Between the Stacks, 07-2023

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The University Libraries Internal Monthly Newsletter

July 2023

Exhibits, Conferences & More
The Special Collections Heritage Exhibit will now be on display on McWherter Library's 2nd Floor (opposite side of the MLK exhibit). The exhibit highlights memorabilia and photographs from UofM history as far back as 1915, including important sports events and milestones, as well as alumni association items.
April Hobbs attended and presented “Community Resilience from Coast to Coast: Lessons from Disaster Research to Engage Your Community and Empower Your Library Staff” with her colleague, Ms. Denise Lyons, at the California Library Association Conference that took place June 1-3 in Sacramento, CA. April shared the images above from her trip.

ExLibris Bluegrass Users Group Conference 2023
Sofiya Dahman attended the ExLibris Bluegrass Users Group Conference that took place June 15-16 in Knoxville, TN. Sofiya shared the images above from her trip.

ALA Conference 2023
Sylverna Ford, April Hobbs, and Frankie Perry attended the American Library Association (ALA) Conference & Exhibition that took place June 22-27 in Chicago, IL. April Hobbs presented "Library Resilience from Coast to Coast: Lessons from Disaster Research to Engage Your Community and Empower Your Staff" with Dr. Feili Tu-Keefner, Associate Professor - University of South Carolina School of Information Science, and Denise Lyons, Commissioner - Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. Frankie and April shared the images above from their trip.
Donate to the UofM Career Closet

The Office of First-Generation Student Success and the Office of Career Services are accepting lightly used or new business attire for their career closet through September 6. They are looking for ties/bowties, accessories (earrings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.), blouses, blazers, dress pants, and suits. Items can be dropped off at the Libraries’ Administration Office, room 204. The campus department who donates the most items by August 25 will be considered for the Campus Partner Award; the winner will be announced at the annual Sapphire Awards (learn more).
UM3D Training

UM3D will have Canvas trainings available every week. To view the full Canvas training schedule, visit their events calendar.

Announcements

Employee Spotlights

- **Jannelle Walker** is the new Library Assistant I in Circulation as of July 10. Welcome, Jannelle!
- **Niki Nikmard Tehrani** is the new Library Assistant II in RIS as of June 20. Welcome, Niki!
- **Lisa Reilly** will no longer be at the Libraries as of July 14. She will be missed!
- **Kelly Maust**’s article “On Display: Blue House Books” was recently published in *Tennessee Libraries*. Read it now!
• **Carl Hess** is the new President of **Memphis Area Library Council (MALC)**.

• **Jessica McClure** was elected as Vice-Chair/Chair Elect and **Bess Robinson** was elected as At-Large Representative of the WeTALC Executive Committee.

• **Joel Roberts** and his colleague, Josef Hanson, recently published “Perspectives of Black Students in Music Education Doctoral Programs: Motivations, Experiences, and Information Literacy” in the **Journal of Music Teacher Education**. [Read it](#)

• **Ben Clanton** and **Michelle Dry** were elected as the new staff senators for the Libraries for the next two years. [Learn more about the Staff Senate](#)

• **Dr. Irma Singarella** recently published “Information access as a strategy to overcome health inequities in the context of COVID-19 in Ozdenerol” in **The Role of GIS in COVID-19 Management and Control**. [Learn more](#)

**Did You Know?**

• **The Music Library** is temporarily closed through July 21 for renovations. Email [@Joel Collin Roberts](mailto:jcrberts) with any requests for Music Library materials. If you’re looking for anyone from the Music Library team, Sean Denby, Caroline Kelley, or Joel Roberts, they are temporarily located in the RIS department.

• Are you signed up for **UofM Alert**? The UofM has moved to a new UofM Alert (Emergency and Mass Notification System) called Everbridge. LiveSafe, the previous system, will remain active as a backup during a short transition period. The UofM uses UofM Alert to notify you of issues that may affect your safety. [Sign up for UofM Alert now](#)

• **New Student Orientation Academic Advising Sessions** will be taking place in McWherter Library (1st Floor Learning Commons & Government Publications) throughout the summer.

• **McWherter Library hours** during the summer term, now through August 4, will be our regular hours. [View all Libraries hours](#)  
  - Monday-Thursday, 7:30AM-Midnight  
  - Friday, 7:30AM-6PM  
  - Saturday, 10AM-6PM  
  - Sunday, 1PM-10PM
PDFs and Accessibility: Portable Document Format or Pretty Deeply Flawed?
By Marie Peeples

If you work in a library (or, indeed, use a computer), you can’t get very far without encountering a PDF file. From our electronic resources to our Digital Commons (not to mention our emails and hard drives) PDFs are ubiquitous—and for a good reason. PDF stands for Portable Document Format, where “portable” indicates that PDFs are designed to be easily shared and printed, without losing their original formatting. This design has many advantages. For one, PDFs can be viewed independent of word processing or similar software, allowing users without access to paid programs like Microsoft Word to freely view PDFs. For another, because they retain a document’s exact formatting, PDFs are especially well-suited to documents where visual layout is key. Unlike in Microsoft Word, where various users may be working with various software versions or settings, you can send a document as a PDF without worrying that a random text box is going to go rogue.

Unfortunately, what can be helpful in some contexts may be detrimental in others, and these advantages become pitfalls when the PDF is viewed through an accessibility lens. Retaining a document’s exact original formatting prioritizes the visual perception of its content, but not all readers will be consuming that content visually. For users with low or no vision who rely on screen readers to parse a document, PDFs are not automatically formatted to communicate with those assistive devices. With visual formatting completely locked into a PDF, it can also be challenging for users with dyslexia or other disabilities that affect reading to adjust the document to meet their needs.
So, what can we do to make PDFs more accessible? The best solution is simply not to use them. Alternatives such as web pages (including the HTML Full Text option available through the library’s Discovery Service) or files created in Microsoft Word come pre-programmed with the tools needed to communicate with assistive devices. Although using a PDF may feel “neater” than other options due to its formatting consistency, it’s important to consider whether that consistency is pedagogically necessary, or an expendable stylistic preference.

If no alternatives are available, you can instead take steps to equip your PDF with the elements needed to make it accessible. In Adobe Acrobat, you can use the Accessibility Check and Make Accessible tools to identify and correct any inaccessible features, allowing you to remediate the PDF according to your specific needs. For a more hands-off approach, you can use tools like SensusAccess, which will deliver a remediated PDF from a file you’ve uploaded. Keep in mind, however, that typically none of these solutions are as effective as the alternatives mentioned above. A truly precise PDF remediation requires human oversight and can take many, many hours. Ultimately, it’s best to avoid the format altogether when possible.

References & Resources for PDF Accessibility

- Checking PDFs for Accessibility | University of Washington Accessible Technology: Quick checklist for ensuring that the most important accessibility elements are present in a PDF.
- Defining PDF Accessibility | WebAIM: Detailed guide covering many aspects of PDF accessibility, including creating accessible PDFs from other file types and using accessibility features in Adobe Acrobat.
- Create and Verify PDF Accessibility | Adobe: Guidance from Adobe in using Acrobat’s Accessibility Checker and Make Accessible tools, along with detailed instructions on correcting issues flagged by the Accessibility Checker.
- Create Accessible PDFs | Microsoft: Instructions on creating accessible PDFs from Microsoft Word documents.
- SensusAccess: Document conversion tool for improving PDF accessibility. SensusAccess is also embedded in Canvas.

Upcoming Accessibility Trainings

- Designing for Diversity in Your Library’s Communications
  - OCLC WebJunction webinar
  - July 13 from 2-3 PM

Contact & Follow Us

- Planning events for the fall semester? Plan at least a month ahead! We have a new Marketing Resources page on the Libraries intranet site. Be sure to review this page for your event and marketing requests. It contains many FAQs.
• Want something included in the weekly email, monthly newsletter, or on social media? Email the Libraries marketing team at lib_marketing@memphis.edu.

• Don't forget to follow @UofMLibraries on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or YouTube to learn about upcoming events, interesting resources & more! Highlighted events can also be found on the Libraries homepage.