ON THE COVER
Bobbie Brinkley, ’18, loves working at Simon & Schuster in the Big Apple.

Photo provided by Bobbie Brinkley.
Earlier this year, I attended a conference in China to meet with other deans of communications programs. The attendees were there to discuss a challenge we’re all facing: With technology evolving at lightning speed, how do we adapt curriculum that was designed for yesterday’s media landscape?

It’s a question that’s not unique to communications schools. In the library and information science world, we’re also grappling with new challenges related to information literacy, big data and the ethics of artificial intelligence – challenges that continue to snowball despite our best efforts to keep up.

I was at the conference as a guest speaker to share what the CIC is doing to address this challenge head-on. And while we don’t have all the answers, we do know that we have to actively seek solutions if we want our students to enter the workforce with the skills needed to succeed.

That’s why we’re revising job descriptions. In the SJMC, plans are underway to hire six new faculty – all six of those positions must now understand data and be prepared to infuse it into our curriculum. And thanks to our information science major, many faculty members in SLIS are already there. That means, as one of the few universities to combine the information and communications disciplines under one roof, our program is poised to become the destination for data education.

But it’s not just about the new hires – investing in professional development helps our existing faculty stay ahead of the curve, too. In January, a group will travel to Silicon Valley to visit Google, startups and other tech companies to learn more about preparing our students for those kinds of careers. We’re also sending four faculty members to the South by Southwest Interactive conference in March to learn what’s new and what’s next from some of the brightest minds in the business.

And, of course, we’re building relationships with employers – companies where the future is already a reality, where workers who can keep up are in high demand. Those partnerships are translating into valuable internship experiences for our students and full-time careers when they graduate. Our goal isn’t just to ensure that each student finds a job when they graduate, but that they find the best jobs and outshine the competition.

At any given point, a new social media platform or innovative technology could take our industries by storm and flip everything we thought we knew upside down. The CIC’s path forward won’t always be clear. At times it will wind or hit a dead end. But that big question – how do we adapt so our students can adapt, too – will continue to drive us and set us apart from the rest.
QUICK TAKES

Galloping into Success
It all started with Farley Wickre's equestrian magazines. Originally a marketing major, Wickre says she would often look at the advertisements while flipping through equine publications and thinking to herself that she could do better. So she did. Wickre switched her major to visual communications and started her freelance business, all while competing on the University of South Carolina equestrian team.

Wickre credits her J-school courses with helping her build on her initial success. She currently creates advertisements for large equestrian shows including the AQHA World Championship Show, National Snaffle Bit World Championship Show and the All American Quarter Horse Congress. She will graduate in May 2020, but will continue to create content for equestrian publications. “Even if I end up in a non-equine job, I will always freelance in the equine world,” she says.

—Caroline Moore

$376,000 for SLIS

SLIS associate professor, Lucy Santos Green, received a $376,000 grant in June from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to explore Guided Inquiry Design, a model that brings school librarians and teachers together to co-teach in classrooms. Her research will explore the impact librarians have on students in these co-teaching teams, and the data from her study could even help them advocate for their value in school systems where their jobs are at risk of being cut.

GID research will be conducted in South Carolina, Texas, New Jersey and Wisconsin, with 60 schools participating. She is currently recruiting and plans to begin her research in the spring. The ultimate goal is to discover how students learn best. “I want the students to be the best they can be,” Green says. She hopes her research helps librarians and teachers collaborate to reach that goal.

For more information, visit bit.ly/slis-imls-grant

—Cassidy Posma

CULTIVATING RESEARCH

The Social Media Insights Lab housed within the School of Journalism and Mass Communications is an artificial intelligence-powered CIC initiative that provides in-depth social media data examining consumer sentiment, reactions to political issues and candidates, and predictions of future trends.

Lab manager Kaitlyn Park gathers data pertaining to the 2020 presidential election. That project – South Carolina Insights – has led to a series of reports exploring conversation volume and sentiment about the Democratic presidential hopefuls. But that’s not all the lab does. “We’re also working on more high-level academic research,” Park says. “We’re looking into how bots can influence conversations, particularly about politics and things like public health and vaping.”

—Collin Byrne

PIONEERING AMBASSADORS

The 2019-2020 ambassadors at the CIC welcome luncheon and orientation.

Photo by Lewis Zeigler.

Only a few undergraduate students in the CIC are chosen to be Dean’s Ambassadors. The new program, introduced by Dean Tom Reichert, invites students to tackle the rigorous application process to represent the college in a variety of ways.

“We want well-rounded students who can speak to their university and CIC experiences,” says Rushondra James, assistant dean for student services and ambassador program advisor. “We seek students who excel academically and also participate in extracurricular activities such as student media, internship experiences or study abroad.”

The ambassadors are responsible for leading tours, serving as student leaders and participating in the Dean’s Student Advisory Group and other development events.

“The ambassadors are great ambassadors. They are learning it’s a great way to make connections. It’s rewarding to interact with so many positive students who desire to better themselves and those around them,” Reichert says.

Wickre with her competition horse, Nikki.

Photo by Phyllis Burchett.

Media Intern Goes Pro

After spending two years with the University of South Carolina Gamecock football’s social media department, alumnus Chad O’Donnell, ’19, now works in broadcast for the Baltimore Ravens.

While he found more creative freedom at South Carolina, he enjoys working for the larger Ravens audience. O’Donnell credits his internship with providing the experience he needed and preparing him to work for the NFL.

“I like to tell stories about the athletes and what the organizations do,” O’Donnell says. “We play games 16 times a year so we need to go beyond what happens on the field.”

O’Donnell eventually sees himself as a creative director for a college or professional football team.

—Lauren Drescher

Insights Lab.

Oluwole is a public relations alumus and current MMC student.

Photo by Michaela Baker.

Ore Oluwole and Kaitlyn Park working to the Insights Lab. Oluwole is a public relations alumus and current MMC student.

Photo by Michaela Baker.

COLLABORATING RESEARCH

Ore Oluwole and Kaitlyn Park working to the Insights Lab.

Photo by Michaela Baker.
Driving Digital Media

The Digital Media Academy at the University of South Carolina was inspired by Dean Tom Reichert, who created a similar program at UGA and wanted to start one at South Carolina. Observations of similar UGA and Clemson workshops reinforced the idea and were helpful in planning the university program. It was so successful that a second DMA is planned for 2020. Organizers also plan to add an advertising/PR track to this year’s mobile video workshop.

“At the school, we’re being proactive in trying to be more inclusive,” says CIC special projects director Randy Covington, who is one of the team leaders conducting the 2020 program.

The DMA weeklong academy gives up to 30 people the opportunity to interact with the exceptional facilities at the journalism school. Sponsorship opportunities are available, which will allow the program to provide stipends to participating students.

The mutually beneficial cross-promotion among the three schools may attract participants from across the Southeast. More information about the DMA, including a link to apply, will be posted to the CIC’s website in the spring.

Contact Randy Covington for more info at randy.covington@sc.edu

–Jack Kerley

New Connections in New England

Ellen Dunn, ‘97, and her dog, Katie, make a good team. While working as the public information coordinator at the South Carolina State Library and volunteering as a therapy dog coordinator, she and her furry friend found an additional way to use her journalism, education and public relations background from the University of South Carolina. “I realized there was high demand to connect therapy dog handlers with libraries,” Dunn said. “I went to my boss with an idea to bring a great program to Columbia!”

TailWaggin’ Tutors is a nationwide program from Therapy Dogs International through which children read to dogs. It’s a friendly environment for those who have difficulty reading or who have developed self-esteem issues. By volunteering through this program, Dunn and Katie offer the children a judgement-free zone to connect with the exceptional facilities at the journalism school. Sponsorship opportunities are available, which will allow the program to provide stipends to participating students.

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–Jack Kerley

A Cowboy Heart

Johnny Boggs, ’84, fell in love with Western literature, despite being raised and educated in South Carolina. He published his first two Western-themed stories while attending the University of South Carolina and has since written roughly 100 pieces. Recently, his novel Toos Lightning won a Spur award for Best Western Juvenile Novel. It was his eighth Spur award, the most in the 66-year history of the Western Writers of America. He owns 30 pairs of cowboy boots, which he calls “an obsession,” and he loves his life in Santa Fe.

“There’s a statue of Elmer Kelton in the San Angelo Public Library in Texas,” Boggs says, referring to the previous record-holder. “I don’t think you’ll ever find another Spur award, the most in the 66-year history of the Western Writers of America. He owns 30 pairs of cowboy boots, which he calls “an obsession,” and he loves his life in Santa Fe.

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Boggs refuses to slow down as he strives to redefine the boundaries of Western literature. “The West isn’t a physical or geographical place,” he says. “It’s how you feel.”

–Kathryn Stoddard

A Healthy Collaboration

With a growing health care communication job market, CIC students have a resource to help them follow this career path. The post-baccalaureate degree certificate in health communication is run jointly by the CIC and the Arnold School of Public Health. Under the leadership of director Daniela Friedman of the Arnold School, students master the art of designing and evaluating health care campaigns. Graduate student Ansley Lee believes the 18-hour program helped her get a peak at graduate school. “I wanted a taste of grad school without diving in headfirst,” Lee says. “I thought this certification was a good way to test the waters.”

She believes the program will help in other ways as well, particularly after graduating. “The relationships you have and the friendships you make in grad programs are intense and important,” Lee says. “And those relationships can morph into professional opportunities down the road.”
Sharkey smiling big while overlooking the stadium and the city.

Kornegay Takes Flight

Van Kornegay loves drones and how they contribute to the creative process for his students and the professional world. The associate professor for the J-school’s visual communications track will be on sabbatical during the 2020 spring semester to obtain his commercial drone pilot’s license, which will involve researching programs, testing for the license, and going to other schools to learn how to make drone piloting education accessible for students at the University of South Carolina.

“I think bringing in something new and experimental is fun for students,” Kornegay says. “I want to provide a safe, reasonable way to offer my classes the chance to learn piloting education accessible for students at the University of South Carolina, their communications department.

She created a season calendar, gave tours and coordinated with media for special events. Her schedule differed most of the time, but her visual communication knowledge and skills were utilized every day.

“Being able to use my education and skills learned at the J-school and SLIS was great, and gave me the confidence to interact with fans and see their love for the organization,” Sharkey says. Her experience was once in a lifetime, and it convinced her to pursue sports as a career.

“For more information, bit.ly/sjmcadteam

QUICK TAKES

–Libby Breeze

Flavor, Not Fad

What’s the best way to promote hot dogs to a hungry audience? Last year, advertising students from across the United States took up the challenge in the annual National Student Advertising Competition. Wienerschnitzel, the largest hot dog chain in America, was chosen as the corporate client. For their ad campaign, University of South Carolina’s Ad Team showed the company’s marketing professionals the importance of flavor over following trendy diets such as keto or paleo.

Each year, teams create the best possible strategic advertising campaigns for the chosen company in hopes of leading their real future advertisements. The students worked for months to properly execute their ideas and the team at South Carolina placed third at the district competition, which took place in Charlotte, with their campaign “Flavor, not Fad.” It was the strongest finish in over a decade.

“It was definitely the most influential learning experience I’ve had at the university,” says Noah McGill, a former team member and advertising major.

–Virginia Bethune

INTERNING IN THE MAJORS

Taylor Sharkey landed in her “Field of Dreams” when she got an internship with the Philadelphia Phillies. Sharkey, a visual communications major and informatics minor, interned last summer in their communications department.

From Student to Staffer

As a college freshman, visual communications major Michaela Baker had a job that carried more weight than most student positions – she was the College of Information and Communications’ only graphic designer. Now a 2019 alumna, Baker hasn’t stopped serving in that role. That’s because she was hired full-time as the CIC’s first-ever visual communications coordinator in May.

During her four years as a student, Baker worked with webmaster Patty Hall, assisting in visual marketing and graphic design. “I loved working here as a student,” Baker says. “Now I have four years of institutional knowledge and experience under my belt and can continue developing the college’s brand.”

As a student, one of her most successful projects was the CIC’s April Fools video, which tricked alumni into believing both schools were moving into the Carolina Coliseum. Since joining the staff, she’s continued creating engaging video content and growing the college’s presence on social media. “Michaela responds to each assignment with an idea for how she can do it even better,” says Rebekah Friedman, CIC communications manager. “Her energy and creativity inspire everyone around her – we’re lucky to have her on our team.”

–Emile Roberts

SLIS will mark its 50th anniversary in 2020. Stay tuned for more information on how the school plans to celebrate this historic milestone.

Graphic by Meagen Sigmon

We seek to celebrate the past and how it has provided a great platform for the future – Director David Lankes

SLIS celebrates 50

A New Attitude in Prague

SLIS student Laura Stillwagon wasn’t sure what to expect when she embarked on her study-abroad program in Prague, but it turned out to be a transformative experience.

As she studied for her master’s degree in library and information science, she also participated in an international internship with The Memory of Nations, where she studied wartime story translation. She gathered information about people of many different cultural perspectives and languages and told their wartime stories.

“Wealth Guard, I would never have had the opportunity to explore a different culture,” Stillwagon says. “The citizens of Prague have history that goes back to the 1100s, and I loved discovering how they handled difficulties in the past and survived – even thrived.”

–Lexi Waites

INTERNSHIP IN THE MAJORS

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–Emile Roberts
BP is helping children learn to read through its support of Cocky’s Reading Express.""Our partnership with BP is a long-standing relationship that has been very positive and we hope to see it continue and grow," says Christine Shelek, executive director of the South Carolina Center for Community Literacy, home to CRE. The effort was founded by student government in 2005, and Shelek has been with it since 2011.

The program began by reaching out to Title 1 schools with student volunteers in rented vans. BP’s support helped CRE get its own custom-wrapped bus. The company’s contributions have changed the entire shape of the nonprofit and it has funded many more trips and books. To date, CRE has distributed more than 134,000 books to children in all 46 counties.

“We are now able to take this bus to schools, promote literacy and encourage kids to get excited about reading,” Shelek says. “The bus is not only a physical vehicle but also a vehicle for literacy.”

The books are labeled with BP’s support sticker on the back and the children make a verbal promise to read every day. At the end of the program, they all receive a Cocky sticker that says “I promised.” According to Shelek, they sometimes forget that Cocky is even there because they are so excited when they receive their brand-new book.

BP directors and employees often accompany the volunteers to these schools to see the impact for themselves.

“Donors like BP are powerful allies in our mission to better prepare tomorrow’s workforce through literacy,” Shelek says.
Emily Spitz demonstrates Accessibility for everyone is most important.

“Accessibility for everyone is most important.”

~Emily Spitz

SLIS alumna Emily Spitz wants everyone to be able to access the information they need. She is helping make it happen as a resident at the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled through the Library of Congress. The NLS is a free braille and talking book library service for those with temporary or permanent low vision, blindness, or a physical disability that prevents them from reading or holding the printed page.

When people think of these services they immediately think of braille and audio, but there’s so much more. The NLS offers resources such as accessible mobile reading apps, braille note-takers, digital audiobook players and even magnifying devices. “Some people can’t even hold a book in their own hands,” Spitz says, adding that issues like these make her want to look into more options to help people read independently.

She first became interested in working with the blind and print disabled when she was studying for her Master of Music in musical theatre direction at Arizona State. She wanted to explore more options for musicians who had low vision or were blind. Her interests led her to pursue her Master of Library and Information Science, which she completed in 2018. Shortly after graduation she applied to the NLS and was accepted.

Since beginning her residency, she’s been working with metadata and bibliographic control. Metadata is used in cataloging to define the different aspects of each record, including titles, copyright dates or subject headings. Bibliographic control is used to check accuracy of metadata and to update any information as needed. “Accessibility for everyone is most important,” Spitz says.

Her residency at the NLS has introduced her to many of the different types of jobs that are available for librarians in the public and private sector. When she finishes, Spitz plans on staying in the Washington area to explore more career opportunities in the field.

Story by Cassidy Posma, Senior, Public Relations
Studying communications to avoid numbers is no longer an option. Data—and knowing how to work with it—has become an increasingly important part of the industry, and new SJMC director Andrea Hickerson plans to make it an even bigger part of the J-school’s curriculum.

Before coming to the University of South Carolina, Hickerson was one of the first faculty members at the new School of Communication at Rochester Institute of Technology, a traditional STEM school. The program at RIT was smaller, which made the SJMC director job so enticing. “It was exciting when this position opened at South Carolina because it is a legacy journalism program,” Hickerson says. Coming from a technological institute, Hickerson had a background in data and how it and communications are interwoven. Her vision is to hire new faculty who specialize in data, media and society. These professionals will teach advertising, visual communications and mass communications courses. “I want to increase community engagement,” Hickerson says, “and raise the overall public profile of the college, making it a resource in Columbia and in the state.”

Another goal of Hickerson’s is to strengthen the relationship between the SJMC and SLIS, and she believes her interdisciplinary work experience at RIT will help her accomplish it. She wants to find and develop SLIS courses for SJMC students to take. Moreover, she believes the best way to accomplish her ideas is to ask discovery questions. “What can we do, instead of saying ‘This is what I want to do.’ I come from more of what’s possible,” she says.

Though her time here so far has been short, she has loved every minute of it. “Everyone has been incredibly welcoming,” Hickerson says. “I love the energy of the faculty and I find they are highly engaged with students.”

In addition, she brags on the students of the SJMC, saying it stuck out to her right away just how many students are involved with extra curriculars and how many awards they are winning.

In addition to her vision, Hickerson also brings her deepfakes expertise and research to South Carolina. Her research has inspired her to create a course on media literacy. The prevalence of the internet and social media today calls for a class explaining how to tell when online sources are fake or not truthful. Her vision is for this course to be a general student core requirement at the university, not just an SJMC class.

Hickerson is excited to be here and is looking forward to meeting and getting to know all the SJMC students. The new director’s best advice to current students is to get involved while the resources are readily available. “Get out in the community,” Hickerson says. “Find out where you can start working for internships while you’re here. Coursework is awesome, but having work produced outside of that is really important, too.”

Deepfakes are images and videos that depict real people doing and saying things, but the whole image or video is fake, based on artificial intelligence.
Finding the Right Fit

Story by Collin Byrne, Senior, Advertising

One student who benefited from Mudunuri’s efforts is Josh German, senior mass communications major, who was selected to attend the 2019 Multicultural Talent Pipeline Conference organized by Publicis Media in Atlanta.

It’s a two-and-a-half-day marketing and advertising conference with networking sessions and keynote speakers. According to German, Mudunuri played a major role in landing him the opportunity. “I can say with 100 percent confidence that without Shirisha, the experience wouldn’t have been possible,” German says. “She contacted me and encouraged me to apply, saying that I would be a great fit for the program. Her diligence, friendly approach and overall upbeat personality had such an impact on me as I began my professional career.”

“It’s not entirely about GPA and the number of internships,” Mudunuri says. “It’s being open and willing to learn and absorb information.” She says employers look for flexible and eager graduates who say yes to assignments or even working late. In terms of taking a risk, Mudunuri believes students should not be afraid of opportunities. “Be able to put yourself out there, don’t be afraid to make a fool of yourself, know that it might not work and then do it anyway.”

Advice for Students and Readers of InterCom

Take full advantage of all the opportunities that are available. Do not squander that experience. Get involved. It allows you to meet people outside of your major and build a network and connections for later. Second, do not be afraid to throw out a bad idea. You don’t get to good ideas without getting through a bunch of bad ones.

Advice for Students and Readers of InterCom

Take a class that you have no interest in just to try it out. Take something that is out of your area and for fun. When I was in college, I took a public speaking course. I didn’t have to, and it scared me to death. It is the best class I took and had the most lasting impact on my career. In general, try to enjoy the moment and remember that you are always going to deal with people in whatever you do so be cognizant of that.

Teaching and Research

I am currently teaching Principles of Visual Communication and Principles of Public Relations. Learning how to strategically manage your time and efforts can help you tremendously.

Teaching and Research

I am currently teaching Principles of Visual Communication, Design of Online Content, Motion Design and The Carolina Agency. Next semester, I am going to teach the portfolio class for the visual communications students, and I’m really excited to give the perspective of having worked in the industry for 15 years to these students.

Do not be afraid to throw out a bad idea.

–Jason Porter
Making it in Manhattan
Story by Caroline Moore, Senior, Visual Communications

Bobbie Brinkley discovered her interest in media and publishing when she joined the school news program in fifth grade. “I just loved spreading information,” Brinkley says. “It didn’t matter if I was letting people know what was for lunch at school that day, I just wanted to get the word out.” Since then, she’s been determined to work in one of the world’s top information cities – amidst New York’s hustle and bustle. After graduating with a mass communications degree in May 2018, she started her job search there. It wasn’t easy, but even with 300 job applications and final interview rounds with companies like Michael Kors and Comedy Central, Brinkley never lost hope.

Although the road to finding her dream job in her dream city was long, she kept applying. And yet when Brinkley saw a position open up at Simon & Schuster for a social media and advertising coordinator, she was initially hesitant to apply. “I wasn’t sure if I had enough real-world experience under my belt to be considered for the job, but I just went for it!” she says. “And guess what? I got an interview, and was hired the next day.” Since March, Brinkley has commuted into the city every morning with a cup of coffee in her hand, ready to tackle the new and exciting challenges her job has to offer. “My role at Simon & Schuster requires me to wear many hats,” she says. “The School of Journalism and Mass Communications was rigorous and challenging, which helped prepare me for the intensity my day entails. My professors and other faculty were always encouraging as well as forthcoming with any advice or connections that could benefit the students.”

Brinkley communicates with many other companies, departments and agents. She helps create advertising and social media campaigns for new book releases for authors including Stephen King, Busy Phillips, Hillary Clinton and Jenna Dewan. She also reserves advertising space in media including The New York Times, Teen Vogue, Goodreads and Spotify.

Brinkley finds it very rewarding to spread the word about a new book release. “It impacts the authors and our readers,” she says. “If an author is proud about the way their book is represented, that makes me happy,” Brinkley says. “If someone sees one of our campaigns and it sparks interest in a new author or genre, then that makes me happier.” When Brinkley has a break from creating campaigns, you can find her at the “take shelves” around the building, where all Simon & Schuster books are available for the employees to take whenever they want. She loves browsing the collections of books, and her bookshelf is now packed full of literature. Brinkley’s goal is to tear down the stereotype that new graduates are only assigned menial tasks at small companies. Her message to anyone who is just entering the workforce? “Just go for it!”

I wasn’t sure if I had enough real-world experience under my belt to be considered for the job, but I just went for it! And guess what? I got an interview, and was hired the next day.
–Bobbie Brinkley
Rubber cement, X-Acto knives, overlays, press type and manual typesetting machines made graphics and design very hands-on tasks in the ’70s and ’80s. From there, technology changed everything. The standard of creation went from paper crafts to creating advertising campaigns on our phones, from creating worlds through simple drawing to augmented and virtual reality. Likewise, the CIC has seen and experienced this very shift in the creation of things and the expectations that shifted with it. But are communicators losing their grasp on the quality of the craft? Van Kornegay, an associate professor with the J-school’s visual communications program, describes this aspect of being hands-on as “thingness.”

**THINGNESS (n)**
the quality or state of objective existence or reality.

*via Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

**Before, you guys were literally getting your hands dirty with it if it had substance, smell and texture, and you held it in your hands to make it work.**

—Van Kornegay

“Before, you guys were literally getting your hands dirty with it if it had substance, smell and texture, and you held it in your hands to make it work,” Kornegay says. This level of work — craft done by hand — was a difficult, long process which really made the difference in distinguishing the work as art.

Today, computers do the work of cropping images and handling the post-production process. Art and design are made in the blink of an eye and posted in a matter of minutes, a stark contrast from the many hours spent cutting out pictures with the utmost care and precision. With current capabilities, the expectations of the communications field grow ever higher with each advancement in technology. “It’s kind of the great leveler,” Kornegay says. “The upside about that is it has democratized visual communication. Everybody gets to play. The downside is, everybody has to play — and you’ve got to be good at all of it.”

While digital media has come to the forefront, we’re still faced with the thingness aspect. “I foresee us pretty much always interacting with technology with our hands to some degree,” says Gordon Humphries, another university viscomm instructor. From photography to virtual reality, there remains some level of physical interaction involved with digital media. “You’re still using your hands to articulate and move whatever it is that you’re moving,” Humphries says. “There’s a fair amount of hand-eye coordination with digital devices.”

For all the efforts to advance technology and communication, there’s something to be said for media that has stood the test of time. “I’m amazed at how durable these forms of communication … like a book, how durable it is,” Kornegay says. “Being able to hold it in your hand is really important — you still want to have this thing in your hand.”

Rubber cement, X-Acto knives, overlays, press type and manual typesetting machines made graphics and design very hands-on tasks in the ’70s and ’80s. From there, technology changed everything. The standard of creation went from paper crafts to creating advertising campaigns on our phones, from creating worlds through simple drawing to augmented and virtual reality. Likewise, the CIC has seen and experienced this very shift in the creation of things and the expectations that shifted with it. But are communicators losing their grasp on the quality of the craft? Van Kornegay, an associate professor with the J-school’s visual communications program, describes this aspect of being hands-on as “thingness.”
From 1899 to 1994, Garnet and Black was known for recapping the year as a tangible collage of memories. Now, it is known as the quarterly design magazine of the University of South Carolina. But after a 25-year hiatus, the annual is finally coming back.

Sparked from an idea for a senior thesis, Thee Big Spur was reborn from Garnet and Black as a completely transformed version of the old-school yearbook. This ‘coffee table book’ demonstrates the collective South Carolina experience to readers – capturing diversity, events, memories and traditions at the university. Its goal is to give the Gamecocks something tangible that they can look back on to remember exactly what made experiences at the university so amazing.

Accounting and marketing double-major Samantha Petrelli was allowed to give her senior thesis (the business plan for the annual and its staff) a year early to begin the execution of its process during her senior year. Taking on this 300-page, $80,000-plus project was an extreme risk for one student. “It is important because this is the first time in 25 years that the university has had a book that commemorates student life,” says freshman visual communications major and staff member Melissa Borgerding. “It’s a physical documentation of what it means to be a student at South Carolina.”

“When you buy your first house, you will need coffee table books – and why not Thee Big Spur?” says Andy Burns, CIC instructor and the project’s advisor.

He had been involved with his own school’s yearbooks and liked the commitment he saw. “The staff was convincing,” Burns says. “They are fully motivated, so why not support that?” Burns says. “It’s a chance for students to do real work creating a real product that real people can buy.” Having work published was a big pull for the student staff members, especially those hoping to work in journalism, but the creation of the annual hasn’t been easy.

Once Petrelli was told she could bring this project to life, she took to social media to connect with students. Staff grew from a student and her business plan to a 40-person endeavor; dozens showed interest and offered ideas using online messaging over summer break. But when the semester started and students from the design and sales/marketing teams began feeling the stress of exams, classes and other extra-curriculars, members began to drop out, leaving behind a staff of roughly 12. Sales were not increasing according to plan, content was leaving behind a staff of roughly 12. Sales were not increasing according to plan, content was not being produced quickly enough and the publishing company was threatening to drop the book, so the staff began intensive recruitment and sales processes.

Making a comeback is a spin-off of this year’s theme; dozens showed interest and offered ideas using online messaging over summer break. But when the semester started and students from the design and sales/marketing teams began feeling the stress of exams, classes and other extra-curriculars, members began to drop out, leaving behind a staff of roughly 12. Sales were not increasing according to plan, content was not being produced quickly enough and the publishing company was threatening to drop the book, so the staff began intensive recruitment and sales processes.

Their efforts paid off – the annual survived. “I think once people see how amazing this first issue is, everyone will want to have one or be a part of it,” says sophomore visual communications major and editor in chief Julia Randolph.

“Why is Thee Big Spur produced by Carolina YB, a new organization working to reinstate one of the university’s longest traditions and revising the yearbook to fit current cultures and feature technological innovations. “I love the augmented reality the staff is incorporating this year,” Burns says. “The ability to hold your phone over the picture of Williams-Brice and have it start playing reality the staff is incorporating this year,” Burns says. “The ability to hold your phone over the picture of Williams-Brice and have it start playing Sandstorm – that is cool. A marriage of old technology and new.”

To order your own coveted piece of UofSC memorabilia, scan the QR code, or visit jostenyearbooks.com and search for the University of South Carolina.
A data sets to begin with," says SJMC director Andrea Hickerson. University faculty are making adjustments to ensure that students become aware of the ethical issues that accompany AI. When considering the issues, efficiency transcends concerns and fears about lapsing security. "AI will take over and we don’t even know that it’s automated, that we are not being active participants in its use," Hickerson says. However, she also points out effective uses of artificial intelligence in general, including automated trains like those in Tokyo. She also thinks sports and financial journalism could be enhanced by embracing AI.

The CIC Social Media Insights Lab, located in the SJMC building, uses an AI program which analyzes social media posts, then categorizes them in order to determine user sentiment and identify patterns. It’s not the only AI initiative on campus, however. Professor Amit Sheth is the founding director for the Artificial Intelligence Institute on the Columbia campus. The effort will involve collaborative research across campus.

Artificial intelligence, although portrayed by Hollywood as dangerous and doomed to destroy humanity, has many practical uses in everyday life already being utilized. The potential for AI to help humanity is there but as OpenAI says, caution should be exercised.

Theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking signed an open letter in 2015 about AI’s dangers going forward. When talking about Artificial Super Intelligence, or ASI, he warned, “humans couldn’t compete and would be superseded.” Other experts, including Bob Carver, are less pessimistic. “AI will continue to enhance cyber security operations,” he says.

Journalism schools have a precarious job when it comes to preparing future journalists to inform the public on AI. “Journalism programs should always be skeptical and critical of practices and uses,” Reichert says. “Being aware of how it’s used is also incredibly important.”

Artificial intelligence can sometimes seem like spooky, science fiction mumbo jumbo, but its growing use means it’s also an approaching reality. It’s not just making its way into medicine, computer science and technology – AI is also being implemented in newsrooms. That’s why the CIC at the University of South Carolina is examining how it’s being taught. “We believe students at the undergraduate level need to understand what AI is, how it can be applied and the ethical implications," Dean Tom Reichert says. Microsoft’s ambitious OpenAI project is an industry leader in the cautious creation of AI and warns that “rushing a technology to market before it has been deemed safe” could bring upon a lapse in foresight, breach of ethics or worse. However, OpenAI suggests that industry-wide communication about potential safety concerns could mitigate problems.

“Now we live in these curated environments, where we never see anything outside of our own bubble... and data plugged into machines is all that they have to fall back on. ‘Bad AI is based on bad... and...”

"We don’t realize how curated they are," explained Oxford Information Labs chief executive Emily Taylor in a Guardian article. That’s because the algorithms created by AI predetermine the information social media users are fed, no matter what. Dodgy data collection scandals from these same social media companies have also been reported throughout the media.

This circles back to Microsoft’s project because AI or human, the curation gets everyone. Difference is, popping the bubble isn’t as difficult for humanity as it is for machine learning.

Data plugged into machines is all that they have to fall back on. ‘Bad AI is based on bad... and...”

Human and 3D illustration robot hands reach toward one another. © Mauzerl / Dreamstime
If you can’t come to the University of South Carolina, the University of South Carolina will come to you.

–Havilah Babock, 1920s

Unlocking Hidden Patterns in Social Media

Story by Lauren Drescher, Senior, Public Relations

At nine, Amir Karami wrote his first research article. By 12, he was reading biographies of scientists, mathematicians and Nobel Prize winners. Today, Karami is an assistant professor for SLIS, where he is exploring what social media can reveal about human behavior.

“I think I love research challenges because they make me want to learn and develop new, original ideas,” Karami says. His interests lie in health and social media. He believes there are many health applications that can be found through social media analytics. His current funded projects are collaborations with researchers at the CIC or other departments on campus as well as other universities.

Could Twitter conversations tell us something surprising about how users discuss diet, diabetes, exercise, obesity and LGBTQ health? Karami – along with researchers at the Arnold School of Public Health, University of North Carolina at Charlotte and John Hopkins University – is analyzing millions of tweets to look for patterns in how people discuss these health topics on social media. The #MeToo movement inspired people around the world to share their sexual harassment and assault experiences on social media. Karami and a colleague in the university’s psychology department are using data science to study millions of those stories to identify patterns and gain new perspectives on sexual harassment.

Daniel Barron, distinguished professor emeritus and former director of SLIS. Photo provided.

Amir Karami writes research findings on his white board. Photo by Lauren Drescher.

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–Amir Karami

Karami and faculty members from the university’s political science department mine millions of social media comments during political events, such as the 2016 presidential election, to recognize patterns and garner a better understanding of political opinion. Finally, a seemingly unrelated, decades-old case hold the answer to a modern medical mystery? In a departure from social media research, Karami and researchers at Harvard Medical School are developing a framework to scan thousands of unusual medical cases to detect meaningful patterns.

When he isn’t busy conducting research for SLIS, Karami unites all of his passions and interests in health and social media. He believes there are many health applications that can be found through social media analytics. His current funded projects are collaborations with researchers at the CIC or other departments on campus as well as other universities.

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Today, tests can be completed and turned in online. In the 1990s, however, exams were often proctored. “For my midterm, the professor emailed the exam to the feature animation librarian,” Lorene Kennard, ’99, says. “She proctored the exam in a conference room near the Disney MGM Studios and mailed it back to campus because they wanted the original.”
In addition to traditional face-to-face meetings, there is now a new way to make connections through the CIC’s Mentor Match program, where students network with professionals in their fields and receive advice and coaching from industry leaders. This year’s program has expanded to include online meetings between students and mentors.

For junior public relations major Melissa Mesnick, this change connected her with Patrick Sutton, who works as a communications lead at Blockchain in New York. The two set aside time biweekly for a discussion via Zoom Chat to sharpen Mesnick’s professional skills and prepare her for upcoming interviews.

“He’s really helpful with reaching out to recruiters and aiding me in writing a personal statement that outlines why they should hire me,” Mesnick says. “As someone who hires interns, he is able to tell me exactly what he does and does not like to see in interviews.”

For 2009 alumna Megan Bagwell, Mentor Match has helped her better understand and improve her professional communication skills. Bagwell has recently received many awards, including two 2019 Public Relations Society of America Silver Anvil Awards and one Silver Anvil Best in Show honors.

“The goal is to aid in the development of the curriculum and ensure that future graduates of the college are prepared and competitive for employment,” says Lisa Fischer, council member and national advertising sales executive vice president of UPtv and Aspire.

Early on, the council has made recommendations for trends the college can monitor on social media. “More than 200 hundred students have come through our social media lab and classes are now being offered,” Dean Tom Reichert says. Plans are to identify research opportunities, expand the college’s national and global reach, identify corporate and organizational partnerships that can enhance its profile, and propose ways the lab can be used to generate revenue. “This lab provides great education against the changing landscape of marketing and PR, bringing a greater understanding of consumer engagement and the effect social media conversations have on business outcomes,” Fischer says.

The council includes alumni as well as professionals who demonstrate a passion for the aims of the college. “It is important to have a diversity of members on the council to bring in an outside prospective,” Reichert says. It’s bringing real-world voices to the college in a manner that fosters teamwork and collaboration and builds enduring relationships among council members.
Diving into the 
NYPD

On the morning of September 11, 2001, a University of South Carolina freshman saw the tragic terrorist attacks unfold live on his dorm room TV. He didn’t realize how the experience would shape his life. James Roche, New York City Police Officer, calls this the pivotal moment that launched his interest in making the world a safer place through the New York City Police Department. First, he had to finish school, and that’s where his SJMC education fits in. Roche, ’05, credits much of his work ethic to his journalism background. The broadcast journalism major learned that to make it in the field, you have to work the hardest. “To be successful, you have to be the best reporter, best anchor, best producer,” he says. These ideas set him up for success as a NYPD police officer. He decided that he wanted to be the story, not tell it.

Following graduation, he began the challenging process of joining the NYPD. It took three years and included countless flights and tests. “Sometimes I stayed up for more than 24 hours straight,” Roche said. “I worked overtime on days off and holidays, went scuba diving in grueling dark cold and found a lot of good luck along the way.”

“My dream job was to become a New York City police officer but more than that it was to become a police diver,” he says. “When I took the test in 2010, I saw a video of NYPD scuba divers looking for explosives and jumping out of helicopters, and from that moment I knew what my career path was going to be.”

So how did he end up rescuing a woman from drowning in Long Island, New York? “It is all about timing,” says Roche. Last June, he made headlines after performing a daring rescue. A boat had capsized on the Long Island Sound and a woman was trapped underneath. Roche was able to bring her to the surface and she was airlifted to a local hospital. “It was the most important thing I have ever done as a police officer,” he says. “I waited two years to make my first rescue out of the helicopter, and it was the experience of a lifetime.”

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Learn how you can support the CIC at bit.ly/cic-giving
2000s

Holly Fisher, MMC, 2005, was named 2019 Marketer of the Year at the AMA Charleston Spark Award. Fisher is CEO and founder of Fisher Creative in Mount Pleasant.

Drew Harkins, BA, 2006, is creative director of Tattoo Projects in Charlotte.

Megan Herrin Bagwell, BA, 2009, was part of the team that won the Public Relations Society of America’s 2019 Best of Silver Anvil Award for the campaign, ‘The Power of Driving Test Teens Prove their #StreetTread,’ developed with Ketchum. Herrin is the corporate affairs public relations manager for Michelin North America in Greenville.

Steve Jackson, MA, 2002, has been promoted to director of communications and operations coordinator. Martinez previously worked as a freelance writer and social media manager. Martinez is a mom of three and wife of an active-duty U.S. Marine.

Christine Carlson McKone, BA, 2008, is the marketing communications manager for Volvo Penta of the Americas in Chesapeake, Virginia. She oversees the company’s communications strategy for the region. Earlier this year, she completed an extensive international assignment for Volvo Penta’s headquartes in Sweden. She serves on the Marine Marketers of America board of directors, is a member of the Junior League of Norfolk-Virginia Beach, and is a mentor for Seton Youth Shelter’s Children of Prisoners program. She was named one of Broadcasting Industry magazine’s Top 40 under 40.

Merritt McNeely, BA, 2005, was named 2019 Marketer of the Year at the Annual Cannes advertising festival, which will use profits from the film to bring healthy food education to low-income communities.

Amanda Loveday, BA, 2007, is a senior advisor in the country. A new Biden super PAC. An associate director at NP Strategy in Columbus, Loveday previously served as communications director for Rep. Jim Clyburn and as executive director of the South Carolina Democratic Party.

Sanchez Valdez Martinez, BA, 2008, has joined Thrive Games Foundation as communications and operations coordinator. Martinez previously worked as a freelance writer and social media manager. Martin is a mom of three and wife of an active-duty U.S. Marine.

Bobby Redfern, BA, 2003, is the director of digital for Realtree, the world’s largest camouflage and outdoor brand, in Columbus, Georgia. He and his wife welcomed their first child in 2019.

Jennifer West, MLIS, 2008, has joined Savannah State University’s Gordon Library as technical services librarian. She also oversees the special collections.

Heather Fordham, BA, 2019, has joined WLP in Freehold, New Jersey, as a reporter/associate producer.

Zachary Frazier, Ph.D., 2019, is the University of North Carolina Greensboro as a clinical assistant professor in the School of Education’s library and information science department.

Kim MacVaug, MLS, 2018, has been named co-anchor of ABC’s World News Now and America This Morning.

Nicholas Needham, BA, 2009, was awarded the Roy H. Park Fellowship to pursue an M.A. in media and communication from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Stephanie Pendry, MMC, 2006, was named to DMN’s 2019 40under40 list. Pendry is marketing manager at Cage Brothers Concrete Products in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Jay Pou, BA, 2005, is the recipient of the 2019 M. Stuart Hunter Award for Outstanding Teaching in University 101 at the University of South Carolina. Pou is director of student services for the history department.

Maryann Williams, BA, 2004, joined the Dari Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina as marketing and communications manager.

Kimmy Hance, 2007, has joined 247Sports in Nashville, Tennessee, as an associate producer of special projects.

Lexi Goble, MMC, 2019, has joined Central Carolina Community Foundation in Columbus as communications associate. He is responsible for all digital communications, including the foundation’s social media, website, blog and email newsletters. He also assists with the development and execution of individual strategic communications plans for the organization’s departments and teams.

Susan Altman Elsfon, MLS, 2017, has joined Airport High School in West Columbia as a school librarian.

Jennifer Faulkner, BA, 2019, has joined Beginnings SC as West Columbia’s program coordinator. She provides support for the hearing screening and parent education programs. She also handles event management, communications/social media and development.

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For questions or giving information, please contact:
Elaine Arnold, Senior Director of Development
earlondsc@sc.edu | 803-777-6898

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DEAN’S CIRCLE SOCIETY

The dean’s Circle of the College is comprised of alumni, community leaders and industry advocates who recognize the value and importance of the College of Information and Communications at the University of South Carolina. The dean’s Circle of the College, we recognize those who annually (July 1-June 30) make a gift of $1,000 or annually who annually contribute
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