

Information Studies @ Curtin University of Technology

The Information Studies program at Curtin is a story of the integration of professional practice and experience and melding the necessary theoretical and often historical frameworks of relevant literature and research into a series of courses that are current, relevant, lively and professionally recognised. That all of this is achieved both in the classroom and in online environments means that students in the most remote parts of the world can join with academics and fellow students in a stimulating and supportive learning environment. The diversity of students' backgrounds also facilitates consideration of issues from a variety of perspectives.

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The program has developed and evolved since its inception in 1971 and remains one of the largest graduate programs at Curtin. It has evolved in times of calm and strife,

including the advent of the internet, and the climate of library school closures that this brought with it. The decision in the early 1980s to offer all units and courses in the distance mode, as well as to continue to teach internally, meant that the undergraduate degree was the first degree course at the (then) Western Australian Institute of Technology to be available completely through distance education. Information Studies seized on internet technology to enrich the teaching and learning experiences for students across the globe and rapidly incorporated its innovations and capabilities to enrich student learning experiences. The Department was one of the first areas in Humanities at Curtin University to adopt the new technology to support student learning. The Information Studies team have continued to teach using a blended approach which incorporates flexible opportunities to share learning resources and includes face - to - face, mixed mode and fully online units. All students equally engage with the online learning sites and the differences between modes of study are minimised by the rich learning environment provided by the staff.

Information Studies believes in the community focus on information provision that teaching in the Humanities environment provides and that it embeds the teaching of essential information and communication technology (ICT) applications in strong notions of professional history and ethos, community focus and industry readiness. Our academics have extensive practical, professional experience and draw on their own learning and research experiences to underpin the principles they are teaching.

The Department of Information has long held the view and has been encouraged, particularly by the ALIA national course recognition panels, to undertake regular reviews of their curriculum and graduate outcomes. This has resulted in an ongoing research project that has explored the outcomes for graduating students since 1988, and the results of which have been reported in the professional literature.

The courses offered by the Department are not just professional courses. Students are encouraged to look beyond the hype of new ICT developments and to critically assess their impact on individuals and the wider society. They are also encouraged to value traditional approaches and not dismiss their relevance to the modern world. Students are challenged to explore the evolution of professional practices within the discipline, to determine for themselves its theoretical underpinnings and ways of thinking. They are encouraged to engage with their communities, an example of this being the close professional relationship the Department has with the Benedictine Community at New Norcia, WA, and the significant assistance that the Department receives from professionals for practicum placements.

Information Studies at Curtin currently offers first-professional qualifying courses at the undergraduate (Bachelors) and graduate (Graduate Diploma and Masters) level, and supervises research degrees at Masters and PhD levels. The coursework programs lead to a qualification recognised by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), the Records Management Association of Australasia (RMAA), and The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA). Graduate courses are recognised by the appropriate individual professional association.

The Curtin Information Studies team has received recent recognition for the quality of its programs with a University Carrick Citation in 2007.

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Partnerships create an interest in library studies

This year has seen a number of partnership initiatives come to fruition in Victoria. Aimed at raising young people's awareness of the diverse opportunities offered in the library and information industry, these initiatives have brought together players from across all library sectors to contribute ideas and expertise as well as financial and in-kind support.

The School Library Association of Victoria (SLAV) has been energetic in its championing of these initiatives and for one with particular relevance to the school library sector, the introduction of a school-based traineeship in Certificate III in Library and Information Services, it was rewarded with a nomination for the *Verve VET (Vocational Education and Training) in Schools Excellence Award -- Sport and Recreation and Arts and Culture*. This program grew out of discussions between representatives of Verve – knowledge and skills (the Victorian industry training board for the arts, cultural, sport and recreation industries), the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), the Swinburne University of Technology and Jobs Plus Apprenticeship Service. The program enables students to undertake Certificate III in Library Information Services as a school-based traineeship or school-based apprenticeship. The qualification is undertaken in Years 11 and 12 while the student is enrolled in the Victorian Certificate