

# Information management and information systems converge

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Two former schools at the University of New South Wales have combined forces. In early June 1999, the global trend for convergence in information studies courses at tertiary level was further cemented by the creation of a new School of Information Systems, Technology and Management (SISTM) at the University of New South Wales. For some time now information disciplines have been moving closer together so that important connections and synergies result from combining teaching and research programs in the various information fields. The disciplinary components of information; library and archive studies; information systems; and associated areas related to software and technology development — including the newer fields of web-based information and e-commerce — will now be taught in the one school. This merger will allow students greater diversity of choice among a wide range of information-related subjects. Similar mergers and/or collaborations have occurred at Monash University, at the University of California in Berkeley, and at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

Associate Professor Bob Edmundson heads the new school with two associate heads of school, Dr Connie Wilson (formerly from the School of Information, Library and Archive Studies — SILAS) and Associate Professor Graham Low (formerly from the School of Information Systems). The new school has been established to capitalise on the expertise of academics from each of the information disciplines and to educate professionals capable of responding appropriately to changes in the information environment. There is a high potential for growth with an increasing number of new students enrolling in all areas of information studies and with new undergraduate offerings relating to library and information management, archives and recordkeeping studies. The former SILAS postgraduate courses and subjects will continue to be offered for study within SISTM's Information Management Program. The new undergraduate offerings will be available for the start of the academic year in 2000.

Of special interest to ALIA and all information management professionals is the greater strength that this school

offers for the development of new programs. These programs are designed to serve the information sector in the broadest sense, but particularly in information and library services and management, in web-based information services, and in the burgeoning field of electronic recordkeeping. The convergence and shift in focus are needed to address the major changes in social understanding of the nature and importance of information. There is an acknowledgment of the rapid development of computers and computing with their inevitable social consequences.

Ideas of information are no longer restricted to something essentially in textual form, such as books, newspapers, journals and so on, stored in filing cabinets or on the shelves of book stores, archives and libraries. Information in its many forms, including text, is now seen as having become overwhelmingly pervasive. In its digital format it embraces all kinds of text, numerical data, images and sound. It is involved at all levels of society and all aspects of human endeavour. The changes are far-reaching and profound.

The introduction of the co-major in information management will be a staged process, with the first subjects offered in 2000 and adding subjects over a number of years. Additional information management subjects are planned in the period 2002–2005.

The new undergraduate co-major includes five new information management subjects to be taken in the Bachelor of Commerce degree in combination with other commerce disciplines of accounting, marketing, actuarial studies, finance, or information systems. To date the co-major in information man-



The new building where the School of Information Systems, Technology and Management is housed at the University of New South Wales

agement comprises the following subjects plus two prerequisite Information Systems subjects. The new undergraduate subjects include:

*Information knowledge and society* provides a critical, analytical examination of current issues on the role of information in society.

*Information services and resource discovery* surveys the broad organisational, professional, and personal context within which information is produced and information needs occur.

*Organisational recordkeeping: Responsibilities and risks* looks at the accountability and requirements that public officials and companies provide to ensure records of activities and actions are maintained.

*Text information retrieval* provides an examination of text IR systems, their structure and the principles of textual information organisation.

*Information management and organisation* provides an introduction and practical understanding of the methods used to organise information in all formats through description, classification according to subject content and function.

The University and the School of Information Systems, Technology and Management welcomes enquiries about the new undergraduate curriculum. Please contact Dr Connie Wilson, associate head of school, by telephone on 02 9385 7134 or e-mail her at [c.wilson@unsw.edu.au](mailto:c.wilson@unsw.edu.au). ■