



SPRING 2025

Jottings

Photo by Andy Manis



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iSchool Director Alan Rubel

From the Director’s Chair: A new era at the Information School

Welcome to the spring 2025 edition of *Jottings*, the Information School’s semesterly newsletter for our community of alumni and friends.

As we head toward spring commencement celebrations, I am reflecting on my time as director, which will come to a close later this year. I’m honored to have led this department through the past three years, a time of growth and transformation for us. It has been a gratifying experience to work with such dedicated, talented colleagues to navigate these years together.

I also want to thank you, our alumni, for staying engaged with us and representing us well, no matter where you live or work.

In this edition of *Jottings*, you’ll see our state-of-the-art new home, Morgridge Hall, in its final stages of construction. This building will enable our students, faculty and staff to collaborate more closely with our colleagues in the School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences, and open up incredible opportunities for education and research in library and information science. (Mark your calendars for September 26, 2025, for the official ribbon-cutting event unveiling Morgridge Hall!)

In addition, you’ll find highlights of our faculty’s recent accomplishments, including fascinating research in human-computer interaction and a project exploring how UW–Madison’s libraries support research conducted across campus. You’ll learn about an MA Library & Information Studies alum serving UW–Madison’s vibrant musical community, and you’ll meet several talented students making waves across campus and beyond. We also celebrate the impactful career of retiring Professor Catherine Arnott-Smith.

I’m grateful to share these exciting stories with our alumni and friends around the country and world.

As always, I hope you enjoy this edition of *Jottings*!

Take care,

Alan Rubel
Professor and Director
Information School
University of Wisconsin–Madison

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Morgridge Hall takes shape, set to open in the fall

Construction on Morgridge Hall is in its final stages, with completion just months away. This state-of-the-art facility is rapidly transforming into a vibrant hub designed to foster innovation, collaboration, and discovery. We are eagerly finalizing plans to bring faculty, staff, and students into this remarkable space, which will serve as a cornerstone for advancing education and research in computer, data, and information sciences.

Project Milestones:

- Classes have been scheduled in Morgridge Hall for Fall 2025.
- Planning for grand opening celebrations are underway. Save the date for Morgridge Hall’s Ribbon-Cutting Celebration on Friday, September 26th. More information to come.
- Planning is underway for the Rebecca Blank Student Commons, known as The Blank Space. It will be a hub for student life, offering study, collaboration, and social spaces, plus support services from campus partners, offering wrap around support for students—all in one welcoming space.

Construction Progress:

- Morgridge Hall is projected for completion at the beginning of June 2025.
- Construction of the ground-floor café is underway, with equipment having arrived in March.
- The tower crane was removed at the end of January, signifying the transition from heavy exterior work to interior finishing tasks such as carpet installation, light fixtures, and tiling.
- Hundreds of pounds of dirt have been delivered to the upper patios to begin roofscaping.
- Approximately 250 craftspeople are on site per day, with a total of 586,000 total work hours put in place.

Sustainability:

Morgridge Hall was created to be the most sustainable academic building on campus. With several cutting-edge sustainability features, the building will be a hundred-year building, standing the test of time and adapting to future



All Morgridge Hall photos by Rachel Robey

sustainability innovations. Sustainability features include:

- 25% of the site area will be covered by planted areas including the courtyard, the terraces, and the green roof. Additionally, 82% of the plant species used are native to Wisconsin.
- Morgridge Hall has 359 solar panels that will produce 162,441 kWh per year, which is the equivalent of 182 average Wisconsin households.
- Morgridge Hall will be LEED Platinum certified. This is the highest level of achievement for green buildings worldwide.
- The building will have 35% better water use than federal standards with a system to capture stormwater for plant irrigation.



Space dedicated for student organizations to meet on the second floor, located within the Commons.

To learn more about Morgridge Hall, visit cdis.wisc.edu/building.



The CDIS Learning Center on floor 2, part of the student ecosystem alongside the CDIS Commons, a state-of-the-art library and student collaboration space.

Research spotlight: Campus libraries play integral role in research at UW–Madison, collaborative study by iSchool and UW Libraries reveals

The libraries at UW–Madison serve as critical support systems for the vast amount of scholarly research conducted across campus. But how well do their collections truly align with the research needs of the campus community?

The answer: quite well, according to new award-winning research led by iSchool **Assistant Professor Chaoqun Ni**. Working alongside **PhD student Weiye Guand Xiyang Mi** and **Anlin Yang** from UW–Madison Libraries, Ni leveraged citation data to reveal insights about how well the libraries' resources support faculty and student scholarship. The project recently won the "Best of Core Forum" award from the American Library Association (ALA).

The work also highlights the growing partnership between the iSchool and UW–Madison Libraries in research and operations, as the

iSchool prepares to move into its new home in Morgridge Hall later this year. In addition, it shows the iSchool faculty continue to conduct cutting-edge research in the field of library science.

Investigating collection alignment

The study is an example of science-of-science research, which analyzes publication data to uncover patterns within the research enterprise. Ni, a leading scholar in the science-of-science field, applied her expertise by analyzing over 1.6 million references cited in more than 51,000 papers published by UW–Madison scholars between 2018 and 2022. Ni, Gu, and the team identified significant alignments, as well as some gaps, between the university's research output and its library collections.

Overall, 72% of the references cited by university researchers

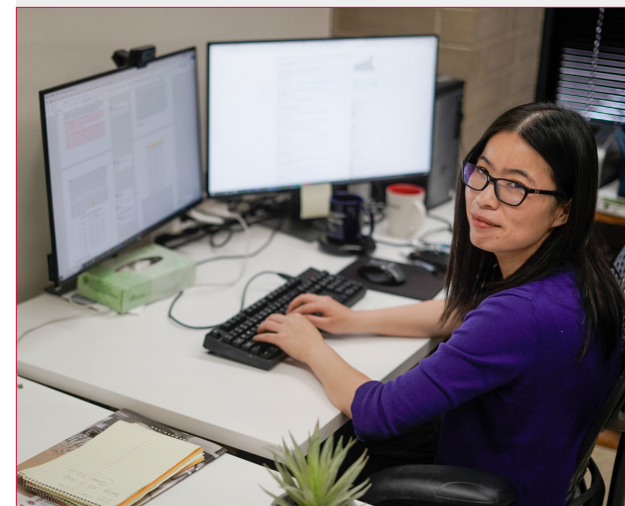
during the time frame studied were available through UW–Madison Libraries. The university provided particularly strong coverage for journal articles, with nearly 95% of cited journal articles accessible

through the libraries. These top-line numbers illustrate the crucial role libraries on campus can play for researchers, from graduate students to senior faculty.

Disciplinary disparities

The study also revealed notable disparities in library coverage across academic fields. Chemistry had the highest coverage, with 89% of cited references available through the library, while Arts and Humanities had significantly lower coverage rates—around 20%. These differences might partially result from factors specific to disciplinary publishing and citation practices, including discipline-specific citation requirements. Such variations suggest the need not only for targeted collection development strategies but also for improvements in indexing and database inclusivity to better serve diverse disciplinary research practices.

The two fields with the most citations in the data—clinical medicine and biomedical research—each had more than 80% coverage across the library system. Researchers in these fields produced a remarkable 585,000 citations available at UW–Madison Libraries between 2018 and 2022.



Assistant Professor Chaoqun Ni in her iSchool office

The research also found that newer publications were more likely to be covered by the libraries. Items published after 1990 had over 70% coverage, while publications from between 1951 and 1980, for example, had about a 50% chance of being covered. This trend highlights the challenges of maintaining access to older, yet still relevant, resources.

Implications and impact

The work has real ramifications for library collection management at UW–Madison and beyond. By identifying gaps in coverage, particularly for certain disciplines and resource types, the research provides data-driven lessons that can guide strategic decisions in library acquisitions and budgeting. This evidence-based approach ensures that library resources remain a vital support system for academic research and innovation.

Beyond UW–Madison, the study offers a replicable model for other universities looking to evaluate and improve their own library collections. Ni’s work provides a model for data-driven decision-making

in academic libraries, reinforcing her impact on both library science and information policy. As academic research continues to evolve, university libraries must adapt to ensure they meet the changing needs of scholars.

Recognizing excellence in library research

The team’s research was recognized at the ALA’s Core Forum, where it won the “Best of Core Forum” award for its insightful contribution to library science. This recognition underscores the significance of their work in strengthening the role of university libraries in academic research.

As UW–Madison continues to foster a culture of research excellence, studies like this serve as a critical tool for ensuring that library resources evolve alongside scholarly advancements. By aligning collections with research needs, libraries can maximize their impact and continue to serve as indispensable pillars of scholarship.

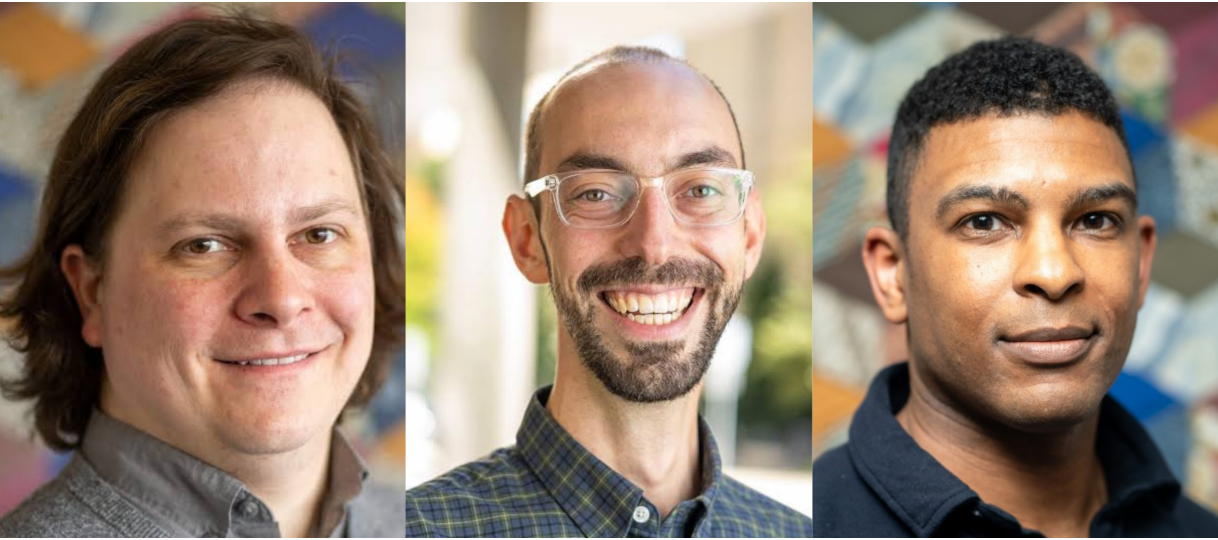
Quick hits

- **Digital Scholarship Hub:** The UW–Madison Libraries are building a forthcoming Digital Scholarship Hub to be located in the 2nd floor of Memorial Library that will be an interdisciplinary, collaborative space for campus researchers at every stage of their careers. The core planning team for the hub includes Carrie Kruse, Lee Konrad, and Cameron Cook from the Libraries as well as **Nikki Wiessinger** and **Megan Adams** from the iSchool. The iSchool has a key role connecting rapid advancements in computation and artificial intelligence to catalyze research and discovery across disciplines.
- **Hiring:** The iSchool is excited to welcome **Patrick Leepport**, an expert in the area of academic and university libraries, to the position of Teaching Faculty III. **Bradley Bryant** will also be joining us as Teaching Faculty with a focus on cybersecurity.
- **iSchool Library:** Our library staff has identified and organized items for the on-site collections in our future home, Morgridge Hall, including highly usable materials for iSchool and other CDIS courses.
- **PhD program:** We welcomed 14 prospective PhD students for a visit to Madison on February 21, in which they connected with faculty, staff and students and learned about all the

iSchool has to offer. We are excited that 8 have already accepted offers to attend the iSchool!

- **Trek visit:** Accompanied by UX Professor of Practice **Leah Ujda**, students from the student organization Design Interactive visited the Trek headquarters in Waterloo, WI, in March to learn about product design and connect with industry professionals.
- **RED Talk:** On April 8, UW–Madison alum **Brent Seales** delivered a CDIS RED Talk (co-sponsored by the iSchool) in which he explored how cutting-edge technology is unlocking history’s lost texts.

Research roundup



L to R: Assistant Professors Jacob Thebault-Spieker, Adam Rule, and Corey Jackson

Information School faculty and graduate students conduct research across a broad range of interrelated fields. Some recent publications by iSchool scholars have come in the domains of human-computer interaction, information ethics, and health informatics. As technology continues to shape individuals and societies in profound ways, research at the intersection of information, technology, and people will play a crucial role in understanding and addressing the opportunities and challenges impacting us all.

Below you will find a curated selection of recent publications by our faculty and graduate students at conferences and in journals across disciplines.

Assistant Professor Corey Jackson and several co-authors presented research at the annual Conference on Computer-supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) in Costa Rica on how language used by participants in citizen science projects can evolve. Their research on “lexical entrainment” shows that as volunteers engage, their language adapts, fostering deeper integration and collaboration.

PhD student Ellie Jeong, with Jackson, also presented a paper at CSCW entitled “How Personal Value Orientations Influence on Behaviors in Digital Citizen Science.” The study examined how personal values influence people’s motivations, participation styles, and interpretations of their contributions within citizen science platforms. These insights help illuminate how social dynamics and individual values shape participation

in social computing systems, offering design implications for creating more engaging platforms aligned with users’ values.

Assistant Professor Jacob Thebault-Spieker co-authored two studies presented at CSCW with **PhD students Yaxuan Yin** and **Zihan Gao**. With Yin, one paper examined microtasking by users in collaborative platforms like OpenStreetMap, finding it boosts efficiency but reinforces contribution inequality. With Gao, another study analyzed how influential users migrate after social media bans, revealing shifts in online discourse and potential harm. These insights can help refine moderation policies and crowdsourcing systems.

Assistant Professor Adam Rule and co-authors published two articles on the promise and pitfalls of using Electronic Health Record (EHR) metadata to improve healthcare delivery. In the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, Rule and co-authors presented a novel framework demonstrating how EHR metadata can be used to study teamwork, workflow, and cognitive workload in clinical environments. In a second article published in the *Journal of Hospital Medicine*, Rule and a clinical co-author cautioned that any effort to use EHR metadata to measure care delivery should engage clinicians to help interpret and act on the data.

Professor Alan Rubel and **PhD student Martin Kaehrle** published a new article in the journal *Philosophy & Technology* on the ethical implications of sharing wildlife location data. Using Snowy Owls as a case study, they argue that digital

platforms should restrict information that could endanger animals or ecosystems, balancing public interest with ethical responsibilities. This work gained media attention, with Wisconsin Public Radio covering the research in the context of Snowy Owls migrating through Wisconsin.

These studies demonstrate the iSchool’s commitment to tackling pressing challenges through interdisciplinary research, shaping more effective and inclusive digital environments.

Continuing Education team offers a range of learning and community-building opportunities

The iSchool is proud to offer a variety of continuing education opportunities for library and information professionals looking to expand their knowledge and skills. Below are some upcoming conferences and online courses that we hope our alumni and friends will consider attending.

CONFERENCES

Upgrade: Enhancing Library Services with Technology

- **October 6-7, 2025 | Madison, WI and hybrid**
This conference explores the latest advancements in digital collections, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and more. Registration for Upgrade will open in June.

Back in Circulation: A Conference for Managers & Staff in Access & Circulation Services

- **November 13-14, 2025 | Virtual**
Focused on customer service, staff training, e-reserves, and management strategies, this conference is an excellent opportunity to share insights and learn from peers. Registration will open over the summer.

NEW UPCOMING ONLINE COURSES

First Amendment Audits and Situational Awareness for Front-line Staff

- **June 2 - 29**
Understand the First Amendment and its application to libraries. Learn strategies for how to professionally respond to challenges, with an emphasis on improved customer service and de-escalation techniques.

Human-Centered Design Thinking for an Ethical and Accessible Digital World

- **June 30 - August 2**
Join iSchool PhD student Srijan Pandey and explore the principles of Human-Centered Design and their real-world applications.

Drive Library Engagement with Adult Programming

- **July 14 - August 24**
Increase library usage and drive foot traffic to your library by creating or enhancing your adult programs.

Closing the Gaps with Diversity Audits

- **July 28 - August 24**
Explore ways to build inclusive and representative collections and services in your library with iSchool PhD student Caitlin Tobin.

Get Involved

Whether you’re looking to enhance your expertise, engage with peers, or contribute to discussions shaping the future of library services, the UW–Madison iSchool provides opportunities for professional growth. We invite our alumni to register for conferences and courses that interest them. Register for conferences and courses at ischool.wisc.edu/continuing-education or get in touch by emailing ce-info@ischool.wisc.edu.

Professor Catherine Arnott Smith retires after distinguished career at UW–Madison

Information School **Professor Catherine Arnott Smith**, who has served on the iSchool faculty since 2006, is retiring from the university after the spring semester. “She was the first faculty member hired with a focus on medical informatics and medical information, and has dedicated her career to research and teaching that helps expand access to health information.”

“Early in my career, I noticed that many healthcare problems are also information science problems,” Arnott Smith said.

With a diverse academic and professional background, Arnott Smith obtained her PhD after working as a medical librarian for a leading reinsurance company. As the digital age has transformed the collection and availability of health information, Arnott Smith has explored how consumers and patients interact with digital medical resources, from patient portals to online bulletin boards, in public libraries, archives and college disability student services. One big motivator throughout her career, she said, has been “patient advocacy,” ensuring patients and their loved ones have access to and understanding of the critical health information they need to make sound decisions.

Reflecting on her two decades at UW–Madison, Arnott Smith singled out **Kristin Eschenfelder**, former iSchool director, for being “super supportive from the very beginning,” and “championing” the integration of medical informatics into the iSchool research landscape. She also expressed gratitude for the ability to work on a campus with a top medical school, an atmosphere that enables medical informatics researchers to thrive.

Regarding teaching, she explained, “My warmest feelings are about discovering that I could bring my research into a class that I thought at the outset would not be possible for me to teach. That’s how I discovered that medical information actually has a huge potential audience.”

When Arnott Smith started teaching, she said, “I always envisioned training students who would go work in hospital libraries and academic medical centers, and work at Epic doing medical computing—and I’ve had plenty of students do that.” However, she added, “What I was pleasantly surprised by was that there was actually a lot of interest from the folks who want to do public librarianship, because in fact, the public library is where most people look for medical information. And if I hadn’t been in a situation where I was teaching future public librarians, I would never have understood that.”

The iSchool is grateful for Professor Catherine Arnott Smith’s dedication to research and education on these important societal issues. By helping bring medical informatics to the iSchool, she opened new areas of research that current and future faculty and students will pursue long into the future.

Thank you, Professor Catherine Arnott Smith!



PhD Student spotlight: Yinka Ajibola explores the African information technology landscape



iSchool PhD Student Yinka Ajibola

After coming to the United States from Nigeria on a soccer scholarship and completing his undergraduate education, **Yinka Ajibola PhDx'25** had a choice to make: "Do I want to pursue academics further, or do I want to go the sports route?" he asked himself.

Ajibola, motivated by his father's work as a media officer for the United Nations in Africa, had developed a keen interest in how emerging technologies were harnessed on his home continent—and how those technologies affected the political and media environments in those countries. He decided to pursue those interests further with a double master's in Political Science and Information Communication Sciences at Ball State University—and subsequently, by pursuing his PhD at the UW–Madison Information School.

"Africa is largely still a developing continent," Ajibola said. "So I was asking, 'How can I make a difference, whether big or small, in how these countries can effectively advance the use of information and communication technologies?'" One answer he found: through innovative research conducted at the iSchool.

Ajibola's journey shows how the iSchool PhD program supports young researchers, helps them find their niche, and empowers them to conduct impactful research at the intersection of technology and humanity.

Studying the digital era in Africa

Digital technology is growing rapidly across Africa, but this development can be both exciting and challenging, Ajibola said. While many countries on the continent have seen some form of technology adoption, such as mobile payment systems, the breadth of technological adoption remains uneven. According to the World Bank, "Africa's technological landscape is characterized by disparities, with certain regions experiencing rapid advancements while others lag."

The unequal adoption of digital technologies has led to the creation and implementation of haphazard technology policies across different African countries, Ajibola said. Last year, Ajibola co-authored a scholarly book chapter entitled "Digital Ecosystem in Africa: Unfolding Regulatory Practices, Gaps, and Trends". In it, the authors described the current digital landscape in Africa as shaped by "reactionary ad hoc policy strategies" and recommended more targeted, localized technology policies across Africa in the future, with the aim of "support[ing] the optimal participation of African countries in the digital revolution."

Ajibola offered the current example of artificial intelligence policies on the continent, saying that the emerging AI policies are heavily influenced by the European Union's 2024 framework. He noted that while some African policies draw well-founded inspiration from the EU, it is important to avoid the "Brussels Effect", in which EU regulations can have disproportionate influence on global policies.

"The EU's policy can end up basically dictating other countries' policies, which can make them both unoriginal and inapplicable in other places," he said, given how significantly the historical, economic, and social contexts differ between the EU and African countries. As a solution, each country or region's AI policy should be tailored to the unique context to which it applies, Ajibola suggested.

The African gig economy

Within this context, Ajibola's dissertation work zooms in on the nuances of one group in Kenya that relies heavily on modern technology: gig workers. Specifically, he is focused on gig translators in Kenya, examining their use of translation technologies and the ways in which Kenya's tech policies impact their agency, their work and their well-being. While traditional indicators of development often look at metrics like Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Ajibola said the human elements hidden underneath these statistics are often overlooked.

It's important to account for human well-being, Ajibola said, because technologies can function as they are supposed to, but if they harm the health or autonomy of those who use them, it is fair to question if these uses are ethical.

"The unique perspective of my research is that I approach it from a human development perspective, prioritizing the well-being and agency of individuals as gig workers," Ajibola explained. "Instead of only emphasizing the technology, I also put the individual at the center." To this end, he hopes that his research will be harnessed by policymakers in African countries like Kenya to better tailor their technology policies toward their populations with human well-being in mind.

Finding community at the iSchool

With about a year remaining in his PhD program, Ajibola reflected on some of the influential people who have guided him along the way. He credited his advisor, **Assistant Professor Reginold Royston**, for engaging in thoughtful conversations about his research. "Those conversations really tend to unblock things for me," he said. "Professor Royston has had an immense influence."

Ajibola also expressed gratitude to iSchool **Professor and Director Alan Rubel** for always being willing to talk

through philosophical concepts involved in Ajibola's work, such as agency and autonomy (philosophy is an area of expertise for Rubel). "He has been a very key person for me, both through being on my committee and through the wonderful conversations we've had," Ajibola said. He also thanked **Adeola Agoke**, a mentor in the African Cultural Studies department, in which Ajibola is completing his PhD minor. (Agoke directs the African Languages Program and serves as an assistant teaching professor.)

Finally, Ajibola spoke highly of the cohort who entered the iSchool's PhD program alongside him. "My cohort is full of amazing folks," he said, specifically mentioning **Jacquie Kociubuk**, and **Tallal Ahmad**. Most PhD students would agree that the challenges of graduate school can be softened with a supportive community of friends and colleagues. That's what Ajibola found at the iSchool.

MS Information student Jinghao Zhou leads pioneering research at interdisciplinary School of Nursing lab

Ever since moving across the world from Chongqing, China, to attend UW–Madison for his bachelor's degree, **Jinghao Zhou MSx'26** has been impressed by the university and its home city. "I quickly learned that Madison is a beautiful place, even though it can be cold," he said. But the real draw for Zhou was the strength and breadth of research happening at the UW. "So many people here are supportive of and devoted to research," he added, including faculty and fellow graduate students at the iSchool.

As an undergraduate, Zhou double majored in Psychology with a Statistics Certificate, assisting with interview-based research in the Department of Pediatrics involving adolescents' experiences on social media. He appreciated how this work translated effectively into practice, and he fell in love with research along the way—especially research with a focus on human well-being. At the same time, he still wanted to fill what he called a "knowledge gap" regarding more data-driven methods, which can open new research avenues.

He found that a perfect program existed at UW–Madison that would enable him to continue his education and conduct further research at the intersection of data analysis and human well-being: the iSchool's MS Information program.

Research at the METAR Lab

Quickly after enrolling in the MS program in fall of 2024, Zhou

landed a position as a Graduate Research Assistant in the METAR Lab (short for Metabolic Environment Targeting Age Reversal) at the UW–Madison School of Nursing. The interdisciplinary lab, run by faculty members from the College of Engineering and the School of Nursing, explores how different aspects of a person's work and home environments can impact heart and metabolic health. Their long-term goal: catalyzing the creation of healthier human environments that promote longevity and well-being. In other words, protecting working hearts.

At the METAR Lab, Zhou is leading an innovative project to identify the social and environmental factors that affect heart and metabolic health in construction workers and truck drivers. "These workers typically age more rapidly than other types of workers," Zhou said. "If we can identify the factors driving disparities in occupational health, future researchers and practitioners can design effective interventions, like



MS Information student Jinghao Zhou

intelligent workplace systems or policy reforms from local governments, to protect worker health proactively,” Zhou said.

The project is currently in the data collection phase, and as a graduate student, Zhou is overseeing a group of undergraduate researchers, applying project management and data collection skills he has picked up in the iSchool’s MS program. Zhou said he also appreciates working with researchers from a range of fields and backgrounds, including his supervisor **Wan-Chin Kuo**, an assistant professor in the School of Nursing and one of the lab’s principal investigators. “It’s rewarding to be able to present my opinions and thoughts to the senior researchers, whether they agree or disagree,” Zhou said, “because either way, it allows me to improve.”

Zhou is the latest MS Information student to join a growing group using skills taught at the iSchool to enhance cross-disciplinary projects that aim to improve human health; for instance, **Rahil Virani MSx’25** has helped manage and analyze data for the Wisconsin Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center. Students like Zhou and Virani are using their skills to uncover key insights about health issues that touch countless lives, all while bolstering the research enterprise at UW–Madison, one of the top research universities in the nation.

The iSchool experience

Around the halfway point in his MS program, Zhou has already honed several skills at the iSchool that have made him a better

researcher and collaborator. “The Information School faculty are all very knowledgeable,” he noted. “It’s quite a place to be able to find myself.” He singled out two specific courses and faculty members that have been standouts for him.

“I took a project management course [LIS 615] with Adam Rule, who is my favorite professor at the iSchool,” Zhou said. The course has equipped him with new techniques, tools and technologies that have proven useful in his work at the METAR Lab. “Part of my role in the lab is managing students from a wide range of academic backgrounds, which can be difficult at times,” Zhou said. “I have already been using a lot of project management skills and tools I learned from that class in my research.”

He also expressed gratitude to **Assistant Professor Corey Jackson**, whose course in user experience (UX) design also left a lasting impact on Zhou’s approach to research. “This course taught me how to approach research from the participants’ perspective,” Zhou said, “and gave me a lot of insights into the common pitfalls to avoid in the research process,” from a UX point of view.

The MS Information program has enabled Zhou to fill knowledge gaps and deepen his research skillset. His experience shows how the iSchool serves as an effective launchpad for young scholars to pursue work that contributes to the well-being of people, communities, and society.

Information Science Student Anna Staresinic embraces every opportunity at UW–Madison

If **Anna Staresinic x’25** had to sum up her journey at UW–Madison in one word, it would be “well-rounded.”

“The idea of being well-rounded has followed me throughout my life. UW stood out to me because it’s such a well-rounded university. There’s a balance between nature and city life, and though it’s a large school, there are pockets of eclectic communities everywhere. I’ve tried to keep my experience well-rounded in the way that the school and the people are well-rounded,” says Staresinic.

Originally from Pittsburgh, Staresinic is majoring in Information Science and Data Science, with certificates in Computer Sciences and Sustainability. Her academic journey through the School of Computer, Data & Information Science reflects how CDIS empowers students to blend technology, data, and creativity to tackle complex challenges.

“I like to be multidisciplinary. I’m never happy just focusing on one thing. I have so many different interests and I would not have been satisfied with my college experience if I didn’t get to put my hands in all the different pots that I’m interested in. I’m always trying to get involved with new things and see what else there is to learn on this campus,” says Staresinic.



Information Science major Anna Staresinic

A Hands-On Approach to Technology

Staresinic has a passion for robotics, which began in middle school with competitions through FIRST Robotics, an organization that prepares young people for the future through a suite of inclusive, team-based robotics programs. She started out working with Lego robots and then moved on to an all-girls team out of Carnegie Mellon University in high school where she began gaining experience with the mechanical, software, and design aspects of robotics.

“Seeing the code I’m writing in a physical test rig or robot is very rewarding. Robotics allows you to get the hardware aspect of things as well as the software side,” says Staresinic.

A Passion for Computing and Information Science

In high school, Staresinic honed her programming skills, deepening her passion for computing. But it wasn’t until she arrived at UW–Madison that she discovered the breadth of opportunities within the School of Computer, Data & Information Sciences (CDIS). Through coursework in data science and information science, she found a way to merge analytical thinking with creative problem-solving, shaping a truly interdisciplinary education.

“A lot of the information science classes allow for creative applications of things you learn in your data science or computer science classes. I’ve gotten to take a bunch of interesting classes about design, creating an interesting user interface, and how we can keep people at the center of technology creations,” says Staresinic.

CDIS’s flexible structure enabled Staresinic to bridge multiple disciplines, reinforcing connections across her studies.

“Right now, I’m taking a course on human-computer interaction, which counts as both a Computer Sciences and Information Science course. It draws on a lot of concepts I learned from LIS 470, which is a design class. In both courses, we look at different software and technology applications and understand how technology is impacting the people working with it. The courses are all so interconnected which is really interesting to me,” says Staresinic.

One of her favorite courses, CS 320: Data Science Programming, introduced her to new data science applications and essential industry tools.

“Through that class, I got hands-on experience with GitLab, which is a critical skill for software engineers,” says Staresinic.

Promoting Sustainability

Amongst her technological pursuits, Staresinic is also pursuing a certificate in sustainability. She was inspired to work toward a sustainability certificate after joining Re-Wear It, a student organization that promotes conscious consumerism and sustainable fashion. The organization regularly holds bi-weekly clothing swaps. Staresinic currently serves as clothing swap chair.

Staresinic serves as president of WASB. The 65-person organization helps encourage students’ passion for the school and create strong ties between the university and its students. One of her favorite memories as part of WASB was hosting the All-Campus Party for students and seeing its impact.

“You can give a student the simplest thing like a granola bar and a bagel and it can make their day. Things like that remind me that you can do things that make a difference even if it’s something small,” says Staresinic.

As president, she also sits on the Alumni Advisory Council, connecting with UW–Madison graduates worldwide. One of the most valuable lessons she’s learned from alumni? No one has it all figured out.

“I’ve learned it’s okay if you don’t like your career or if you are leaving college and don’t have a job lined up. If you are smart, if you care, and you’re driven, you’ll figure it out,” says Staresinic.

Among the many lessons Staresinic has learned, one stands out: embarrassment is a choice.

“Something is only embarrassing if you make it embarrassing. College is full of too many experiences and opportunities to say no to things out of fear of embarrassment or shame. Go after what you want and explore all your interests; you never know what doors it may open up,” says Staresinic.

Looking Ahead

Graduating this spring, Staresinic will be joining Oceaneering International, a subsea engineering and applied technology company, as a software engineer.

“I can walk away from my time at UW feeling very fulfilled. I’ve gotten involved with so many things that I knew I was interested in and things that I had no idea I was passionate about that I will carry with me for the rest of my life,” says Staresinic.

Alumna spotlight: Multitalented Cat Richmond makes music possible as ensemble librarian at UW–Madison

People from many different journeys come to the Information School,” **Cat Richmond MA’23** observed, noting that she represents a case in point: “My background is largely as a musician.”

A trained singer with graduate degrees in voice and opera, Richmond has performed all over the United States, including San Francisco, New York, and Alabama—and overseas, including a particularly formative trip to Germany. On that trip, Richmond visited the Bach Archives in Leipzig, sparking an intense fascination with the world of musical libraries and archives.

“It was this moment of total fusion between doing what I do as a performer and experiencing these beautifully preserved documents and the archives themselves, which was very moving,” she said. “That was a big discovery moment, I think, for me to see both worlds combined.”

In 2023, Richmond completed her MA in Library & Information Studies alongside an MA in Historical Musicology, a combination uniquely suited to prepare her for the role she currently holds. As Music Ensemble Librarian at UW–Madison’s Mead Witter School of Music, Richmond leans on her iSchool training to effectively preserve, organize, and distribute music in digital and physical formats for talented musicians in an array of university orchestras, string ensembles, concert bands, and choirs.

Soon after starting that role, she also completed a fellowship with the Library of Congress, helping to build and refine an immense database of historical copyright cards (including original music) held by the U.S. Copyright Office—all while occasionally continuing to perform opera. In finding her place at the intersection of music and information, Richmond is composing a career that resonates with both her artistic and academic sensibilities.

An ‘exciting experience’ with the Library of Congress

In early 2024, a few months after starting her full-time role at the UW, Richmond learned she had been chosen for the selective Library of Congress (LOC) Junior Fellows Program, collaborating on projects for the world’s largest library. The LOC is the home of the U.S. Copyright Office, where Richmond’s work during the fellowship was focused. “It was such an exciting experience,” she said.

Her project involved helping develop and refine a comprehensive database of copyright cards known as the Copyright Public Records System, particularly cards involving

Cat Richmond, Music Ensemble Librarian at the Mead Witter School of Music at UW–Madison. Photo courtesy of Richmond



original music. “They have digitized their physical copyright card catalog, and so they’re building a database so that people can search it more easily,” she said, adding that her role was primarily “fixing metadata.” This means she was sifting through old copyright cards of musical pieces created by some of the world’s greatest musicians, including Ella Fitzgerald.

Making music possible

As Music Ensemble Librarian, Richmond oversees three separate libraries within the School of Music. “We supply the music for all the performing ensembles, so we have the orchestra library, the band library and the choir library,” she explained. “Each library holds very different things.”

In her role, Richmond works frequently with copyright and metadata, alongside 10 student librarians. Together, they ensure troves of musical materials are preserved, organized, and accessible for the musicians who need them. Throughout her work, Richmond harnesses foundational skills she learned at the iSchool to help make music possible across campus.

But perhaps her favorite part of the job, Richmond said, is “mentoring and passing on knowledge to my student librarians.”

“I really love being able to work with a team of librarians on projects, even when they’re grueling projects like rehousing music,” she added. “It’s very exciting to put together a team who is passionate about this work. Some of them want to continue in this specific ensemble librarianship path, and I’ve even got to write recommendations for students applying for similar roles, including with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra.”

Richmond’s guidance for aspiring library and information professionals: don’t underestimate the breadth of these fields. “There are so many more paths than I thought would be available, whether you’re interested in databases or physical collections or digital collections,” she said. “That’s something I didn’t even realize coming into this career field.”

Alumni updates

Laurie Magee MA’79 is now serving on the Laguna Vista Library Board in Laguna Vista, Texas.

Antonia Houston MA’81 is the longest-serving employee at the Blodgett Memorial Library in Fishkill NY, where she serves as the Local History Librarian. She has worked at the library since 1983 (over 41 years).

Susan (Blakeley) Manalli MA’81 has retired as Head of Technical Services at Anderson County Library System, Anderson, South Carolina. Her accomplished career included stints as a secondary school Spanish teacher, media specialist, educational sales representative, and public librarian.

Jennie Woodfield MA’90 retired from the Massey University Library in New Zealand, serving as Library Web Content Leader at the time of her retirement. She had worked at the library in various roles for 32 years.

Robin Rice MA’91 is proud that the Library Research Support section of University of Edinburgh Library won the Outstanding Library Team of the Year Award from the Times Higher Education. Members of the team (including Rice) attended a gala in Birmingham to collect their award in November 2024.

Heidi Hansen MA’94 is now a full professor at Bemidji State University in Minnesota, specializing in mathematics education. She also supervises the Math Help Center, housed in the university’s AC Clark Library.

Rachel Vagts MA’97 was named Director of Special Collections and Archives at Denver Public Library, leading a new subdivision at the library consisting of four departments: Archives Services, Museum Services, Research Services and Technical Services.

Heather McClure MA’02, a librarian and archivist at the Fray Angelico Chavez

History Library at the New Mexico History Museum, successfully led a major digitization grant project. Thanks to funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the voluminous document and photographic collection of Southwest archaeologist Edgar L. Hewett is now available online at the New Mexico History Museum Digital Collections.

Nichole Fromm MA’04 is now Collections Manager of the archives and library at Holy Wisdom Monastery, an ecumenical Benedictine community in Middleton, Wisconsin.

Amanda Moss Struckmeyer MA’05 is publishing a book with ALA Editions on programming for tweens, teens, and families centered around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Sarah Taylor MA’08 recently accepted a role as Collections and Resource Sharing Librarian at University of Wisconsin–Green Bay. Taylor had previously worked as the Acquisitions and Serials Assistant at the same location.

Veronica Wells MA’08 accepted a role as Associate Dean of Learning & Research at Appalachian State University’s University Libraries in Boone, North Carolina.

Brendan McCarty MA’09 was recently hired to be the Adult / Teen Librarian at the Kingsessing Library, a neighborhood branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia. Kingsessing, a classic Carnegie design, originally built in 1919, is reopening in April 2025 after a two and a half year remodeling project.

John Kromer MA’11 was named a Fellow of the Special Libraries Association (SLA). Fellowship in SLA is bestowed on active SLA members in recognition of past and present service, as well as future contributions to the association and the profession.

Cristina Springfield MA’11 recently received tenure as a Professor/Librarian at Mt. San Antonio College, a large community college in Walnut, California.

Maegan Coffin Heindel MA’12—currently the Library Services Coordinator for the Madison Metropolitan School District—published a book in June 2024 with ALA Editions. Prepared Libraries, Empowered Teams: A Workbook for Navigating Intellectual Freedom Challenges Together was co-written by current AASL President Becky Calzada and fellow UW–Madison alum Val Edwards.

Johanna Boyle MA’17 accepted a role as Collection Management Librarian at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan.

Amy Castro (Conley) MA’17 is now serving as Electronic Resources & Instruction Librarian at Touro University California after previously serving as Library Access Services & Instruction Librarian at the same library. She also supports the College of Pharmacy, School of Nursing, and Graduate School of Education in both roles.

Timothy George Connolly MA’18 started a new consultancy in January 2025 with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Kyiv, Ukraine, as Head of Continuity-of-Operations Planning. His work focuses on helping support WFP’s ability to provide essential humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable, especially those living in the communities along the front lines of fighting. It involves lots of data analysis and best practices research, so he is putting my MLIS to good use.

Ellen Faletti MA’18 was hired as the archivist at the Honolulu Museum of Art in Honolulu, Hawai’i.



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