Celebrating 50 years of graduating students from the Library Science Program
The iSchool continues to increase academic offerings to suit students’ needs

The iSchool is at the forefront of labor dynamics and continues to expand to best serve our students and the Arizona community now and into the future. In August 2021 the iSchool launched a new graduate degree and certificate program in Data Science. Students can now earn a M.S. or certificate in Data Science either on main campus, through AZ Online or through the global campus. The first students began the program in October and over 50 students have enrolled, with 80+ applicants looking for spots in the Spring 2022 class. The new program will admit students in spring, summer and fall semesters offering flexible online courses for those already in the field looking to expand their experience, or professionals looking to specialize. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts the number of jobs will increase by about 28% through 2026, with millions of new jobs being created for qualified applicants. The iSchool is looking forward to training the data science professionals of tomorrow in this in-demand sector. These new programs along with the recently launched undergraduate degrees in Games & Behavior (B.A.) and Game Design & Development (B.S.) are growing in popularity with students quickly. Moving into the second half of the 2021-2022 academic year, the iSchool saw nearly 4.5% growth in enrollment in classes from the previous year.

To address growing needs in the field, our faculty and staff remain focused on the mission to inspire and educate tomorrow’s information professionals, offering them appropriate tools to face challenges brought by an increased digitized society.

From the Director

As we begin a new year I wish all of you alumni, students, staff, faculty, and friends of the school good health. I have gratitude for all of you and all that you do for our school, campus, community, and across fields of information science. Your scholarly research, your work as practitioners and technological innovators, and your contributions toward educating new generations of learners is of profound importance. Because of your work and involvement with us, we have experienced an incredible amount of growth in recent years - I look forward to seeing what’s next!

- Catherine Brooks

In this issue:

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Dr. Sarah Young returns to the iSchool after a fruitful fellowship in the Netherlands, driven by a personal commitment to democratize science and innovation to inspire the next generation of lifelong learners and innovators. A noteworthy example of this effort is his most recent project titled “Just, Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive (JEDI) Aquanautics: Democratizing Innovation in the Networked Blue Economy”. The project aims to develop an open-access platform denominated The JEDI Aquanautics where researchers, governments, industry stakeholders and public in general from all over the world would be able to advance on the understanding of ocean environments and sustainable resource utilization.

A significant portion of Dr. Young’s research involved traveling around to different police stations throughout Europe and learning about police practices. However, the backdrop of the unprecedented global pandemic brought additional challenges than these initially expected. Dr. Young kept her research on track with interviews and conference presentations online, while also “reassuring anxious students through Zoom about their futures and spending time staring out the window thinking about myself and my own family,” she recalls. “There were definitely highs and lows of the experience, but the people I met while in the Netherlands showed me how to slow my life down and still accomplish my goals, making me a better person overall.”

Dr. Young managed to keep her research on track and excelled on her research while expanding academic collaborations. On top of the Marie Curie Leading Fellowship, she supported two other Horizon 2020 grants. One was ICARUS, where she helped apply design thinking methods to address urban crime throughout Europe, and SPATIAL where she helped write the grant proposal submission, a project about trustworthy, transparent and explainable AI which was awarded 5 million Euros over the summer. In addition, Dr. Young also led an undergraduate internship program about the future of work, particularly for matters of privacy and surveillance.

This year Dr. Young is excited to return to the iSchool as an instructor and fellow with the Center for Quantum Networks. “I look forward to working with my colleagues again at the iSchool to see what I can learn from them, too.”

The platform is backed by the world’s most powerful experiential supercomputer, the NSF Holodeck, along with a global aquanautics infrastructure of smart and connected “underwater tents” from which data will be collected. Dr. Burleson defines the JEDI Platform as “a world-class sociotechnical convergence catalyst. We will leverage the NSF Holodeck’s human-centered digital infrastructure to ensure equitable access to data and information tools, globally. An international community of JEDI Inventioneering ambassadors will democratize knowledge and technology, fostering new discoveries and social innovation via Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), across all aspects of ocean science.” added Dr. Burleson.

There is no doubt that the JEDI Aquanautics Platform will deliver profound and transformative solutions to optimize the role of the ocean in sustainably feeding the world’s population under changing environmental, social and climate conditions.

Dr. Leonard Brown received a grant award of $140,000 for a 1 year project, entitled, “Online Community Framework: Improving Evaluation of Training and Assessment of Health and Safety Outcomes for Contractors and Small Mine Operators.” This is an award from the U.S. Department of Labor (Brookwood Sago Grants program) to develop an app-based game and cloud data analytics tools that will help small operators manage health and safety on their mine sites. Leonard will serve as PI for this project.

Dr. Lila Bozgeyikli and Dr. Ren Bozgeyikli are Co-PIs
On a collaborative grant recently funded by The Department of Veterans Affairs. The research project includes the design and development of a virtual reality rehabilitation game for individuals with traumatic brain injury. The iSchool’s share of the grant is $263K (IDC waived).
Knowledge River (KR) is celebrating 20 years of recruiting and supporting Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) scholars. Historically, KR has focused on Indigenous and Latino scholars. Out of the over 230 KR alumni, 31% self-identify as Indigenous / Native American, 58% as Latino / Hispanic, and 11% identify as other ethnicities. With a high graduation rate, the KR Program has proven that its methods of recruitment and retention provide the foundation necessary for student success.

In addition to the workshop and their regular course work, KR scholars are actively involved in professional development activities and committees. For example, each year KR scholars are paired with a local library partner as graduate assistants and interns in the Tucson and Phoenix areas. This year, four KR scholars are working with Pima County Public Library (PCPL) in collections, outreach, patron services, and digital data management. Two other KR scholars are working with our partners at ASU Libraries. “This is a unique opportunity for our students to build experience in library skills and work with local library branches to meet their local community needs throughout Arizona,” added Berlin Loa, KR Program Manager.

Rashida Scott is working at the ASU Labriola Center with Alex Soto, an iSchool and KR alum, on collections access and outreach. Rashida’s goal is to further develop her skills in business librarianship and research instruction. Lindsey Curley is working with PCPL and one of her goals is to promote information resources through library service to help people learn. Rose Reza is a graduate assistant working in the archives at UA Special Collections with the career goal of working with and for BIOPC queer and transgender people.

Also, this year four KR scholars assisted with a recent AZLA project to survey Arizona-based BIPOC library staff. The Survey of Arizona BIPOC Library Workforce Employment Experience is now complete and a report will be submitted to the AZLA Board. The survey will help to inform the AZLA Board of the interests and experiences of BIPOC library workers in Arizona. KR Scholars are also involved with REFORMA, the national association to promote LIS to Latinos and Spanish Speaking communities. Bianca Alper, webmaster for the Tucson REFORMA Chapter, and Kristina Santiago will both be presenting (separately) at the REFORMA National Conference. REFORMA, like the iSchool, was founded in 1971 and in fact shares a history with the iSchool through former faculty member Dr. Arnulfo Trejo who is the namesake for the Trejo Memorial Scholarship.

The iSchool welcomes new faculty

This Fall, Dr. Cristian Román-Palacios and Dr. Dan Charbonneau joined the iSchool as Assistant Professors of Practice. Dr. Román-Palacios is a biologist with an outstanding record of 25 publications over the past 5 years and solid experience in machine learning, biostatistics, phylogenetics, and paleoclimatic reconstructions. His research focuses on the study of large-scale biodiversity patterns from an Eco/Evo perspective and examines the effects of climate change on species survival. Dr. Román-Palacios is currently developing two packages aiming to improve the toolbox of phylogenetic comparative methods in R and he is using machine learning algorithms to produce reliable temperature reconstructions to infer species from population-level extinctions. His research has been featured in Science news, Popular Science, CNN, and USA Today, among many other news outlets. Dr. Román-Palacios brings over his expertise in statistical tools and machine learning algorithms to teach Data Mining and co-teach Introduction to Machine Learning with Dr. Morrison. Cristian is constantly looking for students to collaborate with. He is primarily interested in advising on projects related to model-based inferences for evolutionary biology and global warming.

Dr. Charbonneau is a behavioral ecologist studying social insect behavior with expertise in biostatistics, computer vision and object tracking, and applying data engineering and data science methods to biological questions. Broadly, his research aims to understand how groups function, and often excel, because of and in spite of the individuals that compose them. He is interested in how work is allocated in decentralized complex systems, particularly in the role of ‘task-less’ workers (‘inactive’ and ‘interactive’ workers) in task allocation, and how colonies adjust workers to workload in dynamic environments. Dan has a PhD in Entomology from the University of Arizona. Prior to joining the UA’s School of Information he served as Postdoctoral Researcher at ASU and at the University of Pennsylvania.

Kudos to our Outstanding Senior Lecturer Richard Thompson.

Dr. Thompson was promoted last Fall to Senior Lecturer, after his seven years dedicated to teaching foundational programming classes in Python and running the Section Leader Program for the school.
Thanks so much for all your work and profound impact, Dr. Fulton!

Dr. Bruce Fulton’s pathway at the University of Arizona began years ago when he started his undergrad major. He recalls jumping over many different disciplines including anthropology, geophysics, math, physics, and computer science, and eventually, he graduated from the music department, with one of two people awarded a degree from the new guitar performance program. This interdisciplinarity and part of what he described as “serendipity” allowed him to have a successful career in both the corporate world and later the academic one.

Quick Facts:
- Ph.D., Major: Information Resources and Library Science
- Dr. Bruce Fulton has been teaching in the M.A. LIS since 2008
- Coordinator of Graduate Certificates
- Academic Advisor for the M.A. Library & Information Science and Graduate Certificates
- Hobbies: Photography and Jewelry work

His career as a professional musician started in the mid ’70s but his prior knowledge in math and programming led him to focus on computerizing music stores rather than on music performance. “It’s a long progression how I finally ended up in the private sector working for educational technology and doing some computerized databases and things that started to intersect with digital collections and education research,” said Dr. Fulton.

After some years working in the industry, he decided it was time to take an academic leave and pursue a master’s degree. The UA was his natural choice and this time the then School of Information Resources and Library Science (SIRLS) captivated him. Dr. Fulton recalls that a common concern with the Arizona State Library people was “finding librarians who had technology training to be able to do the modern work of libraries,” which involved dealing with metadata and databases, and being able to do cataloging with digital resources. “That was just the natural hole that I was able to help start plugging, to get people up to speed on some of the technology. I had the corporate technical training to facilitate teaching those classes and was able to write grants to fund them,” adds Dr. Fulton.

“That was at the point where all my technology training and experience were really coming into the field, and I started the PhD,” recalls Dr. Fulton. He brought over his technology instruction experience from the private sector. After many years developing programs for companies such as Microsoft and Intel, Dr. Fulton was familiar with curriculum methodologies to teach technology. Until then, those mainly hands-on approaches had not been used in library schools before. “We introduced some of those innovations and other schools quickly adapted the kind of things we introduced here at the UA. We were awarded grants from the Institute for Museum and Library Service to demonstrate these techniques and prove them, it was exciting,” recalls Dr. Fulton. This input was fundamental for the school to be able to launch its first digital curation certificate, and some others, and later to back Dr. Bryan Heidorn’s idea on transforming the SIRLS into the iSchool.

Indisputably, Dr. Fulton’s career is full of accomplishments. However, when he is asked for the most rewarding experience as faculty in the iSchool, he is certain that it is his role as advisor for the certificates and the MA program. “Being able to shepherd those people through is a great accomplishment, it gives me great satisfaction. Most students are really good students, some others struggle, but, getting all of them through their program is as important as getting a major program through the faculty senate. That made me feel good,” he recognizes.

Dr. Fulton summarizes his time at the iSchool, “I played a big role in getting many of the current academic programs in place. I’ve also taught many of our technology classes. It’s been fun and rewarding getting those programs through, fine-tuning a lot of the policy and procedures. It’s been an interesting time.”

After these years of dedicated work and a remarkable legacy to the iSchool, Dr. Fulton retires. Although still coming back to teach the occasional class, he will be dedicating more time to his hobbies. He has some list of destinations to visit with his family, he loves photography (take a look at his photostream at https://bit.ly/3ebcphi), and he has been making his own jewelry under his company name “Arbor Verde” at https://bit.ly/3yJh4QW.

40 years of amazing work at the intersection of People, Technology and Information.
This year the iSchool is pleased to host two Data Science Ambassadors

After a competitive process, doctoral students, Laura Werthman and Sarah Stueve were appointed by the Data Science Institute as 2021-2022 Data Science Ambassadors (DSA) for the University of Arizona, representing the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

As DSAs Sarah and Laura help students, researchers and educators with problems and questions related to data science including collecting, cleaning, processing, and analyzing data; or just starting a project. They share the motivation to promote data science literacy and make high-level data science tools accessible to university members that will assist them with taking their research to the next level. In doing so, Laura and Sarah have been running online R and Python “walk-in” consulting every Tuesday from 9 to 11 am.

Additionally, they have been active in supporting on-campus activities aimed at increasing training either for beginner, intermediate, and advanced data scientists. Sarah collaborated in a workshop on Machine Learning on High-Performance Computing (HPC) and co-hosted with Dr. Adriana Picoral an R and Python Code-Along where they tackle the same problem in both R and Python. Laura co-organized the latest Women in Data Science (WiDS) Conference on campus and hosted an introductory workshop on Social Network Analysis in R. For the second half of the school year they will be assisting with the organization of both the Research Bazaar and the WiDS conference.

On top of the regular academic workload of their PhD, Sarah and Laura have been doing an amazing job at supporting the cross-disciplinary network of data scientists on-campus, we are proud of your dedicated work!

Congratulations to these outstanding UArizona iSchool Graduates
iSchool alumni Sebastian Deimen is grateful for the learning opportunities the iSchool offered to help him acquire the data science skill set required to land a job in the field. Sebastian graduated last semester and he is currently working as a Data Scientist at U-Haul. For Sebastian, the curricular program at the iSchool “allows you to deepen your pure data science experience in many ways, from a broader concept overview in data mining up to deepening those concepts in extra classes like a neural net class or bayesian inference, just to name some.”

Sebastian’s recruiter and supervisor Dr. Nicholas DiRienzo also commented on the outstanding aspects Sebastian demonstrated over other candidates for the position. “Sebastian possesses a key mix of data and computational skills, along with the ability to apply those skills to answer business questions, and how to contextualize those results into a bigger organizational picture.” On this aspect, Dr. DiRienzo shared a piece of advice for students pursuing a future career in data science for the industry. “It is essential that data scientists understand that success depends on defining a business question in a way it has impact, executing the data science project, all while clearly communicating what is being done, and what the outcomes are to various levels of the business.”

iSchool alumni, Dongfang Xu, PhD, is now a postdoc research fellow at Boston Children’s Hospital & Harvard Medical School. He is currently using natural language processing techniques to extract and analyze information from biomedical text.

iSchool MLIS alumni Jaime Valenzuela was selected in a highly-competitive process to attend the University of Virginia’s Rare Book School course on Law Books: History and Connoisseurship https://bit.ly/3286S8P. The week-long conference in August was led by the renowned Rare Book Librarian at Yale’s Law School. In addition, Jaime authored a chapter in a book about the future of libraries https://bit.ly/32mzYAM, and co-authored a chapter on the very first open-access textbook for law librarianship by Cas Laskowski https://lawlibrarianship.pressbooks.com/

Don't forget to update your personal contact information at: https://tinyurl.com/uaischoolalumni

Stay connected to the iSchool on LinkedIn with updates, career resources, and information from professional organizations. Come share your updates, accomplishments, and network with us.

iSchool alumni across the globe!

https://www.linkedin.com/in/uofa-ischool/ Alumni Group: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13807706/
iSchool business manager Ben Beshaw was awarded the Outstanding Staff Award from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

We are lucky to have Ben on our team! Congratulations!

Welcome to our new staff members

MANUEL ACUNA
Program coordinator

ERIC GONZALES
Administration Manager

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