Change is in the air!

’Tis the season of change. Not only are the days getting shorter and the nights a little colder, but change is afoot at SLIS! From a new student cohort to staff changes and more, we are shaking things up on the 7th floor of Gorgas Library. In this edition of SLIS Renewals, you’ll find out about some of our changes in SLIS Happenings section, which captures general news 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. 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 Kim Gilbert Sennett, SLIS Program Assistant, for the newsletter layout and design. And, now, on to THE NEWS!

SLIS HAPPENINGS

Seasons Change, People Change

SLIS Program Assistant Kim Gilbert Sennett is leaving us to move on to greener pastures with a promotion at UA. Kim will be the new Administrative Specialist for Capstone International. Her last day at SLIS is November 11th.

On November 28th, SLIS will welcome our new Program Assistant Beth Sheehan where she will work with the administrative team to oversee day-to-day operations in the SLIS office. Beth is an artist active in the fields of printmaking, papermaking, and book arts. She holds a BFA from Memphis College of Art and a Certificate in Book Arts from The Center for Book Arts in New York, NY. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is held in several public collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Center for Book Arts, and the San Francisco Public Library. She also co-authored the book Bookforms: A Complete Guide to Designing and Crafting Hand-Bound Books, 2019. Most recently, Beth worked as an Office Associate for the UA Art and Art History Department for just under two years.
SLIS Celebrates 50th Anniversary

On September 30, 2022, SLIS faculty, staff, retired faculty, alumni, and current students along with American Library Association President Lessa Kanani’opua Pelayo-Lozada and Dean Brian Butler celebrated the 50th anniversary of SLIS, networking and reconnecting with faces new and old. If you were not able to attend, check out the SLIS 50th anniversary video, photos from the event, and more on the history tab of the SLIS website.

SLIS Welcomes Updated MLIS National Advisory Board

This month, SLIS welcomes new members to our MLIS National Advisory Board. Members serve a three year, renewable term and provide critical feedback and strategic oversight to the MLIS program to help us create transformative experiences that prepare the next generation of engaged LIS professionals. For a listing of our members, please check our website. Thank you to our advisory board members for agreeing to serve!

Mehra and Collaborators Launch Three IMLS Grants

Drs. Bharat Mehra and Robert Riter, in partnership with multiple state archive-related agencies, were awarded a grant by the Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program ($463,237) entitled "Training of Community-Embedded Social Justice Archivists (SJ4A)" [RE-252356-OLS-22]. The SJ4A goal is to recruit and train 12 Black, Indigenous, and people of color paraprofessionals working in community-based archives settings to earn a library science master’s degree with social justice intersections in our synchronous distance education program. Students will receive a structured, individually tailored curriculum, including an integrated practicum with community-based agencies, and formal/informal professional mentoring by educators and practitioners. SJ4A addresses current gaps in diversifying the workforce to operationalize social justice archival practice within cultural memory institutions while proposing systematic, intentional, action-oriented, community-engaged, and impact-driven education. The team is currently moving forward in the grant's planning and relationship-building stage to ensure implementation success. This includes consolidation of ties with stakeholders; organization of human resources and infrastructure; and configuration of communication technologies (e.g., website design), along with recruitment, applications, streamlining of spring 2023 admissions protocols, and developing the evaluation instruments. (cont.)

Seasons Change, People Change (cont.)

Joi Mahand will also join SLIS on November 28th as our new Assistant Director of Academic Programs. She will be actively engaging with prospective, new, and current students at SLIS in her new role. Joi graduated from Berra College with a B.S. in Business Management and obtained her MLIS from SLIS. She has worked as a public Librarian for in the Jefferson County Library Cooperative in the greater Birmingham, AL area, specializing in teen and adult services. Joi uses her positive attitude and love for libraries to encourage others. In her free time, she reads voraciously and loves to sing. Perhaps she'll include singing as part of her recruitment pitch for our SLIS degree programs!
Mehra and Collaborators Launch Three IMLS Grants (cont.)

The team has successfully initiated planning and implementation set-up, including (not limited to) relationship-building with collaborators; university support, human resources, and infrastructure; website development; completion of research evaluation instruments; and institutional human subjects’ approval. Read more at:


Mehra is joining Alissa Lange, Director of the Center of Excellence in STEM Education and the Early Childhood STEM Lab at East Tennessee State University, on a grant funded by the IMLS’ Laura Bush 21stCentury Librarian Program ($467,587) 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” [RE-252310-OLS-22]. The team includes public library systems across ten states who will partner 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. The collaborative participatory design process includes co-developing a culturally responsive program with key stakeholders from a strengths-based perspective in diverse settings. It will also involve piloting and evaluating program impacts at scale through WebJunction, an online learning network, that will provide libraries free access to the final program. Currently, the team is planning early implementation activities, including developing a road map with the who, what, how, and when components to facilitate design of the online modules in the learning program. Read more at: https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/re-252310-ols-22 [IMLS announcement] and www.librariescount.com [project website].

Find the College of Communication and Information Sciences press release about the IMLS grants at:

https://cis.ua.edu/2022/08/22/slis-faculty-receive-over-1-2-million-in-imls-grants/
Alumni News

Jennifer Combs (SLIS Class of 2020) recently accepted a position as Director of the Columbiana Public Library (AL).

In December 2022, Laura Langberg (SLIS Class of December 2020) will be starting a new job at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC as Assistant Professor & the Information Literacy Librarian for the First Year Experience.

Sarah Lewin (SLIS Class of August 2022) recently accepted a job in October 2022 as a Children’s Librarian for The New York Public Library working at the Bronx Library Center branch, the largest public library in The Bronx.

Kandi Massey (SLIS Class of August 2022) was awarded a $200,000 grant for a 21st CCLC after school program at University Place Elementary and also received a $5,000 grant for library books. She was also recently selected for the Apple Technology Innovation Award for University Place Elementary (Tuscaloosa, AL).

Michelle Mather (SLIS Class of 2013) passed away on October 15, 2022. Originally from Anderson, SC, she was in the process of a move to Howey-in-the-Hill, FL at the time of her passing.

Larissa Teachworth Root (SLIS Class of 2001) was recognized in September 2022 as one of two outstanding librarians nationwide at the Fortis Institute in Nashville, TN.

Sara Maurice Whitver (SLIS Class of 2007) has accepted the position of Digital Humanities Librarian at The University of Alabama Libraries. As Digital Humanities Librarian, Sara will lead the Alabama Digital Humanities Center, supporting UA’s Digital Humanities community through project collaboration and programming.

Student News

Current MLIS student Michelle Cheng was awarded a 2022-2023 Spectrum Scholarship from the American Library Association.

The professional work of current doctoral student and MLIS alumna (Class of 2020) Reba Williams has made an important impact in the Birmingham (AL) area. Williams, the branch manager at the Titusville Public Library, has found ways to connect with the community through various literacy and resource programs. Williams’ programs address barriers to equity and ways the library can assist marginalized community members with everyday experiences that will make a difference in their lives. (below)

Faculty & Staff News

Dr. Laurie Bonnici has a new book out this month with co-author Dr. Brian O’Connor (UNT), Proximity and Epidata: Attributes and Meaning Modification. is published in the Synthesis Lectures on Information Concepts, Retrieval, and Services book series. This book provides a new model to explore discoverability and enhance the meaning of information. The authors have coined the term epidata, which includes items and circumstances that impact the expression of the data in a document, but are not part of the ordinary process of retrieval systems. Epidata affords pathways and points to details that cast light on proximities that might otherwise go unknown. In addition, it offers clues to mis-and dis-information discernment. The authors suggest that proximity is a thread between retrieval constructs based on known topics, predictable relations, and types of information seeking that lie outside constructs such as browsing, stumbling, encountering, detective work, art making, and translation. Bonnici delivered two papers at the Document Academy (Akron, OH) in August 2022. “Translation Disease: Proximity Gone Awry” and “Webs of Proximity: Individuals with Disabilities and Just-in-Time Information.” Bonnici serves on the editorial board of Library and Information Science Research.

CIS doctoral student (and concentrator in information science) Kaeli Nieves-Whitmore. Nieves-Whitmore participated in the Jean Tague Sutcliffe Doctoral Student Research Poster Competition at the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) conference in Pittsburgh, PA in October 2022. Her poster was titled “Are they still anxious?" Students’ Experiences of Academic Libraries.” Nieves-Whitmore also presented a works-in-progress poster with Dr. Miriam Sweeney at the conference. (right)
Faculty & Staff News (cont.)

Professor Sarah Bryant has released Acts of Translation: Allison Grant, the first in a series of collaborative books from Big Jump Press devoted to translation and communication. Text for this project was gathered, edited, and recombined by Sarah Bryant from a series of recorded interviews with photographer Allison Grant conducted in 2021 and 2022. The images are tracings of photographs taken by Grant at Hurricane Creek in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in 2019. These photographs are part of Grant’s series Within the Bittersweet, a dark pastoral examination of her experiences raising her children amid concerns about the impacts of the climate crisis and environmental contamination. Additional collaborators who have committed to this series include a biology professor, a type designer, a public defender, and a translator, among others. Check out the book here: https://bigjumppress.com/section/516534-Acts%20of%20Translation.html

Dr. Steven MacCall and CIS doctoral student Huapu Liu presented a paper for the SIG AI Workshop at the ASIS&T 2022 Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh, PA in October. The theme of the workshop was “AI in the Real World: Strengthening Connections Between LIS Research and Practice.” The title of their workshop paper was “Historical Text Datafication and Loss: Computational Recovery of Typographical Layout Logic on an RDF Graph Featuring ML Methods”. The paper is based on Huapu Liu’s research.

Dr. Bharat Mehra became a UA CC&IS Diversity Advocate Trainer in October. Exaly, a non-profit project to address absences of a comprehensive resource of scholarly literature and scientometric data, identified Mehra as the “1st most published author in Advances in Librarianship (Lifetime)”. Mehra’s paper, “White Pricks” (a.k.a. Inoculations Against Racism) to Decenter Shades of White Privilege in a Professional Association’s Leadership Networks of LIS Educators”, was selected for presentation during the Program of the Information Ethics SIG at the ALISE Annual Conference (October: Pittsburgh). He also presented a poster, ”A Multi-Methological Assessment of the Role of Alabama’s Public Libraries to Address the Opioid Crises” (with Viehouser and Jaber) during the ASIS&T 85th Annual Meeting (October: Pittsburgh). Mehra virtually delivered a Keynote Speech, “Social Justice Laws in Library and Information Science: New Directions of Impact in Pakistan” during the Post-Pandemic Era: Sustainable Development of LIS Profession at the University of the Punjab (November: Lahore, Pakistan). Mehra presented “A “Voice” from Intersecting Margins to Further Social Justice Scholarship and Advocacy in Library and Information Science” at the Fourth Sister Thea Bowman Social Justice Lecture Series hosted by The Department of Library and Information Science, Catholic University of America (November). Details available at: https://bmehra.people.ua.edu/uploads/1/2/3/8/123890329/mehracy_10_31_2022.pdf (below)

Dr. Jamie Campbell Naidoo presented a session on at the Alabama Library Association Annual Convention in August 2022 titled, “Including & Celebrating LGBTQ+ Voices in Library Collections, Services, and Programs.” In October, he spoke about “Children’s and School Librarians as Media Mentors” at a webinar hosted by The Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Center at Erikson Institute in Chicago and delivered a breakout session on serving LGBTQ+ children and teens in Kentucky libraries at the 2022 Kentucky Young Adult & Children’s (KYAC) Conference.

Dr. Jeff Weddle has reached an agreement with small press publisher, Kung Fu Treachery Press, for the publication of his next two poetry collections. The first of these, tentatively entitled Search All Night, is projected to be released by the end of 2022. The second, as yet to be named, collection is projected to be released in April 2023, to coincide with National Poetry Month. These will be Weddle’s 14th and 15th books overall, and his 11th and 12th poetry collections.

Dr. Steven Yates and TaNeezia Cook, an EdS student in Educational Leadership pursuing the School Library Media Specialist concentration, presented a session at the 63rd annual conference of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration. Their presentation was titled “STEM for Students: How School Libraries Contribute to Academic Achievement and Lifelong Learning.” The UA EdS concentration was launched in 2020 in a partnership between SLIS and UA’s College of Education.
The SLIS Annual Children’s and YA Book Sale  
November 30th – December 2nd

Proceeds of the sale support children’s literacy outreach initiatives between SLIS and local public libraries. We are seeking volunteers to help with the book sale. If you are interested, please contact the SLIS Children’s Literacy Graduate Assistant Lindsay Ball at childliteracyga@gmail.com by November 20th to volunteer.

ALLA News

The Alabama Library Association (ALLA) wants you as a member! Our memberships are vital to the association, but Covid has really taken a toll on participation in ALLA. SLIS students can become members of ALLA for just $15, or have a duel membership with Alabama Library Association and the American Library Association for $35. There are a variety of membership options for SLIS alums as well: https://www.allanet.org/dues-schedule

Check out the new ALLA video: “Libraries Are THE Heart of a Community” https://youtu.be/Sd2oFRCCeIA

If you have any ideas or suggestions for ALLA, please contact Amanda Melcher, ALLA President 2022-2023, melcheras@montevallo.edu

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.