

InfoLink

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In the Genealogical Treasure Hunt, Librarians Read the Map by Sasha Nyary, Dean's Editorial Fellow

Once the exclusive purview of the wealthy and royalty, genealogy exploded with the 1976 publication and subsequent broadcast of Alex Haley's Roots. The advent of the internet has revolutionized the field by making genealogical resources and community vastly more accessible to professionals and amateurs. And with their local collections, access to the Web, and extensive research skills, both print and electronic, librarians are on the front lines. A quarter of social and recreational public library users, some 11.8 million people, used library computers to research family history in the past year, according to a study published in March by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.



Julie Bartlett, photo by Sasha Nyary

Library and Museum — Forbes, the only public library in the country with a presidential collection, holds the largest amount of primary materials on the former president — and while the audience gathers, they study the portraits and peruse the collection that's mostly in glass cabinets lining the walls.

Forbes archivist Julie Bartlett '02LS wanders among them, answering questions, until a patron approaches her. She needs help finding information about Private Gordon Loomis, who died in 1944, for an article she is writing for her church's newsletter about her church's families. In addition to being the Coolidge archivist, Bartlett also oversees the library's local history collection. She works just 27 hours a week at the Forbes, so she picks up a few hours doing archives, reference, and user instruction at nearby Holyoke Community College. While the skills needed to answer genealogy questions are similar to reference skills, they aren't quite the same, she says.

"Detective skills are crucial," says Bartlett. "Persistence. Knowing the collection — your own, and also what you don't have, and where it is. We don't own the vital records, for instance; the City Clerk does. And then to be able to rattle off that email address, phone number, and hours off the top of your head."

That's the kind of information Bartlett has picked up since she started at the Forbes in 2004. Genealogy is not offered in library

It's a busy Wednesday night in October at the Forbes Library in Northampton, Mass. All the public computers are in use and there's a waitlist. The circulation desk is doing a brisk business. Up the magnificent oak staircase, a concert of the vibes and ukulele is about to begin the Calvin Coolidge Presidential

schools (although GSLIS offers it as a CE class; see *Snapshot*, page 2), so Bartlett, like genealogist-librarians everywhere, learned on the job. She studied Northampton history, took online courses, such as the free webinars offered by Ancestry.com, toured the National Archives and Records Administration facilities in Pittsfield, Mass., and attended the Librarian Day workshop offered by the New England Historic Genealogical Society (a.k.a. HistGen) at their 2006 conference held in conjunction with the Federation of Genealogical Societies.

A nonprofit private library, HistGen, is among the places Bartlett might send a patron when she's stumped. Founded in 1845, it's the oldest genealogical society in the country, and as such has more than 20 million documents, artifacts, records, diaries, journals, books, photographs, family papers, bibles, and other items dating back more than 400 years. Visitors to the elegant eight-story building on Newbury Street in Boston's Back Bay are likely to be assisted there by genealogist David Dearborn '82LS, who has worked at HistGen since 1976.



David Dearborn, photo courtesy of New England Historic Genealogy Society

While the library is open to the public, its research staff does focus on its 25,000 members, who come from across the U.S. — about two-thirds from outside New England — and beyond. The annual membership dues, which start at a modest \$75, allow members to use the facilities, as well as all of the organization's databases. HistGen offers classes, workshops, and week-long field trips for research. Like Bartlett, Dearborn and his

colleagues don't have any formal genealogical training. "It's an apprentice system," he says. "We all grew up loving history, and most of us developed our own personal interest early on," noting that he landed his job in part because of his master's in history.

"If I were working in a public library and wanted to be the go-to person there," says Dearborn, "I'd join a local genealogy group, and go to their meetings. They meet in church halls and grange halls, and they share an interest in genealogy or history. There's a Polish group based in Northampton, for instance, that meets regularly. Then, there are two national organizations that hold annual conferences, the Federation of Genealogical Societies, and the National Genealogical Society, and I'd try to get to one of those. They are great for networking. You meet a lot of people, not only speakers and exhibitors, but other people in the same boat as you."

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“Genealogists tend to be a major source for volunteers as well as financial donors and political advocates for libraries. I find them an important patron group.”

Librarians interested in becoming proficient in genealogy would do well to consider taking the class Irene Hansen offers through the Continuing Education program at GSLIS. A Ph.D. student in Library and Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Hansen will teach her online, four-week class for the second time in August 2011. Hansen’s lifelong interest in genealogy started in childhood. “I was raised by a family that was old enough to be my grandparents,” she says, “so I always heard family stories.” Conveniently, Hansen grew up in Chicago, home of the celebrated Newberry Library, where she was drawn as a teenager to do her own genealogy research. After getting her B.A. in history, she got a job at the Newberry, followed by other genealogy-related positions at the University of Illinois, the Illinois Historical Survey, and the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Ind. Hansen has an M.S. and a Certificate of Advanced Study, both in LIS.

sophistication, like the various age groups you may be working with — you may be working with youth, who may be doing it for a merit badge for the Boy Scouts, or a History Day project. Or it may be adults doing it for an anniversary or a family reunion. It may be a senior citizen who has time and wishes to pass on the family legacy to the descendents.

Archival materials tend not to be organized by subject or date, or detailed in terms of place. Whereas a genealogist is looking for a specific town, a specific county, a specific time period. And they’re also interested in names, and not just the prominent people but the average individual. So translating the question to the actual record can be challenging.

What training is available to librarians?

Another challenge is there is little to no training in library school. It’s basically touched on only in a general reference course in LIS. Most of the education that librarians and archivists get for this kind of work is through continuing education and professional development, through self-study, and courses through professional organizations. ALA offers a one-day workshop prior to its conference. The National Genealogical Society offers some home-study courses as well as a Librarian Day Workshop that’s connected with their conference. I teach online for Wisconsin and Simmons, but that’s a little rarer. I’ve been calling for such a

course for years now, but because of the recession and various other priorities for library schools, it hasn’t been done.

What would a full semester course look like?

I did a sample syllabus for the University of Illinois that I pared down for the continuing education courses I teach, which tend to be four or five weeks. I spend a great deal of time on reference services and I also touch on other differences such as collection development, cataloging, outreach, and professional development, as well as information-seeking behavior, the actual research.

Genealogy is valuable for students interested in working in public libraries, as well as in archives, and to a lesser extent academic libraries, particularly if it’s a smaller academic library that has community use. Academic libraries don’t think of serving genealogists because they think that’s more the purview of the public library. However, they usually have many of the same types of materials — town histories, county histories, biographical materials, college yearbooks. I can see genealogy benefitting all kinds of LIS professionals.

And there has been some resistance to serving genealogists in various libraries, although this changed dramatically in the 1970s and ’80s.

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Q: What does genealogy mean for library and information science?

Genealogists tend to be the largest user group in archives. The figure usually thrown around is 45 percent, but it can be over 50 percent, depending on the archives. It’s also a popular user group in public libraries, many of which have a small local history room or genealogy room. So serving these users is important. They are a unique group, in that they make extensive as well as intensive use of libraries and archives. They’re looking for any kind of published materials or original records. They usually search by name or place — usually in the U.S. by state and then by a county and then by a date range in which their ancestors lived. That can be much easier in a library which can have arrangements like that, but harder in an archives because of the archival arrangement by the creator.



Why do people do this, and what do they do with the information they gather?

There are many reasons they do this research. They do it for a sense of connection, a sense of meaning, a family connection. Some compile a traditional family tree, a pedigree chart, and they pass it on to family members. Some will donate them to their local library or archives. Some take it further; they’ll do background research into the local history and write a family narrative, or history, and either keep it in the family, publish it, or send it to their local library or archives. So for LIS professionals, it’s a nice way to support their collection development. Also, genealogists tend to be a major source for volunteers, as well as financial donors and political advocates for libraries, especially in these times of financial downturn. I find them an important patron group.

What are the challenges to serving this group?

The reference interview is different from a typical reference interview. Also, as with many patrons, you have various levels of

Genealogical Treasure Hunt (cont.)

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Not every public library has the resources to provide local history to its patrons, Dearborn points out — nor do they all have a collection. But the Forbes, a mid-sized library in the heart of the state's Pioneer Valley, not only has the skilled Bartlett on staff, along with a retired genealogist-librarian who works five hours a week, it also owns an extensive local-history collection, going back to the city's founding in 1654. Bartlett and her colleague are not always there during open hours, so everyone on the library's staff needs enough genealogy training to answer basic questions.

Tonight, serenaded by the sounds of the vibes concert, Bartlett guides the patron through the art and music stacks into the Hampshire Room, about 2,400 square feet, with 15-foot ceilings that dwarf the 12-foot glass and oak cabinets full of leather-bound volumes that line the walls.

Thanks to Joseph L. Harrison, the Forbes director from 1912 to 1950, the library owns folders for 3,000 area soldiers from World Wars I and II. The folders, indexed by town and name, include a form, sent by the library and completed, typically, by the soldiers' families, listing basic demographic data, including schools attended and military service dates. Two-thirds of the folders have photos.

The librarians had also compiled and indexed some two dozen massive scrapbooks of newspaper clippings from the local paper, the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*. The index tells Bartlett the volume and page numbers where she can find clippings about Pvt. Loomis, all brief: a story about him on furlough visiting his family, another about his transfer, and finally, a story about his funeral service. Bartlett scans the pages the patron wants, puts the files on a flash drive, and heads back to her office, where she emails the files to the woman.

"Some people want you to open a file cabinet, pull out a folder, and hand you the completed chart," Bartlett says. Sometimes they hand her a chart with spaces for the missing names highlighted. "It's not uncommon to get a phone call saying, 'I just discovered my person lived in Northampton. Give me everything you have.' Or, a patron might say, 'How come there's not a book about my family, they've been here since 16- whatever.'" The Forbes, not surprisingly, doesn't have the staff to answer general questions. Queries have to be specific, and some work engenders a fee. Bartlett usually responds to phone calls by asking for the query in email, if possible. When she gets it, she prints it out and highlights the requests.

"I spend a lot of time figuring out what they want," she says. "We need specific questions, so 'anything you have on . . .' is not sufficient. We do have a list of researchers for hire. We try to help." When patrons are local, Bartlett asks them to schedule an hour when she can teach them how to get started, especially on the databases. The library also holds classes on using websites and searching census records. Sometimes these are tied to a holiday, such as an Irish genealogical focus timed around St. Patrick's Day.

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Genealogy Resources

Genealogist-librarian Irene Hunt has lots of suggestions for print and electronic resources, suitable for librarians looking to supplement their collections, as well as people seeking to get started in genealogy.

Listserv

Anyone interested in genealogy, and genealogist-librarians in particular, should subscribe to "Genealib — Librarians Serving Genealogists." This listserv connects librarians and genealogists across the country and around the world.

To subscribe or unsubscribe via the Web, visit <http://mailman.acomp.usf.edu/mailman/listinfo/genealib>, or send an email with "help" in the subject or body to genealib-request@mailman.acomp.usf.edu.

Websites

www.cyndislist.com

Offers links to online resources by topic.

www.ancestry.com

Digital images and databases; individual and library subscriptions.

www.familysearch.org

Resources of LDS Family History Library. Click on "Library" followed by "Library Catalog." Also click on "See prototype for searching millions of records":

<http://pilot.familysearch.org/recordsearch/start.html#start>.

www.usgenweb.com

Volunteer-based resources, organized by state.

www.rootsweb.com

Rootsweb Genealogical Data Cooperative.

<http://www.archives.gov/>

National Archives

Software

These programs can help organize information and research:

Brother's Keeper

<http://www.bkwin.org/>

Family Tree Maker

http://www.genealogy.com/soft_ftm.html

Roots Magic

<http://www.rootsmagic.com/>

Legacy

<http://www.legacyfamilytree.com/>

Personal Ancestral File

<http://www.familysearch.org/eng/paf/>

For additional resources from Hunt, including a list of how-to manuals and reference books, visit the InfoLink Online: gslis.simmons.edu/infolink. You'll also find a list of the major regional and national genealogy collections.

CEC Career Corner:

Joining Professional Associations



Joining a professional association could be a great career move before you even start working in the library field. Prior to graduating, you can increase your knowledge about up-to-date issues and trends in the library science industry and expand your professional network at the same time.

With many associations, a member will have access to the organization's e-newsletter, journals, and other publications which often feature informative articles by experts in the field which benefit all members with varied levels of experience. There are current job postings on the group's website or in publications available only to members. Many experienced professionals also join professional organizations to stay informed about changing technologies, learn about best practices from professional colleagues in similar roles, and discover what type of projects and initiatives other organizations are undertaking.

In addition to the publications, members find attending the local, regional, or national conferences extremely beneficial to network with professionals from similar work environments. Online options such as web conferences and specialized LinkedIn discussion groups have expanded members' choices of how to meet and stay connected with others even if they are in another region of the United States or even another country if there is an international chapter of the association.

It is important to research your options and locate an association that matches your specific career interests. To view a list of Library Associations, link to Career Resource Library site: <http://tinyurl.com/2wsyfyky>.

Some professional groups will offer discounted membership fees for students in addition to having student chapter meetings conveniently located on college campuses. Some organizations represented at Simmons include the American Library Association, the American Society for Information Science and Technology, the Society of American Archivists, and the Special Library Association. For a full list and more details go to: <http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/resources/groups.php>.

If you have joined a local chapter but have not attended any meetings, there are some strategies to consider. It is beneficial to have your own business cards to exchange with professionals you meet during the networking sessions. Following a conversation with others, note the date, conference, and a few details on the backs of their business cards for future reference. As you meet new people, you can learn about their roles and in many ways you are conducting a brief informational interview. You may want to contact them in the future to ask for advice when you begin your formal job search. Consider also inviting these contacts to stay connected on LinkedIn.

Getting involved with an organization on a more active role such as volunteering at local chapter conferences, participating in a

planning committee, or contributing an article to a newsletter will increase your visibility. Once you join a professional association, make sure you add memberships to your resume since this shows your strong commitment to your field.

Article by JoAnne Amann

Visit the Career Education Center

Have a brief question? Need your resume or cover letter reviewed? Stop by for a 15-minute session with a career counselor.

When: Mondays and Tuesdays, 3:00-4:30 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-3:00 p.m.

Where: CEC, Suite P304, 3rd floor, One Palace Road.

Make an Appointment with a Career Coach by calling 617-521-2488 or visit the CEC at Suite P304, One Palace Road.

Genealogical Treasure Hunt (cont.)

Continued from Page 3

New England was the jumping-off place for millions of American families, so the queries come from all over the country. Bartlett is often contacted by people who want to join the Daughters or Sons of the American Revolution, or the Mayflower Society, and those organizations all need certified proof that the claim is legitimate; the process can take years.

"Some people come in their motor home and they pull out their folder and their box and they expect to spend the afternoon. Others come in and want it like that," Bartlett says, snapping her fingers. "The majority are over 50, but there's also a lot of younger people who are helping parents and grandparents do research. We do see more women than men."

Not everything patrons might learn will be positive, Bartlett says. "I tell them, 'you need to be prepared not to like what you'll find. You're going to find the black sheep in the family, the one who ran off. If you were adopted and want to trace your family, you might be disappointed.' A lot of people are adamant, 'There's no way that could be my relative.'"

It helps that, like Dearborn — and most genealogists — Bartlett has traced her own family history and dug up her own black sheep, including a great-great uncle no one knew about who had left his family to start a new one in Connecticut.

"It's definitely a treasure hunt," Bartlett says after the woman she was helping has departed. "Some people leave here with tears of joy. That patron was so disappointed there wasn't an index of the local paper downstairs. But then she came up here and said, 'Wow, look at all the stuff you have here!'"

GSLIS Continuing Education

Stay warm and dry this winter while taking online GSLIS Continuing Education workshops from the comfort of home or work. For more information please see our website at <http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/careers/continuing-education/workshops/index.php> or contact gslisce@simmons.edu.

Folks on the Move



The Simmons ASIS&T Student Chapter was named student chapter of the year. Members of the chapter (and advisor Linnea Johnson, pictured at left) were presented with the award at the ASIS&T annual meeting in October, in Pittsburgh, PA.

Georgia Alexander '05LS has been appointed cataloger at the University of the West Indies, Main Library, on the St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad and Tobago.

Carl Antonucci '93LS, Vice President of the Simmons GSLIS Alumni Association Board, became Director of Library Services at Central Connecticut State University.

Edward Bander '56LS is the author of a novel, *The Hidden History of Essex Law School*, published by Trafford Publishing. The novel is about a law librarian at a fictitious law school in Boston.

Raynna Bowlby, GSLIS West Recruiting and Administrative Coordinator, presented at the Library Assessment Conference, co-hosted by the Association of Research Libraries, the University of Virginia Library, and the University of Washington Libraries. Bowlby co-led a workshop titled "Working Effectively with LibQUAL+®" and presented a paper, "Are We There Yet? Aligning Planning and Metrics — Strategically." She also presented "The Balanced Scorecard: Making Academic Library Assessment Strategic" for the Academic Libraries Section at the 2010 New England Library Association Conference.

Students in the new course, LIS 531V Concepts in Cultural Heritage Informatics, taught by **Michèle Cloonan** and **Martha Mahard**, have made class visits to the Gropius House (Historic New England property), the Concord Free Public Library, and the Phillips Library at the Peabody Essex Museum. Groups of students from the class will be profiling these institutions, along with the American Textile History Museum, the Connecticut Historical Society, and the Shelburne Museum. These profiles are the first phase of project development and analysis as we work with the sites on specific projects that will form the basis for the LIS 531X Practicum course which will be offered for the first time this coming spring.

Peter Droese '00LS, obtained his Project Management Professional Certification (PMP) in August 2010. He has been employed since 2008 as an Information Resource Specialist in the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Commonwealth Medicine Division.

Prof. Peter Herson's 50th book has been published. He is the editor of *Shaping the Future: Advancing the Understanding of Leadership* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2010) <http://lu.com/search.cfm>. The book, based on the Simmons Ph.D. program in Managerial Leadership in the Information Professions, provides an overview of that program, and sees leadership as an area needing research. There is also coverage of case studies, including a reprinting of Professor Emeritus A.J. Anderson's

problem-solving model and an overview of scenario planning and examples of student work.

Prof. Lisa Hussey recently gave two presentations at Library Research Seminar V: a solo presentation titled "Diversity and Conflict: What is the Conversation?" and a joint presentation with Diane Velasquez, Dominican University, "Forced Advocacy: How the Community Responds to Library Budget Cuts."

Congratulations to the Simmons GSLIS Emerging Leaders, a program sponsored by the American Library Association. This program enables approximately 100 library workers get on the fast track to ALA and professional leadership. The new group of leaders includes **Linnea Johnson '04LS**, GSLIS manager of the Technology Laboratory; **Miranda Rivers**, 2009 ALA Spectrum Scholar and LISSA treasurer; and **Andromeda Yelton '10LS**.

Prof. Mary Wilkins Jordan is presenting at several conferences this month, including the West Virginia Annual Library Conference, "Connecting With Communities," the Academic Library Association of Ohio, "Stressed for Success: Academic Librarians Confront Stress in the Workplace," and the Brick and Click Libraries Symposium, "All Stressed Out? Enumerating and Eliminating Stress in the Library."

Chris Markman '10LS presented his paper "Media and Metaphysics: How the Motion Picture IP War Was Lost" at Piracy; a conference hosted by the Department of English & American Literature at Brandeis, on Friday, October 22, 2010. For details visit <http://sites.google.com/site/piracyahoy/>.

Assistant Dean Terry Plum presented a paper co-authored with **Jeannette Bastian**, **Ross Harvey**, and **Martha Mahard** at the 2010 ARL's Library Assessment Conference, "Building Effective, Sustainable, Practical Assessment." The paper, "Cultural Heritage Informatics and the GSLIS Digital Curriculum Laboratory: A Cyberlearning Platform for the Evaluation of Digital Asset Management Systems in the Context of Student Learning Outcomes," is available online at <http://gslis.simmons.edu/dcl/publications>. Plum also co-authored a presentation, "Measuring Use of Licensed Electronic Resources: A Second Iteration of the MINES for Libraries Survey on Scholars Portal and Other Resources for the Ontario Council of University Libraries," with Catherine Davidson, York University; Martha Kyrillidou, Association of Research Libraries; and Dana Thomas, Ryerson University.

Rebecca Reznik-Zellen '06LS published an article, "Representation and Recognition of Subject Repositories," in the September/October 2010 issue of *D-Lib Magazine*: <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/september10/adamick/ogadamick.html>.

This fall, GSLIS student **Lori Satter** has written and self-published the e-book *You Want Me to Do What? Overcoming Your Fear of Public Speaking for New Educators*. This source is geared toward all types of educators, including librarians and archivists. For more information please visit Lori's website: lorisatter.com.

Prof. Rong Tang participated in usability studies and design meetings for the re-design of the Harvard Catalyst website version 3: <http://catalyst.harvard.edu/>.

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Snapshot (cont.)

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The stereotype has been that academic libraries think of them as not scholarly enough, public libraries consider them too demanding, too specialized, particularly because many staff members are not trained. And archives traditionally thought of their primary user group as scholars and historians, rather than genealogists. So there has been resistance historically, but that has changed dramatically.

How do professional genealogy societies differ from public libraries?

Genealogy societies tend to collect for a specific local area. Their collections may be housed with the society, and if they're open to the public, staffed by volunteers. The larger societies, such as the New England Historic Genealogical Society, are nonprofits that often let the public access their collections, but cater to their members. They also run conferences and field trips around the country. Public library genealogy collections also collect for a local area and its migration and ethnic patterns, but libraries usually are open longer hours. Some genealogy societies house their collections at the local public library.

How has the internet changed genealogy?

Everything is done much more rapidly and efficiently, and so much more can be done remotely. It has facilitated communication, so that genealogists as well as LIS professionals can communicate rapidly and frequently. Before, genealogists might have to travel to various locations, and now they can do it from the comfort of their home or office. It's also enabled large numbers of people to begin to research their genealogy. Also, various union catalogs and websites facilitate searching for materials. There's all kinds of networking among genealogists, individually and through the various societies. There's an enormous number of chats, blogs, listservs. There's also been an enormous amount of indexing done, the largest companies have indexed materials such as U.S. and state censuses, Canadian censuses, military records, passenger lists, vital records. They have a database, they have a library edition as well as home subscriptions.

How can we begin our own family histories?

Gather all the information you can from your family. Talk to your family, look for old documents and old photographs. Any kind of oral histories you can get, even informally, are tremendously valuable. We tend to wait until we have time, and then the older relatives may not be with us, or their memories fade. Organize your information as you go. There are family group sheets and pedigree charts available on the Internet. See if anyone already has written about your family. Check online catalogs such as WorldCat and PERI (Periodical Source Index) for any published family histories. Then start searching for records of your family; remember that most U.S. records are arranged by state and county, and then by time period. Most people start with Census Records, U.S. and state censuses, and then Vital Records, such as birth, marriage, and death records. Then move on to county/town histories, passenger lists, church records, cemetery records, newspapers, obituaries, city directories, and military records.

Interview by Sasha Nyary

December Events

Thursday, December 9, Notable Women of Simmons College Digital Scrapbook. Presented by Prof. Candy Schwartz and the students of LIS 462-02.

10:30-11:00 - formal opening and presentation
11:00-12:00 - reception (featuring self-running presentations)

RSVP to Stacie Parillo, stacie.parillo@simmons.edu, by December 2, 2010. Kotzen Room. Refreshments will be served.

More information on events can be found at <http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/news/calendar/index.php>.

Folks on the Move (cont.)

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The team behind the new Digital Curriculum Lab (DCL) has been busy presenting the project to the professional community. **Molly Duggan**, IOLIS, Digital & Interface Assistant, and **Mary Bennett**, Technology Assistant, conducted a demonstration at the ASIS&T Annual Meeting in October, "Building a Virtual Archives and Preservation Curriculum Laboratory at Simmons GSLIS." In addition, two posters were presented at the 9th Annual Teaching and Learning Conference, sponsored by the Colleges of the Fenway Teaching & Learning Collaborative, held at Emmanuel College on October 28 and 29. The posters were "DCL @ Simmons GSLIS: Building a Digital Curriculum Lab" by **Mary Bennett** and **Molly Duggan**, and "A Virtual Archives and Preservation Curriculum Laboratory at Simmons GSLIS" by **Ross Harvey** and **Martha Mahard**. To learn more about the Digital Curriculum Lab, visit <http://calliope.simmons.edu/dcl/lab>.

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InfoLink

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Copy deadline for the February issue is Monday, January 24, 2011.