



# The SILS Curriculum

## A Guide for MSLS and MSIS Students

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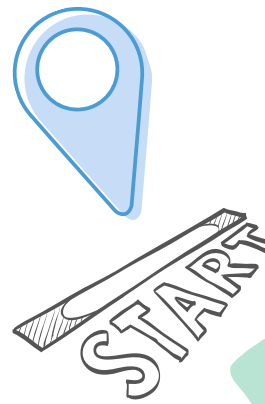
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The master's curriculum at the School of Information and Library Science at UNC Chapel Hill was designed with flexibility and customizability in mind. With guidance from your advisor and others, you will be able to design a course sequence that prepares you for a successful LIS career.

The SILS curriculum has three main components, each of which is discussed in this document:

1. **Two core first-year courses:** our curriculum has two core courses, which all MS students will take in their first and second semesters (these courses are described in more detail on pages 3-4).
2. **Course bins:** a set of four course bins (described on page 6) will guide your selection of additional courses and ensure that all SILS students are exposed to a broad range of professional competencies.
3. **Capstone options:** For your capstone experience, you can choose to complete an independent research-based master's paper or a team-based practicum project (see more about this option starting on page 10).

# Your Path Through the Curriculum



All students will enroll in INLS 777 (Perspectives on Information, Technology, and People) in their first Fall semester.



In your first Spring semester, you will take INLS 776 (Ethics, Values, and Society).

You will use the course bins list, specialization ("track") advising guides, your advisor, and your own professional interests to choose your remaining courses.

At the end of your second semester, you will need to choose whether you want to pursue the research track or the project track.

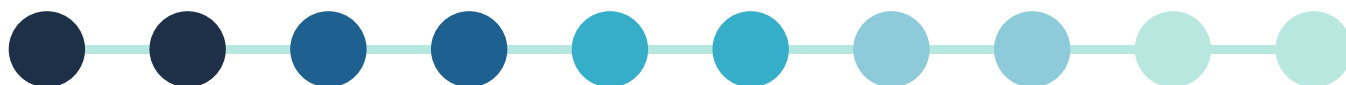
Students choosing the research track will take INLS 778 (Research Methods + Proposal Development) in their third semester, conduct an individual research study, and write a research-based master's paper in their final semester.

Students choosing the project track will take INLS 779 (Practicum Project Development) in their third semester, and complete a team-based practicum project plus a poster / demonstration session in their final semester.



All MSIS and MSLS students will be required to take two core courses, one in each of their first two semesters of the program.

# SILS Core Courses



## INLS 776: Ethics, Values, & Society

*You will take this course in your first Spring semester.*



Students share research posters at the SILS Symposium on Information for Social Good.

### Short Course Description:

This course explores ethical issues related to information, data, knowledge, and technology in various individual, community, and societal contexts.

### Longer Course Description:

In this course, we will explore ethical issues and questions relevant to the work and impact of LIS professionals: How should our values and beliefs be expressed in our information and data systems and services? What impact does our work have on people (at different scales)? What is our responsibility to understand and respond to those impacts? How is power expressed in various sociotechnical information systems, and how does power impact who gets to decide what counts as “knowledge?” How do the values that we (intentionally or unintentionally) build into these systems help or harm? What is our obligation to “goodness,” “fairness,” “justice,” or “ethics?” What are the limitations of these frameworks?

### Student Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify and analyze social dilemmas that arise through the development and use of information systems, services, and technologies, and describe the personal and social values that manifest in the context of these dilemmas.
- Propose actions to resolve such dilemmas based on the application of established frameworks for moral reasoning.
- Describe and compare codes of ethics endorsed by relevant professional associations.
- Articulate and justify your own position on the responsibilities of information professionals in relation to ethics, values, power, and accountability.
- Discuss complex social dilemmas with your peers in a productive, compassionate manner.
- Design and present a panel for a professional conference.

# INLS 777: Perspectives on Information, Technology, and People

*You will take this course in your first Fall semester.*

## **Course Description:**

Examines the relationships between information, technology, and people from an array of disciplinary, professional, cultural, and other orientations. Explores the application of diverse perspectives to understand current matters of concern.



At SILS, we view the LIS field as sitting at the intersection of information, technology, and people. INLS 777 explores this idea from a range of perspectives.

## **Student Learning Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Appreciate the diverse range of disciplines, professions, and other orientations by which people have attempted to make sense of information, technology, and people.
- Contextualize, critique, and compare disciplinary, professional, cultural, and other perspectives with which one might identify and interpret relations between information, technology, and people.
- Trace different ways of understanding current information problems through the lens of different perspectives.
- Examine how your own interests and goals intersect, align, and conflict with different disciplinary, professional, cultural, and other perspectives.
- Articulate your own emerging professional identity.
- Understand the myriad impacts of technology on information and information users.



# FAQs: Core Courses

*If you have other questions about the core courses, please reach out to one of the contacts on the last page of this document.*

**Are there LS and IS versions of these courses?**

No. These courses are an opportunity for students and faculty to explore what connects us as a field, and to be exposed to differing perspectives on information, information organizations, and information professionals. Thus, it is important for all sections of these courses to have a mix of LS and IS students.

**Will every section of this course be taught the exact same way?**

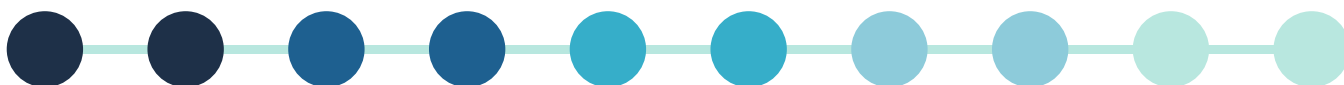
No. All sections of each course will use a similar set of course learning objectives, ensuring that all students leave these courses with similar knowledge and skills. However, individual instructors may customize assignments, readings, and teaching methods to best fit their own expertise.

**How many students can I expect to be in these courses with me?**

Core courses will be capped at 30 students. A class of this size will allow students to meet and form relationships with peers who may have very different professional interests and backgrounds, while still remaining small enough to take advantage of active learning activities such as discussion, guided practice, debate, etc.

*A course bin system combined with traditional advising tools will help guide your remaining coursework.*

# Personalizing Your Degree



## Course Bins

*A set of four course bins will ensure that all SILS students are exposed to a range of core professional competencies.*



Course bins and advising materials will help you make informed decisions about your coursework.

With a small core of only two courses plus 6 credit hours for your capstone experience, you will need additional guidance on what to take for your remaining 36 credit hours. Some of this guidance will come from your advisor and your peers. You might be interested in a particular specialization or "track" at SILS, such as Archives & Records Management or human-computer interaction; if this is the case for you, you will also have access to course advising grids that can help you plan out your coursework (see example advising grids on pages 7-8; more can be found on the SILS website).

Choosing a specialization is not required at SILS, and you may decide to chart your own professional path here. Regardless of whether you choose a specialization or not, you will use the course bins system to choose at least six courses (in addition to the core courses) that will ensure your exposure to a broad range of professional competencies. The four bins are:

### Information

*All students take at least 2.*

### Services and Organizations

*MSLS - take at least 2  
MSIS - take at least 1*

### Technology

*MSLS - take at least 1  
MSIS - take at least 2*

### People and Communities

*All students take at least 1.*

Specific courses that fall into each bin are listed on the SILS website; that list will be updated regularly to account for new and special topics courses.

# Specializations and Tracks



Choosing a specialization or "track" is not required at SILS, however many students do choose to pursue this option. Note that while most tracks are informal and do not result in any official certification or endorsement on your transcript, the Archives & Records Management track and the School Library Media track are more rigidly structured. If you are interested in completing either of those tracks, please be sure to reach out to the appropriate advisor.

Many common areas of specialization have course advising grids available online that will help you decide which courses to select to fulfill your bin requirements while also focusing on a particular area of the LIS field. Two sample advising grids are provided below; visit the SILS website for additional grids and other coursework planning tools. **It is important to note that, except for ARM and School Library Media, advising grids simply list suggestions for course planning: they should not be interpreted as requirements.**

## Sample Course Advising Grid: School Library Media

| Core Courses (Take in your first year)   |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| INLS 777: Perspectives   |  | INLS 776: Ethics  |  |
| Bin Courses  |  |   |  |
| Information  | Services and Organizations   | Technology  | People and Communities   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 530: Young Adult Literature and Related Materials (Fall)</li><li>• INLS 732: Children's Literature and Related Materials (Spring)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 501: Information Resources and Services</li><li>• INLS 783: Library Instruction and Pedagogy</li><li>• INLS 782: Library Assessment</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 534: Youth and Technology in Libraries (Spring)</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choose any course from this bin.</li></ul> |
| Additional Required Courses  |  |   |  |
| INLS 796: Supervised Field Experience in School Library Media (must be taken in second year)   |  | Capstone (Take in second year) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 778 / 992 (research-based master's paper track) OR</li><li>• INLS 779 / 992 (practicum / project track)</li></ul> |  |
| Additional Recommended Courses   |  |   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 513: Resource Selection and Evaluation</li><li>• INLS 558: Principles and Techniques of Storytelling</li></ul>                              |  |   |  |

# Sample Course Advising Grid: Human Computer Interaction Design

| Core Courses (Take in your first year)   |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| INLS 777: Perspectives   |  | INLS 776: Ethics   |   |
| Recommended Bin Courses  |  |  |   |
| Information  | Services and Organizations   | Technology   | People and Communities  |
| Take at least 2.   | Take at least 1.   | Take at least 2.   | Take at least 1.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 500: Human Information Interactions</li><li>• INLS 509: Information Retrieval</li><li>• INLS 520: Organization of Information</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 582: Systems Analysis</li><li>• INLS 585: Management for Information Professionals</li><li>• INLS 719: Usability Evaluation and Testing</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 523: Introduction to Database Concepts and Applications</li><li>• INLS 560: Programming for Information Professionals</li><li>• INLS 570: Fundamentals of Programming Information Applications</li><li>• INLS 572: Web Development I</li><li>• INLS 573: Mobile Web Development</li><li>• INLS 623: Database Systems II: Intermediate Databases</li><li>• INLS 641: Visual Analytics</li><li>• INLS 672: Web Development II</li><li>• INLS 718: User Interface Design</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 585: Management for Information Professionals</li><li>• INLS 660: Social Media and Society: A Theoretical and Empirical Overview</li></ul> |
| Capstone (Take in second year)   |  |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 778 / 992 (research-based master's paper track) OR</li><li>• INLS 779 / 992 (practicum / project track)</li></ul>                       |  |  |   |
| Additional Recommended Courses   |  |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 720: Metadata Architectures and Applications</li><li>• INLS 723: Database III</li></ul>   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• INLS 760: Web Databases</li></ul>  |   |



# FAQs: Course Bins

*If you have other questions about the course bins or advising materials, please reach out to one of the contacts on the last page of this document.*

**Can courses outside of SILS count for my bin requirements?**

No. The bins have been designed to ensure that you are exposed to a broad range of what SILS has to offer, and that you are able to meet our program goals by the end of your time here. With that said, you will still have space in your 48-hour course load to take elective courses outside of SILS if you wish.

**Does every course at SILS fall into one of the four bins?**

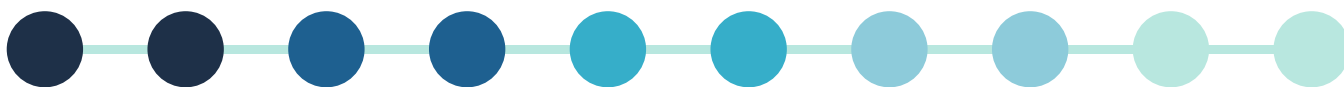
No. There are some courses offered at SILS that are not associated with any particular bin. You can still take these courses as electives, or as part of your specialization or track. If there is a course that is not associated with a bin and you feel it should be, please contact the SILS Associate Dean or a member of the Student Services team.

**Are all courses on the bins list guaranteed to be offered regularly?**

No. While you can expect to see most of the courses on this list offered at least once during your time at SILS, there is no guarantee that any individual course will be offered. We suggest that you fulfill your bin requirements with available courses as soon as possible, rather than waiting to see if one particular course will be offered later in your time at SILS.

*After your second semester, you will choose one of two capstone paths.*

# The Capstone Experience



## Option 1: The Research-Based Master's Paper



If you choose the research path, you will work individually to plan, execute, and report on an original research study investigating a question of interest to the LIS field.

One option for your capstone experience at SILS is to complete a research-based master's paper. The master's paper is similar to a research report published in a professional journal (you can see examples of previous master's papers [here](#)). Master's papers are completed individually.

If you choose this option, you will:

- take INLS 778 (Research Methods & Proposal Development) in your third semester.
- develop a comprehensive research proposal as the final assignment in INLS 778.
- secure a faculty advisor who will supervise your master's paper study and evaluate the final report.
- take INLS 992 in your final semester.

During your last semester you will carry out your proposed study, evaluate your findings, and write your final paper.

### You might lean toward this option for your SILS capstone if...

- you intend to apply for a PhD program. The master's paper will develop your understanding of research methods in LIS, give you practice writing a research proposal, and allow you to independently (with support!) design, carry out, and report on a self-contained research study. Many students go on to publish a version of their master's paper in a professional journal. These are all valuable experiences for students who wish to continue their academic journey after SILS.
- you already have a strong foundation in the practical elements of your field (for example, you have significant work experience in your field, or have already completed multiple field experiences).
- you enjoy working alone and excel at self-directed learning.

## Option 2: The Practicum Project



If you choose the practicum project path, you will work as part of a team to complete a real-world project that applies the knowledge you have gained at SILS.

The second option for your capstone experience at SILS is to complete a practicum project. For this option, you would work within a small team of students to develop and implement a real-world application of the knowledge you have gained at SILS.

If you choose this option, you will:

- take INLS 779 (Practicum Project Development) in your third semester.
- form a team and choose from an existing list of approved projects, or develop a project of your own.\*
- develop a comprehensive project charter as the final assignment in INLS 779.
- take INLS 992 in your final semester.

During your last semester you will carry out your project and present your work in the form of a poster or demonstration session at a culminating all-school event.

### You might lean toward this option for your SILS capstone if...

- you intend to move directly into professional practice after graduation. The project option is intended to help you demonstrate and build practical skills that are transferable to LIS work environments.
- you want the opportunity to address a real-world need and work with organizations and people outside of SILS.
- you enjoy working as part of a team and can commit to fulfilling your role on the team responsibly.
- you do not want to write a lengthy paper to satisfy your capstone requirement.
- you want a bit more structure to your INLS 992 experience. Unlike the master's paper option, in which individual students will be advised by individual faculty members, multiple student teams will be enrolled in the same section of INLS 992 and supervised by the same faculty member. Project sections of INLS 992 will meet a few times over the course of the semester to address any issues of concern and ensure that all teams remain on track.

*\*There may be some restrictions on student-developed projects, particularly if they involve an outside sponsor organization. For example, you may not be able to approach the University Libraries with a project idea if they are already sponsoring invited projects that semester.*

# FAQs: Capstone Options

*If you have other questions about the capstone options, please reach out to one of the contacts on the last page of this document.*

**Is one of these options harder or more work than the other?**

While the paper and the project are very different, each should represent approximately the same amount of effort. INLS 992 is a 3 credit-hour course, and we use the registrar's definition of a credit hour to estimate that you should spend approximately 135 hours on either your paper or the project during your final semester.

**How do students come up with research questions and study designs for the paper option?**

You will be supported in the process of choosing a research topic and developing a reasonable research design in INLS 778. Both your 778 instructor and your paper advisor, once you secure one, will work with you individually to help you find a topic that is interesting to you and that you can successfully complete within a single semester.

**What counts as a "project" for the practicum option?**

A project could be many things: creating a "thing" (for example an app, database, or information platform), conducting assessment of an existing library service or collection, designing and implementing a library program or service, spearheading an advocacy or marketing campaign, creating a professional development experience for library or archives practitioners, etc. Both LS and IS students should find the project option equally valuable.



More capstone FAQs, next page...

Can I do the  
practicum project  
individually?

The teams approach replicates the type of work you will be expected to perform after graduation, and teamwork skills are one of the major learning outcomes we hope you will gain through this experience. In addition, we need to limit the total number of projects each semester so as not to overburden our community partners. Therefore, projects must be completed as part of a team.

How will you ensure that all  
team members fulfill their  
roles within practicum  
project teams?

Project charters (completed in INLS 779) will serve as "contracts" of sorts that describe the project work expected of each individual team member. Team members will keep individual work logs during the project semester, and project work will be evaluated (by faculty, site supervisors, and peers) both at the team level and at the individual level.

Can I complete the paper  
or practicum project  
during the summer term?

It is possible to complete a master's paper over the summer, if the student can find a faculty advisor who is able to supervise summer work. However, because of the teamwork element of the practicum project, the reduced timeline of summer terms, and the required collaboration with outside partners to create the project opportunities, the practicum 992 hours must be completed in the Spring semester.

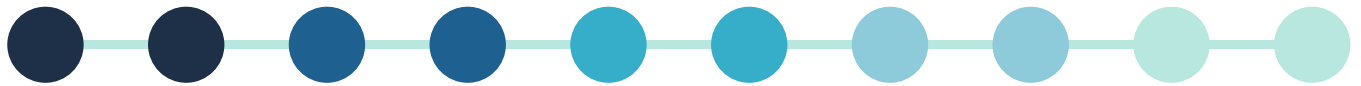
What if I plan to graduate  
in December?

If you plan to graduate in December (which is often the case for our dual degree or BS/MS dual degree students), **you must take INLS 778 or INLS 779 the previous Fall**; these courses will not be offered in the Spring. This may mean that you need to take one of these courses in your first semester of the program. Please speak to your advisor to make sure your plans will allow you to graduate on time.



*Communication with your advisor will help to ensure your success at SILS.*

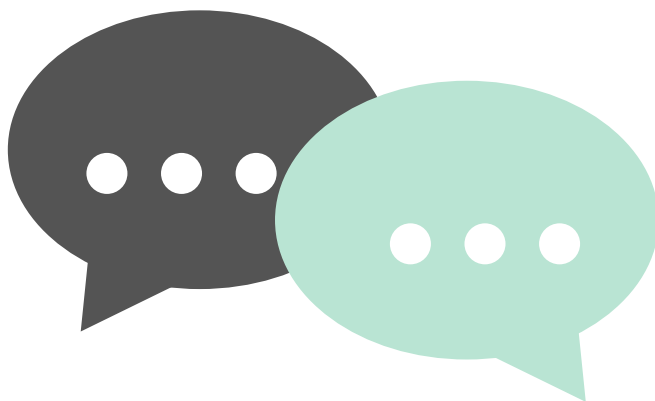
# Advising



When you enroll as a new student at SILS, you will be assigned an academic advisor from our faculty. We try to match students with advisors in their general area of professional interest, though this isn't always possible. You can see your assigned advisor in Connect Carolina.

Your advisor can help you plan your course schedules and monitor your progress toward graduation. They can also help connect you to other people and resources at SILS, at UNC, and beyond. Communicating regularly with your academic advisor will help to ensure that you take the coursework that will best prepare you for your desired career.

In addition to your individual advisor, SILS has a dedicated team of student support specialists to help you succeed here. The four people listed below are good options for folks to contact if you have general questions about our program.



## If you have questions...

**Casey Rawson**   
MSLS Program Coordinator  
Manning Hall, Room 215  
919.962.7247  
crawson@email.unc.edu

**Brad Hemminger**   
MSIS Program Coordinator  
Manning Hall, Room 206A  
919.966.2998  
bmh@ils.unc.edu

**Ericka Patillo**   
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
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