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

of Education (VCE) or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). Successful application has been made to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) so that each student is able to undertake the traineeship program at their own school under the normal conditions of a School Based New Apprenticeship / Traineeship.

...a real buzz in the cutting-edge, multimedia venue...

The traineeship provides students with the opportunity to develop skills and an understanding of workplace practices used in libraries which will enable them to either enter the library workforce, to undertake further qualifications in the field or to support other future studies with enhanced skills to research and analyse information using databases and a range of information sources. Engaging these young 'digital natives' in an authentic learning project with tasks that lead to future jobs is a very successful model and the interaction of SLAV members via the association's metropolitan and regional branch network has also offered 'word-of-mouth' endorsement of the initiative and the positive impact upon the students involved.

The momentum provided by the cross-sectoral partnerships has also resulted in the successful staging or establishment of a number of ambitious projects. Notable among these was the Information Evening regarding Careers in the Library and Information Industry held on Tuesday 22 July at Experimedia @ the State Library of Victoria from 5.30 - 7pm. Representatives from the industry and from tertiary institutions were on hand to inspire the 120 prospective library and information professionals, assisting with advice and information. There was a real buzz in the cutting-edge, multimedia venue as young members of the profession offered behind-the-scenes snippets and highlights of their working lives – public libraries, corporate and special libraries and school libraries came to life for the audience and engendered questions and a great deal of enthusiasm. Needless to say, the *Promoting Library Careers Group* was delighted with the response to its first careers event and the evaluation results were fantastic with 80% of participants rating the information evening as excellent or very good.

Keeping the interest alive in pursuing careers in the industry has also been tackled by the group. The *destinationlibrary wiki* has been developed with just this in mind; to provide a resource and encouragement for anyone considering a career in libraries. It aims to be informative, stimulating and flexible through the collective wisdom and experiences of people in the library and information industry.

The wiki is regularly updated and offers secondary students, and others considering this career path, not only course details, but the chance to delve a little more deeply into what it is like to work in the industry. It offers information about careers, working overseas, salary, people profiles, workplace examples, learning institutions and media articles. Visit *destinationlibrary* at **http://destinationlibrary.pbwiki.com/** find out more and pass the address on to your network!

Complementary to the wiki, is a promotional campaign via the distribution of a cool, eye-catching postcard which was designed via a competition organised to identify key messages and images which would attract young people to not only pick up the card at a café, theatre, library or shopping centre, but to visit the wiki and investigate their future options in the library and information industry.

The by-product, of course, of being involved with such a vibrant, cross-sectoral group is professional stimulation not only for those involved but for the organisations that they represent. From the perspective of the SLAV, it is wonderful for our members to see themselves as making a real and positive contribution to the next generation of their profession and offering mutual support to their colleagues across the industry.

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Celebrating 34 years at Charles Sturt University

The School of Information Studies (SIS) at Charles Sturt University (CSU) this year celebrates 34 years of providing tertiary education in the Library and Information Science (LIS) field, and with its recent move to the Faculty of Education, becomes the only stand-alone LIS school in Australia. We see this move as a key strategic placement that will enable the School to continue to develop in line with emerging government priorities in lifelong learning and the growth of the knowledge economy.

The new government's emphasis on the digital economy demands workers who have the skills to work creatively with information and knowledge-based products within and across a global information environment. New ways of thinking about how we access and use information are shaping patterns of behaviour for the individual, for the organisation and for society. Those who work with information need to be comfortable with these new paradigms and their impacts.

In the immediate future the School plans major revisions to its Bachelor of Applied Science (Library and Information Management) and Master of Applied Science (Library and Information Management) courses, with its many library-orientated subjects to be supplemented by the broader information and knowledge management subjects demanded by the marketplace. Subject development continues in the areas of digital libraries, social networking, online education, business analysis, knowledge management, online content management, recordkeeping, archiving, open source development and collaborative environments, and in the cultural and social impact of information and technology.

The School has also been adding to its core Librarianship and Teacher Librarianship offerings in recent years, with courses in areas such as Information Architecture and Audiovisual Archiving. We aim to offer more advanced level and specialist courses in the near future, as we continue to work closely with the information professions to identify areas