Over the last decade the School of Information Sciences (a charter member of the iSchool initiative) changed its name, dropping the words library and graduate. Since 2007 it has retained 11 tenure stream faculty, 1 from computer science, engineering, or statistics, and added 23 more, 10 from those fields. It has added two degrees: a master’s in information management and a bachelor’s in information sciences. Other LIS schools have done similarly. The changes have been in part market driven, as expected in difficult economic times and an expanding digital environment. They aim at new professions and new constituencies.

This semester we have new leadership guiding the school and the MSLIS program. It’s a good time to get above the day-to-day and strengthen our understanding of the current and future importance of librarianship and related work for which we prepare so many of our students. This will help our LIS education prepare graduates to meet challenges and opportunities in the global library environment of the 21st century. So our forward facing questions here are:

1. What makes a library?
2. What makes a librarian?
3. How might library education adjust towards what is important in librarianship?

The Mortenson Center’s longstanding interest in these questions brings us the perspective of two leading South African colleagues in Mortenson’s tradition of training and learning from librarians worldwide.

Co-chairs Kate Williams and Clara M. Chu
About Friday’s lecture

At the epicenter of a changing higher education landscape is the rapid development of technology. This has significantly influenced the shaping of the higher education landscape. The academic library is not exempt from this influence of technology; in fact, it ought to be adding a new layer of support in this changing higher education landscape. Within this paradigm, there is continuous demand for re-calibration of LIS practice and pedagogy, support by commensurate technology, to deliver library and information services that address the issue of social justice. At no time in the history of academic librarianship have libraries been so vulnerable to becoming redundant. Paradoxically, this presents an ideal opportunity to exploit the potential to become noteworthy partners or collaborators in the evolving teaching and learning and research processes of the higher education sector.

The demands of flexible and robust academic library services that meet the demands of an evolving user community and that remain relevant and fit for purpose in a technology-driven age, are opportunities to be exploited. The recalibration of services and the introduction of new ones make provision for the delivery of new and innovative services responding to the need for a paradigm shift in 21st century academic librarianship. In this digital era that propagates the advancement and redefinition of the traditional roles of libraries, one of the golden threads is that of social justice and inclusion of the marginalized. There is growing demand for the free exchange of knowledge between the global North and global South to address the challenges of the global knowledge village. By the same token, there are demands for unique and relevant services such as the demand for support of a decolonized higher education which has the domino effect of growing diamond open access scholarly communication, specifically publishing, with a de-northernization agenda. This presentation explores such a social justice perspective in relations to evolving LIS practice and pedagogy.

—Reggie and Jaya Raju, University of Cape Town

Why Libraries? is online in video format
Visit http://go.illinois.edu/whylibraries for the livestream and online chat during sessions. Video will be archived at the same location. If you do not want to be on camera, let the cameraperson know in advance.
Friday, November 15

5-7pm – **The 29th Annual Mortenson Distinguished Lecture**

Deans' welcome by J. Stephen Downie, Professor and Associate Dean for Research

“The evolving library profession and education driving social justice: A perspective from the Global South”

Reggie Raju, Director of Research & Learning, University of Cape Town Libraries

Jaya Raju, Professor and Head of the Department of Knowledge and Information Stewardship, University of Cape Town (remotely, for Q and A)

Chair: Clara M. Chu, Mortenson Distinguished Professor and Director of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs

Reception to follow

Saturday, November 16

8:30 am – Continental breakfast

9-10:20 am – **Past/Present: The achievements of our libraries, librarians, and library education**

After an evening of thinking globally, we start today with four stories of historical achievement. This will help us understand the potential of our hard-won library institutions. What have the public library, the academic library, and library education accomplished? How did they do it?

John Wilkin, Dean of Libraries and University Librarian

Fred Schlipf, Director Emeritus, Urbana Free Library; Adjunct Professor

Essie Harris, Manager, Douglass Branch, Champaign Public Library

Welcome and Chair: Kate Williams, Associate Professor and Director, Community Informatics Research Lab

Break

10:40 am-Noon – **Technology: How does it transform libraries, and vice versa?**

This session starts from broad technology transformations that are well underway. The Internet, the algorithm, big data. How do these change libraries? What are librarians and library programs doing with these new arrivals? What might they do?

Robert Wedgeworth, Board Member, IMLS; UI University Librarian Emeritus; ALA Director Emeritus; IFLA President Emeritus; and iSchool alum

Lian Ruan, Director, Illinois Fire Service Library, and iSchool alum

Bharat Mehra, Professor and EBSCO Endowed Chair in Social Justice, University of Alabama, and iSchool alum

Respondent: Yoo-Seong Song, Associate Professor

Chair: Jodi Schneider, Assistant Professor
Noon-1 pm – Lunch in East Lobby and Room 131

1-2:20 pm – Democracy: Does it depend on libraries and librarians? Or vice versa?
This session starts with the people in the communities we serve. Libraries have been the arsenals of democracy, a near-ubiquitous institution of book culture and rational thinking and learning. They are slowly becoming diverse, inclusive, and sustainable. Libraries are also public places playing new roles in service-poor communities. What professional practices do we hold onto? What are the new ones?

Scott Walter, University Librarian, Illinois Wesleyan University, and former adjunct instructor
Lacy Spraggins McDonald, Director, History and Genealogy Library, Hayner Public Library, and iSchool alum
Carol Inskeep, Urbana Free Library and iSchool alum
Respondent: Emily Knox, Associate Professor, and iSchool alum
Chair: Inkyung Choi, Lecturer

Break

2:40-4 pm – Library education: What will we need to go forward?
Where do history, technology, and democracy belong in the curriculum and the LIS program generally? What exactly regarding technology do we need there? And what about democracy, culture, service, diversity, inclusivity, sustainability? And what else do we need to be teaching, learning, and studying?

Maria Bonn, Associate Professor and MSLIS Program Director
Joyce Latham, Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee School of Information Studies, and iSchool alum
Terry Weech, Associate Professor, and iSchool alum
Respondent: Reggie Raju, Director of Research and Learning, University of Cape Town Libraries
Chair: Kate Williams, Associate Professor

If you need disability-related accommodations in order to participate in any of the program, please speak with event organizers.
Maria Bonn is an associate professor and the MSLIS program director in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She teaches courses on academic librarianship and the role of libraries in scholarly communication and publishing. Prior to her teaching appointment, Bonn served as the associate university librarian for publishing at the University of Michigan Library, with responsibility for publishing and scholarly communications initiatives, including Michigan Publishing. Bonn has also been an assistant professor of English at institutions both in the United States and abroad. She received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Rochester, master’s and doctoral degrees in American literature from SUNY Buffalo, and a master's in information and library science from the University of Michigan.

Inkyung Choi is a lecturer in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Choi earned her PhD in library and information science from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and her MLIS from Syracuse University. Her research interests stem from her intellectual curiosity about social and cultural pluralistic perspectives, which influence ways of organizing knowledge. At the undergraduate level, Choi has taught courses in information science and technology as well as organization of knowledge. At the graduate level, she has taught a course in organization of information.

Clara M. Chu began her role as Director and Mortenson Distinguished Professor on June 1, 2015. She brings more than two decades of professional knowledge and experiences to advance the mission of the Mortenson Center in this dual role. In addition to having published in leading international journals, presented at conferences, trained and taught around the world in English and Spanish, Dr. Chu has held successive leadership positions in ethnic, regional, national, and international professional library and information associations. She is President-Elect of the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T), Co-Chair of the IFLA Building Strong LIS Education Working Group, and ALA representative on the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO. She is serving on the editorial boards of Libri, Library Trends, and International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion, and co-edits the International Insights Column of College & Research Libraries News. She has been honored for her research, teaching and professional contributions locally and nationally; most recently, she was awarded the 2018 American Library Association’s Beta Phi Mu Award for distinguished service to education for librarianship. Dr. Chu earned her bachelor’s degree (a major in Spanish language and literature and a minor in psychology and French) from the University of British Columbia and her master’s and doctoral degree in library science from the University of Western Ontario. She comes to Illinois from The
University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) where she was a professor and past chair of the Department of Library and Information Studies. She joined UNCG in 2009 after approximately 20 years as a faculty member at the Department of Information Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles. Dr. Chu specializes in the social construction of library and information use, practices, and systems that impact access and collective memory in multicultural communities. Her transnational, ethnic minority, and multilingual background provides her a distinctive and critical lens in the social study of information issues to transform professional practice and education internationally.

J. Stephen Downie is associate dean for research and a professor at the School of Information Sciences, and the Illinois codirector of the HathiTrust Research Center. He has been an active participant in the digital libraries and digital humanities research domains. He is best known for helping to establish an vibrant music information retrieval research community. Since 2005, he has directed the annual Music Information Retrieval Evaluation eXchange (MIREX). He also was a founder of the International Society Music Information Retrieval (ISMIR) and its first president.

Essie Harris, lifelong resident of Champaign, became the Manager of the Douglass Branch of the Champaign Public Library in 2003. During her tenure, she spearheaded the renovation of the branch in 2011 by securing funding from the Live and Learn Construction Grant through the Illinois State Library. The renovation doubled the size of the branch computer lab and gave it a much-needed face-lift. In 2018, Essie received the Hugh C. Atkinson Memorial Award from the Illinois Library Association in honor of her lasting impact on library services in Champaign. In 2019, the Champaign City Council recognized Essie’s 50 years of service to the library and community with an honorary street dedication and reception on Essie Harris Day, October 9.

Courtney Horry works as the Mortenson Center’s Office Support Specialist. After eleven years as an administrative professional Courtney joins the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs from New York where she served as Executive Assistant to real estate, consulting & hedge fund management firms before moving to the Champaign area in August of 2018. She works excitedly alongside Dr. Chu to aid in the Mortenson Center’s contribution to international education, understanding and peace.
Carol Inskeep is a librarian at The Urbana Free Library who organizes library programs for all ages. She is especially interested in how the library can build community, support the local art and music scene, and build understanding and opportunity for marginalized communities.

Emily Knox is an associate professor in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her book, Book Banning in 21st Century America (Rowman & Littlefield) is the first monograph in the Beta Phi Mu Scholars’ Series. She also recently edited Trigger Warnings: History, Theory Context (Rowman & Littlefield) and co-edited Foundations of Information Ethics (ALA). Her articles have been published in the Library Quarterly, Library and Information Science Research, and the Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy. Emily serves on the boards of the Association for Information Science & Technology, Beta Phi Mu, the Freedom to Read Foundation and the National Coalition Against Censorship. Her research interests include information access, intellectual freedom and censorship, information ethics, information policy, and the intersection of print culture and reading practices. She is also a member of the Mapping Information Access research team. She was the Associate Director and Reference Librarian at St. Mark’s (now Keller) Library of the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church for five years. Emily received her Ph.D. from the doctoral program at the Rutgers University School of Communication & Information. Her master’s in library and information science is from the iSchool at Illinois. She also holds a B.A. in Religious Studies from Smith College and an A.M. in the same field from The University of Chicago Divinity School.

Joyce Latham (PhD, Illinois) is an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee School of Information Studies. Latham comes to LIS education after an extended career in libraries. With a background in cataloging and technical services, she became entwined with retrospective conversion and automation projects for public libraries. She was the head of Automated Services for the Southern Maryland Regional Library and worked on the development of the statewide Sailor Project. From there she went to Chicago Public Library as the head of Information Technology. After three years at the University of Illinois studying the social influences on the development of intellectual freedom in public libraries, she went to upstate New York as a library / public library system director. With the completion of her dissertation she came to the School of Information Studies, where she specializes in public libraries, intellectual freedom and library history. Latham’s alternative perspective on the history of libraries allows her
research to focus on the activist role of librarians in the
development and distribution of cultures influencing American
society.

**Lacy Spraggins McDonald** (GSLIS MS 2011) manages the
Genealogy & Local History Library branch of The Hayner Public
Library District in Alton, Illinois. She has been with Hayner since
February 2012. Lacy holds a master’s degree in Library and
Information Science and a Graduate Certificate in Rare Book and
Special Collections Librarianship from the University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign. She grew up in Arkansas and has since lived in
Iowa, Minnesota (where she received a BA in psychology from
Carleton College), Florida, and several cities in Illinois. Lacy
currently lives in Godfrey, Illinois with her husband Jeff and their
two children. She serves on the board of the Madison County
(Illinois) Historical Society and the Vintage Voices Alton Cemetery
tour committee. Lacy has also consulted on television shows for
PBS and Investigation Discovery, as well as researched period
costumes for a Hollywood movie production.

In January 2019, **Bharat Mehra** (PhD, Illinois) joined the School
of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alabama
as Professor and EBSCO Endowed Chair in Social Justice. From
January 2005 – December 2018 he was a faculty member in the
School of Information Sciences at the University of Tennessee.
His research focuses on diversity and social justice in library and
information science (LIS) and community informatics or the use
of information and communication technologies to empower
minority and underserved populations to make meaningful
changes in their everyday lives. Mehra has applied action
research to further engaged scholarship and community
engagement while collaborating with racial/ethnic groups,
international diaspora, sexual minorities, rural communities,
low-income families, small businesses, and others, to represent
their experiences and perspectives in the design of community-
based information systems and services. He primarily teaches
courses on public library management, collection development,
resources and services for adults, diversity services in
organizations, and grant development for information
professionals. In the position of the EBSCO Endowed Chair in Social Justice Mehra is very excited to have the opportunity
to shape the LIS area of the college-wide doctoral program through a concentration in social justice research. It
resonates deeply with his lifelong commitment to further diversity, fairness, and justice working with underserved
communities on the margins of society. Further, in this unique progressive collaborative initiative Mehra looks forward
to playing a leadership role in mobilizing the LIS and communication professions in engaged scholarship to help expand
their traditional definition, scope, extent, representation, and relevance in the 21st century.
Jaya Raju is a Professor and Head of the Department of Knowledge and Information Stewardship (Humanities Faculty) at the University of Cape Town. She has a PhD in Information Studies. She has researched and written extensively in the area of LIS education and its implications for the LIS services work environment. Jaya Raju served as Editor-in-Chief of the South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science from 2013 to 2018. She also serves on the Editorial Advisory Boards of the Southern African Journal of Communication & Information Science; African Journal of Libraries, Archives and Information Science; International Journal of Information, Diversity & Inclusion; Libri: The International Journal of Libraries and Information Studies, and De Gruyter’s Open Information Science. She is co-editor of the ALISE Book Series on LIS education and research. She has published in peer-reviewed national and international journals and presented papers at local, national and international conferences. She is currently Co-Chair of IFLA’s Building Strong LIS Education (BSLISE), an active global network of LIS educators and researchers. In 2018, Jaya Raju became Subject Chair for Library and Information Science on the Scopus Content Selection & Advisory Board.

Reggie Raju is the Director (Research & Learning) at the University of Cape Town Libraries. He has been in academic libraries for more than 35 years. He holds a PhD in Information Studies. He is the author of several publications in peer-reviewed national and international journals, chapters in books and a book publication. His research focus is on research librarianship with an emphasis on open access and library publishing. He is currently a member of the Academic and Research Libraries Standing Committee of IFLA as well as being the convenor of its Special Interest Group: Library Publishing. Reggie is currently the Chair of SPARC Africa and is driving the social justice agenda of open access for Africa. He serves on the editorial board of Journal of librarianship and scholarly communication.

Lian J. Ruan, Head Librarian at the University of Illinois Fire Service Institute (IFSI) and Director of the IFSI International Programs has research interest on use and users of information and international librarianship. She has served on multiple capacities, including President of the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA) and CALA Executive Director. She serves on IFLA Information Literacy Standing Committee. She received numerous awards, including the University of Illinois Chancellor's Academic Professional Excellence award, the SLA Diversity Leadership Development Program award, CALA Distinguished Services Award and Illinois Academic Librarian of the Year Award. Her
library was named the Finalist for the 2015-2017 IMLS National Medal for Museum and Library Service (The National Medal is the nation’s highest honor given to museums and libraries for service to the community). She has organized the Chinese Librarians Scholarly Exchange Program from 2005-2019 and trained over 423 librarians from 142 organizations all over China. She was named as one of 150 for 150 (celebrating the Accomplishments of Women at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that is part of the U. of I.’s sesquicentennial celebration, https://gec150.web.illinois.edu/1990s/). She received the JCLC Advocacy Award at the 2018 3rd National Joint Conference of Librarians of Color in Albuquerque, New Mexico in recognition of her significant efforts to improve and promote library services to culturally diverse communities. She was honored and recognized by the Illinois Firefighter’s Association Inc. for her accomplishments and contributions to Illinois fire service.

Fred Schlipf has been hanging out in library buildings since the early 1940s and has been working for libraries and teaching about libraries and consulting on library buildings since he was 17. He has been a library school faculty member for over 50 years, and he spent nearly 33 years as director of The Urbana Free Library. He has done formal building consulting for between 150 and 200 libraries and quick consulting for many more, and he visits library buildings everywhere he goes.

Jodi Schneider is an assistant professor at the School of Information Sciences. She studies the science of science through the lens of arguments, evidence, and persuasion. She is developing Linked Data (ontologies, metadata, Semantic Web) approaches to manage scientific evidence. Schneider holds degrees in informatics (Ph.D., National University of Ireland, Galway), library & information science (M.S., UIUC), mathematics (M.A., UT Austin), and liberal arts (B.A., Great Books, St. John’s College). She has worked as an actuarial analyst for a Fortune 500 insurance company, as the gift buyer for a small independent bookstore, and in academic science and web libraries. She has held research positions across the U.S. as well as in Ireland, England, France, and Chile.

Yoo-Seong Song is an associate professor at the School of Information Sciences and also holds an appointment at the University Library. He received his MBA from the University of Iowa and MSI from the University of Michigan. Prior to coming to the University of Illinois, he
was a senior associate at Ernst & Young, specializing in e-commerce, high-tech, and telecommunications. He also worked at Accenture as a consultant and a market intelligence analyst at Tellabs. As an entrepreneur, he co-founded two information service firms in Korea—Logit International and Heavenly Seeds Media. He is currently working with domestic and international corporations to provide real-world projects via his experiential learning classes.

Scott Walter is University Librarian Professor, University Copyright Officer, and Co-Interim Chief Technology Officer at Illinois Wesleyan University. He previously served as University Librarian at DePaul University and in various leadership roles for libraries at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Washington State University, The Ohio State University and the University of Missouri–Kansas City. He received a Ph.D. in higher education administration at Washington State University, both a master of library science and a master's degree in the history and philosophy of education at Indiana University, plus master's degrees at American University and at Georgetown University, where he also earned his bachelor's degree in Russian and linguistics.

Robert Wedgeworth was the founding President and CEO of ProLiteracy in 2000 serving until his retirement in 2007. In 2010 President Barack Obama appointed him the board of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) where he continues to serve. Wedgeworth received an A.B. from Wabash College, an M.S. from the University of Illinois and a Ph.D. from Rutgers-The State University of New Jersey. During his long career as a librarian, library association executive and educator he worked as acquisitions librarian at Brown University 1966-69 and taught at Rutgers 1969-72. From 1972-1985 he led the transformation of the American Library Association (ALA), expanding its membership, adding new revenue sources and developing new facilities. He served as the last Dean of the School of Library Service, Columbia University from 1985 until its closing in 1992. He was University Librarian and Professor of Library Administration at the University of Illinois 1992-1999. From 1991 to 1997 Wedgeworth served as president of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), developing the first global electronic network of libraries of all types and adding new programs on Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) and Copyright and Other Legal Matters (CLM). Wedgeworth has received many honors and awards including the Lippincott Award and Melvil Dewey Medal from the ALA, the McGovern medal from the Medical Library Association and the medal of achievement of the International Council of Archives. He has also been awarded six honorary degrees most recently from Syracuse University, 2008. Wedgeworth resides in Chicago with his wife, Chung-Kyun, also a retired librarian. They have one daughter, a journalist and web manager.
Dr. Terry L. Weech is a member of the faculty at the University of Illinois iSchool. Dr. Weech has taught at Mississippi University for Women, the University of Iowa, the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and at Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas. He has served as Chair of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Division of Education and Research, the Chair of the IFLA Education and Training Section and the Chair of IFLA Library Theory and Research Section. He has been active in the American Library Association, participating in numerous ALA accreditation External Review Panels and from 2014-2018 a member of the American Library Association Committee on Accreditation (Chair 2017-18). His research interests include collection development, library cooperation and networks, library administration, economics of information, government information resources, and library education with a special focus on international issues in LIS education. Internationally he has lectured in more than twenty countries. He currently teaches courses dealing with International Librarianship, the Economics of Information and Librarianship and Society. In 2017, he received the Scroll of Appreciation from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) for distinguished contributions to IFLA and the Library Profession, especially in the internationalization of Library and Information Science Education.

John Wilkin assumed the position of Dean of Libraries and University Librarian at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2013. In addition, he served as Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost Designate at Illinois from February 2017 through January 2018. Previously, Wilkin served as Executive Director, HathiTrust and in a variety of administrative roles (including interim library director) at the University of Michigan. Under Wilkin’s leadership, Michigan’s Digital Library Production Service pioneered a number of large-scale digital library efforts, including Making of America, the Humanities Text Initiative, PEAK (a system delivering Elsevier’s journals), and putting the Middle English Dictionary online.

Kate Williams is an associate professor at the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. My research asks this: Is community possible in the digital age? I follow in the footsteps of the early urban sociologists, who debated whether community was possible in the industrial age. Part of this is: What is the role of the public library here? And how do people get and give tech help? These helpseeking “informatics moments,” as I call them, are in a sense the building block of humanity’s move into digital society. I find that people are more ingenious and resourceful than they get credit for. Professional librarians who understand this make for better and freer libraries. I’m currently looking at this process in a 1980s Chicago branch library, a modern-day senior housing complex, and (in collaboration with other scholars) in the US, China, Norway, Philippines, India, Czech Republic, and Pakistan.
About the Mortenson Center

Mission
The mission of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs is to strengthen international ties among libraries and librarians worldwide for the promotion of international education, understanding, and peace.

Librarians from more than 90 countries have participated in professional development programs offered by the Mortenson Center, the only one of its kind in the world.

Activities
The Mortenson Center offers non-degree professional development programs for librarians from outside the United States. Working with international partners, we are involved in a variety of programs around the world.

Partnerships
Our partners assist in the development of self-sustaining centers for continuing education around the world. In collaboration with partnering organizations, we identify professional development needs, develop appropriate educational programs, and help find resources to sustain those programs. The Center often trains librarians from partner countries or regions through the Mortenson Center Associates Program.

Professional Development Programs
During the Center’s professional development programs, international librarians are exposed to innovative services and best practices through visits to a variety of libraries, exposure to professional organizations and conferences, and workshops from experts in library and information science. The Mortenson Center Associates Program is our signature non-degree professional development program for librarians from outside the United States. Mortenson Associates benefit from the ability to network with a diverse group of librarians while exploring current issues and trends in the field.

Our programs would not be possible without the expertise and generosity of our colleagues at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign University Library, the iSchool of Illinois (formerly the Graduate School of Library and Information Science), and library and information science professionals throughout the United States.
The Mortenson Center Distinguished Lectures

The Center works to promote the work of international library and information science professionals through the Annual Mortenson Distinguished Lecture. Previous lecture topics have ranged from the social aspects of digital libraries to the role of libraries in supporting civil society.

2017: Viet Thanh Nguyen, “Enduring Wars In Transpacific Memories”
2015: Dr. Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg, “Right to Accessible Information for Global Citizenship”
2013: Sanjana Shrestha, “Community Libraries as Platforms for Sustainable Development”
2010: Dr. Shalini R. Urs, “Shifting Terrains, Crossing Boundaries: Digital Libraries are Personal and Social Again!”
2009: Ellen Tise, “Isolation and Information Famine: Stifling Africa’s Growth”
2006: Alex Byrne, “Can International Organizations Deliver the Information Society?”
2005: Jorge Orlando Melo Gonzalez: “Democracy and Libraries in Colombia: From Oral Culture to the World of the Book”
2004: Pancras J.M. Ssebuwufu, “Managing and Transforming an African University: My Experience as Vice Chancellor of Makerere University”
2003: Jésus Lau, “Information Competencies: A Bridge to Narrow North-South Knowledge Gaps”
2002: Marianna Tax Choldin, “Walls and Windows, Islands and Bridges: Libraries Along the Road to Civil Society”
2001: Martin E. Marty, “Religion on the Global Scene: The Killer That Heals, the Healer That Kills”
1997: Michéle Duvivier Pierre-Louis, “Reading the Minds of Democracy”
1996: Talat Halman, “From Book Culture to Infomania: The International Transformation”
1992: Julieta Campos, “Culture and Development Between Tradition and Modernity”
The Community Informatics Research Lab was established in 2007 by Kate Williams and Abdul Alkalimat (now iSchool professor emeritus) in order to study technology use in local communities and train future professionals and scholars. Starting funds came from the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

Community Informatics looks at what can be considered the bedrock of human life in the digital age. By maintaining a focus on local communities and people in their everyday lives, it looks after the places we all live in and depend on. Rather than an atomizing focus on individuals, it looks at our relationships and collectivities. It looks at the vast majority of people who are not elites but are nevertheless transforming their lives and work around new and still-changing digital tools.

Early on, community informatics identified the multi-dimensionality to the then-new concept “digital divide.” It became clear that this inequality is persistent and builds on old divides. It is morally and practically troubling in any society. It involves not only access to tools, but also literacy, meaningful digital content, and social support. The lab has focused on the last, coining two terms along the way: Informatics Moments and Informatics Lifecourse. Today the lab is leading an international study of what it posits as a Web of Help: if humanity’s digital transformation depends on a voluntary ethos of “each one, help one,” what does that look like in different countries and among different classes, ethnicities, genders, and generations?

Over 13 years, the CI Lab has published technical reports, journal articles, special issues of the U of I’s Library Trends, books, and a comic book. It has organized 12 conferences. It continues to organize two lecture series: the online Libraries, Literatures, and Literacies Minitalks with the Mortenson Center, and the 12-year-running Info City Talks, begun as the Digital Divide Lecture Series. These are free and archived online. The Lab also organized two team trips abroad to present research: to Beijing in 2010 and Havana in 2016.

The Lab’s doctoral students and visiting doctoral students are working today at UNC Greensboro, Western Washington University, Renmin University, Sun-Yat-Sen University, and elsewhere. Masters and Certificate of Advances Studies students are working as public and academic librarians, university faculty, consultants, and more.

A particular focus of the CI Lab has been helping Chinese colleagues introduce community informatics into China, where it is now taught in at least six universities. Some of this has entailed hosting visitors; teaching at Peking, Hebei, and Renmin; and editing a bilingual community informatics textbook, a second edition of which is now in the works.
To learn more and use our archived talks, publications, and more, visit:

go.illinois.edu/whylibraries

and

go.illinois.edu/infocitytalks
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ischool.illinois.edu