

VOICES

Winter 2009 Vol 2 Issue 3

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

New Collaborations

Written by Sharon Irish

2010 is here! Along with a new calendar year, there are some changes at the Community Informatics Initiative (CII). Associate professor Ann Bishop, the founding co-director of CII, is on sabbatical this year. She is conducting research on the relationship between American Pragmatism and current community inquiry projects in the Humboldt Park area of Chicago. Professor Caroline Haythornthwaite, a former co-director of CII, is a Leverhulme Visiting Professor at the Institute of Education, University of London, from October 2009 to July 2010. She is conducting research and writing an e-book with professor Andrew Richards, a colleague with whom she co-authored *The Handbook of E-Learning Research*. Haythornthwaite's research will center on increasing the number of researchers engaged in empirical and theoretical studies of learning networks, or new trends in learning brought about by technology. Meanwhile, I have agreed to serve as interim director, shifting to full-time from my previous part-time position as project coordinator. Together with the community informatics faculty and staff—Paul Adams, Abdul Alkalimat, Chip Bruce, Jon Gant, Kate Williams and Martin Wolske—and our incredible students, I will forge ahead into the new decade, staying open to new possibilities and collaborations. The rest of this newsletter reports on the many activities that keep us challenged and involved. Participate with us!



CII interim director
Sharon Irish

Tech Volunteers Expands

Written by Susan Rodgers



The main computer area of the Urbana Free Library hosts over 20 computers and will be the site for the computing skills courses.

of activity I've seen there shows without a doubt how important the lab really is."

The Urbana Free Library (UFL) technology volunteers will teach basic computer skills classes in the UFL computer lab during February or March 2010.

The classes, organized and developed by both volunteers and reference librarians involved in the project, will be free and open to the public.

"People come in with all sorts of different tech-related goals," says Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GS-LIS) student Laura Rancani. "More than anything, the breadth

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tech volunteers continued from previous page

To date, GSLIS students and other volunteers have been hard at work in the UFL computer lab providing technology assistance to patrons. The group of around 30 volunteers provided 160 hours of volunteer time during the 2009 fall semester. The type of support the volunteers provide ranges from basic computer assistance like how to use a mouse to more complicated processes like converting file types.

"I signed up to volunteer in order to get some experience teaching, and I have most definitely been able to do that. I teach people new things every time that I volunteer, and in doing so, I learn a lot as well," says GSLIS student Genevieve Henricks.

Community informatics students Susan Rodgers and Kristin LoDolce started UFL Technology Volunteers in the spring of 2009 as part of a class assignment. Since its inception, it has expanded into a much larger forum for both research and community service.

The project is accepting new volunteers for the spring semester. Volunteers work individually in the lab at a volunteer station where they are available to assist patrons with technology related questions.

If you would like to learn more or sign up to volunteer, please contact Susan Rodgers: srodger@illinois.edu

Community Archives

Written by Aisha Haykal

Anke Voss, director of the Champaign County Historical Archives and a lecturer in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, is teaching a new course on community archives (LIS 590 CA).

The class, using work by students in last semester's "Administration and Use of Archival Materials" (LIS 581), will assist community organizations in developing an archival program by conducting interviews; assessing records, storage space, and preservation concerns; and proposing steps that will promote greater accessibility to each organization's historical materials.

Participating organizations are the Central Illinois Mosque and Islamic Center (CIMIC), the Independent Media Center (IMC), Amasong; Champaign-Urbana's Premier Lesbian/Feminist Chorus and the Champaign County Forest Preserve.

"Community archiving has a large following in the United States and internationally, and in both urban and rural settings," states Voss, who believes student-community collaborations will help close the gap in the historical record in Champaign-Urbana (C-U).

Community archiving is a movement that emphasizes the involvement and preservation of the local community through archiving. The movement's initiatives intend to recover the history of grass-roots organizations and underrepresented communities.

Voss hopes that this new course offering may help to create a framework for a community archives resource center, a local, year-round service for organizations in C-U that need advice and assistance in preserving their heritage.



GSLIS students Whitney Carr and Damon McGhee are ready to answer questions in the UFL computer lab.



Successful Submissions to the iConference

Written by Robin Duple and Suzanne Im

Thirty University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) submissions were accepted to the fifth annual iSchools iConference, which will convene Feb. 3-6 in Champaign, Ill. A few of the accepted GSLIS submissions are highlighted below:



The grant-funded Youth Community Informatics (YCI) will kick off the conference with an all-day workshop on Wednesday, Feb. 3. The workshop will introduce conference participants to community mapping projects that YCI conducted in Champaign-Urbana and Virginia, Ill.

Other accepted submissions include a wildcard session titled "Teach, Learn, Engage: Reflections on Community Informatics Curriculum Development" organized by master's students Aisha Haykal and Suzanne Im, and doctoral student Aiko Takazawa; a roundtable titled "Research Methods in Community Informatics at the Broadband Moment" and a paper titled "Grassrooting the Space of Flows in an Urban Branch Library" which will be presented by assistant professor Kate Williams; and a paper titled "Effective ICT Use for Social Inclusion" which will be presented by senior research scientist Martin Wolske.

There were also several posters accepted, including a submission by certificate of advanced study student Anna Pederson, which shows how libraries used government funds and community partnerships to close the digital divide in the United States; a submission by doctoral students Jeff Ginger, Navadeep Khanal and Adam Kehoe that highlights several key theories and aspects of CI methodology, and a submission by Susan Rodgers on technology access and training at the Urbana Free Library.

The full line up of conference activities can be found on the iConference program schedule:

<http://www.ischools.org/iConference10/program/>

Get Ready for HASTAC!

The 2010 Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology Advanced Collaboratory (HASTAC) Conference will be hosted virtually April 15-17 at the University of Illinois. This year's theme is Grand Challenges and Global Innovations related to technology, research, teaching and inquiry. The conference is coordinated by the Institute in Computing for the Humanities, Arts and Social Science (I-CHASS). HASTAC is an international consortium of academic and community members who are interested in the opportunities and possibilities that new technologies bring to diverse fields of study and communities. For more information about the conference, please visit http://ichass.illinois.edu/Events/Entries/2009/10/30_HASTAC_2010.html or email guiliano@illinois.edu with HASTAC in the subject line.



Doctoral Student Receives Position at Dominican University

Written by Noelle Williams

Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) doctoral student Sujin Huggins received a faculty position at Dominican University.

"It will be new for me," says Huggins, who graduated from the master's program in 2004 and became a doctoral student in 2006. "I've taught adults before but never in America, so it will be different teaching all American graduate students. I'm excited about it."

Huggins learned about the position through her colleague and former Director of the Center for Children's Books, Janice Del Negro, who is currently an instructor at the LIS School in Dominican University. She applied for the position last summer and interviewed with the dean, provost and a selection committee on Sept. 30. In December, Huggins received a job offer, which she accepted.

"It was the best interview I've ever had," says Huggins about the process. "I expected it to be more difficult than it was but it was more of a dialogue than a grilling."

While Huggins believes that her experience at the University of the West Indies prepared her for teaching, she also believes that her experiences in the GSLIS at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign also prepared her for her new role.

"The GSLIS youth services program prepared me for work as a librarian as best as I could hope to be prepared," says Huggins, who graduated from the master's program in 2004 and became a doctoral student in 2006. She also believes that the combination of youth services with community informatics (CI) was very influential for her as well.

"Community informatics connects the theoretical approach of youth services to a more experiential approach," says Huggins, who believes CI exposes youth librarians to technology and its potential usefulness in teaching children. "Community informatics creates a more concrete way for librarians to connect to children through teaching."

Huggins began teaching at Dominican University Jan. 11 as an instructor. She plans to finish her doctorate sometime between December 2010 and May 2011 while teaching, and will become an assistant professor once she receives her degree. Congratulations, Sujin!

Save the Date: Dialogues in Methods of Education

A meeting for the Dialogues in Methods of Education (DIME) group is tentatively scheduled for the weekend of April 9-11, 2010, in Champaign, Ill. The people in DIME, who have met twice a year since 1980 (that's 30 years!), discuss hands-on learning, innovations in teaching, community funds of knowledge and new technologies, among other things. The group is open to new and interested folks. Participants in DIME include teachers, museum and library educators, and community members. For more information about DIME, please visit <http://go.illinois.edu/dime>.

Public Engagement Awards

Written by Eric Johnson



Steve Sonka
Interim Vice Chancellor
for Public Engagement

Congratulations to the recipients of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) Office of the Vice Chancellor for Public Engagement (OVCPE) grants! Four proposals related to the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) community include:

- eBlackCU: A Collaborative Portal on the African-American Experience in Champaign-Urbana, developed by Noah Lenstra, a certificate of advanced study student, and Abdul Alkalimat, a professor in GSLIS and the Department of African American Studies. With partners in the Champaign County Historical Archives, Early American Museum, Urbana High School and the American History Teachers Collaborative, this project will digitize, centralize, and create information and knowledge on various aspects of African-American history and culture in the local community.



A portion of a mural in north Champaign by Angela Rivers
"A History of African Americans in Champaign County," painted in 1978

- Student Opportunities for After-School Resources (SOAR), founded by GSLIS professor Ann Bishop, at Booker T. Washington School in Champaign. Co-led by Michelle Cruz-Santiago, SOAR provides homework help and enrichment activities free of cost for children. At the same time, SOAR gives UIUC students opportunities to engage with local kids in multicultural settings. The SOAR funding will build sustainability for the program through an assessment process, along with developing new program elements related to parent participation.



Professor Ann Bishop

- Family and Community Engagement (FACE), created by Community Informatics Initiative Fellow Rebecca Ginsburg, will extend the education program at Danville Correctional Center into the low-income neighborhoods of Chicago, from where most of the students come. FACE has three components. It connects children and their families to mentoring and academic support, and provides opportunities for family engagement and family strengthening. It provides sustained, long-term personal engagement between at-risk children, their families, and FACE volunteers, both virtually and in person, and delivers resources about higher education application processes and financial aid.



Rebecca Ginsburg

- Community Health Informatics, a collaborative effort by David Buchner (director of the Master of Public Health (MPH), UIUC Applied Health Sciences), Lisa Bievenue (project coordinator, Illinois Informatics Institute) and Elaine Hicks (GSLIS student with public health background, Community Informatics Initiative). These three are coordinating the multi-disciplinary expertise of UIUC faculty to collect, manage and use local health data to make significant contributions to the public health workforce, and build sustainable partnerships with health departments and community-based organizations.

These and 26 other proposals were judged to have a sustainable, positive, community impact. To learn more about the other OVCPE grant recipients, visit <http://engagement.illinois.edu/RFPawards.html>

Research Series in Community Informatics

Written by Eric Johnson

Once again, the Community Informatics Initiative (CII) has organized a Research Series, talks that consider some aspect of this emerging area of inquiry.

Most presentations will be held in LIS room 109 from 2-3 p.m. on Wednesdays.

Visit the CII calendar for a full listing of speakers and their topics:

<http://illinois.edu/calendar/Calendar?callId=1775>

Starting the semester on Jan. 27 in LIS room 126 from 2-3 p.m., **Sharon Irish**, the interim director of the Community Informatics Initiative, will explore the challenges and possibilities of living in an imperfect community using examples from contemporary art in the United States.



Feb. 17, **Nama Budhathoki** (pictured left), doctoral candidate, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, will discuss the motivations of web 2.0 people who share their spatial experience. Scholars describe it as volunteered geographic information (VGI). VGI is being considered a serious source of geographic information. However, little is known about the participants and why they invest effort. Understanding VGI will provide important insights to the phenomenon of social production of knowledge. His presentation will be held at noon in room 109.

March 10, **Laura Lawson** (pictured right), associate professor, Department of Landscape Architecture, will discuss her recent visit to the island of São Tomé. Her research focuses on community activism in open space planning and design. She has an ongoing study of community gardening and greening that includes both historical research and contemporary case studies and analysis.



March 17, Rebecca J. Ginsburg's assistant, **Rushika Patel**, will talk about the higher education community at a medium-high security Illinois prison. Operating the Resource Room, a multipurpose center that includes a library, computer lab, study hall, and tutoring center; and through partnerships with Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, the Office of Continuing Education, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the home departments of the program's instructors; it offers four upper-division courses in the prison's education building. It is the only program of its kind in Illinois.



March 31, **Deana McDonagh** (pictured left), associate professor, Department of Industrial Design; Gender and Women's Studies; Beckman Institute; with support from Susann Heft Sears, Division of Disability Resources and Educational Services, Applied Health Sciences and M. Lydia Khuri, program coordinator, Housing Division, will discuss revisions to the "Disability + Relevant Design" course to engage a wider student population beyond design majors. Assignments for the course focus on the creation of technologies that increase community-based leisure participation for people with disabilities. Field trips highlight challenges that people with disabilities face in daily experience.

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April 21, **Ruth Nicole Brown** (pictured left), assistant professor, Gender and Women's Studies and Educational Policy Studies, will answer the question, how does power and powerlessness shape the experiences of black girls? By working in educational settings to critique representations of black girlhood and creating new ways of seeing black girls through multi-media theatrical performances based on participants' lived experiences, her project continues the compelling collaborations that have been nurtured over the past several years by enhanced use of multi-media technologies in theatrical performances, the instruction of critical media literacy skills, and the production of digital media art (photography) and communicative forums (website) in Saving Our Lives Hear Our Truths (SOLHOT).

April 28, **Lynne M. Dearborn** (pictured right), assistant professor, School of Architecture, will tell how she brought together various types of community and regional housing data and created a web-based tool to make data easily accessible for housing advocates and service providers in the Metro East St. Louis area. By working with community housing partners and facilitating access to current data and analyses, she and her students collaborate to address pressing questions about conditions of housing and homelessness in the area.



Seed Funding Available

The Community Informatics Initiative (CII) under the auspices of the Illinois Informatics Institute (I3) and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) invites UIUC faculty and professional staff to apply for seed funding for research and/or curriculum development in community informatics. Applicants are encouraged to apply for support of projects involving citizen science, community health, youth and media and technology applications for social inclusion.

Those interested should submit their proposals by March 15, 2010, to Paul Adams at padams@illinois.edu with "CII Funding Application" and their name in the subject line. Recipients will be notified in April, with awards starting July 1, 2010. A limited number of grants of up to \$15,000 are anticipated. For more information, please visit the Spotlight section of the CII website at www.cii.uiuc.edu.

2009 - 2010 recipients

- **Annie Abbott**, Director of Advanced Spanish Language; Assistant Professor, Department of Spanish, Italian & Portuguese
- **May Berenbaum**, Professor, Department of Entomology; **David Forsyth**, Professor, Department of Computer Science; George Reese, Director, MSTE, College of Education
- **Ian Brooks**, Research Scientist, National Center for Supercomputing Applications
- **Ruth Nicole Brown**, Assistant Professor, Gender and Women's Studies and Educational Policy Studies
- **Lynne M. Dearborn**, Assistant Professor, School of Architecture
- **Rebecca J. Ginsburg**, Assistant Professor, Landscape Architecture
- **Laura Lawson**, Director of East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP); Associate Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture
- **Deana McDonagh**, Associate Professor, Department of Industrial Design; Gender and Women's Studies; Beckman Institute; **Susann Heft Sears**, Division of Disability Resources and Educational Services, Applied Health Sciences; **M. Lydia Khuri**, Program Coordinator, Housing Division
- **Stephen J. Notaro**, Lecturer, Kinesiology & Community Health
- **Lissette M. Piedra**, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work

Upcoming Events

iSchools Conference 2010

The Fifth Annual iConference brings together scholars, professionals and students who come from diverse backgrounds and share interests in working at the nexus of people, information and technology.

February 3rd - 6th, 2010

iHotel and Conference Center
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
1900 S. First Street, Champaign, Illinois 61820

<http://www.ischools.org>

Microfinancing for the 21st Century: Opportunities and Challenges

On the occasion of a visit to campus of Dr. Mohammad Yunus, a panel session on microfinancing will feature presentations organized around cutting-edge field research on microfinance by students and faculty at the University of Illinois. In addition to the panel, there will be a poster session for students to present their ideas and work in the arena of microfinancing.

Monday, March 1st, 2010; 8:30 am-all day

Business Instructional Facility
515 East Gregory Drive
Champaign, IL 61820

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GSLIS Research Showcase

Join faculty and students from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science as they offer presentations and a poster session highlighting their scholarly work. Topics range from digital preservation and data curation to youth literature, from information modeling and retrieval to community informatics. A reception follows the poster session.

Friday, April 9th, 2010; 1pm - 4pm

Graduate School of Library and Information Science
501 East Daniel Street
Champaign, IL 61820

<http://www.lis.illinois.edu>

Join us! "Fifty Years of Public Computing at Illinois"

A symposium with founders, users, scholars and others about the meaning and legacy of ten projects that shaped public computing, beginning with PLATO in 1960 and including Prairienet.

Thursday and Friday, April 15-16, 2010

Alice Campbell Alumni Center
601 S. Lincoln Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801

<http://go.illinois.edu/50years>



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