

2020

SLIS Director's Report

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SLIS Director's Report
Teresa S. Welsh, Ph.D., Professor and Director

Welcome, dear scholars, to the spring/ summer 2020 issue of *SLIS Connecting*!



Director and Graduate Assistants
Ashley, Megan, Bailey, Julie, Sarah, and Phillip

We are now living in a strange, different pandemic world. For the first time in more than 50 years, the **Annual Fay B. Kaigler Children's Book Festival** was canceled in April due to COVID-19, but a virtual festival is being planned for the fall. The **British Studies** LIS class scheduled for June was also canceled but plans are being made to offer it in summer 2021.

The big news at USM this spring and summer are the strategies developed for **COVID-19**:

- After spring break, all classes at USM moved to an online format. While this caused great angst for some classes and instructors, all LIS and MLIS classes are already online, so the effect on SLIS is minimal.
- USM closed non-essential office buildings on campus and requested that non-essential faculty and staff work remotely. Everyone on campus is required to wear masks. Signage was posted in each building related to maintaining social distancing of six feet and maintaining a one-way flow of traffic through each building.

- **Faculty/staff meetings** and other College and University meetings are online, in Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

While **virtual conferences** lack face-to-face interaction and travel, they allow more opportunities for faculty to present at an international venue.

- Dr. Jennifer Steele and Dr. Welsh presented virtually at the **Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries International Conference**, based in Athens, Greece, May 26-29.
- Dr. Welsh was a virtual keynote presenter at the **International Conference on Information Management in the Modern Era**, Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, Pakistan, March 5.

“The Roots of Community: Segregated Carnegie Libraries as Spaces for Learning and Community-Making in Pre-Civil Rights America, 1900-65,” an IMLS grant-funded project by Dr. Matthew Griffis, is available at <https://aquila.usm.edu/rocoverview/>. The website includes a project overview, library profiles, historical images, an oral history archive, and a list of project publications.

SLIS students, alumni, and supporters are invited to view the “SLIS Connecting” column in *Mississippi Libraries* refereed e-journal, published quarterly by the Mississippi Library Association and available online <http://misslib.org/MLarchives>.





Melanie J. Norton, Ph.D.



**Dr. Norton, SLIS alum Ash Parsons, Dr. Welsh
Kaigler Children's Book Festival 2018**

Dr. M.J. Norton retired in May after twenty-seven years of service at The University of Southern Mississippi. She joined the SLIS faculty as Assistant Professor in 1993 after earning an MLIS and Ph.D. in Information Science from the University of North Texas. She was later promoted to Associate Professor and served as SLIS Director from 2003 to 2013. During that time, she led SLIS faculty through two successful continued ALA accreditation visits (2005 and 2012) and supported faculty in developing the first fully online program at USM.

She was invited to serve as Interim Dean of USM University Libraries from January 2013 until July 2014. In fall 2014, Dr. Norton returned to SLIS and, as a senior faculty member, worked to revise and update a technology course and served as one of the authors of a self-assessment report for the LIS undergraduate program. Dr. Norton published a book, *Introductory Concepts in Information Science* (2000, 2010). She also documented SLIS distance education history in a chapter published in *Benchmarks in Distance Education* (2003). Dr. Norton was the first reader on more than 450 successful Master's Projects between 2003 and 2013, leading to students earning their masters' degrees. Dr. Norton's teaching and research interests included academic libraries, information ethics, e-resources, information science, and technology. Dr. Norton will be greatly missed by SLIS students, faculty, and staff, but they wish her a wonderful retirement.

