



# COLLEGE OF INFORMATION STUDIES

## ***ANNUAL REPORT***

***JULY 2022- JUNE 2023***





# DEAN'S

# MESSAGE >

At the University of Maryland College of Information Studies (INFO), we strive to solve society's grand challenges. Through interdisciplinary partnerships, our initiatives address some of the world's most pressing issues and represent our college's core values.

Our world is changing rapidly. Every day we hear stories about exciting new ways artificial intelligence (AI) is being developed and deployed, motivating us to think about privacy, creativity, and what it means to be human. Through the Center for Values-Centered Artificial Intelligence (VCAI), our faculty promote the integration of human values, ethical considerations, and societal impact into the design and implementation of AI systems. The center aims to shape the future of AI in a way that is productive but also reflects the principles of fairness, transparency, accountability, and human well-being. Our faculty also are leaders in the National Science Foundation (NSF) Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law & Society (TRAILS) where they address similar issues—advancing AI technologies that align with legal and ethical principles.

Our college prides itself on centering the human experience when it comes to our relationship with technology. This is particularly important for people with disabilities. The digital world often overlooks the needs of people with disabilities, and designs technologies to be inaccessible, only remediating them after-the-fact when there are complaints from people with disabilities. Such an approach leads to delays in access for people with disabilities, while not being the most cost-effective path to accessibility. Our faculty lead the Maryland Initiative for Digital Accessibility (MIDA), which seeks to transform technology design by involving disability communities as equal partners from the outset, using a “born-accessible approach” to proactively integrate accessibility into the design process.

The work our faculty do at the Center for Archival Futures (CAFe) is also community-based and human-centered. The center creates systems and processes that allow for the preservation of cultural memories in an equitable way. Through research, education, and partnership building, the center focuses on the role of digital collections and data in supporting communities; the management and impact of data throughout its lifecycle; and the roles of digital collections and data in advancing knowledge across disciplines.

Our college is moving fearlessly forward, embracing the university's call to action to provide value to the communities we live and work in as well as to the rest of the world. We're tackling poverty, climate change, as well as disparities in education. Our faculty are key members of the Maryland Initiative for Literacy and Equity (MILE), which addresses the literacy needs of marginalized communities, connecting research on literacy and language acquisition with culturally responsive practices.

We are committed to our students becoming future leaders and changemakers. One important way we do this is through teaching leadership skills, such as effective communication, productive team collaboration, and an understanding of the social and ethical implications of information and technology. All of these skills come to bear in our innovative iConsultancy program. We partner with over 65 organizations and businesses and give our students the opportunity to address their information and technology needs. Under the guidance of experienced faculty and mentors, over 600 students have engaged in collaborative problem-solving, research, and analysis, delivering strategic recommendations and solutions to clients. This hands-on learning opportunity equips them with valuable skills and prepares them to excel in their careers.

Reading this annual report as a partner, peer, donor, alumni, or parent, we hope you see our college's accomplishments, initiatives, and progress over the past year and will continue to support us as we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of technology and societal change that impacts and defines our community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Marzullo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Keith Marzullo, Professor and Dean  
UMD INFO College

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# FAST FACTS

## WHO WE ARE ACADEMIC YEAR (AY) 2022-23

- 42 tenured/tenure-track faculty, 26 professional-track faculty, and 58 staff members
- 2,200+ students
- 3 bachelor's programs, 3 academic minors, 2 combined bachelor's/master's programs, 7 master's programs, 1 doctoral program
- Master of Library and Information Science ranked #4 in the USA (US News & World Report)
- Master of Science in Human-Computer Interaction ranked #6 in the USA (Edurank)
- University of Maryland ranked #5 in the USA for Student Entrepreneurship (Princeton Review)
- \$5M+ in research expenditures, 59 active research grants, \$6M in research funding from July 2022 - June 2023
- Approximately 95 publications by INFO faculty and Ph.D. students
- 12 faculty members who received National Science Foundation (NSF), Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), or DoD Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA CAREER) Grants throughout their career

## UMD COLLABORATION

- Faculty joint appointments with Arts & Humanities (ARHU), Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSOS), Computer, Math, and Natural Sciences (CMNS), Education (EDUC), Journalism (JOUR), and Public Policy (PLCY)
- Dual or joint academic programs with Architecture (ARCH), Engineering (ENGR), JOUR, and ARHU
- Joint research units with BSOS: Maryland Center for Social Data Science (SoDa); and with the UMD Institute for Advanced Computer Studies (UMIACS): Human-Computer Interaction Lab (HCIL) and Computational Linguistics Information Processing Lab (CLIP)
- New joint research initiatives with CMNS, EDUC, ARHU, BSOS, School of Public Policy (SPP), Division of IT (DIT), School of Public Health (SPHL), ENGR, University Libraries (LIBR), and the University Career Center (UCC)

## INFO IS COMMITTED TO SOLVING GRAND CHALLENGES

- Promoting an informed and equitable society
- Making information and technology ethical, fair and trustworthy and protecting people's privacy, security, and safety
- Expanding individual opportunities through information and technology
- Providing and ensuring accessibility to information and communications technologies for people with disabilities

## DIVERSITY ➤

- AY 2022-23: 2,200+ Students from 52 Countries | 42% Female | 31% Students from Underrepresented Groups
- AY 2023-24: 2,500+ Students from 63 Countries | 45% Female | 30% Students from Underrepresented Groups



# THE UMD INFO COLLEGE

**INFO** is committed to cultivating a diverse, inclusive community of scholars, researchers, and students to address the information challenges of the 21st century. Our research endeavors have not only contributed to academic discourse but have also fostered real-world solutions that address the urgent issues facing our world. We have democratized access to cultural memories, reconceived the capabilities of data visualization, and addressed educational inequities. Information is a dynamic force that shapes the world; INFO endeavors to prepare individuals to harness this force responsibly, ethically, and with a deep understanding of its transformative potential.

INFO accomplishes this through its doctoral program, seven masters programs, and three bachelors programs, which includes a Bachelor of Science in Information Science that has grown to be the second largest undergraduate degree program at the University of Maryland. We are equipping students with the skills to lead and transform how people find, access, and use information and technology.

Our work extends beyond the classroom and into the broader world. The college has actively engaged with local and global communities, forging meaningful partnerships and initiatives. Through outreach programs, industry collaborations, public service initiatives, and research initiatives, we are leveraging our expertise for the betterment of society and the advancement of information accessibility and literacy.

As you peruse this annual report, we invite you to join us in celebrating the achievements of our college. With the support of industry partners, alumni, and donors, we have continued to be leaders in the dynamic field of information. We hope that this report offers a glimpse into the inspiring stories, impactful initiatives, and ambitious vision that define our college's ongoing commitment to advancing the frontiers of information and technology.



*Dr. Tamara Clegg (center) with graduates at the Spring 2022 INFO Commencement Ceremony*

# YEAR IN REVIEW

July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Launched the BS in Social Data Science
- Launched the BA in Technology and Information Design
- Launched the MPS in Data Journalism
- Launched two combined bachelor's/master's degree programs (InfoSci & MLIS; InfoSci & MIM)
- In Fall 2022, we had 2,200 registered students, 19% growth over the prior year
- The INFO College experiential learning program, iConsultancy, managed projects for more than 65 industry clients involving 629 students across INFO
- Launched Industry Speaker Series, bringing in organizations such as Ernst & Young and the US Dept. of Defense to meet directly with INFO students
- Launched Dean's Fireside Chats with parents and alumni
- 98 news articles/interviews featuring INFO faculty
- The Human-Computer Interaction Lab (HCIL) celebrated its 40th anniversary, one month after 31 HCIL members presented at the prestigious 2023 CHI Conference
- Received funding to launch three new research initiatives/institutes: Trustworthy AI in Law and Society (TRAILS), National Science Foundation (NSF) funded; Maryland Initiative for Digital Accessibility (MIDA), UMD Grand Challenges funded; Values-Centered Artificial Intelligence (VCAI), UMD Grand Challenges funded
- Launched an external EDI assessment of the college as a workplace, conducted by the Ivy Planning Group, to inform INFO's strategic planning
- In March 2022, INFO had its most successful Giving Day yet, increasing total funds raised by over 60% and increasing the number of donors by 77% (donations totaling \$25,449 from 159 donors)

## SIGNIFICANT GRANTS

- **DARPA grant** to study social media in conflict zones (\$1M)  
– PI *Cody Buntain*
- **NSF grant + Amazon** to reduce AI bias in mapping algorithms (\$750K)  
– Co-PI *Sergii Skakun, PI University of Pittsburgh*
- **IMLS grant** to launch the TALENT Network to promote the Training of Archival & Library Educators with iNnovative Technologies (\$400K)  
– PI *Richard Marciano*
- **IMLS Early Career grant** to explore the sociotechnical barriers libraries, archives, and museums face in integrating crowdsourced transcriptions to discovery systems (\$460K)  
– PI *Victoria Van Hyning*
- **NSF grant** to develop a model that will improve the ability of people who are blind or low vision to analyze big data using other senses (\$432K)  
– PI *Jonathan Lazar*
- **NSF grant** to develop sophisticated predictive models and best communication practices needed to combat future pandemics (\$1M)  
– Co-PI *Vanessa Frias-Martinez, PI UMD BGMT*
- **NSF grant** to address the complex and interconnected challenges of food and nutrition security in Maryland (\$750K)  
– Co-PI *Vanessa Frias-Martinez, PI UMD AGNR*
- **NSF Career grant** to create an algorithm for a social media platform that will deliver users a trustworthy news feed (\$600K)  
– PI *Giovanni Luca Ciampaglia*
- **NSF grant** to explore how different stakeholders negotiate privacy in smart environments and develop tools to help people better manage data collection when using smart technologies (\$145K)  
– PI *Jessica Vitak*
- **NSF grant** to fund Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law and Society, TRAILS (\$20M)  
– Co-PI *Katie Shilton, PI UMD CMNS*

## EXTERNAL SPEAKERS

### Highlights

October 12, 2022

#### Dean's Lecture Series:

**"The Future of Learning in a Multicultural Democracy"**

Speaker: Dr. Na'ilah Suad Nasir, 6th President of the Spencer Foundation

March 16, 2023

#### Search Mastery Speaker Series: "Understanding the New Bing"

Speaker: Michael Schechter, VP of Microsoft Bing's Growth and Distribution team

March 17, 2023

#### OTTRS Speaker Series: "Human-Machine Teaming: What Skills Do the Humans Need?"

Speaker: Dr. Samantha Dubrow, Lead Human-Centered Engineering Researcher, The MITRE Corporation

April 12, 2023

#### Sociotechnical Cybersecurity Speaker Series: "Graphika: Future Work in Action"

Speaker: Jennifer Mathieu, Chief Technology and Product Officer, Graphika

April 27, 2023

#### ALA Lecture Series: "The Future of American Libraries"

Speaker: Lessa Pelayo-Lozada, ALA President

May 3, 2023

#### "Settler Tech: A Conversation on Indigenous History and the US Tech Sector"

Speaker: Famed author and Alumnus Malcolm Harris ('10)

## JASON R. BARON ➤



**Jason R. Baron Appears on Major News Outlets to Share Expertise on Indictment of Former President Trump.** The INFO professor of the practice appeared twice on CNN to share his expertise during the network's special coverage of the indictment of former President Trump for the mishandling of classified documents in June 2023. The interviews were conducted by Anderson Cooper and Jake Tapper. He was also quoted in numerous other national and international media outlets.

## FACULTY IN THE NEWS

### Highlights

#### United Press International:

**"Taliban shift tactics in their determination to control, oppress women"**

(8/15/22) – Cody Buntain

**NBC: "Cookies might not be tracking you, but some of your favorite brands are"**

(9/28/22) – Ido Sivan-Sevilla

**The Baltimore Sun: "Jennifer Golbeck talks artificial intelligence policy, privacy before Baltimore Sun event"**

(10/19/22) – Jennifer Golbeck

**New York Magazine: "Are We Living Under 'Technofeudalism'?"**

(10/28/22) – Dan Greene

**The Boston Globe: "AI can detect signs of depression. Should we let it?"**

(12/8/22) – Jennifer Golbeck

**Wired: "The Internet Is at Risk of Driving Women Away"**

(12/19/22) – Jessica Vitak

**CNN: "How technology can strengthen democracy"**

(3/27/23) – Jennifer Golbeck

**The New York Times: "Column: Afraid of AI? The startups selling it want you to be"**

(3/31/23) – Dan Greene

**Psychology Today: "Far-Left Canadians Susceptible to Russian Influence Too"**

(4/1/23) – Cody Buntain

**Forbes: "Tracking Gay Priests and Abortion Seekers with Location Data"**

(4/2/23) – Jennifer Golbeck

**CNN: "Computational Thinking is the New Literacy of the 21st Century —Are Students Prepared?"**

(4/17/23) – Mega Subramaniam



# NEW STAFF



**Olu Akinola**  
Facilities Project Manager



**Chris Beatty**  
Graduate Program Manager



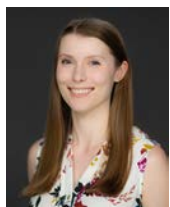
**Rachael Bennett**  
Event Management Coordinator



**Diana Brigdett**  
Academic Advisor



**Sara Brookins**  
Academic Advisor



**Emily Davidson**  
Communications Coordinator



**Josh Dayrit**  
Information Technology Support Assistant



**Christopher Hawley**  
Assistant Director of  
Information Technology



**Nuwan Hewabethmage**  
UG Academic Program Specialist



**Kyran Richardson**  
Assistant Director of Sponsored Projects



**Laurie Robinson**  
Writer



**Anthony Ross**  
Academic Program Specialist



**Joseph Sherren**  
MLIS Program Coordinator



**Tatyana Yevgrafova**  
HCIM Program Coordinator



# NEW FACULTY

**Giovanni Luca  
Campaglia**

Assistant Professor  
Sociotechnical Cybersecurity



**Sheena Erete**

Associate Professor  
Human-Computer Interaction



**Amelia Gibson**

Associate Professor  
Library and Information Science



**Jesse Klein**

Lecturer, Director of GEM  
Data Science



**Heera Lee**

Lecturer, Co-Director of HCIM  
Human-Computer Interaction





# ACADEMIC OVERVIEW

## Doctoral Program

- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Information Studies

## Master's Programs

- Master of Science in Human-Computer Interaction
- Master of Information Management
- Dual Masters in Information Management & Community Planning
- Master of Professional Studies in Gaming, Entertainment, and Media Analytics
- Master of Library & Information Science
- Dual Masters in History and Library and Information Science
- Master of Professional Studies in Data Journalism

## Combined Bachelor's/Master's Programs

- Bachelor of Science in Information Science + Master of Library and Information Science
- Bachelor of Science in Information Science + Master of Information Management

## Bachelor's Programs

- Bachelor of Science in Information Science at College Park
- Bachelor of Science in Information Science at Shady Grove
- Bachelor of Science in Social Data Science
- Bachelor of Arts in Technology and Information Design

## Academic Minors

- Information Risk Management, Ethics, and Privacy
- Technology Innovation Leadership
- Science, Technology, Ethics and Policy (STEP)

## Certificates

- Digital Curation for Information Professionals Certificate
- Museum Scholarship & Material Culture Certificate

*INFO Graduates at the 2022 Spring Commencement*

# ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS



Students in a BS in Social Data Science class

## BS IN SOCIAL DATA SCIENCE

The Bachelor of Science in Social Data Science (SDSC) degree program launched in Fall 2022, and in this coming Spring 2024, it will graduate its first class. These students will also be the first to take a capstone project in the spring alongside bachelor of science in information science students. Once they graduate, students will enter careers as data scientists and analysts in a wide range of fields in both government and industry. Graduates of the program are well-equipped to navigate the intersection of challenging social science problems and data analysis, using their skills to contribute to evidence-based decision-making and understanding of pressing social issues in fields like economics, politics, psychology, and public health.

The major gives students experience and training in diverse topics including social research methods, data mining, machine learning, programming, and social theory. Students take a set of core courses housed primarily in INFO and Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSOS) Joint Program in Survey Methodology (JPSM). They then select a track discipline in which they train in relevant theory and methods, from among the following options: African American studies, anthropology, economics, government and politics/international relations, geography/geospatial information science, psychology, or sociology. Public health was added this year as a track, expanding the major's reach to include the School of Public Health (SPHL) in addition to INFO and BSOS.



# ACADEMIC HIGHLIGHTS

## ***BA IN INFO DESIGN***

The Bachelor of Arts in Technology and Information Design (InfoDesign) degree program launched in Fall 2022 with 11 students. Fall 2023, the program expanded its footprint, course offerings, and student population with a total of 109 students. Classrooms equipped with movable tables and chairs, interactive whiteboards, and prototyping tools facilitate dynamic and interactive learning environments for InfoDesign students.

As the spaces students learn in evolve, so do the course offerings, as they move toward a more design-centered ethos. A creative coding course explores computational and data-driven tools for writing poetry and fiction, emphasizing experimental writing with computers, digital fiction, and poetry. A design fusion course delves into the dynamic relationship between aesthetics and the core skills of design thinking all with the goal of enhancing the design process. Students learn to identify user needs, comprehend user behaviors, envision interface designs, and experiment with paper prototypes.

Despite new changes, the core principles of the degree program remain consistent. InfoDesign continues to combine elements of information science, technology, design, and human-computer interaction to prepare students for careers in fields such as user experience (UX) design, information architecture, and data visualization. The program's interdisciplinary nature equips students with the skills needed to analyze, organize, and present information in meaningful and accessible ways.



*Students in a BA in a Technology and Information Design class*





## New Research Initiatives

# TRAILS >

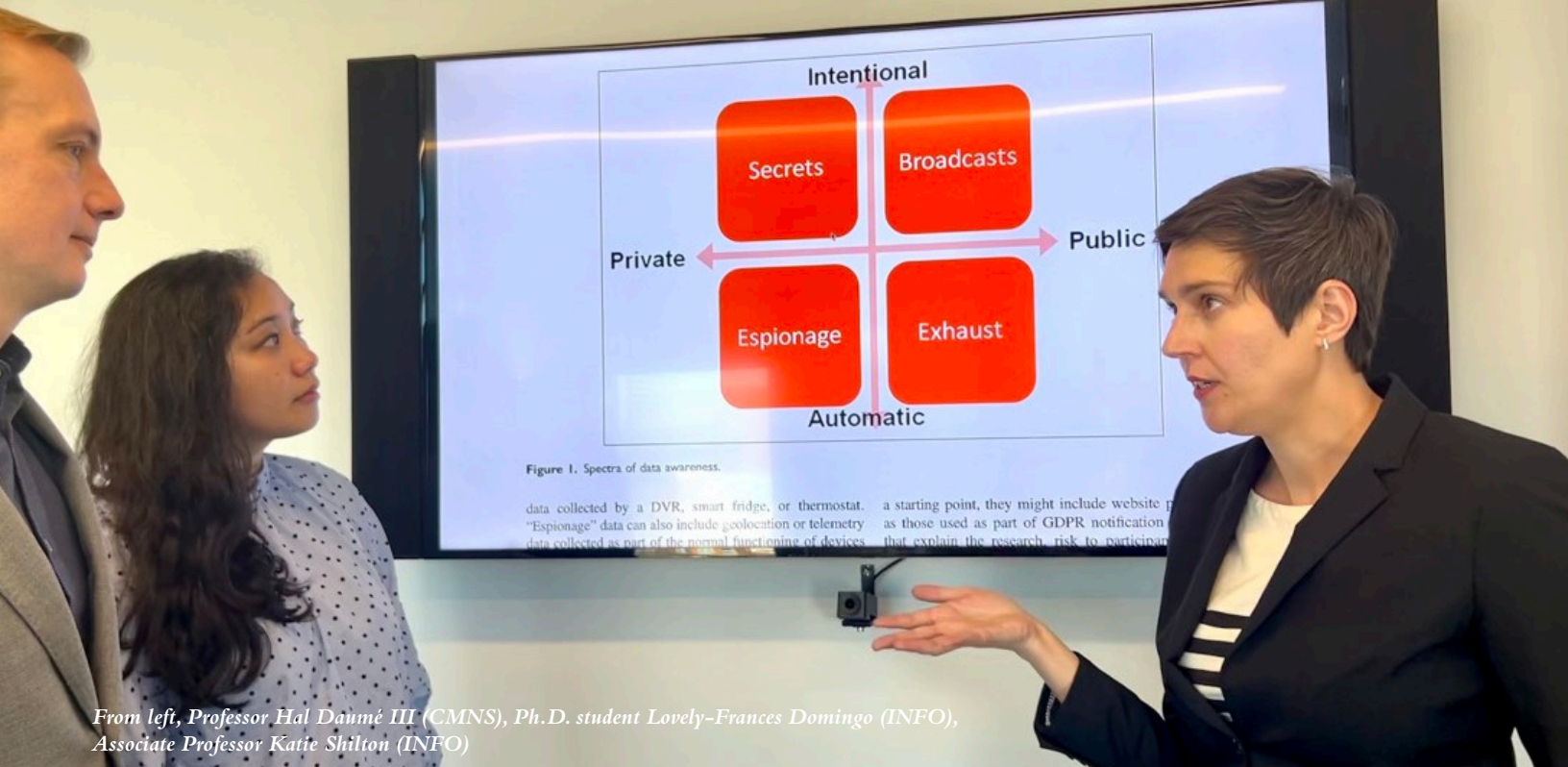
## Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law and Society

**UMD** is leading the development of the NSF Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law & Society (TRAILS)—a collaborative effort funded by a \$20 million award from the National Science Foundation (NSF).

TRAILS brings together experts in AI, machine learning, social sciences, and legal studies to develop AI technologies that are more trustworthy and ethical. It will involve participation from impacted communities, private industry, and the federal government to determine how to create AI that can promote and establish trust through policy models.

TRAILS is the first organization to integrate artificial intelligence participation, technology, and governance during the design, development, deployment, and oversight of AI systems. They will investigate what trust in AI looks like, how to create technical AI solutions that build trust, and which policy models are effective in sustaining trust.

Leading the initiative is Hal Daumé III, Lead PI and Director (CMNS). Katie Shilton (INFO) is Co-PI leading the efforts in participatory AI. Also from INFO: Cody Buntain, Hernisa Kacorri, Giovanni Luca Ciampaglia, and Naeemul Hassan.



From left, Professor Hal Daumé III (CMNS), Ph.D. student Lovely-Frances Domingo (INFO), Associate Professor Katie Shilton (INFO)

## New Research Initiatives



# Initiative for Values-Centered Artificial Intelligence

UMD Units Represented: INFO, CMNS, ARHU

The goal of the Initiative for Values-Centered Artificial Intelligence (VCAI) is to integrate research and education across the UMD campus and engage in high-impact research with stakeholders to transform how AI is practiced globally.

In 30 years, the VCAI hopes to see AI:

- Safely and privately augmenting and personalizing medicine with doctors and patients informed and providing feedback
- Fairly and justly tailoring educational content to individual learners with teachers and students understanding and critiquing AI interactions
- Planning efficient and accessible routes across our cities with engineers and transit riders in the loop
- Enabling equitable, reliable communication across languages and cultures with lay users and professional interpreters alike

The proposed solution for this transformation: To put AI in a human context by developing theories, practices, and tools to ensure that AI respects human values.

The world needs mechanisms that increase the participation of the stakeholders in guiding how values are interpreted and implemented in AI systems. VCAI aims to work within situated communities to invent those mechanisms.

The VCAI is being led by Hal Daumé III (CMNS), Vanessa Frias-Martinez (INFO), Katie Shilton (INFO), and John Horty (ARHU).



# MIDA

## MARYLAND INITIATIVE FOR DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

### New Research Initiatives



## Maryland Initiative for Digital Accessibility

*UMD Units Represented: INFO, CMNS, EDUC, DIT, SPHL, ENGR, ARHU, BSOS, LIBR, UCC*

Digital technologies (such as software apps, websites, digital documents, and operating systems) are often designed without considering the needs of people with disabilities. Remediating accessibility issues in existing technologies can be a time-consuming and expensive process that still fails to include the disability community and often leads to delays in access.

The new Maryland Initiative for Digital Accessibility (MIDA) combines the expertise and passion of researchers, designers, developers, and educators from multiple disciplines at the University of Maryland with a united goal of making digital technologies accessible for all. MIDA aims to involve the disability community, private and public partners, and anyone interested in accessibility issues, in technology development projects, public outreach programs, and advocacy. MIDA will collaborate with others to proactively build-in accessibility when developing new technologies—known as the “born-accessible” approach.

MIDA has five high-level goals:

- Building a community of faculty, staff, and students across the University of Maryland (UMD) who are passionate about digital accessibility
- Creating opportunities for UMD to engage with external stakeholders including disability rights groups, technology companies, and policymakers
- Developing technology projects to improve accessibility and demonstrate the born-accessible approach to design
- Fundraising to further support MIDA’s mission
- Increasing awareness of digital accessibility through public events and programming at UMD

MIDA is being led by Jonathan Lazar (INFO), Ana Palla (DIT/SPHL), Gulnoza Yakubova (EDUC), Paul Jaeger (INFO), J Bern Jordan (INFO), and Galina Reitz (INFO).





## New Research Initiatives



# Maryland Initiative for Literacy and Equity

*UMD Units Represented: EDUC, ARHU, BSOS, INFO, SPP*

**T**he Maryland Initiative for Literacy and Equity (MILE) seeks to address literacy achievement gaps across Maryland by transforming practices in education, speech and language pathology, and library sciences.

A large proportion of the students who graduate from Maryland public schools face barriers that prevent them from reading and writing at grade level. Achievement gaps in schools systematically increase with the number of students living at or below the poverty line, coinciding with increasing segregation by race, ethnicity, and language background.

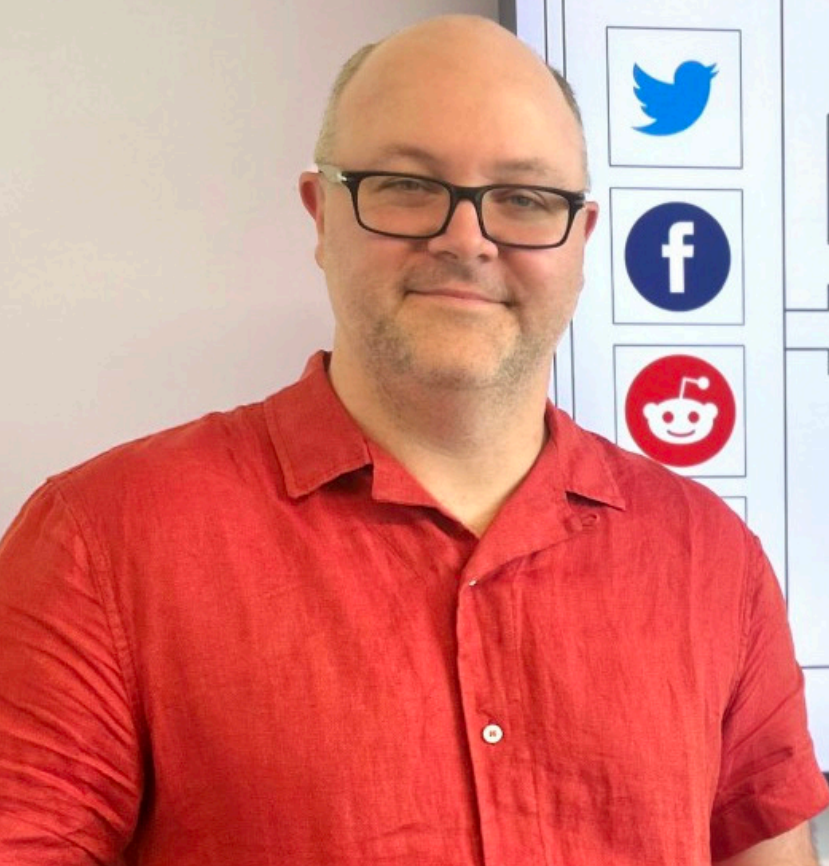
In the field of literacy, there is a global chasm between the science of language and literacy acquisition and the practice of teaching children how to read and write.

Research on language and literacy acquisition often overlooks or minimizes social and cultural contexts, leading to deficit perspectives toward culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and communities.

MILE is harnessing partnerships and community stakeholder outreach to drive research that is contextualized with respect to marginalized communities across race, culture, ethnicity, and language, as well as neurodiverse populations.

The MILE initiative is being led by Donald Bolger (EDUC). Elizabeth Bonsignore (INFO) is a key member of the team, with extensive experience in co-design with youth, human-computer interaction, and information equity.





## **FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: CODY BUNTAIN** ➤

### **Building Digital Tools to Combat Misinformation**

**T**he goal of INFO Assistant Professor Cody Buntain's research is to make the online information ecosystem a more informative, higher-quality space by enhancing its resistance to manipulation. His work is mainly focused on crisis informatics and online political engagement, which includes online manipulation, social media use in conflict spaces, and how technology is mitigating or contributing to social ills online.

One of Buntain's major research efforts is to advance the understanding of how visual media is used to manipulate online audiences and influence elections. He is also actively working on how content moderation—both technological and manual—can positively or negatively impact the broader information ecosystem.

Recently, Buntain joined the University of Maryland Institute for Advanced Computer Studies (UMIACS) as an affiliate faculty member. He emphasizes that UMIACS' collaborative and computational infrastructure will play a major role in supporting his research.

"From leveraging large multi-modal datasets of online behavior to engaging with UMIACS centers and labs like the Computational Linguistics and Information Processing Lab and the UMD Center for Machine Learning—these resources will vastly facilitate and accelerate my work," he says.

Looking ahead, Buntain's upcoming research is heavily focused on artificial intelligence (AI). While AI has changed how politicians engage with the public, revealed new societal vulnerabilities, and exacerbated long-standing social ills, these technologies have also empowered new voices and engagement in political processes, he explains.

He is also a part of the new Institute for Trustworthy AI in Law & Society (TRAILS), a cross-campus collaboration aimed at influencing fairness and trustworthiness in AI by incorporating both users and stakeholders in the development process. Led by UMD, the institute is supported by a \$20 million award from the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

*The original article by Melissa Brachfeld, UMIACS communications group, was published July 25, 2023.*



## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: SHEENA ERETE >



UMD staff at  
local community  
event

## Building New Community Partnerships and Engaging the Local Community Surrounding UMD in Meaningful Ways

**INFO** Associate Professor Sheena Erete is a researcher, educator, designer, and community advocate, whose research focuses on co-designing socio-cultural technologies, practices, and policies with community residents to amplify their local efforts in addressing issues such as violence, education, civic engagement and health. The objective of her work is to create more just and equitable outcomes and futures for those who have historically and who currently face structural oppression. Examples of her most notable works have been the co-design of mobile technologies to support street outreach workers for violence prevention, and co-founding Digital Youth Divas, an out-of-school program aimed at encouraging Black and Latina middle school girls and their families to engage in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM).

Erete's research has won several best paper awards in top venues such as the Association of Computing Machinery's (ACM) Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI), Conference On Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW), and Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education (SIGCSE TS), as well as a diversity and inclusion award for her collaborative work dissecting oppression that exists in the field of computing, HCI, and design. Her work has been supported by the National Science Foundation, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, and several philanthropic foundations including the Polk Bros. Foundation, Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation, and McCormick Foundation.

Erete received Bachelors of Science degrees in Mathematics and Computer Science from Spelman College. She received a Masters in Computer Science from Georgia Tech and a Ph.D. in Technology & Social Behavior from Northwestern University.

Erete says, "I am so excited to join the INFO College at UMD and to have the opportunity to collaborate with high caliber, diverse faculty who approach research and teaching in a variety of ways. I'm most especially looking forward to being a part of the university's mission of engaging the local community surrounding UMD in meaningful ways, focusing on issues of justice, equity, and transformation for historically marginalized groups. My approach to research has been to support and further existing community-based initiatives, and I look forward to building new community partnerships and relationships in the area and engaging students in this work."





## **FACULTY SPOTLIGHT:** **STEPHANIE VALENCIA- VALENCIA** ➤

### **Exploring How Large Language Models Can Accommodate People with Disabilities**

**I**n a recent study, INFO Assistant Professor Stephanie Valencia-Valencia and a team of researchers found that people who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices are enthusiastic about using large language models (LLMs) to improve their communication, but don't want to lose their personal expression.

The research team spoke with 12 participants who use a variety of AAC devices. Participants were asked to evaluate Speech Macros, a prototype that demonstrated the capabilities of LLMs in aiding conversation. Speech Macros had three main functions: extending a reply based on a one-word input, generating responses based on background information about the user, and turning one-word input into phrases. Participants found that while this technology was helpful in minimizing time and effort, it can reduce expression of personality and generate overly-formal responses for the situation.

AAC users often face stigma for using technology to communicate, Valencia-Valencia said. There's also financial and informational barriers to accessing this technology. But as artificial intelligence becomes more accessible, she's hopeful that future technology could be more accessible to AAC users.

"I could also see another future where large language models could help us develop AAC devices that are on-the-go or live on web browsers or on any type of computer," Valencia-Valencia said. "That would be really nice, because it would make them more widely accessible."

Another concern for AAC users is privacy. If LLMs had access to an AAC user's medical information, interacting with healthcare providers could be easier and more efficient. But AAC users are wary about uploading their personal information and expressed concerns about where that data will be stored, the study found.

It's also important to AAC users to preserve their personal tone and cultural expression. As language continues evolving, LLMs will have to adjust to accommodate new forms of expression. Valencia-Valencia said more advanced technology that can accommodate these features is possible, but requires more exploration and research.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS



## MLS & Ph.D. Alumna Named 2023 Maryland School Librarian of the Year



Sherri Massey earned her bachelor's degree in elementary education from the University of Pittsburgh in 1998, and her first teaching job was at Birney Elementary School in Washington, DC, in 1999. When she took her class to the school library and asked about the children's collection, the woman at the front desk said she didn't know what they had, and that there was no librarian she could speak to. "It was one of the few schools with a large collection, and they put a secretary who was waiting to retire in there," Massey recalls. "This is really unfair to these kids." She started to think more deeply about the role librarians play in schools.

She left public school teaching in 2000 and began working at the Washington Theological Union's library as a circulation assistant, even though she is not Catholic. Sister Yvette Beaulieu saw her talent and encouraged her to go back to school. She chose the College of Information Studies (INFO) for the collegiality and connectedness of its community. She was especially drawn to program coordinator Vicky Reinke's kindness. She developed lasting relationships while earning her master's degree in library science as well as her Ph.D.

Massey is an integral part of her school community and prides herself on being a resource for teachers and students. Massey was named School Librarian of the Year by the Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL) in 2023 and credits INFO for making her the professional she is. "The College of Information Studies has been the cornerstone of my journey as a school librarian, equipping me with the tools to ignite curiosity, foster critical thinking, and empower students to become lifelong learners."

## HCIM Alumnus Brings Equitable UX Design to Google



Marcus Hines came to the College of Information Studies (INFO) to pursue a master's in human-computer interaction (HCIM) because of the history of the Human-Computer Interaction Lab, the oldest HCI lab in the country. He became interested in HCI when he learned more about user experience through an Information Architecture Publishing course he took in undergrad.

While at INFO, the course that had the most impact on him was Inclusive Design. He learned about how to provide equitable experiences for all users, including those with disabilities. He worked on a project that addressed racial bias in search engine results. He co-designed an app that allowed Black women to filter search results for hairstyles, products, and salons based on their hair texture.

Hines is currently a user-experience designer for the Google Meet team. He is focused on providing equitable experiences for people meeting in rooms or virtually while keeping in mind business needs and engineering constraints.

Landing a job at Google is one of Hines' proudest achievements. "User experience is about understanding how people interact with technology. Visual design aids in creating delightful experiences users will love by improving usability, provoking emotion, and strengthening brand perception," Hines says.



# DONOR SPOTLIGHT



## Living With Purpose: The Legacy of Gloria Davidson

**G**loria Davidson, who was born in 1928, grew up on a small farm in Sunflower County, Mississippi. When she was in 10th grade, her family moved to Indianola so she and her siblings could attend a Rosenwald School and receive the best education possible. Rosenwald schools were funded by philanthropist Julius Rosenwald in partnership with activist Booker T. Washington and were often the first schools in a Black community.

The commitment Davidson's family had to her education extended beyond high school. Her mother, a schoolteacher, saved up money for her to attend college. She earned a bachelor of arts degree in library science and master's degrees in education and library science from the University of Maryland. After graduating, she was hired by T.C. Williams High School, now known as Alexandria City High School, as a librarian. She was one of a handful of Black educators and administrators tasked with helping to integrate the school—a challenge she welcomed.

Davidson believed so strongly that getting an education was a great equalizer and the key to a good life that she created the Gloria Davidson Scholarship in 2016 for students at INFO pursuing careers as school librarians.

Davidson had a vision for empowering children by developing their creativity and interests through library and information services. Recipients of her scholarship share that vision. "I applied for the Gloria Davidson Scholarship because she embodied all the things I aspired to become as a school librarian," says Theresa Bourbon, who was awarded the scholarship in 2022 and is now a librarian at Hearst Elementary School in Washington, DC. "She was innovative, creative, and made great strides in educating her community about the critical connection between a thriving school library and a successful school. That's the kind of impact I'm hoping to achieve in my own career."

Davidson was a leader at her school and the individuals she helped with her scholarship are burgeoning leaders as well. She transformed her school's library into one of the first high school media centers in the country, becoming a model for other schools to follow. She made a lasting impact on the field and on the many lives she touched—all the students she worked with over the years—and those who benefited from her scholarship.

To support the Gloria Davidson Excellence in School Libraries, visit <https://go.umd.edu/gdavidson>

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI)

## A History of Activism

The INFO College (formerly the UMD School of Library and Information Services) was founded in 1965 with a mission to transform the ways in which libraries function in communities—bringing information related to health, housing, education, police and emergency services, consumer affairs, employment, government, and more to underserved communities. In the 1960s, this was a radical and even opposed concept. The INFO College is credited as having the first library and information science program with a core focus on identifying and addressing the social needs of communities. The College also has a legacy of championing diversity within its own community, actively recruiting students and faculty from underrepresented populations since its inception.

## Continuing a Mission of Activism

Diversity, equity, and inclusion continue to be central to the mission of the INFO College today. Our faculty, staff, and students actively engage critical issues by:

- Collaborating with the National Federation of the Blind to develop and enhance curriculum in areas of diversity and inclusion
- Serving on diversity and inclusion focused boards and committees, such as the Executive Board of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and the FAS COVID-19 Rapid Response Task Force
- Making our courses and teaching more inclusive, equitable, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive by providing a learning community in which faculty and students revise curricula and develop inclusive teaching practices through the Anti-Racist Teaching Seminar (ARTS)
- Offering an MLIS specialization in diversity and inclusion (ours was the first MLS to do so)

## DEI Faculty and Staff Spotlights

- Victoria Van Hyning (Assistant Professor) oversaw a national effort to improve information access for incarcerated and returning citizens
- Ana Ndumu (Assistant Professor) has conducted research, presented papers, and delivered presentations focused on information access for Black immigrants
- Amelia Gibson (Associate Professor) directs the Community Equity Data & Information Lab. Her research focuses on maternal health equity and disability justice
- Renee Hill (Principal Lecturer, DEI Officer) presented at the TerrapinSTRONG symposium
- Ron Padrón (Director of Undergraduate Operations) was appointed to the university's Climate Survey Working Group, and he serves as associate editor & contributor to the *Including Disability* journal
- Sareil Brookins (HR and DEI Coordinator) participated in a panel discussing DEI in the INFO College at a new faculty onboarding session
- Aaron Wilson (MLIS Student) Awarded ALA Spectrum Scholarship for his commitment to community building, leadership potential, and social justice efforts in LIS

## Land Acknowledgement *by Ghonva Ghauri from MICA and approved by Piscataway elders*

At the College of Information Studies, we believe it is important to create dialogue to honor those that have been historically and systemically disenfranchised. So, we acknowledge the truth that is often buried: We are on the ancestral lands of the Piscataway People, who were among the first in the Western Hemisphere. We are on indigenous land that was stolen from the Piscataway People by European colonists. We pay respects to Piscataway elders and ancestors. UMD community members, please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today.



# Diversity in the INFO College Community AY 2022-23

2,200+ students from 52 countries

42% female

31% undergraduate and 13% graduate students from underrepresented groups

9 student organizations that encourage DEI

*Note, today, Dec. 2023, we have 2,500+ students from 63 countries*

While we are proud of our diverse student body, we realize we need to do even more to make the INFO College a truly diverse and inclusive environment. Through marketing, advertising, and hiring, we are working towards increasing the diversity of all of the INFO College: faculty, staff, and students.

## New DEI Activities and Initiatives

- Hosted session in conjunction with the UMD Speaker's Bureau regarding pronoun usage, inclusive language practices, and current social events impacting members of the INFO College
- Co-hosted the "Supporting Students with Disabilities & Mental Health Concerns" (virtual event) with the Counseling Center and Accessibility & Disability Services (ADS)
- Engaged an external DEI consultant to conduct a full examination of the INFO College as it relates to DEI and help us write a DEI strategic plan
- Developed onboarding presentations to address the culture of the INFO College
- Implemented TerrapinSTRONG initiatives at the student, staff, and faculty level
- Growing the DEI team in preparation increased needs in AY24
- Continued Monthly Spotlights to celebrate underrepresented groups
- Implemented the INFO College staff Birthday Initiative and Work Anniversary Initiative, by which the DEI team recognizes opted-in staff members
- Provided staff "Equity Transparency" and "Belonging in the Workplace" presentations





R. LEE HORNBAKE LIBRARY



# INFOTERPS >

*HCIM Students from INST710 class*



## COLLEGE OF INFORMATION STUDIES

4130 Campus Drive  
Hornbake Library, Room 0201  
College Park, MD 20742-4345  
[ischool.umd.edu](http://ischool.umd.edu)



@INFOCollegeUMD