

School of Information Science Annual Report

Academic Year 2023-2024

College of Communication and Information

The University of Kentucky

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Introduction

The School of Information Science (SIS) comprises 44 full time faculty members, 4 staff members, more than 245 undergraduates, and almost 280 graduate students. The School offers an undergraduate minor in information science, a major in information communication technology, and two master's degrees in information communication technology and library science. Our faculty includes world-renown scholars and leading researchers in instructional communication, education, computer science, technology, and library and information sciences.

During this academic year, the School achieved substantial progress across various areas. This report showcases accomplishments in enrollment, curriculum development, new initiatives, scholarly pursuits, and student and alumni achievements. These results underscore the School's collective strategic thinking and teamwork, reflecting its commitment to academic excellence and quality education.

SIS BY THE NUMBERS

3 degrees

44 faculty

4 staff

more than **245**
undergraduate students

more than **270**
graduate students

Enrollment and Graduation

SIS enrolled a total of 522 students in the fall of 2023, comprising 245 undergraduate students and 277 graduate students (ICT 46 and LIS 231). Enrollment remains stable since 2022 when it was 518 students (Table 1). Enrollment in the ICT undergraduate program seems to be on an upward trajectory while enrollment in the ICT master's seems to have plateaued at just under 50 and library science enrollment having dropped the last couple of years. Early numbers for the LIS program for fall 2024 are encouraging and suggest a final enrollment at least on par with fall 2023.

Table 1: Enrollment data in degree-granting programs

	Fall 21	Fall 22	Fall 23
ICT Undergraduate	220	227	245
ICT graduate	57	46	46
LIS graduate	286	245	231
Total	563	518	522

The School's Instructional Communication Program offers four undergraduate courses (CIS110, CIS111, CIS112, and CIS300) in the composition and communication area of the University of Kentucky's general education program (UK Core). The enrollment in CIS courses has increased over the past years (Table 2). Specifically, between fall 2022 and fall 2023, total enrollment in those CIS courses rose by 45%, reaching 2,429 students. This enrollment surge suggests increased demand for those courses, representing the College's values to the University of Kentucky's educational mission. It also reflects the ICR faculty's dedication to supporting students throughout their academic journey.

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Table 2: CIS Course Enrollment

	2021	2022	2023
CIS110	898	1347	1379
CIS111	156	204	209
CIS112	305	313	361
CIS300	315	389	480
Total	1,674	2,253	2,429

A total of 138 students graduated in Summer 2023, Fall 2023, and Spring 2024, 184 students receiving the BS/BA in ICT and 115 receiving a master's degree in ICT and LIS (Table 3).

Table 3: Graduates in three semesters in AY

	Summer 23	Fall 23	Spring 24	Total
ICT undergraduates	23	62	99	184
ICT graduates	3	4	10	17
LIS graduates	12	38	48	98
Certificate	1*		1	2

*Student's primary degree was housed outside CI.

Findings from 81 graduates in the MSLS program demonstrate their high perception of the program quality, with 98.8% (80 students) agreeing on the overall quality of program classes and 97.5% (79 students) affirming the quality of their program experience.

The School strives to offer students an exceptional academic experience. The School's commitment to program excellence is supported by exit survey data. For instance, findings from 81 graduates in the MSLS program demonstrate their high perception of the program quality, with 98.8% (80 students) agreeing on the overall quality of program classes and 97.5% (79 students) affirming the quality of their program experience. Among 81 respondents, 63 graduates (77.8%) indicated that they had accepted or intended to accept a position at the time of graduation. Such high job placement rate and the high perception of the program quality are indicative of the program quality for the workforce.

Achievements of Faculty, Students, and Alumni

Our faculty members are very productive researchers, conducting impactful and meaningful research across a variety of fields. During this academic year, SIS faculty made intellectual contributions and advanced the School's standing as a leading research hub.

Award-Winning Faculty



Dr. Sarah Barriage



Dr. Shannon Oltmann



Dr. Shannon Crawford-
Barniskis



Dr. Luke LeFebvre



Dr. Sherali Zeadally

- Grant activities - Three faculty members (Drs. Maria Cahill, Renee Kaufman, & Shannon Oltmann) obtained three new federal grants (two IMLS grants and one NSF planning grant). Three faculty (Drs. Maria Cahill, Yu Chi, and Daniela Di Giacomo) were awarded three UK internal grants (Land-grant, UNITE Humanities, & SUPRA Pilot grant).
- Faculty recognition –Six faculty received awards validating the importance of research and scholarly work.
 - Dr. Sarah Barriage received “the best paper award” by ASIS&T, Information & Learning Sciences SIG
 - Dr. Shannon Crawford-Barniskis received the ASIST SIG USE Early Career Best Paper Award
 - Dr. Shannon Oltmann received the Kentucky Library Association Intellectual Freedom Award and was selected as a University research professor
 - Dr. Luke LeFebvre received the National Communication Association’s best paper award
 - Ms. Lesley LeRoy received the National Communication Association’s best paper award
 - Dr. Sherali Zeadally received the IEEE Smart Computing STC Life-Career Award for 2023 and the SEC Faculty Achievement Award
- Professional and scholarly activities
 - A new research group, Community-based, Applied and Participatory Research Group (CAPR), was formed by six of our faculty members. This group joins YISE (Youth, Information, Spaces & Experiences) as the second School-based research group. These research groups represent the faculty’s keen endeavor to expand the breadth of their research investigations and open new opportunities and share different perspectives. As

interdisciplinary collaboration, these research groups make the School a more unique research hub.

- Dr. Sean Burns received UK Libraries the Open Educational Resources Grant to write an open access textbook.
- Four faculty members (Drs Maria Cahill with Derek Daskalakes, Shannon Oltmann, and Brian Real) offered professional webinars for students, scholars, and practitioners, whose topics included book challenges and intellectual freedom, historical dis and mis information campaigns, and digital storytelling practice.
- Tenure and promotion - Five junior faculty members applied for promotion and tenure during the 2023-2024 academic year. All cases were successful. Four faculty (Drs. Sarah Barriage, Daniela Di Giacomo, Fatima Espinoza-Vasquez, and Luke LeFebvre) were promoted to the Associate professor rank. Dr. Meredith King was promoted to Senior Lecturer.

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Students are engaged in the programs, building a strong learning community. Individual students and alumni had significant achievements in personal career development and their professional fields. Here are some highlights of outstanding performance and the growth of students and alumni.

- ICT undergraduate students founded a new student organization, “Girls Who Code.” Graduate students in the MSLS program are very active in the professional student chapter, the American Library Association UK Student Chapter. The ALA student chapter hosted the 2024 SIS student conference.
- MSLS student, Sarah Henckel, was awarded a 2024-2025 ALSC/Bound-to-Stay-Bound Books Scholarship. The Bound to Stay Bound Books (BTSB) Scholarship is given to individuals who intend to pursue an MLS or advanced degree and who plan to work in library service to children.
- ICT student Ruben Valencia Jr. was inducted into The University of Kentucky Nu Circle of national leadership honor society Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK). ODK recognizes superior leadership and exemplary character and encourages collaboration among members across the five phases celebrated by the society: scholarship, athletics, service, communications, and arts.
- ICT student Daniel M. Jackey earned the CompTIA Network+ certification. This certificate emphasizes cybersecurity and demands a strong grasp of networking and security protocols. It holds significant value in the industry, particularly for roles related to cybersecurity and information security according to the Certification website.
- Lauren Abner (MSLS, 2011) was honored in *Library Journal*’s 2024 class of Movers & Shakers.
- Reinette Jones (MSLS, 1988) was profiled by UKNow in its “Women Making History” series. They featured her work beginning the Notable Kentucky African Americans Database.
- Robert Gieszl (MSLS, 2004) serves as the current president of the Kentucky Library Association (2023-2024).

- Colleen Harris (MSLS 2006) was selected for Dean of Texas A&M international University Library.
- Carly Jessup (MSLS, 2022) was one of the 46 American Library Association's Emerging Leaders for 2023.
- Emily Northcutt (MSLS, 2001) received the 2023 Outstanding School Media Librarian award from Kentucky Association of School Librarians Conference and the 2023 Excellence in Teaching award from the Kentucky Library Association.
- Valerie Perry (MSLS 1994), current UK employee, received the Rose L. Vormelker Award for service to the Special Library Association and information professionals.
- The LIS program awarded Patsy Carruthers with the Trospen Award.
- The ICT program recognized their outstanding junior, Jeremy Brentzel and outstanding senior, Ana Sampaio.

Award-Winning Students



Lauren Abner



Carly Jessup



Emily Northcutt



Valerie Perry

Curriculum Updates

The faculty took several new initiatives which are either ready to launch in fall 2024 or will seek approval from the College and the University for implementation this coming academic year. These new initiatives reflect our commitment to growing the School, the College, and the University. Curriculum updates and initiatives are summarized below.

- The faculty proposed four new courses for UK Core approved by the School and pending at the University level. These courses were proposed to fill the gaps of course offering to meet the university requirements in the college: Social Sciences Technology and the Human Experience (CIS 101 Technology and the Human Experience); Humanities ICT ethics (Ethics of Information & Communication Technologies); Quantitative Foundations (ICT Computational Communication); Humanities ICT through the Ages (ICT111 Information Communication Technology Through the Ages).

- University Scholars Program for ICT and LIS – the faculty proposed the USP, a bachelor’s and master’s degree, for the ICT program and the LIS program in the spring of 2024. This program is an excellent opportunity for motivated students to fast-track their advanced degree.
- The ICT program conducted an environmental analysis to review the status of the program and help faculty discuss the strategic priorities of the program. Those priorities will be used to refine the curriculum and reset the program to ensure the ICT program is responsive to the changing information environment.
 - For the ICT undergraduate curriculum, ICT305-001 was revised.
 - ICT faculty approved including ICT205 Issues in Information and Communication Technology Policy as one course in a new undergraduate certificate (Certificate in Artificial Intelligence) proposed by the Department of Computer Science. This collaboration will benefit students in our ICT program to obtain the certificate.
 - Two Bioinformatics courses were approved to be cross-listed with the ICT graduate curriculum: BMI 730 Principles of Clinical Informatics with ICT 730 Principles of Clinical Informatics and BMI 731 Biomedical Information Retrieval with ICT 731 Biomedical Information Retrieval.
- LIS faculty conducted a curriculum mapping between the MSLS program curriculum and the professional competences to identify areas for enhancement. In addition, a technology course audit was performed to make the curriculum remain effective, relevant, and aligned with changing technology applications in professional practice. As a result, the MSLS program will pilot a special topics course to provide students with a broad technology survey course.
- Faculty members introduced four special topics courses to tackle current issues or enhance the existing curriculum. Those courses are:
 - Research methods for librarians
 - Programming and outreach of libraries and archives
 - Critical design of information
 - Policy and ethics in ICT

The faculty will continue to examine the curriculum critically in the next year to ensure the ICT and LIS programs are responsive to the changing information environment.

School Highlights

Creating a supportive academic environment for students and faculty is a top priority of the School.

Creating a supportive academic environment for students and faculty is a top priority of the School. Some steps the school took last year include as follows:

- ICT faculty and staff organized a pre-ICT major welcome event in October to welcome new incoming undergraduate students to the ICT major for interaction and relationship building between students and faculty.
- Dr. Brian Real organized two events of library tours to UK Libraries Special Collections and to Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives for students in our MSLS program. The events provided a unique opportunity for students to connect socially with peers and professionals and foster a sense of belonging.
- Ms. Ashley DeWitt partnered with UK Libraries to provide career service webinars for LIS students and hosted a research speed dating for SIS faculty and UK Libraries staff in the spring semester.
- The LIS annual Advisory council meeting was held in April, 2024.
- Three program coordinator positions for the School were created. These appointments underscore our dedication to nurturing faculty development, enhancing leadership abilities, and fostering an environment of growth, innovation, and collaboration.
- The School underwent a new faculty search for three positions at the tenure track assistant professor rank. All searches were successful and three new faculty will join the School in August 2024.
- A new staff member (Academic Administrative Associate) was hired in June 2024.
- The School launched its new website in October 2023. A redesign of the School Websites has made it easier for users to explore content, aiming to increase traffic. For the new website, the School will add faculty research areas and student work to highlight the school's niche within academia.
- The student recruitment efforts in the School continue at a high level. The School employed multiple approaches for promotion and recruitment.
 - SIS partnered with UK Online to manage Google Ads and to facilitate online information sessions. We also partnered with UK Online to produce two videos of LIS program and ICT program for marketing. We will continue our partnership with UK Online.
 - SIS has been proactive marketing to Kentucky academic libraries and public libraries (from spring 2024). Our outreach will be expanded with email campaigns to other institutions including colleges and universities and school districts in Kentucky as well as professional organizations in other states.
 - Digital ad campaigns were placed on *Digital Inclusion* (for DEI) and in May issue of *Library Journal*.
 - The School also sponsored annual conferences of major professional associations including ALISE, ASIST, and iConference.
- School strategic planning work in progress
 - The School has been working on developing its strategic plan. Faculty and staff meetings were held with an external consultant. The process has helped identify areas for enhancement and innovation. A strategic plan will encourage continuous improvement of the School.

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Major Items for the Next Year

- Student recruitment - the School will need to focus on recruitment and marketing for the programs aggressively. In particular, due to many affordable online programs emerging in LIS, the School faces tremendous difficulties to draw more students. However, the faculty has been discussing potential ways to reverse the current enrollment trend including developing new educational initiatives. The faculty will continuously explore ways to increase enrollment.
- Faculty hiring – The School successfully hired three new junior faculty in spring 2024. However, Dr. Jeff Huber, the former director, retired in Spring 2024 after serving 15 years and Dr. Yu Chi resigned in spring 2024 to relocate to another institution. Expertise and teaching areas of Drs. Huber and Chi include Health Information and Librarianship in which the School has received high national rankings. Their service and contribution to the School is much appreciated. This means that the School needs to replace their expertise with new faculty to maintain and expand the existing level of Health Information program. Dr. Brandi Frisby, a full professor in the ICT program, has been appointed as Associate Provost for Academic Affairs since May 2024. She will dedicate herself to the new administrative position at the University level entirely. In other words, the School needs to find new faculty to cover her faculty duties during her tenure as Associate Provost for the ICT program. Taking this opportunity, the School can make an effort to build relevant expertise in new areas.
- LIS Research Seminar VIII: Telling Library Stories – The School will host the national event on September 16-18, 2024, on campus. The event will provide the School with a huge opportunity to foster community connections, promote the School, and support academic goals of the School.
- ALA COA Accreditation - The MSLS program will undergo the ALA COA accreditation review in spring 2026. This accreditation will reaffirm the MSLS program's status of academic excellence, demonstrating compliance with the national standard in library and information science. As part of the preparation for accreditation, the faculty will complete its self-study during the upcoming academic year.

Conclusion

The School of Information Science has made much progress in many aspects since last academic year. Our achievements and progress contribute to the mission and value of the College of Communication and Information and the University of Kentucky. The field of information science is highly relevant in the 21st century, and our efforts made position the School well to attract new students. The expertise of the faculty, the strong support from staff, and the commitment of all to the School will help us reach the next level of excellence in the next academic year.