



Office of the Director
School of Library and Information Science

October 15, 2019

Dear Alumni,

We are planning the 50th anniversary celebration and exploring evolving needs for our curriculum, degrees, and program name. In doing this, we continue the path first developed in Davis College by founding dean, Wayne Yenawine. His Statement of Plans for the Graduate Library School included, "Our curriculum may not resemble the conventional Master's program and may be strikingly different." It was.

Through the first 5 decades of the program we have been known as the Graduate Library School, the College of Librarianship, and the School of Library and Information Science. Our flagship degree has been named both the Master of Librarianship and the Master of Library and Information Science, but now we also offer Bachelor and Doctorate degrees. So, much has changed, but much stays the same. As the Dean noted in his 1971 Statement of Plans, "Ours will be a multi-purpose library school, limited for the present to the Master's program. Hopefully, the curriculum will be a vital, relevant one and that our graduates will be prepared to use information and modern technology to fulfill our community's needs." That is still our guiding focus as this evolution again occurs.

There is a lot of good news to report on from the halls of Davis College. We wanted to bring you up to date with your alma mater and ask for your help and participation as we prepare to celebrate 50 years of library science education at the University of South Carolina in 2020.

Enrollments at the graduate and undergraduate program are up. In 2017 we were re-accredited by the American Library Association for 7 years and we have just completed a two-year process to craft a new core curriculum for the Master of Library Science degree that merges the best scholarship with the direct experience of front-line librarians. We have also begun programs with several K-12 school districts to address the critical shortage of school librarians in South Carolina.

Over the past 4 years we have hired amazing new faculty and increased the funding of our research. This year we welcome our new Augusta Baker Chair, Nicole Cooke. We have also launched a Fellows program connecting the school to outstanding internationally known librarians and information professionals.

Plans are also underway for a new master's degree in Data and Strategic Communications with our sister School of Journalism and Mass Communications. Next fall we will begin offering specialist certifications for every library student that require no additional courses or tuition to help them stand out in the job market. We are also working with the Charleston County Public Library to develop a professional development program geared to library workers without the master's degree.

This letter could go on for pages with details on these and other advances in the school. And please reach out to the school if you would like to know more. However, the primary purpose of this letter is to get your input.

As part of a college-wide strategic planning process several identity issues have been identified for the school. Namely, folks outside of the school do not understand all the areas we work in nor all the degrees we offer. Too many faculty in other departments at the university confuse us with the university library. Too many undergraduate students think that our information science degree is preparation solely for library positions. We also are looking to come in line with peer programs at other universities as we head into new U.S. News and World Report rankings for LIS programs – the majority now identified as “I” schools (for information).

We are proposing to change the name of the School of Library and Information Science and we are looking for your input and your suggestions. We are looking for a name that captures all of our degrees and impacts upon South Carolina, the country, and the world. Should we be the School of Information? Information Science? Information and Civic Discourse? What speaks to you? What continues the vision Dean Yenawine set out?

To be clear this in no way minimizes our dedication to libraries or librarianship. The degree name, Master of Library and Information Science, will remain the same providing vital continuity from our past innovation to our future impact. We continue to hire tenure-track faculty in librarianship. We continue to work across the state and across the globe on improving communities through librarianship.

Please know that your alma mater is strong and continues to make a positive difference. We remain dedicated to the advancement of librarians and the broader information domain. This is your school and the successes in Davis is directly tied to your good work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R. David Lankes". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." and last name "Lankes" clearly legible.

R. David Lankes, Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fred W. Roper". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Fred" and last name "Roper" clearly legible.

Fred Roper, Dean Emeritus and Co-Chair of the 50th Anniversary Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Bryan". The signature is very stylized and cursive, with the first name "Jack" and last name "Bryan" clearly legible.

Jack Bryan, Class of 1974 and Co-Chair of the 50th Anniversary Committee