LIBRARY & INFORMATION STUDIES (LIS), INFORMATION & COMMUNICATIONS (ICS), AND TO JOIN THE COLLEGE OF INFORMATION: TO LEAD OR TO FOLLOW?

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Abstract. In accordance with social changes, Library Science (LS) schools have transformed themselves into Library and Information Studies (LIS) schools in the last decade. The first LIS school in Taiwan to take the lead into Information and Communications (IC) was the Department of Library and Information Studies in Shih-Hsin University. Curriculum reform has resulted in a broader range of jobs for students, leading to increased enrollment. A potential move to join the College of Information has become an issue among students and faculty members. This paper presents the results of a preliminary survey among students and faculty members regarding the move. Asked the open-ended question: "What do you think of the Department of Information and Communications joining the College of Information?", full time students and students from the Continuing Education (CE) program gave different answers. Responses received from faculty and students were sorted into categories of reasons and concerns.

From Library Science (LS) to Library and Information Studies (LIS)

The Department of Library Science in Shih-Hsin University (SHU) (formerly the World College of Journalism, which became the World College of Journalism and Communications, and finally Shih-Hsin University) was established in 1965, the second oldest library school in Taiwan. The intention was to educate students who would be capable of collecting and organizing information for information services in libraries, news agencies and other information provision institutes. From 1960 to 1990, together with four other educational institutes for librarianship, the Department of Library Science contributed towards the education of librarians and information professionals. By then, the Ministry of Education and the Library Association had both authorized core competencies for Librarianship, and the five LIS schools had agreed to some degree on common core courses. The situation changed after the 1980s, when most universities decided on their own curriculum plans. LIS education has had different directions since then.

In accordance with social changes, the Library Science (LS) schools transformed themselves into Library and Information Studies (LIS) schools in the last decade. So did SHU's Department of Library Science. The curriculum was redesigned during this time, more information-related courses were added, and computer-related courses as well. In the last decade of the 20th Century, the number of LIS education institutes in Taiwan increased to eleven, more graduate schools were initiated, and more focused areas of the discipline were strengthened, such as "Archival Studies", "Digital Library Technician". At the same time, we also increased our student recruitment in continuing education (CE) as well as in full time undergraduate and graduate programs. Students of the undergraduate program are high school graduates who either have passed the entrance examination or were recommended by their high schools, while the undergraduate CE program accepts students who work during the day and attend classes in the evenings and at weekends. For graduate programs, full time students come from various backgrounds in terms of the majors in their undergraduate programs, and chose ICS for further study because of its curriculum. The graduate students of the CE program hold advanced administrative positions and have multiple backgrounds in information technology or information management. Generally speaking, full time students, whether undergraduate or graduate, are different from CE students, and it is challenging to design curriculum for the Department.

From LIS to Information & Communications (ICS)

In the year 2000, the Department of LIS changed its name to the Department of Information and Communications (ICS), the first LIS school to do so in Taiwan. ICS is one of seven departments in the College of Journalism and Communications, and students of ICS take required courses which are more communication oriented, such as *Media Literacy*, *Communication Techniques*, *Theory and Methodol-*

ogy of Communications, and *Communication and Culture.* ICS has tried to retain the essence of LIS education, and to strengthen the communication-related courses while developing information service professionals with more competitiveness. Curriculum reforms have resulted in a broader range of jobs for students and this has led to an increase in student enrollment, compared with the other departments under the College of Journalism and Communications. However, the LIS education community has criticized ICS for straying off the track of LIS professional education -- *Classification and Cataloging* has been replaced by *Information Organization*, and *Reference works and services* has been eliminated. These are two major subjects in the traditional LIS curriculum, and are subjects in Taiwan's civil examinations for librarians. In addition to competition from 10 other LIS education institutes, there are 21 other institutes that carry the name of Information and Communications. Information and Communications is a newly developed area of study, and institutes are still trying to position themselves.

Different Opinions about Joining the College of Information

In 2005, ICS received invitations, so as the Department of Digital Media Design of the College of Journalism and Communications and the Department of Information Management of the College of Management, to start the College of Information. This event has become an issue for faculty members and the student body. For faculty members, the change may jeopardize their promotion chances, affect teaching loads, as well as lead to new areas of study. It will cause confusion among students in terms of their professional focus, their diploma statements at graduation, and will also disrupt the "College-Wide Cross-Department Selective Courses Program". (In this college-wide program, each department of the College offers two or three programs, each with four to five courses, and every student has to select one course from his (or her) own department, and another course from another department.)

A preliminary survey was conducted to determine the ideas and concerns related to the change, in order to raise topics for further discussion. The survey questions were simply: "What do you think of ICS joining the College of Information? Agree or disagree? And why?" We spoke to full time graduate students. We also surveyed a sample of sophomore full time students and second-year students of the CE program, as they had been in the department for a year, and were familiar with the department's courses and programs.

1. Four out of nine full time faculty members of ICS agreed to join the College of Information, consider it a trend and good for the future of the Department, as it will enhance curriculum reform and lead to better employment opportunities for students. However, five disagreed. One reason concerned resource allocation in the College of Information, which may have major departments (such as Information Management and Information Engineering) with more faculty members and students. Also, the promotion process may be different. The academic backgrounds of the faculty members vary -- five are from Library and Information Science (or Studies), three are Information Management and Information Engineering (more computer-oriented) experts, one is an expert in Botanical Science but well versed in Knowledge Management. This discussion took place during a faculty meeting.

2. Among 10 full time graduate students, four agreed with the idea that ICS join the College of Information, for the following reasons: 1) ICS will be in the College of Information eventually; 2) It is a trend to have ICS join the College because of the nature of "Information". However, there were concerns about: 1) Faculty members' promotion process; 2) Resource allocation in the new College; 3) Identity of ICS in the College (Name and title, Diploma Statement); 4) Curriculum reform and adjustment.

    Five disagreed for these reasons: 1) Currently ICS's courses are more cultural than technological, and the gap between ICS and the other departments in the College of Information will be big; 2) Misconceptions about "information" will lead to more challenges in the new College; 3) The position of the College of Information in SHU is not yet clear. Additional concerns are: 4) Possible loss of advantage in the new College; 5) How to retain the advantages of Journalism and Communication.

    One student took a neutral stand, indicating concern with the position and status of ICS in the College of Information and whether the curriculum would be flexible for students, in addition to concerns expressed by both sides.

3. Among 47 sophomore full time undergraduate students, six agreed with the idea, with the main reasons being: 1) More information-related courses were taught in ICS; 2) ICS's position in the

College of Journalism and Communication is not clear; 3) ICS should chose one area, Information, to focus on; 4) Students' interests and learning preferences.

37 disagreed with the potential change, and the major reasons were: 1) The Communications part of ICS (i.e., journalism and communication) is their reason for enrolling in ICS; 2) Belief that communication has an advantage over information, especially in SHU, which is known for journalism and communication; 3) Intend to take more communication-related courses; 4) Job market is better in communication-related areas; 5) Being afraid of losing the advantage in the College of Information; 6) May be more information technology courses in College of Information; 7) Information as taught in ICS is different from that taught in Information Engineering or Information Management; 8) Whether the diploma statement states 'Information and Communications' or 'Information' matters; 9) The identity of ICS in our society and future employment opportunities; 10) Anticipate that ICS will face more competition in the College of Information because most national colleges/universities offer *Information Management* (more computer-oriented) programs; 11) SHU is not famous for its computer-related programs that will deduct the scores of the entrance examination; 12) Curriculum changes may bring about tough situations as SHU faces space constraints.

Four were undecided. Their concerns included: 1) ICS has to focus on its own specialty, like ICS of Yuan-Zhi University, which has already built a reputation in Media Design and Application under the name of Information & Communications; 2) Would like to have ICS develop its own teaching and course content, that is, name of the college or title is not that important; 3) ICS should retain both Information and Communications in its balanced status.

4. Forty-four students of the second-year CE program also had their opinions and concerns. Twenty-seven agreed with the idea of joining the College of Information. Their main reasons were: 1) ICS will have a more concrete focus of curriculum content in addition to *Knowledge Management* and its related courses; 2) There are more employment opportunities in information than in communication; 3) Students to be recruited will be from information-related industries, thus enhancing their own advantage; 4) Majoring in information-related subjects will increase SHU's recruitment rate; 5) Consider information and communication to be a combination of information technology and media; 6) It will offer a chance for ICS to reform the curriculum content and to be more focused on information-related courses and technology courses; 7) It will enhance the competitiveness of ICS in the long term; 8) It will bring all the related courses together to make Information and related information studies more connected in the College of Information; 9) ICS will add more depth to "Information" as a whole; 10) Introducing communication-related courses into the College of Information will be an advantage; 11) Add value to ICS if it joins the College of Information; 12) Good chance to have ICS integrate resources as putting theory and practice on communicating information; 13) Cultivate communication talents with different methods and allow ICS to grow in multiple directions; 14) Give full time faculty lighter teaching load and upgrade the quality of teaching; 15) Provide chances to learn more about *Information Management*, *Information Engineering*, and *Digital Media Design*.

Fourteen disagreed with a move to the College of Information. Their main reasons were as follows: 1) Communication is a specialty of SHU, and ICS should have Communication as its core; 2) ICS should put emphasis on communication-related expertise; 3) Our society has more than enough human resources from information-related departments; 4) Remaining in the College of Journalism and Communication is more advantageous because of courses related to Communication; 5) ICS's faculty members are not sufficient to join in the College of Information; 6) The College of Journalism and Communication in SHU has a long tradition and a known reputation; 7) Will limit student recruitment to those who have background in information management or related fields; 8) Courses in the College of Journalism and Communication are good, especially since the "College-wide Cross-Department Selective Courses Program" was launched, and it is a great opportunity for students to learn more with a broader range of options; 9) Courses in the College of Journalism and Communication are more active and more fun.

Three were undecided, but they expressed their concerns as: 1) Budget: an information facility is a high cost -- is SHU's financial status strong enough to support it? 2) Reputation: Are Colleges of Information in other universities saturated? Among all departments, which has the best job prospects? 3) Market: After the "Internet Bubble" burst, are information graduates welcome in the job market? 4) There are many universities with a College of Information, they all have more and better faculty, it is hard to compete with them; 5) From the viewpoints of practitioners, the College of

Information seems more professional, but how about the faculty members? ICS will need to hire more professionals to teach students of the department.

Summary

Among faculty members and students, there are different viewpoints and perspectives towards the potential change of affiliation of ICS. Suggestions and concerns raised in the preliminary survey covered development of core courses, the department's identity and specialty development, proficiency of education and training between the two colleges, and so on. ICS is on an edge of transformation since it is related to the career paths of both students and faculty members. How to retain the advantages of both information and communication is a question. Since there is no road map for this matter, the administrators can only endeavor to collect information and consult experts and professionals in related areas, and report to their superiors before a decision is made. The paper also hopes to initiate a discussion on 1) the advantages and disadvantages of joining the College of Information; 2) ideas on the development of core courses, whether ICS remains in the College of Journalism and Communication or joins the College of Information; 3) initiate criteria for an advanced survey of related parties in order to collect more precise information for decision making.

We invite our colleagues in current LIS schools from different countries to share their expertise. We hope to gather concrete ideas to benefit related or potential parties in the future.