



## Message from the President

Welcome to all SLIS graduates! Since our AGM in June, every single one of you is now a member of LISAA. Members voted to remove membership fees and extend membership to every single graduate from SLIS. Therefore, welcome!

During Alumni Weekend at the UofA this September, LISAA hosted its annual celebratory brunch. If anyone needs a reminder why alumni are important, please consider joining us next year. This event celebrates our student LISAA scholarship winners, Gooneshwaree Beeson and Gianmarco Visconti, and this year, two Distinguished Alumni, Sandy Campbell and Sharon Marshall. It is immensely powerful to hear the stories of our celebrated guests. You are likely to feel inspired, reinvigorated, and grateful to be part of this wonderful community.

Speaking of being grateful, we have asked our

alumni to support increasing the LISAA scholarship endowment for the annual LISAA student scholarships, so we may increase the value from \$1,500 to \$2,000. Already, you have donated over \$600 since our request and our goal is to raise \$10,000. If you would like to give back to your alma mater and support our goal, please go to <http://bit.ly/1vBRpDL> and donate to the Library and Information Studies Alumni Endowment Fund.

I also encourage you to get involved with LISAA in other ways. We are looking for volunteers to help us put on events that will connect our alumni, SLIS students, and Faculty. If you would like to help us out, please contact one of our executive members. I hope you enjoy this issue of the LISAA newsletter and on behalf of the LISAA executive, I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving.

CJ de Jong - LISAA President

## Report from the Chair of SLIS

Change is endemic in the LIS professions, and therefore in SLIS. One of the SLIS changes you will see in the title of this note: the head of SLIS is now a Chair rather than a Director. We made the change in order to accommodate the terminology used at the University of Alberta. Directors at the University of Alberta are administrators of centres or institutes, never of teaching and research departments, with much less responsibility than chairs have. Previously, each new director of SLIS had to explain to Human Resources that he or she was a chair in function although director by title, and had to ask to be put on the University's mailing lists for chairs and to become a member of the Council of Department Chairs, one of the governance bodies of the University. When I took the interim position in July 2013, I discovered that

Continued on Page 2

### *In This Issue*

<i>Report from Chair of SLIS</i>	<i>Page 1</i>
<i>In Memoriam: Michael Silver</i>	<i>Page 2</i>
<i>Distinguished Alumna Sharon Marshall</i>	<i>Page 3</i>
<i>The LISAA Executive</i>	<i>Page 5</i>

## Report from the Chair of SLIS Continued

exceptions for 'chair-like persons' would no longer be made and only actual chairs could be on the mailing lists and members of the Council. For that reason, I asked the Dean of the Faculty of Education to have the title of the head of SLIS changed to 'chair'. It took a long time to get the change approved at the various levels of university governance, but it was finally ratified last July. The word 'School' was not changed, nor were the responsibilities and authority of director-now-chair. The search for a new chair of SLIS began at the end of August and will be concluded this fall, we hope. The successful candidate will start on July 1, 2015.

The online program continues to develop and grow. The number of applications doubled this year, and 55 new students are registered in LIS 501 online. We are all—SLIS faculty and staff, LISSA, and LISAA—working on integrating the program and students into our communities. The face-to face MLIS has 35 new students enrolled this fall, a slightly lower number than in previous years, but nothing to worry about. Variation in enrollment over the year is normal, and the quality of the students continues high. An informal comment from one of the new students (2014 cohort),

made in an email to a retired faculty member said "For your general interest, my online MLIS is going great! Only on week three, but I'm really enjoying it. What a fun way to learn, and how great to be able to apply it or see it in action immediately here in the library. I'm incredibly busy, though, and spend most of my non-working time reading. I'm not complaining, though."

Finally, here are a couple of highlights from the Employment Survey sent to the class of 2013 a year after they graduated. Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents have been employed in some capacity in library and information services since completing their MLIS. Of those, 52% were in full-time permanent positions, 33% were working full-time temporary/contract positions, and 15% were part-time permanent and/or temporary. Of the 23 respondents who identified what kind of organization they worked for 48% said 'public library'. Just 9% said a post-secondary library, and 26% said 'other' which included the Alberta government, law, and a corporation. The 83% is lower than the roughly 90% of the previous decade, but not so low as to be discouraging. SLIS and its graduates flourish!

Chair of SLIS, Anna E Altmann

## Class Notes - In Memoriam Michael Silver

In late September SLIS Alumni were greatly saddened to hear of the passing of Terry Michael Silver. Known by most as Michael, his unexpected passing on September 19th, 2014 due to complications after surgery has been a shock to his family and friends. Michael had a long career in libraries that intersected with many of the major library systems in Alberta, including Parkland Regional Libraries, University of Alberta Libraries and The Alberta Library.

Michael graduated from SLIS in 2010 after already establishing himself a career in library IT. He was known by his classmates as a great friend and colleague who could be relied on for everything from advice on assignments to humorous stress relief.

Shortly after learning of Michael's death, classmates and colleagues of Michael came together through facebook. In sharing memories and grieving, a consensus quickly formed that some type of tribute or memorial needed to be arranged for Michael. With the help of LISAA, TAL and the Gifts and Tribute Office at the University of Alberta, a fundraising campaign has been started to establish a Travel Award



*Michael Silver pictured here at his SLIS graduation, with fellow graduates Sarah Dupont and Kathleen Reed.*

Photo: Sarah Dupont

/ Bursary in Michael's name. Details about how to donate can be found at: <http://bit.ly/MichaelSilver>. It is hoped that we can reach a final sum of \$5,000 to establish the travel award for future SLIS students to attend conferences. Michael was a teacher both in the classroom and to his friends, this award will continue his work. -Hanne Pearce

## Distinguished Alumna Sharon Marshall

Sharon Marshall was born and raised in Sangudo, a small village 150km northwest of Edmonton, and she lived there until she decided to attend the University of Alberta at the age of 18. She graduated in 1975 with her Bachelor of Education with a focus in secondary mathematics. Initially, her intentions were to become a high school teacher, but there were not a lot of opportunities for young teachers at the time, particularly in the city. Therefore, Sharon, who was not one to live in the country, applied to the Education library here at the University of Alberta, and that was her first library job. Coming from a math and computing sciences background, the library was not really a place Sharon used that much during her studies, which she admitted amusedly. Thus, despite a strong love for reading, she went into her first job at the Education library with few expectations: "To be quite honest, my school library was the typing classroom and there were books all around," Sharon explained, with a sentiment that a lot of us probably shared before we began studying LIS more in depth.

Once Sharon began her work in the curriculum library, it quickly sparked her interest in LIS. Her first task was to help manage the card catalogue, filing cards for the new titles and pulling cards for discarded titles. Sharon recalled that "it wasn't exactly exciting," but it provided a base for what she would end up doing. There was something about the library that continued to draw her in. With her B. Ed., Sharon was able to take a position at the curriculum reference desk, aiding student teachers with specific queries about the curriculum collection. Overall, taking the good and the bad, Sharon found the Education library to be a very encouraging environment and her experiences there truly pushed her to learn as much about librarianship as she could. Her first step to becoming a librarian was completing a 1-year after degree program in school libraries, as she considered a career as a teacher-librarian. However, Sharon's interest in school librarianship soon expanded into a more general interest in academic libraries. Eventually, her duties at the Education library also included AV cataloguing, which provided another opportunity to develop a whole new skill set. It was this experience as an AV cataloguer that enabled Sharon to eventually become a cataloguer at the Cameron library.

She continued her work at the University of Alberta libraries, finding a niche in technical services, which allowed her to incorporate her knowledge of math and computing sciences into her work. In fact, Sharon did not start her MLIS until 1991, after she had already garnered quite a bit of experience as an administrative professional officer. For Sharon, the opportunity to complete a Master's degree was only possible once SLIS began accepting part-time students. By this time, Sharon had a family and a full-time job that she loved, and so being a student full-time was not possible. Doing her MLIS part-time, while working full-time, meant it took Sharon 5 years to complete her degree: "It felt like it took forever," Sharon lamented, but it was an extremely important decision. She had decided that librarianship was going to be her career; she knew that she wanted to be a librarian. Sharon had been working within the University of Alberta library system for years but, without the MLIS, it was uncertain whether or not she could find work in a library outside of the university, should she ever leave. Moreover, having the degree was intrinsically tied to having the title "Librarian," which is what Sharon wanted for herself. However, the thing that ultimately defined Sharon's time at SLIS was a craving for variety. The broad purview of the MLIS program gave her a new perspective on the work she had already been doing: "I tried to take a variety of courses and not really focus on technical services or the automation sort of things.

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Continued from Page 3

I was always wanting to learn something different.” This mix of practical training and intellectual contemplation that library school provides is something that Sharon and I could agree on as something that makes the program so valuable. Furthermore, this craving for variety that Sharon felt as she was coming into the program is something that I myself, as an incoming student to SLIS, could relate to greatly. It goes to show that sometimes there are common threads that attract people to the same areas of study.

Throughout her career as a librarian, Sharon has been involved with many unique projects outside of her everyday work. This includes her significant contribution to the NEOS library consortium. From the start, charged with the task of unifying the catalogue that all the participating libraries would use, Sharon made sure each library had records operating at the same level of quality. While consortia are common now, NEOS was quite a project at the time. The idea that individual libraries could share their resources with one another was important and it elevated library services throughout the province. The project also helped to strengthen relations between library professionals, at multiple levels. Sharon explained that, apart from automated conversion of records, much of her work involved working with the library staff at these other institutions. She was not just working with other librarians, but with library technicians as well, and providing training in subjects such as MARC coding to help maintain this new system. This has been an ongoing process for Sharon. Whenever there was an upgrade, more training would be provided. In fact, this year marks the 20th anniversary of NEOS and it is worth noting that it was only in the last couple of years that MacEwan University’s libraries were incorporated into the system. NEOS is a remarkable accomplishment considering the sheer number of students all across Alberta who have accessed NEOS over the course of their post-secondary education.

I was curious to ask Sharon about the role of cultural preservation in her work. Sharon was involved with The First Nations Information Connection (FNIC) from its beginnings. FNIC is a partnership between the University of Alberta Libraries and six First Nations Colleges in Alberta

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that provides free internet resources, particularly aboriginal resources pertaining to aboriginal languages and history, to First Nations students. It provides a way to elevate and uplift First Nations libraries with varying amounts of funding at their disposal to a point that would benefit all the students attending these institutions. As Sharon spoke about how she oversaw the cataloguing for this project, she remarked that, much like NEOS, FNIC was about facilitating personal and professional connections between communities and institutions. That said, the effects of this project were much more emotional, which became clear as Sharon explained that a few of the participating First Nations libraries were actually located in buildings that had been residential schools at one time. Finally, when I asked Sharon how post-secondary institutions, and specifically academic librarians, could continue to make efforts to strengthen these connections with aboriginal communities, she had this to say: “We can’t impose our values or, in my case, our cataloguing rules and our standards. We need to relax and remember the goals of the project.” Thus, the importance of FNIC lies in its ability to remind us to listen and respond to the needs of others; we cannot assume that our information needs are the same for everyone.

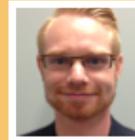
Sharon’s career has been defined by her eagerness to learn and help others. She reminds us why it is necessary to recognize our colleagues whose work often goes unnoticed. It is important to remember that a large part of librarianship involves maintenance, the success of which often translates to work that remains invisible. In spite of all her accomplishments, Sharon remains humble about her success: “It all worked. Not really so much through my good planning or foresight. I think it just happened. We never know where our interests will take us.” Yet, in my opinion, even making the decision to trust in one’s own abilities is powerful. Therefore, I am so glad to have taken part in the celebration of Sharon Marshall’s career, and to have learned even more about the possibilities of librarianship.

-Gianmarco Visconti

*In our next issue we will feature our other distinguished Alumna Sandy Campbell.*

LISAA accepts nominations for the distinguished alumni award and the honorary alumni award year-round. Criteria for the awards can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/LISAAawards>. If you know a colleague or former classmate that deserves to be honoured please send your nominations to us. LISAA executive contact information can be found at <http://bit.ly/LISAAExecutive>

## The LISAA Executive



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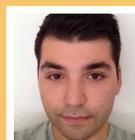
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