



School of Computer, Data  
& Information Sciences  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

INFORMATION SCHOOL

SPRING 2023

# Jottings

University Communications



Flamingos on Bascom Hill

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iSchool Director Alan Rubel

## From the Director's Chair

Dear Alumni and Friends,

I looked over my director's missives from the past few issues of *Jottings*. Together, they mark a tentative and then a full return to campus after COVID disruptions, announcements of new programs (a master's degree in information and a bachelor's degree in information science), and our school-wide effort to navigate this round of American Library Association (ALA) accreditation of our master of library and information studies program. We learned of our continued accreditation status in January (which sounds very banal, bureaucratic, and anti-climactic but is, in fact, wonderful news!).

With accreditation successfully navigated, we have been able to focus on developing our abilities to offer excellent educational programs, engage in vital and creative research, and to continue serving our communities, the state, and beyond. The iSchool has welcomed three new members to our staff: Faculty Associate David McHugh, Experiential Learning Director Brendan Casey, and Grants Specialist and Lecturer Eric Ely-Ledesma.

Moreover, we are busy with searches for new faculty and staff, including a Tribal Libraries, Archives and Museum Project and laboratory library manager and faculty in ethics of computing, data and information; information security and privacy; information retrieval and natural language processing; and computational social science. Recruiting and developing new faculty and staff is a big part of how we ensure excellence in our longstanding programs, make good on the promise of building new programs, and how we foster research and collaboration. Since early January, there has been a steady stream of talented scholars giving research talks and describing their teaching. It's exciting to learn about their work, and I'm looking forward to updating you about who will join us in the fall.

With gratitude,  
Alan Rubel

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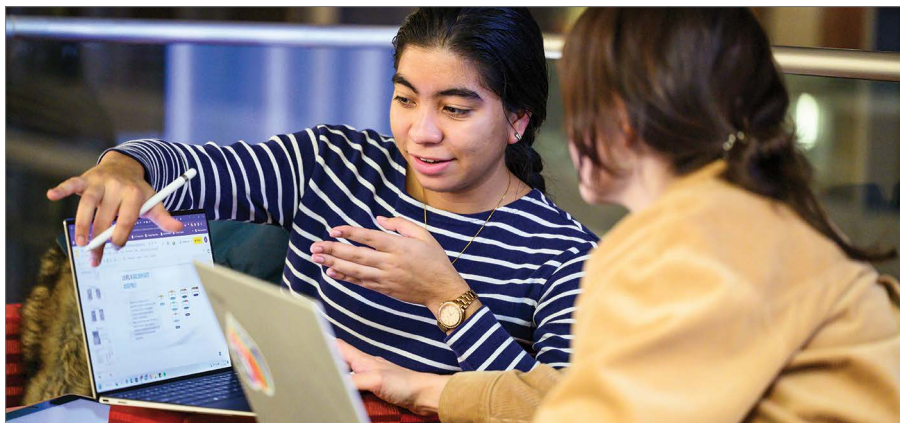
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## American Library Association Awards Reaccreditation

Did you know that every seven years the iSchool must reaccredit its master of arts in library and information studies (LIS) program? All programs accredited by the American Library Association (ALA) go through a very formal and extensive review process. This was our year, and it was an intensive and involved process.



While the iSchool is a strong, highly ranked program, reaccreditation planning efforts started over two years ago. It takes so long because the iSchool embraces the opportunity to spend time reflecting and thinking about progress, accomplishments, and plans for the future.

“While it was a lot of work, in the end it was a very helpful and overwhelmingly positive process,” said iSchool Director Alan Rubel. “We don’t always get the opportunity to slow down to reflect and evaluate all that we are working on. The accreditation self-study and site visit gave us that opportunity. It helped us realize how much we have accomplished and better appreciate the strength of our students, program, and faculty. It’s clear that the program is healthier than ever and that it has a very bright future as well.”

To achieve accreditation, the iSchool was required to demonstrate high achievement on a wide and diverse set of standards, which set benchmarks for quality in the domains of curriculum, faculty, student affairs, planning, and administration.

“I’ve served as a site visitor for three other master of library science programs so far,” commented iSchool Professor Catherine Arnott Smith. “I can attest to the value not only of ALA accreditation but of the accreditation process in helping master of library science programs understand their goals and accomplishments as a school — and how to continually improve going forward.”

To earn reaccreditation, the iSchool provided a comprehensive written report and evidence documenting the work of the LIS program. Then independent, trained volunteers drawn from both academia and the information industry visited campus for several days to conduct an onsite evaluation. The iSchool’s site visit happened in October, when reviewers met with students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as the head of libraries, dean of the College of Letters & Science, and the UW–Madison provost.

While the final site visit happened in late 2022, the department didn’t officially receive word of reaccreditation until late January. Thank you so much to all who participated in the process, including our alumni, stakeholders, UW leadership, and members of the ALA Committee of Accreditation.

## Research Spotlight Gender Disparity in Academia



Chaoqun Ni

Whenever there’s breaking news about gender disparity in the workplace, iSchool Assistant Professor Chaoqun Ni is rarely surprised.

She has made gender disparity, particularly in academia in STEM fields, the center of her recent work.

What she has found isn’t pretty. Ni found that women scientists in academia don’t advance at the same rate as their male counterparts, often leading to retention issues. For the women who remain, Ni found there are significant gender differences in productivity, citation, funding, earnings, and awards across STEM fields. Ni also found that women receive an unequal distribution of authorship and are more likely to encounter authorship disputes and receive fewer authorship credits than they deserve. Finally Ni found women scientists are more likely to be penalized for being parents, in terms of research productivity and citation impact.

“While my work exposes broad gender disparity in scientific academia, I am pleased that it has been well received,” said Ni. “I am hopeful that my work can be used to develop and address disparities and level the playing field for women scientists.”

Learn more about Chaoqun Ni’s research and read some of her work by visiting [ischool.wisc.edu/blog/staff/ni-chaoqun/](https://ischool.wisc.edu/blog/staff/ni-chaoqun/)

## Best Wishes to Debra Shapiro

Congratulations to Debra Shapiro, who will retire from the iSchool on June 30. Shapiro (MA LIS '91) joined the department professionally in 2000 to work in continuing education services, and became the coordinator of the online master of arts program in 2006. Her previous experience included working as a reference and instruction librarian, photo archivist, picture researcher at Pleasant Company in Middleton, Wisconsin, and internet cataloger at the Scout Project. "I was attracted back to the iSchool because of my interest in teaching and developing online courses," said Shapiro.

Shapiro's many achievements include developing, redeveloping, and managing the school's website as the technology evolved from hand-coded HTML to a content management system and finally to WordPress, organizing the online master of arts "Bootcamp" orientation, and matching hundreds of students with practicum experiences. Additionally, Shapiro was integral in the creation of the iSchool core course — Information: Organization and Search, which she has taught each fall. Shapiro's work extended beyond the department with her involvement in shared governance at UW. She first served as an Academic Staff Assembly rep and then as a member of the Academic Staff Executive Committee from 2013–2021. Beyond the university, Shapiro has been active in professional associations, particularly the American Library Association's tech-

nology division (Library Information Technology Association, now Core).

"During my career I always tried to share practical advice with students to help them apply their unique talents in the profession, and I always encouraged students to join professional associations and attend conferences, for the valuable networking and a better view of the bigger picture."

When asked what she will miss most, Shapiro says, "My wonderful colleagues, of course, but also the feeling of optimism I have when I update a course for a new semester and think this version of the course is really going to work for students!" You will be missed, Deb!

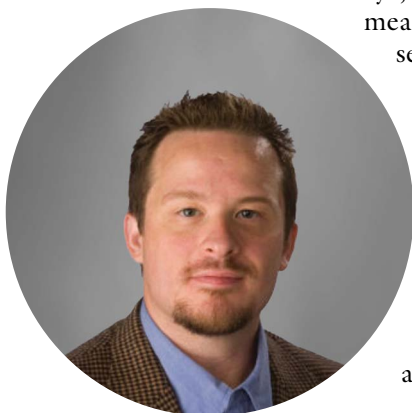


Interested in making a donation to the iSchool in Deb's honor? Visit [supportuw.org/giveto/ischool](https://supportuw.org/giveto/ischool). Please specify your gift is in her honor. All gifts will be used to support students attending conferences and professional events.

## Welcome Brendan Casey

Welcome to Brendan Casey, the new director of experiential learning, who joined the iSchool in December. In his role, he works to secure internships and other experiential opportunities for students. "This includes everything from generating opportunities by tapping into 20 years of government and industry connections, to portfolio reviews, mock interviewing, and industry-specific coaching."

When asked what his goals are for his new position, he says, "Aside from building meaningful industry and public sector partnerships within and for our programs, the obvious goal is to develop a cycle of well-placed alumni who engage with our students. Those students then go on to become well-placed alumni who engage with our students, and so on."



Casey's favorite part about his job is working with all of the students! He believes in the Wisconsin Idea and hopes to create meaningful connections with students to continue the cycle of producing outstanding iSchool alumni who can share their knowledge and expertise with others.

Before joining the iSchool, Casey was the managing director at digiCOMM Consulting and vice president at the Connected TV Marketing Association. He brings a strong background in UX, content consumption, media targeting, and digital communities. Additionally, Casey holds a PhD in interdisciplinary social science from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University, where his work was fully funded by the National Science Foundation and he has research experience in uncovering leadership within self-organizing virtual teams, information security policy, social network analysis, natural language processing, interactive television, sports telemetry, and more.

We are excited to expand experiential learning opportunities for students in the iSchool and know that with Casey at the helm, we are in great hands.

## Letter from CDIS Founding Director Tom Erickson

Dear iSchool Community,



Tom Erickson

**Three years ago, UW–Madison took a bold step to be a leader in the information age and created the School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences (CDIS).** The Information School (iSchool) is one of three founding departments of this new school.

When I was a UW student, the university fed my fascination for information and how things worked. In my role as founding director of CDIS, I am passionate about paying that forward through each new academic program, research advancement, and connection. Never am I doing this by myself, as we embrace the saying “alone isn’t where ideas thrive.”

As a first-of-its-kind collaboration, CDIS strives to use information and computing to reshape every industry and element of society. While CDIS is new, I recognize that your affiliation, history, and experience with UW is not. The iSchool has a unique and important history that has influenced where we are today and where we will go in the future. By coming together, our departments are intersecting in new ways that create a powerhouse of knowledge and innovation for the university, state, and beyond.

We have made significant progress in a short amount of time. Recent notable accomplishments for the iSchool, which build on the long-term success of the master’s in library and information studies and doctorate in information, include creating a new undergraduate major in information science and launching a master of science in information program. To support both our new and longstanding programs in the iSchool, we continue to invest in our faculty and staff and are excited by the hiring of 13 new and very talented individuals, including five new faculty!

Also underway is the construction of CDIS’s new home in the 1200 block of University Avenue. Designed to be the most sustainable facility on campus, the 328,000 square foot building will be a global hub for advancing research and instruction. Funded entirely through private resources, the \$260 million facility will bring all our departments under one roof when construction is completed in spring 2025. Not only will the facility provide much needed teaching space for our exponential growth, it will also magnify the power of discoveries across the university through spaces designed to foster collaboration and innovation.

The future of CDIS is bright, but it would not be possible without incredible people. I am grateful to all our alumni, donors, faculty, staff, students, and partners who have shown their support over the years.

Thank you for your support. **On, Wisconsin!**

**Tom Erickson ’80**

Founding Director  
School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences



Artist rendering of new CDIS building

## Student Spotlight

### - Alina Mukhortova (BS Information Science x'25)

Alina Mukhortova is a long way from home. She is an international student from Krasnodar, Russia, pursuing the iSchool's newly offered information science major. The information science major will be in addition to her bachelor of science degree in consumer behavior and marketplace studies in the School of Human Ecology. In addition to her busy academic schedule, Mukhortova is on the UW women's tennis team.

When Mukhortova came to UW, she knew that she wanted to double major to help build future career skills. She heard about the information science major from her athletic academic advisor and believed it would be an excellent way to improve her current knowledge of technology and its societal impact while learning new skills.

"I believe that society is constantly adapting and evolving around new technologies. Everyone should be more involved with technology, and it is super important to know how to correctly understand information and where it comes from," said Mukhortova.

Mukhortova is very pleased with how information science classes are going. She has taken two classes so far and particularly enjoyed taking Introduction to Digital Information, where she was able to build a website and develop "current technology skills that are needed to succeed."

While she doesn't know exactly what she will do post-graduation, Mukhortova has many interests and is considering a professional tennis career. Wherever her path takes her, she is confident that "the information science major will be beneficial to any career path."

## Student Profile

### -Corey Black (MA Library & Information Studies x'24)



Corey Black

Madison, Malawi, Beijing, Washington, DC. Corey Black's journey to the iSchool has been a bit of an adventure.

Like many Wisconsin kids, Black decided to attend her hometown school, UW-Madison. UW was a clear choice since she was chosen to be a Precollege Enrichment Opportunity

Program for Learning Excellence scholar while still in middle school, and the program offered not only full tuition but a supportive community and mentorship.

Black needed a student job and stumbled upon a paid internship through the Information Specialist Internship Program. The two-year position was designed to expose students to the field of library and information sciences and offered Black library placements in areas like special collections and reference. "I kind of stumbled upon it," she said. "I was looking for a paid student job, and this one ended up changing my life."

After graduating with degrees in Afro-American studies and English literature, it was time to leave the familiarity of Madison, and the next stop of Black's journey took her all the way to Beijing, where she worked as an English teacher. "I needed to explore and spread my wings. I loved China and teaching," said Black.

After returning to Madison, Black applied to the Peace Corps. She expected to be placed in Myanmar teaching but was excited to learn she would be doing something completely new: health care in Malawi. She left for Africa in 2016 and jumped right into the new challenge, learning a lot about health care, community building, and facilitation.

"There was a school with no library and an underutilized space that was frequently locked," she said. "I had the idea to build a children's library. The community had a strong desire to build something useful for the children, so there was good support. I worked with an NGO to find resources, and the library has now been opened."

After the Peace Corps, Black wasn't sure what was next. She took a job as a management analyst with the Health Resources Services Administration, but "it wasn't clicking." Luckily Black had mentors at UW who continued to check in on her. "I felt very supported. Kelli Hughes (head of user services at UW-Madison Libraries) checked in on me. And others from UW contacted me wanting updates and offering support." After some soul searching, Black realized it was time to go back to school and decided to pursue education in libraries and information. What began as a student internship grew into an interest and passion that now drives her career interests.

## Alumni Updates

**John Baken** (MA '90) is now Assistant Librarian at Little Big Horn College in Crow Agency, Montana. Little Big Horn College is a public two-year community college chartered by the Crow Tribe of Indians. The college is located in the town of Crow Agency, Montana.

**Pete Boll** (MA '94), commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve, has assumed command of Defense Logistics Agency Joint Reserve Force Distribution Support Team – Atlanta/Warner Robins Air Force Base, GA. In his civilian job, Commander Boll serves as head of monographic acquisitions and senior academic librarian at UW–Madison Memorial Library.

**Jessica Buettner** (MA '21) is the assistant director of development operations at Lawrence University.

**Connie Corcoran** (formerly Connie Tiffany) (MA '74) retired as the Tuolumne County, California, librarian in 2009. She recently published her first novel, *Illusions I Recall: Elegy for a Flower Child* which follows three women across half a century including a librarian, her preteen daughter and her best friend since college in the sixties.

**Charles Forrest** (MA '79) published *Eye-Popping, Show-Stopping Libraries: Trends and Insights from the AIA/ALA Library Building Awards*, co-authored with Anders C. Dahlgren, president of Library Planning Associates, Inc. The book recounts the relationship between the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the American Library Association (ALA) to establish the Library Building Awards and traces the development of the program over six decades.

**Susan Liu** (MA '01) is the librarian at International Theological Seminary in Los Angeles, California. She recently became a secretary of the Southern California Area Theological Library Association (SCATLA).

**Mary McCoy** (MA '05) has been appointed senior librarian of the library experience office for the Los Angeles Public Library. This office advocates for library workers and patrons by coordinating reimagined safety and social services to create safe and welcoming libraries for all.

**Melissa Villa Nicholas** (MA '12) recently published *Latinas on the Line: Invisible Information Workers in Telecommunications* (2022, Rutgers Press). The book received an honorable mention for the inaugural LaborTech Research Network Book Award. Her

upcoming book, *Data Borders: How Silicon Valley is Building an Industry around Immigrants* (UC Press), is available for pre-order and will be released in July.

**Katie Curler Shoults** (MA '07) and **Deborah Copperud** (MA '07) are celebrating the five-year anniversary of co-hosting the podcast *It's My Screen Time Too*, which critiques children's media and explores issues related to parenting, education, entertainment, and technology.

**Jennifer Younger** (MA '71, PhD '90) retired in June 2022 after a distinguished career in academic library leadership. Recognized for her achievements at the libraries where she served, as well as in numerous professional associations, she received the Information School Distinguished Alumna Award in 2010. She then served as the executive director of the Catholic Research Resources Alliance and as a member of the OCLC Board of Trustees.

## In Memoriam

**Clint East** passed away in December 2022.

East worked in The Information School for almost 35 years, from 1966 until his retirement in 2000. Upon his passing, Professor Emeritus and former iSchool Director Charles Bunge said, "I will be forever grateful for Clint's contributions to the school's continuing excellence for more than 30 years. I could not have done the job of director without his support, budget management skill, and savvy interaction with other offices and staff across the campus." Louise Robbins, also professor emeritus and former school director, said, "Clint ran a tight fiscal ship, and often would say NO until he thought and figured a bit and then often said YES. He was an invaluable advisor and colleague. He made many things work smoothly through his expertise. His shoes were hard to fill." East was 84 when he passed.



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## Join us in Chicago – Sunday, June 25

Are you attending the ALA Conference, or do you live in the Chicagoland area? Please join us for the UW-Madison iSchool Alumni, Students, and Friends Reception! Sunday, June 25 5:30–7 p.m., Quartino – 626 N. State Street, Chicago

