

SOLIS

Newsletter for VSU's Student Organization of LIS



September-October 2025

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Volume 17 Issue 1

SOLIS News

Interested in Joining the SOLIS Team?

SOLIS currently has openings for three **advisory board positions** for the 2025-2026 academic year. Serving on SOLIS is an excellent opportunity to become more involved with the Department of Library and Information Studies, connect with your fellow students, and provide insight into the program. Becoming a member of the SOLIS leadership team will look great on an academic and professional resume. To learn more about the advisory roles, please refer to this link: <https://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/education/master-of-library-and-information-science/solis/>

To nominate yourself or another student, please use the [SOLIS nominations form](#).

For any questions, please contact Maria J. Alvarez, current SOLIS president, at mjalvarez@valdosta.edu

VSU Foundation SOLIS Account

Currently, VSU Foundation SOLIS account has an ending balance of \$921.88. It is used to fund the SOLIS Internship Reimbursement Award: https://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/education/master-of-library-and-information-science/student-resources/internship_reimburse.php and to support various SOLIS community engagement activities.

The main source of SOLIS account revenue is MLIS T-Shirt sale. You may follow this link to order yours: <https://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/education/master-of-library-and-information-science/solis/t-shirt-order-form.pdf>.

SOLIS Social Medias

SOLIS has social media accounts. On these accounts, SOLIS will be engaging with students within the program, sharing resources, hosting events, and more. Please follow us on Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) for the latest SOLIS news.



Both usernames for Instagram and X are [solis_vstate](#)

Achievements

SOLIS loves to celebrate your achievements. Keep sending your news about recently awarded scholarships, a conference presentation, a paid internship opportunity, or other exciting news of your scholarly and/or professional achievements to Dr. Ren at xren@valdosta.edu or the current Communications Officer, Ashley Adamian, at amadamian@valdosta.edu as they happen. Thank you!

Alumni Spotlight: Catie Tierney

BIOGRAPHY:

Catie Tierney has held various positions within libraries since 2004, beginning as a Library Aide for the Satilla Regional Library in Douglas, GA. She achieved an Associate of Arts in Political Science from South Georgia College in May 2006 and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science in May 2008 from Valdosta State University. In May 2010, she graduated from Valdosta State University with her Master's in Library and Information Science (MLIS).

After receiving her MLIS degree, she continued her professional librarian career starting as a Reference Librarian for Washington Memorial Library from 2010-2014. She then advanced to the Head of Reference Department from 2014-2016, then to the Washington Memorial Library Branch Manager from 2016-2017. She became the Head of Public Services for Middle Georgia Regional Library from 2017-2018, and then the Branch Manager for the Pikes Peak Library District from 2018-2024. Currently, she is the branch manager for the Mildred L. Terry Public Library, a position she has been in since 2024.



Catie Tierney earned her Associate of Arts and Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from VSU with her MLIS in 2010.

1. What were your favorite classes while in the MLIS program?

Several classes fostered my love for all things reference: Information Sources & Services, Information Literacy, Electronic Resources, Social Science Information Services, Legal Information Sources and Services, Public Libraries, and more. My first professional job was as a Reference Librarian, and these classes provided a solid foundation for my role. I received a lot of unique questions from curious patrons while working in the Reference Department. These classes gave me an idea of where to start looking to help patrons answer their questions.

2. What was your favorite course project while receiving your MLIS degree?

Probably the case study in our Library Management class. I admit that at the time, I had no interest in managing a library and it wasn't my favorite project. Having now worked in library management for over ten years, I appreciate the importance of developing and presenting that case study which was based around my own experiences working in libraries.

3. How has what you learned while getting your MLIS degree directly affected or been applied to your work?

Though my job as a Library Manager does not involve as much direct time helping library users with their research, I enjoy encountering both professional and personal opportunities to use skills I learned in the MLIS program. I love putting on my librarian hat and using my education to help a patron, colleague, family member, friend, or acquaintance dig for reliable resources and solutions. I learned a lot about what kind of information is out there and how to find it, and I learned how to effectively connect people to those resources. It is gratifying to witness the relief on peoples' faces as they realize that the librarian has helped them resolve a nagging question or issue. I especially love when a patron leaves the library delighted at having received much more guidance and support than they expected to get.

Alumni Spotlight: Catie Tierney (cont.)

4. Do you have any advice for upcoming graduates on how to navigate the job search and/or the field as a new graduate?

1) Prior to graduation, get as much experience as you can working in libraries. If you are having difficulties obtaining a library job, look for other ways to get your foot in the door. There are lots of ways to get involved with your library. Volunteer your time and talents at your library. Join your local Friends of the Library group. Advocate for libraries. Join the library board. Make use of your library! Attend programs and look for opportunities to provide your feedback as a library user. Maybe your library is working on a strategic plan and wants your input as a library user. Tell them! Your involvement with libraries provides you with experience that can increase your chances of landing a library job after graduation.

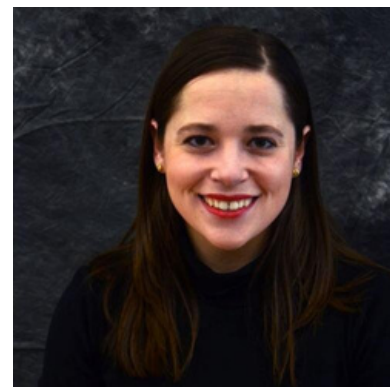
2) As you apply for jobs, track your applications in a way that makes sense to you, whether it's in your Notes app, a spreadsheet, a calendar, or some other tool. It's helpful to have dates, notes, recruiter information, and all your job-hunting information in one place.

3) It's no secret that the job market is tough and the job application process is exhausting. Keep your head up and keep going. When it is yours, the right opportunity will present itself. Good luck!

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Barbara Alvarez

BIOGRAPHY:

Barbara A. Alvarez, PhD is a university instructor and former public librarian who has worked with professionals, organizations, and businesses for nearly 15 years. With a specialization in community engagement, Dr. Alvarez has studied Community-Based Participatory Research practices and developed library-community relationships to meet patron needs. Alvarez is the author of two books with ALA Editions. Dr. Alvarez is a 2022 LJ Mover & Shaker. She has an MLIS from the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign and PhD in Information Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Dr. Barbara Alvarez earned her MLIS from the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign and her PhD in Information Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

1. What would you describe as your focus/concentration within the MLIS field?

My focus is community engagement. I have worked in five different types of information organizations: four public libraries in two different states and a corporate archive/library/digital management hybrid. I have also received a PhD and spent time in research cohorts in and beyond the LIS space. No matter where I've worked, studied, or learned, I always come back to community engagement. To me, this encompasses learning what the needs are of our community, whoever that may be: students, faculty, parents, immigrants, employees, business units, etc. And then determining how we can meet their unique needs and develop sustainable relationships that are built on trust and information access for all. I feel very fortunate to have done this work and now be in a position where I can help students learn how to employ these principles in their own practice- no matter what their official job title is or at what type of library that they work.

2. What are some lessons or tips you have learned throughout your career?

I have learned to not turn down opportunities: jobs, committees, leadership positions, fellowships, grants, speaking/publication chances, etc. If you are interested in an opportunity- apply! It is easy to talk ourselves out of going forward with some applications. For example, we may tell ourselves that we don't have enough experience or aren't qualified enough. Maybe we are nervous about public speaking or asking for a letter of recommendation for the application process. But when we let those fears win, we miss out on a lot of chances to meet others in the field, learn from other people, and build up our own professional skills. Here's an example: I applied for a scholarship to attend a conference. When I received the scholarship, I almost didn't accept it because I had just started a new job and life was so hectic that I'd only be able to be at the conference for 1 full day! I had a lot of reasons for why I could have not accepted and gone. However, I went anyway and ended up meeting someone who not only became a good mentor to me but also encouraged me to apply for a university teaching position and even wrote a letter of recommendation for me for a PhD program. I learned so much from this person and am very grateful for the time and expertise that they shared with me, which I would not have received if I hadn't gone to the conference.

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Barbara Alvarez

3. What were some unexpected challenges you faced throughout your career?

This answer relates to the above question because I have faced feeling exhausted or burnt out. I love the LIS field and want to be involved as much as I can. However, the flip side is that there have been times when I have felt overwhelmed with juggling work, studies, projects, and applications- in addition to life in general! I have had to learn how to set up boundaries so that I can do the work, while also not losing steam. This requires me to have a good support system and peers in the field who I can lean on and who can lean on me when we need a reality check or a pep talk.

4. What are some resources you recommend for professionals within the MLIS field?

I can't recommend these two opportunities enough: take public speaking classes or workshops, as well as learn about instructional design. Whether you take these on in your MLIS program or through continuing ed webinars/workshops, I believe that these two areas are essential no matter where you end up in your career path. Part of librarianship involves advocacy: advocating for this profession, our organization, projects we hope to do, funding we wish to receive, and so on. That requires that we know how to speak effectively to library boards, city councils, fellow professionals, and the public in general.

Instructional design, or essentially learning how to teach others, is also really valuable. Whether you use these skills in a classroom, at the reference desk, in programs or outreach, through digital design, or with your colleagues, the ability to synthesize information and provide meaningful support in learning new skills is invaluable.

5. Do you have any advice for upcoming graduates on how to navigate the job search and/or enter the field as a new graduate?

You never know where your career will take you! When I applied for my MLIS back in 2010, I thought that I would go into archives and museums. A year later, I was working as an Assistant Librarian in Youth Services at a public library. Five years after that, I was working in a corporate setting and four years after that I was in a PhD program and doing research with public health scholars. Be open to career shifts and don't be afraid to take chances, make changes, and get out of your comfort zone. You got this!

Support the Student Organization of Library and Information Science (SOLIS) by ordering your own T-shirt with the VSU and MLIS insignias!

Proceeds of sales in years have funded ALA conference registrations for students, travel reimbursements for SOLIS officers representing SOLIS at GLA conferences, a reception for the travelling rare books exhibit on loan from the Remnant Trust, a 15th anniversary celebration in downtown Valdosta, and many SOLIS activities such as virtual 5k, and t-shirt design contest. The proceeds of sales will be the main funding source for a newly created SOLIS scholarship starting from Fall 2021. Shirts are sold at \$10 each at face-to-face events such as GLA conferences and previous New Student Orientations.

SOLIS T-Shirt Order Form

Yes, I want to support SOLIS! Please send me _____ (number) of shirts.

Please fill in the oval next to your preferred t-shirt **design**:



Please indicate the **quantity** for each size:

Small _____ Medium _____ Large _____ X-Large _____ 2X-Large* _____ 3X-Large* _____

**sizes not available for white t-shirt*

Order of one (1) shirt is \$20 (includes processing and shipping via USPS). Order of 2 or more shirts is \$15 per shirt (processing and shipping included)

Total enclosed: _____

Check payment only. Make check payable to **MLIS Foundation**. Allow two to four weeks to receive your t-shirt(s).

Your shipping address:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Please mail this form with your check to:

Dr. Xiaoi Ren

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SOLIS website: <http://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/education/master-of-library-and-information-science/solis/>