Frequently Asked Questions about the iSchool’s Structure at the University of Arizona

Why does the University of Arizona need an iSchool?
Arizona’s iSchool was created in 2015 given the opportunities an iSchool affords the campus - iSchools are meant to collaborate with and manage interdisciplinary efforts that work across computing technologies and society. Also, the context of rapid technological innovation necessitates the need for even more energy focused on the ways these developments intersect and impact societies. There is value in having a site through which the University focuses on the interplay between technology, information, and society.

There are no other iSchools in Arizona, none in New Mexico, etc. For the Southwest region, an iSchool can be a site of distinction for this campus. The closest other iSchools are the University of Texas, and a few of the University of California campuses. In North America there are 54 iSchools and over 120 worldwide. The iSchool Consortium was founded in 2005 with a set of North American Schools of Information and Library Science. Indeed, the iSchools movement grew out of library schools where the ethos is very much tied to curating, preserving, and making information usable for people. The vision of the iSchool consortium is to strengthen all aspects of research in information and information science for members across the globe with a focus on the intersection of people, technology and information. [https://www.ischools.org/](https://www.ischools.org/)

What is the history of Arizona’s iSchool?
Hatched in 2015 out of a merger of two units, the School of Information Resources and Library Science and the School of Information Science, Technology, and Arts, today’s iSchool manages an accredited master’s degree in library science that is more than 50 years old. In all, the iSchool manages 9 total degree programs with an additional set of certificates and minor degrees. Initially, to grow the iSchool, the University of Arizona’s central administration recommended it be nested within a college and cared for by an established Dean as it developed. The College of Social and Behavioral Sciences has managed the iSchool through its first eight years of development.

Why not leave the iSchool in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences?
Plans for the iSchool were never to leave it permanently in a college but, rather, to eventually structure it so that it would be strong enough to stand alone like iSchools at our peer institutions like the University of Michigan, University of Pittsburgh, University of Texas, University of Washington, etc. The iSchool at the University of Illinois is another strong model, it’s a ~20-year-old iSchool, a stand-alone school, with an accredited library science program and a dean that reports to the Provost. Intellectually, the iSchool cross cuts a variety of intellectual areas to varying degrees (e.g., engineering, humanities, social science, natural science, computer science, art) which is one of the reasons that iSchools typically stand alone and work across various colleges on a campus.
What does this transition have to do with data science at the University of Arizona?
Given that the University of Arizona is a research-intensive institution, data and big data are all over campus. Data science is also all over campus in the form of both undergraduate and graduate courses, degree programs, and research. Data scientists are everywhere, they reside and do work in most colleges on campus and in other locations like the data science institute, the academy, and the University of Arizona libraries. At the University of Arizona there are multiple data science-related degree programs. We do not expect this to change with the iSchool’s shift in organizational structure.

Does this change relate to the new Institute for the Future of Data and Computation, or as it is now called, the Institute for Computation and Data-Enabled Insight (ICDI)?
The new Institute has been developed at the University of Arizona to provide a clearinghouse for information technology for research and education on campus. Driven by the University’s Office of Research, Innovation, and Impact, the new institute aims to bring people together, to coordinate conversations around research data management, and more. This institute, with its additional focus on things like career readiness (workforce), research infrastructure, community outreach, and economic development, functions very differently than the iSchool which is an academic unit housing faculty, degree programs, etc.

Are other units or faculty joining the iSchool?
For the foreseeable future, the iSchool will remain just as it is in terms of its composition. That is, the iSchool already exists as an academic unit and academic mergers are NOT under review. Rather, this structural change represents a fiscal change that’s been worked out between the iSchool and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

What programs are offered by the iSchool?
The iSchool provides the following academic programs: Ph.D. in Information (Science), M.A. Library and Information Science, M.S. Information Science, M.S. Data Science, B.S. Information Science, B.S. Game Design & Development, B.A. Information Science and eSociety, B.A. Games and Behavior, B.A. Information Science & Arts, and assorted existing graduate and undergraduate certificates.

What about shared courses, faculty, or curricular programs between units and colleges?
There will be no change in shared courses, joint faculty, or curricular programs. New opportunities for collaboration should arise, however.

Will the move impact the library science program?
American Library Association, the accrediting body, for the M.A. Library and Information Science will continue to observe and monitor the management of the program. Many M.A. and M.S. programs in Library and Information Science in the USA exist in standalone colleges so this new structure is consistent with national practices. The American Library Association will be notified of this shift in structure as soon as the new iSchool transition is approved by ABOR.