

## **Leading in the Future: An Expanded School Vision**

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### **A tradition of excellence in LIS education**

For nearly two decades, *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked GSLIS number one among professional schools offering master's degrees in library and information science (LIS). This ranking reflects the excellence of our current degree (MS/LIS); the hard work of our faculty, staff, and students; the leadership of our alumni; and the support of friends and colleagues at other LIS schools. It also reflects our strengths in:

- Pioneering innovative educational programs.
- Ensuring our graduates have excellent employment prospects.
- Stewarding the historical excellence of the School and protecting the value of GSLIS degrees.
- Maintaining a School that is financially and strategically sustainable.

We are committed to these objectives and therefore to exploring new ways to meet our responsibility for bringing our skills, knowledge, and values to bear on the critical problems facing society today. Our profession's interdisciplinary, human-centered approach to information services and systems—guided by the standards and values of librarianship—has never been needed more than it is now.

### **Growing in scale and scope: A new degree in information management**

In order to meet the need for well-prepared information professionals who can adapt to an ever-changing environment, GSLIS plans to expand our degree offerings by adding a master's degree in information management (MS/IM). This new degree, which is in the final stages of approval, will provide a separate program for those interested in information-intensive professional roles in a broad range of sectors. It will be offered on campus and online and will draw on the experience and infrastructure of our Leep online learning option, which already supports our MS/LIS. The addition of this degree will allow our School to stay competitive and provide an additional revenue stream that will contribute to our financial health and sustainability.

### **Commitment to libraries and librarianship**

Our commitment to libraries is, of course, undiminished and non-negotiable. We are not reducing or replacing anything that we are doing now. We are expanding the School, and we are enriching and growing *all* our programs, including our MS/LIS program. We plan to increase the number of students who intend to find careers in library settings, archives, and museums as well as to recruit students who wish to pursue our MS/IM. We also are actively recruiting PhD students whose interests range from youth services to text mining and data analytics.

Most importantly, by expanding our academic scope, we can bring the culture and values of LIS and librarianship to more information professions and settings. These values include our ethic of service, respect for diversity and the cultural heritage of all peoples, the protection of privacy and intellectual freedom rights, and more. We share these values not only through our teaching and research but also nationally and internationally through our two longstanding publications, *Library Trends* and *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, which are highly regarded in the field of LIS.

### **Names matter: The evolution of our School's name**

Our current name, acquired in 1981, is our fifth; as of this year, we've had it longer than any other. It has served us extremely well, but to the world—especially potential applicants and employers—it is too narrow to encompass the range of preparations we envision.

Names matter. For our School, a name change would happen only after much consideration and with a concerned eye to both our history and our future; it also would be part of a larger agenda to further our achievements and expand our impact on society. It is vital that we translate the knowledge and skills that form the core of our School's mission to a broader audience, while embracing the many evolving paths of librarianship that have helped to inform and define the emergence of information professions.

Our School is becoming more programmatically diverse. We anticipate the new MS/IM degree by spring, pending approval by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. We are discussing the possibility of an undergraduate major in the information field, which would preclude the use of the word "Graduate" in our name. We also are helping the University manage the Illinois Informatics Institute (I3), which offers a campus-wide undergraduate Informatics minor, a Bioinformatics MS, and an Informatics PhD; this assistance includes teaching and advising Informatics students. Our School needs a broad name that encompasses these activities as well as changes in librarianship.

### **Recommendation for "School of Information Sciences"**

After several discussions and proposals, our faculty have recommended, "School of Information Sciences." This name is meaningful and indicates the breadth of our teaching, research, and public engagement. The use of the word "sciences" encompasses the full range of intellectual practices around information and information institutions. In addition, while "library science" refers to work within a particular institution, "information sciences" refers to multiple forms of knowledge across institutions.

This name also will increase our School's visibility on campus and clarify our identity as a college-level unit, one that is free to make its own decisions about how to organize and operate. This autonomy is extremely valuable in the pursuit of our

mission, allowing us to respond adeptly to student needs and local and national needs. Campus recognition of our leadership will aid in promoting cross-campus collaborations, communicating our value to internal and external audiences, attracting more high-quality students, and emphasizing our relevance to the future vision of the University.

## **Summary**

Our School has always evolved to meet the needs of a changing world while at the same time preserving our core identity and values. The current expansion of our programmatic offerings will strengthen our teaching and research excellence, sustain our achievements, contribute to our financial security, and broaden our societal impact. Our mission and school structure will remain the same.

In light of these changes, a new, more encompassing name is needed. Our faculty recommend “School of Information Sciences” to reflect the breadth of our academic programs and the full range of intellectual practices around information and information institutions. This new name—combined with increases in scale and scope—will allow us to better reflect the scholarship of our students and the research of our faculty, foster broader collaborative relationships with alumni in all sectors, and maintain our relevance and ranking in the years to come.

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## **Related Documents**

[Statements of Support](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Proposal to Establish a New Master of Science in Information Management](#)