



Canadian Council of Archives
Conseil canadien des archives

27 January 2017

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Dear Dr. Freund,

Re: *Proposal for the Creation of the School of Media and Information, Draft for Consultation, December 2016*

I am writing today as Chair of the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) in response to the request for consultation with stakeholder communities on the proposal for the creation of the School of Media and Information at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

CCA was established in 1985 to coordinate planning and communications within the Canadian Archival System, the whole of the organisations and programmes, including over 800 institutions, concerned the acquisition, access and preservation of our documentary heritage. CCA's coordination and communication mandate exists to advance the preservation, organisation, and accessibility of Canada's records and information resources. Professional education programs are key components of the Canadian Archival System; archival studies imparts a distinct body of knowledge and theory regarding the identification and management of records. Since its founding, UBC's Master of Archival Studies program and its faculty have contributed tremendously to the Canadian Archival System. As the not-for-profit council representing Canada's archival institutions and organisations with archives and records management programmes, CCA's members include a large segment of the employers of MAS graduates.

Below are the CCA Board's responses to the questions contained in the Consultation Form sent to me on December 13, 2016.

1. What, if any, benefits do you envision from the establishment of a School of Media and Information at UBC?

CCA recognises the potential administrative streamlining, and financial and interdisciplinary gains in the formation of a new School from the existing School of Library, Archival and Information studies, and the School of Journalism. There is an opportunity for the Bachelor of Media Studies to increase interest and enrollments in the graduate programmes of archival studies, journalism, and library and information studies.

2. What, if any, effect might the establishment of a School of Media and Information have on your unit/group/organisation?

Since its inception in 1981, the UBC MAS program has prepared graduates for careers as archivists, records managers, access and privacy administrators, digital records curators, and other "non-traditional" positions that require expertise in the creation, use and preservation of records. These positions are found in many organisations, from the largest financial institutions to smallest community archives. CAA considers the integration of the existing two schools into a "School of Media and Information" to run counter to the needs of the employers of archival studies graduates.

It has taken nearly a generation for the UBC MAS program, the first of its kind in North America, to establish its identity and reputation. In the context of collaborative initiatives to identify national priorities for the Canadian Archival System, CCA has been informed by numerous employers that experienced, professionally-educated archivists are in demand now



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more than ever, and that the workforce needs professional staff with distinct archival knowledge who can collaborate effectively with allied professionals and support staff to address the challenges of managing records throughout their lifecycle. The proposal for a “School of Media and Information” contributes to dilution of archivists’ professional identity and loss of UBC programme recognition with potential employers of graduates.

3. What, if any, concerns do you have regarding the proposal? How could we strengthen the proposal to address these concerns?

Robust graduate archival studies programs are vitally important to Canada and the rest of the world as we face the challenges of 21st century record-making, keeping, preservation and access. It is critically important that the MAS programme, as well as each of the other programmes that will make up the new School, have its own chair. The needs of the disciplines are such that it is not desirable to establish a “Director of Graduate Programs” who would unavoidably be from one discipline or another, and could not appropriately represent the three professional programmes. Like archival practitioners working in team environments, a chair of the MAS programme would collaborate with other programme chairs to advance inter-disciplinary initiatives and address school administrative matters.

The UBC MAS programme has a strong reputation with employers; this results from both core and elective courses that impart the necessary theory and methods to address the management of records, both digital and analogue, throughout their lifecycle. It is vital that students have access to the courses they need and that are directly related to their specific field of study.

4. What suggestions do you have for ensuring that this integration would be successful? What do you see as important values, features or guiding principles for the UBC School of Media and Information?

Each graduate programme within the school is independent and has its own chair, who liaises within the School and the university, and with the external stakeholder communities.

The School establishes a mechanism for maintaining relationships with stakeholder communities, via an external advisory committee or similar; this will be especially important in the first few years of the new School’s establishment.

The names of the distinct professions are included in the School’s name.

Students in each program have priority access to discipline-specific elective courses.

Cross listing of courses is minimised, at least initially.

The MAS programme within the proposed School maintain a discipline-based approach; this approach provides graduates with the required knowledge to address the problems encountered in the management of digital and analogue records.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

On behalf of the CCA Board,

Lara Wilson
Chair, Canadian Council of Archives