No time to Chill!

According to the Chinese zodiac, 2023 is the Year of the Rabbit and time to reflect, relax, and, perhaps, chill. While the temperatures have been chilly, we are far from chilling at UA SLIS. Our faculty are in high-activity mode: planning a new undergraduate degree in informatics, admitting MLIS and MFA Students (as well as in-person and online doctoral students) for the upcoming academic year, engaging in amazing research and life-changing grant activity, and searching for our next SLIS colleagues (with searches underway for a new assistant professor in information science and a teaching instructor/assistant professor in archival studies). But, we are also reflecting upon continuous improvement gaining feedback from our MLIS National Advisory Board and monitoring our progress on the SLIS Strategic Plan. This newsletter captures some of our activities since our last update in November 2022.

In this edition of SLIS Renewals, you'll learn about the some of the exciting projects of Dr. Bharat Mehra in the SLIS Happenings section, which captures events in the life of SLIS. Other sections reporting updates and changes are: Alumni News, sharing the accomplishments of our graduates; Student News, highlighting some achievements of currently enrolled students; Faculty & Staff News, profiling select faculty and staff highlights; and Announcements, listing upcoming events at SLIS. You'll find opportunities to engage with our forthcoming Friends of UA SLIS group and learn about various, upcoming programs and events, including one celebrating book making, Chinese culture, and, perhaps, the Year of the Rabbit!

If you have news that you’d like to have considered for the next edition of the newsletter or general feedback about the newsletter, please contact me at jcnaidoo@ua.edu. I look forward to hearing from you! You can also find additional SLIS news items on our website along with archives of previous editions of the newsletter. A huge shout out of sincere gratitude to Beth Sheehan, SLIS Program Assistant, for the newsletter layout and design. And, now, on to THE NEWS!

Mehra and Collaborators Make Excellent Progress on Three IMLS Grants

On January 7, Drs. Bharat Mehra and Robert Riter led the SJ4A Spring 2023 New Student Orientation (with faculty and staff support) as part of the grant entitled “Training of Community-Embedded Social Justice Archivists (SJ4A)” awarded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program [RE-252356-0LS-22] to welcome and initiate the first cohort of social justice archivists into the program. Their goal was to initially recruit and train 12 Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) paraprofessionals as SJ4A Fellows working in community-based archives settings to earn a fully funded master’s degree in Library and Information Studies (MLIS) from (cont.)
The University of Alabama Online. Thanks to strong recruitment and an exceptional applicant pool they were able to secure College and School resources to additionally admit 6 SJ4A Scholars fully funded by The University of Alabama. The SJ4A cohort has kicked off the implementation of the grant’s educational and training segment (ongoing from January 2023 through December 2024) as they enrolled in their first two required courses this spring. This phase will also identify student learning objectives and project recommendations. Read more at: the IMLS announcement, the project website, and the latest College press release.

Mehra and Kimberly Black at the Chicago State University’s Department of Computer, Information, and Mathematical Science and Technology, in partnership with multiple state and public libraries, are moving full speed on their grant entitled “Civic Engagement for Racial Justice in Public Libraries (RJ@PL)” awarded by the IMLS’ National Leadership Grants for Libraries [LG-252354-OLS-22]. The overall goal of this research project is to explore the role of public libraries in the support and promotion of racial justice and positive social change in communities. After IRB approval, the team has initiated the first assessment phase of the research with an online survey for collecting feedback from public library staff in the American South about racial climate in library workplaces. As relevant, please complete the survey here.

The survey consists of 20-30 questions seeking public library staff opinions and experiences related to racial diversity and inclusion in their library workplace (i.e., workplace culture and inclusion, staffing and professional development, workplace policies and procedures, personal experiences, demographic questions). Developing an awareness of racial justice in library workplaces is important to understand how effectively libraries can engage their communities on these topics. Data collected from this research study will help develop contextually relevant strategic information tools (e.g., roadmap, action plan, taxonomic framework of information responses) for civic engagement that public libraries can use to overcome problems related to racism in their communities. Read more at: the IMLS announcement, and the project website.

Alissa Lange, Director of the Center of Excellence in STEM Education and the Early Childhood STEM Lab at East Tennessee State University, Mehra (co-PI), and others are making excellent progress on their grant entitled “Libraries Count: Co- Developing a Professional Learning Program to Build Capacity of Library Staff to Support Diverse Young Children and their Families in Math” that is awarded by the IMLS’ Laura Bush 21stCentury Librarian Program [RE-252310-OLS-22]. The overall goal is to create and evaluate an online professional learning program for library staff to integrate math into programming for diverse young children and their families in underserved communities. Along with public library representatives and their family patrons across the ten partnering states, the leadership team is currently heavily engaged with the design-development and family-community teams to assess and examine effective ways of integrating equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) concerns throughout the content, structure, and delivery of the initial modules in Libraries Count. Read more at: the IMLS announcement and the project website.
Alumni News
Anita Delp (SLIS Class of 2022) passed away in January 2023. Anita was the youth services librarian at the Cecil County (MD) Public Library North East Branch.

Gail Sheldon (SLIS Class of 2010) retired in November 2022 from her role at the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS).

Dr. Lyda McCartin (SLIS Class of 2005) has been selected as the next director of the School of Information Science at The University of South Carolina’s College of Information and Communications. She will begin this new venture in June 2023.

Student News
This summer, current MLIS student Mariella Giordano will begin a 10-week paid internship program through ExxonMobil at their research library and special collections in Spring, TX.

In February 2023, current SLIS student Takeisha Kennemore received a scholarship from the Alabama School Library Association (ASLA) to pursue her MLIS degree in school library media, and Amy Blackstock (SLIS Class of 2011) received an ASLA scholarship to support her Education Specialist (Ed. S) degree in school library media.

In January 2023, current MLIS student Jessica Lublin was hired as a library associate at Fulton County Public Library System. Jessica has also submitted an article for publication that come from her MLIS coursework.

Faculty & Staff News
Dr. Laurie Bonnici was a featured author for the Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIST), Meet the Author Series. On February 23, Bonnici and her co-author, Brian O’Connor talked about their new book Proximity & Epidata: Attributes and Meaning Modification. Bonnici’s ongoing research in the area of proximity and epidata has recently been published in Volume 9, Issue 2 of the Proceedings of the Document Academy (2022). Translation Disease: Proximity Gone Awry considers three trans-medial translations that have caused dis-ease. The research examines novel to film, poem to cantata, and novel to film to television series translations to examine various strains of dis-ease for the audience. Bonnici also tests epidata in the context of social media. Webs of Proximity and Just-in-Time Information published in the DOCAM proceedings explores an algorithm-driven censorship case attempting to report a severe weather event on Facebook.

Professor Sarah Bryant recently worked on the project Acts of Translation: David Allen. This is the second in a series of collaborative books from Big Jump Press devoted to translation and communication. In this project, Dr. David Allen describes his process for translating a natural ecological system, a tick population, into a predictive mathematical model. Text for this project was gathered, edited, and recombined by Sarah Bryant from a series of recorded interviews with Allen conducted in 2022. Ticks collected by Allen in Vermont were imaged with a scanning electron microscope by Jody Smith in 2019 and inkjet printed in Bryant's studio. More information and images of the project can be seen at bigjumppress.com. In addition to the project release above, other projects of mine have recently been accepted into exhibitions at
Dr. Dimitrios Latsis received the Society of Mayflower Descendants fellowship from the Newberry Library in Chicago for research into his new book project on the history of systems for the classification of thought and the evolution of library architecture. His book *How the Movies Got a Past: A Historiography of American Cinema, 1896-1930* will be published by Oxford University Press in Fall 2023. Latsis received an Archives Cooperatives grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission of the National Archives and Records Administration and an SGP grant from the Office for Research and Economic Development of the University of Alabama for a collaborative digitization project with Tuskegee University and the Birmingham Black Radio Museum. The project will catalogue, digitize and curate historic audiovisual materials relating to the history of the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama.

Dr. John Burgess had the privilege of giving the keynote presentation, “Finding Moral Courage: Embodying Your Values Without Burning Out,” at the Florida Association of College and Research Libraries annual meeting. Burgess was a member of an online expert panel titled “What’s the role of the Higher Ed community in supporting intellectual freedom?” on academic and intellectual freedom for ALA’s Banned Books week, sponsored by Sage Publishing. The same group revised and extended the discussion for another panel at the Charleston Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. At the Association for Library and Information Science Education annual meeting Burgess presented “Opposing Epistemicide as First Principle: Redeeming Social Epistemology in LIS Education,” in a juried paper session and moderated a panel on the Ninth Principle for the ALA Code of Ethics for the ALISE Information Ethics SIG. As of January 2023, Burgess is also a Co-PI along with researchers from the University of Alabama’s Anthropology and Geography departments on a grant from the UA Water Institute to develop the DIGISEED project which aims to promote food security and autonomy in partnership with representatives from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

**NEWS**

**Faculty & Staff News (cont.)**

the Morgan Conservatory in Cleveland, OH and the Zuckerman Museum of Art in Kennesaw, GA. This project was made possible by financial support and community building from the Collaborative Arts Research Initiative at The University of Alabama. (below)

Dr. John Burgess had the privilege of giving the keynote presentation, “Finding Moral Courage: Embodying Your Values Without Burning Out,” at the Florida Association of College and Research Libraries annual meeting. Burgess was a member of an online expert panel titled “What’s the role of the Higher Ed community in supporting intellectual freedom?” on academic and intellectual freedom for ALA’s Banned Books week, sponsored by Sage Publishing. The same group revised and extended the discussion for another panel at the Charleston Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. At the Association for Library and Information Science Education annual meeting Burgess presented “Opposing Epistemicide as First Principle: Redeeming Social Epistemology in LIS Education,” in a juried paper session and moderated a panel on the Ninth Principle for the ALA Code of Ethics for the ALISE Information Ethics SIG. As of January 2023, Burgess is also a Co-PI along with researchers from the University of Alabama’s Anthropology and Geography departments on a grant from the UA Water Institute to develop the DIGISEED project which aims to promote food security and autonomy in partnership with representatives from the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

**Dr. Dimitrios Latsis** received the Society of Mayflower Descendants fellowship from the Newberry Library in Chicago for research into his new book project on the history of systems for the classification of thought and the evolution of library architecture. His book *How the Movies Got a Past: A Historiography of American Cinema, 1896-1930* will be published by Oxford University Press in Fall 2023. Latsis received an Archives Cooperatives grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission of the National Archives and Records Administration and an SGP grant from the Office for Research and Economic Development of the University of Alabama for a collaborative digitization project with Tuskegee University and the Birmingham Black Radio Museum. The project will catalogue, digitize and curate historic audiovisual materials relating to the history of the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama.

**Dr. Bharat Mehra’s article, “(Dis)information, Dysfunctions, and Democracy During the Global Pandemic: Is the Vision of Social Justice a Mirage (for Libraries) in the Neoliberal Age?,” was published in Library Quarterly (2023: 93 (1), 110-125). Details here.** His co-authored chapter (with Baheya Jaber), “Illustrative Information Support Services for People Who Are Differently Abled in Alabama’s Public Libraries: An Exploratory Website Content Analysis”, was published in Disabilities and the Library: Fostering Equity for Patrons and Staff with Differing Abilities (editor: Copeland Clayton, publisher: Libraries Unlimited).

Mehra was invited to attend the Catalysts for Change Institute (January 23–27) in New Orleans, Louisiana, hosted by the “Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship Program”, as an advisory board member on the grant awarded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services to the American Library Association in partnership with the University of South Carolina. During the event, he served as panelist on three sessions for people of color, on mentoring strategies, BIPOC as authors, and publishing and editing. Mehra is Co-Instructor (with Cooke, Dow, Gray, Hill, Martin, Colón-Aguirre, Park Dahlen, and Sanchez) for a course “Community as Rebellion: A Syllabus for Surviving Academia as People of Color,” sponsored by the “Spectrum Doctoral Fellowship Program.” Details here.

**Dr. Jamie Campbell Naidoo** was the opening keynote speaker at the Kid’s Lib Conference in Ocala, FL in February 2023, delivering the talk “Beyond Book Hugs: Helping Kids (& Librarians) Navigate Tough Topics through Books.” Naidoo also presented a storytelling breakout session at the conference, “What’s Your Story?: Dynamic Storytelling with a Purpose.”
CC&IS is hosting its 14th annual Discerning Diverse Voices Symposium, which will take place on Wednesday March 1, 2023. The conference is FREE and will be taking place in a hybrid format to encourage broad participation. SLIS's Dr. Miriam Sweeney is co-chair of the symposium’s planning committee. The theme this year is *Under Observation: The Conditions of “Being Seen”*. Our keynote speaker, Dr. Melissa Villa-Nicholas from the University of Rhode Island will be discussing *Data Borders: How Silicon Valley is Building an Industry to “Know” Immigrants*. Faculty and students from SLIS, the College, and UA will present research at the event. Online registration for the event is available [here](#).

On April 6, 2023, SLIS will host our Honor’s Day Celebration from 1–3 pm CT via Zoom to acknowledge the outstanding accomplishments of our students and announce our Outstanding Alumni in Book Arts and LIS. The SLIS Student Advisory Committee will also announce the SLIS Outstanding Faculty Award winner during the event. Online registration for the event is possible [here](#).

**2023 SLIS Honor’s Day**

On April 6, 2023, SLIS will host our Honor’s Day Celebration from 1–3 pm CT via Zoom to acknowledge the outstanding accomplishments of our students and announce our Outstanding Alumni in Book Arts and LIS. The SLIS Student Advisory Committee will also announce the SLIS Outstanding Faculty Award winner during the event. Online registration for the event is possible [here](#).

**Calling all Alumni, Retired SLIS Faculty, and Other SLIS Friends**

SLIS is in the process of facilitating the development of the Friends of UA SLIS, a new group to engage with our alumni, retired faculty, and other friends. We are looking for folks interested in serving on the planning committee/board of this new group. If you would like to be on the committee and/or be a future member of the Friends of UA SLIS once it is officially launched, please contact Joi Mahand, SLIS Assistant Director of Academic Programs at [wwmahand@ua.edu](mailto:wwmahand@ua.edu). We hope to have representation on the planning committee from friends of both the MFA and MLIS programs from across the state and nation. Preference for planning committee membership will be given to friends who contact Joi by March 25th, 2023.
SLIS Book Bonanza for the Black Belt & Beyond

In March 2023, SLIS will award brand new children's and teen books to at least four public school libraries in the Black Belt region of the state and two school libraries in an economically deprived area of Alabama outside of the Black Belt Region via the SLIS Book Bonanza for the Black Belt (and Beyond) program. School Librarians in the Black Belt counties of Alabama and other economically disadvantaged areas of the state are encouraged to apply for free books. Interested school librarians can download and complete the application sheet and email it to SLIS children’s literacy graduate assistant Kim Rogers at childliteracyga@gmail.com with “Book Bonanza” in the subject line or fax it to (205) 348-3746. Applications should be received no later than midnight on February 28, 2023. Applications are available on the program website. Launched in 2009 by Dr. Jamie Naidoo, the SLIS Book Bonanza for the Black Belt is an annual program that provides free books to school libraries in the Black Belt region each academic year. In March 2022, the program donated over $38,300 in new books to elementary, middle, and high school libraries in Alabama.

A Celebration of Book Creativity & Artists

SLIS will be hosting an in-person event on April 19th, 2023 at 11 a.m. (Yellow Hammer Room, Gorgas Library) celebrating the art of book creation with award-winning children’s author-illustrator Grace Lin and visiting scholar and book Artist Na Zhou (周娜/Joanna), a senior lecturer from the Department of Illustration and Books Arts at Qingdao Agricultural University in Shandong (China). More information will be forthcoming in the new section of the SLIS website.

The event is free and open to the public, so mark your calendars!

Want to keep up with other SLIS announcements or share news about a job posting? Subscribe to one of our SLIS listservs! More information is available on our website.