



College of Letters & Science  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# Jottings

INFORMATION SCHOOL

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& DIGRESSIONS



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Professor Kyung-Sun "Sunny" Kim

## From the Director's Chair

This semester brings exciting new opportunities to the iSchool at the same time as our faculty and staff rise to meet the challenges of higher education during the pandemic. First, we are delighted to add five faculty members to our ranks. Their expertise in human-computer interaction, information retrieval, and scientometrics will enhance the school's already high-caliber scholarship and increase our capacity to best prepare students for the variety of professional positions they seek. The additional faculty are integral to the new Master of Science in Information program that the iSchool will launch in 2021. While we remain committed to the ALA-accredited Master of Arts in Library and Information Studies program, the school also looks forward to building on our tradition of educating leaders in the information fields with a new degree option.

This Fall, we welcomed our largest class (over 120 students), including online and on-campus students. Faculty and staff members have done a tremendous job adapting to the remote learning environment. In accordance with campus guidelines developed in response to the pandemic, about 50% of in-person classes were moved online this semester. Our in-person courses are taking place in Helen C. White Hall, following strict safety protocols. The dedication to students and the considerable amount of online teaching experience within the iSchool allowed us to be responsive and nimble when campus leaders announced Fall instructional modalities. We are working hard to ensure that our students have safe, high-quality learning experiences.

In response to the Black Lives Matter movement, the iSchool reaffirms its commitment to fostering inclusive learning and working environments that embrace the diversity of experiences, perspectives, and interests represented in our communities and the broader world. To quote Chancellor Rebecca Blank, "Each of us—particularly those of us who do not face the daily challenge of living amid inequity and injustice—must contribute to and lead the change that is needed." The iSchool is committed to recognizing injustice and learning how to help individuals and the library and information community move toward a more equitable world.

Thank you,  
Professor Kyung-Sun "Sunny" Kim

## New Student Support Fund

Students interested in Records and Information Management will have more opportunities for professional networking, mentoring, and career development thanks to the new **Eusch Records and Information Management Student Fund**. This iSchool fund will help students cover the cost of organizational memberships, conference attendance, and involvement in professional chapter meetings. Established by former UW-Madison Records Officer Peg Eusch, the fund will be instrumental in developing career and leadership potential in records management students at the iSchool. Records managers preserve the institutional memory of organizations by collecting, organizing, and maintaining documents. The Eusch fund will help iSchool graduates do this important work with a supportive professional network in place.

**Thank you to Peg Eusch for supporting students with a generous donation.**

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## Janet Tom Receives ALA's "I Love My Librarian" Award



**Janet Tom (MA'99)** was one of ten librarians across the country to be awarded the 2019 "I Love My Librarian Award" for her work at the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL). Co-workers and patrons nominated Tom for her excellent reference skills and her dedication to the San Francisco community through unique educational programming and service. Tom was particularly successful with the "Death and Dying" discussion series hosted by SFPL to help people prepare for death in a healthy, comprehensive manner. Tom lauds libraries for their ability to create discussion and educate

patrons on a variety of subjects, even if they are taboo. Some of Tom's other programming projects at SFPL have included topics such as housing, alternative medicine, nourishing diets, and healthy living.

Curiosity and passion are at the heart of Tom's advice for current or future iSchool students. She hopes that iSchool students cultivate curiosity and try a number of ways to use their library degrees so that they stay interested and passionate about their work. Tom attributes Joseph Campbell's following words as her guide to living life: "Follow your bliss. If you do follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while waiting for you, and the life you ought to be living is the one you are living. When you can see that, you begin to meet people who are in the field of your bliss, and they open the doors to you."

## Jameson Zaballos Volunteers to Diversify Technology Sector



**Jameson Zaballos (UX Certificate'19)** earned his bachelor's degree in Computer Science at UW-Madison in 2017 and returned to earn a Capstone Certificate in User Experience (UX) Design at the iSchool in 2019. The certificate provided him with the UX expertise he wanted while providing him with the flexibility he needed and a great network of alumni and information professionals. Zaballos' graduate courses also helped to supplement his CS degree so that he could close the gap between technology and service and focus on delivering the best products to his customers.

Zaballos is currently working as an AI Software Engineer at Dell, as well as volunteers with Code2College (<https://code2college.org>) as a mentor for students interested in tech. He is seeking to close the equality and diversity gap in the technology sector by empowering more minority and low-income students to get involved in the field through this volunteer work. For current or future students interested in UX design, Zaballos says to "Learn how to ask great, thoughtful, and empathetic questions—this will serve you well not just in the software you build, but in the way you learn from your customers and teammates. It's a valuable skill that you can flex as you grow your UX skill set. Asking great questions, and really listening to the responses, will go a long way."

*Interested in the Capstone Certificate in User Experience Design? Contact Jenny Greiber, [jgreiber@wisc.edu](mailto:jgreiber@wisc.edu). Scholarships are available for alumni.*



Please consider contributing to the iSchool scholarship, facilities, student travel, or research funds.

Learn more at [go.wisc.edu/ischool-giving](https://go.wisc.edu/ischool-giving)

## Meet the iSchool's New Faculty Members



Dr. Ian Hutchins

### Dr. Ian Hutchins

- BS in Genetics, University of Wisconsin–Madison
- PhD in Neuroscience, University of Wisconsin–Madison

Dr. Hutchins aims to use his expertise in genetics and data science to inform policy, make scientific research more efficient, and accelerate discoveries in medical treatments. He plans to teach his students to use data science creatively in order to analyze a variety of issues and make the best, most informed decisions to address them. As a native Wisconsinite and an alum of UW–Madison, Dr. Hutchins is thrilled to return home and contribute to the Wisconsin Idea. His work supports open science initiatives and ensures that the general public has access to biomedical research data. For example, Dr. Hutchins spearheaded the COVID-19 Portfolio to give people access to the most recent COVID-19 studies. “Part of my work is aimed at building predictive analytics systems that can tell us more about what distinguishes projects that end up moving the needle in health outcomes from those that do not, so that this information can help in decision-making.” This intersection of data science, distribution of information, and biomedical research is vital to solving large-scale public health crises for residents of Wisconsin and beyond.



Dr. Corey Jackson

### Dr. Corey Jackson

- MS in Library and Information Science, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- PhD in Information Science & Technology, Syracuse University

Dr. Jackson’s research revolves around computer-supported cooperative work and human-computer interaction. Specifically, his work seeks to maximize human collaboration using machine tools and the web to improve virtual citizen science projects. This requires a concentration on both the social and the technical aspects of digital collaboration from a variety of researchers, volunteers, and experts. He looks forward to teaching his students “Data Science for Everyone” and digging into the ethics and contexts of data science and machine learning to explore how tools and decisions can be fair to everyone. Dr. Jackson is also excited about the iSchool’s trajectory. He explains that “the iSchool becoming a part of the new School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences was the icing on the cake. As we shift to include computational thinking as a core area of focus, I saw a unique opportunity to shape the iSchool’s curriculum and research. As we grapple with the problems that technology has brought about, we need a new generation of data and information professionals who are critically engaged in future tech development. I plan to make that a reality at the iSchool.”

An additional faculty member, **Dr. Adam Rule**, was also hired and will join the iSchool in Fall 2021.

## Dr. Jiepu Jiang

- MS in Information Science, Wuhan University
- PhD in Library and Information Science, University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Jiang's research aims at understanding, evaluating, and enhancing search systems and conversational systems (e.g., *Siri*, *Cortana*, and *Alexa*) using behavioral data. His work has addressed the challenges of using these systems with a combination of information retrieval, HCI, and text and data mining methods. Jiang has published in top journals and conferences including *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, *Journal of Information Science*, and ACM SIGIR Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval. He is completing a second PhD in Computer Science from the University of Massachusetts.



Dr. Jiepu Jiang

## Dr. Chaoqun Ni

- MS in Information Systems and E-Commerce, Wuhan University
- PhD in Information Science, Indiana University Bloomington

Dr. Ni is excited to join the iSchool due to its excellent reputation and the potential new partnerships under the School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences. She will contribute expertise in information technology and policy, as well as a research focus on scholarly communication. One of the issues she is working on is facilitating scholarly competition so that scientists are maximized as the human capital of science. She is also researching gender disparities within scientific fields, specifically gender discrepancies among college students and individuals within the scientific workforce. Dr. Ni looks forward to teaching students the basics of information and data literacy so they can be better prepared for their future careers, no matter which direction they may go. "One major goal of my courses is to get students comfortable with technology and help them learn data and information technology basics. We are in an era where data and information technologies are more powerful and important than ever. Not everyone will rely on these skills for their jobs but being comfortable and knowing the basics will be beneficial."



Dr. Chaoqun Ni

## Dr. Jacob Thebault-Spieker

- BA in Computer Science and Spanish, University of Minnesota
- PhD in Computer Science, University of Minnesota

Dr. Thebault-Spieker's research interests lie in biases, social computing, crowd work, and the sharing economy. At the intersection of these elements, he seeks to understand and mitigate geographic and social biases in computing and crowdsourcing systems, such as Uber and TaskRabbit. Dr. Thebault-Spieker's work also considers the development of systems and interfaces that may encourage accountability for bias. "Biases and disparities in computational systems often stem from the human labor that underpins these systems or the data they're built on. At its core, my research is focused on ameliorating these biases and similar weaknesses in computational systems and data." As an instructor, he will teach students how to approach problems and solutions from a socio-technical perspective, taking the individual, social, and technical facts into account for any given problem. He is excited to be back in the Midwest and believes his research correlates strongly with the Wisconsin Idea. His work leads society toward 'technological pluralism,' ensuring that new technology serves all people as equally as possible.



Dr. Jacob Thebault-Spieker

## Summer Practicum Experiences

All students in the Master's degree program complete a 120-hour practicum. This summer brought the necessity of entirely remote experiences, but the virtual environment did not hinder students' abilities to learn and grow as professionals. Two students shared their experiences with us: Lloret De Mar Pelayo completed a practicum at UW–Madison's Office of Data Management and Analytics Services, and Jennifer Senn completed a practicum at UW–Madison's Policy Library Project.



Lloret De Mar Pelayo

The experience at the Office of Data Management and Analytics Services helped prepare me for a career in an information profession by allowing me the opportunity to actually apply skills I've learned in a real-world environment. Taking practical skills and seeing how they fit in with certain projects, or parts of certain projects that I wouldn't otherwise be able to practice at my current job has been really valuable.

My favorite part has definitely been the team at my site. Although we were all working remotely, I had the opportunity to schedule interviews with over five team members. They were all honest, kind, and very willing to assist in my practicum project. Another advantage is that the practicum allowed me to apply my professional communications background together with my graduate pursuits. COVID-19 didn't have a negative impact whatsoever on my experience, if anything it was more valuable because it allowed me the experience to work with a team in different time zones. My advice for future students is that the practicum can be used as project-based work on your resume, or even in your portfolio. Make sure to take it seriously and learn as much as you can!



Jennifer Senn

I worked on a style guide for the Policy Library Project this summer. It gave me the opportunity to work on a project still in the development phase, meaning I got to see a lot of the behind-the-scenes planning and implementation of a project as big as this one. COVID-19 of course meant that everything was being done remotely, however since it was already largely digital that didn't have a negative impact. The hardest part for me personally was not having the easy in-person immediacy of "I have a question, can you come look at this?" However, on the flip side, that did make me do a lot more problem solving on my own, so I developed skills I might not have otherwise.

My favorite part was being able to play with the data management tool sandbox—it allowed me to test my work without repercussions. My advice to future students is to approach the practicum like any other job and look at the bigger picture beyond your own part. This is a great opportunity to get in-depth experience in a supportive environment and should be embraced as both an educational and (hopefully!) fun experience.

### Congratulations to Rita Ormsby (MA'92)!

Rita will be inducted into the Special Library Association's Hall of Fame at the virtual conference in October. After starting her career at the Brooklyn Public Library, she spent many years at the William and Anita Newman Library at Baruch College (CUNY) and plans to retire in Spring 2021.

## Class News and Notes

**Hanseul Stephanie Lee (PhD'19)** accepted the position of Assistant Professor at Myongji University, Korea.

**Carmen Niemeyer (MA'19)** started her first position since graduation in May 2019 at Cedar Rapids Public Library in Cedar Rapids, IA, as a Public Service Librarian.

**Harvey Long (MA'16)** accepted a tenure-track, Assistant Professor/Student Success Librarian position at North Carolina A&T State University in March 2020.

**Leigh Barnes (MA'04)** accepted the position of Adjunct Professor at Northampton Community College (PA) in August 2020.

**Yunkeum Chang (PhD'03)** was named the President/Chancellor of Sookmyung Women's University, Korea.

**Frederick W. Dingley (MA'00)** received the American Association of Law Libraries' Law Library Journal Article of the Year Award for 2020.

**Amy (Witt) Crowder (MA'93)** and **Laura Olsen (MA'93)** received the *Wisconsin Law Journal's* 2019 Unsung Heroes Award. Amy is the Deputy Law Librarian at the Wisconsin State Law Library and Laura serves as Senior Legal Research Specialist at Quarles & Brady, LLP.

**Sharon Korbeck Verbeten (MA'91)** is entering her 17th year as editor of *Children and Libraries*, the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association. She is also a youth services librarian with Brown County Library in Green Bay, WI.

**Gerry Max (MA'91)** had his book, *Richard Halliburton and the Voyage of the Sea Dragon*, published by the University of Tennessee Press in July 2020.

**Barb Hamel (MA'89)** retired from the UW–Madison Libraries in Fall 2020. She held a variety of roles over her 30-year tenure at UW–Madison and was mostly recently the very first Science & Engineering Collections Coordinator.

## In Memoriam

**Ruth Steffen (MA'69)** passed away in December 2019. Ruth was a librarian at UW–Stevens Point, serving in a variety of professional positions.

**Jane Vriesacker (MA'96)** passed away in May 2020. Jane served as Director of the Reedsburg Public Library as well as the Circulation Coordinator of LINK for the 54 member libraries of the South Central Library System before retiring in 2002.

**Gerri Wanserski (MA'78)** passed away in May 2020. Gerri was a 25-year employee of UW–Madison and had been connected with the School of Pharmacy for a dozen years in three locations—initially as a library assistant, then as librarian and coordinator of the Pharmacy Library in Chamberlain Hall, and then over to the new Rennebohm Hall. She continued as liaison to the School when the health sciences libraries merged into Ebling Library. Gerri retired as a Librarian Emeritus in June 2008.

## iSchool Student Awards

**Beta Phi Mu: Outstanding Student Scholar**  
Kristen Whitson

**Lawrence C. Zweig Student Leadership Award**  
Anna Dinkel

**Lawrence Jacobsen Innovations in Library Science Scholarship Award**  
Samantha Garlock

**Dianne McAfee Hopkins Diversity Award**  
Jennifer L. McGowan

**James Krikelas Award for Innovative Use of Information Technology**  
Yun-Ting Chen

**Valmai Fenster Award for Outstanding Promise for Exceptional Scholarly Contribution to the Profession**  
Adam Blackburn



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## iSchool to offer new MS Information degree in 2021

The iSchool will launch a new master's degree program in Fall 2021: Master's of Science in Information. The new degree will focus on data and information management with the curriculum integrating technical skills with the critical thinking, design, and communication skills needed to ensure that data-driven systems support values such as privacy, fairness, justice, and transparency.

While the degree has a technical orientation, students who enroll are not required to have previous experience or a degree in computer science or data analytics. The program provides an opportunity to obtain the technical skills needed to understand systems, and the critical thinking skills essential to govern and critique systems and policy. The degree complements the iSchool's long standing Masters of Arts degree in Library and Information Studies, extending the iSchool's information and data management education and career preparation into new areas.

*If you would like more information, please contact the MS Information Manager Jenny Greiber ([jgreiber@wisc.edu](mailto:jgreiber@wisc.edu)).*



Tracy Lewis-Williams, Faculty Associate, Computer Sciences

### MASTER'S OF SCIENCE IN INFORMATION

- 30 credits
- Campus and Online options
- Flexibility for full- or part-time program of study

### CURRENT PROGRAM CONCENTRATIONS:

- User Experience/Interaction Design
- Analytics and Data Management