Autumn Changes

I’m not sure what the weather has been like in your corner of the world, but it’s been breezy and crisp here in Tuscaloosa. And, I love it! Along with the changing colors of autumn comes football (Roll Tide!), the Kentuck Festival of the Arts, cozy sweaters, dazzling harvest moons, and pumpkin everything. This fall has also meant the start of a new group of students here at SLIS. In August, we welcomed approximately 178 MLIS students and 5 MFA students, in addition to several new doctoral students with LIS concentrations. SLIS also launched two searches for additional new faculty hires – one in the area of youth services to support the growing number of youth services MLIS students and one in the area of scripting languages to bolster our forthcoming undergraduate. As we continue to grow at SLIS, we have launched enrollment for our first Spring cohort in almost a decade, which means even more new MLIS students will be joining us in January.

As we embrace autumn changes, SLIS faculty have been in high-planning mode, continuing our plans for the new undergraduate degree in informatics, proposing two new minors – one in book arts and one in informatics – and planning for our move to the McLure building in Summer 2025. Oh, and did I mention that the SLIS Admin Team has already started our initial planning for the SLIS self-study that will be due in a year as we ready for our next American Library Association (ALA) accreditation review? But, planning is not all that we’ve been up to.

In this edition of SLIS Renewals, you’ll learn about leadership changes at SLIS, meet our new SLIS program assistant, 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. 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 Genesis Drake, SLIS Program Assistant, for the newsletter layout and design. And, now, on to THE NEWS!

P.S. While some folks in the SLIS office have suggested I’m a vampire, there are no vampires at SLIS but there were certainly zombies, frogs, pickles, book characters, and more on the 7th floor at the end of October. Check out the Book Arts Halloween photo lurking in this newsletter for proof.
SLIS Happenings

Leadership Changes at SLIS

Beginning with the 2023-2024 academic year which started in August, SLIS reorganized our leadership roles to provide additional opportunities for faculty to participate in leadership of the School and College. Dr. John Burgess, Assistant Professor, began a new leadership role as the SLIS Undergraduate Coordinator where he assists with oversight of the proposed, forthcoming undergraduate minor and major in Informatics.

Prof. Karen Scott (SLIS Class of 1999), a former Middle School Librarian in Alabama and nationwide educator in young adult literature, joined SLIS as the School Library Media Coordinator for the MLIS program. She provides oversight of school library media internships and advises school library media MLIS students. Dr. Miriam Sweeney, Associate Professor, began as the new SLIS Associate Director. In this role, she offers oversight of MLIS programmatic assessment, leads onboarding of new SLIS students, and assists with SLIS administrative operations. Dr. Steven Yates, Associate Professor, was promoted to the role of Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies for the entire College of Communication and Information Sciences. He continues in his role at SLIS as the Education Specialist (EdS) Educational Leadership – School Library Media Specialist Degree Program Coordinator.

SLIS Welcomes A New Program Assistant

On July 31, 2023, SLIS welcomed our new Program Assistant Genesis Drake who works with the SLIS administrative team to oversee day-to-day operations in the SLIS office. An enthusiastic and energetic colleague, Genesis has a BS in Operations Management and a master's degree in English Literature. She's worked with the Alabama’s Blues Project, taught courses for UA's English department, and served as an Administrative Assistant in English. Genesis replaces Beth Sheehan who received a UA Graduate Council Fellowship and left in August to pursue her master's degree in studio arts.

MLIS and MFA Book Arts Students & Faculty Celebrate Banned Books Week

The SLIS ALA Student Chapter collaborated with the professors and students in the MFA in Book Arts program to celebrate Banned Books Week. SLIS students were asked to nominate the first line, favorite line, or “line that got it banned” from a book that had been banned here in the United States. Then votes were cast to select winning lines to be printed in the type lab using the printing presses.

The winning lines were as follows:

First Line
Winner: "It was a pleasure to burn." Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury
Runner-up: "All this happened, more or less." Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut

Favorite Line
Winner: "Trust me, Wilbur. People are very gullible. They'll believe anything they see in print." Charlotte's Web by E.B. White
Runner-up: "What would happen if we spoke the truth?" Fun Home by Alison Bechdel
MLIS and MFA Book Arts Students & Faculty Celebrate Banned Books Week (cont.)

Line that got it Banned
Winner: "I looked at the back of her neck. She had a real small neck. I decided to break it. You know, like a twig; just snap it. I been low but that was as low as I ever got." Beloved by Toni Morrison
Runner-up: "There is no reason that we should ever be ashamed of our bodies or ashamed of our love." Two Boys Kissing by David Levithan

Numerous SLIS students and faculty along with undergraduate and graduate students and faculty from other units across campus printed these lines on book marks on October 6th.

SLIS in the Community, Profession, and Beyond: A Visual Montage

Since our last newsletter, the life of SLIS has been quite active. From presentations at national and international conferences to Kentuck community outreach events in local schools and Tuscaloosa, our faculty and students have been engaged in a hive of activity. Leaning into the adage “a picture is worth more than a thousand words,” we thought we’d show you some of the work at SLIS in pictures with snippets of pertinent metadata. We hope you enjoy!
SLIS in the Community, Profession, and Beyond: A Visual Montage (cont.)

MFA Student Millicent Krebs demonstrates book binding at the 2023 Kentuck Festival.

Dr. Bharat Mehra, Dr. Kimberly Black, and Baheya Jabar at poster session at the 2023 ALISE Conference.

Professor Anna Embree and Professor Sarah Bryant at the 2023 Kentuck Festival (left).

Dr. Steven Yates, Gwen Nixon, and Dr. Jamie Naidoo present at the 2023 AASL Conference (right).

Prof. Anna Embree and crew of spooky MFA students on Halloween.
Alumni News
James L. (Jim) Baggett (SLIS Class of 1997) retired in June 2023 from the Birmingham Public Library (Alabama) where he was Head of the Archives Department.


In July 2023, Christina Koch (SLIS Class of 2023) was promoted to Library Deputy Director of the Thompson-Hickman Madison County Library in Virginia City (Montana). She worked there for 12 years as the Assistant Librarian. When Christina graduated from SLIS, the county created a Deputy Director position for her, which comes with a pay raise and big badge! (below)

Russell Lee (SLIS Class of 2022) passed away in July 2023. Russell worked at the Birmingham Public Library (Alabama) and as a spin instructor that the YMCA of Greater Birmingham.

Jessica Lublin (SLIS Class of 2023) was promoted in August 2023 to Youth Services Librarian I at the Roswell Public Library, part of the Fulton County Library System (Georgia).


In July 2023, Catherine Oseas Champion (Class of 2011) was named Head of the Birmingham Public Library (Alabama) Archives and Archivist for the City of Birmingham.

Karen Scott (SLIS Class of 1999) retired as School Library Media Specialist from Thompson Middle School (Alabaster, AL) in July 2023.

Carrie (Miller) Steinmehl (SLIS Class of 1999) was appointed as the Assistant Director of the Hoover Public Library (Alabama) in July 2023.

Maria Guest, current MLIS student and director of the Cascade Public Library (Cascade, Idaho), was named 2023 Community Leader of the Year and her library received the 2023 Non-Profit of the Year. Both awards were conferred by the Cascade Chamber of Commerce.

In October 2023, Shanavia Reed, current MLIS student, was named Director of the Spanish Fort Public Library (Spanish Fort, AL).

MLIS student Sabrina Robinson was awarded a 2023-2024 Spectrum Scholarship by the American Library Association.

In November, Kim Rogers, current MLIS student and SLIS Children’s Literacy Graduate Assistant, along with Dr. Cynthia A. Frosch, IMH-E®, Dr. Silvia L. Vilches, and Sheila Sjolseth presented the poster “Partnering with Pediatric Primary Care Providers and Reach Out and Read to Understand Families’ Experiences with Books and Their Babies” at the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) Conference in Orlando, FL.

In October 2023, Sally Velez, current MLIS student, received the Booz Allen Family Retention DEPLOY (Diverse and Expand the Pipeline of Leaders Of Your military community) Fellowship position at Blue Star Families. It is a full-time, one-year, task-oriented program to help pipeline diverse, talented leaders within Military and Veteran Service Organizations. Sally will be researching various aspects impacting family retention in the military and present her findings with possible solutions in Spring 2024.

Student News
MLIS student Gabrielle Bass-Butler was awarded a 2023-2024 Spectrum Scholarship by the American Library Association.

MLIS student Marisa Bell was awarded a 2023-2024 Spectrum Scholarship by the American Library Association.
Student News (cont.)
Ventanas de la Habana, a collaborative book between Carlos “Tato” Ayress Moreno and Book Arts faculty and MFA students, was awarded the Dot Moye Memorial Award by jurors for the international Book As Art Exhibition in Decatur, GA. The work also received an Emory University purchase award and is now part of the school’s permanent art collection. The Book As Art exhibition is sponsored by the Decatur Arts Alliance, Georgia Center for the Book, the DeKalb Co. Public Library, and DeKalb Library Foundation.

Faculty & Staff News
Acts of Translation: Allison Grant, a collaboration between UA photography professor Allison Grant and SLIS Professor Sarah Bryant, has been acquired by the Birmingham Museum of Art. This project is part of a larger collaborative book featuring the voices of a biology professor, photographer, soprano performer, type designer, and elementary school teacher. The completed artist book will be included in an exhibition at the Berkeley Environmental Design Library early next year. In September 2023, Professor Sarah Bryant was named one of three finalists for the BRAVA Award for Artists Books from the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art (BIMA). This new national award was created to recognize four contemporary artists, craftspeople or makers whose work demonstrates artistic merit and excellence, technical mastery, contribution to the arts landscape and professional accomplishment in four different fields: Emerging Artist, Artists’ Books Artist, Children’s Book Illustrator, and Native American and First Nations.

Dr. John Burgess attended the 2023 ALISE Conference Oct. 3rd in Milwaukee, WI where he presented a summary of trends in LIS ethical guidance documents related to DEIB issues on the panel, “The Contested Nature of Public in Public Policy.” Burgess will present on a panel in November at the Charleston Conference on the importance of sustainability ethics to agenda setting in academic library practice. Burgess was also recently appointed the Co-Director of the Information Policy and Privacy research initiative for the College of Communication and Information Sciences Institute for Communication and Information Research.

Dr. Hengyi Fu participated in the following two presentations as part of the 2023 ASIST conference in October: Beyond the Search Box: Navigating Socioeconomic Influences on Mental Health Search Patterns, SIG–USE 2023 23rd Annual Research Symposium at the 86th Annual Conference of the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIST), and Decoding Distress: How Search Engine Data Reveals Socioeconomic Disparities in Mental Health, 19th Annual Social Informatics Research Symposium at the 86th Annual Conference of ASIST.

Dr. Yuan Li been elected as the Treasurer for the Special Interest Group on Artificial Intelligence (SIG-AI) under the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) for the 2023-2024 term. The primary objective of SIG-AI is to advance AI-related research and applications within the Library and Information Science (LIS) sectors. This esteemed forum provides pivotal opportunities, such as workshops at the annual ASIS&T meetings, student research symposiums, and social events. These events are curated to foster communication and further development of AI-related studies among information science researchers and students.

Dr. Steven MacCall’s Linked Data Research Group, working with Dr. Yu Gan and his Digital Image Processing Lab at Stevens Institute of Technology, published an open access research article in Scientific Reports, a Nature Publishing Group journal. This article reports on the development and demonstration of a scalable deep learning–based player tracking system designed to automatically document football player participation in born-digital and digitized historical video for inclusion into semantic digital video indexing systems embedded in linked data video clip retrieval applications. Full citation: Hongshan Liu, Colin Adreon, Noah Wagnon, Abdul Latif Bamba, Xueshen Li, Huapu Liu, Steven MacCall & Yu Gan. Automated player identification and indexing using two–stage deep learning network. Sci Rep 13, 10036 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-36657-5.

Kauri C. Williams-Cockfield (CIS doctoral student) and Dr. Bharat Mehra published their co-edited book How Public Libraries Build Sustainable Communities in the 21st Century (Emerald). Mehra moderated the “Service Panel: Linda as a Leader” during the Library Trends Linda C. Smith Festschrift Virtual Symposium. During the ALISE 2023 Conference (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), Mehra
Dr. Jamie Campbell Naidoo and Gwen Nixon (CIS Doctoral Student) presented their research “Fostering Global Citizenship in a Global Pandemic: Children’s International Digital Book Platforms and the Climate Crisis” at the 26th Biennial International Research Society for Children’s Literature (IRSCIL) Congress in Santa Barbara, California. Dr. Naidoo and SLIS Assistant Director Joi Mahand presented “From the LIS Classroom to the Stacks: Examining Social Justice Education in Practice for Youth Library Professionals” as part of the “Youth Services: Inclusion, Community, & Resilience” program at the ALISE 2023 Annual Conference. Dr. Naidoo along with Nicole Clark (University Librarian at Queensland University of Technology) and Margot Riley and Bruce Carter (State Library of New South Wales) presented the “How Libraries can Serve the LGBTQIA+ Community” for the School of Information & Communication Studies (SICS) Radio Podcast at Charles Sturt University, New South Wales, Australia.

Dr. Jamie Campbell Naidoo and Gwen Nixon present their research at the IRSCIL Congress (Santa Barbara, CA) in August 2023.

Dr. Miriam Sweeney participated in the “Dark Side of AI” workshop as a part of the annual Choice Symposium, hosted in Fontainebleau, Paris in August. This workshop brought together a group of 10 scholars from institutions around the world to draft a whitepaper detailing concerns of AI from social, psychological, and critical perspectives. Dr. Sweeney also presented a poster at the Annual Meeting of the America Society for Engineering Education on “Teaching Ethics Using Problem-Based Learning in a Freshman Introduction to Electrical and Computer Engineering” course as part of an ongoing NSF grant collaboration with UA faculty in Engineering (Todd Freeborn) and Education (Claire Major). Finally, Dr. Sweeney presented with her collaborator, Casey Lynch (University of Twente, Netherlands) on the “Evolving Spatialities of Digital Life: Troubling the Boundaries of the Smart City/Home Divides” at the 2023 Association of Internet Researchers Conference in Philadelphia, PA. This project merges cultural geography and feminist technology perspectives to theorize the relationship of the smart home and city by proposing a heuristic framework for researchers to apply to case studies.

Dr. Steven Yates presented at the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) 2023 National Conference in Tampa, Florida on the topic of “Advocacy 101 with ALA’s Committee on Library Advocacy: Where to Start, What to Do.” Gwen Nixon (CIS doctoral student), Dr. Steven Yates and Dr. Jamie Naidoo also presented the following two sessions at the AASL conference: “Let’s Change the World! Cultivating Sustainable School Library Programming with the
Faculty & Staff News (cont.)
United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals” and “An Open World of Stories: Understanding & Using Open-Access, Global Digital Picturebook Platforms to Scaffold Cultural Connections.” This summer the trio presented “The School Librarian As Changemaker: Implementing the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals” at the International Association of School Librarianship Annual Conference in Rome, Italy.


Dr. Jeff Weddle published a collection of his poetry in Kosovo, Vritme Nese Ke Koge in August. The 280+ volume includes a selection of his poems curated by well-known Albanian translator and poet Fadil Bajraj. On October 31st, his latest book Driving the Lost Highway was released by Uncollected Press.

Changes Forthcoming to the SLIS Website

The College of Communication and Information Sciences is in the process of upgrading its website this fall with a planned launch in January. As part of the college, the SLIS’s website will be changing too and will be nested within the College’s overall website. There will be a significantly new look to the website to align with UA branding and website design rules. As part of the change, the number of pages on the SLIS website will be reduced significantly. Genesis Drake has been working tirelessly to maintain as much of our content as possible. Once the new website launches in the new year, we’d love to hear your feedback on missing information or suggestions to improve the flow of the SLIS portion. You can share those directly with Genesis at gadrake@ua.edu.
The SLIS Annual Children’s and YA Book Sale
December 5th – December 7th

SLIS Annual Children’s & Young Adult
Really Big Book Sale

When: December 5th - 7th, 2023
Location: 7th Floor, Gorgas Library - Room 7024
Tuesday: 11:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Hardcover Books only $4
Board Books only $3
Paperback Books only $2
Free books available too!

All new books are perfect for gift giving!

We accept cash, checks and purchase orders; no credit or debit cards, please. Checks Payable to: University of Alabama
Questions? Contact: Kim Rogers - childliteracyga@gmail.com

Proceeds of the sale support children’s literacy outreach activities at The University of Alabama’s School of Library & Information Studies (SLIS)

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.