

SLIS Connecting

Volume 1 | Issue 2

Article 1

September 2012

SLIS Update

J Norton

The University of Southern Mississippi, Melanie.Norton@usm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/slisconnecting>



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Norton, J (2012) "SLIS Update," *SLIS Connecting*: Vol. 1: Iss. 2, Article 1.

DOI: 10.18785/slis.0102.01

Available at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/slisconnecting/vol1/iss2/1>

This Column is brought to you for free and open access by The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in SLIS Connecting by an authorized editor of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact aquilastaff@usm.edu.

SLIS Update

By J. Norton, Director

Beginning a new academic year is always exhilarating! We start anew, greet new students, faculty, staff and of course new ideas. We are opening the 2012-2013 academic year with good news on multiple fronts; a new faculty member, with permission to seek two more tenure track faculty, a renewed American Library Association accreditation for 7 years, and we are involved in a new software pilot in Blackboard.

We are delighted to have Dr. Brenton Stewart, a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison doctoral program, join The University of Southern Mississippi's School of Library and Information Science faculty. He was awarded one the Institute of Museums and Libraries Services six inaugural Spectrum Doctoral Fellowships in 2007 through a national competition. As part of that award Dr. Stewart was supported to attend the E.J. Josey Doctoral Leadership Institute. He has also previously received funding in support of his research on the culture of print in the antebellum South and received two fellowships from the American Antiquarian Society, as well as a Holtz Travel Grant from the Holtz Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He will be attending the summer meeting of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP) the internationally respected network of book historians representing a diversity of disciplines. Dr. Stewart will attend The American Association for the History of Medicine (AAHM) conference in Atlanta, Georgia in May 2013. We are very excited to have him join us; his research areas will add significantly to our program. Dr. Stewart has already demonstrated his special skills for collaboration and leadership with the work he has undertaken to enhance our historical courses and expand the scope of our program offerings.

Other good news for the new academic year is the continued accreditation of the School of Library and Information Science by the Committee for Accreditation of the American Library Association. Our next scheduled accreditation visit will be in 2019. The efforts of the library community to be available for the external review visiting team in February of

2012, plus the participation by so many students, alums, and employers in the various surveys, phone interviews and meetings with us about the program are to be commended and surely are the reason for our continuing accreditation! Thank you all! But, to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our employers and to keep current with the ever evolving demands of practice, we absolutely must engage more alums, employers and practitioners in our curriculum construction and offerings and assessment. We will be hosting a luncheon at the Mississippi Library Association meeting Wednesday October 24 to discuss our curriculum and invite our board and practitioners to help us develop scenarios to be used for program assessment. While our students must complete a research project, we also have them take a comprehensive exam. We want to develop scenarios to present to the students in these exams for them to analyze and determine how to address the issues. By asking practitioner Involvement, we hope to be able to heighten the 'reality' factor for the students, as well as evaluate whether we are preparing the students adequately. While many of our courses incorporate case studies and current issues, having the insight of the practitioner will enhance the experience for students, while providing further guidance to our curriculum.

We met with the Advisory Board on June 1, 2012 to present information of our ongoing efforts, to report the high ranking we received through the University Priority Committee (we ranked in the top 20 of 247 programs) and to solicit information about the needs and vision of the community. We shared with the board the details of the extensive process of self-review that all of Southern Miss undertook to prepare for decisions about the future of programs. Because we ranked highly, we anticipate continued support but must always keep an eye to the future. If we are not meeting the needs of the constituencies, or we are not striving for continuous improvement, we could face a loss of support. In this discussion with the board we heard that more library directors are spending significant time dealing with personnel law, fund raising, technology complications, and community support and development concerns.

We need to meet with practitioners to understand how this information should influence our future curriculum.

A phrase we heard from the Advisory Board and are taking to heart is the need to tell 'our story.' Presenting the story of what we do and how we do it, and how it can serve the community, is key to having a common bond and exchange. Here is some of our story:

- The first library services course at Southern Miss was taught in 1926; in 2026 we will be in service for 100 years!
- SLIS was the first fully online graduate program at Southern Miss approved in 2002, we offered the first fully online graduate course in 1998, but began offering online supplemented courses in 1995.
- SLIS has always engaged in some form of distance education in order to serve the state of Mississippi. Initially sending faculty to other portions of the state, then by Interactive Video Network, and then various internet technologies.
- SLIS is one of the two largest single graduate degree programs at Southern Mississippi. There are larger departments but those are divided among multiple degrees.

- SLIS has recently implemented a graduate certificate program in Archives and Special Collections and is in the proposal stages of a graduate certificate program in Youth Literature, Services and Technology.
- Approximately half of the students enrolled in the SLIS master's program come from Mississippi. The other half comes from all over the country and overseas.
- We are piloting Collaborate, a new audio and classroom interface as part of the Blackboard Learning suite used at Southern Miss; working with the Learning Enhancement Center (LEC) we are identifying the challenges and advantages of this latest Blackboard innovation. This software will allow us to have Townhall meetings with the constituencies.
- Our undergraduate BA has been approved for online offerings, and we anticipate growth in student opportunities as a result.
- At this writing we are adding three offices within our suite, as recommended by the visiting accrediting team.

With the help of our alums and friends we can continue to write and tell the story. For more information, visit us at <http://www.usm.edu/slis>

