Greetings SLISers,
September has proven to be a busy month with the beginning of classes and first onsites. Below you will see photos from the first ever 701 onsite luncheon hosted by LISSA. 757 had on onsite that day as well, which afforded us an unusual opportunity to set up Davis College as a mecca of food and conversation. LISSA also attended the 704 onsite to sell bagels, muffins and homemade baked goods with all proceeds going to charity. I had the pleasure of speaking with Feili Tu, one of two new members of the faculty and was inspired by her enthusiasm for SLIS. Read about SLIS Alumna and new author Laura Townsend Kane and get tips for interviewing from Alumna Valerie Byrd.

Good Luck to Dr. Dan Barron on his application for the position of Director of the School of Library and Information Science. Also special thanks for your unending support of student activities.
Cheers, Jo

Alumni View

Laura Townsend Kane, SLIS Alumna
Straight from the Stacks: A Firsthand Guide to Careers in Library and Information Science is Laura Townsend Kane’s new book released at the end of September. Kane is a 1991 graduate of USC SLIS and currently works at the School of Medicine Library as Head of Cataloging and Acquisitions. After 11 years in this position just where did Kane get the idea to write a book? She actually had the idea for such a book while she was a student trying to make her own career decision and not finding any real help in print.

Kane’s first concept for the book was to write about jobs in the health sciences field but when she sent the proposal to the American Library Association they encouraged her to include all types of librarianship. It took a year to write the book but Kane admits it wasn’t as bad as she thought it might be. She emailed 33 librarians in different fields to be interviewed. “Nobody turned it down,” Kane said. “I thought it was going to be a terrible process but it turned out to be easy and fun.” She sent each librarian a list of questions according to the type of library in which they worked. These are included in the book under “Spotlights.” Each chapter also features a sample list of possible job descriptions you may encounter at different types of libraries.

Straight from the Stacks is an up-to-date resource that uncovers the assorted jobs available in the library field. It looks at both traditional and nontraditional career paths in an extensive range of Library and Information Science professions. It is organized by type of library and includes public, school, academic, nontraditional, medical/law, and library administration. These personal accounts from real-life librarians make this career guide unique while being informative.

Kane says the whole process has renewed her faith this profession. “Librarians are generous, very kind and a great group of people.”

Straight from the Stacks sells for $34 and is available at Amazon.com or at ALA.org (10% discount for ALA members).

Valerie Byrd, SLIS Alumna
Which class at USC/SLIS best prepared you for the work you are doing right now?
The internship! I was able to have so many “hands on” experiences during the internship...being at a school day after day and spending so much time with a “real” media specialist really helped to “train” me for the position I have now. The internship also allowed me to know where I did NOT want to work. I did two internships, one at an elementary school and one at a middle school. Having experience in both helped me know for sure to focus my efforts on getting a job in an elementary school. Middle school kids are too big for me!

Where do you work? Tell us about your job and how you got it.
I work at Dutch Fork Elementary School in Irmo, South Carolina. I’m the media specialist at the school. We have about 550 students and serve grades K-5. I have a combination fixed/flexible schedule. This means that I see some grade levels every week at the same time and other grade levels on an “as needed” basis. I wear many “hats” in my school (as do all librarians) including technology, story lady, and research queen. To get the job, I first went to USC’s education job fair and was interviewed by the district there. I went to two more interviews (district level and school level) and was finally offered the job!

What would you tell current SLIS students to do to better prepare themselves for the library marketplace?
My advice is to get as involved in the “library world” as possible. Before graduating from SLIS, I volunteered at a number of schools in the area, worked at the public library, and went to (and volunteered at) just about every conference that came near me (South Carolina Association of School Librarians, ALA when it was in Atlanta, and South Carolina Library Association). These experiences helped me decide where I wanted to work, helped me meet loads of people that will help me whenever I find myself in need of a job, and helped me build references for the jobs I did apply for.

Give us you best interviewing tip for getting that dream job.
Create a portfolio! I have a binder of pictures, thank you notes, lesson plans, etc. that I brought with me to each job interview I went on. At the end of the interview when they say, “is there anything you would like to share with us?” I’d pull out my portfolio and really wow them. I think this is the best tip I can give for getting that dream job. I could tell that the portfolio really helped to show the interviewers that I am as committed as I say I am—they see what I’ve done and know I can do it. It’s better than just “selling yourself,” you are proving yourself too.

Any words of wisdom for SLIS upcoming graduates?
Get as involved as possible in local and national associations—especially now that you get student rates! Volunteer and network whenever the opportunity presents itself and make sure you take advantage of internships and the wisdom of the professors in SLIS—believe me, you WILL be going back to those notes and emailing them for advice even AFTER you graduate!
One of two new members added to the SLIS faculty this fall, Feili Tu, is devoted to lifelong learning and is eager to pass this on to her students. A native of Taiwan, Tu is not unfamiliar with the ways of the south. She received her Ph.D in Library and Information Studies from Texas Woman’s University and her MLIS from Louisiana State University.

Tu’s area of expertise is in the health sciences and she has an academic background in reference, information services and virtual reference. This semester she is teaching the Digital Libraries course, which she feels is going well. “I felt warmth and hospitality here even when I came for my interview,” Tu said. “I fit in well. I feel at home.”

When entering Tu’s office students will feel that warmth returned to them. She surrounds herself with mementos of past projects and photos of her family and friends. On her desk, in a place of honor, rests the “Angel of Learning.” Tu considers this to be her guardian angel. “The Angel of Learning is always with me reminding me that new knowledge is important and so is passing it on to my students,” Tu stated.

This concept of the power of knowledge was instilled in Tu as a child. When she was 10 years old her father, a professor, asked her to help him do some research at the library. He gave her his library card and set her off to work with only one bit of advice, if she needed help, ask the lady at the desk. That was Tu’s first experience with a librarian and she remembers her as being very helpful. She has been “fascinated with librarianship since that time.”

Tu started out her library career in a public library in Taiwan where she was consumed with the idea of “going boldly where her patrons would not” so that she would be a better information provider. Since then she has been committed to increasing her
knowledge in all forms of librarianship, especially the digital field.

Another role Tu plays at SLIS is as the faculty adviser for LISSA. “It is a privilege to be a part of LISSA and it is in a support role. I’m always there to be the bridge between the students and administration,” said Tu. “LISSA is a poster. It is actually an image of our school and the student body.”

TU’S TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS:
· Know the job and the environment before any interview
· Do your homework (this is most important)
· Find information about the place and be prepared
· Train yourself in skills to answer questions (ask professors for help)
· Give your potential employer a reason to hire you
· Join the local professional association and create your own network
· Believe in yourself
· Remember the projects/assignments you have done in school are your accomplishments. Don’t devalue your school projects, use them to help your employer know your skills

In the next issue you will meet Dr. Jennifer Arns.

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LISSA is seeking officer candidates for 2004. Please contact President Susan Miller for more information.
susanclis@yahoo.com

Send announcements and any news you would like to see here to:
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