FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear SIS Alumni and Friends,

We are very pleased to present you with our inaugural issue of Spark, a new print annual to keep you connected with the SIS community. Spark presents you with a fresh view of what is happening in the SIS community. Alumni, students and faculty do amazing things every day and we have gathered a number of their stories in hopes they will inspire you and make you proud to be a graduate of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, School of Information Sciences.

The School continues to thrive. We have experienced two consecutive years of significant enrollment growth in our MSIS program and are launching a new undergraduate major this fall in the information sciences. This will be the first program of its kind in the state of Tennessee and we are excited about the opportunities it will provide to increase our educational impact and elevate the information professions.

Faculty have spent considerable effort during the past few years creating the undergraduate major, as well as revising the MSIS curriculum and identifying ways to improve the MSIS student experience. Faculty have continued to be engaged in research, outreach and service; most impressive is their commitment to involve practitioners, students and communities in this work. As you will see in the Faculty News section, our research and service footprints continue to get larger and more diverse, reflecting the rising relevance and scope of the information sciences.

Connecting with alumni has also been a priority for us. We have created new communication channels and other ways for you to stay in touch. We have prioritized collecting and sharing your stories and created opportunities for you to connect with students and other alumni. In September of last year, we launched a monthly Alumni and Friends email newsletter – be sure we have your current email (https://www.sis.utk.edu/alumni-update) so you don’t miss these stories and opportunities.

Thank you for your support and help as we continue to bolster the SIS community and the information sciences.

Diane Kelly, Professor and Director
School of Information Sciences

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TAKE OUR ALUMNI SURVEY!

How’s your degree treating you?

Please take a few moments to participate in our Alumni Survey to help us continue to improve the value of the SIS Master’s degree and the services and opportunities we provide to alumni:

http://tiny.utk.edu/sisalumnisurvey
Follow SIS on social media to keep up-to-date with our latest news, highlights, events, giveaways, and opportunities to engage and support current students!
Beginning this fall, UT will become the first school in Tennessee and just the third in the SEC to offer an undergraduate degree in information sciences. This is an exciting opportunity to build on our highly regarded graduate program in the School of Information Sciences, while positioning UT to recruit top students and preparing our graduates to compete in a growing job sector.

Like most other universities, UT has historically only offered a master’s program, which we have built into a nationally recognized program ranked 17th by U.S. News and World Report. Ours is the top-ranked program in the SEC.

As the volume of information in our society expands, the demand for skilled employees who can organize, analyze, and present that data has increased. The skills learned in information sciences can be applied in a variety of fields, including media, education, and technology.

This new program has been four years in the making, and it’s the result of a lot of hard work and research by the faculty of the School of Information Sciences. The major will have two areas of concentration: user-experience design and data, information management, and analytics. It will also include a number of online classes, which have been shown to improve graduation and retention rates, especially for nontraditional and part-time students.

We’ve paid close attention to other schools with top-10 information sciences programs that have successfully launched and grown their bachelor’s degree programs in recent years, including the universities of Michigan and Maryland. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the top-ranked master’s program by U.S. News and World Report, announced that it would also begin an undergraduate program this fall.

Some of these programs have even become top majors at their institutions, producing students who go on to become user-experience designers and data analysts. Nationally, jobs in these concentrations are expected to grow at 15 percent and 27 percent, respectively, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. In Tennessee, we expect the rate for jobs requiring these skills to grow by more than 36 percent in the next five years.

By launching this program, UT is not only keeping pace with other top universities, we are filling a vital need in the state’s workforce and launching students into promising careers in expanding fields. ●
Amy Dye-Reeves (’13) started her information sciences career as a library media specialist for Jefferson County Schools in Jefferson City, Tenn. There, she focused on filling gaps for students, and created many outreach programs, most notably the “Growing Readers” summer program, which helped young readers who lagged in literacy skills. She reached out to local and national businesses to acquire grants to sustain these programs, including one program that provided food for students.

Her career shifted recently as Dye-Reeves began as an assistant professor and librarian for the humanities in the department of research and instruction at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky, in January 2018. In July 2019, she started her new position as associate librarian (education liaison) at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas.

“It was a big change, to go from schools to the academic world,” she said – but it was a change to which she is well-suited.

At Murray State University, she was the liaison for history, political science, sociology and psychology. One of her innovations at Murray State was creating interactive online instructional modules encompassing the ACRL framework for graduate students within the public administration program. She also developed the university library’s social media policies. She conducted over 50-plus instructional sessions and individual consultations for undergraduate and graduate students. A notable workshop she conducted was on self-plagiarism with the graduate psychology program. She conducted multiple workshops for the university’s faculty development center. She taught two sections of Research in the Information Age, a three-credit course, both in-person and online during the fall of 2018 and summer of 2019.

She has stayed active in several professional and academic organizations, and also was accepted into a Wikipedia Education fellowship program, and was an invited presenter at the WikiConference North America in Columbus, Ohio, in 2018.

“I was trained and well-versed in all the different products within the Wikipedia. Their program allowed me to create modules for educational standards and implement within a three-credit information literacy course,” she said. “That program was really something that was exciting.”

She is currently a member of the New Roles and Changing Landscapes and Appointments Committee with the American College and Research Libraries, and the upcoming co-convener of the History Librarians Interest Group for the American College and Research Libraries. She presented at the ALA Annual Conference in 2018 and Midwinter in 2019, as well as at the American College and Research Libraries in 2019 in Cleveland, Ohio.
Zoë Hoyle (‘91) held an undergraduate degree in religious studies and was working a variety of jobs, such as managing restaurants, when she decided to pursue her degree in information sciences at the University of Tennessee.

“I knew other people in the IS program and the idea of learning how to really research different topics and become adept at using information technology really appealed to me,” she said.

She knew from the start of that journey she didn’t really want to work in a library, but rather her endgame was to become a writer. Along the way, her information sciences background not only helped her to become a writer, but to also be technologically innovative and an early adopter.

She retired from her dream job – which turned out to be science writing – in January 2017. Hoyle was a science writer and editor at the USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station (SRS) in Asheville, NC. There, she was both writer and editor of the print magazine “Compass,” but then went on to develop, write for, and manage “CompassLive,” the blog SRS still uses to convey the results of forest science research to interested audiences at least twice a week. When she started “CompassLive,” blogs were not a regularly utilized format by any government agency. She also brought the agency up to speed on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

Hoyle also served as acting media officer for SRS from 2011 until 2016, the highlight of which was helping to organize a National Association of Science Writers media tour of climate change science in western North Carolina in 2016.

Prior to her work at the Forest Service, she was an information specialist at the UTK Office of Research. There, she created an electronic newsletter, “Research Goodnews,” which was the first on-campus e-newsletter that delivered information to faculty about research findings. Before that, she worked at Knoxville’s Metropolitan Drug Commission, an alcohol and drug prevention program, helping to organize their information and assist in writing grants.

Hoyle is currently serving on the School of Information Sciences Advisory Board to continue to support the next generation of information scientists.

“I really think that information sciences allows you to find what you’re passionate about and apply the skills that you’ve learned,” she said. “I think there’s a lot of different aspects of the field that are not really known to the public as such. I don’t think they understand the importance of the very high ethical and service orientation of the field, and the benefit that brings to the communities graduates serve.”

Would you like to nominate someone for an alumni award? Go here to learn more about the awards and to submit a nomination: sis.utk.edu/alumni/distinguishedalumni
SIS Associate Professor Rachel Fleming-May, left, and UT Hodges Assessment Librarian and SIS Alum, Regina Mays, have worked together on a variety of projects, publications and more over the past 10 years and plan to keep up the mutually beneficial collaboration between the library and the School.

Photo by Hillary S. Tune
When Regina Mays and Rachel Fleming-May get together, it’s a close camaraderie. They joke about which one of them is “the best” (each claiming it’s the other, and not themselves), and their interactions have that underlying trust and ease that takes years to build. In fact, it’s been about a decade since the two began their professional collaboration.

Mays is the University of Tennessee’s first-ever assessment librarian, and a 2009 graduate of the School of Information Sciences. Fleming-May is an associate professor for SIS, as well as its director of graduate studies. The two never crossed paths as student and teacher, with Mays graduating just before Fleming-May came on board with the SIS faculty. But it wasn’t long after Mays graduated that they started working together on a project.

“We first met working on the Value, Outcomes, and Return on Investment of Academic Libraries project funded by IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services). I was the program manager on that project, even before I started working at the library,” Mays said. She was hired for the project by SIS Professor Carol Tenopir, who was the principal investigator for it.

About 18 months into the project, the first assessment librarian position at UT Libraries was created. Mays applied for the position and got it. She said her research uniquely positioned her to have a strong grounding for the work of an assessment librarian.

“It got to apply some of the principles and theory I had learned through research and see how it worked in the real world,” she said.

The relationship between research and actual implementation was so beneficial that, when opportunities continued to arise for Mays to work with Fleming-May, they took it. Their collaboration has resulted in papers, articles, workshops, conference presentations and even a webinar.

They also worked closely on the “Experience Assessment” (UX-A) cohort funded by IMLS (with professors Dania Bilal and Carol Tenopir), that specifically brought 12 students to UTK to earn the MSIS with a specialization in user experience and assessment. The program plan included creating and teaching a class about planning and assessment, which Fleming-May and Mays created and co-taught in the fall of 2017.

While their relationship has benefited research, its impact has reached beyond that. When Mays needs student workers, she knows she can ask Fleming-May for students who will be knowledgeable about library practices.

“It creates a win-win for us to do practicums and to hire (SIS students) as student workers. It helps us to get more done, and it gives students real-world experience,” she said. “I’ve lost track of how many reference letters I’ve written and reference calls I’ve made…a student just getting into the game, it makes a big difference for them to get that experience. We can hire students from anywhere on campus, but the SIS students who are really interested in it, they’re really high caliber.”

Fleming-May, in her position as SIS director of graduate studies, speaks to many potential students who see the relationship between the school and university library as an added attraction to the program.

“You don’t have a lot of partnerships like this between LIS or IS programs and their libraries,” she said. “I really appreciate the relationship we have with the library.”

Fleming-May worked as an academic librarian herself at the University of Alabama, where she subsequently earned her doctoral degree in communication and information sciences. This segue from practitioner to researcher allowed her to address a lot of questions she had while she was working in the library.

“I’m still very interested in academic libraries, and how they fit into the larger institution,” she said.

Mays said Fleming-May doesn’t just use their relationship to stay in step with the library, but that she also continuously shows up to library events and forges new connections with others who are involved with the library.

“She tirelessly puts herself out there,” Mays said.
Former SIS Professor Bill Robinson was many things, to many students: exacting, funny, personable, tough, whimsical. All these qualities and more are what make up a big personality that has stuck in the memories of more than three decades of students.

This September, when he turns 80, we are taking the opportunity to recall the many wonderful experiences past students and faculty have had with the man they call Dr. Bill.

“He was just absolutely devoted to teaching. That’s where his love was, that’s what he wanted to do. He spent hours and hours preparing for classes, he just loved it,” said SIS Professor Carol Tenopir, who worked with Robinson for several years.

Robinson not only made learning an enjoyable experience for his students, he also made it a worthwhile one, said Susan Jennings (’07), a former student and current dean of library services at Chattanooga State Community College. She took five classes from Robinson – which comprised more than half of the hours she needed for her master’s in information sciences. She jokingly said she might hold the record for taking the most classes from him, but noted she did it intentionally after taking one class and “getting hooked.”

“He was very exacting, but he was the type of instructor that you wanted to please,” she said. “He gave me a good foundation and a lot of good advice during school and after. He was a reference for me for a very long time.”

Jennings said Robinson had a few quirks and jokes that past students likely will recall – such as referring to himself in the third person, or calling himself Dr. Blabbo. Or how he’d say “blump” when he couldn’t think of another word to use in an example.

“It was sort of a fill-in word. ‘Let’s say you work at blump.’ And we all knew what he meant,” she said.

Robinson would often pepper his lessons with relevant stories about his wife, Shelly, and their three children Megan, Daniel and Rob. Or he’d even slip in an occasional
A photo of his cat into a slideshow, or a picture of the garden he so lovingly tended.

Students weren’t the only people who felt the impact of Robinson’s love of the school, profession and teaching – faculty also benefited from his enthusiasm.

“He was not only an inspiration to students, but also to the faculty. He embraced every change in technology, from teaching face-to-face, to flying to go teach, teaching by broadcast, and then teaching through multiple generations of distance education software. And he kept up with it and helped others do it,” Tenopir said.

SIS Professor Dania Bilal said that Robinson was her personal mentor when she arrived at the school in the mid-90s.

“He was very supportive, critical, constructive, and I learned a lot from him. He’s just a wonderful person,” she said.

Robinson’s reputation as a tough professor made some students wary, such as Martha Earl (’85), who said she dodged his demanding collection development course when he was on sabbatical one summer. But she later took his research methods class and absorbed knowledge from him that has impacted her entire career. Earl is currently the director of the Preston Medical Library at the UT Medical Center in Knoxville.

“That class was so good, and yes it was tough, but it has to be tough. If you’re going to do research in our field, you have to learn how to do it right,” Earl said. “I love research anyway, but I used that course immediately. I’ve published numerous articles and I teach research to physicians and nurses and grad students, and I wouldn’t have been able to do any of that if I hadn’t had such a good research methods class.”

Whether the takeaway was that he is funny, a tough teacher, or a proponent of all things related to books and libraries, one thing is certain: he is a memorable man.

“He was a great mentor even after I got out of school, never missed a birthday on Facebook. He supported all his students, and everybody you will talk to has fond memories of him,” Jennings said.

As we take this time to celebrate Bill Robinson’s 80th birthday, we want to do even more than that. The Bill Robinson Scholarship Fund was established many years ago, and is currently $12,000 away from becoming an endowed scholarship. We would like your help to reach our endowment goal so future students can continue to have wonderful learning experiences at SIS. An endowed scholarship yields a scholarship every year, so we want to meet that goal!

Perhaps you have $80 to spare, to celebrate Dr. Bill’s 80th birthday and all the great memories you have of him from when he taught you? Or maybe you would just like to be a part of enhancing the field of information sciences by sending more educated professionals into the world. Either way, we have faculty who have pledged to match dollar-for-dollar up to $6,000 between now and Dr. Bill’s birthday, Oct. 25. You can go to tiny.utk.edu/DrBillScholarship to donate, or use the envelope in this magazine to send in a check made out to UT Foundation with “Dr. Bill Fund” on the memo line. Thank you for your support!

Top: Bill Robinson reads to one of his grandchildren.

Middle: The faculty of 1972 included a younger Bill Robinson, who is pictured second from the top right.

Bottom: SIS alum Susan Jennings reads from a book she created for Bill Robinson at his retirement party.

Contribute to the Bill Robinson Scholarship Fund

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When SIS student Frankie McGinnis sees a problem, she will build a solution for it from the ground-up. She is not the type to find a band-aid for it and move on, but instead fights for the best possible outcome.

That was the case when she found out her daughter had cystinosis, a very rare, genetic chromosomal disease. Her daughter, Laura, overproduces the amino acid cystine which can cause cells to crystalize and be destroyed. The result is organ failure, starting with the kidneys.

There are about 2,000 cystinosis patients in the world – though McGinnis said that number would be higher if children didn’t die so young from it before getting diagnosed. She didn’t know anything about it before she was told her daughter Laura had it – and from there, she got to work.

“She got diagnosed as a one year old, and I was supposed to be doing my student teaching for my undergraduate degree in secondary education history. But I had her and she was sick from day one. It put life on hold, and I ended up working with a group of mothers and establishing a 501c3,” McGinnis said.

Instead of worrying about her daughter’s short life expectancy – projected to be about 12 years – McGinnis decided to create the Cystinosis Research Network with the help of other cystinosis families. It is an “all-volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to supporting and advocating research, providing family assistance and educating the public and medical communities about cystinosis,” according to its website. Out of McGinnis’s struggle and initiative, an entire organization was born to help others who faced the same disease.

“Everybody has a need, you just don’t know what it is unless you open yourself up to others and hear them. I’m always on a horse, driving it for somebody, wondering how can I help this person make their life just a little bit better,” McGinnis said.

Laura is now 23 years old, living almost twice as long as the doctors’ dire prediction when she was first diagnosed, though she continues to have complications. Despite dealing with Laura’s ongoing medical needs, McGinnis started a career and is now an administrative specialist for the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee at the UT Institute of Agriculture. She has worked at UT for four years, previously in student services. It was there that a graduate assistant urged McGinnis to enter the information sciences master’s program. That graduate assistant was LaVerne Gray, who has since graduated.
with her doctoral degree from the College of Communication and Information.

“She was telling me, ‘This is where you belong,’” McGinnis said. “And so far, just about every class I have had, it applied to my job. Between professors working with me, and supervisors working with me, it’s been synchronous.”

McGinnis found her passion and strength in user experience after SIS Associate Professor Vandana Singh encouraged her to do a usability study on some software McGinnis’ department was looking into using.

“She presented the idea of doing a usability study as a way to do independent research. When we did the study, it really helped – now the vet school has decided not to use that software based on what we found out, because the interface is horrible,” McGinnis said.

She said a usability study is, simply put, a set of tasks that you give individuals to complete with minimal instructions. If the test users find stumbling blocks, or can’t complete the tasks, that provides data – rather than anecdotal user experiences – about the user experience.

“Three test users couldn’t complete it, and we actually found a fatal error in the program where people got sent into an infinite loop. People don’t realize how emotional it can be when you’re trying to work with software,” she said.

Her daughter, Laura, teases her about working with computers – but McGinnis says she’s the best type of person to do what she’s doing: an average user who isn’t a computer scientist.

“I have always been interested in the human aspect of life, what makes people behave the way they do, makes them choose what they choose. What motivates people, what they see when they see what I’m looking at – usability speaks to that part of my brain,” she said.

As a result of the independent study that McGinnis did under Singh, the two are authoring a paper together. It’s quite an accomplishment for a woman who is working full-time, and also continuing to be a caretaker for her daughter. And to top it off, McGinnis is now going to donate a kidney so Laura can get a transplant.

Laura received a kidney transplant in the past, but her disease caused it to fail two years ago; she’s been on dialysis ever since. The previous transplant also means her antigens and blood are completely different, and she’s harder to match. McGinnis isn’t a match for Laura, but she was accepted for a pair exchange – basically a “kidney for a kidney.” McGinnis’ donates a kidney, and it moves forward to a donor who is a match and that bumps Laura up higher for her own match.

Once McGinnis was approved for the pair exchange, she started looking into what the policy was for leave for organ or bone marrow donors. As it turned out, the University of Tennessee and the state of Tennessee do not have a leave policy for organ or bone marrow donations, whereas most states and the federal government do have one.

“I have to use all my vacation, all my sick time, and then I can go to the sick bank for any more time I get off. Then I’m left with not being able to get sick at all for the rest of the year, and forget having a vacation,” McGinnis said. “My vacation was giving an organ to somebody.”

Rather than stew about it, she did what she always does: she found a solution. McGinnis wrote a letter and submitted a policy to the university. She said that Dr. Tim Cross, senior vice president/senior vice chancellor for the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, submitted the policy to be considered by the board that approves the employee compensation package.

“We’re the volunteer state. We want to volunteer and be the epitome of a giver, but our policy isn’t set up for us to do this,” she said.

As McGinnis forges forward for her daughter, it is Laura who often keeps her mother’s spirits high.

“With her, you don’t take any day for granted, and that’s the best lesson I’ve learned from her. Every day you live with as much joy and gratitude as you can, and when you wake up tomorrow, you say, ‘Yes, I am here again. I get to participate in life.’ She’s a constant reminder of that for me. You don’t sweat the small stuff,” McGinnis said.
FROM MISSISSIPPI to SEATTLE

SIS Alumni Marcellus Turner on Finding the Perfect Career, Job and City

Top: Seattle Public Library Chief Librarian Marcellus Turner instructs patrons.

Left: Marcellus Turner is a 1988 alum of SIS, and sponsors a travel scholarship for SIS students.

Photos Courtesy of Seattle Public Library
Throughout his career as a librarian, Marcellus Turner ('88) has often chosen his next position by the city rather than the job itself – soaking in each new location's culture, challenges and opportunities. He always had his eye on the Pacific Northwest and is currently celebrating his eighth year as chief librarian for The Seattle Public Library. He loves his job, he loves his city, and he believes he is in a very good space in a long and fulfilling career.

Running the library for a large northwestern city wasn’t what a young Turner had envisioned for his future. He had earned his undergraduate degree in audiology and pathology from the University for Women in Columbus, Mississippi, and was attending the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, to earn his master’s in the same field. He had moved into an apartment complex near campus, and it was there that a series of fortunate events occurred and led him to where he is today.

“Long story short, I was dropping them off one day and I sat there on the second floor waiting for them, and I sat down and looked in the career notebook,” he recounted. “At that time, all of the job opportunities were listed in a notebook – that shows you how old I am. I was flipping through the notebook and I noticed some jobs in some great cities and I thought, ‘I can do that.’”

For Turner, academic libraries became repetitive in the day-to-day work with patrons. Despite moving up in seniority, he wasn’t as excited by what he was doing as he had been initially.

“Public libraries provided differences in the people I would see, the communities I would serve, opportunities to do more and to be out in the community and not be behold-
en to a particular location in the city,” he said.

While he found the transition from academic libraries to public rather easy, what was difficult was finding jobs that took into account his previous supervisory experience – and being a supervisor is what really gets Turner energized.

“Only in supervisory positions are you able to bring about the changes you would like to see for the public; and only in supervisory positions are you able to bring about the changes and opportunity you would like to see for the staff,” he said.

He found that supervisory position and Turner’s first public librarian job was in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and that set off a career that took him to places including: Tacoma, Washington; Rockford, Illinois; and Jefferson County Public Library in Colorado. He says he often “chased cities, more than I chased jobs as I wanted to see the world.”

As Turner moved from one city to the next, he found there are universal needs and wants in each community – such as the public always wanting better hours and more access – but that there are differences in which members of that community need resources the most, he said.

“I do like variety and opportunity, and that’s the beauty of the work that we do. This education and preparation, this work I do is transferable,” Turner said.

Turner has found his niche in life with libraries, and wants others to be able to do the same. He currently serves on the UT College of Communication and Information Board of Visitors, and he also has established the Marcellus Turner Student Travel Scholarship.

The scholarship allows an SIS student to travel to a conference, even if they are not presenting or otherwise participating in the conference as more than an attendee.

“When I moved over to librarianship, I came blindly in terms of the profession and the association itself. I truly had no idea what I was stepping into,” he said. “I knew what librarianship was, but not what the [American Library Association] was, and initially I didn’t go to the annual conferences.”

Turner said it’s important for students to be able to attend conferences to network with other students and professionals, so he created the travel scholarship.

“There’s a lot of opportunity in going to conferences, and I don’t just mean in terms of jobs, but a lot of exposure for students. We just do not avail ourselves to these opportunities, and I wanted to give students a chance at that before they stepped into the real world,” he said.

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‘I think it would be quite encouraging for minority students at the University of Tennessee [School of Information Sciences] to see that a little black boy from Mississippi could meet the pinnacle of library success.’

- Marcellus Turner
SUZIE ALLARD, CHANCELLOR’S PROFESSOR
Allard joins several other UT faculty and researchers for a $1.6 million Minerva Research grant. The project will monitor and analyze the content of Russian disinformation warfare and measure the effectiveness the tactics have in shaping opinions in Eastern European nations.

DANIA BILAL, PROFESSOR
Bilal gave three presentations and chaired one invited paper session at the Human Computer Interaction International Conference in Orlando, Florida, in July 2019. She also co-authored a paper in Information Processing and Management about children’s query types and reformulations in Google search.

WADE BISHOP, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Bishop was named the Belmont Forum Human Dimensions champion for 2018-19. He created a toolkit to ensure Belmont Forum researchers are trained in data management skills. Bishop, along with Allard and Tenopir, was awarded an $883,034 IMLS grant to educate a cohort in science library liaison roles.

CAROL TENOPIR, CHANCELLOR’S PROFESSOR
Tenopir was named as the 2019 UT Macebearer. Macebearer is the highest faculty honor at UT, and is symbolic of the faculty’s commitment of service to students, scholarship and society.

BRIAN DOBRESKI, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
Dobreski is starting his first semester with SIS this fall as its newest faculty member. Dobreski’s research centers around knowledge organization. He earned his master’s in library and information sciences, as well as his PhD in information sciences, from Syracuse University.

RACHEL FLEMING-MAY, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Fleming-May, SIS director of graduate studies, chaired the CCI Graduate Studies Committee and served on the UT Graduate Council Curriculum committee, allowing her to guide several significant changes to the MSIS curriculum through the approval process.

CAROLYN HANK, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
Hank stepped in as the SIS Diversity & Inclusion Officer in spring 2019. The role of the SIS Diversity and Inclusion Officer is to monitor and advocate for diversity and inclusion within SIS, CCI and UT.

DEVENDRA POTNIS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Potnis will be awarded the 2019 CCI C. W. (Bud) Minkel International/Intercultural Award this fall for his work to elevate and empower marginalized communities in developing countries through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

VANDANA SINGH, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Singh will be awarded the 2019 CCI Faculty Service and Outreach Award this fall. From 2017-2019, she served as SIS director of undergraduate studies and led the creation and submission of the proposal for the new information sciences undergraduate major.

PEILING WANG, PROFESSOR
Wang will present, “Open Peer Review: The Current Landscape and Emerging Models” with Dietmar Wolfram at the 17th International Conference on Scientometrics & Informetrics, the biennial conference of the International Society for Scientometrics and Informetrics.

CINDY WELCH, CLINICAL ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Welch co-chaired and coordinated the 2019 Tennessee Library Association Conference in Chattanooga in April, and will take up the role again in 2020 when the conference is hosted in Knoxville.

XIAOHUA (AWA) ZHU, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
Zhu recently earned her tenure and promotion to associate professor. She will also be awarded the CCI Faculty Teaching Award this fall. She was awarded the SIS Gloria & Dave Sharrar Faculty Research Award earlier this year.

FACULTY NEWS
a selection of SIS faculty achievements
Tracsen Hinz started out as a part-time library assistant in the children’s department at the Louis Cooper Junior Memorial Library in Opelika, Alabama. About two years into that job, she began training to be a full-time library assistant in technical services; she’s been working at the library for a total of eight years.

“Going back to school seemed the most logical thing to do next. I’ve been wanting to do it for a while now, it’s just been difficult to get to it. So finally, I just made the jump,” she said.

Hinz will start classes at SIS in the fall, and she aims to move into a librarian position once she earns her master’s, and is also interested in academic libraries. She said she “fell into” her initial position at the library, though she did have some high school experience as a library aid.

She said her initial career plan was to use her bachelor of science in geography from the University of Alabama to become a broadcast meteorologist, but she changed her mind the very last semester of school. Now, Hinz said, she feels she’s on the right track for her career and is thrilled to be a recipient of the Winslow Scholarship.

“I was very, very happy, I really needed it. I was grateful for that,” she said.

Alicia Foster has been working in public libraries for five years – but as an accountant. She took the job to kick off her finance career, and then fell in love with libraries.

“I just like helping people, I think deep down inside I’m an educator at heart. Originally, in undergrad, I was an education major,” she said.

Her goal in attaining a master of science in information sciences is to become a library director, or branch manager.

“Outside of helping people, I’m really interested in how all of the components of a library work together, that whole picture just fascinates me,” she said.

Foster started classes in 2017, and said the Winslow Scholarship will help accelerate her education so she can complete her degree.

“I have faced some difficult seasons in the past two to three years, and I didn’t know ‘if or when’ I would be able to return to taking classes, but I did know that applying for this scholarship may have been the only opportunity for me to be able to go back,” she said. “I felt like a little kid when I found out I got the scholarship and I am grateful to the generous donors who make this opportunity possible!”
Victoria James Catalano was about seven years old when she told her mom that she wanted to be a librarian. “She said, ‘You realize being a librarian doesn’t mean you sit and read books all day?’,” James Catalano recounted. And her mom, a journalism librarian, would know.

James Catalano eventually volunteered at a library and her dream to be a librarian persisted. She earned an undergraduate degree in English language and literature from the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, with the goal of earning her master’s degree in information sciences so she could become a children’s librarian.

She currently works as a page at the Chattanooga Public Library, and lives in nearby Apison, Tennessee. She’s finished 12 credit hours and plans to graduate in summer 2020; getting awarded the Winslow Scholarship is helping her meet that goal.

“I was so relieved – I’ve been in the program for over a year now and I’ve been going slow because of cash flow, and this new scholarship came up. So, I went ahead and took a shot and then I got it, and I actually did cheer and ran around and told my friends, other librarians, my parents, everyone,” she exclaimed.

Megan Phouthavong initially took up a part-time page job at the Bellvue Branch of the Nashville Public Library while working as a server at the celebrated Loveless Café in Nashville.

“It was perfect for me because my job at the Loveless was flexible. Then I decided libraries were what I wanted to do with my life,” she said.

Phouthavong is still working at the library, but now as a children’s library associate. She said it’s not surprising she found her passion in library work – her grandmother is a director of libraries in northeast Kansas, and has headed up an even larger library system in the past.

“It’s always been around but I never had thought about it as a career,” she said.

But that changed when she took on her current role, and she found the joy of working with children readers.

“I love the kids. It’s so much fun watching them find new stuff and things they love to read,” she said. “I love adult readers, but they kind of know what they like. It’s cool to see kids jumping into new genres and discovering what they like.”

Phouthavong is overjoyed to be awarded this scholarship to help her finish her degree.

“I was so excited when I got it, I thought, ‘Oh my gosh, this is so awesome!’,“ she said.
Rick Wallace takes the traditional tenets of being an academic librarian seriously – he ensures students have the skills and access to information they need, and maintains a space for them to study and explore that information. But he also takes it a step farther by making the library a place they can go for help beyond academic. He’s affable, kind, energetic and intelligent.

“He cares a lot about representing librarianship in a positive light. We’re more than just there to hand people information, we’re there to support them in all ways. It’s truly a calling for him,” said his current coworker and former employee, Nakia Woodward (’03), who is also an SIS alum. “He engages with the students so they always feel comfortable coming to him for any information need or if they need help navigating the university, or anything like that, they have a bond with him.”

Wallace is the associate director of the Quillen College of Medicine Library at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City. Wallace’s work with ETSU started in Memphis, shortly after he graduated from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with a master’s degree in library science. The position he held was a unique one funded by an Area Health Education grant, and it fostered his enduring love of outreach work.

“I’d go to rural hospitals and knock on doors and say, ‘Can I help you with library services?’ I targeted doctors and nurses and get them literature, because rural hospitals didn’t have libraries back then,” he said.

The grant eventually ran out in 1995 but the medical library at ETSU took Wallace in; the original grant position operated through the school, but now he was to work directly for the institution at the medical library. This was serendipitous for the Bristol native, who was happy to return to his East Tennessee roots and family.

Throughout his career, Wallace continues to
educate himself and those around him – students and staff alike. He’s a lifelong learner who, in addition to his master’s degree from UT, has earned the following degrees: master’s degree in epidemiology (public health) from ETSU; doctorate in higher education leadership from ETSU; master’s in organizational management from Tusculum University; master of divinity from Mid America Baptist Theological Seminary; and master of art in theology from Columbia International University.

Wallace’s duties also extend beyond the library. He teaches a variety of student classes, including: evidence-based research; using the PubMed database; assessing population health; and a class on comparison intervention. When he’s not teaching or at the library, he’s involved in community work such as helping at Remote Area Medical clinics, which provide medical care for people in rural communities. He also sits in on family medicine meetings in Bristol and Kingsport, as well as surgery meetings in Kingsport, to field clinical questions from the physicians at those practices.

And, as many academic librarians do, Wallace does research. He and a student are currently working on a systematic review of employment assistance programs that help people addicted to drugs. On that same note, he’s participating in a program called Project ECHO, which also addresses the opioid crisis.

“We have clinical people who work with insurance companies who connect us with doctors treating patients who have a problem with opiates. We’re going to use Zoom to meet with the doctors and our panel will advise them on how to treat their patients,” he explained.

In recent years, Wallace has turned even more focus on his students – and if the number of awards he’s received from students are any indicator, he’s making an impression.

“I like working with medical students, I like working with medical faculty. I like doing stuff where you feel like you can help save somebody’s life,” he said. “Medical students are some of the most likeable people you’d ever meet, and you just want to help them.”

Wallace not only supports students in their academic work by providing academic support, but also with small, meaningful gestures. He buys pizza for students when it’s obvious there are exams coming up and they are all in the library studying. He also puts out “junk food and calories” on an honor system of 35-cents per item, so they can have food nearby for less-than vending machine prices. He’s even helped with a yoga class hosted at the library, and there are exercise bikes available there for students so they can turn their brains off for a minute and treat their bodies to physical exertion.

“Just anything I can do to soften the blow and make it bearable, to be a cheerleader,” Wallace said of his methods.

He was one of 17 faculty members that the medical school’s graduating class of 2019 chose for special recognition as an outstanding educator and mentor, with the award called the Scarlet Sash. He was also given the 2019 Caduceus Award, which is given by the school’s Caduceus Club and honors those “individuals who go beyond their usual duties to assist students in the pursuit of their medical education.” Yet another honor he earned by student vote in 2019 was as a nominee for the “String of Pearls” which is comprised of 34 faculty members who are selected as the most influential over the students’ four years of medical education.

“I guess I have a bunch of students who like me or something,” Wallace jokingly said.

The recognitions have come shortly after his job switched with less focus on outreach and more opportunity to teach, he said. He is passionate about getting health information into the right hands, so teaching students how to build diagnostic and critical reasoning skills is one of his priorities. After students graduate and become physicians, they will need the ability to seek out new information in order to stay up-to-date on science and evidence-based practice.

According to Woodward, it’s no fluke that Wallace has racked up so many honors from the students. She said his passion shines through in everything he does, including when he teaches.

“He wants to be a player in the classroom, teaching them how to critically appraise articles, how to do appropriate searches to find the best evidence. He’s very much continually learning,” she said. “He truly is one-of-a-kind and our profession is very lucky to have him in it.” ●
We want to know what you’re up to! Make sure you update your information in our Alumni Directory at sis.utk.edu/alumni-update.

If you have a great alumni story to share, contact communications specialist Hillary Tune at htune1@utk.edu, or by phone at 865-974-7760.

If you want to read more about the people and events featured here, visit our website at sis.utk.edu.
1. Members of the SIS Advisory Board met at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in spring 2019. 2. SIS sponsored students to attend TLA as a school trip. 3. SIS alum Jamie Osborn ('08), left, and SIS Clinical Associate Professor Cindy Welch, right, co-chaired the TLA conference, and pose with Jillian Rael, incoming TLA president. 4. Alums enjoy the SIS Alumni Reception at TLA. 5. Ole Villadsen ('15) shares how he applies information science to cybersecurity. 6. Dorothy Ogdon ('07) gets creative with technology in her position as an emerging technologies librarian. 7. Natalie Hansen ('13) switches from medieval arts to nuclear archiving. 8. Alum join Associate Professor Devendra Potnis at the SIS Alumni Reception at ALA. 9. MSIS student Lisa Ladd traveled to ALA on the Marcellus Turner Student Travel Scholarship. 10. Alums socialize at the SIS Alumni Reception at ALA. 11. Josh Borczy ('19) gets his MSIS after earning a PhD in chemistry, to help other scientists manage data better. 12. Kashif Graham ('19) found his calling as a theological librarian. 13. Sharra Rosichan ('19) uses GIS technology to understand which populations can better be served by her library. 14. LaVerne Gray ('19) earned her PhD after basing her dissertation on her grandmother and other women who tried to establish a library in a black community in Illinois.
College of Communication & Information 50th Anniversary Gala
October 11, 2019 // Knoxville Convention Center // Knoxville, Tennessee