areas identified in the S*tandard*. Three informal pathways provide guidance in choosing appropriate electives (PP, pp. 51, 52, 61, 62; syllabi).

The importance of leadership and advocacy is highlighted in various assignments and activities within the core courses. In addition, there are numerous courses that focus on information services to general and specific populations, notably children and youth services and First Nations (PP, pp. 51-3; syllabi). The co-op and other experiential learning opportunities foster independent, forward thinking and professional attitudes (Interviews with students, experiential learning supervisors and employers).

The curriculum reflects the knowledge evolving from basic and applied research. Examination of syllabi confirms that new knowledge and technology is being integrated into various courses. Core courses LIBR 507 and 508 serve as introductions to research methods and the role of research in the information fields, engaging students with scholarship and contemporary issues. In addition, there are research-oriented electives, and students have the option of a 12-credit thesis (PP, pp. 35, 53, 54; syllabi). SLAIS financially supports students to attend conferences to

present research and encourages them to engage in colloquium presentations, research workshops and iSchool Research Day (PP, pp. 46, 53, 54, 65, 66). The measures assessing student performance of research-focused competencies 1.4, 4, and 5.3 indicate strong student performance (PP, pp. 26, 28, 29, 46).

Based on 2015 feedback from employers, alumni and community members, SLAIS established a new approach to technology instruction (iTechFlex) that focuses on integrating technology across the curriculum, rather than through a designated course approach. iTechFlex involves independent learning on the part of students, support to instructors in integrating technology use into their courses, and a research and learning sandbox (Tech Sandbox). In addition, there are courses that centre on technology applications, and the new Information Interaction and Design pathway allows students to focus on these electives (currently 15 courses). Students have experienced some frustration in gaining access to outside courses in the computer science domain because of filled classes, but the 2016 hiring of Dr. Abdul-Mageed is expected to alleviate this (PP, pp. 47, 54, 55, 163, 164, Appendix 16; interviews with students and faculty).

Faculty indicated that they were pleased with the iTechFlex initiative and have found that students embrace it and are showing greater independence and innovation. Similarly, employers and experiential learning supervisors commented that students were very technologically adept. Many of the experiential projects are technologically based and supervisor evaluations were positive.

Diversity issues are addressed directly in a variety of courses, starting with the core course LIBR 508 (Information Practices in Contemporary Society). Electives include Community-Led Libraries, Client-Centred Services for Adults and Services to At-Risk and Special Needs Young

Adults. The new Community and Culture Pathway will help students choose electives focused in this area (PP, p. 55; syllabi).

There is also a unique First Nations Curriculum Concentration (FNCC) that is integrated within the MLIS program. Students in this concentration take 12-15 credits focused on indigenous cultures and related information needs and services. The curricular components reflect the needs and concerns of the relevant communities. Associated with the UBC First Nations House of Learning and the X̱wi7x̱wa Library, the concentration is supported by an advisory board and a broad group of consultants. In addition to taking courses within the MLIS program, students may take courses in the First Nations and Indigenous Studies program and in the First Nations and Endangered Languages program. In existence since 1998, the concentration has been revitalized under the current coordinator, Dr. Lisa Nathan, and enrolment has grown considerably, from five graduates in 2012-13 to a current enrolment of over 25 students. It is strongly aligned with the strategic initiatives of the Faculty of Arts and of the University as a whole. Courses in the concentration are available to all students in the MLIS program, and many outside the concentration take advantage of this (PP, pp. 55-7, 66, Appendix 22; Interviews with Coordinator and Director).

SLAIS recognizes the importance of responding rapidly to technological change. The iTechFlex initiative and the Tech Sandbox which makes innovative software and systems available to students for special projects and creative use, combined with computer labs, general-purpose and specialized software and a state-of-the-art multimedia collaboration pod, contribute to the ability of students and faculty to adopt change and to innovate. Faculty are encouraged to use technology-enhanced teaching methods where appropriate – for example, the use of eye-tracking and transaction-logging software to conduct usability studies (PP, pp. 55, 58).

Faculty integrate research and provide leadership in keeping the curriculum current and forward-looking. Courses such as Information Visualization and Visual Analytics address new developments. New courses can be created quickly as "topic courses" and may be added to the curriculum if judged successful and pertinent. The feedback acquired from the many experiential learning placements serves as an additional indicator of directions for change (PP, pp. 57, 58; Interviews).

In their course work and in their experiential learning, students are encouraged to be independent life-long learners. For example, through the iTechFlex approach they must accept responsibility for their own technological skills and take the steps necessary to upgrade them. Professional development is addressed formally in the core course LIBR 508 and in a number of electives. There are many opportunities for students to define their own paths of study and to customize assignments, directed studies and experiential learning opportunities. The various student chapters of professional organizations are active, presenting events and involving their memberships. Employers and experiential learning supervisors indicated that graduates were engaged with the profession, willing and able to learn independently and to research the information necessary to accomplish specific projects (PP, pp. 45, 46, 58-60; Interviews).

The four required core courses are completed in the first year. Students may choose a specific pathway (Data Services, Information Interaction and Design, or Community Culture) around which to build their course selections, or may design their own program. There are approximately 18 electives offered per semester. Within the designated pathways, primary, secondary and related electives are indicated. All courses are listed on the website along with their pre-requisites, goals, outcomes/objectives and content descriptions. As indicated above, students may enroll in the First Nations Curriculum Concentration. Students note that SLAIS is

very helpful in helping them design their individual programs of study and in supporting independent studies; they also spoke to the strength of the core courses in providing a coherent base upon which to build their knowledge. (PP, pp. 35, 36, 60-2, 64, 65, Appendices 21 and 50; Website; Interviews).

Students may take courses outside the program, either in allied programs (Master of Archival Studies, Master of Arts in Children's Literature), or in areas of specialization when appropriate to their program of study; examples are health sciences and First Nations knowledge. They may also take courses through the Web-based Information Science Education (WISE) consortium. A formal MLIS/MAS DUAL program is also possible, and a number of students spoke to their appreciation of this (PP, p. 61; Interviews).

SLAIS offers multiple experiential opportunities:

- The majority of students participate in a two-week Practicum (LIBR 595 non-credit).

- Students may also choose Professional Experience (LIBR 595) a for-credit project-based placement that requires 120 hours of work over 12-13 weeks. Approximately 50 students participate in this opportunity per year.

- The Graduating Project (LIBR 569R) requires the student to assess the information and technology needs and practices of a Vancouver area non-profit and to propose an appropriate project that must be delivered within the necessary time-frame.

- The extensive co-op program is under the auspices of the Faculty of Arts Co-op program. At any given time, approximately 150 students (new plus in-place) are enrolled in the non-credit program. Co-op positions are of 4 or 8 month's duration and are paid. (PP, pp. 36-8, 62-4, Interviews with coordinators, students).

Two to three online courses are offered every year, and SLAIS participates in the WISE consortium (15-25 students per year). Online courses are generally created with the support of UBC's Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, and correspond pedagogically to the face-to-face courses. WISE courses are chosen based on their potential to supplement the existing curriculum (PP, pp. 67, 68; Interview with CTLT Associate Director).

There is evidence that SLAIS has instituted a comprehensive and systematic set of feedback mechanisms that includes the various stakeholders, notably students, faculty members, experiential learning supervisors, alumni and employers. Students indicate that faculty are very responsive to their curricular concerns and that necessary adjustments are clearly and often quickly visible.

The "*iSchool Guidance Document for Program Planning and Assessment*" (PP, Appendix 6) explains the planning-assessment cycle, and the "*Learning Outcomes Assessment Program*" (PP, Appendix 10) shows the mapping of courses to competencies. The graduate competencies are clearly defined (PP, pp. 10,11), and the course outcomes have been explicitly linked to the competencies (PP, Appendix 10; syllabi). Direct and indirect assessment of course level outcomes is carried out through various measures There is clear evidence that the Curriculum Committee has worked productively with faculty and adjuncts in the formulation of course objectives as outcomes and that course assessments have been linked to these outcomes (PP, pp. 17-29, 40-6, Appendix 10, pp. 4, 5; syllabi; sample assignments; Interviews with Curriculum Committee, Assessment Committee, faculty). Core activities have been realigned and redesigned in response to assessment and student feedback (PP, pp. 47-9, Appendix 6; Curriculum Committee minutes; Interviews with Curriculum Committee, Assessment Committee and students).

The Curriculum Committee is currently rationalizing the niche electives to identify which should be retained and offered more predictably and which can be eliminated. These decisions will be based on enrolment data, course evaluations, an alumni survey and the competency mappings (Interview). Its primary mandate for 2016-2017 is to finalize an end-of-program assessment mechanism (capstone). The Committee has been investigating various options and instituted the Graduating Project which is offered annually and works well, but has proved impractical to implement as a one-size-fits-all requirement for graduation. It us now examining the possibilities of a portfolio approach (PP, pp. 133-5; Curriculum Committee minutes; Interview with Curriculum Committee).

It must be noted that SLAIS is considered a UBC leader in course design by learning outcomes (Interviews with CTLT Associate Director and Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies). The program revisions over the past two years have solidified a highly-integrated program in which content and course sequences have been carefully aligned.

STANDARD III: Faculty

SLAIS at present has 9 full time tenure-track research faculty (cf. PP, p. 75 which indicates 6), 1 tenured senior instructor, and 2 12-month term lecturers. There have been substantial changes during the review period, including promotions, retirements, resignations and new hires, as well as the appointment of an Acting Director. The overall mood and tone, as revealed in individual and small-group interviews with all faculty, is one of optimism, enthusiasm, collegiality, and an eagerness to move ahead. As one said, "people see a great future."

Lecturers at UBC are appointed through a formal hiring process for a maximum of 12 months, largely to fill specific teaching needs; those appointments can be renewed, and in practice at SLAIS, lecturers are given several months' notice regarding renewal. The full-time faculty mainly teach in areas of their professional and research expertise, and additionally have mapped their expertise to the graduate competencies (PP, p. 79, Table III-B). All full-time faculty (including lecturers) serve on committees and in other service capacities; the load can be heavy, given the small size of the faculty and the number of new initiatives being undertaken, though this does not seem to be a major impediment.

Part-time (adjuncts and sessional) faculty are hired to teach specific classes not covered by full-time faculty. Interviews with adjunct faculty demonstrate their engagement with the program, including an orientation and a new handbook meant to support them in the development and teaching of their courses, leading to a stronger connection to the school and program.

Numerous interviews with faculty at all ranks and levels indicated a strong feeling of support for the teaching and research environment at the school. At the institutional (UBC) level, faculty make use of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology which provides support on course design and implementation as well as Support Programs to Advance Research Capacity (SPARC) for assistance with grant applications. A Research Day, organized and led by faculty, provides an opportunity to showcase faculty and student research work.

Faculty also repeatedly mentioned – and praised – the work which has been done in the last three years in developing and implementing learning outcomes and the process of weaving those and their assessment into the curriculum, individual courses and in some cases down to the level of class assignments. A group meeting with students, echoed the responsiveness and adaptability of

faculty, which was also based on student feedback concerning the implementation of learning outcomes and their assessment.

In the last few years, there have been four successful cases for promotion and tenure; an additional one is pending this year. Each of these faculty indicated they felt the process went well. Prior to that point, there were very few tenured faculty, which made mentorship of untenured faculty challenging, and more than one person said they believed the quality of mentorship had improved considerably recently, likely resulting from several newly-tenured faculty. A new mentorship policy has been implemented, and some faculty also take advantage of mentorship from faculty in the broader Faculty of Arts. One assistant professor has recently decided to resign in his sixth year, and thus will not be moving forward to a tenure decision.

The SLAIS faculty is governed by publicly available policies and a strategic plan, at both the UBC and Faculty of Arts level, which explicitly address diversity and equity, and recent SLAIS position descriptions for faculty positions reflect their alignment with these (Appendices 26 and 27). Faculty also collectively bargain through the UBC Faculty Association, which covers the terms of their employment. (See note on PP, p. 93 regarding Canadian law concerning information and statistics-gathering.)

Table III.B (PP, pp. 75-8) lists the background and research interests of full time faculty along with their primary teaching areas and responsibilities, which in general align well. The list on PP p. 95 shows a wide range of professional associations and organizations with which faculty are involved. Interviews and discussions with faculty indicated a high level of care, enthusiasm, and satisfaction regarding their instructional roles, corroborated by commentary from students and alumni about their perceptions of the quality of teaching.

Table III-G (PP, p. 96) summarizes the research outputs of the full-time faculty in the three years since the previous comprehensive review, and shows over 400 works of varying forms, including several edited monographs, an average of over 20 per faculty member (including one lecturer whose sole explicitly stated responsibilities are teaching and service). In addition, SLAIS faculty have been successful in obtaining external funding from a variety of sources, both internal to UBC and externally. Further, several faculty serve on editorial boards and as reviewers for a range of journals.

The 16 full-time faculty represented in the review period received doctoral (or equivalent) degrees from 10 institutions. In interviews, faculty described substantial recent progress regarding establishing the terms of reference and charges for committees as well as clarity and communication within the faculty and between the faculty and administration. Connections with the field appear to vary by faculty member; there has been a regular session at the BCLA to present research, and many students attend, although as one informant said, "there are not a lot of faculty who go to conferences."

As noted previously in this report, a great deal of work has been done both on planning and assessment fronts over the last three years. Developments include the proposed merger with the School of Journalism and growth of the Bachelor of Media Studies degree. There was solid and consistent support for these moves (and a simultaneous lack of concern regarding the ongoing identity for the MLIS program within a new administrative structure), both as mechanisms for growing and strengthening the SLAIS position within the Faculty of Arts and UBC, as well as in providing opportunities for meaningful and beneficial collaboration on curriculum and research

and greater options for students. One faculty member described SLAIS as a "natural interdisciplinary locus" within the Faculty of Arts.

Course assignments are made by the Acting Director, in consultation with faculty members at the time of their annual review. Attempts are made to balance faculty interests and strengths with instructional needs, though all faculty interviewed saw that process as systematic, predictable, fair, equitably applied, and personally satisfactory. This includes term-appointed lecturers, who normally carry a teaching load of 8 courses per year at UBC, though at SLAIS, in recognition of their service role, they are assigned to teach 6. Minor revisions to courses can be made entirely within SLAIS, subject to review by the Curriculum Committee; only new courses require Faculty of Arts review and approval, facilitating the process significantly.

Faculty undergo an annual review process in the spring with the Director, based on a narrative self-assessment, which covers their research, teaching and service activities over the prior year. During that review, they also discuss potential teaching assignments for the future, including new areas, potential changes to teaching areas, etc. In general, initial teaching assignments are made around November for the next academic year, giving faculty considerable time for planning and preparation.

Student course evaluations are performed regularly, and Table III-E (PP, p. 94) shows consistently strong evaluations across all measures over the last three years. Curiously, Table III-F (PP, p. 94) reporting the results of a survey of students in Spring 2015, shows overall lower scores on a few general matters regarding teaching and program quality. Interviews with faculty provided little insight as to this discrepancy, and an open meeting with students yielded generally quite positive attitudes regarding faculty and teaching.

STANDARD IV: **Students**

The UBC iSchool strives to provide excellent student experiences and outcomes, alumni and community engagement, and socially relevant research in a supportive work environment. The onsite MLIS program is centrally located in the Irving K. Barber Learning Center(IKBLC) where students have ready access to program staff, faculty, classrooms and IT facilities. The iSchool offers a two-year MLIS program and a Dual program in which graduates receive both MLIS and MAS degrees. Enrolment since 2013 has been in a steady state, with around 160 - 170 students in the stand alone MLIS program and about 40 students in the Dual program. Total annual program enrolment is between 200 - 210. Graduation rates for the program are high and withdrawals are negligible (PP, Table IV-A, p. 109). UBC has a strong commitment to diversity and intercultural learning (PP, p.110). International students constitute about one third of the UBC overall graduate student population and about 40% of the iSchool population (see "World Map Showing Countries of Origin of Current iSchool Students" PP, p.111). The majority of iSchool international students are from the USA (PP, Table IV-B, p.112).

 UBC has a particular commitment to Aboriginal engagement as part of the university strategic plan entitled "*Place and Promise*" (PP, p. 110). The iSchool has developed a First Nations Curriculum Concentration (FNCC) coordinated by Dr. Lisa Nathan. This concentration has grown from five students in 2012-13 to over 25 students currently enrolled. The fall 2016 iSchool newsletter reported on a community-based experiential learning experience at the Heiltsuk Cultural Education Center in Bella Bella, which is in the Central Coast region of B.C.

Domestic tuition at UBC is one of the lowest in Canada. International students are eligible for International Tuition Awards of $3,200 per annum to offset the higher tuition rates for international students (PP, Table IV-C, p. 113). A variety of other school and university-based

merit awards are available (PP, Tables IV-D and IV-E, pp. 114, 115) in addition to external government sources (PP, p. 116). An array of student assistantships, part-time employment, co-op experiences, field experiences, work/learn programs and internships provide a rich source of experiential learning and funding that are greatly valued by the students (PP, pp. 116, 117). Students reported strong support for experiential learning from their faculty advisors and the iSchool Student Services Coordinator. As noted above, in separate interviews, three senior university officials identified the iSchool as a leader on campus in experiential learning, diversity and program development, including mission, goals and objectives, graduate competencies and learning outcomes.

To increase transparency, the iSchool program undertook an extensive revision of its website http://slais.ubc.ca in 2013-2014 (PP, p. 119). The site now contains information on recruitment, documentation related to the program's conditional accreditation status, and detailed information on program assessment, policies and degree specializations and pathways.

Website content is maintained by administrative staff and supervised by the Director. The content was designed based on extensive community consultation with students through Director's lunch sessions, alumni and student surveys, and involvement of an internal School Communication Group. This website revision is an example of how the program is responding to ongoing feedback from the iSchool community. As described in the Program Presentation (p. 120), the program is continuing to hold mid-term sessions for students to answer additional questions as students proceed through the program and to explore other needs and opportunities. Other examples of changes made in response to ongoing evaluation and feedback include an orientation toolkit for incoming students, sessions on the roles of the Graduate Advisor and

Student Services Coordinator, and information sessions on other campus services such as UBC Counselling Services (PP, pp. 121, 122).

Other initiatives that show responsiveness to student needs are the "iTech Flex" initiative designed to better support collaboration and hands on use of technology for learning and research and the "Tech Sandbox" that supports new MLIS pathways such as data science, information visualization and manipulation of large data sets. Students told us that they come into the iSchool programs with varying levels of information technology expertise. These technological innovations offer students the opportunity to develop the advanced expertise that they need for their career interests.

Students generally reported that the iSchool was very responsive to their needs and helped them create programs of study that enable them to develop knowledge and skills in any area of interest. A barrier for some students was that other departments, especially computer science, are less able to accommodate iSchool student enrollment. To help alleviate this situation, the program has hired an additional faculty member with expertise in information technology (Dr. Abdul-Mageed).

Standards for Admission are consistently applied in all graduate programs through the policies and requirements of the G+PS at UBC. Program applications are submitted through the new G+PS online application system created as part of the Graduate Applications Streamlining Project (GRASP). Admissions are the responsibility of the iSchool Admissions Committee, which includes a faculty chair, the Student Services Coordinator, a Program Assistant and faculty evaluators. Applications are rated using an admissions rubric (PP, Figure IV-D, p. 125). The Graduate Advisor of the iSchool usually makes final admission decisions. The iSchool's

recruitment, admission, financial aid and placement policies align with those of the UBC Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS). The full procedures are described in the Program Presentation (pp. 121-3). In some cases, such as requiring higher TOEFL scores, the program modifies these policies and procedures to ensure that students will be able to meet the academic requirements of the iSchool program.

Evidence from students, faculty and staff, as well as program documents, suggested that the iSchool program enables students to grow academically, professionally and socially. The 2015 Survey of iSchool Graduates found that 87% of respondents agreed that the advising they received contributed to their finding full-time employment. Faculty advisors provide a wide range of advice on program offerings as well as on opportunities in other parts of the university. They work closely with students who are having difficulty in the program through the university-wide "Early Alert" program. The Graduate Advisor, Director, and G+ PS work together to resolve problems and find solutions. The Student Services Coordinator provides the essential link to the much-appreciated professional work placements that are available to students. Since this position was created in 2005, the number of applications to the program has almost doubled, and the enrollment in the program has increased (PP, pp. 126, 127).

Evaluation of student achievement in the program is assessed through the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Program (SLOAP), and the results are reported annually in an Assessment Report. (PP, p. 133). In addition to assessments at the class level, surveys of current students, alumni and employers show that while much is being learned, student knowledge of and confidence with technology could still be improved. This led to the development of the ITech Flex and Technology Sandbox initiatives mentioned earlier.

A comprehensive overview of the iSchool evaluation activities is included as Appendix 6**:** *iSchool Guidelines for Planning and Assessment***.** The learning outcomes aspect of the guidelines is further elaborated in Appendix 10**:** *iSchool Learning Outcomes Assessment Program: SLOAP Guidelines*. These guidelines are in keeping with both the iSchool Graduate Competencies and the G+PS Graduate Student Survey and Operational Plan. A full list of the relevant appendices is included in the Program Presentation (pp. ix, x). Students are aware of the increased emphasis on planning and assessment and are supportive of these activities. Students feel that their views are valued and that positive changes are occurring because of their feedback.

A 2015 review of student feedback about the quality of adjunct instructors pointed to the need to strengthen management competencies. As a result, a new term-appointed lecturer is now teaching the MLIS management course, and a full-time faculty member worked with the adjunct instructor to ensure that the course was improved (PP, p. 134). Additional orientation and training has also been developed for all adjunct instructors. Based on the Student Survey, MLIS program pathways have been developed to assist students in selecting courses and developing career paths. A description of the involvement of faculty, staff and students in evaluation of policies and committee activities is provided in the Program Presentation (p. 136).

*STANDARD V***: Administration and Financial Support**

The iSchool at UBC is administratively located in the University of British Columbia Faculty of Arts, the largest academic unit at UBC. The iSchool is one of the twenty-four distinct academic units within the faculty. It is the faculty's largest graduate unit and "administrative and budgetary matters are reported via the Dean of the faculty" (PP, p. 137).

During our onsite visit, we had the chance to meet with several individuals involved with the administrative and financial activities of the school. These included Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts Kathy Harrison, Assistant Dean Finance for the Faculty of Arts Brian Lee, Vice-provost and Associate Vice-president Academic Affairs Eric Eich, Acting Director of the UBC iSchool Luanne Freund along with the school's Administrative Manager Mary Grenier, and the school's administrative staff (Information Assistant Debra Locke, Program Assistant Alynne Pols and Administrative Assistant Connie Wintels). We also interviewed adjunct and regular faculty members.

Despite its "strong professional orientation [which] sets it apart from most other units in Arts," (PP, p. 139; Interview) the school appears to be appropriately housed within the UBC Faculty of Arts. SLAIS has considerable autonomy in setting its goals, the selection of faculty and students, and regarding course content. In the past year, the school has developed a new identity statement with the intention of strengthening its connections with the faculty, as was recommended in the last external review (PP, p. 139).

Regarding the financial situation of the school, we are encouraged to see that income from the parent institution has increased in most years during the past five years (PP, p. 151, Table V-A in Can$). This is important since we notice that, during the review period, the iSchool did not receive significant income from other sources, such as through donations and gifts.

Recently, along with other Faculty of Arts units, the iSchool experienced an unexpected 2.7% budget cut (PP, p. 150; Interview). The school weathered these cuts well because of carry-over money that had been set aside from previous years, so no services to students were affected because of these budgetary readjustments (Interview). This comes as evidence that the overall

financial situation of the iSchool is in good hands and that the school has sufficient autonomy to handle such unexpected situations.

As mentioned in the Program Presentation, iSchool programs are relatively expensive to deliver in comparison with academic units that have large undergraduate classes (PP, p. 156). The forthcoming merger with the School of Journalism and the involvement of the iSchool in the new Bachelor of Media Studies—a program that is likely to grow and generate revenue in the coming years—is viewed positively by most people we interviewed and seen as a growth opportunity and a way to increase and diversify the course offerings to students (Interview). We note that should the new school inherit a fully accredited degree, this should help in attracting quality students in all its programs.

The Program Presentation enumerates in detail the number of committee appointments held by iSchool professional staff and faculty members (PP, p. 1424, Appendix 24). It also indicates that, in recent years, iSchool representation on university- or faculty-level committees has been minimal (PP, p. 142). This may be explained by the fact that SLAIS presently has several junior faculty members on board. This is likely to change in the coming years, and it is encouraging to see that iSchool faculty nonetheless do interact quite a bit with other academic units within the Faculty of Arts, mostly through involvement in other programs of study (PP, p. 143–4; Interview).

The new "whole-school" perspective (PP, p. 146)—rather than the previous fragmented approach by programs—is also seen by the large majority of people we interviewed as a positive element that is helping to create a stronger sense of identity and unity in the school (Interview). While it still appears to be a "work in progress," people seem to recognize that this is an

important issue (PP, p. 147; Interview), especially considering the forthcoming merger with journalism. Many interviewees praised the Acting Director Luanne Freund for her strong leadership and for her efforts to bring everybody together on common important issues that had been flagged as problematic in the previous accreditation process. We received many testimonies that, especially in the past two years, numerous changes have been implemented to reach a set of common goals (Interview). The new Assessment Committee created two years ago (PP, p. 68), is a particularly strong element, and the Committee annual reports contain lots of evidence of solid planning and evaluation processes at the school (PP, Appendix 51).

The iSchool administrative staff members all appear to be very dedicated individuals who are well integrated within the school and its administrative and assessment activities at different levels. Evidence of this integration was stated in the Program Presentation (pp. 150, 155; Appendix 39) but also asserted during our interviews. All attest to the thoroughness of the processes and procedures followed during faculty meetings, where most "important decisions are made at the school." (PP, p. 149)

Of the four employees we interviewed, two have been working at SLAIS for over a decade (PP, p. 149; Interview). Staffing of the iSchool is done in accordance with policies in existence at the Faculty of Arts, but also by taking into consideration the specific needs of the iSchool (PP, p. 148). We questioned what these "specific needs" could be and were told that for instance, because of the nature of the student body and the curriculum, the school has higher level staff than other units at the Faculty of Arts; the school is also allowed to offer a higher rate to adjuncts because they are a professional school (Interview).

At the Faculty of Arts, funding is globally attributed through a budget formula based primarily on student enrollment and the number of courses offered, or, as expressed by faculty officials, on a "bums in seats" basis (PP, p. 150, Interview). The iSchool Director and Administration Manager have an annual meeting with the Faculty of Arts Dean and Assistant Dean Finance, during which they present requests to fund special projects or support new objectives (PP. p. 151, Interview).

Funding appears to have fluctuated minimally during the past five years, and the anomalies observed in the statistics reported through the ALISE statistical surveys are the result of variation in the way data was reported in the spreadsheet (PP, p. 152). We were informed that these variations have now been addressed, and that the data have been adjusted to reflect the actual trends (Interview). The majority of SLAIS faculty members are well-funded, and their renewal appears to be assured (Interview).

In terms of hiring and retaining faculty members, it appears that the iSchool can attract high-quality individuals. Salaries, benefits and increments are established through collective bargaining and are comparable to salaries elsewhere at UBC (PP, p. 152). A committee composed of at least one faculty member at each rank recommends increases based on merit through guidance documents and policies (PP, Appendix 29).

During interviews, recently hired faculty members provided us with evidence that a lot of effort is made to help them during their first years as young faculty members, either at the school-level with mentoring (PP, p. 147), at the faculty-level with start-up grants (PP, p. 153), or at the university-level with a variety of workshops and services offered through various units on campus (Interview). They can also claim a small amount of money annually from the

professional development fund (PP, p. 153). Faculty members teaching large classes (more than 40 students) also receive the help of a teaching assistant (PP, p. 141), although we note that apart from core and required courses, few elective courses have enrollments above 40 (Interview).

As mentioned in its Program Presentation, iSchool strategic planning and assessment activities are achieved through a mix of long-established practices and a series of recent initiatives put in place since the last comprehensive review (PP, p. 155). The appendices provide evidence that these processes are carried out in a thorough manner and on an ongoing basis (PP, Appendices 6, 31, 32 and 35; Website). Short- and long-range strategic planning is carried out annually in collaboration with the Dean and Assistant Dean Finance in the Faculty of Arts, and are revised and updated as new issues and situations arise (PP, pp. 151, 156; Interview). The forthcoming merger with the school of journalism along with the involvement in the new Bachelor of Media Studies is a striking example of high-level concerted and coordinated planning and appraisal intended to provide the school with new opportunities to grow and diversify its activities and to integrate in a more concrete manner with other units in the Faculty of Arts (PP, pp. 143, 156; Interview).

Standard VI: Physical Resources and Facilities

The iSchool benefits from its home in the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKBLC) at the center of campus. The space reflects the needs of the School and promotes positive collaboration, communication and consultation. The panel found physical resources that were sufficient to accomplish the iSchool's objectives. Students have exclusive use and 24-hour access to the

space. Faculty offices are of a generous size. Student spaces generally have windows and provide a variety of work spaces that are quite attractive and appear to be heavily used.

As summarized in the Program Presentation, iSchool physical facilities provide a functional learning environment for students and faculty that fosters student learning. The space reflects the needs of the School and promotes positive collaboration, communication and consultation. Instruction spaces are generally up-to-date with needed resources and technology. The SLAIS footprint includes exclusive use of the Terrace Lab as classroom space. The Lab was recently renovated. The renovation has been well received by both students and faculty (PP, pp. 161, 162; Interviews). The iSchool has first tier booking for two classrooms within IKBLC as well as preferential access to a third room. It also has access to other bookable classroom spaces on campus. (PP, p. 160; Interviews). A floor plan provides details for each of the previously mentioned spaces (PP, p. 159).

The spaces provided for students to use technology provide ample opportunities for both individual and group work. Of special note is the renovation of the Kitimat Lab and the construction of the collaborative privacy pod that was the direct result of student feedback (PP, p. 174; Onsite Observation). Also of note is the iTechFlex Initiative that was the result of feedback from community members, employees and alumni. The three components of the Initiative (Core Tech Component, Virtual Lab, Tech Sandbox) will provide a new approach to technology instruction and learning. The Core Tech component is in use and is currently being assessed. Significant progress has been made with the Virtual Lab and Tech Sandbox (PP, pp. 163, 164; Appendices 16 and 30; Interviews). The Roberta F. Grieg Research Lab provides curriculum support for technology related projects. SLAIS continues to add relevant software to the lab (Interview).

Instructional and research facilities and services are available at the iSchool, Faculty of Arts and University levels. At the university level, the School benefits from facilities and services provided by UBC IT. This includes infrastructure and support services available to the entire campus. The UBC Learning Technology Hub is a central online resource to explore learning technology tools. (PP, p. 168).

Computing facilities and resources are managed by Arts ISIT. The School has access to sufficient and appropriate online resources for instruction. Faculty and students have access to state-of-the-art computing facilities in computer labs maintained by Arts ISIT in the Buchanan Building and other campus locations (PP, p. 171; Interview). The iSchool has an excellent working relationship with Arts ISIT and reports that Arts ISIT staff are responsive (Interviews).

The iSchool also benefits from the available resources of the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT). CTLT staff have worked with School faculty on course design, linking course objectives to program outcomes, curriculum mapping and assessment. One School faculty member received a scholarship from CTLT (Interviews).

Faculty and students have access to the resources of the UBC Libraries. A strong collection of library and information science print monographs and serials as well as access to appropriate online resources are housed in the same building as the iSchool (PP, pp. 169-70). The collaboration with the UBC Libraries is an impressive relationship. The Libraries provide services to the School, including learning and research resources and hands-on practical opportunities to the students of the School (Interviews). The Libraries' facilities are appropriately staffed, convenient, accessible to people with disabilities, and available when

needed (Interviews). The iSchool gets full support from the Libraries with rich learning resources and practical hands-on opportunities to the students.

Students enrolled in the First Nations Curriculum Concentration (FNCC) have access to the facilities and resources of the First Nations House of Learning (the Longhouse), and the X̱wi7x̱wa Library. FNCC students make heavy use of the facilities. Three students are currently employed at the X̱wi7x̱wa Library. The Library also engages many professional experience students from the School (Interview).

The University also provides the iSchool with access to Connect, the University's course management system. Faculty are required to at least post the syllabus to Connect (onsite interview). There is also support for multimedia resources, and group study space for use by faculty and students is available in numerous locations within IKBLC (PP, pp. 171, 172).

The IKBLC, including the iSchool footprint, is fully accessible for students with special needs (PP, p. 173; Interviews and Onsite Observation).

Technology services at the Faculty of Arts and University levels appear to be sufficiently staffed.

UBC Library facilities are also appropriately staffed, convenient, accessible to people with disabilities, and available when needed. Students expressed satisfaction with resources and services (Interviews), and faculty and students were positive about the relationship between the School and the UBC Libraries. A subject librarian is designated as the liaison with the School and is active in providing specialized reference services, instructional support, and collection development. Liaison Librarian Erin Fields reports that resources are adequate, except for ISO

standards that are needed for the archival program. She acquired an additional $5,000 support this year for the standards (Interview). The Acting Interim University Librarian also indicated that there is a positive interchange between the Libraries and the iSchool (Interview). The iSchool provides competent graduates and provides library faculty with opportunities for professional development, including teaching as adjuncts. Both the Library and SLAIS benefit from Co-op and experiential learning opportunities made available to students (Interviews with students, alumni, librarians).

Facilities and physical resources are evaluated primarily through the work of the Facilities and Resources Committee. The Committee has recently established a new mandate and goals and objectives for the coming year (PP, p. 174; Interview). The School also receives input from other assessment activities. The renovation of the Kitimat Lab and the construction of the collaborative privacy pod were the direct result of student input (PP, p. 174; Interviews).

<u>CONCLUSION</u>

This report reflects the consensus opinions of the ERP pertaining to evidence collected from documentation, observations and testimony obtained through personal interviews. Members collectively sense that they have been given access to everything necessary to review the state of the MLIS program at the UBC relative to its request for ALA accreditation. As we submit our findings to the COA for its adjudication of that request, we would like to express our appreciation for the assistance provided by the Office for Accreditation in facilitating our work. Similarly, we thank everyone at SLAIS for their generous welcome – the iSchool Acting Director, her office administrative staff, and the faculty members who made themselves available for our interviews. The senior UBC administrators who reserved time from their busy schedules

to meet with us, and the students, alumni and employers who provided candid responses to our many questions, are to be commended for their interest in the future of the iSchool. Members of the Accreditation Working Group, chapter reviewers and the Accreditation Oversight Committee produced a comprehensive self-study, and we acknowledge the tremendous amount of work involved in assembling the extensive amount of supporting material essential to our analysis. We join with COA members in recognizing the value of such participation in the accreditation review process.