LIS launches new set of concentration requirements: September 2017

Curricular review is part of the normal cycle of curricular updating. For the past several years, Library and Information Science (LIS) concentration-related faculty, in consultation with industry partners, associates and alumni, have been reviewing how best to update the LIS required curricular framework to better respond to the changing librarianship landscape. Similarly, KMD became UXD with several new courses in 2015-16 to better reflect sector advancements; and, Culture and Technology introduced amendments in 2016-17.

The following Q&A should help current LIS students to better understand LIS curricular changes and ways that you may benefit from these changes.

1. **How do the changes affect current LIS concentration-enrolled students?**

Students already enrolled in the LIS concentration have the option of completing their degree as per the original set of (5) required courses or by taking the new set of (4) required courses. Students can select to follow either curricula, however, students cannot mix and match required courses from the two sets (original/new) of curricular paths. The new courses are:

- INF1321H: Representing, Documenting, and Accessing the Cultural Record
- INF1323H: The Information Experience
- INF1322H: Communities and Values
- INF1324H: Systems and Infrastructures

2. **Why were the changes made to required courses? What was changing in the ‘library landscape’ that impacted the decision to generate new course content?**

In a world of 24/7 information access and ubiquitous computing, combined with an increasingly educated population, the role of information professionals associated with the Library and Information Science concentration is in a state of perpetual evolution. The demands for specific knowledge, skills, and attributes are changing as library professional’s move beyond traditional settings and into the broader community. Competencies range from the demand for enhanced generic skills (communication, leadership, entrepreneurship, flexibility, adaptability) to profession-specific ones such as managing the life-cycle of born digital materials, information systems, teaching and mentoring, community engagement and outreach, and embedded librarianship, to name just a few.

Our alumni survey from 2014 and 2015 reveal jobs outside of traditional libraries including Academic Plan Project (Seneca Collage), Clinical Research Coordinator (Mount Sinai Hospital), Editor (publisher), Information Literacy & Liaison Officer (Seneca College), Information Resource Specialist (Ontario Government), Marketing Web Assistant (Ontario Public Service), Prospect Research Analyst (University of Calgary), Prospect Research Officer (Scarborough Hospital Foundation), Data Analyst (OPS). Within traditional library settings, novel titles include: Data and Statistics librarian (UTSC), Data Analyst (OPS), Community Embedded Librarian (Edmonton, PL).
The Faculty has been continuously adjusting to meet the demands each year within the original schedule of required courses. Over the past 12 months, LIS-related faculty have been meeting to review and rewrite program requirements and courses for maximum relevance. The changes also resulted from dialogue with and feedback from library and industry partners and alumni. The proposal was discussed at MISc in February and with student Program Committee representatives throughout the Winter term approval process.

3. **Are the original required courses that I have taken still relevant?**

Yes, very much so! The core professional concerns and ethics that underpin the study, practice, and Scholarship of Library and Information Science remain unchanged. The learning outcomes you have achieved from the original required course curricula are relevant and in demand. And, keep in mind that 11 of 16 courses within your program (singular concentration) are electives. These are evaluated and updated on a regular basis. Special Topic courses are routinely added to focus on emerging practices while Information Workshops provide students with an up-close connection to faculty research interests in a ‘hands on’ teaching environment.

Also, this year, the Committee on Accreditation of the American Library Association (ALA) granted continued accreditation status to the program leading to the degree of Master of Information. The findings are clear: the ALA cited our program as being of the highest standard to warrant accreditation renewal. This included a very detailed review of all courses, including LIS.

4. **When are the LIS concentration course changes taking effect?**

The new curriculum begins in the fall 2017 term.

5. **Why is INF1240: Research Methods no longer a required course?**

The Research Methods course became somewhat redundant given that each of the new required courses carry over, to varying degrees, theories, concepts and best practices as they relate to the methods and literature of inquiry and problem solving.

6. **If I decide to change to the new LIS curriculum, how can I use completed required courses to complete my degree?**

If one follows the new set of required courses, then completed ‘original’ required courses become degree electives. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that one is taking the correct courses required to complete their degree. Student Services only audits a student’s transcript when a student applies to graduate. However, at any point in time, a student may ask Student Services to review their transcript to determine if they are ‘on track’ with degree requirements.

7. **What do I have to do to indicate that I am following the new schedule of required courses?**

There is nothing for you to do. The accuracy of required course degree completion only happens at the time that you apply to graduate. Important perhaps to repeat, it is the student’s responsibility to take the right complement of required/core courses and electives in order to graduate.
8. **Do part time people still have the five or six years to finish the old LIS requirements or will those courses stop being offered?**

Generally speaking - yes. It is important to note that we do not guarantee daytime required courses for part time students. There may be alternative solutions provided when we have very few students left but such arrangements will in no way impact the quality of the learning outcomes/degree completed. We know it is especially difficult for part time students. Though we in no way can adjust timetables to ensure each part time students specific course pathway to completion, we do try to assist where possible.

9. **Do you anticipate that many students will change to the new curriculum?**

No. Past experience has shown that most students maintain their current curriculum pathway when new requirements are introduced. As current students can take the new courses as electives.

10. **Are there any exemptions provided between the original and new set of required courses?**

No. Though there is some carry-over of some course content and learning outcomes, there was insufficient carry over to exempt students in the current curriculum. There is no direct correlation between new and original courses.

11. **As a current student, is there any way that we can be exempted then from taking INF1240?**

The terms of the curriculum you determine to follow, either entering or new curricula, must be maintained without change. Following the original curriculum, an LIS student may graduate without taking INF 1240H only if granted an exemption under this policy:

https://ischool.utoronto.ca/current-students/academic-resources/academic-regulations/

Please note that the exemption must be based upon a graduate-level course taken in a prior degree. Information Behaviour or another MI course can’t be the basis of an exemption.

12. **There is an elective course I am interested in which was offered in previous sessions but I don’t see it on the schedule? Will it be offered again?**

Generally speaking, as long as an elective course is ‘viable’, it may be offered every year or every other year. Frequency is determined by several factors primarily enrolment history/interest and the availability of an instructor.

13. **Who can I contact to discuss my options?**

At any point, please contact Student Services (cd.anderson@utoronto.ca) to discuss your course options. Each concentration also has identified a ‘Concentration Liaison’. For LIS, Professor Jenna Hartel is providing this service for the 2017-18 academic year. She may respond directly or redirect your enquiry to a fellow professor who may be better suited to respond. Professor Chun Wei Choo is the current MI Program Director. He is available to assist with questions that cross concentration borders or matters of greater significance that may affect course curriculum and planning.
NEW LIS REQUIRED COURSES

INF1321H: Representing, Documenting, and Accessing the Cultural Record: Within the context of human activity, both individual and institutional, an exploration of epistemological and ontological approaches to creating, organizing, preserving, and accessing information and knowledge. The design and evaluation of tools and techniques used in support of curatorship, stewardship, discovery, and use of cultural artefacts and their records.

INF1323H: The Information Experience: identify and understand information behaviour (also called information practice) in any setting. Participants will develop sharpened vision to discern how individuals and groups experience information, that is, an ability to trace “the red thread of information” pervading life (Bates, 1999). A concern with information behaviour is unique to the academic discipline of Library and Information Science (LIS) and its associated professions; practically speaking, it underlies all information mediation and provision. Each semester, the information experience will be critically examined in social contexts germane to LIS, such as: reference service, readers’ advisory, scholarly knowledge production, and hobby careers, among others. Theoretical and methodological tools will be introduced to help participants to see the information experience as socially-constructed, patterned, knit-together, and dynamic. Throughout, students will refine their observational and analytical skills by conducting an independent, exploratory Research Project in a setting or population of personal interest or career relevance, thereby initiating a concentrated research career.

INF1322H: Communities and Values: Librarianship is a service profession that conceives of knowledge, in all its aspects, as fundamental to the human condition. People and communities exist at the heart of the discipline and at the heart of professional practices. They are the focus of our research and the clients of our practitioners. They come to us as unique individuals at any point along the life course seeking knowledge, and in communities (both large and small, formal and informal) working to achieve a common end. These social interactions bear the imprint of the professional values, core assumptions and principles upon which our discipline is founded. Some of these values include intellectual freedom, diversity, a respect for privacy, human rights, social justice, equal and open access without barriers, compassion, and empathy. Further, a commitment to these values demands knowledge of and participation in the public policy arena where decisions around the social, economic, cultural, and political implications of innovating information and communications technologies and their distribution are debated. Then there are the information professionals whom we work with and for; they are the communities of practice of which we are a part.

INF1324H: Systems and Infrastructures: This course examines how information infrastructures form, how they change, and how they shape (and are shaped by) social and cultural forces. Particular focus is paid to libraries, archives, scientific research practices, the Internet, the World Wide Web, and cyberinfrastructures. The course includes an examination of the role of standards, such as library catalogues, classification systems, TCP/IP, HTML, and metadata standards, and changing social structures and knowledge practices, such as scientific disciplines, professional societies, and universities. Finally, the course engages with broad theories of infrastructure and foreground the usually hidden aspects of infrastructures, be they material, informational, or structural.