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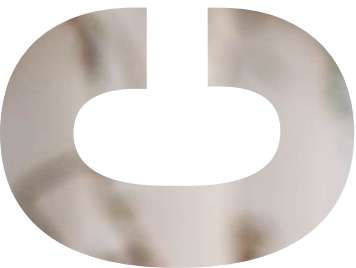
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# NEWSLETTER

VOL. 3, NO. 1 SPRING 2025



UNIVERSITY of  
**SOUTH FLORIDA**



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The University of South Florida School of Information (USF SI) newsletter brings together departmental stories, events, and news important to information professionals. Each volume contains two issues published in the Fall and Spring. The Spring 2025 issue is Vol. 3, No. 1 of the publication. Please contact [si@usf.edu](mailto:si@usf.edu) for questions, feedback, or more information.

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VOL. 3, NO. 1 | SPRING 2025

# Building a Successful Future: A Welcome Message from the President of the Florida Library Association

## WELCOME!

My name is Jorge Perez, a proud member of the USF Class of 2004 and the current president of the Florida Library Association (FLA). Yes, that's my original student ID from my days in library school. With my father being a barber and having spent a lifetime under strict rules about keeping my hair short, I finally embraced my hair growth exploration era.

Speaking of growth and exploration, this is your moment to flourish as you embark on your journey in a profession with a rich history and a strong community.

### Here is the advice I wish I was given when a student:

- ✓ *Take the fieldwork course (LIS 6946 Practicum). It allows for many opportunities such as networking, future recommendations and referrals to full-time positions, and insight into what library area you would like to thrive in.*
- ✓ *Join professional associations as a student such as FLA or ALA. I joined after graduating and missed out on a lot of wonderful resources.*
- ✓ *Look for student scholarships to attend annual conferences. There are three annually given by FLA.*
- ✓ *Present a poster or a lightning round at a conference. As a student, you bring skills and unique perspectives.*
- ✓ *Join a professional association committee and meet colleagues across the state.*
- ✓ *Find mentoring programs. There are many skilled librarians eager to take you under their wing and be a resource for your talents.*



***Blast from the past!***

Know this; you are joining a network of colleagues who take pride in our shared values and professional legacy.

We are here for you!

**Jorge Perez**





The Florida Library Association (FLA) Awards & Honors Committee is pleased to announce that the application period for the **2025 FLA Scholarships will open Sunday, December 1, 2024**. The scholarships will be awarded in the spring of 2025, and scholarship recipients will be recognized at the 2025 Annual Conference at the Hilton Doubletree SeaWorld Orlando on Friday, May 16.

### **Available Scholarships:**

Three (3) FLA Library & Information Science graduate scholarships (At least \$1,000 each):

- The Florida State University MSLIS graduate program scholarship
- The Bernadette Storck University of South Florida scholarship
- Minority scholarship for MLS graduate students attending either school\*

*\*To qualify for a Minority Scholarship, the candidate must belong to one of the following racial or ethnic groups: Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern/North African, or American Indian/Alaska Native.*

*If qualified, applicants may apply for the Minority Scholarship in addition to the scholarship designated for their graduate school.*

### **Eligibility Requirements**

- Individuals who are graduating in May 2025 are not eligible due to the fact that payment is made to the graduate school for the following semester.
- *To apply, all scholarship recipients must meet the following requirements:*
  - Be a Florida resident
  - Have a current active membership in the FLA
  - Applicants must include verification of membership as part of the application packet. For proof of membership, contact FLA at [admin@flalib.org](mailto:admin@flalib.org).
  - Have some work or volunteer experience in a Florida library
  - Have received admittance to the FSU or USF library/information graduate degree program

***If awarded a scholarship, applicant must agree to the following requirements:***

- Commit to work in a Florida library for a minimum of one year after graduation
- Commit to serving on an FLA committee during the year following graduation

***Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) How to Apply***

**Deadline for submission of the application packet is FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2025.**

- Applications received by 11:59 PM EST on Thursday, January 23, 2025, will be permitted to make corrections to the application package should deficiencies or omissions be identified by the Scholarship Subcommittee. Applicants submitting after January 23 will not have the privilege of making corrections or supplementing the application with missing information.
- Complete application packets should be submitted online. All supporting documents must be uploaded as individual PDF attachments to the online form.
- Paper submissions will **not** be accepted.

***Essays***

There are two essay questions as part of the application. Each should be answered individually and be 300-500 words in length. You will be able to type/paste them into the application OR upload them as PDF attachments to the application.

- *Why are you entering librarianship?*
- *What are your career goals with respect to Florida libraries?*
- *Letters of Recommendation*

***Submit three professional recommendations.***

These may be from a present or past supervisor, colleague, professor, or another person who can speak to your professional abilities. Each letter must be signed by the recommender. Letters should address all of the following points:

- Length of time they have known you
- Capacity in which they have known you (i.e., supervisor, co-worker)
- Their assessment of your potential as a library professional
- Your potential to graduate from the library/information graduate program
- Additional Required Documents

***Current resume***

***Proof of enrollment (Letter of acceptance or current transcript)***

***Proof of current FLA membership (For proof of membership contact [admin@flalib.org](mailto:admin@flalib.org))***

Please direct questions regarding the application process, to Ken Frankel, FLA Scholarships Subcommittee Chair, [frankel@fau.edu](mailto:frankel@fau.edu)

# CONGRATULATIONS, DR. LONG!



Congratulations, Dr.  
Long!

***Please join us in offering heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Alicia K. Long on earning her Ph.D. in Information Science and Learning Technologies from the University of Missouri. Dr. Long has been a long-time adjunct and is now a visiting professor at USF's School of Information.***

***Dr. Long's achievement is a testament to her dedication and advocacy for inclusive library services that address the unique needs of children and young adults from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as her passion for advancing knowledge in the field of information and science.***

***We are overjoyed to celebrate Dr. Long on her remarkable accomplishment!***

## Q&A WITH MS. TOMARO TAYLOR

BY: ADRIANNA LA KAM, MLIS CANDIDATE AND MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS GRADUATE ASSISTANT AT USF SCHOOL OF INFORMATION

I had the pleasure of speaking with USF Alum Ms. Tomaro Taylor, an accomplished archivist and the newly elected president of the Society of American Archivists (SAA). With a wealth of experience spanning over 20 years, Ms. Taylor currently serves as the Director of Special Collections at USF Libraries. Her journey into archival work has been both dynamic and inspiring.



During our conversation, she shared insights into her fascinating career path, the importance of mentorship, and her plans to drive meaningful change within SAA. As president of SAA, Ms. Taylor is taking on a leadership role at a critical time for the archival profession. She envisions a future where archives embrace emerging technologies, such as AI, while maintaining a deep connection to local communities through grassroots archiving efforts. In both her roles, Ms. Taylor speaks to the importance of fostering professional collaboration, building strategic networks and forums, and creating resources that empower archivists to navigate the evolving landscape.

In this Q & A, Ms. Taylor discusses her professional milestones, the current challenges and opportunities within the field of archives, and her advice for the next generation of MLIS graduates.



Promoting the value and diversity of archives and archivists.



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College of Arts & Sciences



**Q** *Can you share what inspired you to pursue a career in archives and librarianship?*

**A** Ms. Taylor: “My interest in archives began when I was working as a visiting instructor librarian. Before attending library school, I had an interest in the museum field. I told my mentor at the time that I aspired to work in museums or special collections within libraries and wanted to learn more about those areas. During my MLIS program, I worked as a visiting instructor librarian in a library and was offered a temporary position in special collections. What was supposed to be a short-term assignment turned into a permanent role. It all fell into place. When I found archival work, I knew this was the direction I wanted to go in. It offered the hands-on experience I had been seeking in the museum field.”

**Q** *What has been your most rewarding experience in the field of archives?*

**A** Ms. Taylor: “There are so many rewarding experiences I could point to, especially at this point in my career. One of the most fulfilling aspects has been giving back to the professional community. I’ve had the opportunity to serve on various committees and mentor students in both general librarianship and specialized fields. Watching students and new faculty members grow professionally is incredibly rewarding. Mentorship is a big part of that work. It’s those things—being involved in the professional community, working with students in the field to help them grow professionally, and supporting new librarians in their development to ensure they are well-positioned in their careers—that have been the most rewarding experiences of my career.”

**Q** *Are there any projects or initiatives from your career that stand out as milestones?*

**A** Ms. Taylor: “One major project I’m especially proud of is Concentric Circles: Collaborative Community Archiving in Tampa Heights and Sulphur Springs. This is a grant-funded initiative through the Mellon Foundation. The project’s focus is archiving these neighborhoods, which have seen significant demographic and socioeconomic changes. We’re working to document and preserve the historical materials of these communities, especially as gentrification displaces many long-standing residents. Our work with the Sulphur Springs Museum and the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association is a key part of this effort.”

**“When I found archival work, I knew this was the direction I wanted to go in. It offered the hands-on experience I had been seeking in the museum field.”**

**Q** *How has your previous experience prepared you for the role of president of the Society of American Archivists?*

**A** Ms. Taylor: “My experience working with different archival associations has prepared me well for this leadership role. I've been fortunate to develop a broad perspective on archival work based on the range of issues I've dealt with and managed at that level.”

**Q** *What are your top priorities as the newly elected president of the Society of American Archivists (SAA)?*

**A** Ms. Taylor: “SAA has been in a period of transition for the last few years. My main goal is to improve the member experience and refocus our strategic goals. One of the biggest initiatives we're launching is the *Future of the Profession Presidential Forum*. Over the course of two years, we plan to have quarterly forums to discuss big topics in the profession, starting with AI and continuing to other topics as they unfold. These quarterly forums will be member-led, bringing together experts from different sections of the archival profession to discuss emerging trends. I want this to be a collaborative process—something that outlasts my presidency and adds real value for our members. I'm a fixer. I am always looking to see how we can make things better. How do we ensure success, and what assessments are we taking? I approach my daily job and service to the community in this way.”

**Q** *What challenges do you anticipate in your role, and how do you plan to address them?*

**A** Ms. Taylor: “One major challenge is managing change. At USF, we've expanded rapidly in the past six years, and we're now seeing a shift in the types of materials coming in. Where we once faced logistical challenges from a high volume of archival materials, we're now navigating changes in the kinds of collections we're receiving. It's an exciting but challenging time as we grow. We've also added a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) team, which will bring new skills and approaches to our work. I'm excited to see how they contribute to our broader impact.”

**“ I'm a fixer. I am always looking to see how we can make things better. How do we ensure success, and what assessments are we taking? I approach my daily job and service to the community in this way. ”**

**Q** *What emerging trends in the archival world excite you the most?*

**A** Ms. Taylor: “I wouldn’t say it’s an emerging trend, but I’m excited to see the growing recognition of community archiving. For years, non-traditional archival work required a lot of education and advocacy to get external stakeholders on board. In the last five to ten years, people have really started to understand the importance of preserving community histories, especially those of underrepresented groups or areas experiencing gentrification and displacement. We are preserving the stories of these communities before they’re lost. We need to continue educating people on the importance of archival work.”

**Q** *What advice would you give to students aspiring to do archival work?*

**A** Ms. Taylor: “I’ve given the same advice for over 20 years: volunteer, work somewhere, talk with professionals, and get direct exposure to the field you want to pursue, whether it’s archival work or another area. If I had just read about archival work, I probably would have never pursued it—it sounds boring. I don’t think I would have been interested. However, being exposed to it, being in that environment, and working alongside people who are passionate about what they do showed me the importance of preserving certain types of materials for research and teaching use. It really opened my eyes to how fun it is. For students taking their next steps forward, you really have to get into the weeds of it. I encourage them to ask people what they love about their job and the work they do.”

**Q** *Any final thoughts on continuing education or career growth?*

**A** Ms. Taylor: “Don’t be afraid to go back to school or continue your education. I didn’t take an archival class until after I had graduated and started working in the field, but it inspired me to keep learning. If you’re starting in a new area, re-educate yourself and stay updated. And when applying for jobs, don’t count yourself out. If you meet some of the key qualifications, apply. You never know what opportunities might open up.”

**“In the last five to ten years, people have really started to understand the importance of preserving community histories, especially those of underrepresented groups or areas experiencing gentrification and displacement.”**

## Dr. Amelia Anderson Awarded the ALISE / Connie Van Fleet Award for Research Excellence in Public Library Services to Adults

ALISE/Connie Fleet Award

USF Professor, Dr. Amelia Anderson, was the recipient of the **ALISE Connie Van Fleet Award**. This award recognizes LIS research concerning services to adults in public libraries.

When reflecting on the aspects of Dr. Anderson's research that most resonated with the award committee, Dr. Anderson explained, "The committee considered my research broadly, but focused particularly on two of my current projects."

The first of which was her role as managing co-Principal Investigator (PI) on an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant exploring the experiences of adult patrons with disabilities in public library makerspaces through inclusive practices.

Makerspaces have become a hallmark of modern public libraries. Dr. Anderson discusses the opportunities makerspaces provide for patrons with disabilities, stating, "By their very nature, makerspaces have the potential to be particularly inclusive learning spaces, allowing patrons to learn, explore, and build community in a low-pressure environment."

This inclusivity is especially important in public libraries, which strive to serve diverse communities, including those with disabilities. Despite this, gaps remain in the literature regarding their accessibility. As noted by Dr. Anderson, "While some case studies have explored individual makerspace accessibility, little work has been done to study experiences and barriers in the public library makerspace for adults with disabilities."

Dr. Anderson went on to say, "Despite laws that require equitable access, library users with disabilities often find their needs unmet." To address this, Dr. Anderson's grant used inclusive practices to study the experiences of adult patrons with disabilities in public library makerspaces. Dr. Anderson explained, "From grant findings, we then created a list of practical guidelines for creating more accessible, inclusive public library makerspaces for all."

A manuscript illustrating the findings of *Accessibility in Making* has been published in *Library Quarterly*. Beyond this scholarly publication, her research has been shared widely. Along with her co-PI, Dr. Abigail Phillips, Dr. Anderson has presented her findings on the American Libraries "Call Number" podcast, the American Library Association (ALA) annual conference, ALA's LibLearnX conference, the Public Library Association's annual conference, the Florida Library Association's annual conference, and the Texas Library Association's virtual "Talks." Dr. Anderson's work is also featured in *American Libraries* magazine, which can be found [here](#).





Dr. Anderson's second project delves into how public libraries recognize Autism Acceptance Month. She explained, "This study explored what services public libraries in the US are providing about autism in the month of April, and what language they use to describe it." Dr. Anderson's results revealed that while few public libraries host autism events in April, those that do share valuable information with the community and create opportunities for autistic patrons to connect.

However, Dr. Anderson found that the event descriptions didn't use language that reflected the preferences of autistic individuals. She noted, "Many event descriptions use language that is not in alignment with autistic individuals' preferences, and opportunities for autistic patrons of all ages are limited. Results from this study highlight gaps in public library programming, with implications for providing better services around Autism Acceptance Month."

The study highlights a mismatch in language use, limited input from the autistic community, and a lack of events for celebrating and including autistic adults. "Autism is lifelong," said Dr. Anderson. "Much of what is currently being done is for children, and what is provided for adults is for caregivers or provides information about autism to the general public. This leaves out adults who are actually autistic." Dr. Anderson questions, "Are we celebrating without including?" These points are made in her study to help practicing public librarians better understand this issue.

Dr. Anderson's work is being published in an upcoming scholarly publication in the *Journal of Library & Information Science (JOLIS)*, and as a blog post for the ALA Store, which can be found [here](#). Dr. Anderson also presented this study at the 2024 Public Library Association virtual conference.

Dr. Anderson's ongoing research in this area can best be described by the award committee's remarks, recognizing: "At the broadest level, Dr. Anderson's research meaningfully contributes to a better understanding of how public libraries can remove barriers to, and enhance their services for, the adult disability community." As Dr. Anderson continues her work, she states, "In general, my research has emphasized my approach as an ally, and I believe that this is reflected in the number of both researchers and practitioners receptive to collaboration and engagement."

# USF Instructors, Dr. Alicia Long and Dr. Karen Kaufmann, Present at the Library Research Seminar 8 Hosted at the University of Kentucky



## Telling Library Stories

USF School of Information instructors, Dr. Alicia K. Long and Dr. Karen Kaufmann, represented the university at the Library Research Seminar 8 (LRS 8), held at the University of Kentucky on September 16, 2024. The seminar, organized by the American Library Association's (ALA) Library Research Round Table (LRRT), brings together library practitioners, scholars, and students to explore emerging research in library and information science.

This year's seminar theme, *Telling Library Stories*, emphasized the importance of using research stories to reflect and enhance library practice. According to Dr. Kaufmann, the theme focused on “how to use data to tell compelling stories, how research stories reflect library practice, how library stories impact research and development, and how libraries can tell stories to advocate for themselves and their communities.”

Dr. Kaufmann, a past chair of the LRRT from 2022-2023, participated in a panel alongside Dr. John Budd and Dr. Clarence Maybee, discussing Information Literacy as a New Discipline. Dr. Long presented as part of a three-state research team studying programs for young children with disabilities, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The project, called SCALE, was led by Dr. Maria Cahill, Dr. Denice Adkins, and Dr. Bobbie Sartin Long.



To learn and explore more about LRS 8, provided is the link to the [program schedule](#).

# DR. HAGEN'S FULBRIGHT JOURNEY TO JAPAN

Fulbright Trip



Dr. Hagen at the Union of Library & Information-Media Studies, University of Tsukuba

We had the privilege of catching up with Dr. Hagen to discuss her recent Fulbright U.S. Scholar experience in Japan. Dr. Hagen was selected for this prestigious award during the 2024–2025 academic year and has since embarked on a groundbreaking research project exploring the dynamic relationship between human supervision and artificial intelligence.

Her journey took her to Japan, a global leader in AI innovation, where she engaged with students, scholars, and industry leaders, gaining cultural insights that have enriched her work. Here, Dr. Hagen shares the highlights of her trip, research projects, and the beauty of living in Japan while meeting local members of the community.

## *Arrival*

I arrived in Japan on July 1st for my Fulbright. My host, Morishima-sensei, introduced me to his lab meetings and seminars immediately. This provided an opportunity to become acquainted with the lab members and their research projects. The students here are diligent, capable, and proficient in English. Many of them publish their research in English journals or conferences.



Welcome Dinner for this year's Fulbright recipients to Japan



## Research



I am involved in two research projects with faculty members and students at the University of Tsukuba. One of the research projects is about human-in-the-loop topic modeling approach. Additionally, I have given lectures at Kyoto University and plan to give another lecture at Ritsumeikan University, as well as at the host university, to share knowledge and learn from these interactions.

Dr. Hagen giving a presentation to the faculty at the Institute of Library, Information and Media Science, University of Tsukuba, titled Undergraduate Data Science Curriculum Recommendation for iSchools

## Life in Japan

Last summer, known as the hottest and longest ever, gave my family a reason to visit Mount Fuji and Sapporo. I admired Japan's beautiful nature and how well it is preserved. The harmony between nature and human development—roads, buildings, and “supposedly” wildflowers—was striking.



Dr. Hagen created a weekly Frisbee meet up with people who live near Tsukuba.

I've been active in sports, especially Ultimate Frisbee. My family participates in Sunday practices and games. I'm set to play at the GAIA ULTIMATE Cup tournament in November with a club team. I admire Japanese players' precise throws and am excited about playing with them. I also started an Ultimate Frisbee group in Tsukuba, where we meet weekly for 60 to 90 minutes. Although all players are new, everyone enjoys the game.

I became a member of a local badminton group consisting of women aged 60 and above, with some participants being as old as 80. The group meets weekly for practice sessions. Their dedication to improving their skills impressed me. I enjoy the practice sessions, including a 30-minute teatime.





*Reflection*

The Fulbright award allowed me to refresh my research in a new environment and build lasting connections with Japanese scholars and friends. I will return to the U.S. in December 2024. Although it is sad leaving Japan, I am excited about teaching and meeting colleagues in person.



Photo of Dr. Hagen and her Ultimate Frisbee group after a weekly practice and game.



# Introducing

## New SI Faculty

### Dr. Lingyao Li

*Joined the USF iSchool in Fall 2024 as an Assistant Professor*

#### Professional Bio:

*Prior to joining the University of South Florida, Dr. Lingyao Li completed his postdoctoral study at the University of Michigan's School of Information. He earned his Ph.D. in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of Maryland.*

*With an interdisciplinary background, Dr. Li's research interests include data science, large language models, and social media analytics, with applications in urban informatics and health informatics. Dr. Li's work focuses on leveraging artificial intelligence techniques, particularly large language models, to address societal challenges, while emphasizing the value of human-centered data science and human-computer interactions.*

*He has extensive experience in text mining, statistical analysis, big data analysis, and network analysis. His current research including working with crowdsourced and geospatial data to gain insights into public responses and community resilience, as well as developing multi-agent chatbot by applying large language models.*

*In his teaching, Dr. Li aims to make coding accessible to beginners and actively guides students in data-driven research. His interdisciplinary approach integrates rigorous technical methods with a strong commitment to understanding the human aspects of technology. This allows him to make meaningful contributions to both academic and applied fields.*

#### Academic Areas of Specialty:

- *Natural language processing & large language models*
- *Social network analysis & crowdsourcing*
- *Urban informatics*
- *Health informatics*



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## Leading the Conversation:

### Dr. Ly Dinh Presents at the 2024 ASIS&T Informatics Panel



USF Assistant Professor, Dr. Ly Dinh, along with her esteemed co-authors, presented at the 87th annual Meeting of the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T), held on October 28, 2024. The panel, titled *Social Media and Crisis Informatics Research in LIS*, presented their research findings and highlighted the critical role of crisis informatics.

Dr. Dinh and her research colleagues found that crisis informatics lacked a dedicated research community at ASIS&T. In response, the panel aimed to address this gap by fostering collaboration among researchers. In their study, they explored how information, technology, and human behavior intersect during natural disasters and global health crises. Dr. Dinh's panel presentation specifically focused on using network analysis and natural language processing (NLP) to examine interagency crisis response networks through unstructured social media data.

Panelists shared their current crisis-related projects and discussed how their work seeks to advance crisis informatics research within the LIS community. Dr. Dinh's research aims to improve response planning and policies by analyzing how information is sought, processed, and used during times of crises.

The panel was well-attended and positively received by the audience. It concluded with an interactive Q&A, which allowed for further discussion on the future of crisis informatics research and its potential to enhance both theory and practice in the LIS field.

#### **Full Article Citation & Link Below:**

Dinh, L., Hong, L., Dumas, C., Patin, B., Ghosh, S., Li, L., & Khoury, C. (2024). Social Media and Crisis Informatics Research in LIS. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 61(1), 749–753.

Link to Article [here](#).

# ANNOUNCING THE 2025 ANNUAL SUNSHINE CYBER CON PRESENTED BY CYBER FLORIDA AT USF

2025 Sunshine Cyber  
Con

Cyber Florida at USF is presenting their Annual 2025 Sunshine Cyber Conference, taking place on **February 24th and 25th** at the **JW Marriott Tampa Water Street**.

This event will feature keynote speakers and leading technology professionals from the cybersecurity community. Attendees will have the opportunity to network with industry professionals and learn about the latest trends and innovations in the field.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the 2025 Sunshine Cyber Conference and registration details.

## USF GRADUATE, JAMES SCHOLZ, AND SENIOR INSTRUCTOR, KIERSTY COX, PRESENT AT THE WIKICONFERENCE NORTH AMERICA ON UNIVERSITY EDIT-A-THONS

WikiConference

Former USF MLIS graduate student, James Scholz, alongside USF Senior Instructor, Kiersty Cox, presented at the WikiConference North America in October 2024. Their presentation, *Meeting at the Crossroads: University Edit-A-Thons*, addressed their efforts to combat Wikipedia's long-standing bias toward white male subjects and editors.

To counter this imbalance, librarians and faculty members at USF and Tennessee State University (TSU) have partnered with Wikimedia Foundation DC to host a series of Wikipedia edit-a-thons. Mr. Scholz, now the Coordinator of Research and Instructional Services at Tennessee State University, joined Ms. Cox to discuss the origins of these events and how they successfully engaged students, faculty, and librarians from both universities.



These edit-a-thons serve to promote diversity on Wikipedia and develop critical skills in students, such as information literacy, research, and critical thinking. Held during Black History Month, Women's History Month, Native American History Month, and Latin American History Month, the aim of these events is to diversify Wikipedia's content and contributors.

Their presentation highlighted the participants' contributions and shared their feedback on the experience. Many participants, particularly from underrepresented backgrounds, edited or created articles on people of color, women, and marginalized groups. Mr. Scholz and Ms. Cox reported the initiative's success, highlighting strong student participation and professors offering extra credit to encourage student involvement.

Following their conference presentation, Mr. Scholz and Ms. Cox hosted an edit-a-thon where approximately 10 expert editors contributed their skills to enhance articles initially created by students during previous events. These editors developed two new articles from the provided lists and expanded the content of 14 pre-existing articles. The experienced editors expressed appreciation for the opportunity to build upon the students' work, with the collective hope that these improvements will inspire and motivate the students to continue editing.

Given the overall positive impact on expanding representation on the platform, Mr. Scholz and Ms. Cox hope to see more university faculty assign Wikipedia editing projects in place of traditional research assignments. They emphasized that this will not only allow students' research to make a lasting contribution, but also one that students can look back on with pride.



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: USF ALUM, JENNIFER NICHOLSON, TAKES ON NEW ROLE AS FLORIDA STATEWIDE DIGITAL INITIATIVE CONSULTANT

Alumni Spotlight

We're thrilled to celebrate Mrs. Jennifer Nicholson, a recent graduate of USF's MLIS program, as she steps into her new role as Florida Statewide Digital Initiative Consultant at the Florida Department of State Division of Library and Information Services.

In her role as Florida Statewide Digital Initiative Consultant, Jennifer will be developing and implementing policies, procedures, and workflows for the Florida Collections Digital Repository.

She is also collaborating with staff from Florida libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions to prepare content for the Repository.

Jennifer shared that her courses at USF not only helped her secure her new role but also prepared her well for this exciting new chapter.

Please join us in congratulating Jennifer as she continues to make a difference in the field. We can't wait to see the incredible impact she'll make!





# EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES AT HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (HCPS)



HCPS

MEET MS. KIMBERLY DEFUSCO



Hello! My name is Kimberly Defusco and I'm the Supervisor of Library Media Services for middle and secondary schools at Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS). I also work as an adjunct faculty member at USF's iSchool. I earned my M.A. in Library and Information Science from USF, where I'm now pursuing a Ph.D. in Curriculum & Instruction.

I'm thrilled to support students interested in becoming media specialists with HCPS after graduation! Each February, our library team hosts a Prospective Library Media Specialist Meeting, where we dive into HCPS's library media services, provide an in-depth look at the media specialist role and its requirements, and offer a great opportunity for Q&A. I'd love to see you there!

HCPS is the 7th largest school district in the nation, serving over 220,000 students across more than 270 schools.

Guided by its vision of "Preparing Students for Life," HCPS

takes great pride in its comprehensive Library Media Services, which offers a wide array of dynamic programs for students, such as the Poetry JAM, SLAM Showcase, and Storytelling Festival, just to name a few.

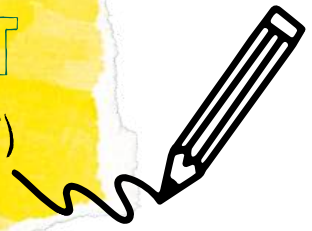
WHY HCPS?



For more information on HCPS's Library Media Services, click [here](#).



# EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES AT HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (HCPS)



HCPS

## INFO SESSION AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES



We will be hosting our next Prospective Library Media Specialist meeting via Teams on Friday, February 14, 2025 at 2:30-3:30 EST. Interested parties can register [here](#). We look forward to seeing you there! 😊



HCPS's requirements for new media specialists can be found [here](#).



For more information about HCPS employment opportunities, including searching for open positions and hiring events, click [here](#).



## **Student Spotlight- Celebrating our Students' Success!**

A decorative header featuring a row of green, scalloped curtains. Two silver spotlights are positioned on either side of the curtains, angled downwards. The background is a light cream color with a subtle pattern of white lines forming a diamond shape.

**For this Student Spotlight, we  
are shining a light on the  
incredible achievements and  
contributions of our students  
outside the classroom.**

## Robin Amstutz—Winner of the 2024 Outstanding Student Award

### Robin Amstutz- 2024 Outstanding Student Award

USF's iSchool is proud to announce Robin Amstutz as the recipient of the 2024 Outstanding Student of the Year Award. This award recognizes a graduate student who has demonstrated exceptional academic achievement and dedication to their field of study.

Robin impressed both her professors and the award committee with her thoughtful insights and observations on the value of archival preservation. Beyond excelling in her coursework, Robin has shown exceptional dedication through her volunteer work, honoring the memory of our service members. Robin is a military spouse of almost 20 years and mother to a teenage daughter.

She has volunteered at various organizations, including military organizations, while stationed across the United States. Most recently, Robin volunteers at the Lewis Army Museum Archive on Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM) in Washington state.

Robin has volunteered at the Lewis Army Museum Archive for the last year and a half, where she is contributing to the Vietnam-era soldier portrait project. Her efforts include rehousing and digitizing photographs to create an accessible digital footprint for these service members to preserve their memory for generations to come.

Robin is on track to graduate this Spring 2025. She plans to pursue a career in museum archives and continue her work at the Lewis Army Museum Archive. Robin was celebrated at the Alice G. Smith Lecture held on December 19, 2024.

***Congratulations to Robin for her many achievements and continued hard work as she approaches graduation!***



## Alison Matthews—Nominated by Dr. McCook



### ***Alison Matthews - Graduate Student, M.A. in Library and Information Science***

Alison Matthews was nominated by Dr. McCook to acknowledge her dedicated volunteer work at the Orange County History Center. Alison has been part of the team for the past 14 months. Her contributions have focused on assisting the Assistant Curator with the Figurehead exhibit, which is scheduled to close in February 2025. In this role, Alison has played a key part in cataloging artifacts and organizing images for online use, demonstrating her commitment to preserving history for a wider audience. Alison is graduating this Spring 2025 and aspires to work in archives and special collections.

## Zuhair Niazi—Nominated by Dr. Eldredge



### ***Zuhair Niazi - Undergraduate Student, B.S. in Information Science, with Health Informatics Concentration***

Zuhair Niazi was nominated by Dr. Eldredge to highlight his research achievements. Beginning his research journey in 8th grade, Zuhair has focused on critical topics, including oncology and public health. His early work explored the discrimination faced by people with disabilities in FDA oncology drug trials—a project he has been working on for seven years. This research culminated in an article published in December 2024, which can be accessed [here](#). Zuhair was also a co-author in a study where he analyzed the social media presence of medical boards before and after COVID-19 to identify effective platforms for sharing accurate medical information and addressing gaps. This study can be found [here](#).

During his undergraduate studies, Zuhair has contributed to multiple programs, including serving as a data analyst at the Global Center for Speech and Hearing at USF and joining the Trafficking In Person's (TIPs) Risk to Resilience Lab. He also developed his own information-seeking model, inspired by game design and philosophy, which aligns with natural cognition. This led him to join the iSHIRL Lab, where he recently submitted an abstract for conference presentations. Following graduation, Zuhair plans to pursue his graduate studies in audiology.

## Sarah Lynch—Nominated by Dr. McCook



### ***Sarah Lynch - Graduate Student, M.A. in Library and Information Science***

Sarah Lynch was nominated by Dr. McCook for her work at The Dalí Museum. Sarah is a graduate student enrolled in USF's MLIS program. She wears several hats, primarily serving as an Executive Assistant to the Museum's Director, Dr. Hank Hine. Sarah works to support The Dalí Museum's leaders, board of trustees, and guests. Recently, she became full Redundancy working under The Dalí Museum's sole librarian and archivist. Sarah is collaborating with the team to develop a Library Staff Policy, leading efforts to create a Rare Books Room Policy, and refining the Museum's Reading Room Policy. A project Sarah is particularly proud of is her contribution as the designer of *The Dalí Museum Café Gala Cookbook*, a copy of which can be found [here](#). Sarah is on track for graduation this Spring 2025. Post-graduation, she hopes to continue her work at The Dalí Museum, where she plans to support the Museum's building expansion and latest cultural and educational programs.

## Danielle Thurston—Nominated by Dr. McCook



### ***Danielle Thurston - Graduate Student, M.A. in Public History and Digital Humanities***

Danielle Thurston was nominated by Dr. McCook in recognition of her work at the Tampa Bay History Center. She is a part-time graduate student in USF's Public History and Digital Humanities M.A. program. Danielle balances her studies with her full-time role as the Visitor Services Assistant Manager. In this role, she assists customers with check-ins, supports memberships, and manages operations in the museum store. Danielle began her career with the Tampa Bay History Center in 2021. In 2022, she gained valuable experience through an internship with the then Public History Curator, Dr. Massey, as part of her undergraduate studies at USF. Looking ahead, Danielle aspires to build a career in the curatorial department of a museum.

## Natalie Polson—Nominated by Dr. Andrews



### ***Natalie Polson - Graduate Student, M.A. in Library and Information Science***

Natalie Polson was nominated by Dr. Andrews in acknowledgment of her fieldwork practicum internship at the Law Library of Congress. During the internship, Natalie reviewed metadata for the *Lincoln and the Law* Digital Collection, an archive focusing on Lincoln’s legal career, critiques of his wartime powers, and trial manuscripts from the prosecution of Lincoln conspirators.

Natalie described the experience as “eye-opening,” stating, “It not only deepened my understanding of Lincoln’s passion for law and litigation but also gave me hands-on experience with archival work from the perspective of a law library.” She further shared, “Before this internship, I knew little about the assassination plot against Lincoln and struggled to comprehend the motives behind Booth’s actions. However, after examining trial transcripts and court proceedings related to the accused conspirators, I gained insight into the intense political divisions of the Civil War era, particularly along party lines.” Additionally, Natalie worked with ARC/GIS technology to develop a story map, which enhanced the accessibility and discovery of the collection.

Natalie graduated in Fall 2024 and recently accepted a position as a Visiting Librarian at Eckerd College in Electronic Resource Management.

# Newsletter Contributors

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