

2019-20 ACADEMIC SENATE PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION STUDIES

Internal Reviewers

Willeke Wendrich, Review Team Chair, Graduate Council, Near Eastern Languages and
Cultures

Fernando Torres-Gil, Graduate Council, Social Welfare/Public Policy

External Reviewers

Geoffrey Bowker, Department of Informatics, University of California, Irvine

Heather MacNeil, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto

Date of Site Visit: February 18-19, 2020

Approved by Graduate Council: May 15, 2020

Appendix I: External Reviewers' Reports

Appendix II: Site Visit Schedule

Note: The Self-Review Report has been previously distributed. If you would like a copy, please contact programreview@senate.ucla.edu.

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Information Studies is part of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSE&IS), under Dean Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco.

The Department is home to two graduate programs:

PhD in Information Studies

Master in Library and Information Science (MLIS)

The PhD in Information Studies

At the time of the review, the number of enrolled PhD students was 29 (19 female/10 male); 5 international; 2 Black African American; 4 two or more races (Hispanic); 2 Chicano/Mexican American; 1 Filipino; 1 decline to state/other; 13 white.

The PhD program's main focus is to prepare students for a career in academia, although some enter the program to continue to leadership roles in the library and archives world. In the past 8 years, approximately 50% of the graduates have been hired directly out of the program into faculty positions.

Master in Library and Information Science (MLIS)

The MLIS is a professional program, accredited by the American Library Association. The most recent accreditation review was in 2018-19.

At the time of this review, the number of enrolled MLIS students was 116 (90 female/26 male); 1 international; 10 two or more races (non-Hispanic); 11 two or more races (Hispanic); 16 Chicano/Hispanic/Latino; 12 Asian; 3 Filipino; 4 decline to state/other; 59 white.

The MLIS program has five areas of specialization, with the following division of student interest expressed as percentages of the total applications in 2019:

1. **Archival Studies 40%**
(covering the full spectrum of archival media, including electronic records)
2. **Informatics 10%**
(a critical approach to modern information services, including digital libraries, data repositories, metadata and search engines)
3. **Library Studies 20%**
(preparation for librarianship, including collection development, public services, cataloging and classification, and outreach to underserved populations)
4. **Media Archival Studies 20%**
(historical, contemporary, and emergent media-making contexts and formats)
5. **Rare Books / Print and Visual Culture 10%**

(early writing, manuscripts, print and digital formats)

It is important to note that these interests are indicated by students at the time of application, when many of them do not have a specific understanding of what is covered by each specialization and the professional opportunities they lead to. These percentages would most likely be different if they were collected at the conclusion of the degree.

The MLIS degree requires a capstone portfolio or a thesis and the department maintains an extensive internship program. The department's self-review states that there is a high rate of employment for recent graduates, who also participate in leadership of national professional organizations.

The department offers a concurrent degree program of MLIS and MBA, but this program is not successful and may be discontinued.

A concurrent degree with the Latin American Studies MA program is modestly successful and has had 6 applicants and 3 graduates during the review period.

A Post-Master Certificate Program (36 units) has very few applicants, mostly from working professionals.

The department also offers a prestigious summer program: the California Rare Book School.

Faculty

The Department has 13.5 FTE of voting Senate faculty (2 have split appointments)

Rank	Voting	Non-voting
Full Professors	7	3
Associate Professors	4	
Assistant Professors	3	
Librarians		2
Emeriti on recall/research		4

In addition to ladder faculty, classes in this professional school are taught by postdoctoral scholars in rare cases and lecturers drawn from practitioners. The self-review lists 4 postdoctoral scholars by name, who are mostly involved in research.

Diversity

The Department has a commitment to diversity, phrased broadly, and a very active Diversity Council. This is a faculty-led advisory body in which very active alums take part. The status of the council and the reach of its advice is unclear. The self-review recognizes, however, that much more needs to be done to correct the underrepresentation of certain groups.

Although part of the vision is broadly supported, efforts to increase diversity in recruitment of

students are met with mixed results. Success in diversifying the student body is mostly the result of initiatives by individual faculty members, such as through dedicated diversity grants obtained from the Mellon Foundation or the Emerging Archival Scholars program funded by the IMLS.

Position of the Department Nationally and Internationally

In the self-review and in several conversations it came to the fore that the department prides itself as being a top-rated department nationally as well as internationally. Faculty research and publications from both the senior and junior faculty are groundbreaking. The Dean, Chair, and Faculty were generously characterizing the latter faculty as “stars.” Both external reviewer reports (Bowker and MacNeil) presented a robust picture of a faculty “on top of their game” in terms of national and international recognition and excellence in scholarship. UCLA has an extraordinary asset in this Department of IS, one that has garnered national and international recognition and high rankings and stands poised to be a leader in the rise of information technology and digital education that confront the nation. Certainly, the current COVID-19 pandemic and the recognition that distance and remote learning “are a wave of the future” provide the IS department with tremendous value-added and competitive advantages that can accrue to UCLA's stature. In addition, examining the characterization of careful journalism as “fake news” and the opposite, unsubstantiated beliefs that are presented as “the truth,” are at the core of the critical approach that Information Studies at UCLA stands for. The dilemma, however, is to what extent can that potential be realized and to what extent does UCLA administration and leadership want to reinvest time, energy and resources in capitalizing on this intellectual and professional gem, notwithstanding the serious issues confronting the Department of Information Studies (as described below)?

The department was instrumental in redefining information studies into iSchools, a development in which, ironically, the UCLA equivalent of the iSchool has fallen massively behind in growth, housing and equipment (albeit not in prominence). In the words of the self-review: the department stands out among its peer iSchools and Library and Information Science programs in three important ways:

- Its deep engagement across the social sciences and humanities
- The outstanding academic track record of its faculty and students
- Its proactive commitment to social justice, pluralism, and cultural and global awareness.

Position of the Department in the School

The IS department used to be an independent School of Library Services (founded in 1958), but since 1994 it is positioned in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSE&IS), together with the Department of Education. The relationship between the two departments is imbalanced, because the Education Department is much larger than the IS department. More importantly, colleagues from Education and even the Dean regularly forget that the IS department exists, or at least forget to mention them as part of the school. The Dean typically has an Education background, and the IS department has long felt unseen. With the establishment in 2018 of an Associate Dean from the IS department, this has been corrected partly.

Department Location and Housing

The IS department is not housed in the same building as the Dean's office and most of the Education department. This literally increases the distance between the two departments and the perception that the IS department is tucked away in what was supposed to be a temporary building in a corner of campus that is not easily accessible. There is a serious lack of building maintenance and upkeep, including serious issues with heating and water infiltrations, and there are no gender neutral bathrooms and no lactation room.

In many universities the iSchools are typically large and energetic multidisciplinary research and educational centers that are housed in glitzy new buildings with state of the art digital laboratories. In contrast, IS is housed in a low-ceilinged, outdated conglomeration of small offices on the second floor. A larger space on the ground floor has been subdivided in four corners that represent the most important maker-spaces and digital laboratory needs, as well as a library of children's books and a collection of information carriers and players, such as tape decks, video recorders, film editing and preservation equipment, and old computer models, to enable archiving of various media. It is a valiant attempt to enable the work that is central to archiving and critiquing the recent history of human knowledge and communication.

One of the immediate problems that faces the building, as well as the Young Research Library, immediately to its east, is a serious lack of disabled parking. This is an unacceptable obstruction of access that needs to be corrected post haste.

Department Climate

A fundamental problem that has a detrimental influence on faculty, students, and staff is the social climate in the department. Everybody the review committee spoke to mentioned the poisonous atmosphere and hostile relationships within the department and in particular among the faculty. Almost without exception, the faculty members expressed regret about the discord, based on a general and fundamental mistrust in the politics, considerations of tenure and promotion, power relations, epistemological and methodological differences, distribution of workload, and (lack of) appreciation and recognition. The terms used by faculty to describe the current climate were harsh: hostility, abuse, death by a thousand cuts. The climate issues have been known for a while, but in spite of attempts by several department chairs to mitigate tensions—through organizing a retreat and series of mediation meetings led by the Ombuds office, focusing on the vision and a 5-year strategic plan for the department, and initiating social get-togethers—the misgivings continue. This has caused professional and personal hardships. The previous Chair stepped down unexpectedly and the present chair has not managed to close the divide. He is lauded by some, critiqued by others. Part of the problem may be that the department is very small, while several faculty members have split appointments and collaborate with colleagues from the College, rather than from the department.

The discord is articulated as consisting of two sides. One side characterizes the other as abusing a position of power and having “a lack of understanding otherness in the department in a field that is mainly white.” The other side complains about a serious lack of involvement in the department and diva behavior. A third voice maintains that diversity is a party line, in which

students have to talk the talk, while they feel that critical race theory does not get them a job and they would prefer to focus on competencies.

Faculty

The discord among the faculty was brought up by all participants. The view of the fundamental cause of the problems diverged considerably. The difference of opinion focused on power differentials and perceived lack of appreciation.

The junior faculty feel unsupported. Faculty votes on promotion and tenure are anonymous; however, it seems that faculty choose to disclose and coordinate their votes as there are always a number of No votes. This happens in votes after faculty meetings in which no criticism was voiced or arguments given on why a certain dossier might not be sufficiently strong. Junior faculty felt they were judged harshly and unfairly. A number of junior faculty are very active in public debates, which results in invitations to conferences, TED talks and public media – in turn requiring travel and absence from the department.

Mid-rank faculty are split. Recently tenured professors feel very similar to the pre-tenured colleagues and express that their tenure procedure had been extremely stressful. They feel that many of the senior faculty do not appreciate or understand the innovation they brought to the field in the form of activist scholarship. Other mid-rank Professors express that some of the junior faculty were perhaps unreasonably antagonistic.

The senior faculty, who are all well-published and have provided the department with an excellent reputation over the last decade, feel that they were unfairly impacted by the lack of “departmental citizenship” and solidarity. Several faculty members are teaching above the required class load and in the meantime they also feel unfairly blamed for blocking progress of junior faculty, who have introduced an atmosphere of self-promotion, touchiness, and eye-rolling in faculty meetings.

A serious problem is that the faculty meetings are not kept confidential. Discussions are leaked, which is one of the reasons that an open debate has become impossible. Faculty members keep their mouth shut during meetings, but then vote negatively. This only exacerbates the feeling of distrust and uncertainty to the point that the department represents, and we do not use this term lightly, a hostile environment.

Graduate Students

The PhD students are generally very positive about their advisors, who are accessible and are great mentors. Students who do not come in with an MLIS degree are missing some of the fundamental classes. The PhD students would like to have more of a community and access to other professors, who are often not around. Graduate student funding is insufficient with the cost of living in Los Angeles.

The MLIS students who spoke to the review committee stress that there is no departmental funding for Master’s students. They come in and need to find out how to support themselves, for instance with TA-ships in other departments. The creation of an undergraduate program would be an

enormous boon to enable the establishment of more TA-ships. There is anxiety about the process of creating a portfolio and some requirements are unclear. The classes that were supposed to be offered are not always available, due to faculty sabbaticals or sick leave.

Staff

There are two groups of staff working with the department: finances, HR, and the school's manager are working out of Moore Hall, where the Dean's office of GS&EIS is. The student affairs officer, several members of the School's Educational Technology Unit, two librarians, and two assistants (to the chair and the faculty) work from the IS building.

In general, the staff were positive about their work in the Department. They feel supported by the chair and appreciated for the work they do. They see, however, that the atmosphere among the faculty is affecting the students and also at times their work negatively. Some faculty are rarely in the department.

Conclusion

The "degradation" in 1994 from School of Library Services to a department still plays a role in the self-perception of the department, especially in relation to the much larger Department of Education. There is little collaboration with the Department of Education in teaching or research and the majority of collaborative efforts are focused on different departments in the College.

The building, which was supposed to be temporary housing, is not suitable to house an iSchool, and its location in a rarely visited and invisible part of campus detrimental to a sense of departmental pride and involvement of IS in campus activities. The Department can be characterized as an "anorexic organization," with a faculty that is too small to fulfill all tasks, especially if, as recommended, the department would add an undergraduate program. The graduate students would benefit from TA-ships that come with the creation of an undergraduate program. This plan that the department is actively developing is an effort that should continue, but merits support from the administration. A most serious problem is, however, the departmental climate, which has been atrocious for many years and needs an outside chair to immediately address the current situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this report and its conclusions, as well as the reports of the two external reviewers, we recommend the following:

Recommendations to the Executive Vice Chancellor/Provost and Dean of GSE&IS:

1. Consider placing the Department of Information Studies in receivership and focus on addressing the current climate that impedes its productivity. This should include the installation of an outside Chair (external to Information Studies), possible investments in outside consultants and a "tough love" approach to resolving its internal conflicts. If there

is not clear improvement, then more severe action (e.g. disestablishing) should be considered.

Recommendations to the EVC/Provost:

2. The physical placement of the Department of Information Studies on campus should be examined. Explore the feasibility of moving the IS department into Moore Hall and upgrading the current building to serve as Lab Space for related educational programs.
3. Given that a new Dean for GS&EIS will be sought in the near future, we recommend that the job description and recruitment emphasize the value of the Department of Information Studies and that one of multiple responsibilities for this new Dean will be to enhance the stature and contributions of this department to the School of Education and Information Studies and to the University.
4. Give serious consideration to the competitive advantages this department brings to the university vis-a-vis their areas of academic and professional jurisdiction which touch on some of the defining issues of society (technology, digital revolution, on-line education).

GSE&IS

Recommendations to the Dean:

5. If IS remains within GSE&IS, develop a plan to integrate IS and Education better.
6. Maintain or improve the current departmental budget amounts for 5 years.
7. Increase efforts to fundraise for the department in close collaboration with the Associate Dean from the department.

Recommendation to the Dean, Chair, Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Personnel:

8. Develop a strategic plan for providing trainings for all faculty on professional integrity, confidentiality, respect, and accountability.

Recommendations to Chair:

9. Assistant professors should be given more clarity on expectations for promotion and tenure.
10. The department should continue with the development of an undergraduate program.

Recommendations to the Chair and Faculty of the Department of Information Studies:

11. Develop a collective vision statement on the intellectual focus and direction of the department. Such a vision should move beyond historical or interpersonal conflicts and focus on the intellectual future of the department and opportunities for further interaction and collaboration with outside units.
12. Identify the true intellectual home of the department. Consider the placement of IS within GSE&IS versus the College or/and other areas, with an emphasis on taking advantage of current productive relationships between IS, the Social Sciences and the Humanities and recognizing the leadership potential for IS within the university.
13. Review the Faculty Code of Conduct with respect to confidentiality requirements in personnel actions and professional civility.

Recommendation to Graduate Division:

14. Give serious consideration to the problem of graduate student funding, given the cost of living in Los Angeles.

Final Recommendation:

The Graduate Council recommends scheduling a mandatory progress review meeting in Spring 2021. The timing of the next review, and consideration of further consequences including suspension of admissions or disestablishment of the department, will be determined after the progress review meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Willeke Wendrich, Review Team Chair, Graduate Council, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
Fernando Torres-Gil, Graduate Council, Social Welfare/Public Policy

Appendix I: External Reviewers' Reports

Report on GSEIS Review
Geoffrey C. Bowker

I divide this report into three sections – strengths; issues; and recommendations. As is natural, issues will take up the larger portion.

Strengths

It should be stressed that from the outside, the Department looks great – senior and emerging scholars doing work recognized at a national and international level. Faculty have been able to continue producing fine work under what can only be described as difficult circumstances.

There is a strong commitment to social justice and community informatics: this was a universally agreed strength (though there were questions about career paths in this area) – one faculty member noted that the shift to ‘critical media studies’ did not create a job path. These are difficult issues – but there are simple solutions I shall mention in my recommendations.

The Department had been seen as top-heavy, but more recent hires have created a reasonable balance (though this is still not perfect).

The appointment of Ann Gilliland as Associate Dean has been valuable in beginning to forge links with the School of Education.

Issues

However, we could start enumerating the problems with the issue, multiply expressed, that the Department has never accepted its demotion from School status; that it feels abandoned by the wider school (in terms of resources, development and attention). For an outsider, this is frankly strange.

There are numerous issues that the Department and wider school share – for example, teaching about fake news in schools (real fake news ...); issues of online bullying; information awareness and many more. No-one could point to a good connection with the wider School, though there was some belief that things may be getting better.

It is just wrong for the Department to nurse resentment over an issue that was decided I believe about 20 years ago. (I tried briefly to be more precise, but when I went to the School of Education timeline - <https://alumni.gseis.ucla.edu/bruin-memories/bruin-timeline/> - I note that the merger with Education does not even rate a mention in the history of the School). Several people mentioned that the issues we witnessed had been brought up not only in the last review, but in the last two reviews. Good management at the School and Department levels would have dealt effectively with this issue years ago. Clearly there are things which could be done at the School level – and hopefully the new Dean will feel empowered to be more attentive to the needs of the Department.

None of this is helped by the physical separation of the School and the Department – essentially core staff (e.g. Development) just do not see people from the Department on a regular basis.

And the facilities the Department suffers with are terrible. There are complaints about the building always being too hot or cold (which I have experienced on previous visits); of the shabby interior; and of the lack of decent laboratory space. One faculty member offered to donate a working printing press – which would be invaluable for teaching her specialty – but there was just no room. **A strong lab space**

would be great for developing a possible growth area – digital humanities – but one person was told their lab was ‘just’ an instructional space. Every other comparable school/department I know has one or several research labs. One person commented that the teaching facilities were dreadful – an iSchool (or Department ...) should have state of the art accommodations here – another good place to integrate more with the School of Education.

The Department has an excessive number of specializations for such a restricted faculty. While in principle this could work if every one were fit all of the time and were operating to maximum capacity, this has not been the case. There were comments about the ‘alarming’ number of mental breakdowns there have been in recent years. There were complaints from junior faculty that they do all the service, and from senior faculty that they carry the burden of the teaching. Four of the twelve faculty were on leave last year. It seems odd that in a Department stretched so tight, there is no minimum class size.

Students experienced huge difficulty navigating the two year Masters program. Courses would be withdrawn without explanation, from their viewpoint – and adjuncts were not appointed to fill in. Sometimes, they said, that you had to wait will three days before enrolment to find out about courses on offer the next term. Clearly this is partly due to the number of leaves and the size of the department, but a fiduciary relationship with Masters students means that they should be assured, one way or another, of a clear path through the program. There was a comment, which I can’t really understand, that they were not allowed to take summer courses – I cannot imagine why not. I also had difficulty understanding why students have to pay tuition for internships even if these are not on campus.

It was claimed that staff are similarly overstretched. In organization theory terms, the Department bears all the marks of an ‘anorexic organization’ – it is completely unable to respond to new possibilities or developing exigencies.

Although I have seen this at other institutions (UC Davis and UC Berkeley are good counter-examples) it is a real pity that Data Science got taken over by the Business School – this is a core IS issue. Within the School, Data Science seems to be much more of an Education than an IS issue.

While the main competitor to their core Library Science program is seen as San Jose State (which it should not be – it’s much more GSLIS at UIUC), there was not much enthusiasm for developing an online Masters – seen as San Jose State’s competitive edge. This is an issue worth revisiting – GSLIS has done very well through its pioneering online program. One would have thought that an online program would be something that could be forged with the School of Education as well.

There is a pervasive atmosphere of distrust in the Department – something noted not just by Faculty. While I will not go into details, serious charges were laid against Faculty both by other members of the Faculty and Staff. There is no quick fix here, but something needs to be done about the institutional climate. There were charges and countercharges at every level.

Promotion issues are central here. There was a strong belief that discussions on cases were not treated confidentially. It was noted that promotion cases were never unanimous (they mostly are, as a matter of culture in our Department – we tend to cleave to the outcome of the discussion, with the odd abstention). Both junior and senior faculty charged the other group with the ‘no’ votes that characterize every case. A strong department chair should be able to garner more agreement: and the voting should be fully confidential as a matter of culture. I do not see in principle why all faculty sit on every case – it

may work better if faculty only sit on cases at their own level or below (I can see counter-arguments here though). Generically, junior faculty felt they were being given no consistent advice on how to achieve tenure. As one said, they: “move the goalposts till we give up, break down or quit”. They also stressed that they had been told no-one could go up for early tenure and promotion, which is surely against university policy. There was a belief as well that CAP had been an issue here – two cases had been ‘shelved’ for 18 months: either this story is wrong or the delay is egregious.

One faculty issue which merits immediate attention is the complaint (on multiple fronts) that faculty do not attend their office hours, will not make appointments with students and will not respond regularly to email – even to the point of the unforgivable lapse of not writing letters of recommendation on time. It was also claimed that a number of faculty (both junior and senior) never give feedback on papers – just a letter grade. There was also the issue that some faculty seemed unaware of the faculty handbook with respect to course offerings (a more widespread problem in the university, I imagine).

The cost of living was an issue that arose naturally. This affected both junior faculty (buying into the housing market was simply beyond their means) and students (there was the – reasonable – assumption that many students were lost not only because full packages were not offered but also because the packages were not realistic). This is not of course just a concern for this department.

An overall tension, which really must be addressed, is the role of Library Science. It was noted that five of the past 6 losses of faculty had been in library studies. It was believed by those who supported this program that the demand was high among students and placement very good – unlike for other specialties. This tension is by no means peculiar to this department. It has been the story of all iSchools since about 1990. The difference in this case seems to be that the tension is frozen in place – all the other comparable institutions have found a way to move on. It is certainly clear that they can’t continue to try to still be a Library School and take on new mandates without a large bump in faculty size. I could not get a good answer on why they cannot employ university librarians as adjuncts in library courses – they are the people with hands-on experience who know the jobs students will be going to. Also, many other schools employ heads of public libraries as adjuncts for similar reasons. In both cases, this enriches the program and build networks which help with job placement while freeing faculty to pursue issues closer to their research homes. I also failed to understand why students cannot be employed in university libraries while getting their degrees -this would be great experience, a source of relatively cheap labor for the libraries, and help provide funding packages for students – it is done widely elsewhere.

Doctoral students suffered from not receiving multi-year packages; they also noted that course offerings changed constantly.

Clearly the lack of a strong relationship with the School of Education was a matter of concern on multiple fronts. There was a strong feeling that the Dean had neglected the Department. (Though I will also note I saw little enthusiasm, apart from the appointment of Ann Gilliland) for forging such connections. There was occasional mention of the Department’s quite recent 5 year plan, and also remarks that nothing was being done about it (again, this is not uncommon). There was a feeling that Education does not need us but we need them – clearly an issue to be addressed.

Recommendations

Some difficult decisions need to be made – which is not going to be easy in an atmosphere of pervasive mistrust. First and foremost, the Department needs strong leadership from outside its ranks: an international figure from iSchools with a clear vision for where the school should be going and proven management skills to bring this off. One thinks of the work that Allen Renear did at GSLIS or Brian Cantwell Smith did at the University of Toronto or Leigh Estabrook again at GSLIS – she is the most ‘library’ of the three so might be a good choice (one could do far worse than bring one or more of them in as external consultants prior to advertising the position): they know these kinds of issues and have dealt with them successfully. This is different from what I understand is called ‘receivership’ at UCLA – it’s not about getting someone with no experience in the field from another part of campus.

I have my own thoughts re ALA accreditation and would not want to foist them on the Department. The question that any new head must ask, though, is whether the game is worth the candle. While there are assertions that critical media studies does not offer a career pathway, this seems to me patently wrong. All the major service providers are getting into content moderation, information and data ethics, and information policy (an area that could be developed at UCLA). To do this, one would need commitment from the development office to work with major companies – such as FB and Google but also the more local gaming companies to get scholarships, internships and so forth as a way of building a pipeline. There seems to be some headway in placing students in community archives – this is promising. Overall, this may mean hiring (or getting as adjuncts) people more trained in the appropriate technical skills.

While the Department told us that in the new budget model, money would come through undergraduate education mostly, I question whether this is necessary. There are opportunities for new professional master’s programs to bolster the department’s funding stream – this has been done successfully elsewhere.

There are just far too many groups in the department and far too little cohesion. Cleaving to a two year teaching schedule would seem an easy task – and it would make things much better for the students at both Masters and PhD levels. I note that this cannot be done without increasing faculty size; or at least dealing more flexibly with adjuncts.

The relationship with the School of Education has clearly been dire, and should be a priority both of the new Dean and the new Chair. I heard a few options. One was just to break up the Department – and while I am not far from recommending this, I would give it one more try (despite the lack of progress since the last two reviews). The facilities are a core issue on several fronts. What I would do is physically move the Department in with the rest of the School. The building currently used by the Department – after necessary renovation – could house labs shared between Education and the Department. They are never going to get together really unless they are co-located. This is not a panacea, but it is a necessary condition. It is sad that there are *so many* possible connections with Education and so few which have been explored. I might bring in danah boyd for some advice here: she knows the school literature backwards and is a leader in data and society. The reason I am recommending 3 or 4 consultancies is that the Department as constituted just will not listen to each other – they need authoritative voices from the outside whom they respect to help them navigate a path forwards.

In general, this is a terrific Department with a well-deserved international reputation. Its faculty are strong and its student body robust. Two of the best students I've worked with in recent years have been part of their PhD program and both went on to stellar jobs. They are doing some things extremely well. But fundamentally, they need to learn how to work together toward common ends with tighter integration with the School of Education.

External Reviewer's Report
Heather MacNeil
Faculty of Information
University of Toronto

In February 2020 I participated in the program review of the Department of Information Studies at UCLA as an external reviewer. My assessment of the Department's research and teaching accomplishments and its potential is based on the site visit that took place on February 18-19, and on documentation provided to the review team in advance of that visit. I am very grateful to the other members of the review team for their collegiality and wisdom throughout that visit; their insights and our conversations have informed my own assessment.

General assessment of departmental research and teaching strengths

Within the information field, the Department of Information Studies is recognized both nationally and internationally for the exceptional quality of its MLIS and PhD programs. Graduates of the MLIS program have been very successful in obtaining professional positions in a wide range of public and private sector organizations while graduates of the PhD program have secured academic positions in highly regarded universities in the United States, Canada and the U.K. and are widely regarded as emerging leaders in the field of information studies.

Like other iSchools, the Department's teaching and research revolve around the intersections between and among people, information and technology. Within that broad framework, the Department has carved out a unique niche with specializations in archival studies, media archival studies, library studies, informatics and rare books/print and visual culture. Cutting across all these specializations is a common concern with the role of information institutions in both promoting and inhibiting social justice and human rights and a shared commitment to harnessing information systems, services, and design to the goal of creating a just society. Within the international iSchool community the Department is well known for its critical perspective on information and technology and that critical perspective is what gives the Department its unique identity.

The Department's reputation for excellence derives in no small part from the extremely high calibre of its faculty who bring a diverse range of disciplinary perspectives to the study of information. Most, if not all of the Department's faculty are either established or emerging leaders in their respective fields; collectively, their research and scholarship spans all five specializations and a variety of cutting edge domains including community archives, the internet and society, digital labour, digital ethics, media technologies, computing infrastructures, information visualization and critical information studies. The exceptional scholarship and leadership of the faculty helps to explain the Department's prominence within the iSchool community despite its relatively small size in comparison to other iSchools. Faculty members also appear to be committed to their students at both the MLIS and PhD levels. During the site visit the MLIS and PhD students we met with commented very favourably on the mentorship and support they have received from faculty and view it as one of the program's strengths.

Areas for program growth and renewal

At the same time, the Department of Information Studies has witnessed a steady downturn in applications to the MLIS program since 2015 and it is clear that the Department needs to direct its energies toward the growth of an undergraduate program and the renewal of its MLIS curriculum in order to enhance recruitment and attract a larger and more diverse pool of applicants to its programs. As I understand it, UCLA's new budget structure makes the need for the Department to expand its undergraduate program offerings particularly urgent since it will be unable to sustain itself financially in the absence of an undergraduate program. At the moment the Department offers a number of GE courses and is currently developing a joint minor in information and media literacy with its sister department in GSEIS. The Department's 2019-2024 Strategic Plan outlines a number of objectives directed toward expanding its footprint in undergraduate education. Such expansion is expected to raise the Department's profile within the university, attract more students to its MLIS and PhD programs, and provide a much needed source of funding (in the form of teaching assistantships) for its doctoral students.

In the interest of renewal, the Department needs to deepen and broaden the informatics specialization in the MLIS program. Currently, informatics seems to be the least well developed and least coherent of the five specializations and an overhaul of its curriculum is necessary to give it an identity and focus as strong and compelling as that of the other specializations. The area of Informatics and the research strengths of its affiliated faculty align nicely with the College Social Science Division's data and society initiative so revisiting the current curriculum is also an opportunity to consider how the specialization might be reconfigured for the undergraduate program to reinforce and strengthen that alignment.

More depth and breadth of coverage in such areas as digital curation and digital preservation are also needed to better prepare graduates of both the MLIS and PhD programs for their respective job markets. Advertisements for faculty positions in iSchools (most recently the University of Maryland, University of North Carolina and University of Texas at Austin) consistently target digital curation and digital preservation as areas of research and teaching expertise that they are seeking. In a similar vein, advertisements for professional librarian and archivist positions are increasingly targeted at "digital archivists" and "digital librarians" who are expected to possess the technical knowledge and skills needed to manage and preserve born digital and digitized materials.

The PhD program is widely known and respected for its emphasis on social justice concerns and consequent adoption of critical perspectives on library, archival, and information studies. That said, it is a very small program, admitting between 4 and 8 students per year. Given the limited faculty resources within the Department, the requirement that students take six core courses in the theory and methods of information studies as part of their pre-candidacy requirements seems excessive. Reviewing the current PhD curriculum with the aim of tightening and streamlining the core courses will make it possible for ladder faculty to teach more courses in the undergraduate and MLIS programs.

Obstacles to growth and renewal and suggestions for addressing them

The potential for growth and renewal within the Department of Information Studies – particularly in relation to an undergraduate program – is significant, given its existing connections to digital humanities and other cognate disciplines (largely through faculty joint appointments) and the clear alignment of its areas of research and teaching with new and emerging areas of academic enquiry and programming, including UCLA's campus wide data science initiative. Given its multidisciplinary and its unifying ethic of social justice, the Department should be well positioned to make a unique and meaningful contribution to that initiative. The Department's ability to realize that potential, however, is impeded by a number of obstacles. I will focus on three that seem particularly pressing and make a few suggestions aimed at addressing them.

Limits to capacity to develop and grow new areas

Human resources: During the site visit it soon became clear to the review team that faculty members within the Department are stretched to the limits of their capacity in terms of teaching and service loads and that the Department is just managing to deliver its existing programs. The significant gaps in course offerings and scheduling upheaval caused by an unexpectedly large number of leaves in 2018-2019 underlines how thinly faculty resources are spread. In its Strategic Research plan, the development of an undergraduate minor and major in Information Studies are identified as objectives. Given ladder faculty's current teaching commitments in the undergraduate, MLIS, PhD programs, however, it is difficult to see how these objectives can be achieved without a significant investment of additional funding for undergraduate program development and new faculty lines. The Department has been able to pursue a joint minor in information and media literacy simply because all but one of the courses it will contribute to that minor are ones the Department is already offering.

Physical resources: The Department delivers an onsite, face to face MLIS program and views it as one of the program's strengths; the forms of interaction and reflection an onsite program makes possible clearly distinguish it from online programs such as the one offered at San Jose State University. The competitive edge provided by the Department's onsite program is weakened, however, by the lack of innovative physical spaces for learning. It is clear that faculty are committed to incorporating hands on learning into their course offerings. The expansion of existing labs and creation of new ones will open up more opportunities for technology-assisted learning and research-based learning and significantly enhance the quality of that learning within and across all five MLIS specializations. Moreover, such spaces will be critically needed as the Department moves further into undergraduate education where these forms of learning are becoming the norm.

Given the unique and important contribution the Department can make to UCLA's undergraduate program in general and its campus wide data science initiative in particular, GSEIS and the University should support the Department's efforts to develop an undergraduate minor by providing seed money for that development.

Given the importance of lab spaces as sites for learning, research and collaboration, the Department should enlist the support of GSEIS External Relations to identify possible sources

of funding for expanding the existing spaces and creating new ones. The Department should also seek out opportunities to partner with cognate disciplines with which it has existing relationships (e.g., Digital Humanities) to create a shared space for cross-disciplinary learning, research and collaboration. Given its professional links to Information Studies and the role it plays as a central site of disciplinary intersection, the UCLA Library should be brought into that partnership.

Limits attributable to current placement within GSEIS

The 1994 merger that resulted in the placement of Information Studies as a department within GSEIS is widely seen by its faculty as a significant and ongoing obstacle to its growth and renewal. Because of its comparatively small size in relation to its sister department Education, Information Studies has been unable to command significant attention from the various GSEIS Deans or interest from the Education faculty in pursuing opportunities for collaboration. Consequently, its needs and interests in critical areas such as grant development, fundraising, and recruitment have not been treated as GSEIS priorities over the years and its value and importance to both GSEIS and the broader university community have not been championed or promoted. The neglected state of the GSEIS building in which Information Studies is housed has come to function as a metaphor for the neglected state of the Department more generally.

The appointment of Professor Gilliland as Associate Dean for Information Studies in September 2019 is a positive step in the direction of making information studies more visible within GSEIS and communicating its needs and priorities to the Dean. The recent initiative to develop a joint minor in information and media literacy may lead to more productive collaborations between GSE and IS faculty. Moreover, in our meeting with GSEIS administrative staff we were told that External Relations is committed to dedicating more resources to supporting Information Studies faculty with obtaining grants and contracts and assisting the Department with identifying opportunities for fundraising and raising its profile both on and off campus.

While these are all encouraging signs that, 25 years after the merger, the relationship between Information Studies and GSEIS is showing signs of improvement, it is unclear what effect the departure of the current Dean and forthcoming appointment of a new Dean will have on that relationship and as a result there remains a good deal of uncertainty about its future direction. If UCLA's Academic Senate gives the new GSEIS Dean a clear and strong directive to continue and expand current efforts to support and promote the needs and interests of the Department of Information Studies it might alleviate some of the Department's current uncertainty about its future relationship with GSEIS.

At the same time, given its particular need and interest in expanding its undergraduate program offerings, it is an appropriate time for the Department to strengthen its structural ties with the College Social Science Division, particularly since many of the data science initiatives in which the Department is interested in participating are taking place in the College. For that reason the Department should undertake a preliminary exploration of ways and means of building stronger structural ties with the College (e.g., through the creation of centres or institutes).

Low morale and breakdown of civility and trust among faculty within the Department

Perhaps one of the most worrisome obstacles to growth and renewal within the Department is low faculty morale. Undoubtedly, some of the issues identified above, e.g., the thinly stretched

faculty resources and the Department's invisibility within GSEIS and on campus, are contributing factors, but the comments faculty and staff shared with us during our site visit suggest that the problem goes deeper and that there has been a serious breakdown of civility and trust within the Department.

When describing the experience of working in the Department, faculty at all ranks expressed strong feelings of distrust, alienation, and anger with some of their colleagues. The divisions among the faculty appear to be both personal and ideological and revolve around divergent perspectives on a wide range of issues including research orientation, teaching obligations, workload, and advancement through the ranks. Some faculty believe that their research and other contributions to the Department are not valued; a number of faculty feel they are being actively undermined in their efforts to advance through the ranks; several faculty members feel misunderstood and unfairly maligned by some of their colleagues; and there does not seem to be much consensus among faculty about what it means to be an academic.

This state of affairs has had a number of knock on negative effects. The pervasive atmosphere of tension and hostility is felt by faculty, staff and students and there has been a breakdown in respect for the confidentiality of certain departmental processes, such as tenure. The toxic atmosphere is serious enough that the department faces a very real risk of losing some faculty members. The distress and anxiety expressed by faculty during our site visit was genuine as was the compassion and deep concern expressed by a number of faculty members about the effect of this climate on their colleagues.

The strategic planning exercise the Department held in January 2019 was, in part, an effort to ameliorate this situation by bringing the faculty together around a shared vision, mission, and set of values. While this is a useful symbolic move in the right direction it remains little more than a declaration of intent and a year later the climate of hostility that precipitated the exercise has not dissipated. It seems very unlikely that the situation will improve without leadership in the form of a new Department Chair and that leadership should come from within UCLA but outside the Department of Information Studies and GSEIS. The role of that Chair should be to act as an honest broker for the conflicting perspectives among faculty and to rebuild the trust that has broken down in the Department. This suggestion is by no means a reflection on the current or previous chairs of the Department about whom many positive things were said during our site visit; it is simply unrealistic to expect that someone from within the faculty ranks of the Department will be capable of turning the situation around given the current climate of distrust; that being the case, it seems an unconscionable burden to impose on them.

Appendix II: Site Visit Schedule

UCLA Academic Senate Program Review
Department of Information Studies
Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

Site Visit Dates: February 18-19, 2020

Review Team Members:

Willeke Wendrich, Review Team Chair, Graduate Council, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

Fernando Torres-Gil, Graduate Council, Social Welfare/Public Policy

Heather MacNeil, Information, University of Toronto

Geoffrey Bowker, Informatics, University of California, Irvine

February 17, 2020:

7:00 p.m. Dinner meeting: Initial organizational session for review team members only (*Luskin Conference Center- Plateia, 425 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90095; 310-794-3563*)

February 18, 2020:

All meetings will be held in GSE&IS Building, Room 202 unless otherwise indicated.

8:00 Breakfast discussion with Dean **Marcelo Suárez-Orozco** and Associate Dean **Anne Gilliland** [*Catering arranged by the Academic Senate Office*]

9:00 Meeting with Department Chair **Jean-François Blanchette**

10:00 Meetings with representative groups of faculty by specialization:

Room 202

10:00 *Library Studies*: Noble, Furner, Leazer, Roberts

10:30 *Informatics*: Blanchette, Srinivasan, Posner, Lievrouw, Leazer

Room 228

10:00 *Archival Studies*: Gilliland, Caswell, VanCour, Pearlstein, Furner

10:20 *Rare Books, Print, and Visual Culture*: Drucker, Pearlstein

10:40 *Media Archival Studies*: VanCour, Posner, Blanchette

11:00 Meetings with representative groups of faculty by ranks:

Room 202

11:00 *Full Professors*: Srinivasan, Furner, Pearlstein, Kelty, K. Gomez

11:30 *Assistant Professors*: Roberts, VanCour, Posner

Room 228

11:00 *Associate Professors*: Blanchette, Leazer, Noble, Caswell

11:30 *Professors VI & Above*: Gilliland, Lievrouw, Drucker, L. Gomez

12:00 Lunch – review team members only [*Catering arranged by Academic Senate*]

1:15 Recruitment: AARC Chair Srinivasan, AARC Past Chair Vancour, Maye (staff)

2:00 Meetings with MLIS representatives: Mardoyan, Schwieterman, Locantore

2:45 Student Advising: DPC Chair Caswell, PPC Chair Drucker, Maye

- 3:30 Meetings with PhD representatives: Tibeso, Agmon, Santachiara
- 4:00 Tour of the Department and Lab: Blanchette and Ascher (staff) (GSE&IS 102)
- 4:20 Closed session for review team only
- 5:00 Reception: faculty, alumni, lecturers (Powell Library Rotunda)

February 19, 2020:

Morning meetings will be held Off-Site.

- 8:00 Breakfast (review team members only)
- 8:30 Open individual meetings

Transit to Moore Hall

- 11:00 Staff and Academic Personnel: Diaz-Ramirez (CAO), Alfredsen (Academic Personnel) (Rm. 2320)
- 11:30 Budget and Facilities: Breen (CFO) and Hernandez (Bldg. & Operations Mgr.) (Rm. 2052)
- 12:00 External Relations, Website: Lindberg (Director, OER) and Mascari (CTO), (Rm. 2043)
- 12:30 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Chair of Diversity Council, Roberts and Rios Aguilar (Assoc. Dean of EDI) (Rm. 2339)

Afternoon Meetings will be in Murphy Hall

- 1:00 Lunch –review team members only
- 2:00 Closed session (review team members only) (3135 Murphy Hall)
- 3:00 Final review team meeting with Chair **Jean-François Blanchette** (3135 Murphy Hall)
- 4:00 EXIT MEETING (2121 Murphy Hall). The meeting includes Review Team Members, Program Chair **Jean-François Blanchette**, Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost **Emily Carter**, Dean **Marcelo Suarez-Orozco**, Vice Provost for Graduate Education **Robin Garrell**, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education **Patricia Turner**, Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion **Jerry Kang**, Undergraduate Council Chair **Adriana Galván**, Graduate Council Chair **Andrea Kasko**.

Program Staff Contact:

Andrew VanSchooneveld (310-825-8799; vanschooneveld@ucla.edu)

Jean-François Blanchette (310-267-5137; blanchette@gseis.ucla.edu)

Academic Senate Staff Contact:

Conrad Alumia (310-206-2959; calumia@senate.ucla.edu)

Taylor Lane Daymude (310-205-8199; tlanedaymude@senate.ucla.edu)