Welcome to Management of Information Programs in Hard Times! Information programs are broadly defined to include archives, records management, library programs, special libraries, IT, knowledge management, information services programs, and other information programs.

These are extraordinary, difficult times. As this course was being prepared, the economy continued to be in crisis with no end in sight. The Federal government was trying several “stimulus” approaches. The stock market, one measure of the economic situation of the nation, was up one day and down the next. Many companies, governments, and other organizations were reducing the scope of their programs and the size of their workforces. This meant a continuing threat to information programs from reduced resources. This course covers strategies and techniques for managing in these hard times. It is related to, but different from, other courses offered in the MIM program.

Please read the entire syllabus at the beginning of the course. It provides a roadmap for how the course is organized and how it will proceed. The Syllabus is organized as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Course Overview
3. Discussion Board Forums
4. Readings
5. Assignments
6. Grading
7. Course Units

Please also access the course web site and become familiar with the material under each heading.
1. Introduction

Getting started with an online course. This course is offered online via the University’s Enterprise Learning Management System (ELMS), asynchronously. ELMS is based on the Blackboard electronic system. It is user-friendly and very easy to use! Please use the ELMS Assignments Tool (linked from the course menu) for submitting your weekly assignments and research paper. All assignments are due by midnight on the due date.

Working through ELMS gives us the ability for online discussions in a number of forums, described below. You should have plenty of time to carry out all the work, particularly given the fact that you don’t have to travel to class or spend time in classroom sessions, but you need to complete the work in the timeframes specified.

Teaching and learning via ELMS will be a rich and rewarding experience. Before you begin, if you’re not familiar with ELMS, which uses the Blackboard system, there are three places to get a quick orientation:

- University of Maryland Office of Technology/Academic Support: http://www.courses.umd.edu/
- Blackboard’s web site: http://www.blackboard.com
- The Introduction to ELMS on the course web site

If you have problems with ELMS, please call 301-405-1400, Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. through 5:00 P.M. or e-mail: elms-support@umd.edu. If you have other questions or problems, please let me know. You can reach me via e-mail from the course web site.

Code of Academic Integrity. In all of the work for the course, students must abide by the University’s Code of Academic Integrity. This is particularly important in providing guidance on quoting and citing sources that you use in posts and papers. Please review this before the course begins at: http://www.shc.umd.edu/code.html.

Course evaluation. You will have an opportunity to evaluate the course and the professor formally at the end of the term. However, if you have any questions, suggestions, or feedback during the course, please e-mail me via ELMS.

Getting started. We’d like to get to know you! Please begin by writing a one-page mini-biography with information that you are willing to share with your colleagues in class: your name, where you are in the program, career goals, subject area interests, the type of program that most interests you (e.g., information technology, records management, knowledge management, libraries, other) and what you hope to get out of this course.
This will help me and your colleagues in class get to know you. It will also help me develop the case study projects. Please post to the Class Bio Forum by July 18.

2. Course Overview

This course covers strategies and approaches for navigating information programs through difficult economic times when there are threats of budgetary reductions and prospects of programs being downsized or eliminated. It focuses on how to manage successfully in periods of serious challenge and retrenchment, including how to ward off reductions in resources, set priorities, maintain motivation, improvise, and use times of exigency to plan for the future.

3. Discussion Board Forums

We will use four discussion board forums, in the course. The first forum will need your continual attention. The other three are informal, for information sharing.

1. Weekly Discussion Forums. For most weeks, there is a weekly discussion topic related to the theme of the week. These are discussed below.

2. Course Information Forum. We have set up a Course Information Forum where you can post questions about the course and assignments; ask other students’ opinions (for instance, about your research project if you wish); raise management questions you have or challenges you face where you’d welcome suggestions from your colleagues in class; provide suggestions for additional readings; and otherwise keep in touch. I hope you will make use of this Forum. I will use the Announcements tool to disseminate information to the class, including information about the course schedule, syllabus or assignments. It will appear on the front page of the course each time you log into ELMS.

3. Class Bio Forum. As noted above, please begin by writing a short mini-biography with information that you are willing to share with your colleagues in class: your name, where you are in the program, career goals, subject area interests, type of program that most interests you, and what you hope to get out of this course. This will help me and your colleagues in class get to know. Please post by July 18.

4. Managing in Hard Times Issues News Forum. We will maintain an informal Managing in Hard Times Issues News Forum. This is a forum for us to share information on management topics in the news or other new developments that may be of interest that are related to managing in crises and difficult times. Topics may include (but are not necessarily limited to) management issues in the news; developments in the information field which relate to management in difficult times; and books, web sites, blogs, or other sources of particular interest. Please post as often as you wish.
4. **Readings**

**Books/booklet**

The three short books and one booklet required for the course are available at the University Book Store or you may purchase them via Amazon.com or in any other way that is convenient for you. They are also on reserve in McKeldin Library.

Books:


Booklet:


**Articles and other readings**

Articles are available online and can be accessed via the University Library’s access port. Accessing the articles is easy:

- Click on the web site for McKeldin Library: [http://www.lib.umd.edu/MCK/mckeldin.html](http://www.lib.umd.edu/MCK/mckeldin.html)

  In the top line, click on “Research Port” (you may want to bookmark this for convenience)

  - Select “University of Maryland, College Park”

  - Enter your Directory ID and Password
You can select databases by subject or name. These databases may be particularly helpful:

- Quick Search
- Article First
- ABI Inform
- Academic Search Premier
- Business Source Complete
- Emerald

It is to your advantage to become familiar with these and other University databases; you’ll need them for your research paper in this course and for your other courses here at CLIS. Try various databases to identify those that work best for you. (I find that Business Source Complete is particularly helpful for topics of interest to us.)

For each article in the syllabus, I’ve suggested one database to bring up the article most directly (usually, Business Source Complete). I suggest typing in the full title of the article; that seems to work better in some cases than entering the author’s name.

If you have any problems, contact the Library (a good place to start is their Ask Us! page: http://www.lib.umd.edu/help.html), or let me know.

Other items are available on the web by clicking on the URL noted in the syllabus.

### 5. Assignments

Course assignments fall into three categories: (1) weekly assignments; (2) unit written assignments; and (3) short research paper on a topic of your choice. Please note that there are no exams in this course.

#### 1. Weekly Assignments

**A. Read unit lecture notes.** Please read the unit lecture notes posted in the Course Content folder, linked from the Course Menu. My notes for each unit provide information, orientation, and insights. Usually, reading the lecture notes is the best introduction to the unit material. They should also be useful in the online discussions.

*No grade for this assignment*

**B. Read unit material and submit a short Unit Written Assignment.** Please read the assigned material each week. You need to submit a short essay (**no more**
than 6 pages, double spaced) via the Assignments Tool for several of the weekly units.

Each week, there will be one of two types of assignments:

* A short essay based on a topic related the readings or the lecture notes

* OR

Reading Reflections based on the readings. For the Reading Reflections, please address this question:

What are the author’s main points and thesis?

And as many of the following questions as possible:

How does the reading deepen or broaden your insights?

How does your personal experience confirm or refute what the author is saying?

What did you agree with, disagree with, and why?

Any topics that are not clear, or where there is insufficient (or too much) detail?

What other questions or issues does the material raise but not address?

If there are multiple readings in a particular week, you may focus on two of the readings which you find particularly interesting and useful. (Please note: multiple chapters from a book that are assigned in a given week count as one reading.)

For some units, you have the choice of either of these assignments.

Please submit using the Assignments Tool on the course web site.

The answers are due on Wednesday, midnight, of each week assigned. Late answers are not acceptable. However, if there are extenuating circumstances such as illness, please let me know and we can make arrangements for an extension.

I will read your answers and assign a grade and provide you with some written responses each time.

This assignment will count for 1/3 of the grade.
C. Participate in weekly online discussions. There is a required weekly online topical discussion for several units.

The online discussion takes place 24/7 for four days: from Wednesday, 8:00 AM each week through Saturday, midnight, each week.

The objective is to have an informative online discussion – an exchange of opinions, insights, observations, and other thoughts that broaden and deepen our insights about the topic. It is intended to demonstrate, and provide you with experience in, online discussion and problem-solving, a technology-based approach that is used increasingly in organizations. Your postings should address the question at hand, and provide commentary based on the lecture notes, the readings, your own experience or work, and, as noted below, at least one outside source that is relevant to the weekly topic. The postings need to reflect your opinions, analysis, and insights.

I monitor the discussions and, occasionally, join them, usually to summarize some of your major points and to suggest questions or issues for further discussion.

You are encouraged to log on to the discussions as often as possible during this period, and to participate as fully as possible. The following are minimum requirements:

- You need to post to each of these weekly discussions at least three times unless otherwise noted (Units 1 and 6 require less). More are welcome but not expected or required.

- Please post at least once the first day (Wednesday). This initial post must reflect your own insights or perspectives, based on your experience and observations and the week’s readings and lecture notes, rather than being based on an outside article or a reaction to someone else’s post.

- One of the posts each week may be based on something that you access beyond the assigned readings. This is optional. If you pursue this, please provide a citation (author, title, publication, date, pages if appropriate), a link if appropriate, summarize the item, provide your perspective on it, and integrate it into the discussion.

- One of the other posts each week may be a response to what another student has posted if you wish. But the response needs to go beyond just indicating agreement or disagreement; it needs to add to the discussion by indicating the reasons for your position, thereby continuing the discussion.
• Please post during the appropriate week; early or late postings will not count and won’t benefit your colleagues in class.

• Your postings should be clear, focused, and proofread before you post them.

• All discussion postings must use appropriate, respectful language even if you are registering disagreement with someone else’s point.

I have made some additional suggestions in *Informal Suggestions for Online Discussions*, available on the course web site.

Depending on class size, we may have more than one discussion forum on the same topic each week.

*Your participation in the weekly discussions is a requirement of the course and will count for 1/3 of the grade*

3. **Short research paper on a topic of interest to you. Due Aug. 21 (the end of the course).**

The research paper, approximately 15 pages, needs to relate to management of information programs in times of fiscal exigency or other difficulties, e.g., a problem and how to solve it, keeping the program vibrant in times of financial reductions, keeping up morale, handling personnel issues, etc. It must be different from the other topics we’re discussing as a class and must be approved by me. *It should be something that interests you* and it needs to be precise enough that you can carry out the research in the time available during the semester and handle it in a paper of this length. The paper may cover a topic that is related to your own work situation or career interests. The paper must be well organized, clearly written, present a clear thesis or argument, include appropriate footnotes in proper form, and include a bibliography that notes sources consulted. (The document entitled *Suggestions for Research Papers* on the course web site has some additional suggestions for structuring and writing the paper.)

Please send me a proposal by ELMS e-mail by July 18. The proposal can be short – a page or less should be enough -- and should address the following:

- Your name
- Title of the topic
- A short description of it (a few sentences), including researchable questions
- Initial list of sources – titles of a few books, journals you expect to consult (you don’t need to cite specific articles for the proposal),
web sites, etc. This does not need to be a long list; just enough so that it is clear that a critical mass of source material exists)

I’ll respond by e-mail with approval or suggestions for changes.

You may if you wish use the Course Information Forum to elicit suggestions from your colleagues in class on sources, approaches, and other questions for either paper.

I advise you to begin working as soon as you receive approval so you don’t have to rush at the end. The paper is due August 21 but you may submit any time before then. Late papers are not acceptable.

You may submit via the course web site or as an e-mail attachment to me.

In this and other work, please submit in Word 2000 or earlier.

This assignment will count for 1/3 of the grade.

6. Grading

As noted above, grades will be assigned as follows.

* Weekly written assignments 1/3 of the grade
* Participating in weekly topic discussions 1/3 of the grade
* Research paper 1/3 of the grade

I will provide a response to each of your weekly submissions and expect to provide an informal assessment of your work sometime around the mid point of the course.

7. Course Units

The weekly units are outlined below. The work is fairly intensive because this summer session is only about half the length of a regular semester. If you have any problems keeping up or have any questions, please let me know by e-mail.

Unit 1. Hard Times and Their Impact on Information Programs July 13-18

Lecture Notes: Hard Times and Their Impact on Information Programs (in the Course Documents section of the course web site)

Readings:


AND any two of the following (your choice):


Karen Rubenstrunk and Mark Polansky, “In the Age of Agility, Chief Information Officers are Agents of Change and Business Transformation.” 2008.  


**Unit Written Assignment** due Friday, July 18 midnight (please note that in future weeks, assignments are due earlier, i.e., Wednesdays at midnight): The Charan book and the two Boston Consulting Group white papers discuss the nature of the recession and provide strategic advice for companies to get through the downturn. The other items are basically advocacy pieces for information programs. Referring to the items you read this week and the lecture notes, please focus your essay on the main impacts of the recession on businesses; the strategies advocated for businesses to get through the recession; and the degree to which the strong points described in the information programs seem to support those strategies.

**Online Discussion** (July 15-18). (This is a short discussion, designed to give you a chance to get used to the format. You need to post only once, not three times. You may post more than once if you wish.) In general, what do you believe are the greatest strengths, and the greatest vulnerabilities, of information programs in time of recession, and why?

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Unit 2. The Role of the Leader in Hard Times

**Lecture Notes:** The Role of the Leader in Hard Times (in the Course Documents section of the course web site)

**Readings:**


Unit Written Assignment (due Wednesday, July 22, midnight): Reading Reflections based on either the Deems book or two of the articles.

Online Discussion: None; combined with Unit 3

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<th>Unit 3. Getting Ready for Hard Times</th>
<th>July 26-Aug. 1</th>
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Lecture notes: Getting Ready for Hard Times (in the Course Documents section of the course web site)

Readings:


John P. Kotter, A Sense of Urgency


Unit Written Assignment: None this week, but see option 4.B for Unit 4.

Online Discussion (July 29-Aug. 1): Based on the lecture notes and the readings, particularly Deems, Harvard Business Press, and Kotter, please discuss the role of leadership in piloting programs through hard times. Topics might include the role of the leader in getting the program ready to face hard times; identifying and dealing with threats before they become too large; advocating for the program; and getting employees and other to understand the urgency of the situation and take action (including making sacrifices) to meet it.

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<th>Unit 4. Managing Through Hard Times</th>
<th>August 2 - 8</th>
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Lecture notes: Managing Through Hard Times (in the Course Documents section of the course web site)

Readings:


James Kaplan, “Managing IT in a Downturn,” *McKinsey Quarterly* Fall 2008. [Http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Managing_IT_in_a_downturn_Beyond_cost_cutting_2196](http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/Managing_IT_in_a_downturn_Beyond_cost_cutting_2196) (Please note: this article is free but you must register with McKinsey to download it.)

Marianne Kolbasuk McGee, “You vs. the Downturn,” *InformationWeek Analytics*, Jan. 23, 2009. [Http://i.cmpnet.com/informationweekreports/doc/2009/InformationWeek_Analytics_Alerts_Downturn.pdf](http://i.cmpnet.com/informationweekreports/doc/2009/InformationWeek_Analytics_Alerts_Downturn.pdf) (This report is free but you need to register on their web site to download it.)


**Unit Written Assignment** (due Wednesday, Aug. 5, midnight): Your choice:

4.A. Please submit Reading Reflections based on any two of these readings

4.B. John Kotter’s book in Unit 3 and Rosabeth Kanter’s article this week both discuss the messages and themes that leaders should emphasize during times of crisis. Please summarize each briefly, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each, and discuss briefly how you might apply either in managing an information program that was threatened by a major budgetary reduction during the recession.

**Online Discussion:** Based on the research for your first research paper (due Aug. 7) and the readings and lectures for this week, please discuss the most important strategies for
managing during a fiscal crisis. The results of the research for your paper will be most useful because it will broaden our perspectives by working in analysis from various types of information programs. (Please note: No need to bring in an outside source this week; the research for your paper takes its place.)

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<th>Unit 5.</th>
<th>Impact on Employees</th>
<th>August 9-15</th>
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*Lecture notes:* Impact on Employees (in the *Course Documents* section of the course web site)

*Readings:* Please read any six of the following, based on your interests:


*Unit Written Assignment* (due Wednesday, Aug. 12, midnight): Please submit *Reading Reflections* based on any two of the readings.

*Online Discussion:* Hard times bring uncertainty, apprehension and worry which can be a distraction from ongoing work just at the time when maintaining critical services (and therefore support) for the information program are most critical. Based on the lecture notes, readings, your outside source, and your own observations and experience, please discuss what you believe are the best approaches to keeping morale up, keeping people focused on the work, keeping quality of the work high, and minimizing the impact of budget reductions and reductions in force/layoffs.

**Unit 6. Using Hard Times to Prepare for the Future August 16-21**

*Lecture notes:* Using Hard Times to Prepare for the Future (in the *Course Documents* section of the course web site)

*Readings:* Please read any six of the following, based on your interests:


*Unit Written Assignment* (due Wednesday, Aug. 19, midnight): Please submit *Reading Reflections* based on any two of these readings.

*Online Discussion* (Aug. 19-21): (This is a short discussion, only three days rather than four because the session ends on Friday, Aug. 21. So, you need to post only twice and there is no need for an outside source. You may of course post more times if you wish.) The theme this week is using the period of hard times to take stock, assess, predict, and, if appropriate, set a new course for the information program as the recession eases. Based on the lecture notes, readings, and your own perspectives, please discuss what you believe will be the most important trends in information technology, information policies, institutional use of information, and other developments and the approaches and strategies that information programs should consider developing to adapt, address, and capitalize on them.