What’s Old is New Again!

For anyone that’s been around for a while, you have seen fads come and go. And, eventually, what is old becomes new again. One only needs to look at the hairstyles and clothes of the students here on the Quad at UA to see that the late 80s and early 90s styles are back! While SLIS folks have not gone all “retro,” we are fully embracing the “old is new again” sentiment as we excitedly think about our move to the previous McLure Library building. In May, the McLure Library officially closed its doors to prepare for renovation and renewal to become a new home for SLIS. Currently, we are in the design and planning stages of the project, and I’ve been meeting with the project manager, architects, and designers to plan out new spaces for our masters programs and our proposed undergraduate major in informatics. The move to the McLure building will not only provide SLIS with greater public visibility, but it will also allow us to expand opportunities in the areas of book arts, archives, information science, and youth services. There will be expanded studio space for book arts, dedicated flexible lab options for archival studies and information science research, and a reimagined reading room to house the children’s review collection, which will serve as a collaborative space between students in library and information studies and education. You can read more information about our move [here](#). I hope you’ll be as excited as I am about embracing our new-old building!

Since the last newsletter, SLIS faculty have been in high-activity mode: continuing our plans for the new undergraduate degree in informatics, proposing a graduate certificate in youth literature and services, engaging in noteworthy research and grant activity, and graduating our latest class of archivists, book artists, and library and information science professionals. This newsletter captures some of this activity since our last update in early February 2023.

In this edition of SLIS Renewals, you’ll learn about the some of the exciting projects of Drs. Bharat Mehra and Latsis, meet new SLIS faculty, and encounter highlights from various events 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.

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](mailto: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!
SLIS Donates over $19,000 in New, Free Children’s and YA Books to School Libraries in the Black Belt and Beyond

SLIS awarded $19,200 in new, free books to elementary, middle, and high school libraries in Alabama via the SLIS Book Bonanza for the Black Belt & Beyond Program. Dr. Jamie Naidoo delivered the books to winning schools in April and May 2023. Please join us in congratulating the following winning school libraries.

2023 Book Bonanza Black Belt Winners:
- **Dixie Elementary School**, serving grades PreK-5 (Russell Country), Librarian Charity Wade
- **Moundville Elementary School**, serving grades PreK-5 (Hale County), Librarian Wendy Tucker
- **Sweet Water High School**, Serving grades PreK-12 (Marengo County), Librarian Tate Luker

2023 Book Bonanza Beyond Winners:
- **Centreville Middle School**, serving grades 5-8 (Bibb County), Librarian Minda King
- **South Dale Middle School**, serving grades 5-8 (Dale County), Librarian Amy Blackstock

Additional information about the program is available on the program website. A special thank you to SLIS Children’s Literacy Graduate Assistant Kim Rogers and volunteer graduate students for assisting with the program logistics.

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SLIS Happenings

2023 SLIS Honors Day Recognizes Accomplishments of Students & Alumni

The 2023 SLIS Honors Day was held April 6th, 2023. SLIS students and outstanding alumni were be recognized for their accomplishments. Alumni honorees included Joshua Burford, Director of Outreach and Lead Archivist of the Invisible Histories Project (IHP), as the Outstanding Alumnus in Library and Information Studies, and Paul Moxon, Letter Press Printer and Book Designer from Fameorshame Press, as the Outstanding Alumnus in Book Arts. The SLIS Outstanding Teaching Award, presented by the Student Advisory Council, was given to Professor Kyle Holland. Congratulations again to all our honorees!

Student recipients of awards at honor’s day were:

- **Jennifer Nowick**
  Bethel Fite Endowed Scholarship
- **Takeisha Kennemmore**
  Corr Scholarship
- **Irassema Quezada**
  Faculty Scholar Award
- **Kristy Hutson**
  Florien Oltman Award
- **Milicent Krebs**
  Raymond F. McLain Book Arts Award
- **Vince Kelley**
  SLIS Student Paper Award
Updated Progress on the Three IMLS Grants by Mehra and Collaborators

Since the last newsletter, Dr. Bharat Mehra and community collaborators have made excellent progress in the three grants supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) that began in August 2022. On May 27, Drs. Mehra and Robert Riter organized the SJ4A May Cohort meeting with the students as part of their IMLS grant entitled “Training of Community-Embedded Social Justice Archivists (SJ4A)” [RE-252356-OLS-22]. The SJ4A purpose is to train a cohort of community-embedded Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) paraprofessionals around the country in skills related to archival studies and social justice intersections. The online event in May provided the 12 SJ4A Fellows and 6 SJ4A Scholars an opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives after the completion of their first semester in the online master’s program. During the past spring, they took two of the required courses at SLIS, namely: LS 501 (Information in Communities) sections taught by Dr. Jeff Weddle and Prof. Marnie Utz and LS 513 (Professional Paths) taught by Prof. Melissa Green. The SJ4A cohort has also been meeting with their faculty advisors developing their strategic educational plans moving forward into the program. Many have gained valuable insights as they started interacting with their paired archivists’ practitioner-mentors in the field based on aligned interests, geography, and domains of work. The SJ4A students are now enrolled in two summer courses as part of their grant contract: CIS 650 (Applying Diversity Leadership Theories and Praxis) with Dr. Mehra during Summer I and LS 555 (Introduction to Archival Studies) taught by Dr. Riter during Summer II. We will keep you updated about their progress in these courses! Read more here.

Mehra and Dr. 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 developing significant assessment datasets during the Phase I in 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]. Three online surveys to gather feedback from public librarians and community members in the American South have been completed: 1) Racial Justice in the Library Workplace; 2) Library Roles in Civic Engagement for Racial Justice; 3) Community Perspectives on Racial Justice and Libraries. The next steps involve completion of data analysis from these datasets, gathering qualitative feedback, and organizing the strategic planning workshops for the next year. Read more at the RJ@PL website.

Dr. 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 21st Century Librarian Program [RE-252310-OLS-22]. During the first year, the team completed the design of the first two modules in the online professional learning program for library staff to integrate math into programming for diverse young children and their families in underserved communities. These include: Module 1: Introduction & Overview; Module 2: Early Math: What, Where, & Why in Libraries? The modules are under development with WebJunction, an online learning network and grant partner, that is helping to launch and evaluate the two program modules for initial pilot testing with public librarians across ten partnering states over the summer. Read more at the Libraries Count website.
SLIS Happenings

SLIS Celebrates the Art of Book Creation

On April 19, 2023, SLIS hosted award-winning children's book author-illustrator Grace Lin and visiting scholar and book artist Na Zhou, a senior lecturer and visiting scholar from the Department of Illustration and Books Arts at Qingdao Agricultural University in Shandong (China). The duo discussed their unique approaches to book illustration and design to a crowd of graduate and undergraduate students from across the university. Grace Lin highlighted her newest book as well as the inspiration and influence on her children's book illustrations. Na Zhou introduced several of her illustrations as well as numerous unique examples of bookbinding, including one that resembled dragon scales. The program was a joint collaboration between Book Arts and LIS faculty. Later in the evening, Grace presented a program at the Tuscaloosa Public Library to a crowd of approximately 75 children and their families. All participants received a free signed copy of her newest book Once Upon a Book, courtesy of UA SLIS's youth services outreach program. An exhibition of both artists' works were on display through the months of April and May in the SLIS Gallery, and Na Zhou delivered another presentation on Traditional Chinese Bookbinding in person and via Zoom to a packed room on April 23rd.

SLIS EBSCO Scholars Visit Los Angeles

During the Summer Interim semester in May, ten of our students, who are part of the EBSCO Scholars program in audiovisual and digital preservation, had the opportunity to visit eleven major archives, libraries and museum in the Los Angeles, CA metropolitan area as part of a course taught by Dr. Dimitrios Latsis. This experiential learning opportunity provided students an intimate look into the day-to-day work of archivists, preservationists and curators, the tools and workflows they use, the dilemmas and challenges they face as well as the unique joys afforded by preserving cultural heritage. The packed 6-day schedule of visits included...
In August 2023, SLIS will welcome two new faculty members Yuan Li and GK Armstrong. Yuan will join SLIS as a tenure-track assistant professor. She is currently finalizing her Ph.D. in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She holds a master’s degree in Library and Information Science from the University of South Carolina and a bachelor’s degree in Library and Information Science from Nankai University, China. Her research focuses on the intersection of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), User Experience (UX) design, and Interactive Information Retrieval (IIR). Specifically, she explores users’ cognitive learning processes and contextual factors during their interaction with information search systems, with the goal of designing and developing new search assistance tools to enhance users’ learning performance in everyday life. Through her work, Yuan makes information and technology more accessible to everyone.

GK will join as an instructor teaching archival studies courses and managing the EBSCO Scholars Program for audiovisual preservation and archives. They currently work as Associate Professor of the Library at Birmingham-Southern College where they serve as College Archivist and Digital Initiatives Librarian. Professor Armstrong previously held positions at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, the Amistad Research Center, and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. They have an extensive record of independent and collaborative teaching at the undergraduate level, including Queer Archives & Digital History, Introduction to Web Design, and The Black and the Green: Civil Rights in Ireland and Alabama, and Archival Research & Narrative Articulation courses. In addition to this formal teaching activity, Professor Armstrong actively supervises/mentors undergraduate and graduate archival/library interns. GK’s research has been published in the Journal of Digital Media Management.
Alumni News

Kate Bennett (SLIS Class of 2023) has been appointed as a Junior Fellow for the Library of Congress and will be assisting with the Artists in Archives project.

Shandi Burrows (SLIS Class of 2023) has been appointed as the Archives Fellow for the Minnesota Public Radio Archive.

In March 2023, Hope Chandler (SLIS Class of 2022) started the Metadata and Digital Archives Librarian position at the UA Bounds Law Library.

Miles Dalrymple (SLIS Class of 2023) begins the position of Branch Librarian for Youth and Family Services at the Hartford Public Library in August 2023.

In May 2023, Blake Denton (SLIS Class of 2019) started the Collection Management Librarian at the University of Southern Mississippi's Cook Library in Hattiesburg. Blake was also appointed the news editor for the Southeastern Librarian, the journal of the Southeastern Library Association.

Michelle Hamrick (SLIS Class of 2011) joined the Homewood Public Library (Alabama) as Assistant Director in February 2023.

Jessica Lublin (SLIS Class of 2023) has a forthcoming article on autistic librarians in the July/August issue of Public Libraries Magazine. This work is the result of an independent study project with Dr. Naidoo from last Fall 2022.

In March 2023, Dolores Peralta (SLIS Class of 2022) published the article “AI and Suicide Risk Prediction: Facebook Live and Its Aftermath” in AI & Society. This was an outgrowth of a final project for Dr. Sweeney’s 2022 AI & Society course.

Kathie Popadin (SLIS Class of 2010) recently joined the Main Library at the University of Georgia as Circulation & Reserves Manager.

In October 2022, Stephanie Rollins (SLIS Class of 1995) was promoted to position of Director of Library Services at the Air University Library at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

Lauren Tubbs (SLIS Class of 2022) has been appointed co-convener for the Digital Badges Interest Group for ACRL and is serving on the Barbara Gittings Literature Awards Committee for the Stonewall Book Awards for Rainbow Roundtable of the American Library Association. Lauren was also recently appointed as the Safe Zone Coordinator and the Gender and Sexualities Alliance Sponsor at Athens State University, and has been selected as a panelist for NAAL’s Continuing Education Webinar on social media “Invigorating Your Library Social Media Outreach: a Roundtable Discussion” to be held on June 20th.

Current MLIS student Samantha Baldwin received the 2023 Century Scholarship from the American Library Association.

Current MLIS student Kerrin McGuire was awarded an ACRL 2023 Virtual Conference Scholarship. The conference was held in Pittsburg, PA in March of this year.

While a MLIS student this spring, Cecilia Dupepe (who just graduated in May) was selected as an Ambassador for the 2023 Kaigler Children’s Book Festival at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

Faculty & Staff News

Dr. Bharat Mehra’s article (with Jaber) “Don’t Say Gay” in Alabama: A Taxonomic Framework of LGBTQ+ Information Support Services in Public Libraries” was published in the Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology (here) and presented during the Alabama Library Association’s Annual Convention. Lopez, Mehra, and Capse’s article “An Exploratory Social Justice Framework to Develop Public Library Services With Underserved Families” was published in the Public Library Quarterly (here). Black and Mehra published their co-edited book Antiracist Library and Information Science (Emerald). During the 14th Annual Discerning Diverse Voices Symposium (Tuscaloosa) Mehra and Black presented “A Logic Model Using Theory of Change Applied in Grant Development of Civic Engagement” and Mehra moderated the “Diverse Voices of Graduate Students in Community-Engaged Scholarship” panel. Mehra was panelist on “Potential of Extended Reality, including Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality to Address Culturally Diversity” during the iConference 2023 (Barcelona, Spain). His co-presented webinar “Mobilizing Libraries for Sustainable Development” was

Student News

In March, CIS doctoral student and LIS concentrator Gwen Nixon presented the research poster “Celebrating a World of Visual Literacy: Using International Digital Book Platforms to Foster Global Citizenship” with Dr. Jamie Naidoo at the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY) Celebrate the World of Language Conference in New York. Their work was a semiotic and visual analyses of graphic novels and picture books in global digital platforms for kids. (below)

In March 2023, Doctoral student Gwen Nixon and Dr. Jamie Naidoo at the USBBY Conference in New York, NY
Dr. Bharat Mehra was also recognized for his “Excellence in Academic Advising (Faculty 2022–2023)” by the University of Alabama's Office of Academic Affairs and Academic Advisors Association. (below)

Dr. Miriam Sweeney has a chapter, “Caring is Connecting: AI Digital Assistants and the Surveillance of Elderly and Disabled Family Members in the Home,” coming out in the book Artificial Intelligence and the City (Routledge) in 2023. She also has a conference proceeding, “Teaching Ethics Using Problem-Based Learning in a Freshman Introduction to Electrical and Computer Engineering” co-authored with her collaborators that reports out on the year one results for their NSF grant. Dr. Sweeney gave an invited presentation on her research for the University of Arizona iSchool's doctoral colloquium speaker series in April, and (also in April) participated in a roundtable discussion sponsored by the Alabama Library Association’s College, University, and Special Libraries Division about “DEI Initiatives in Academic Libraries an Spaces”. She is currently working on a research monograph, Voice Assistants (under contract with Polity Press), that offers a critical treatment of voice assistants, surveillance capitalism, and issues of data, design, ethics, and the future of voice as a ubiquitous interface.

Dr. Steven Yates and recent MLIS graduate Takeisha Kennemore (Class of 2023) presented “Packing Your Toolkit with Free and Cost-Friendly Resources: UA SLIS Students Share their Favorites” at the Alabama School Library Association conference in Florence in February 2023. The presentation is part of a semester-long project from the LS 532 School Libraries class where all students contribute to the presentation. Yates was elected to the American Library Association (ALA) Executive Board and will serve a three-year term beginning in July 2023. Read more here. He was also a co-presenter of “National and State Advocacy Updates: What's Happening and How You Can Help” in March at the Oklahoma Library Association/Mountain Plains Library Association joint conference in Norman. Later in April, Yates moderated the panel “Hammer, Vise, Lever: Better Tools, Stronger Advocacy” for a webinar hosted by United for Libraries, a division of the ALA serving library trustees, friends, and foundations. He was elected vice president of the UA Faculty Senate in April 2023.
SLIS Alumni Reception at ALA Annual Conference in Chicago

Current students, alumni, faculty, and friends of UA SLIS are invited to attend the SLIS Alumni Reception at the American Library Association Annual conference in Chicago.

The event takes place on Saturday, June 24th, 2023 from 7:00pm to 9:00 pm at Labriola Chicago.

Questions about the event can be directed to SLIS Assistant Director of Academic Programs Joi Mahand at wwwmahand@ua.edu.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the SLIS administrative team is facilitating the development of the Friends of UA SLIS Network, a new group to engage with our alumni, retired faculty, and other friends. The SLIS Administrative Team is selecting the final members of the planning committee that will begin work this fall. We would like to give a huge thank you to Ron Schwertfeger who polled SLIS alumni and used that feedback to propose the plan and mission for this new group.

Friends of UA SLIS Network Planning Committee

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the SLIS administrative team is facilitating the development of the Friends of UA SLIS Network, a new group to engage with our alumni, retired faculty, and other friends. The SLIS Administrative Team is selecting the final members of the planning committee that will begin work this fall. We would like to give a huge thank you to Ron Schwertfeger who polled SLIS alumni and used that feedback to propose the plan and mission for this new group.

Congrats Spring 2023 SLIS Grads!

Master of Library & Information Studies:

- Abigail Ahlers
- Jessica Angel
- Wyatt Arp
- Ashley Bell
- Katerina Bennett
- Madeleine Billiel
- William Blackerby
- Daniel Boudreau
- Kathleen Brunot
- Shandi Burrows
- Megan Coleman
- Mary Curtright
- Miles Dalrymple
- Laura Daly
- Sabrina Davenport
- Amanda Decker
- Katherine Duke
- Phoebe Duke-Mosier
- Cecilia Dupepe
- Rina Fernandez
- Curtis Forte
- Gina Fowler
- Mariella Giordano
- Melinda Hawkins
- Erinn Hines
- August Holley
- Sara Kaparos
- Takeisha Kennemore
- Kayleigh Kent
- Robin Klemm
- Christina Koch
- Benjamin Kral
- Katie Lietz
- Jessica Lublin
- Savannah McCarther
- Ashley McMahon
- Jonathan Miller
- James Moore
- Keneisha Mosley
- Kayla Murphy
- Jordan Ostrum
- Eli Parrott
- Ashley Pate
- Serena Poniatowski
- Natalie Potell
- Melanie Sigman
- Grace Templet
- Kyle Thompson
- Cetoria Tomberlin
- Tara Vankoughnett
- Karrie Wagner
- Sabrina Wallace
- Nicholas Wantsala
- Erin Watt

Master of Fine Arts:

- Katerina Bennett
- Irasema Quezada

Archival Studies Certificate:

- Robyn Balay
- Cristin Finch
- Matthew Hamilton
- Christopher Harden
- Rebecca Johnson
- Julie Olson
- Erin Stender

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.