Dear MLIS students,

I want to take this opportunity to inform you of an important development in relation to the MLIS program. For students entering the program beginning Fall 2015, the Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree will be changing its name to the Master of Information (M of I) degree. The set of courses currently offered for the MLIS also form the basis of the Master of Information, although we will be highlighting some plans of study with new concentration names.

Any of our current and continuing students who were admitted prior to Fall 2015 will earn the MLIS degree for which they applied. The LIS program, specializations and courses remain as outlined in our existing documentation of our curriculum and fully accredited by the American Library Association. In short, nothing has changed in terms of quality and commitment to our highly ranked LIS program. The Master of Information degree will open up even more opportunities for students whose goals are to engage as information professionals in industry sectors outside of librarianship. Current students who plan to graduate in 2016 or after can opt into having their degree be conferred as M of I rather than MLIS.

Let me take a moment to provide you with some background on the rationale for the change in the name of the MLIS degree to M of I. Our current MLIS program, as you know, is a nationally high-ranked program (US News and World Report #6 in LIS, #2 in School Library Media). We have held these rankings for many years, and are very proud to have provided an American Library Association accredited program for over 60 years. We certainly hope to continue these accomplishments. It all started with a Master of Library Service degree in the 1950s, and underwent subsequent name changes to the current MLIS.

The courses that make up your MLIS have long served individuals whose career goals are in the broader information professions. In the evolving economy of the 21st century, we are seeing numerous new jobs being created that require knowledge of information science and management concepts and practices, and there are new emerging communities of potential students for our program who have career goals outside of "library" contexts. Although our our program prepares individuals for a wide range of careers, a degree labeled "Library and Information Science" deters some of these potential students from applying to us. There are knowledge and skill sets common across the information professions, and many positions that are advertised do not require an MLIS degree specifically. It is our belief that a broader degree name will enable us to reach a wider target population and serves people looking for a more diverse set of career goals in the professional information arena. It is about opportunity, choice and careers. We do recognize that some students want a library and information science program with ALA accreditation, and we will continue to provide that pathway in the Master of Information. Without making significant changes to our existing coursework, we are able to define
concentrations to enable potential students to see the possibilities we offer. We believe the right name for the degree is Master of Information, and this name change has been approved by the Rutgers Board of Governors, the New Jersey Council of Presidents, and the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education.

Under the umbrella of a Master of Information degree, we will still offer a concentration in library and information science for those seeking jobs in libraries (with full ALA Accreditation). In addition, we will have a data science concentration for those seeking positions coordinating data collection, storage, and analysis; a strategic information management concentration for those who seek enterprise-level responsibilities for corporate or institutional information; and further down the track, an informatics and design concentration for information professionals seeking careers in analyzing, designing, building and managing information and communication technologies in support of individual and social access to and management of information in a wide variety of occupational and personal contexts. All of these concentrations will draw on the range of courses we currently provide for the MLIS.

I plan to keep you all updated as we progress on the roll out of the Master of Information during this semester. I will also be holding information sessions for all students on campus and online to provide further information and to address any questions that you have. In the mean time, do not hesitate to get in touch with me or MLIS program director, Dr. Joyce Valenza.

Best wishes as you continue your studies.

Ross Todd