A Word from the Chair

We entered 2011 with wonderful news. The Department of Information Studies earned full accreditation from the American Library Association (ALA).

Dean Peter Bloniarz and I learned of the accreditation at the ALA mid-winter meeting in January. The hard work and dedication of our faculty, staff, and students played a major role in our department's outstanding achievement.

Our program continues to grow, for enrollment remains strong, with more than 200 students enrolled each year. As the information environment evolves, we will continue to advance to meet new challenges, while embracing and honoring our rich history.

Our traditional spring graduation ceremonies took place on May 14 in the Performing Arts Center on the Uptown Campus. It was the third year that the College of Computing and Information has held a consolidated graduation program, where the baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral graduates from the Computing, Informatics, and Information Studies Departments are jointly honored. About fifty of our students received their MSIS degrees that day. Congratulations all.

While some of our students are graduating, others continue to matriculate. Allow me to acknowledge the work of Susan A. Carver, Kristin Charles-Scaringi, and Kun Lin. These three individuals worked on developing iConnect, a capstone project connected with an independent study course focused on marketing and development. I hope our alumni and friends find this communication useful and informative.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of Kathy Gurney, the department’s long-serving secretary. While she officially retired in January, Kathy has been able to return to the IST office on a part-time basis. We are delighted to have her continue to be the face of the program in Draper 113 and appreciate her dedication and high-quality administrative support.

Best Regards.
Dr. Philip Eppard
Chair of Information Studies

President Obama Appoints MLS Alumna

Susan Hildreth, the current director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), got her start at the University at Albany's library science program.

Hildreth, who received her Master of Library Science (MLS) from Albany in 1973, was appointed to her national post by President Barack Obama in January 2011. She will serve a four-year term with IMLS, which is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums.

“It is an honor to serve,” said Hildreth. Hildreth’s impressive resume includes such positions as Seattle City Librarian, California State Librarian, San Francisco Public Library Deputy Director, and San Francisco City Librarian. Her career began at the Edison Township Library in New Jersey where she served as a branch librarian. She then moved to California where she worked as the Sacramento Public Library Deputy Library Director, the Placer County Head Librarian, and the Benicia Public Library Director. An active member of the American Library Association (ALA), Hildreth was president of the Public Library Association (PLA) in 2006.

Always interested in public libraries, Hildreth has served on the local and the state levels. Her new position allows her to work in the library field on the federal level, which she sees as a natural progression in her career.

Hildreth said she believes that a career in library science is a great investment. “I strongly believe we are doing great work, especially in making a difference in the lives of our users,” she said.

She added that such a high level of caring for the work and the users is beneficial for the librarians and information professionals themselves. Hildreth said that librarians have to know how to find relevant and reliable information, but in the process are exposed to and learn about a lot of different subjects.

ALA Accreditation

Good news! That’s what Dean Peter A. Bloniarz of the College of Computing and Information, and Dr. Philip Eppard, chair of the Department of Information Studies, learned in January 2011 at mid-winter meeting of the American Library Association (ALA). The Masters of Science in Information Science (MSIS) program at the University at Albany (UAlbany) had once again achieved full accreditation from the American Library Association (ALA).

Assistant Dean Frances Reynolds said that the ALA gave the MSIS program a “full vote of confidence” with this accreditation. This means that those students that are currently enrolled in the program have been taught the highest standards of information studies theory and practice. This will give them the best tools to find jobs in a variety of information studies fields and improve their chance of career mobility.

The ALA accreditation is a voluntary self-assessment and peer assessment of library and information studies schools to ensure the schools offer programs that meet ALA guidelines for excellence and integrity.

Reynolds and the MSIS faculty began a rigorous accreditation process in 2008 with an internal program and curriculum evaluation. They were helped by a twelve member Information Studies Community Advisory Committee, made up of alums, librarians, and community leaders from in and around the Capital District.

In September 2010, a group of North American librarians appointed by ALA’s Committee on Accreditation (COA) conducted an external review of the program over the course of three days. The evaluation team met with students and faculty, attended graduate classes, and participated in panel discussions. Reynolds was pleased to note that the team “came to UAlbany knowing what the program was all about.”

The Information Studies Program offers MSIS degrees with in five concentration areas: Archives/Records Administration, Library and Information Services, School Library Media, Information Policy and Management, and Information Systems and Technology. In addition, MSIS students can earn dual master’s degrees in Information Science and either History or English.

The UAlbany Library School was founded in 1926. The graduate program has been continuously accredited by ALA since 1966. A copy of the COA report is available on the Information Studies Department web page at http://www.albany.edu/www.edu/cci_test/images/ALA_new_f i nal_final_version_%28The_Real_Deal%29.pdf.
Three IST alumni among University’s Distinguished Public Service Award recipients

The University at Albany recognizes the dedication of individuals who serve the people of New York State with the John E. Burton Lecture Series and the Distinguished Public Service Award.

Department of Information Studies alumni Dionne Mack-Harvin ’95, GladysAnn Wells ’72, and Christine Ward ’71 have received the award, which is one of the university’s highest honors. Mack-Harvin, a former executive director of the Brooklyn Public Library System, received the award in 2010. During her tenure at the BPLS she oversaw 60 libraries, serving the 2.5 million residents of Brooklyn. In addition to being the first African American to hold this post, Mack-Harvin was the first African American female to head a major New York public library system. In January 2011 Mack-Harvin was named director of the El Paso Public Library system. A 2009 recipient was GladysAnn Wells. Ms Wells, who retired in April of this year, served as Arizona State Librarian and Director of the Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records for 14 years. Wells got her start in New York as a reference library for the state library before becoming an as editor, researcher, and Senate Librarian for the Senate Research Service.

Christine Ward was presented with the award in 2006. As the assistant commissioner for the New York State Archives, Ward serves as the state archivist. During her tenure, she has developed the state’s archival collection, which holds more than 140 million records – some of which are among the oldest items in the county.

UA’s Distinguished Public Service Award, which has been presented annually since 1983 (with the exception of 1984), is accompanied by the John E. Burton Lecture Series. Burton was the state’s Director of the Budget from 1943 to 1950 under Governor Thomas Dewey and a longtime contributor to New York public service.

Notable keynote presenters include, among others, Governors David Paterson and Eliot Spitzer; Lt. Governor Richard Ravitch, New York State Court of Appeals Chief Judge Judith Kaye, Congressman Michael McNulty, and Congressman Paul Tonko.

Student Awards

The College of Computing and Information spring graduation ceremonies were held on May 14, 2011 on the Up-town Campus. Daniel C. Chan, Ph.D., the Acting Chief Information Officer for New York State, was the keynote speaker. During the ceremonies ninety-five graduate students were awarded Master of Science in Information Science degrees and sixteen Information Studies students were recognized for their special accomplishments and they were as follows:

During the spring graduation ceremonies held on May 14, 2011 sixteen Information Studies students were recognized for their special accomplishments and they were as follows:

Dean’s Certificate of Appreciation
Kathryn DeCorah

Excellence in Community Partnerships
Laura Baker
Bridge Crossman
Elise DeQuoy
Sara Feldman
Karen Fronhofer
Denise Jorgensen
Sheri McNair
Sandra Stevens

Excellence in Service to the College and/or University Community
Catherine Dumas
Dima Kassab
Kristen Kelbasa
James Weis

Outstanding Publication by a Master’s Student
Catherine Oliver

Academic Excellence
Dima Kassab
Sandra Stevens

Connecting Students to Real World Experiences

Each semester, students in the Information Studies program enter the information world within reach as they work at internships in public and academic libraries, archives, museums, and more. Some of these internships have been close to home, including the New York State Archives and UAlbany’s University Library, while others have been farther away at such locations as the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto and the Everglades National Park in Florida. These internships share one thing, “students are gaining information science skills in a real-world setting,” observes Frances Reynolds, internship coordinator. “They are learning what it takes to be information professionals in the 21st century.”

Reynolds has been coordinating the internship program since 2005, when it became a requirement for the Information Studies degree. She has created an internship network of internship locations throughout the Capital District, Hudson Valley, and North Country. This network has been very helpful as more students are looking to add to their academic experiences by doing not one but two internships.

The network continues to expand as students seek out new internship locations. Before the approval of a new intern location, Reynolds carefully checks out the site to be sure that students will gain professional development skills during their internship. “We want to be sure students gain the professional experience they need during their internship to give them the edge in finding job,” Reynolds said.

Reynolds noted that she “appreciated the willingness of the people in our profession to develop new information professionals. These people form a generous community who give their time and energy to foster student learning.”

The Department monitors a variety of enrollment data and statistics regarding diversity enrollment trends has been moving in a positive direction.
Husted Renovation Heralds New Era

Husted Hall opened its doors to the 21st century with the completion of a major renovation project in early 2010. The Department of Information Studies at the University at Albany has been holding classes in the 102-year-old building, located on the university’s Downtown Campus on Western Avenue, for more than a year.

“The project has allowed the Downtown Campus to sustain and further enhance its position as a nationally recognized center of learning and excellence,” said Jennifer Watson, special assistant to the director – Office of the Provost.

Husted Hall’s $13,662,512 renovation was the culmination of a ten-year project – two years for approval and funding, three to four years in design, and three years of construction. The end result is a high-tech building with ten collaborative classrooms, nine seminar classrooms, a thirty-seat computer classroom, a seventy-five-seat amphitheater, a conference room, several small discussion rooms, and a café. The building’s upgrade coincides with the department’s recent ALA (American Library Association) reaccreditation. According to ALA standards, an accredited program must have physical resources that foster an “environment that is conducive to learning and research.”

Watson said, “All the classrooms and seminar rooms boast state-of-the-art technology and multimedia presentation capabilities that would rival any academic building in the state.”

Husted classrooms have built-in data projectors, computers, Internet access, and document projectors. In the lower level of the building, there is a classroom that provides the computer equipment and software for students to complete their six-credit technology criteria and beyond.

Abebe Rorissa, an assistant professor in the department, said the new computer classroom has made a difference especially in the technology-based courses he teaches, including the required Fundamentals of Information Technology (IST 529).

“In the new computer classroom, I present students with theory and instruction and they can immediately put that knowledge to work in class,” he said. “I can then offer assistance on-the-spot or make changes in my instruction method for a particular topic.”

The renovation also fitted Husted Hall with many components that are ADA (American with Disabilities Act) compliant and qualify for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification. Additionally, the Albany Historical Society was consulted to maintain the historical integrity of the building.

Prior to its recent renovation, Husted Hall housed mainly offices. Most Information Studies courses were previously held in Draper Hall – where the department and faculty offices are located.

Husted Hall opened in 1909. Then known as the Science Building, it was one of the three original buildings on the Downtown Campus.

Kathy Gurney: Face of the Information Studies department

Kathy Gurney has been part of the lives of the Information Studies faculty, staff, and students for 25 years. The department’s secretary has been integral to the smooth-running operation of the Information Studies department on a day-to-day basis.

“My days are quite varied and interesting, even though the bulk of my communication is via the computer these days,” she said.

Gurney has seen a number of transformations in the department since 1986, including the changing faces of faculty and students. She has also been around for the department’s various incarnations: prior to 2005, the Information Studies department was known as The School of Information Science and Policy and before that the School of Library and Information Science.

Despite retiring from her position in September, Gurney’s familiar face can still be seen in Draper 113. She remains a member of the Information Studies staff, but on a part-time basis, which suits her plan to ease into retirement.

Today, Gurney works closely with assistant dean Fran Reynolds, graduate assistant Sarah Kennedy, and department chair Philip Eppard to meet the needs of prospective and current students, faculty, and employees in offices campus-wide, not to mention many outside employers (e.g., libraries and schools), alumni.

Many Information Studies Department alumni have had contact with Gurney since graduating from UAlbany. Gurney said, “It’s always fun to hear from former students.”

Win-Win: MSIS and NYS Library

The 1911 fire that ravaged the New York State Capital in Albany also destroyed 700,000 books and manuscripts from the New York State Library (NYS). In the days afterwards, students from the New York State Normal College (former name of the University at Albany) were on hand to help with cleanup efforts.

One-hundred years later, thirteen students from the Information Studies program are continuing the tradition of working at the NYS. These student assistants help in the day-to-day operations of the only state library listed in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The student assistants are learning library skills firsthand in the manuscripts, preservation, government documents, e-reference, acquisitions, library operations, Talking Book and Braille Library, and circulation units.

“Not all books are equal,” noted Jeff Sohn, Documents and Digital Collections - section head and UAlbany student assistant liaison.

“Students are put in the middle of what is happening in the research library. They contribute to the functioning of the NYS from sorting books in the warehouse, to repairing books, creating digital government documents, fielding reference questions, and assisting the library director. While the jobs are not always glamorous, students are getting a chance to learn how a large research library operates.”

Since Sohn started coordinating the program in 1986, more than one-hundred-and-seventy-five library and information studies graduate students have worked in the NYS. Sohn noted that he enjoys the relationship with UAlbany.

“The students bring a fresh perspective to library operations. And the Information Studies Department staff, including [administrative assistant] Kathy Gurney, have always been great to work with.”

Information Studies faculty include (back row, l to r) Abebe Rorissa, Terry Maxwell, Deborah Andersen, Ozlem Uzner, Phillip Eppard, (front row, l to r), Joette Stef-Marby, Jenny Yuan, Donghee Sinn, Hemalata Iyer, Fran Reynolds, and department secretary Kathy Gurney.
Great Recession and Library Employment

Cary Gouldin and Lily Shafer
http://www.albany.edu/scala

On April 15, the Student Chapter of the American Library Association (SCALA) hosted a panel entitled “Get A Job!” Moderated by SCALA president Lily Shafer ’12, the panel included Cynthia Koman (Hudson Valley Community College), Chrisisie Morrison (East Greenbush Community Library), AnnaLee Giraldo (Albany Public Library), Tori Russo (Bethlehem Public Library), and Timothy Burke (Upper Hudson Library System). Panelist shared valuable advice on the ins and outs of the library job search to a packed house of 30 students.

The panelists agreed that networking is the most important job search strategy and urged students to take advantage of every networking opportunity. In addition, the panel of experts encouraged students to gain library experience through internships and volunteer opportunities. This is particularly important in the current job market where public library positions are often filled from within before they are ever publicly advertised. The advisers stressed the importance of communications skills, especially the ability to listen. These key skills will assist the students in getting hired and in becoming good information specialists.

Panelists spoke extensively about the civil service exam process; advising the student audience to learn more about the appropriate state, county, and city civil service exams. They also recommended students get their New York State Public Librarian Certification as soon as they graduate. Information about the certificate can be found at the New York State Library’s Division of Library Development website, http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/cert.

The most encouraging part of the session was Tim Burke’s declaration that “You will all get jobs.”

What is iConnect?

iConnect is an electronic update sent to UAlbany Department of Information Studies, alumni and friends. It is a publication that provides summaries and links to news, announcements and other information of interest to IST alumni and friends. This edition of iConnect was written and produced by Kristin Charles-Scaringi ’11, Susan Carver ’11, and Kun Lin ’10, students in IST 669, Marketing and Public Relations for Academic and Public Libraries, Spring 2011.

Please consider giving to IST program. Click the following URL to Make a Pledge
http://www.albany.edu/cci/support_CCI.php

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