August 25, 2008

To: The UBC Community
From: Brian J. Silzer, Associate Vice-President, Enrolment Services & Registrar
Re: Publication Format for the UBC Calendar

Enrolment Services is responsible for producing the Vancouver, Okanagan and Graduate Calendars. In an open letter to the UBC community dated March 18, 2008, I gave notice of our intent to focus exclusively on the web version of the UBC Calendar, beginning with the 2009/2010 Calendar. This letter appeared in every print copy of the Calendar, and was also accessible from every page of the web Calendar. I asked for comments and questions about this transition to a single electronic format. I write again now to summarize the comments we received and to respond to the questions raised.

Of the total 24 submissions received, three were in favour of a single electronic format, 19 expressed some concern or asked questions about discontinuing the printed books, and two people offered comments without expressing a clear preference either way.

Those in favour cited environmental sustainability and the currency of information as two good reasons to stop printing the Calendar. From those against, the following four themes emerged:

1. The printed book remains useful in some settings, e.g., advising sessions with students or student appeals hearings.
   While we recognize that some Calendar users are more familiar with the printed version, we believe that these needs can be met in other ways. We recognize that this will mean an adjustment period for some users. More advisors than in the past now rely on electronic resources, including Degree Navigator and the web Calendar. Electronic access to either current or archived Calendar material can be made available in meetings such as appeal hearings. In addition, we anticipate that planned improvements to the web Calendar, including the ability to customize or maintain bookmarks, will outweigh the utility of the print version.

2. Some prospective students do not have ready access to computers.
   There are many parts of the UBC experience that prospective students and students have come to expect to take place in a web environment. Application to the university, registration for courses, and reviewing the University’s various publications are some of those activities, and cannot effectively be done without a computer and Internet availability. Given that the number of prospective students without convenient computer access is expected to continue to decrease over time, we do not feel that this concern would justify continuing to print the Calendar.

3. The print Calendar is necessary for archival purposes.
   The Calendar has been archived online at a publicly accessible website from 1998/1999 for Vancouver and 2005/2006 for UBC Okanagan. Our electronic archives are very powerful tools when it is necessary for Enrolment Services to verify Calendar language in a given section at a point in time in the past. Enrolment Services has also partnered with the University Archives to scan the older printed books (from 1915 onwards) and make them available online by the end of 2008.
4. Enrolment Services should continue to print a small number of copies and make them available on a cost-recovery basis.
Generating any number of printed Calendars for 2009/2010 would require that we maintain the current labour-intensive processes with respect to content management, data extraction, and layout that support print production. Eliminating these processes will allow us to shift our focus to improving the web Calendar user experience. Print runs have been decreasing every year and are at a point where the per unit amount is no longer cost effective. Printing a smaller number would be prohibitively expensive.

For the reasons articulated in my March 18, 2008 letter, and having considered all of the above, I wish to confirm at this time that the 2009/2010 Calendar will be the first to be available solely in an online format. I believe that the vast majority of users will embrace this change and that all users will benefit from future enhancements to the web Calendar. I thank those who have engaged in this discussion to date and look forward to continuing to work with Calendar users to efficiently meet their needs.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Silzer
Associate Vice-President, Enrolment Services & Registrar