

Fall 2013

The Link, Fall 2013

University of Northern Iowa. Division of School Library Studies.

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THE LINK

UNI's School Library Studies Alumni Newsletter

Welcome to *The Link*!

We are happy to offer our second issue of *The Link*! Our goal is to give you a bit of current news about the UNI School Library Studies Program. Our intention is to send one issue per semester. If you have news that we should include in the Spring 2014 issue, please send it to alisa.weeks@uni.edu.

Program Review

During the 2012-13 academic year, the School Library Studies program engaged in its every-seven-years program review. The process involves an extensive self-study to examine how our program is keeping up with changes in the profession, how well our graduation rates are holding up, how satisfied our graduates and their employers are, and what we see for the future. An external team visited the program in the spring; our visitors were Dr. Deborah Jesseman, Minnesota State University at Mankato, and Dr. Sherry Crow, University of Nebraska at Kearney. In the fall, we met with the Dean of the Graduate College, the Dean of the College of Education, our Department Chair, and the Provost to review the evaluators' assessment. A central recommendation of the report was to develop a five-year strategic plan for the program, and our administration encouraged us to plan with an eye to growth of the program in students and faculty. Such an endorsement and commitment to support growth is gratifying.

Research: Critical Literacy

SLS faculty members Karla Krueger and Jean Donham were awarded a research grant from the American Association of School Librarians to examine 24 fourth-grade state research projects completed in high-poverty rural Iowa schools. The grant was purpose was to reveal the influence of professional librarian staffing on student learning.

Results showed that students' projects displayed higher levels of critical literacy, ethical use of information, content learning, and understanding of the inquiry process where schools had higher levels of professional teacher librarian staffing. Although the states projects were primarily centered around factual learning, 58 percent of students posed new inquiry questions at the end of the project.

The authors encourage teacher librarians to capitalize on the curiosity generated through states projects and use it as a jumping off point for future inquiry learning. The findings will appear in the [School Library Research](#) journal.

Research: College Preparedness

What do those first-year college professors expect of high school graduates? This was the central question of a study undertaken by Dr. Donham. College assignments were solicited from private and public colleges and universities throughout Iowa. Three themes emerge from a content analysis of the assignments:

1. information literacy, especially how to engage students in inquiry;
2. academic writing, especially how to identify evidence in support of a thesis; and
3. learner dispositions, especially curiosity, open-mindedness, self-reliance, and perseverance.

The results will be presented at the AASL Conference in Hartford, Conn. in November.

AASL/IASL Leadership Academy

The Iowa Association of School Librarians received a grant from the American Association of School Librarians to host a leadership conference for teacher librarians. UNI was represented by six teacher librarians: Joan dePrenger, Chelsea Sims, Rachel Burrow, Kenya Arrants, Miranda Kral and Lisa Beal. The two-day event featured a keynote address by Sam Miller, superintendent at Solon Schools, followed by activities aimed at strengthening leadership skills and dispositions.

Fall Scholarships

Three School Library Studies students were awarded scholarships for fall 2013:

- Andrea Hora, The Mary Lou Kirk Scholarship
- Lisa Collier, The Iowa Library Association Foundation Scholarship
- Michelle Kruse, the Rigor-Madsen Scholarship



Lisa Collier

Congratulations to all three winners. We greatly appreciate the ongoing support for these scholarships. If you would like to make a donation, contact the UNI Foundation at 319-273-6078 or [pledge online](#). Please list the scholarship account you wish to contribute to in the section marked "Other." Thank you for helping current UNI students!



Michelle Kruse

ILA Member of the Year

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Jean Donham, Professor in School Library Studies, was named the Iowa Library Association Member of the Year for 2013. This award is conferred upon a librarian, trustee, friend or institutional member of the Iowa Library Association. The award is based on the following activities or accomplishments:



- Outstanding service to the Iowa Library Association
- Community library betterment through broadened scope and quality of service
- Contribution to any area of service benefiting library users
- Distinguished service to libraries: outstanding participation in activities of a professional library association; notable publications and productions; creative work in interpreting the library to the community.
- Leadership in education and in-service training for librarians or trustees
- Extension of library services through cooperation
- Improvement in library techniques or management
- Development of library facilities



Ann Orsini, Current School Library Studies Student

I currently work as an instructional coach for the West Des Moines Community Schools. Partnering with teachers and administrators to improve student learning is truly a privilege and a joy! Previously, I taught second grade, Gifted & Talented, and fifth grade. My passion in the classroom was centered on creating life-long readers and learners.

Sharing books with my community of readers is what I miss most about being a classroom teacher. Serving as a teacher librarian seems like the perfect fit, allowing me to act as an instructional partner and a teacher who builds a love of reading and helps students to discover new possibilities using technology.

This semester, my coursework at UNI includes *Introduction to the School Library Program*. I am struck by the multi-faceted role of the teacher librarian and the positive effect that individual can have on a school. The course is offered online using Adobe Connect and Blackboard, along with two on-campus meetings. It is a pleasure to connect with educators across Iowa and learn from our diverse experiences and backgrounds.

In Memoriam

Sharon Kay Wetherell, 71, of Cedar Rapids, passed away peacefully on October 27, 2012. She was born in Imogene, Iowa. Sharon graduated from Farragut High School in 1959 and received a B.A. in teaching from State College of Iowa (now University of Northern Iowa) in 1962. Ms. Wetherell began her educational professional life as an English teacher. In 1971, she received an M.A. in library science from UNI and was employed by Cedar Rapids Schools as a media specialist in the district until her retirement in 2001. In addition to being a longtime member of Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library, her service to the library profession included service on the boards of the Iowa Educational Media Association and the Cedar Rapids Public Library.



Alumna Feature: Heather Hope

Heather Hope graduated from the UNI School Library Sciences program in the summer of 2012. Heather has taught sociology and psychology at Valley High School for past 14 years. She transitioned this year into the Teacher-Librarian position at Valley High School. It has been a whirlwind beginning of the year for Heather, but she is completely enjoying her new job. Her current projects include re-designing the Valley Library website and activating a Valley Library Twitter account. At UNI, Heather built life-long friendships with her classmates who are now her Iowa library colleagues.