

UBC School of Information

# INSIGHTS

Vol. 2



In this issue: COVID-19 • Information Design • Blockchain Pathway • Events • iSchool News



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



# Update from the Director

## Luanne Freund

UBC iSchool Director  
2015-2020



## Erik Kwakkel

UBC iSchool Director  
2020 - 2023

Looking back, I am amazed at how full and exciting the past five years have been, and yet how quickly they have flown by. I am proud that the School has continued to grow and build upon the foundations established by former directors, faculty, staff and students. With our new name, larger and more diverse faculty complement, and strengthened international reputation, the School is in a strong position to weather the many challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I want to extend my warmest thanks and appreciation to all of those who have stood by the school and supported me personally in this role. This includes former directors Caroline Haythornthwaite and Edie Rasmussen, my many faculty colleagues, and especially Rick Kopak who served as Graduate Advisor and Associate Director for most of this period. It has been a great pleasure to work closely with the dedicated staff of the school, who ensure that all the gears keep turning and consistently demonstrate their dedication to our wonderful students. Through this period, Dean Gage Averill and the Faculty of Arts leadership team have forged a principled and progressive path, created many exciting opportunities, and provided guidance and support for iSchool initiatives. The school has benefitted from this positive relationship and I deeply appreciate the support extended to me as Director.

These five years have been an incredible period of learning and growth for me personally, and deeply satisfying. I am pleased to be able to turn over the leadership to our new Director, Erik Kwakkel, and I look forward to many great years to come.

I am looking forward to my new role as director of the School of Information. Since I arrived from Leiden University, in 2018, I have come to know the school as a vibrant place of learning and a welcoming community. My background is in the history of the book and how information was disseminated prior to the introduction of the printing press in Europe. In both my teaching and research, I enjoy looking across different periods of time to gauge how individuals engaged with information. I am fascinated by changes in book design and how such developments relate to societal change, whether in the past or today. My research has brought me inside Rare Books and Special Collections libraries across the world and my teaching also focuses on how these fascinating libraries operate.

The school has made tremendous progress under the directorship of Dr. Luanne Freund. While completing various current initiatives, including our BA-minor in Informatics, the coming years will provide the opportunity to further increase the quality of our curricula, to attract more Indigenous students, and to consolidate our broad disciplinary profile. Connections with units across campus continue to increase and I think it makes pedagogical and strategic sense to connect with our neighbors, especially the library. While the Covid-19 emergency presents challenges to the school and its leadership – forcing us to rethink how to do what we do, as administrators, researchers, and teachers – it also provides opportunities to explore new ways of teaching, and connecting with our students. I look forward to the chance of helping to make our school an even better place of work and learning.

# The importance of community in a time of crisis

by Belen Garcia

March 16, 2020 marked the beginning of an unprecedented journey for the entire UBC Community. In light of the rapidly changing situation due to Covid-19, a message from the President's office announced a transition to online classes, for an initial three-week pilot period. And so, the iSchool embarked on the digital reality that we are still living today.

The transition has presented many challenges for all the members of our community. As the coronavirus pandemic continues to grow, the uncertainty of the situation generated many disruptive and overwhelming feelings. This has been an especially difficult time for our students. Some have lost their jobs that help fund their studies and under these circumstances, many others who graduated worry about an uncertain job market.

Together, as a community, the iSchool looked for solutions and a common response to overcome the situation and to help our students. **Faculty** members quickly adapted to the new online teaching environment, responding to the students' needs, but also working to bring different research assistantships opportunities to our students.

Through the generous support of our **alumni**, student groups, and other supporters, the school was able to establish an emergency fund for students experiencing financial hardship due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our graduate students have played an essential role during these challenging times. Probably, one of the most difficult aspects of this global pandemic has been the overwhelming feeling of isolation and disconnection. In response to this distress, the **iSchool Peer Advisors** held multiple virtual sessions, giving the opportunity for all students to connect with their classmates and support each other through Q&A sessions and virtual study groups.

**LASSA**, the school's student association regularly checked on its members and kept them informed with all the university's announcements. It truly has been extraordinary and inspiring to see how students have been supporting and caring for each other during this difficult time.

From an academic perspective, the inconceivable amount of information (and misinformation) that Covid-19 has generated presented a unique opportunity to analyze and study the information needs and practices of people during a crisis. **Dr. Lisa Nathan** and **Dr. Luanne Freund** worked diligently to prepare a new course for the summer terms. The seminar 'Information in Times of Crisis' offers students the unique opportunity to examine the role of information in crises and develop conceptual frameworks for approaching this area of study and practice, while experiencing such a crisis in their own lives.

At the end of March 2020, UBC made the decision to cancel the in-person graduation ceremonies in order to follow provincial health guidelines. Soon after this announcement, **iSchool staff** members started to work on different ideas to honour the graduating class of 2020 and celebrate their achievements. Their dedication and hard work translated on a total success during the first UBC iSchool virtual graduation ceremony.

With the upcoming 2020-2021 academic year set to be hosted primarily online and a noticeable decrease of official announcements, the Covid-19 situation seems to be currently more settled as we navigate the so-called new normality. Our school is proud of each of its members and the extraordinary response that we experienced as a community. We will continue to work to provide the best possible experiences and opportunities for our students, but also learning and exploring new ways to improve ourselves and the communities that we live in.



# Information Design - helping users to understand data

*“The most rewarding aspect of working in the field of Information and User Experience Design in the public sector is that you get to influence what really impacts the people on the other end of the government services and make their lives easier.”*

When Ksenia Cheinman (MLIS ‘12) started her career in Information Design, back in 2014, as Information Architect (IA) for the Canada Revenue Agency, she wasn’t completely sure of what an IA did. She saw a lot of problems with the way information was being created, communicated and shared, and she had ideas about how to improve it. She began by just making the role her own and continued learning every bit of the way. *“I was pretty much a UX-team-of-one leading the reorganization of the intranet content by topic rather than organizational units, developing other employees into critical information roles from web-publishing ones, creating a content strategy, governance, and a style guide to introduce important concepts and consistent patterns, and advocating for user needs.”*

The digital content realm has changed a lot since then. In 2020, we have seen an explosion of specialized UX job titles, such as Content Strategists, Content Designers and UX Writers. Organizations are more aware of the value content professionals bring and are increasingly hiring for these niche roles. Despite the trendy job titles, there is still lots of work to be done in properly positioning these roles within the organizations, and ensuring that they are treated on equal footing with the more established design ‘superstars’ like for example User Interface (UI) Designers.

When looking at the current trends on the field, Ksenia explains that, right now, there is a high level of interest in the use of artificial intelligence to better manage and automate content, with conversational design (designing interactions with chatbots and other multimodal devices) and content modeling (creation of connected and structured content). *“Personally, I believe as a designer you have a phenomenal responsibility for what you put out into the world, and ethical considerations play a huge part in it. I think this ethical and critical lens is something that will become increasingly important in the next 5-10 years.”*

This trend opens the door to multiple research opportunities available in Information Design. *“Ethics and defining what ‘good design’ is, and who benefits from design are essential to the growth of this field and require further study,”* Ksenia says. From a content design perspective specifically, there is quite a bit of tension between this new area of work and information management; it would be worthwhile to examine how the two areas can better reinforce one another. *“There is a need for critically-minded professionals who understand the power of content/information and use it for social good. This is a phenomenal time for graduate students to use the skills they have learnt in Information Studies to improve and create ethical digital services.”*



**Ksenia Cheinman, MLIS ‘12**

Lead Content Strategist at the  
Canada Revenue Agency



**Felicity Collins**  
Dual MASLIS Student  
Blockchain@UBC Pathway

# Blockchain@UBC - technology to improve the World

Officially launched in January 2020, Blockchain@UBC is Canada’s first Blockchain and Distributed Ledger Technology training pathway. The initiative aims to build capacity for existing Master and PhD students in this area and help contribute to scaling Canada’s Blockchain industry while also tackling some of the world’s most complex socio-technical issues. Students under this pathway have access to next-generation tools and applications to address issues in FinTech, engineering and computer science, and information governance through its disciplinary streams.

Felicity Collins, from Kehewin Cree Nation, located in Treaty 6, is on her first year of our Dual MASLIS program and currently pursuing the Blockchain@UBC training pathway.

**What are the goals/outcome do you expect to achieve after completing your degree?**

I chose this program as I recognized a need within my community for good data and information management practices. My future goals, after I have completed this program, include building information literacy within First Nations communities; creating a records management system within my community that exemplifies Indigenous data sovereignty; and helping other First Nations communities in doing the same.

**Why did you decide to pursue the Blockchain@UBC training path?**

I am doing this pathway to learn more about the concept and technology requirements to see its viability and usability for First Nation communities and their records, whether it be operational or historical. I believe this pathway will open up opportunities for First Nations to exercise control over their data and in providing a secure avenue for recordkeeping for First Nations. I like the potential this technology has in opening space for Indigenous peoples moving towards sovereignty of their Nations on their own terms.

**What are your Blockchain-related research interests?**

My interest stems from Indigenous data sovereignty and examining what processes need to be considered in order to have First Nations take on their own data and information management. I want to see if Blockchain technology has a place within this process and if there is room for collective privacy under it.

Learn more about the Blockchain@UBC Research Cluster  
[blockchain.ubc.ca](https://blockchain.ubc.ca)



## Student news

**Saguna Shankar** (PhD) was awarded a SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship 2019-2020 for her research *“Care-driven migration strategies: Investigating how information practices influence migrants’ ability to thrive”*.

**Emily Larson** (MASLIS) received the Theodore Calvin Pease Award given by the Society of American Archivists (SAA) for her paper *“Big Brother, Big Data: Digital Preservation of Big Data in Government”*.

**Nicole Mulder** (MASLIS) was the winner of the 2018-2019 Arts Student Portfolio of the Year Competition for the portfolio she began as part of the MLIS core. The judges were impressed with the quality of the activities that she included in her portfolio, as well as the diversity of experiences that she represents therein.

**Risa Hatanaka** (MLIS) received the 2020 Graduate Student CARL Research in Librarianship Grant for her research on *“Using Non-English Sources for Academic Research: Information-seeking Behaviours of Graduate Students”*.

**Eiman Elnoshokaty, Reza Ghajar, Neah I. Monteiro, Karen Ng and Zakir Suleman** (MLIS) received the Spectrum Scholarship from the American Library Association (ALA).

**Sadaf Ahmadbeigi** (MASLIS) was awarded the 2019-2021 ARL/SAA Mosaic Program Fellowship.

**Mya Ballin** (MAS) received the 2020 Mosaic Scholarship. The award, given by the Society of American Archivists (SAA), recognizes students who manifest a commitment both to the archival profession and to advancing diversity concerns within it.

### UBC ISCHOOL DOCTORAL PROGRAM GRADUATES

In September 2018, **Dr. Sarah Ann Gilbert** successfully defended her dissertation *“Motivations for Participating in Online Initiatives: Exploring Motivations Across Initiative Types”*.

In March 2019, **Dr. Weimei Pan** successfully defended her dissertation *“Managing Records as Evidence and Information in China in the Context of Cloud-based services”*.

In September 2019, **Dr. Elizabeth Shaffer** successfully defended her dissertation *“Social Media in the Canadian Government: An Exploratory Study of Emerging Practice”*.

In September 2019, **Dr. Adam Jansen** successfully defended his dissertation *“Technological Features of Preservation Systems that Support the Authenticity of Digital Records”*.

In May 2020, **Dr. Darra Hofman** successfully defended her dissertation *“‘Between Knowing and Not Knowing’: Privacy, Transparency, and Digital Records”*.

## Faculty and Staff update



**Erik Kwakkel, MA, PhD** is the new iSchool Director. He joined UBC in August 2018 at the rank of Professor. His research interests are related to the material design of medieval manuscripts and how information was disseminated prior to the introduction of the printing press in Europe. He published several monographs and edited volumes devoted to the culture of the medieval book, including *The European Book in the Twelfth Century* and *Books Before Print*, a university textbook for teaching the medieval book. Widely recognized as international expert in medieval manuscripts, he held several major research grants and is a member of the Comité International de Paléographie Latine (CIPL).

**Tess Prendergast, MLIS, PhD** joined the School in June 2019 as Lecturer in Librarianship. Dr. Prendergast received her PhD in literacy education from UBC’s Department of Language and Literacy Education in 2018. Her doctoral research explored the inclusion of children with disabilities in early literacy learning opportunities in their communities. Her research explores the role of children’s librarians in the lives of children and families and she is currently collaborating with other children’s librarians to create a toolkit that reflects Canadian children’s library services. Tess is active in both BCLA and ALA, presenting programs, writing articles, and serving on administrative and award committees.



**Tricia Logan, MA, PhD** joined the iSchool in July 2019 and she is cross-appointed with UBC’s Residential School History and Dialogue Centre (RSHDC), where she is Assistant Director of Research and Engagement. Dr. Logan is a Métis scholar with more than eighteen years of experience working with Indigenous communities in Canada. She has held roles at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the Legacy of Hope Foundation. She completed her PhD in History at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her PhD is entitled *“Indian Residential Schools, Settler Colonialism and Their Narratives in Canadian History”*.

**Hannah Turner, MMst, PhD** joined the iSchool in September 2019 as Assistant Professor. Prior to joining UBC, Dr. Turner was a Lecturer in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, and a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow in the Making Culture Lab at SFU. She investigates how ethnographic material culture has been produced and circulated using different recording and documentation technologies through time. Her upcoming book *Cataloguing Culture* (UBC Press, 2020) presents a history of ethnographic documentation practices and the classification and cataloguing of material culture collections in the Smithsonian’s Department of Anthropology.



**Kevin Day** is now the Educational Services Manager at the iSchool. He oversees experiential learning, recruitment, admissions, professional development, and other student services initiatives.

**Sandy Abah** joined the iSchool in April 2019 as our Program Assistant. She provides administrative support for our graduate programs and assists with admissions, scholarships, and graduation.

**Yvette Shen** is the new Administrative Assistant at the iSchool. She assists with managing the Director’s schedule, payroll, student and faculty recruitment and hiring.

**Alissa Kinnis** is our Finance Assistant at the Arts Service Center. She provides financial support to the iSchool, and assists with financial processing, and inquiries.

**Belen Garcia** is our new Communications Coordinator. She is the administrator for the School’s website, the editor for the weekly and annual newsletter, and social media manager.



# iSchool Events



## MACL 20th Anniversary

In March 2019, we celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the MA in Children’s Literature program at UBC iSchool. Alumni, faculty, staff, and members of the children’s literature community had the opportunity of hearing from professor emerita Judith Saltman, the heart and soul of the program from its creation, under the direction of Ken Haycock. The event also featured keynote speakers Kenneth Oppel, an author and Governor General’s Award winner; and Leonard Marcus, a world-renowned children’s book historian, author, and critic.



## ACA@UBC 2020

In February 2020, the Association of Canadian Archivists Student Chapter at UBC (ACA@UBC) held its 12th Annual Symposium, “From Accountability to Memory”. National and international speakers and panellists discussed several topics and points of view over appraisal, acquisition, and disposition of public records in the archival and records management domains. The event, which had more than 160 attendees, was a success thanks to the essential work of their executive team, and the collaboration of up to ten student volunteers. Abstracts, slide presentations, and photographs of the event can be accessed on their website.

[www.acasymposium.arts.ubc.ca](http://www.acasymposium.arts.ubc.ca)

## Carnival of Information

On the evening of February 28, 2020 the School hosted a unique event to celebrate its new name, the School of Information. The Carnival of Information was a night full of color, games, prizes, popcorn and fun. Our staff members organized different information-inspired games, such as the popular Bitcoin Toss, Binary Moves U, “Race to graduation” and “Pin the i on the iSchool,” these last two organized by LASSA, the School’s student association. The night was a success, thanks to all the volunteers, sponsors and donors, LASSA, Kathy Shoemaker, and the staff members that work so hard to make this event happen.



## Annual Awards Gala

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual iSchool Awards Gala took place on November 1, 2019. The event celebrated the achievements of more than thirty UBC master students and recognized students that received some unique awards, as well as the recent achievements of iSchool doctoral students. Our keynote speaker, Dr. Erik Kwakkel, delighted us with his speech “Why I don’t read books,” a look into the vision of historians of the book and how to how to interact and read the information and material design included in a book.



# Alumni Spotlight

- Karen Munro** (MLIS '02) has been appointed President of the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association.
- Mark Christensen** (MLIS '15) is now the Head of Access Services at Simon Fraser University.
- Kendal Bergman** (MLIS '14) recently started a new job as a Senior Executive Search Consultant with Target Corporation.
- Mark Goodwin** (MLIS '16) is working with the UBC Library Research Commons team as the Metadata Coordinator for the Geodisy Project.
- Shadrack Katuu** (MAS '00) was awarded an Emerald Literati Award for his article *"Healthcare systems: typologies, framework models, and South Africa's health sector"*.
- Ebony Magnus** (MLIS '13) is the new Head of the SFU Belzberg Library.
- Martha Whitehead** (MLIS '85) has been named University Librarian at Harvard University.
- Elizabeth Denham** (MAS '84) received, in January 2019, a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) Award by Queen Elizabeth II for her services to protecting information.
- Ksenia Cheinman** (MLIS '12) is now Lead Content Strategist at the Canada Revenue Agency.
- Devon Mordell** (MAS '18) received the 2018 Dodds Prize, which recognizes superior research and writing on an archival topic at a Canadian University.
- Christina de Castell** (MLIS '01) was appointed Chief Librarian of Vancouver Public Library in June 2018.
- Jessica Woolman** (MLIS '09) is the new Communications Strategist at the Residential School History and Dialogue Centre (RSHDC) at UBC.
- Emily Fornwald** (MLIS '18) is working as a reference librarian for UBC's Education Library.
- Devon Greyson** (MLIS '06) has been appointed Assistant Professor of Health Communication at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- Laura Mason** (MASLIS '14) is working as an IT Business Analyst for the Government of Canada in Ottawa, Ontario.
- Cynthia Ng** (MLIS '11) is now working as a Senior Support Engineer for GitLab, Inc.
- Maria Paraschos** (MAS '16) is an Archives Assistant at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa.
- Stacy Paull** (MLIS '17) is working as a Science Librarian for the Pierce County Library System in Tacoma, Washington.
- Natalie Porter** (MLIS '09) is the Assistant Chief Librarian at the Powell River Public Library.
- Neeyati Shah** (MLIS '17) is working as a Community Engagement Librarian at Madison Public Library in Wisconsin.
- Katie Sloan** (MASLIS '17) is working as an archivist for the BC Government in Victoria.

## Would you like to be featured on the Alumni spotlight?

Share your personal or professional updates, awards and successes with us! You can submit your news through this online form > [www.tinyurl.com/ischool-alumni](http://www.tinyurl.com/ischool-alumni).

# Research Spotlight



**STOREE: Supporting Transparent & Open Research Engagement & Exchange**  
The Supporting Transparent and Open Research Engagement and Exchange (STOREE) Project supports community-led research initiatives and increases the accessibility of research – thanks to partners at UBC Library, Simon Fraser University Library, UBC Learning Exchange and the BC Centre on Substance Use. Dr. Heather O'Brien, Associate Professor at UBC iSchool, is the lead investigator of this project, which is funded through a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Partnership Development Grant.

Many university research projects based at UBC, SFU and other institutions are aimed at residents and community groups in the Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood. Residents have voiced concerns about research projects that are extractive, and research findings published behind paywalls that make them inaccessible to the community. The STOREE project aims to make research more accessible and relevant to non-academic audiences, by supporting knowledge sharing between researchers and community groups, and by exploring the roles of librarians and literacy educators in sharing research. More details about this project are available at [www.storee.ubc.ca](http://www.storee.ubc.ca)

## Tracing the Scribe: Reassessing Professional Networks in the Paris Book Trade

Dr. Erik Kwakkel is the principal investigator of Tracing the Scribe, a research project funded through UBC's Public Humanities Hub Research Cluster Grants. This project focuses on the activities of scribes during the fourteenth-century in Europe, where the most important illuminated and extensively studied manuscripts were produced in Paris. Art-historians have profiled a substantial number of illuminators, reconstructing with whom they collaborated and revealing their professional networks. Current reconstructions are incomplete, however, because scribes, who are the most substantial contributors to the manuscript's production, are disregarded. The project studies a complete professional network in Paris, by analyzing manuscripts associated with the prolific illuminator Mahiet and variations in letter formation, to trace individual scribes. The project aims to study scribes and their professional associations, and to assess in what way scribes add to our comprehensive understanding of professional book production.

## Conceptualizing Recordkeeping as Grief Work: Implications for Archival Theory and Practice

Dr. Jennifer Douglas, Assistant Professor at the iSchool, is the principal investigator of this research project. Recognizing grief as a universal human experience, *"Conceptualizing Recordkeeping as Grief Work"* aims to explore how grief affects the field of archival study and practice. The project studies the recordkeeping practices of the bereaved and the manner in which archivists care for records of bereavement. Despite its inevitability and pervasiveness, grief is not an emotion or experience often acknowledged in the literature on archival studies, nor are archivists regularly trained to work with records documenting or resulting from complicated emotional states. This project aims to address this gap, and to suggest ways in which understanding recordkeeping as a type of "grief work" might contribute to rethink archival work as a caregiving profession. The study explores how, specifically, recordkeeping facilitates the maintenance of relationships with the dead and functions as a kind of grief work; and how an understanding of archives-as-grief work and concepts such as continuing bonds and continuing social presence might transform the way that professional archivists think about the care of and provision of access to records in their custody. More details about this project are available at [www.blogs.ubc.ca/recordkeepinggriefwork](http://www.blogs.ubc.ca/recordkeepinggriefwork)



# Have your say

Do you want to learn more about iSchool research projects? Want to hear from more students? Curious about other iSchool alumni? Let us know!

We are always looking to improve our communications with the iSchool community. Alumni can submit their news using our online form: ([www.tinyurl.com/ischool-alumni](http://www.tinyurl.com/ischool-alumni)).

Feedback can be submitted via email to [ischool.comms@ubc.ca](mailto:ischool.comms@ubc.ca).



## Stay connected with us



[ischool.ubc.ca](http://ischool.ubc.ca)

INSIGHTS is published by UBC iSchool and distributed to alumni, faculty, staff and students. To join the mailing list, or to receive an electronic copy, please contact [ischool.comms@ubc.ca](mailto:ischool.comms@ubc.ca).



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Information  
Faculty of Arts