

**External Review Panel Final Report**

**Master of Library and Information Studies**

**School of Library, Archival & Information Studies (*iSchool@ubc*)**

**University of British Columbia**

Conducted on behalf of the American Library Association Committee on Accreditation

Panelists: Lynne (E.F.) McKechnie, Chair; Kenneth-Roy Bonin; William Buchanan; Joseph Busch; Barbara Ford; Ross Gordon; Cheryl L. Stenstrom, Observer for the Canadian Library Association

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## Introduction

The External Review Panel (ERP) visited the University of British Columbia (UBC) School of Library, Archival and Information Studies (SLAIS) program October 21- 22, 2013.

The panel met with a large number of individuals and groups including:

- SLAIS Faculty: Caroline Haythornthwaite (Director); all full time faculty; members of the adjunct faculty including individual interviews with Debbie Millward, Guy Robertson and Allison Taylor McBride.
- Staff: Mary Grenier (Administrator, SLAIS), Dan Slessor (Student Services Coordinator, SLAIS) Erin Watkins (SLAIS Co-op Coordinator, UBC Faculty of Arts Co-op Program)
- Representatives of the university: Dr. Anna Kindler (Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-Provost Academic Affairs), Dr. Gage Averill (Dean, Faculty of Arts), Sally Hermansen (Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts, Student Services), Dr. Michael Richards (Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts, Research and Graduate Studies), Brian Lee (Assistant Dean, Faculty of Arts, Finance), Dr. Larry Walker (Associate Dean, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Policy and Program Review)
- University library staff: Ingrid Parent (University Librarian); Simon Neame (Director, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKBLC)), Gordon Yusko (Assistant Director, IKBLC), Ellen George (LAIS liaison librarian, Humanities & Social Sciences Division, UBC Libraries), Kim Lawson (Reference Librarian, UBC Libraries, Xwi7xwa Library, First Nations House of Learning), and others during a scheduled lunch with UBC librarians
- Public library staff and other alumni and employers of graduates at an open reception for alumni and employers held in the Vancouver Public Library

- Students: Group meeting with leaders of over ten student associations at SLAIS and others during an open lunch meeting with students

The ERP also participated in a tour of the SLAIS facilities (faculty and staff offices, meeting rooms, classrooms, information technology (IT) teaching labs, shared research space, student lounge), a tour of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre which houses SLAIS and collections, classrooms, and IT labs which support SLAIS. ERP members viewed portions of seven MLIS classes scheduled during the two days of the visit.

The ERP report draws from these various interviews and meetings as well as on documentation provided by the program in its Program Presentation (and the various appendices and supplementary linked documents).

### **Standard I: Mission, Goals, and Objectives**

The mission, goals and objectives of SLAIS, readily available through the program web site, arise from and are consistent with those of the University of British Columbia (Program Presentation, p.13). There is clear evidence that these are regularly reviewed through consultation with the community of local professionals and SLAIS program graduates, regular faculty retreats and an extensive curriculum review process initiated in 2011 and still continuing.

Program objectives are operationalized through an existing statement of “Expectations for Graduates” (PP, p. 16) and a newly developed (and soon to be implemented) draft “Competencies Framework” which states the program objectives in terms of “learning outcomes to be achieved” (PP, p. 17). Objectives for the core and required courses are mapped to, and consistent with, those identified in Standard 1.21 and in Standard 1.2.2. SLAIS identifies two

areas of specialization (Standard 1.2.3) within their program, First Nations and Human Computer Interaction, and has faculty expertise and elective courses to support both areas.

In addition to its program, which reflects topics of interest to the professional community, SLAIS cites faculty and student membership and service in a wide variety of professional and scholarly LIS organizations as evidence of its commitment to “teaching and service in the advancement of the field” (Standard 1.2.4). Faculty participation in LIS organizations is evident in their CVs. During an on-site meeting with students the ERP learned that, as well as the Library and Archival Studies Student Association (LASSA), there are ten active student chapters of organizations like the Canadian Library Association (CLA) and the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIST) with three more (e.g., Librarians Without Borders) under development.

That SLAIS works hard to communicate “the importance of research to the advancement of the field’s knowledge base” (Standard 1.2.5) is reflected in the required research methods course, electives which allow students to complete directed research projects, opportunities for students to work as research assistants, and the annual Research Day to showcase student and faculty research.

Interdisciplinary perspectives (Standards 1.2.6 and 1.2.7) are evident in the other programs offered by the department (Master of Archival Studies; Master of Children’s Literature offered jointly with English, Creative Writing and Education; Dual MAS/MLIS degree program). Faculty are members of a number of interdisciplinary research groups on campus.

The First Nations Curriculum Concentration, unique among Canadian MLIS programs, is a prime example of SLAIS’s commitment to diversity (Standard 1.2.8). Two of the core courses and a substantial number of electives (e.g., LIBR 548H – Community Informatics; LIBR 559B –

New Media for Children and Young Adults) are centred on the “role of library and information services in a rapidly changing technological society” (Standard 1.2.9).

Strategies such as the involvement of adjunct instructors from the professional community, the incorporation of experiential learning opportunities into many courses, as well as in stand-alone courses (e.g., LIBR 596: Professional Experience) and the very successful co-op work program provide evidence of strong interaction and support with “the constituencies [the] program seeks to serve” (Standard 1.2.10).

The MLIS program is evaluated regularly in a number of ways (Standard 1.3). The Faculty of Arts reviews the program every five years and the report arising from the 2008 review (largely favourable) was provided in the Program Presentation. A broad program review was conducted by the unit in 2009/2010 (*SLAIS: The best of both worlds*, SLAIS Task Force on Joint Initiatives); the results have been used to inform on-going planning and curriculum development. Formal teaching evaluations are conducted for all courses. The school also surveys graduates, students and employers. A full overview of evaluation strategies is presented in Table IB in the Program Presentation.

## **Standard II: Curriculum**

In responding to Standard II, SLAIS presents evidence of four degree programs offered by the school: the Master of Library and Information Studies, Master of Archival Studies, Master of Arts in Children’s Literature, and the PhD, though only the MLIS is being submitted for accreditation review. A Certificate of Advanced Study is also offered. While each of these degrees has its own core curriculum, the curricula of all four degrees overlap and draw on each other, creating a robust, interdisciplinary MLIS program with a strong emphasis on research. The

MLIS is a 48-credit degree program that can typically be completed in two years of full-time study; part-time study clearly extends this time as do such options as the Dual MAS/MLIS degree program. In responding to the Curriculum standard, SLAIS presents evidence of an established plan for assessing the outcomes of its courses and its programs through processes developed in consultation with the Faculty of Arts Instructional Support and Information Technology service (Arts ISIT) and other entities. Clearly, SLAIS faculty see both course level and program level outcomes assessment, and their resultant impact on the curriculum, as ongoing and evolving efforts which continue to shape the curriculum in response to a changing information environment.

The curriculum itself has a classified organization whereby courses on specific subdivisions within the field are conveniently grouped together in numerical ranges. The curriculum is further organized into three categories. Core courses are taken in the first term (in the case of part time students, the courses are taken prior to taking other courses in the other two categories). These provide the foundation for further studies in the other two categories: required courses (in management and research), and elective courses. It is in the elective course category that MLIS students are able to develop coherent programs of study to meet their individual career goals, including drawing upon coursework from the other disciplines represented in the school.

The research emphasis in the MLIS program is represented by a required research course (LIBR505), several elective research courses in the LIBR590 range of courses, and an optional thesis (LIBR599) for 12 credits. The thesis option is chosen by a small but steady number of MLIS students, with the program reporting one each in academic years 2009, 2010, and 2011 and with three students following this option in 2012. The Program Presentation provides

evidence of student presentations of research through publications, conference presentations, and other venues; this evidence was further corroborated by interviews with students and recent alumni who reported scholarly and professional publications as well as innovative applications of their MLIS degrees in non-library settings.

Through its Curriculum Mapping Project (CMP) SLAIS has made impressive strides in examining the school's curricular offerings and how they relate to standards and expectations promulgated by both the library profession and UBC and its constituencies. Taking a "bottom up" approach, the SLAIS curriculum committee has been mapping the outcomes of core and required courses to the ALA Core Competencies of Librarianship (e.g., Table I.A). SLAIS program outcomes are demonstrated in a variety of ways, including achieved leadership and successful research and publications. For instance the Program Presentation refers to one SLAIS alumnus who won the Governor General's Literary Award and another who won the BC Book Prize's Children's Literature Award.

SLAIS faculty appear to be making a comprehensive and sustained effort at outcomes assessment at all levels of the MLIS program, even though they acknowledge this as a work in progress and not a *fait accompli*: "[We are at] the beginning of creating formal measures that align with contemporary practice regarding learning outcomes assessment...we have been consulting with local experts and institutional organizations to facilitate these processes and will continue to do so in the future" (Confidential appendices). The Program Presentation documents both course level and program level assessments which are both systematic and anecdotal, drawing on such data as peer and student evaluations, employment statistics, alumni surveys, and unsolicited testimonials from students, alumni, and employers. In meetings with each of these groups, the ERP was able to validate the high regard in which the school's constituencies hold

the program and its continuing relevance for the profession. The school is currently evaluating the possibility of adding a formal capstone experience as a further means of assessing outcomes. It is clear that the school feeds its assessment data into an ongoing effort at curriculum renewal in response to the changing needs of the profession. In the exit interview with Dean Averill and Vice Provost Kindler, SLAIS was identified as a leader in an outcomes assessment development project within the Faculty of Arts.

MLIS students are encouraged to take advantage of Co-ops, Practica (non-credit, unpaid short term work placements), and other opportunities that bring them into contact with working professionals. This enriches their learning experiences and provides valuable feedback on the program's learning outcomes. Each of these experiences requires evaluations of student performance by site supervisors, which is reported back to faculty in the program. Students are also increasingly taking advantage of Web-based Information Science Education (WISE) courses, and SLAIS faculty members make seats in their online courses available to WISE students from other campuses, thereby creating more diversity (intellectual, geographic, etc.) in the program.

SLAIS also maintains an active program of continuing professional development in the form of the Certificate of Advanced Study program (24 credit hours), colloquia, research symposia, etc. These provide service to the profession, while at the same time bringing working professionals into the learning community, thereby benefiting currently enrolled MLIS students.

The First Nations Curriculum Concentration clearly responds to the requirement that ALA-accredited programs respond to the needs of a "diverse society." Importantly, this part of the curriculum is aimed not just at members of Canada's First Nation populations but at all SLAIS students in an effort to broaden their knowledge of a diverse society. The Program

Presentation provides evidence that, even though enrollment in the First Nations Curriculum Concentration has been minimal, issues of diversity have been effectively integrated across the curriculum.

Since the last accreditation review SLAIS has been accepted into the *iSchools* organization, with a resulting increased emphasis on electronic technology and its role in the storage, retrieval, and dissemination of information, and the interplay of technology, information and people.

Clearly, the UBC MLIS curriculum is vigorous and rapidly evolving. The committed faculty in this program are to be congratulated. They are building on past successes to present a professional graduate education program in library science that appears to be meeting the needs of today's information marketplace through the education of professionals who have the benefit of a broad-based interdisciplinary program of study.

### **Standard III: Faculty**

The chapter in the Program Presentation on Standard III - Faculty was very well presented and all questions were, in the opinion of the External Review Panel (ERP), substantially addressed. The information presented suggests the Program has worked hard to address the problems noted in 2006 concerning faculty size and composition.

All COA recommended forms of evidence were used in the Program Presentation. These include: a table of all faculty (full time, and adjunct) with names, status, teaching load, courses taught, delivery mode, research areas, and service engagement; CVs for all faculty; UBC and School policies on recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty and data reflecting implementation of these policies; Faculty personnel and grievance policies and procedures; the

School faculty evaluation policy and data reflecting both its implementation and the use of the results of evaluations; materials relating to faculty development opportunities; and descriptions and representative samples of faculty research and other scholarly activities.

There has been a substantial renewal of faculty since the last accreditation review. Through retirement and resignation, eight of thirteen faculty members are new, including six in the MLIS program: Director and Professor Caroline Haythornthwaite; and, Assistant Professors Freund, Loehrlein, Meyers, Nathan, and O'Brien. Individual interviews were held with Professors Luanne Freund, Aaron Loehrlein, Eric Meyers, Lisa Nathan, Heather O'Brien, Edie Rasmussen and Judith Saltman as well as with Senior Instructors, Mary Sue Stephenson and Rick Kopak.

There are no Associate Professors among MLIS faculty. The large number of new hires represents a serious investment in the Program by UBC at a time when the hiring of full time faculty across Canada is in decline. One of the suggestions made in the 2006 ERP report was that the Program increase the number and diversity of faculty, and that has been achieved. However, only about half (n=5) of the MLIS faculty have tenure. The ERP noted that an earlier new hire, Assistant Professor Joseph Tennis, resigned to take up a position at another university. Evidence (e.g., large start up allowances, strong mentoring programs, and mapping teaching assignments to research interests wherever possible) suggests that the Program is actively attending to retention. Interviews revealed that the faculty appreciate the level of care and professionalism demonstrated by their Director and in several cases made a point of remarking that their decision to join the SLAIS faculty was partly based on their interactions with the Director (previous or current). Great care must be taken to continue these efforts.

Interviews with faculty indicate that recruitment and hiring process are universally perceived to be both fair and open. For example, there were no complaints at all about the hiring process for the new Director and new faculty.

All levels of the work environment were positively commented on. Research funding is considered to be excellent, fairly distributed and accessible. Teaching assignments were also described as excellent. Faculty, even new faculty, felt free to create and offer new courses with the encouragement of the Director. Course loads are fairly distributed and a good amount of mentoring is offered from senior faculty, including the Director. The overall satisfaction points to an extremely well run program with an open and caring environment.

Through the interviews it became clear that the students evaluate their professors using a UBC electronically formatted survey that is available to all programs. Because it is not mandatory, and because it is electronically offered, it is not filled in by all students. The evaluations are sent to the Director and to the faculty member who is being evaluated, or, in the case of adjuncts to the Director, Chair of program and the adjunct instructor. While confidential, for faculty the teaching evaluations also provide evidence relating to teaching for reappointments and promotion. Student evaluations are used by faculty to improve individual classes and their teaching, and are used by the Director to signal the need for conversation with faculty about how to improve their teaching. As needed the Director will also request that faculty take advantage of UBC teaching courses to further improve teaching practice. . All faculty accept the student evaluations in a positive light and some faculty go out of their way to encourage ‘mid semester’ evaluations in order to improve courses ‘mid stream.’

With the new faculty come new courses, new skill sets, and an interesting mix of backgrounds and education. This demonstrates that SLAIS can offer a stimulating experience for

its students. Indeed the recruiting process has brought in some outstanding minds who understand the enormous amount of work to be done in the wider world of Information Management, including human-technology interaction which is increasingly important in Library and other fields. Preparing students for an Information world rather than a Library career is an excellent step forward.

One concern is the impending retirement of one faculty member (Dr. Rasmussen) and possibly two more in the next 18 months. This represents a loss of organizational memory and mentoring skills for the new faculty. It is hoped that a mechanism will be in place for both knowledge transfer and hiring of new faculty, preferably at senior ranks.

Faculty CVs include lists of excellent peer-reviewed publications and presentations in good venues. Interviews confirmed a strong commitment to research and publishing.

There is evidence in the CVs of good broad based participation on UBC Committees and in partnerships with other universities and organizations. All Faculty interviewed stressed that while committee work takes up time, this is normal in an academic setting. They also felt that they had the freedom to discuss committee membership with the Director to determine on which committees they should serve.

The faculty are diverse in terms of geographic backgrounds, interests and viewpoints. Research agendas and curriculum are best described as being broadly inclusive. SLAIS follows the University wide policies on equity and diversity and has seen no need to create their own statement.

The salary for faculty has risen steadily, including one time top-ups, merit increases and Performance Salary Adjustments (PSA). The average salary for MLIS Faculty is actually slightly higher than for the average member of the Faculty of Arts. There were no complaints about

salaries or about the process for establishing merit pay and annual increases. Salary arbitration is governed by a collective agreement. Annual reviews of faculty are viewed as being open and transparent. Not one interviewee noted a problem with the process.

The turnover rate for adjunct faculty appeared to be high. However, the ERP learned that it is actually a bit lower than that for other programs within the Faculty of Arts. SLAIS has access to many more qualified teachers drawn from the profession than can be used. A few adjunct faculty have taught in the program for more than twenty years. During interviews, the ERP learned that some adjunct faculty were dissatisfied with remuneration, which was regarded as too low, and with their inability to take on a greater role within SLAIS. However, many others were happy with their work conditions. Pay and working conditions for adjuncts follow those for sessionals from whom these are governed by University wide policies.

A new Director, Professor Caroline Haythornthwaite, was hired in 2010 through an advertised, open competition. She replaced Professor Edie Rasmussen, an extremely popular Director. Through interactions with faculty, students, local employers and alumni of the program, it became clear that Dr. Haythornthwaite is widely respected and regarded as having guided the School in bold, interesting and effective directions.

In the last accreditation review, it was noted that the Program had some difficulties with the size and composition of their faculty. Through a concerted effort, funded by UBC, and led by two Directors, the School recruited widely and successfully and has addressed prior concerns about the size, composition and professionalism of its Faculty.

#### **Standard IV: Students**

The School has an active recruitment program including participation in graduate fairs, online open houses, and phone and in-person meetings and tours. A rubric has been formulated for evaluating student applications that reflects the requirements for admissions, and meets the objective to admit the most academically-qualified students who are well-prepared for graduate program work, and that also provides opportunities for mature students to effectively compete for program slots. Student tuition is among the most affordable among North American MLIS programs. There is a specific school-based award for aboriginal students (one per year) which has been awarded annually most years since 2006.

There are many opportunities for paid student employment in UBC libraries, as grant-funded research assistants in the program, and locally at organizations in the greater Vancouver area. But students can only work a maximum of 12 hours per week within UBC. There are also unpaid internships and paid Faculty of Arts Co-op Program local and remote placements. During such placement students continue to pay their regular tuition installments. There is a one-time \$250 fee to join the Co-op program; for this students receive a high level of coaching and evaluation. Neither paid placements nor practica accrue course credit, but other experiential learning opportunities operate as credit-earning courses. All these placements provide a wide range of practicum opportunities that is highly valued by the students, alumni and employers the ERP spoke with during the site visit.

Demographically women predominate (81%) in the Program. The Student Services Coordinator told us that an effort was being made to recruit more men. One faculty member acknowledged that most faculty were women. UBC hires on the basis of merit and is committed to employment equity and diversity within its community.

The First Nations Curriculum Concentration is the result of a long-standing effort by the School and University to develop sensitivity to and knowledge of aboriginal library needs and services. Over the past several decades, First Nations programming and activities at the University have been student- and community- rather than School- and University-initiated. It is clearly a challenge to develop an appropriate respect and sensitivity for “orality” versus recorded information in the context of an MLIS program. Faculty and students have participated in the development and support of the First Nations curriculum, and also participated in student employment and Co-op Program placements at the Xwi7xwa Library in the First Nations House of Learning.

The Program has up-to-date, accurate, accessible and well-designed websites which contain informational materials including program goals and objectives, course descriptions, faculty biographies, admission requirements, financial aid, student performance evaluation criteria, student employment and placement opportunities, and other policies and procedures. The School receives support from the Faculty of Arts marketing and information technology services to create, develop and produce communications such as announcements, brochures and biographies in many different and complementary formats such as printed materials, dynamic displays and websites. For example, in response to student input, the School developed and maintains a student portal with content categories including experiential learning, awards, professional development opportunities and student employment.

The School has admissions objectives and has developed a rubric for faculty evaluation of applications that supports these objectives. The rubric tries to accommodate exceptions for mature students, and recommendations include published guidelines for letters of reference so

that professional references can be more responsive to the School's admissions criteria ([http://www.slais.ubc.ca/admissions/Referee\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.slais.ubc.ca/admissions/Referee_Guidelines.pdf)).

The School has student performance objectives and a published rubric for evaluation. Students are assigned faculty advisers on their first day in the Program. The Student Services Coordinator provides informal advising and referrals to appropriate School administrators as necessary and/or appropriate. Courses are evaluated by students at the end of each term and these reports form the basis of discussions between the Director and the faculty member, or the Director or Program Chair and the adjunct or sessional instructor. Also notable are informal faculty-initiated evaluations of coursework and assignments which were mentioned in faculty interviews (e.g., mid-term feedback). For some faculty, this is a method to obtain feedback on newly developed courses, course activities or other assignments so that they can be improved.

Director's forums are held once or twice a year as organized by the students and serve as an important source for student input to the School's policies and procedures. In recent years, the Chairs of the degree programs have also attended; student comments are reported at faculty meetings. Student representatives also sit on committees that are concerned with academic and student affairs such as the Colloquium Committee. Faculty advisers for student professional organizations appear to be actively engaged, and they also serve as liaisons to communicate student interests and opinions.

The School's admission process is described in the Program Presentation (pp. 98-99). Further details were obtained during the site visit. During a first screening by the Student Services Coordinator, a cover letter is prepared for each applicant file verifying that requirements have been met, and identifying any exceptions. The files are randomly bundled and assigned to faculty for review according to the documented rubric for the application review process. The

rubric is based on a combined evaluation of academic, intellectual, and other relevant qualifications. The rubric has been devised to accommodate exceptions, usually for long experience, which is described in the Program Presentation (p. 99). The School continually evaluates the rubric to monitor scoring consistency, and has made changes in the rubric to achieve a higher level of consistency among faculty in the scoring.

All evidence points to a successful admissions policy. Students unanimously expressed a high level of satisfaction with the program and their cohort. The low number of withdrawals (PP, p. 93) reflects a high program completion rate. Employers of students, Co-op Program participants, and employers of graduates all said that students were well-prepared for their jobs.

There are four required core courses that each cohort takes together during their first term in the Program. Based on the ERP's discussions with students and faculty this practice appears to create social cohesion within each cohort group as well as provide a common knowledge baseline. The ERP believes this is one factor in the high level of students' satisfaction with the program and their cohort. Beyond this core, students may choose among a wide, but well organized, selection of electives offered by the School, as well as courses in other University departments. Students reported no difficulty in registering for elective courses within or outside the School. The School has also defined several concentrations such as the First Nations Concentration Curriculum and the sub-specialization in HCI (Human Computer Interaction), and special programs such as the Master of Archival Studies and Masters of Arts in Children's Literature, all of which are described on the School's website. The Program Presentation describes the student evaluation methods (pp. 104-105) and the "Grading Policy" is published on the School's website.

There are ample opportunities for independent and work study. Various experiential learning opportunities are discussed in the Program Presentation (pp. 101-104). These include student jobs in UBC libraries, paid research assistantships under faculty grants, unpaid internships and up to three sessions in the Faculty of Arts Co-op Program. Students, alumni and employers that we met with expressed a high level of satisfaction with the ability to define and experience a coherent and professionally practical program of study.

As described in the Program Presentation, “SLAIS fosters a welcoming and supportive culture ... that enable[s] them [students] to grow academically, professionally and socially.” (p. 100). In meetings with students the ERP was impressed by the high level of involvement in student organizations illustrated, for example, by the amount of student organization programming. Student organizations are described in the Program Presentation (pp. 106-107).

As discussed in the Program Presentation (pp. 107-108), and in meetings with faculty and students, the ERP confirmed that there is active student participation in School and University policies affecting academic and student affairs. Another channel for student participation is the Director’s Forums held once or twice each year. The Student Services Coordinator and the Graduate Advisor are also points of contact for students to raise issues and obtain feedback on these issues.

The School applies formal and informal evaluation processes such as the “Grading Policy” and informal faculty-initiated evaluations of coursework and assignments to gather information about student achievement. The School also regularly surveys graduates; the 2011 Graduate Employment Survey results, for example, are posted on the School’s website. In meetings with Faculty, the ERP was impressed by their efforts to gather and apply such feedback to current and planned courses. The ongoing project to map competencies to curriculum, while a

work in process, is another example of the School's ongoing activities to continually improve the curriculum to prepare students with foundational but relevant and practical skills.

### **Standard V: Administration and Financial Support**

Complemented by financial data, statistical tables and appendices, the Program Presentation provides a comprehensive account of the current SLAIS organizational and budgetary situation relative to conditions at the time of the last accreditation review.

As indicated in the UBC senior organization chart, reporting through the Provost and Vice-President Academic to the President and Vice-Chancellor of the University, the Dean of Arts is responsible for SLAIS and [now] four other Schools, 16 academic departments, two institutes, three interdisciplinary programs, a museum, art gallery and concert hall. In the same capacity as the other Directors of Schools in the Faculty of Arts, the SLAIS Director attends the biannual information meetings of all UBC academic unit heads chaired by the President of the University. On the more practical regular administrative level, she also participates in the monthly meetings of Directors and Department Heads, chaired by the Dean of Arts, where managerial decisions are made relative to the entire Faculty of Arts. These latter meetings also serve as the forum for budgetary discussions. SLAIS program authority is subject to regulations set by the University Graduate Council and administered by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies; the SLAIS Graduate Advisor serves as its representative in this regard.

Within this framework, as confirmed in interviews with designated representatives, SLAIS enjoys the collegial autonomy analogous to that characteristic of all UBC academic units relative to program development, student selection and faculty hiring and promotion.

Recommendations in each of these domains originate in the School and are usually accepted by the Dean of Arts and the Dean of Graduate Studies as per established policies and procedures.

Financial and human resource allocation decisions follow a similarly established process. Made available to the ERP on site, annual strategic plans as submitted to the Dean of Arts request any increases intended to support on-going and new programs and faculty. These are considered by a committee of the Dean and Associate Deans subsequent to “two-on-two” meetings between the Dean and the Assistant Dean, Finance, and the SLAIS Director and School Administrator. The SLAIS budget history included as Appendix V.C of the Program Presentation provides evidence of results in this regard. Total SLAIS institutional funding has increased by 62% since 2006. It is recognized that this total includes salary raises, amounts intended to offset certain downloaded costs associated with decentralization, and discretionary funds previously listed separately. This has also decreased somewhat over the past three years. In the absence of comparative financial data for other academic units or for the Faculty of Arts as a whole, the relative significance of these figures is not readily determined. Nevertheless, supplementary information based on University financial statements describes a 4.5% increase in total University revenue over the past three years, a 3.5% institutional expenditure from endowment funds, a double digit healthy return on investment, and “all time high” success in fund raising. Coupled with a 4% rise in student enrolment, the University also introduced a 5% increase in domestic tuition and a 6.8% increase in international tuition. In summary, the institution appears to be in an enviable financial situation, and SLAIS clearly enjoys some of the benefits.

Compensation for SLAIS faculty, professional, managerial and clerical personnel is determined according to the respective union and association agreements applicable across the University as negotiated through collective bargaining. UBC incentives to attract and retain

faculty include subsidized housing and interest-free loans. Special note was made of a special adjustment received in 2013 by female faculty members to address gender salary parity. As presented in Appendix V.D, the average salaries for ranks where SLAIS faculty are represented reveals a slightly favorable advantage compared to University salary averages in general. SLAIS senior instructors are an exception, with salaries on average about \$3,000 lower. On-site explanations confirmed that these figures include controls to account for length of service and years in rank. As a general observation, compensation levels appear comparable to those in the rest of the University.

Research support, outlined in section V.7, is drawn from sources of funding available both within and external to the University. Evidence included in table III.E in section III.5 of the Program Presentation records grants awarded to SLAIS faculty members. Supplementary information supplied in Appendix 10 confirms that half of the SLAIS professors received funding from these sources over the past two years. Even without comparative data reflecting general University faculty awards, or the results for other professors in the Faculty of Arts, SLAIS success in this regard seems impressive.

Supplementary information included in Appendix 6 suggests that there are no set quantitative formulae to determine funding levels for each of the academic units in the Faculty of Arts. As clarified in discussions with School and Faculty of Arts budget authorities, while no single comprehensive formula yet exists to replace the incremental historical budget model frozen three years ago, significant progress has been made in adopting metrics that assist in determining operating budgets. For example, a uniform formula has been adopted to calculate full-time equivalent student figures. Coupled with decentralization of certain funds, considerable flexibility is possible. UBC offers a Professional Development fund that provides annual

amounts to support faculty travel, books, memberships, etc.; the fund amount was increased from \$900 to \$1,100 per faculty member in 2011. Since 2009, SLAIS internal funding has contributed an additional \$1,000 per faculty member per year for travel and conferences. A similar approach characterizes the availability of student funding. Amounts are also allocated for workshops, visiting lectures and student-organized conferences that contribute to the SLAIS intellectual climate. Academic equipment funds to support teaching and learning and start-up funding for new faculty members remain with the Office of the Dean, but the Dean's office is cognizant that SLAIS professors require amounts higher than elsewhere in the Faculty of Arts "reflecting the greater need for information technology support."

On-going full funding for an initially only partially funded Student Services Coordinator and a term clerical support position was achieved in 2008 and 2009 respectively. Office reorganization in June 2013 produced the revised job descriptions presented in Appendix V.B, and has resulted in an improved division of labor.

Evidence that SLAIS professors and staff are actively involved in such financial and administrative strategic planning, and in evaluating one-time and on-going program support requirements, is reflected in the five year and annual strategic plan documents made available on site. Determined in monthly meetings and at the annual Faculty Retreat, considerations include clearly stated goals, complemented by specific objectives for each year, strategies for their realization and indicators of monitored intended outcomes. While SLAIS faculty members also collaborate with other academic units and serve on the variety of committees and University representative bodies documented in Appendix III.B, students and support staff are encouraged to participate in the SLAIS decision-making process as well. This active involvement

undoubtedly contributed to the overall positive tone which the Program Presentation intended to communicate.

### **Standard VI: Physical Resources and Facilities**

The External Review Panel (ERP) found physical resources that were sufficient to accomplish the School's objectives. These included spaces in the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKBLC) for staff and faculty, common areas for students, a fully equipped instructional classroom and computer lab, and a dedicated meeting room and research laboratory. Within the IKBLC the School also has access to three additional classrooms and other spaces as needed. The School is rightfully proud of its place within the new IKBLC which provides an excellent environment to support the School's objectives. Vice Provost Anna Kindler stated that the quality of teaching and learning depends on space and that the space in the IKBLC supports the School.

The ERP toured all the School's space. Instructional space in the IKBLC is generally up to date with needed resources and technology. There is a computer lab used for instruction and another general-use computer lab and there are plans to update some of the equipment in these labs. When asked students were aware computers would be upgraded. Non-computer-based classes are held in classrooms in the IKBLC but outside the perimeter of the School. A variety of study spaces are available for individual and group work. A new research laboratory provides space for research projects. While it did not appear that the new research laboratory had many resources, it seems that resources and software to support research will be available through faculty research grants and other sources. There are a variety of spaces in the IKBLC that are available for social and special events. Students reported that while space is not always available

for student groups in the School space it is easy to book meeting space in other parts of the IKBLC.

Administrative space and faculty offices support the needs of the School. When asked about the adequacy of instructional and research facilities and services, students and faculty expressed satisfaction with the resources available. Faculty offices are adequate. Faculty are expected to upgrade their computer equipment through their research funds or the Professional Development Fund. Faculty did not raise this as a concern. Student spaces which generally have windows and flexible furniture and provide a variety of work spaces are quite attractive and appear to be heavily used.

Resources for web-based courses are available through the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT). Development of these courses is supported by the University through CTLT, e.g., by providing services such as instructional design, and hosting the online course. Computer and other information technologies are available for students, staff and faculty in offices, classes and areas for independent study. A range of media production facilities is available for instructional purposes. Use of social media is supported for everyone at the University. Newly remodeled spaces in the IKBLC will provide additional space for students working with media. Support is available to assist faculty with hardware and software. When asked about access to support services and help with information technology, faculty and students indicated that they receive help when needed.

Faculty and students reported that library hours and resources are adequate. Liaison librarian Ellen George reported that library resources are adequate and the only challenges are serials and standards needed for the archival program. The library has a policy that to add a new

journal one must be cancelled but the liaison librarian reported that she is generally able to accommodate requests.

## **Summary**

Since the last accreditation review, the school has undergone renewal and revitalization through a renovation and expansion of its physical space and an expansion and re-energizing of its faculty and curriculum. The re-energizing of the faculty occurred when a majority of the former MLIS faculty either retired or relocated to other professional positions, enabling the School to renew its faculty with young scholars attuned to the *iSchool* movement whose ideas and scholarship have resulted in new curricular emphases.

Key points of this report, based on the evidence provided in the Program Presentation and gathered during the ERP site visit, include the following:

- The mission, goals and objectives of SLAIS are consistent with those of the University of British Columbia (Program Presentation, p.13). These are regularly reviewed through consultation with the School's community of local professionals and program graduates, regular faculty retreats and a curriculum review initiated in 2011. Objectives for the core and required courses are mapped to and consistent with those identified in Standard 1.21 and in Standard 1.2.2.
- Through its Curriculum Mapping Project (CMP) SLAIS has made impressive strides in examining the School's curricular offerings and how they relate to standards and expectations promulgated by both the library profession and UBC and its constituencies.

- SLAIS faculty appear to be making a comprehensive and sustained effort at outcomes assessment at all levels of the MLIS program, even though they acknowledge this as a work in progress and not a fait accompli.
- There has been a substantial renewal of faculty since the last accreditation review. Through retirement and resignation, eight of thirteen faculty members are new, including six in the MLIS program. However, only half (n=5) of the MLIS faculty have tenure. Care must be taken to ensure retention of the new hires as well as to replace faculty who are likely to retire in the next 2-3 years.
- The School has an active recruitment program including participation in graduate fairs, online open houses, and phone and in-person meetings and tours and a well-developed rubric for making admissions decisions. Student financial aid is low and declining, but tuition is among the most affordable among North American MLIS programs. There is a specific school-based award for aboriginal students (one per year) which has been awarded annually most years since 2006. There are many opportunities for paid student employment in UBC libraries, as grant-funded research assistants in the program, and locally at organizations in the greater Vancouver area. All evidence points to a successful admissions policy. Students unanimously expressed a high level of satisfaction with the program and their cohort.
- As discussed in the Program Presentation and in meetings with faculty and students the ERP confirmed that there is active student participation in School and University policies affecting academic and student affairs. Another channel for student participation is the Director's Forums held at least twice each year. The Student Services Coordinator is also a primary point of contact for students to raise issues and obtain feedback on these issues.

- SLAIS enjoys the collegial autonomy analogous to that characteristic of all UBC academic units relative to program development, student selection and faculty hiring and promotion. Recommendations in each of these domains originate in the School and are usually accepted by the Dean of Arts and the Dean of Graduate Studies as per established policies and procedures.
- The institution appears to be in an enviable financial situation, and SLAIS clearly enjoys some of the benefits.
- The External Review Panel (ERP) found physical resources that were sufficient to accomplish the School's objectives. These included spaces in the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKBLC) for staff and faculty, common areas for students, a fully equipped instructional classroom and computer lab, and a dedicated meeting room and research laboratory. Within the IKBLC, the School also has access to three additional classrooms and other spaces as needed. The School is rightfully proud of its place within the new IKBLC which provides an excellent environment to support the School's objectives.