

## NEWS FROM THE SCHOOLS

### THE APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCE MODULAR SCHEME: BSc IN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES: 1988

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Received 20 July 1988

From September 1987 the BA in Librarianship and Information Studies has been phased out. In its stead is a pathway to this new degree entitled the Information and Communication Pathway. For the PNL it is the end of a 'stand alone degree' in librarianship. The pathway seeks to provide appropriate learning opportunities for students wishing to understand the world of information and to prepare themselves for the wide range of occupations in the storage, handling and communication of information.

The pathway takes a theoretical and analytical approach to three interrelated fields: information technology, librarianship and information science and mass communications. It also offers a wide range of practical skills for effective practice in the information professions.

One of the distinguishing features of the later years of this decade is the alignment of library schools with other subject departments. Strathclyde University, Glasgow is a notable example, and the innovative thrusts of this department in business information is indicative of a specialized focus. The Polytechnic of North London's School of Librarianship is integrated with a Faculty of Social Science and uses a social science scrutiny of the world as a basis for its specialized interests. Our course focuses on the information needs of urban communities and the context of social communication.

#### 1. Aims

- To promote an appreciation of the contribution of the social sciences to an understanding of the role of communication and information systems in the contemporary world.
- To examine the technological, economic, political and social contexts of the production, distribution and consumption of information.
- To analyse the growth and development of the communications industry and related professions.

- To equip students with the technical competencies and skills necessary for selecting, organizing and retrieving information.
- To impart to students the social and managerial skills necessary for the effective design and delivery of information services.

## 2. Organization and structure

The basic building block of the course is the unit of study. All units are of equal length – 15 weeks, or one semester.

Full-time students normally take 24 units to complete the Honours degree programme. The units are designated by level – *Preliminary, Intermediate* and *Final*.

2.1. *Preliminary Level*. The Preliminary level is structurally distinct from the Intermediate and Final levels in that it operates ‘horizontally’ to provide all students whatever their pathway choice with an introduction to the conceptual framework, subject material, forms of analysis and methodology of the social sciences. The level is composed of four common foundation units:

The individual in society  
 Social history and social policy  
 Introduction to law  
 Information and society

These units represent the basic requirements for all five pathways: Health Studies; Policy Studies; Social Research; Social Work – and of course the one under discussion: *Information and Communication*.

On the successful completion of these core units the student then chooses four option units from the following eight offered at this level.

Economy and Society  
 Individual in Society  
 Information needs analysis  
 Political institutions and processes  
 Political philosophy and state intervention  
 Introduction to the administration of justice  
 Social structure and social processes  
 Social thought and social change.

The Intermediate and final levels operate ‘vertically’ to provide students with programmes of study facilitating progression to Honours standard through increasing specialization and competence.

Each of the five pathways has specified certain units as *core*, i.e. compulsory for students taking that pathway. The core units and designated options for the Information and Communication Pathway are:

*Semester A**Core*

Computers and information access

Fundamentals of information retrieval

*Designated options*

Sources of information

Managing information services

Information systems analysis

Media and popular culture

Censorship, law and the regulation  
of cultureLocal government and local  
politics \*

Women in contemporary Britain \*

Research methods \*

*Final Year**Semester A**Core*Principles and practice in  
information work. A

A placement-linked module.

Principles and practice in  
information work. BManagement-linked placement  
module.*Designated options*Information and communication  
in scientific communitiesDocumentation in a specified  
subjectTechnology of data handling and  
transferInformation software: data  
structures and techniques

Popular literature

Ethnic minorities and public  
policy

Data analysis

*Semester B**Core*Cultures, information and  
communicationEconomics and politics of  
information*Designated options*Organizing bibliographic  
information

Business information

Library and information work  
in a multi-cultural societyInformation software:  
programming and designPublishing and bookselling  
studies

The information professions

Computers in social research \*

*Semester B**Core*Information and communication  
project.New directions in information  
and communication  
technology.*Designated options*International communication  
systemsAutomated indexing and retrieval  
systemsIntelligent information  
systems

Reading studies

Arts policy in Britain \*

Immigrant communities: history  
and sources of informationEthnic minorities and  
education.

Those marked with an asterisk (\*) are drawn from other pathways. In a radical departure from traditional practice, fieldwork or placement is now treated as a module and is assessed.

The following samples of student programmes illustrate possible routes through the information and Communication Pathway. Core modules are in italics. At the preliminary level the foundation core modules are the same for all students in the pathway. However, as the observant reader will have noticed, students will need firm and wise counselling in their choices. First year students who wish to choose the Information and Communication Pathway will be counselled to take the option: Information Needs Analysis.

*Sample Student 1. Focus on traditional/orthodox librarianship*

*Intermediate level*

*Computers and information access*  
*Fundamentals of information retrieval*  
*Cultures information and communication*  
*Politics of economics and information*

Sources of information  
 Managing information services  
 Organizing bibliographic information  
 Organization of information services

*Final level*

*Principles and practice in*  
*Information work (placement)*  
*The information and*  
*communication project.*

Documentation in a specified  
 subject  
 Audio visual media:  
 bibliographic retrieval  
 systems.

*Sample Student 2. Focus on information technology*

*Intermediate level*

*Computers and information access*  
*Fundamentals of information retrieval*  
*Cultures information and communication*  
*Politics and economics of information*  
*systems*

Sources of information

*Final level*

*Principles and practice in*  
*information work*  
*Information and communication*  
*project*  
*New directions in*  
*communication and*  
*information*

Technology of data handling

Information systems analysis	and transfer
Information software: programming and design	Information software: data structures and techniques
New technology and information services	Automated indexing and retrieval systems
	Intelligent information systems.

*Sample Student 3. Focus on the media and information work*

*Intermediate level*

*Computers and information access*  
*Fundamentals of information retrieval*  
*Cultures information and communication*  
*Politics and economics of information*  
*Media and popular culture*  
 Press and broadcasting studies  
 Publishing and bookselling studies  
 Women in the media

*Final level*

*Principles and practice in information and communication work*  
 placement modules  
*Information and communication project*  
*New directions in communications and information*  
 Audiovisual media:  
 bibliographic and information retrieval systems  
 Popular literature  
 Reading studies  
 Arts policy in Britain.

*Sample Student 4. Focus on inner city information work*

*Intermediate level*

*Computers and information access*  
*Fundamentals of information retrieval*  
*Cultures information and communication*  
*Politics and economics of information*  
 Managing information services  
 Local government and local politics  
 Library and information work in a multicultural society  
 Organization of information services for specific communities

*Final level*

*Principles and practice in information work*  
 placement  
*Information and communication project*  
*Popular literature*  
*Ethnic minorities and public policy*  
*Automated indexing and retrieval systems*  
*Ethnic minorities and education \**

### **3. Summary**

As with most degree courses the problem of integration is a major concern. The function of the Information and Communication Project is to enable the student to bring together the concepts and techniques learnt in the other modules. This bringing together must have a focus on a specific issue in librarianship, information work and communications. There is a secondary objective in that the student acquires the experience of researching and writing a lengthy report, and in the general presentation of information. We feel that the modular structure will give us sufficient flexibility to cope with the manifold and imminent unknowns of the nineteen nineties.