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The Newsletter for the Community Informatics Initiative at the University of Illinois

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New CI core required courses begin this Fall



Changes are coming to the Community Informatics curriculum at GSLIS. Beginning with the 2008-2009 school year, CI faculty will be offering three core courses that are required for incoming GSLIS students who wish to complete the CI program. Community Informatics Concepts (LIS590 CO/COL), an introductory CI course, and Community Engagement (LIS490CE/CEL/CEO), a service-learning-based course, will be offered for the first time this fall. The third course, tentatively titled "Introduction to Research Methods in LIS," will be offered in spring 2009. Plans are also

underway to create a community informatics certificate, similar to the certificate in special collections offered by the Midwest Book & Manuscript Studies Program.

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Community Informatics Concepts, taught by Professors Kate Williams (on-campus) and Chip Bruce (LEEP), will survey key CI concepts drawn from texts commonly used in CI instruction at Illinois and at other universities, providing students with the principles needed to understand how communities use information and communication technologies. This course is recommended for those who are interested in public libraries, youth services, social work, education, and/or working with underserved communities.

Community Engagement, taught by Professor Ann Bishop, introduces community engagement theory and practice. This project-based course illustrates how information professionals learn about, collaborate with, and provide services to communities. Course activities may include performing community needs assessments, providing basic computer training to seniors, involving residents in museum decision-making, working on school literacy programs, bookmobiles, teen reading clubs, citizen science, organizing local issue forums and art exhibits in libraries, homework help and local history archiving. This course will be available on-campus, in Paseo Boricua, Chicago, and via LEEP.



Professor Ann Bishop

Introduction to Research Methods in LIS, taught by Prof. Caroline Haythornthwaite, will cover the fundamentals of social science research for library and information science professionals. Students will select their own project, for which they will frame a problem, choose an appropriate research method and prepare the research for publication. This course is recommended for students who may work in a library, community center or other setting that requires research skills for tenure, promotion or local evaluation of services and practices.

Faculty members are also introducing a number of CI-related electives for the first time this fall. Professor Jon Gant will teach Geographic Information Systems (LIS490GI), a course that will show students how to apply GIS technology to help identify problems in communities and find management and public policy solutions to those problems (see "Gant's Research...", p. 5); Professor Abdul Alkalimat will offer The Digital Divide (LIS490DDG), a course cross-listed with the African American Studies Department that examines the theoretical issues, empirical research, and policy debates defining and describing the digital divide; Serving the Child in Schools and Community (LIS590BTW), a course cross-listed with Curriculum and Instruction and co-taught by Professors Bonnie Armbruster and Ann Bishop, is a service-learning course in which students interact with children in an after-school tutoring environment; and Distributed Knowledge (LIS590DK) is a doctoral seminar on the meaning of knowledge, open to all graduate students campus-wide and co-taught by Professors Chip Bruce and Caroline Haythornthwaite.

GSLIS faculty to present at AoIR 2008

Professors Caroline Haythornthwaite and Lori Kendall will attend the annual conference of the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) as panel organizers this fall. Internet Research 9.0: Rethinking Community, Rethinking Place will happen October 15-18, 2008 at the IT University of Copenhagen in Denmark.

Professor Haythornthwaite's panel, "Community Cohesion & Connectivity," will feature four major research projects related to the connections between online and offline experiences of communities spanning the U.S., Israel and the Netherlands. The four papers to be presented focus on changes in community relationships over time and the effects of the Internet on these relationships. Panel participants include Hua Helen Wang (U Southern Calif.), Barry Wellman (U Toronto), Jeffrey Cole (USC), Gustavo S. Mesch (Haifa U, Israel), Uwe Matzat (Eindhoven U, Netherlands) and Azi Lev-on (Ariel U, Israel).



Professor Caroline Haythornthwaite



Professor Lori Kendall

Professor Kendall's panel, "Distributed Community," will present four projects that investigate the importance of mobility and geographical place to virtual communities in relation to mobile devices and geolocation technology. The papers to be presented examine online photo-sharing communities such as Flickr, friendship among members of social networking sites, IT use during periods of disaster, and a media project that allows rural youth from different underrepresented and under-served cultural backgrounds to share their art projects, and learn about technology. Panel participants include Ingrid Erickson (Stanford), Gitte Bang Stald (IT U, Copenhagen), Rich Ling (Telenor, Norway), Irina Shklovski (UC Irvine) and Robert J. Sandusky (UI Chicago).

Course promotes service-learning with at-risk youth

This Fall CII is offering a new class through GSLIS and Curriculum and Instruction that will work with the Booker T. Washington (BTW) after school program mentoring and tutoring children. The students in the class will be placed as volunteers at BTW elementary school where they will work with one to three children ranging from kindergarten through seventh grade. The tutors will guide the children through their homework, provide assistance with reading and participate in digital enhancement projects.



Booker T Washington School located in Champaign

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The B.T. Washington after school program began in 2006 as a response to a request from the Shadow Wood mobile home community in north Champaign. The after school program is made up of around 40 children and about 70 volunteer tutors (13-20 each day) who meet together four days a week. The goal of the program is to help at-risk youth excel academically, connect families to resources in the community, and create new action research and service learning opportunities.

Laura Lowe, former GSLIS student and BTW program leader, said: "It has been a very rewarding experience watching the students grow intellectually and emotionally over the past year and seeing the bonds that are formed between children and the adults."

Institutional partners in the program include the UI Center for Education in Small Urban Schools, Don Moyers Boys and Girls Club, and UI's La Casa Cultural Latina.

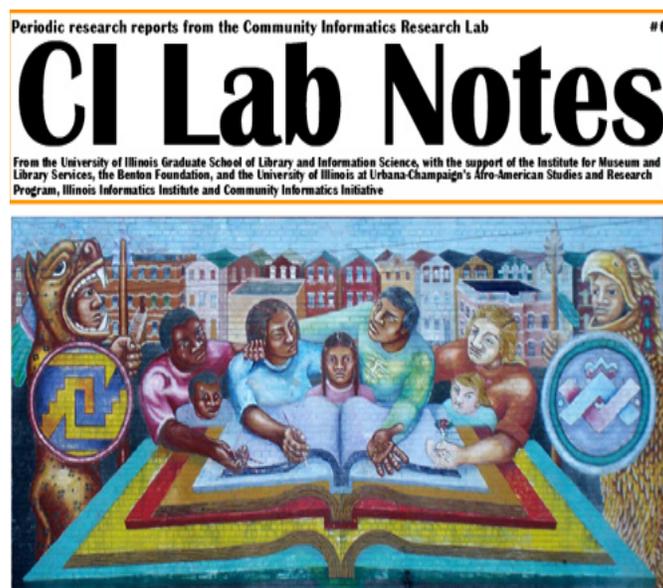
In addition to the tutoring hours, students enrolled in the UI course will meet as a class once a week for two hours; the class content will focus on relating to children; motivating and engaging children in learning; community institutions and agencies serving children; and social issues affecting the lives of children in the U.S. today. The class (LIS590BTW and LIS390BTW, CI260BTW) is also available to sophomores, juniors and seniors as well as graduate students.

Students interested in getting involved with the BTW program can also develop an independent study or simply volunteer. For more information, contact professor Ann Bishop (abishop@illinois.edu)

CI Lab Notes help researchers discover ethnic Chicago

In Fall 2007, GSLIS Professor Kate Williams began a research initiative entitled Chicago Community Informatics: Places, Uses, Resources. Nicknamed eChicago, the three-year project aims to (1) find out how and where social capital and social networks influence technology use in communities; (2) identify collections that can be made available online to reflect the historical identity of communities; and (3) find out how local residents can participate in the digitization process. The researchers plan to survey six Chicago community areas and interview community members who are actively involved in grassroots community-building initiatives.

The first stage of the project is to collect secondary research on the communities by reviewing the literature that currently exists about them on the Web. This research is published as part of a series called CI Lab Notes. Currently available CI Lab Notes include bibliographies/webliographies of Arab, Japanese, Mexican and Puerto Rican communities across the city of Chicago. These issues are publicly accessible from the UIUC IDEALS archiving project Web site: <http://www.ideals.uiuc.edu/handle/2142/5138>.



First page from the 6th issue of CI Lab Notes

Gant's research examines how GIS can impact community participation

This summer, GSLIS Professor Jon Gant began a project that examines how communities can use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to improve information sharing among members. This research is in collaboration with non-profit organizations that work with economically-stressed and racially-concentrated communities in three metropolitan areas. The organizations, Lumity (Chicago), CTCNet (Washington, DC) and Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods (Winston-Salem, NC), work with community technology centers (CTCs) and other traditional community-based organizations to improve access to resources through information technology and other means.



Professor Jon Gant

Gant's research is concerned with evaluating how GIS technology can improve participation in community-level decision-making, finding out how to encourage community members to participate in creating and sharing knowledge using GIS tools, studying the development of folksonomies (user-generated search terms) in these settings and analyzing the structure of community members relationships.

In addition to this project, Gant will begin offering two courses related to his research this fall. Geographic Information Systems (LIS490GI), co-taught with Dr. Charles Linville, will show students how to apply GIS technology to help identify problems in communities and find management and public policy solutions to those problems. Students will learn how to use GIS software in a lab setting and apply their knowledge in a service learning project that will require them to address a community issue or problem. Strategic Information Management (LIS590ST) focuses on teaching students how to manage information as a strategic asset of community- and service-based organizations, including libraries and museums. Students will learn methods for developing information system strategies for communities and community organizations that reflect community values.

Professor Gant received \$27,000 from a combination of grant money (through the Institute of Museum and Library Services) and GSLIS matching funds to cover the costs of his research project and curriculum development, including hiring graduate assistants and purchasing lab materials.

Earlier this year, Professor Gant presented at a GIS workshop for UI students, faculty, staff and community partners that allowed participants to explore GIS applications through a series of hands-on exercises using ESRI ArcExplorer software. In addition, Nama Budhathoki, PhD candidate in Urban and Regional Planning, led the group in a Google Maps exercise; GSLIS Master's student Brooke Bahnsen showcased a research project that is currently underway to map Chicago's ethnic communities (see "CI Lab Notes...", p. 4); Dr. Lisa Bouillion Diaz of the 4-H Extension Office presented on youth involvement in community mapping projects around the country; and Dr. Charles Linville demonstrated how to map postings on the US Geological Survey website about the southern Illinois earthquake that had occurred the same morning (April 18).

GSLIS students, faculty and staff can access presentations and other GIS resources by signing into the GIS in Community Informatics workshop wiki with their Confluence username and password.

LIS 451 Gets a summer make over

This past June, 19 GSLIS students completed Professor Martin Wolske's Introduction to Network Systems (LIS 451) course in only four weeks. This year was the first time Wolske has ever attempted to deliver the course during Summer Session I, the briefest semester offered. He says the new format was popular with students, and furthered his goal of tying together the concepts of community and technology.

"By and large the students are encouraging me to teach it again as a four-week course. They have a hard time imagining it as a 15-week course," Wolske said. "So it's gone from 'we can't imagine taking this as a four-week' course to 'we can't imagine doing it any other way.' I think that's a good sign."

Some of the differences included longer stays in East St. Louis, where most of the student projects took place. Whereas students taking the course in a regular 15-week semester make two trips lasting from Friday morning until Saturday evening, Summer Session I students made three trips, each lasting from Thursday morning through Saturday evening.

Wolske also made structural changes to the lesson plans. By combining lab time with lecture, Wolske said he was able to intertwine course concepts more effectively with hands-on training and reflection time. He broke the lessons into subtopics, delivering three to four per day. With all elements (lecture, lab and reflection) present, this method allowed him to bring immediate closure to all subtopics addressed for the day and introduce questions that reflect on technology in the context of community.



GSLIS students (l-r) Elizabeth Voss, Chris Ritzo and Sara Clark install software on a new set of computers at Community Concepts, and East St. Louis youth theater and media group.



GSLIS student Lizzie Klinert repairs computers at the Mt. Zion Church lab in East St. Louis

The changes came about partially as a result of staff schedules at the GSLIS Help Desk (where Wolske also was working as user services coordinator), and partially as a result of course analyses, including a dissertation research study conducted by a curriculum and instruction doctoral student. The ethnographic study of Wolske's course provided some insights into the course's effectiveness at teaching higher ideals related to applications of technology in community and the effectiveness of different technologies for enabling communities.

Another benefit to the four-week format was the camaraderie that formed among the students. Wolske has found that many students get to the end of their program at GSLIS without really knowing their classmates. Summer Session I students had the unique experience of living communally at Hubbard House, an East St. Louis hostel.

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"There was a level of bonding among the GSLIS students that, while it's reproduced to some extent in other semesters, was only heightened as part of the stay at Hubbard House. I've always assumed that the students know each other, but oddly enough students end up going through the program side by side and never knowing each other in terms of career objectives and backgrounds," Wolske said. "All 19 Summer Session I students know each other better than they ever had before in a way that the students feel will be a great aid in their professional careers. It will be good to find a way to encourage that this fall even though we're staying at the Ramada."

The students initiated and continued several existing projects including refurbishing donated computers, and training librarians and their assistants in computer maintenance at the Centreville Public Library. They also repaired the frequently-used computers and introduced Linux software at the library's children's center, performed maintenance and repairs at the Mt. Zion Church lab, and installed labs at St. Luke's church and Catch a Falling Star, a school for children with social development disabilities.

Overall the experience was positive. However, one of the things Wolske has learned is that when projects don't come together as expected in a four-week course, there are only hours to respond. Fortunately, he and CII Community Networking director Paul Adams were able to reach out to community partners to line up additional projects that benefited both students and the community. So, GSLIS's deep relationships within the East St. Louis community are more important than ever.

Wolske says he is currently analyzing feedback about the course and will work to implement some changes for his Fall 2008 offering. He plans to teach the course for at least the next three summers, after which he will take a break to spend time with his sons who are scheduled to graduate from high school and college.

Community as Intellectual Space Symposium

The 4th Annual Community as Intellectual Space Symposium in June brought together more than 100 students, faculty and community members from across Chicago, the U.S. and abroad, with representatives from University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign and Chicago campuses), the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) of Chicago, DePaul University, Northern Illinois University, Elmhurst College, University of Chicago, Northwestern University, Loyola University, Turabo University (Puerto Rico) and University of Sheffield (U.K.). Much of the conference took place at La Estancia, a recent construction effort by the PRCC, community leaders and an area developer to create affordable housing for more than 50 families in the community. The completion of La Estancia marked a victory for the PRCC and activists who have attempted to halt the effects of gentrification over the past several years.



(l-r) Vice Chancellor of Public Affairs Steve Sonka, Professor Ann Bishop, PRCC Executive Director Jose López, keynote speakers Dr. Margaret Burroughs and John Pitman Weber, and moderators Cristina Pacione-Zayas and Jonathan Rosa.

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GSLIS students represented the school in the 30th Annual People's Parade.



Martin Soto leads mural tour along with artists Star Padilla and Gamaliel Ramirez (not pictured).

Conference attendees:

- Toured neighborhood murals led by artists Gamaliel Ramirez, Star Padilla and Martin Soto;
- Heard a keynote address from Dr. Margaret Burroughs: artist, leader, activist and founder of the internationally acclaimed DuSable Museum of African American History. Dr. Burroughs was funded by UIUC Chancellor Richard Herman to travel to Turabo University in Puerto Rico to meet with faculty and staff and tour art institutions on the island;
- Learned about projects GSLIS and the PRCC have collaborated on including an urban agriculture project planned by local high school students, the creation of the PRCC library, helping high school students create a Puerto Rican Heritage exhibit at the Newberry Library and implementing software-assisted literacy models for children in preK through grade 2;
- Participated in panel discussions with Dr. Carol Lee (Northwestern), Dr. Lisa Yun Lee (Jane Addams Hull House Museum, UIC), Dr. Howard Rosing (Depaul), Dr. Laura Ruth Johnson (NIU), Dr. Sarai Lastra (Turabo University), Dr. Abdul Alkalimat (GSLIS), Dr. Jaqueline Lazu (DePaul) and Jonathan Rosa (University of Chicago);
- Saw a screening of *Aquellos*, a documentary about youth in Paseo Boricua and a performance by local youth arts group Batey Urbano of "Bandera a Bandera," the third play in a trilogy by Nuyorican poet and playwright, Tato Laviera.



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