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Dear Dr. Freund, Luanne:

I am writing in my role of President of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) to convey the views of the Canadian records and archival profession as conveyed to the ACA Board and approved by such Board as “the ACA views on the Proposed School of Media and Information.”

I will convey the ACA views by directly responding to the questions contained in the Consultation Request form received by the ACA Office on December 10, 2016.

1. *What, If any, benefits do you envision from the establishment of a School of Media and Information at UBC?*
  - a. It was stated at the SLAIS town-hall that universities tend to direct resources towards larger units and the Proposed School would join together three units, thereby significantly increasing the number of faculty members and students. This should improve the financial situation of the existing units by attracting funds larger than the sum of the current funds held by each of them.
  - b. It was also stated at the SLAIS town-hall that it is unusual for universities to have units offering exclusively graduate programs. Graduate programs are expensive and they tend to be financed by bachelor programs, which make money for the university. By including a bachelor program in the Proposed School, the resources earned by such program might be funneled into the graduate programs.
  - c. The integration of the bachelor program in Media Studies into the Proposed School might be a means of attracting students to the graduate programs, as they would be taught introductory courses by faculty members of those programs and might develop interest in pursuing graduate education in one of them.



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- d. The Master of Archival Studies Program has a very strong disciplinary and professional identity that is based on a centuries-old science with an internationally recognized theory, method and practice. The Journalism program also has a very strong disciplinary and professional identity based on internationally recognized principles, concepts and methodologies which are different from but complementary to those of archival science. Both programs would have the opportunity of reinforcing their identity and international impact by gaining an understanding of each other's purposes and perspectives, especially on matters where complementary approaches are needed, e.g. FOIPPA.
2. *What, if any, effect might the establishment of a School of Media and Information have on your unit/group/organization?*
    - a. As the national archival association, the ACA has a stake in the recognition of the archival profession as an independent and distinct profession that receives its identity not from what its members do but from the science that is at the core of its body of knowledge and the education through which such science is transmitted. Presently, the name of the scientific body of knowledge that identifies the archival profession is both in the name of the graduate program and of the School. This is the only school in North America that has reference to the archival program in its name (which is the norm in Europe—including the UK, in South America and in Asia, and common in Africa). The inclusion of the “archival studies” in the School's name was wanted by the UBC Senate when the MAS was created and is a formal recognition of the identity of the archival profession, of its autonomy based on the science that is at its core, and of the importance of the functional competences that its members must have in order to be regarded as professionals. It is the responsibility of the ACA to support the visibility of the profession it represents and the recognition of its distinctive identity and mission by employers, by users of the materials for which the profession is responsible, by governments at all levels, and by the public at large. The inclusion of “archival studies” in the name of the School attracts people to the archival profession (of which they may not be otherwise aware), students to the archival program, and members to the archival association. Nationally and internationally, those familiar with the MAS would make the assumption from the School name change that the program has been eliminated as an autonomous entity. It has been stated at the SLAIS town-hall that the branding of the Proposed School will happen at the program level. How can such a thing be done in an effective way? To discover programs one has to get to the school first, not viceversa.
    - b. The proposed structure for the School of Media and Information does not envision an independent MAS Chair. The ACA, as the national archival association, needs to have a direct liaison with the archival program to ensure that communications between the profession and those responsible for its education are open, active, and ongoing. Such a person must be regarded by the profession as a leader, speaking for the program to the profession at large, as well as to the public served by the archival profession. The Proposed Director of Graduate Programs would create an additional bureaucratic layer that would make difficult both communication and collaboration. The Proposed Program Coordinator would have no administrative authority or responsibility and only serve to advise the Programs Director. If coordination among graduate programs is required in order to avoid duplication and identify ways of enhancing the benefits of the co-existence



of such programs within the same administrative unit, such function can be easily fulfilled by a Coordinating Committee made up of the Chairs of all graduate programs having leadership and administrative responsibilities.

- c. The emphasis within the proposal on education based on “problems” rather than “disciplines” is against the views held by the ACA and presented by it to legislators, governments, employers, and the public. The ACA Guidelines on Graduate Archival Education strongly insist on a disciplinary approach to archival education and focus on the archival body of theory and methods. New Guidelines will be issued this year reinforcing such a view, especially in relation to the teaching of new technologies.
3. *What, if any, concerns do you have regarding the proposal? How could we strengthen the proposal to address these concerns?*
- a. The addition of 5 faculty members and 70-plus students to the School is too large to reduce the total number of the staff presently taking care of students, programs, and administrators. The actual administration of the three units will remain separate.
  - b. The new unit will not reside in a shared location. This makes unrealistic the expected savings in general staff, such as the information person welcoming visitors. It also annuls the benefits that could potentially derive from interaction among students and faculty of different programs. Synergies cannot be easily created when the units are in separate locations.
  - c. As a result of integration, the faculty members might be involved in fewer School’s committees, but would not spend more time with the archival students as they will have to deal with larger issues in the committees to which there are assigned, and with a larger students’ body. In fact, they will lose the focus they now have on the archival curriculum and on archival students.
  - d. If the School will get more resources from UBC because of its larger size and of the money coming from the program in Media Studies, what is the guarantee than any of these additional resources will go to the MAS program, which would be the smallest of all programs (except for the MACL, whose resources depend on multiple departments)? There is a very real danger that the large programs will become stronger and the small ones will become weaker. It is possible that a Coordinating Committee in which all Program Chairs have equal weight would ensure fairness in a distribution of resources based on the contributions of each program, its students, and its faculty to the profession, the discipline and scientific scholarship nationally and internationally, but there is no guarantee.
  - e. Students of the various programs may want access to courses designed for and needed by archival students (though the core would be protected, much of the archival knowledge the teaching of which has given an international reputation to the MAS program is taught in elective courses, including key archival functions and activities). The MAS program has already encountered great difficulties with Dual students, as well as with MLIS students having access to its cross-listed courses. How is the School going to ensure that MAS students are going to have access to courses designed for them in the sessions/terms they need them if students from other programs fill such courses on the basis of first-come first-served?
  - f. The archival faculty contingent is already small. Are they going to be assigned additional responsibilities for advising students of other programs or for teaching in the bachelor program?
  - g. Alumni of the SLAIS MAS, who are now leaders of the Canadian archival profession worldwide, believe that they will lose part of their professional identity as well as their



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connection to their Alma Mater. This could have also financial consequences in terms of donations to the School, support for internships, and contributions to research.

4. *What suggestions do you have for ensuring that this integration would be successful? What do you see as important values, features or guiding principles for the UBC School of Media and Information?*
- a. Each graduate program has to remain autonomous, and have a Chair who represents the program to the School, the university, the profession, and the public at large, nationally and internationally, and who leads the other faculty of the program in making decisions related to both the curriculum and the students.
  - b. A Coordinating Committee made up of the Chairs of all graduate programs should advise the School Director on the needs of each program as agreed upon within the Committee. The Committee should have a rotating Chair with exclusive responsibility for conveying the views of the Committee to the School Director and coordinating faculty's responsibilities—as delegated by the Committee—with the Chair of Media Studies.
  - c. Each graduate program has to decide independently whether to be discipline based, problem based, competence based or soft skills based, on the basis of the requirements of the profession it serves (rather than possible future jobs or positions).
  - d. The Proposed School has to find a way of including in its name a reference to the very distinct professions it serves.
  - e. Cross-listing of courses should be avoided in the first few years until such a time when it will be clear what strategy will better serve the students of all program.
  - f. Courses that are already cross-listed should give absolute priority to the students in the program for which they were designed.
  - g. The creation of new programs must wait for a complete stabilization of the new structure and for the acceptance of the new unit by all professions involved. This requires the creation of an Advisory Board that includes professionals from all the fields served by the Proposed School.

Thank you for giving the ACA the opportunity to offer its views on the Proposed School.

Sincerely,

Luciana Duranti  
President

Jordan Bass  
Vice-President