An Expanded School Vision: Statements of Support

“As this campus looks forward to the celebration of its sesquicentennial in 2017, we can take pride that our School has been part of that history since 1897. Since joining the faculty in 1977, it has been especially rewarding for me to see the growing influence of GSLIS on this campus. We have had our own building since 1994, substantially expanded in 2001. We led the campus with the establishment of the first degree program offered online in 1996 and continue to be recognized for our innovations in online education. Our increasingly multidisciplinary faculty are sought out as research collaborators by others across campus. And our faculty, students, and staff are contributing to exciting new outreach activities such as the CU Community Fab Lab and the Illinois Digital Innovation Leadership Program. The new initiatives outlined in “An Expanded School Vision” are intended to ensure that we have the resources to enable our LIS degree program to flourish and continue to develop as part of a larger school with a stronger presence on this campus.”

—Linda C. Smith (MS ’72), GSLIS Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Programs

“For many years my 502 students have heard me talk about Robert Taylor’s notion that our field is not about institutions such as libraries, but about information transfer—in libraries, yes, but in many other types of institutions, as our graduates’ careers demonstrate. The addition of the degree in information management is long overdue and promises to enrich the school not simply in course offerings and variety of students. My experience is that having students together in these related fields will enhance each of those fields in important ways—it’s one reason I’m an avid reader of the 3 Geeks and a Law Blog.

I am delighted to learn both about the name change and the future directions of the School. They will be critical to GSLIS’s vitality and survival in the future. The faculty must be pleased and proud they are taking these steps.”

—Leigh Estabrook, GSLIS Dean Emerita (1986-2001)

“The proposed changes at GSLIS are tremendously important and beneficial, both for the School and the profession. I’m encouraged to see these developments and applaud both Dean Renear and the leadership of the School. Most significantly, the changes signal a breadth of perspective on the scholarship and professional work for which the School is responsible.
That perspective clearly reflects an understanding of the opportunities and challenges of information-related sciences and professions. Now more than ever, it is important to see the connections between these related disciplines. Our School can do this, and do it in ways that strengthen the education of librarians.

The discussions underway at GSLIS are about more than a name change, and yet the proposed name change is important. There is important semantic power in the new name. The School is not simply a graduate school, and this must be understood by students, employers, and the campus as well. By asserting responsibility for the information sciences and including librarianship in that curriculum, the School is laying claim to a broad orbit of responsibility of which librarianship is a part: these are not two separate things, librarianship and information science, but a powerful interplay of information- and policy-related theories and practices, of which librarianship is a part.

I am especially pleased to see this effort coming from the leading school of library and information science. Our educators must assert a future for our schools and for the profession, a future that proclaims a role in the information sciences, linking these things together and educating the best possible next generation of information professionals. Our research libraries have long hired across a broad spectrum, addressing a growing set of responsibilities that includes policy and advocacy, UX-inspired design, data management, digital technologies, and much of the education and research experience. The proposed changes at GSLIS will strengthen the curriculum, enrich the student experience, broaden the student body, and of course benefit our libraries and their users.”

—John Wilkin, Juanita J. and Robert E. Simpson Dean of Libraries and University Librarian, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

“I am pleased to hear that GSLIS is expanding its degree offerings to include a master’s in information management, and also that it is continuing an effort that I began when I was Dean of the School, to establish an undergraduate major, as well. Both of these changes will be good for the long-term vitality and sustainability of the School, and both are natural extensions of the core library and information science programs. These changes would also bring GSLIS into alignment with its primary peer group, the iSchools, a cohort that I helped to build from four schools (when I arrived at GSLIS in 2003) to more than 25 when I left nine years later. The iSchools group came together around the mission of raising awareness of information degrees and careers among undergraduates, parents, and employers, and all of those schools offer options like the ones that GSLIS is developing.

The value of Illinois’ first-rate educational programs in the information professions is widely recognized: having recently hired one of your graduates in my merged library and IT organization at Brandeis University, I can attest to the experience, energy, and expertise of the professionals coming out of your programs. In fact, I will shortly be advertising a position for a business information analyst—a position that I have described as a special librarian meant to work with the University’s
business offices on their information needs in the areas of competitive intelligence, reporting, and decision support. My ideal candidate would be a GSLIS graduate with experience and possibly a second master’s in business—and I’m sure that such a person exists among your alumni. Looking ahead, I see increasing need for people like this, in organizations like mine—as well as continuing need for academic librarians, archivists, records managers, instructional designers, communications specialists—a broad range of information professionals whose practice focuses on people and their information needs, as librarians have always done. GSLIS has built a tradition of excellence in library and information science education, and I look forward to seeing it expand on that tradition. Illinois graduates coming out of your School will always be welcome in Library and Technology Services at Brandeis.”

—John Unsworth, Vice Provost, University Librarian, Chief Information Officer and Professor of English, Brandeis University; former GSLIS Dean (2003-2012)

“Before getting an MS degree, I worked in a small public library with even smaller patrons. As an apprentice storyteller there and later in a school library, I discovered the power of telling and listening to stories as an essential source of information that both reflects and shapes who we are personally, ethically, socially, culturally, and globally. As a doctoral student and later faculty member who taught future youth librarians face to face and online, I explored the way stories cross oral, print, and electronic boundaries. Young people slip back and forth between those traditions even more easily than their elders.

In the land of higher education, all research—including science—tells a story. (Information science is, of course, infinitely enriched by the inclusion of knowledge in the arts and humanities.) Stories must be adaptable to survive changing tellers and listeners who are themselves balancing tradition and innovation. GSLIS is not only a vision, it’s a story. [Our School] will adapt that story to new listeners, who in turn will tell it in new ways. I can hardly wait to hear it.”

—Betsy Hearne, GSLIS Professor Emerita

“I have had GSLIS graduates as colleagues during my career and recruited others in my role as dean at various academic institutions. My experiences on both fronts have been very positive. I continue to value the breadth and depth of GSLIS graduates’ preparation for the profession amidst significant changes in higher education.

GSLIS has enjoyed top rankings because of bold and effective leadership for a long time. Now there is another opportunity to expand its impact by offering a new degree in information management while protecting its core value and commitment to libraries and librarianship. That is the hallmark of successful organizations: to adapt to a changing world without compromising its core mission.
I endorse the new direction for GSLIS to offer more students a rich and exciting opportunity to flourish as professionals and leaders in libraries and as information professionals.”

—Lorraine J. Haricombe (MS ’88, PhD ’92), Vice Provost and Director of University of Texas Libraries, Austin

“It has been almost fifty years since I earned my MLS from a program that subsequently was closed by University administrators who lacked the foresight to see the importance of information and information studies as the end of the twentieth century neared. During those intervening years, as someone in the position of interviewing, hiring, and nurturing talented librarians, I was proud to observe them leading the important changes that have enabled our profession to thrive. I share others’ delight in learning about GSLIS’s future plans. Both its name change and its future directions are critically important to ensuring that our past contributions to our global society will continue well into the future.”

—Paula Kaufman, Professor Emerita of Library Administration, former Juanita J. and Robert E. Simpson Dean of Libraries, and former University Librarian

“From the perspective of an alum who has returned to recruit countless graduates of the LIS program, I strongly endorse and applaud the proposed realignment / expansion of the School’s offerings. Serving on the advisory board of another library school, I have had the experience of participating in extensive discussions regarding the future of library schools. From the wide variety of options available, I sincerely believe that Illinois has chosen an extremely logical and practical path to pursue, and I look forward to a successful transition and our continued interest in Illinois graduates.”

—Clifford H. Haka (MS ’77), Director of Libraries, Michigan State University

“This is great news and an important direction that I hope more schools take. As libraries, and especially public libraries, work to serve their communities in the knowledge and information economy, I believe information schools are in the best position to support this critical evolution. You have a world-class program and will soon have a name that fully encompasses your mission. I applaud the thought and analysis that led to this change. This name change will serve as an important external message to prospective, current, and past students that libraries are in the information and knowledge business and have a critical and strategic future within business, government, and education.”

—Brian Bannon, Commissioner, Chicago Public Library
“The proposed changes for GSLIS simply reflect the nature of information in our era. The ability to access accurate information is critical in this time of limited resources on a global scale. Timely and reliable information assists the decision makers of both the government and corporate spheres to make crucial allocations of resources. How society organizes and makes available information for that responsibility is equally important. The enhanced direction the School is making will significantly assist leaders in understanding the perplexities of decision making. Information access is a gift of enlightenment in this era and the recognition that knowledge is power. Librarianship will remain the core of GSLIS with the proposed change. That can never change because librarians are the key resource for information allocation.

As a former policy analyst for the Illinois General Assembly and chief deputy director of the Illinois State Library, and as a data information analyst for a public policy lobbying group, I can attest to the value of my MS from GSLIS (LEEP Cohort 5, 2001-2002). GSLIS is involved in some amazing projects that greatly benefit the challenges of librarianship and information management. The future of the School with the proposed changes will enhance the rich history of the School and pave the way for an even greater future.”

—Mike Ragen (MS ’02), Data Information Analyst; former Policy Analyst for the Illinois General Assembly and former Chief Deputy Director of the Illinois State Library

“Since I arrived at GSLIS as a young professor in 1970, my primary interest has been libraries as institutions. As a result, I was very concerned a few years ago when it was suggested that the school change its name to the Graduate School of Information Science. However, in recent months I have changed my mind for several reasons.

Expanding the school’s range of programs seems essential to avoid a forced merger with an irrelevant division of the University, which I think would be disastrous for GSLIS and its national status. An expanded school with the title of School of Information Sciences (plural) seems far more inclusive than the Graduate School of Information Science (singular). I was surprised by how much difference the change made to me.

The retention of the master’s degree in library and information science represents the school’s continued commitment to people who intend to work in and with actual libraries. The fact that it is one division of a school of information sciences seems very appropriate.

To me, the proposed changes seem well thought out. I would be happy to support the change in any way I can.”

—Fred Schlipf, GSLIS Adjunct Professor; former Director of the Urbana Free Library and former GSLIS Assistant Professor
“I applaud the GSLIS faculty’s decision to adopt a growth strategy for the School and to signal this by a name change that emphasizes a broadening of the School’s intellectual, disciplinary, and professional foundations. My own experience as dean of the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago and dean of the Faculty of Professional Studies at the University of NSW in Sydney Australia leads me to emphasize how important such a strategy is to academic survival and development.

From my own experience, I know how hard it is to make the fundamental changes that are now being discussed. With the commitment of faculty and alumni and the support of the University’s administration, it seems to me that there is no reason why the School should not succeed in initiating the changes that will ensure a flourishing future. The alternatives are loss of identity in a merger or worse, closure. In a rapidly changing institutional and professional environment, the School cannot stay as it is. I believe that its future welfare, and indeed its survival, depends on the initiatives it is now taking. More will be needed too, but as I see it, what has been decided after a sustained period of reflection and systematic discussion within the faculty (changes tentatively mooted even before I retired from the faculty in 2007) is the right move. As to timing, I say urgently to all my colleagues at GSLIS, do not accept delay. It is now necessary to act.”

—W. Boyd Rayward, GSLIS Professor Emeritus; former Dean of the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago; former Dean of the Faculty of Professional Studies at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia

“As a very early member of the cohort of faculty that helped to develop the strength of the LEEP Program at GSLIS, I want to applaud the bold move that the school is undertaking. Having attracted a wonderful mix of faculty from multiple disciplines, Illinois’ iSchool is doing what needs to be done: it is reminding us all and working towards a world that is putting the pieces that make up the world of scholarship. It is almost as if we have come full circle—gathering back together the marvelous strands whose tendrils have wrapped themselves around all of the parts of our lives through linked information technologies; making sense of the world was never a strictly linear pursuit, nor can it be confined to one discipline or one entity. The new direction of the School realizes not only the potential of the age in which we live but embraces it wholeheartedly, allowing the world of the library to encompass and interact with the strands of knowledge in ways that will enlighten us all.

—Elliott Shore, Executive Director, Association of Research Libraries (ARL)
LSAA Statement of Support for Leading in the Future:
An Expanded School Vision

The undersigned members of the Library School Alumni Association Board of Directors enthusiastically support the Expanded School Vision and the direction and goals of progressing towards an expanded role for the School including its proposal to call itself the School of Information Sciences.

Our beloved School offers many multi-disciplinary options to students, and the Future Expanded School Vision extends that with the addition of the MS in Information Management, which adds a discriminating depth to its appeal to future students and their future employers, while ensuring that the library and information science degrees remain the solid foundation of our School.

The alumni of GSLIS reflect diversity in many ways, including working in an expanding number of non-traditional librarian roles. A change in the School’s name appropriately reflects that diversity of career opportunities and embraces the growing importance of information professions, both within the walls of libraries and in the countless other arenas where we curate and disseminate information.

It is imperative that we support initiatives like those proposed by the Executive Committee and endorsed by the faculty to augment the School’s stellar reputation, increase its fiscal health, attract more diverse students and a continuing high caliber of faculty, and broaden its competitive edge by responding to changes in our world.

We support the initiatives to strengthen and enhance the School that has played such a significant part of all our lives and encourage other alumni to show their support.

Sincerely,

Donna LaFollette, LSAA President (MS ’09)
Stephanie Atkins, Vice President (MS ’99)
Linda Sloat, Secretary (MS ’76)
Donna Schaal, Treasurer (MS ’00)
Wayne Bivens-Tatum, Director (MS ’00)
Barbara D’Angelo, Director (MS ’97)
Ethan A. Henderson, Director (MS ’07)
Jeffrey Sichaleune, Director (MS ’04)

Related Documents

Leading in the Future: An Expanded School Vision
Frequently Asked Questions
Proposal to Establish a New Master of Science in Information Management