



Proposal for the Creation of

The School of Media and Information

Faculty of Arts
UBC Vancouver

Draft for Consultation
December 2016

1. Introduction

This proposal outlines the creation of a new school within UBC Vancouver's Faculty of Arts that reimagines the information, media and journalism landscape in response to the dramatic digital shift of the past two decades. The new unit, The School of Media and Information, will be formed by combining two existing units: The School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies (the iSchool) and the Graduate School of Journalism, and integrating the interdisciplinary and collaborative Bachelor of Media Studies (BMS) program. The new School will enhance the research and teaching potential across these cognate units and programs and enable UBC to take a leadership role in this area.

This proposal emerges at a moment of convergence of traditional disciplinary domains and forms of expression, as digital media, data, and information operate on a shared platform that connects the work of journalists, librarians, archivists, designers, artists and other information and media professionals. Effective leadership in the digital economy requires graduates who can create, manage, interrogate and make sense of digital information in order to contribute to meaningful public discourse across all forms of media. The new School will be interdisciplinary, building on existing strengths to provide a space for inquiry, innovation and inspiration for students and researchers who seek to intervene in the knowledge economy to address the compelling challenges of the 21st century.

Our proposal reflects UBC President Santa Ono's observation that "The academy used to be driven by disciplines; now it is driven by problems." The new School will offer a significant and novel constellation of complementary areas of research and education with a shared focus on digital information and media; a commitment to multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity, and innovation and praxis; and will have far-reaching research impact. The School of Media and Information will examine, interrogate, and design the information and media landscape of the future by:

- Serving as a hub and incubator for multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research, scholarship and design focused on emerging real-world challenges and opportunities;
- Educating future knowledge leaders, who can, individually and collectively, take advantage of the transformative and disruptive nature of the digital economy;

- Engaging creatively with issues of critical societal importance, providing insight, increasing understanding, and designing solutions.

2. Rationale

The School of Media and Information is proposed in response to dramatic changes in the means and methods of creating, disseminating, analyzing, using, and preserving all forms of information and media, from Big Data to post-Internet art. These changes have produced shifts in traditional professional and academic disciplines resulting in greater collaboration and synergy among librarianship, archival science, information science, journalism and media studies. Grounded in an ongoing commitment to the important professional work carried out in these fields, the integration will capitalize on the rise of digital technologies and data science that demands new competencies and opens up new research areas within and across all disciplines. Situated in the Faculty of Arts, it will engage with the problems of the digital age from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing upon the wide range of academic and professional practices represented by core and partner units, including creative writing, visual arts, film, media theory, education, computer science, linguistics, Indigenous studies, and more. This will open up enormous possibilities for creativity and innovation.

Logistics: Pragmatic aspects of this integration further recommend its implementation. Both the School of Journalism, with 5.5 faculty positions, and the iSchool, with 13, are below the Senate minimum size for department status, which is 15 faculty members. With 18.5 faculty members, the new unit will benefit from greater stability, a reduction in faculty administrative load, a streamlined administrative structure, an increased capacity for handling searches, appointments, and promotion, and a larger internal pool for leadership. The integrated unit will further benefit from the collaborative and interdisciplinary structure of the BMS, which draws on the teaching resources of 7 units in the Faculty of Arts in addition to Computer Science. The undergraduate focus of the BMS will be complemented by the graduate programs of the iSchool and Journalism, and the new School will provide the basis for the expansion of the BMS via a graduate component.

Market Demand: A recent report entitled *Skills in the Digital Economy* describes the pressing need for “digitally skilled talent” in the Canadian workforce¹. The report, prepared by the Information and Communications Technology Council of Canada,

¹ The Information and Communications Technology Council (2016). *Skills in the digital economy*. <http://www.ictc-ctic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Skills-in-the-Digital-Economy-Where-Canada-Stands-and-the-Way-Forward-.pdf>

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identifies three ways in which educational programs can support these needs: by enabling students to gain “practical, real-world experience” through experiential learning; by emphasizing interpersonal and communication skills in addition to knowledge of digital technologies; and by designing and delivering programs in close consultation with businesses and employers. Existing programs (Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS), Master of Archival Studies (MAS), the Master of Journalism (MJ), and Bachelor of Media Studies (BMS)) already take this approach separately, and as Arts-based programs, are uniquely suited to develop the “soft skills” that employers are seeking. Together, these programs can pool resources, industry connections, and pedagogical approaches to establish a strong brand, known for graduates who are technically skilled, socially engaged, articulate, and work-ready.

Employment forecasts show great potential for graduates of the School of Media and Information. The BMS, which will graduate its first class in the spring of 2018, has made a number of alliances within Vancouver’s digital industries via the Arts Co-Op Program and with the assistance of the Vancouver Economic Commission, leading to internship opportunities with Microsoft Canada, among others. This bodes well for future career placement opportunities. The demand for librarians, archivists and journalists is still substantial (see Table 1), but is not on the rise and consequently, applications to the MLIS, MAS and MJ have declined gradually in recent years (Appendix 1). At the same time, there is a great demand for employees with many of the same competencies afforded by these professionally-oriented master’s programs. Increasingly MLIS, MAS and MJ graduates are finding work in non-traditional sectors, such as data curation and analysis, web design, multimedia production, public affairs, advertising, information management, digital preservation, and social media management. While this represents an opportunity, it also requires an expansion and re-envisioning of these traditional fields of study so they are seen to be relevant and versatile. The popularity of the new BMS program, which receives over 400 applications for 40 spots each year, and includes a number of courses from the iSchool and the School of Journalism, is evidence that students are attracted to the content if it is effectively packaged.

By combining forces we will be able to enrich our existing professionally-oriented programs with more access to digital media, data, information and technology skills that are in high demand. Integration will allow for courses to be shared, while maintaining the distinct identity of specialized, professionally-oriented programs. Our graduates will be poised for innovation and leadership in the societally important roles that the iSchool and the School of Journalism have traditionally supported, as journalists, librarians, and archivists, and they will be better prepared to take on new and emerging roles within and beyond those fields. To illustrate, Table 1 shows job

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opening projections for the 10 year period 2014-2024 in the areas currently served and in some of those the School of Media and Information could serve going forward.

Professional Occupations	Job Openings to 2024
Current and Ongoing Positions: JRNL and SLAIS	
Librarians	830
Archivists	20
Journalists	600
Library, archive, museum and art gallery managers	210
Supervisors, library, correspondence and related information workers	480
Records management technicians	150
Professional occupations in advertising, marketing and public relations	3,240
Authors and writers	2,300
Potential Positions: Integrated School	
Web designers and developers	2,040
Information systems analysts and consultants	7,600
Computer and information systems managers	3,500
Advertising, marketing and public relations managers	3,300
Business development officers and marketing researchers and consultants	2,400

Table 1: Projections (British Columbia) for occupations relevant to the new School²

Looking further ahead, analysts point to new career paths emerging out of rapidly changing technological, economic and social trends. Respected media analyst Amy Webb contextualised the impact of these trends on potential future career paths in journalism in her annual presentation at the 2016 Online News Association conference³, the world’s leading organisation of digital journalists. These career paths (Table 2) are located at the intersection of content, communication and technology.

² BC 2024 Labour Market Outlook: https://www.workbc.ca/getmedia/9e0cadba-16d9-49d5-971b-7e9afd2561d7/BC-LM-Outlook-2014-2024_C.pdf.aspx

³ <http://www.slideshare.net/webbmedia/tech-trends-for-journalists-9th-annual-online-news-association-presentation>

OUT	IN
Reporter	Data & Algos Investigations Team
Social Media Manager	Enhanced Reporter
Web Content Producer	Augmented Reality Producer
Multimedia Designer	Bot Developer
Graphic Designer	Principal Researcher, Media Lab
Copy Editor/ Fact Checker	Ecosystem Manager
Line Editor	Platforms Manager
	Public Editor for Code
	Lead Data Scientist
	Automation Experience Designer

Table 2: Journalism Jobs of the Near Future (Amy Webb, 2016)

Context: UBC is well-situated to support this new unit, which will be unique in Canada. No other university offers this constellation of programs in information studies, library and archival studies, journalism, and media studies, within an Arts Faculty⁴. All the component parts currently exist; bringing them together will increase capacity, enable growth, and lead to greater impact. The School of Journalism and the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies have strong faculty contingents, excellent reputations among peer universities and strong community support through their alumni and professional networks; the new unit will be able to build upon that combined base. The new Bachelor of Media Studies is phenomenally popular and successful in its first three years of operation, with high international enrolments and outstanding students. Digital media is recognized as an area of strength at UBC; having a focal point for academic research and practice in digital information and media will open up opportunities for closer collaboration with units such as the Centre for Digital Media, and options for new programs and research collaborations that address emerging issues and technologies. As such, the new unit will enable UBC to reach its potential in this area. Vancouver, the Pacific Northwest, and the Pacific Rim provide an environment that is ideally suited to the mission and strengths of the new unit: Vancouver is a digital hub that currently employs 94,000 digital information and media workers, with an increase to 120,000 anticipated in the coming decade (Vancouver Economic Commission). There is enormous potential for collaborations with industry and community-based organizations, experiential learning placements and a range of

⁴ The closest comparator within Canada will be the Faculty of Media Studies at Western University.

innovative partnerships, which would build on already-existing connections and initiatives.

Pedagogy and structure: The integrated school will meet the demand for Arts-based educational options that are agile, problem-driven, professionally oriented, community-focused, and reflective of current social, political, cultural, economic and technological realities. Such a school would build on the key strengths of the component units in community-based experiential learning, interdisciplinary teaching and international experiences for students. As graduate units, the iSchool and School of Journalism would be strengthened substantially through the integration of an undergraduate program. Solely graduate units are outliers within UBC, set apart from many of the key initiatives that focus on undergraduate education and in terms of the financial models by which most units function. Inclusion of the BMS ensures that the new unit is tied more closely to the core mission of the Faculty of Arts and graduate programs offered by the iSchool and the School of Journalism would provide additional options for BMS graduates seeking to continue their studies at UBC. The opportunity to interact with and be mentored by graduate students pursuing a range of related career paths would enrich the undergraduate experience for BMS students. At the same time, the strong theoretical orientation of the BMS will provide an extended basis for the expansion and focusing of graduate offerings in the new unit.

3. Description of the New Unit

Academic Programs:

The School of Media and Information will offer a unique and in-demand undergraduate degree (the BMS) and will inherit the graduate programs offered by the School of Journalism and the iSchool. Opportunities for the creation of additional relevant graduate programs, including wider opportunities for studies at the doctoral level, will be explored following the creation of the new unit.

The current programs and approximate total enrolments in 2015 are as follows:

- Bachelor of Media Studies (120 students, with an increased cohort projected)
 - An interdisciplinary, enriched, direct-entry undergraduate program currently administered through the office of the Dean of Arts.
- Master of Journalism (76 students)
 - A full-time, intensive program that runs over five semesters, including a summer internship, designed to provide graduates with professional experience and academic grounding in journalism.
- The Master of Library and Information Studies (160 students)

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- A 48 credit accredited degree with two intakes per year; can be completed through course work or a combination of coursework and thesis; qualifies graduates to work as professional librarians throughout North America.
- The Master of Archival Studies (27 students)
 - A specialized 48 credit degree that can be completed through coursework or a combination of coursework and thesis; it is the only stand-alone archival degree offered in Canada and one of only a few in North America.
- The Dual MAS/MLIS program (35 students)
 - In this 81 credit program, graduates receive two masters' degrees, equipping them for a wide range of career options.
- The Master of Arts in Children's Literature (9 students)
 - An academic, thesis-based graduate degree jointly offered by the iSchool and three other units (English, Creative Writing and Language and Literacy Education, and administered by the iSchool.
- PhD in Library, Archival and Information Studies (14 students)

The School of Media and Information will serve as a hub for a range of existing and emerging interdisciplinary programs and collaborations. These include cross-campus collaborations in areas such as human-computer interaction and data visualization, digital media and global policy, and Arts-based collaborations with Linguistics, First-Nations and Endangered Languages and the many units involved in the MACL and the BMS. The unique approach and scope of the Media and Information School makes it a natural home for interdisciplinary initiatives.

Administrative structure and governance: The administrative structure will consist of a Director, a Graduate Chair responsible for leadership and oversight of graduate programs, an Undergraduate (BMS) Chair, and an Academic Council, in which all programs will be represented. An Advisory Board representing internal (UBC) and external stakeholders will be established to advise the School on strategic planning and to build industry and professional connections. The first Director of the School will be selected through an open search process.

The governance of the unit will reflect a "whole of school" approach, with all faculty and staff contributing to the operations and the intellectual environment of the school as a whole. Standing committees will be integrated and school-level policies and procedures brought into alignment through team-work and negotiation. This will be essential to capitalize on the opportunities afforded by integration and to foster cohesion. The Academic Council will be structured so as to ensure that all the

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component programs and disciplines are represented and resourced and have a voice in planning and decision-making.

At the program level, the following structure is proposed:

- Programs offered fully by the new unit (M.J., MLIS, MAS, DUAL, PhD) each will have a designated Program Coordinator appointed by the Director from among the faculty of the new School.
- The interdisciplinary Master of Arts in Children's Literature (MACL) program will continue to be directed by a Program Chair appointed from among the faculty of the new unit and a Steering Committee made up of faculty teaching in the program from the participating units.
- The interdisciplinary BMS program will be directed by the Undergraduate (BMS) Chair and a BMS Steering Committee made up of representatives from the partner units. The BMS Chair will be appointed by the Dean in consultation with the BMS Steering Committee and the Director of the School of Media and Information. When a Chair from outside the School is appointed, an Associate Faculty appointment will be created for the Chair within the new School to facilitate communication and coordination. Administration (recruiting, admissions, scheduling) will be handled by the new unit; however, educational and intellectual leadership of the BMS program will remain in the hands of the appointed Chair and, collectively, the units contributing courses. Future growth of the BMS, with respect to students and faculty, will be negotiated within the Steering Committee with an aim to distribute resources among the participating units.

Staffing: There are currently approximately 9.5 staff members across these separate units and programs. We anticipate a future staffing complement of approximately 8 positions, based on integration of staff roles on a functional basis. Current staff will be retained to the extent possible to benefit from their expertise and to ensure a smooth transition.

Facilities: The initial stage of integration will not involve relocation of the units, although staff and faculty offices may be redistributed through the available spaces to enhance integration and effective administration. Current facilities include:

- Irving K. Barber Centre, dedicated 4th floor space (iSchool)
- Sing Tao Building (School of Journalism)
- University Centre Lower Level (BMS)

Research and Knowledge Transfer: The new unit is poised to have a major impact in the following areas:

- Studies of social media and digital civics
- Records and information policy and management: ethics, sustainability, governance, access
- Digital media and public policy
- Digital story-telling norms and practices
- Data science/information science/archival science
- Digital preservation
- Information interaction and design
- Media research and professional practices

We anticipate a high level of research collaboration within the new school, cutting across the disciplines represented. This will extend outwards, given initiatives such as new research clusters supported by the VPRI Office, including the Designing for People cluster (iSchool, Computer Science, Engineering, Architecture and Nursing) and the Hidden Costs of Global Supply Chains cluster (School of Journalism and units from the faculties of Arts, Business, Law, Forestry, Science); involvement in the Digital Humanities Salon and associated initiatives; and many ongoing projects, such as the iTrust Partnership Grant and the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre.

4. Implementation Timeline:

Fall 2016: Proposal preparation; Dean's office review

December 2016- January 2017: Public consultations

January-February 2017: Revised proposal submission to Faculty of Arts Council

February 2017: Submission to Senate

July 2017: establishment of the School of Media and Information

This proposal was prepared by (in alphabetical order):

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Appendix 1: Enrollment trends for academic programs

Master of Library and Information Studies Enrolment Data (iSchool)

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Applications	140	148	177	208	240
Offers	98	110	110	120	120
New registrations	63	71	72	73	78
Total enrolment	160	156	160	170	181

Master of Archival Studies Enrolment Data (iSchool)

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Applications	29	39	40	42	68
Offers	20	25	25	24	27
New registrations	8	14	13	12	20
Total enrolment	27	28	31	30	33

DUAL MAS/MLIS Enrolment Data (iSchool)

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Applications	38	32	36	56	67
Offers	23	18	11	17	21
New registrations	14	12	7	12	13
Total enrolment	35	40	44	46	44

Master of Arts in Children's Literature (iSchool, English, Creative Writing and Language and Literacy Education)

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Applications	13	11	27	16	15
Offers	7	5	7	10	8
New registrations	2	3	4	9	4
Total enrolment	9	18	22	22	18

Master of Journalism Enrolment Data (School of Journalism)

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Applications	133	116	149	182	189
Offers	55	54	38	42	41
New registrations	38	32	30	29	27
Total enrolment	76	72	74	66	68

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Bachelor of Media Studies Enrolment Data			
	2016	2015	2014
Applications	695	511	Pilot Year
Applications with Supplemental Materials	440	392	
Offers	71	75	
New registrations	41	39	