**2014/11/13 Director’s Forum from 1:00-2:00 in the Terrace Lab, SLAIS**

Faculty in attendance:

Director Caroline Haythornthwaite, Associate Director Luanne Freund, Dr. SusieStephenson, and Professor Judith Saltman

Moderators:

Kelsey Ockert and Sarah Giesbrecht (LASSA Co-Presidents)

*Students met at 12:30pm to discuss issue with no faculty present. A list was composed of issues and read by Lassa co-chairs before the director and faculty at 1:00pm. Each point on the list was raised giving both students time to elaborate and faculty time to respond.*

1. The concern regarding difficulty in getting spots in ARST/LIBR 587: Preservation (the physical preservation) for MAS & dual students is going to be reviewed. Students will be notified (Director Haythornthwaite)
2. The size of the archival faculty is discussed (this year Professor Duranti is the only full time professor in the program who is not on leave).
	1. If MAS/Dual students want to write a thesis, they have only one supervisor to choose from. (See point 3).
	2. Director Haythornthwaite said that they are well-aware of this issue, but that they are not able to hire until receiving authorization from the Faculty of Arts and there are currently some budget constraints. There are two unfilled positions, one in the MLIS and one in the MAS programs.
		1. When asked why the faculty candidate who was offered a position at the school chose not to accept it, the answer was that the candidate had accepted a competing offer for personal reasons, not related to the school or UBC.
	3. Kelsey asks Director Haythornthwaite to talk about the new guest lecturer coming in the spring. Her name, nationality, and presence as a guest lecturer for the archival program is briefly discussed.
3. *Response to 2a*: Dr. Freund comments that students are not restricted in choosing only faculty members within their degree program to supervise a thesis – professionals in the community or faculty from other departments may be found to co-supervise together with a another faculty member within the school.
	1. Dr. Freund mentioned that it is less common in the school for students to take thesis but SLAIS is not discouraging students as a general policy.
		1. Students voiced concerns that SLAIS was discouraging and not promoting a thesis. i.e. No information sessions are provided on theses as they are with co-ops.
4. Concerns are raised about the necessity of a thesis to apply for a PhD. Faculty convey that, while it is good to do a thesis, it is not necessary to apply to SLAIS’s PhD program. Dr. Freund further offered that in some cases, a student who has done an independent study could make a case that this can fulfill the thesis requirement when applying for a PhD. However, doing a thesis is very good preparation for a PhD. Dr. Stephenson mentioned that the thesis option is not even offered in many American schools anymore.
5. Regarding the creative work products of the MACL theses and publishing in cIRcle: Judi mentioned that the two MACL co-chairs (Professor Saltman and Dr.Meyers) initiated a discussion regarding this issue with the Faculty of Graduate Studies.
	1. Professor Saltman and Dr.Meyers are working on this issue and when it is confirmed and approved with the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, they will communicate with the MACL students on the new method of posting Creative Writing theses online in cIRcle, which will give them greater flexibility.
	2. Prior to this change, which will be formally announced shortly, MACL students who opted to do a Creative Writing thesis have been concerned that they would have to regularly re-apply for an embargo on their thesis posted to cIRcle.
	3. *Note: A MACL PhD panel was happening an hour before, contributing to low MACL attendance*
6. Regarding communication between admin, faculty members and students and among SLAIS faculty members and other faculty members and units in the university (specifically for department news, events, and external opportunities).
	1. Students voice concerns over the lack of a working central hub for communication and no communication coming from SLAIS.
		1. Students discuss their problems with the portal (iSchool Central).
			1. Many students did not know about the portal, which lead them to think that there was no central hub for communication..
				1. Miscommunication to new students regarding information sessions was raised.
			2. Students raised concerns that the Portal is only visible via blackboard if students connect to blackboard via the ischool home page. NOT through connecting directly to Blackboard; however**,** this is not the case. Students can reach the Portal from the main eLearning site. Once they login, the portal is at the bottom of their course list.
			3. RSS link is broken (in one location) & last update on the portal was Oct 27th.
	2. Concerns are voiced that SLAIS administration did not publicize the external review and process for submitting student evaluations directly.
		1. Students raised concerns that emails were sent only through the LASSA listserv, which does not include all students. However, faculty noted that this information was distributed through other channels as well: notices were posted on the iSchool Central Portal, physical notices were posted in the school and on the Electronic Noticeboard and emails were sent to all faculty and to adjuncts emphasizing the need to present this information in classes.
		2. Frustration is voiced by one student that this was an administrative issue and that students needed to be directly contacted by the SLAIS admin.
	3. Kelsey asks about how students would feel receiving more emails from LASSA, recalling the change SLAIS made 3 years ago to send fewer emails.
		1. Kelsey also noted that not everyone is registered on the LASSA Listserv, making it a difficult option for communication.
	4. Was voiced that LASSA should not be used for official school notifications and should be used for student groups and events information
	5. Professor Saltman recalls that some students didn’t like to receive too many emails about the programs and protested about receiving emails from faculties.
		1. A students who was here through this transition said that this was a vocal minority.
	6. Dr. Stephenson mentioned the benefit of RSS feeds regarding this issue and bookmarking it.
7. There was a concern that the HCI research methods course is overlapping with the MAS/MLIS core research method course.
	1. Dr. Freund mentioned that we had been operating on the understanding that the HCI research methods requirement was focused more on data analysis and therefore covered different content than LIBR 505, but that if there is substantial overlap between the two required courses, then this will be investigated with the intention of addressing it in future.
8. The mandate and direction of SLAIS as an iSchool is discussed. What does this mean for the academic v. professional (theoretical v. practical) format of the courses.
	1. Students are concerned that there is not enough lab time and that not enough practical skills are being taught. The example of the LIBR 576: Public Libraries course was raised briefly.
		1. Students suggest that course descriptions should specify lab time/practical skills.
	2. Students are concerned that the School is focusing more on information science while the student body primarily identifies as librarians/archivists.
9. Faculty raised several points in response to questions about what being an iSchool means, and the relationship between library science and the overall mandate of the school.
	1. Director Haythornthwaite described the the iSchool as an umbrella concept that connects the programs, teaching and research activities in the school through the concepts of information, technology and people. She highlighted the dramatic changes in the workplace in which many of the skills and practices related to information are in demand in non-library or archival contexts, and that this represents an enormous opportunity for our students. At the same time, jobs in libraries are decreasing.
	2. Professor Saltman mentioned that as a professional school the courses seek to balance practice and theory.
	3. Dr. Freund adds that the school aims to prepare students to take on higher level jobs in libraries, archives and other organizations, as there is a trend in the workplace for more positions to be taken by library technicians. Therefore, learning the basic skills is not sufficient in a graduate program. Furthermore, the workplaces have a responsibility to train their employees as well. Dr. Freund notes that the school has an excellent track record in placing graduates in great jobs.
10. One student suggested that the balance of theory and practical material in each course be indicated on the syllabus so that students could make choices with this in mind and be better prepared for the orientation of the course.
11. Regarding the ALA accreditation status, Director Haythornthwaite explained that the school had made a major effort over the past 9 months to address ALA’s concerns and that a report was submitted to ALA on October 1. Director Haythornthwaite, Dr. Freund and a representative s of the Faculty of Arts will meet with ALA later this month to discuss the report and next steps.
	1. SLAIS has been putting into place a Learning Outcomes Assessment Program in response to ALA’s concerns, which will involve the collection of data on student achievement on an ongoing basis and an annual report, all of which will be made public. The iSchool website now has a page devoted to ALA Accreditation and one devoted to the Learning Outcomes Assessment program that students can visit to learn more about this and find updates.
	2. The MLIS and MLIS component of the Dual degree are currently accredited – all graduates of these programs will hold ALA accredited degrees.
	3. Because of conditional accreditation, SLAIS will be reviewed again after 3-years (2016) instead of 7-year review period.
	4. SLAIS is doing student surveys, focus groups, and commits to have more reviews and evaluations of the iSchool Graduate Competencies and learning outcomes.
12. Teaching Issues.
	1. A desire for peer-review of adjunct instructors is voiced by students
		1. Director Haythornthwaite responded that SLAIS takes student evaluations very seriously and that responses on student evaluations are a major consideration in making decision on whether to allow an adjunct to continue teaching for the School. It is the general practice to give instructors two chances to teach a new course, so that they can incorporate student feedback and work to improve the course.

Dr. Stephenson notes that adjuncts have some online materials available to them through Connect, but that, unfortunately, the university provides very limited teaching support for our adjuncts, who are primarily working professionals. Teaching training (practical & pedagogical) for adjuncts and Ph.Ds was recommended by students.

* 1. Students voice the opinion that they would like to see more critical perspectives, such as feminist theory being brought into courses.
		1. Admin and directors encourage students to bring this to the curriculum committee via LASSA, who has a representative on that committee.
1. Concern is expressed that SLAIS does not have a direct job support person on staff (i.e. resume writing assistance)
	1. Director Haythornthwaite expressed openness that this issue be given further consideration through ongoing discussions with LASSA.

*N.B. Students expressed concerns over the rising tensions in the room; overtly visible frustration of students and the defensive tone of faculty responses.*