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Spotlights: Faculty, Alumnus, and Courses

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Spotlight – Faculty



Ellen Hunter Ruffin, Curator of de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, is an adjunct instructor at the USM School of Library and Information Science who teaches LIS 417: Literature and Related Media for Children in summer and fall.

Ellen holds a B.A. in Speech Education and an MLIS from Southern Miss and she serves on the Mississippi Book Festival Board, Magnolia Book Award Committee, Kaigler Children's Book Festival Steering Committee, and Ezra Jack Keats Executive Committee. In 2016, she was presented the USM Excellence in Librarianship Award.

Ellen continues the tradition of Dr. Lena Y. de Grummond, who wrote numerous letters to prominent children's authors and illustrators requesting primary-source materials they might otherwise throw away such as sketches, galley proofs, and other materials related to the creation and publication of their works. Today, the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection is an internationally-known research center for children's literature. The Collection holds original manuscripts and illustrations of more than 1,300 authors and illustrators, as well as more than 180,000 books including the works of Kate Greenaway, H.A. and Margret Rey (the creators of *Curious George*), and Ezra Jack Keats who wrote and illustrated *The Snowy Day*, considered to be one of the most important American books of the 20th century.

Spotlight – Alum



Cynthia Sturgis-Landrum, Director of the Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library (EVPL), holds a B.A. degree in linguistics from Northwestern University, an MLIS from USM, and is a doctoral candidate in Managerial Leadership for the Information Professions at Simmons College.

She previously held management positions at libraries in Oak Park, IL, Pittsburgh, PA, and Glendale, AZ, and has served as ALA Councilor-At-Large and as president of the Arizona Library Association. She currently serves on the PLA Equity, Diversity and Social Justice Task Force, Executive Board of the Black Caucus of ALA, and Conference Co-Chair of the 11th National Conference of African American Librarians to be held in Tulsa, OK in 2020. Her professional mission is to empower individuals to reach their highest potential so they can transform communities.



“Always intrigued by how my worlds intersect. Not only am I a proud Southern Miss SLIS alum, but I happen to be the first African American library director of one of the libraries in Dr. Griffis' research study”
[\[Study of Segregated Carnegie Public Libraries\]](#).

Spotlight—Course

LIS 417, or Literature and Related Media for Children, is a three-credit hour course that surveys traditional and modern literature for use by and with children. It focuses on children from birth to grade 6, or age 12. This class is unique in that it is a service course for students in Child and Family Studies (CFS), is eligible for use as an Accelerated Master's Option (AMO), and exposes the students to over 100 books for children.

Since it is a CFS service course, students are provided a unique opportunity to experience using books and media for children in two emphasis areas—libraries and early learning centers. In 2012, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) made collaborations between early childhood programs and public libraries a priority and early learning a designated national issue and priority (IMLS, n.d.). Two strategies of importance for public libraries and early childhood programs are:

- Early childhood programs can use local librarians as consultants on such topics as extending lesson plans; aligning books with specific topics; providing material resources like puppets, music, and props; and providing ideas on expanding literacy throughout early childhood classrooms.
- Libraries offer multi-generational programming, support literacy in the home, and are a resource for families, providing programs and services for young children, parents, and caregivers. They invite parents to join their children in activities and provide information on childrearing and ways to promote literacy in the home. Libraries also provide GED preparation resources, help with employment searches, and tools such as computers and copiers that can benefit adult learners (USDHHS, 2018).

LIS students get an emphasis on early literacy and instructional activities that they might not otherwise encounter, and CFS students learn about valuable, diverse resources offered in libraries, including early childhood learning strategies and programs.

LIS 417 is listed as an AMO course. The AMO is the opportunity for senior LIS undergrads with a 3.5 GPA or higher to take up to 9 credit hours of graduate credit in their senior year.

Students get to apply the 9 credit hours to their LIS bachelor's degree and to the MLIS at Southern Miss if they opt to pursue one. They also pay undergraduate tuition for the 9 credit hours.

Students leave LIS 417 having read 20 unique titles of their choosing, 10 board books, and 10 award books. Each week, student assess their chosen book and how they would use it; then in a live class, in small groups, students share what they have learned. Along with selected books, the faculty member shares songs, rhymes, videos, etc. to use with children thus exposing them to over 100 books.

Upon successful completion of this course, students through discussions, presentations, and assignments demonstrate a basic knowledge of:

1. The wide array of literature, materials, and media available for children;
2. Critical evaluation of books, media, and online resources for children;
3. The developmental stages of children and their right to read;
4. The presentation of materials for children face-to-face and through technology;
5. The awards available for children's materials and resources;
6. The materials useful in selecting books for children; and
7. What the current literature says about children's literature.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.usm.edu/library-information-science>

References:

Institute of Museum and Library Services (n.d.). *Head start, child care, and public libraries*. Retrieved from <https://www.imls.gov/issues/national-initiatives/head-start-child-care-and-public-libraries>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018). *Supporting children through public libraries*. Retrieved from <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/community-engagement/article/supporting-children-through-public-library-partnerships>.