Digital libraries are uniquely poised as environments for knowledge creation and life enhancement. Researchers are able to develop and utilize the virtual environment in compelling ways, including global engagement with people who are new to practicing information science. Virtual sessions and unconferences are two innovative ways to connect established practitioners with less experienced students and professionals in supportive, collaborative environments. By combining these two formats, we propose hosting a virtual uncommons that transcends geographical locations. The Digital Liaisons Virtual Uncommons (DLVU) will feature leaders in digital libraries who will act in a mentoring capacity by responding to questions posed by new information professionals. In the DLVU, innovative students and early career professionals will be able to connect with mentors in the field of digital librarianship. The virtual uncommons will be a space for informal mentoring and serendipitous networking. This session will feature a Twitter chat under the hashtag #SIGDLchats (OR #DL4Good) for LIS students and newly practicing professionals to connect with mentors in the field with a focus on the changing nature of modern librarianship. Mentors will be sought out beforehand and the session will be widely publicized to international LIS, IS, Archival, etc. I-* programs.

Keywords
Digital libraries, modern librarianship, future of digital librarianship, LIS4Good, digital collections, early-career professionals, graduate students, students, student research.
**Introduction**

This year’s conference theme, “Creating knowledge, enhancing lives through information and technology,” offers SIG-DL the opportunity to propose a Digital Liaisons Virtual Uncommons focusing on enabling the skills of modern librarians to better support the communities we serve. Digital Liaisons has historically been delivered as a combination poster and panel session highlighting innovative research in digital libraries and has been recognized as a format that supports student involvement. This year, due to the difficulty for North American students or early career professionals to attend ASIS&T in Europe, but the clear benefit of international mentorship and idea-sharing, we are proposing Digital Liaisons as a Virtual Uncommons: a Twitter chat and networking opportunity to foster conversations about ways in which digital libraries enhance lives and the future of the profession.

The panel session at the annual meeting will be an unstructured meeting, similar to an unconference. This would allow mentors and mentees to build their own schedules around the various time zones represented. The panel would allow for a formal setting, indicating mentor/mentee relationships as well as allow for the opportunity for additional professional networking between attendees of the annual conference.

A collection of library professionals focused in digital librarianship have been invited to frame the theme in the beginning of the Twitter chat to help synthesize conversation over the course of the conference. In the past, Digital Liaisons has successfully fulfilled three goals. First, the panel provided students with an opportunity to present their research at a national conference, thereby serving as a form of outreach for new professionals who desire to take part in the information science research community. Second, the panel provided a venue for presenters to exchange ideas with peers and experienced colleagues, as well as for the more experienced members to learn from presenters’ fresh perspectives and recent involvement in LIS programs. Third, the Digital Liaisons panel increases student participation and recruitment of both individual members and student chapters.

This year, we will shift the panel into a mentoring opportunity by reformatting Digital Liaisons into a virtual uncommons. We will connect students and young professionals with information professionals who are serving and impacting knowledge creation and life enhancement through work with digital libraries and related initiatives. In the Digital Liaisons Virtual Uncommons, we will continue to provide opportunities for students to be involved in conversations about the future of our field and grow an active membership for ASIS&T. This conversational approach will provide a venue for early-career practitioners to connect with more seasoned mentors without geographic limitations.

**Topic**

In adherence to the 2016 annual conference theme, this year’s panel will focus on digital libraries from the perspective of responsibility in knowledge creation and ways in which communities benefit from access to information through the development of digital libraries.

The open-ended theme will allow participants to engage with a broad range of topics and interests related to knowledge creation and life enhancement. Subtopics may include citizen science, community projects, crowd-sourced metadata, digital humanities, non-text digital libraries, open access and new publishing models, open source software, information ethics, social network analysis, the skillset of the modern librarian the future of digital libraries, the responsibilities of knowledge creation, and the impact of the creation of digital libraries on communities. Exploring digital collections through the lens of professional responsibility and community involvement allows participants a great deal of latitude in the subjects they cover. The broad range of focuses that may develop for the session listed here are meant to be illustrative, not inclusive.
Structure and Format
The Digital Liaisons panel will be a multi-part, interactive session in which students and early-stage professionals have an opportunity to communicate with mentors. The virtual uncommons will take the form of a kickoff Twitter Chat that connects mentors and mentees connect and discuss topics related to digital librarianship on October 13th. Mentees will be invited to get in touch with mentors throughout the virtual symposium session via a hashtag (#SIGDLchats or #DL4Good). Mentor responsibilities include active participation in the Twitter chat on October 13th and availability for direct question and answer conversations with mentees who get in touch during the conference. Participants will engage with presenters’ offerings, giving them an opportunity to learn from and network with seasoned professionals. In turn, attendees will benefit from learning about current interests and directions of students and early-career researchers.

At the conclusion of the Twitter chat, participants will be encouraged to reach out to mentors directly with additional questions and mentors will be asked to remain available to answer questions for the duration of the ASIS&T annual meeting.

There will be ample time for discussion among all participants, including audience members. SIG-DL members will continue to connect with mentors throughout the year. Following the conclusion of the conference, the proposers will compile and electronically present unconference outcomes through a Storify and a Google Drive folder. During the panel session at the annual meeting we will help students navigate the expansion of their professional network, representation of their own interaction with the conversation by creating a Storify of themselves, and

At the conclusion of the unconference, participants will participate in summative evaluation via a Google Form. The results of this survey and a summary of the Twitter chat will be compiled and presented at the Digital Liaisons panel session during the Annual Meeting. This session will be structured as a collaborative working meeting structured like an unconference and intended to overcome divisions in the field of digital librarianship resulting from jargon. Outcomes of this working session are expected to include a document identifying what the work of a digital librarian is, what digital library initiatives look like, and what the terminology surrounding this work really means in a glossary format.

Recruitment
If the panel is approved, SIG-DL will begin promotion in June. SIG-DL will announce the chat through an aggressive promotion campaign beginning in June using a variety of media channels including LIS programs and other relevant professional listservs, as well as social media outlets. SIG-DL members will also contact ASIS&T student chapters and LIS program faculty teaching pertinent coursework. Submissions to the Digital Liaisons panel have grown every year over the four years the session has been held at the annual conference. If the panel is approved, we anticipate another strong pool of student participants.

Timeline
Twitter chat from October 13th 2pm-4pm EST / 8pm-10pm CEST as well as flexibly through the length of the conference, October 14th - 18th. Expansive hours will allow for participation across global time zones. Social media uniquely allows us to account for scheduling issues. The use of Twitter would also allow for additional archiving and a greater reach. As DeMers states, social media allows for greater levels of humanization. He states “Social media is a place where brands can act like people do, and this is important because people like doing business with other people; not with companies.”1 In our case, SIG DL is the brand being represented. Twitter will also allow us a digital record that will be sued to evaluate some of the interaction between the mentors and mentees.

---

Virtual Uncommons Confirmed Participants

Chris Cunningham (moderator)
University of Southern Mississippi
School of Library and Information Science

Alyson Gamble (moderator)
Jane Bancroft Cook Library
New College of Florida and
USF Sarasota-Manatee

Ekatarina Grguric (moderator)
NCSU Libraries
NCSU Libraries Fellow, Digital Library Initiatives, User Experience

Twyla Gibson (mentor)
School of Information Science & Learning Technologies
Assistant Professor

Jim DelRosso (mentor)
Hospitality, Labor, and Management Library, Cornell University Libraries
Digital Projects Librarian

Jason Casden (mentor)
NCSU Libraries
Interim Associate Head, Digital Library Initiatives

Jason Ronallo (mentor)
NCSU Libraries
Head, Digital Library Initiatives

Kevin Beswick (mentor)
NCSU Libraries
Digital Technologies Development Librarian

Bret Davidson (mentor)
NCSU Libraries
Digital Technologies Development Librarian

Cory Lampert
Hospitality, Labor, and Management Library, Cornell University Libraries
Digital Projects Librarian

Nora McGregor
British Library
Digital Research Team
Potentially Interested SIGs
In addition to Digital Libraries, this panel is relevant to several other SIGs including Education for Information Science, SIG III because of the explicitly international virtual venue, as well as Human Computer Interaction and Information Needs, Seeking, and Use, and SIG VIS.

Added Value
The panel will bring added value to our members in several ways. One, new information professionals will have the opportunity to interact and learn from well-established members of the digital library community. This mentor/mentee relationship will give the mentee access to individuals that they might otherwise not be able to approach, in a manner that fosters open and honest communication. Second, the mentees will garner a larger professional network, allowing for the possibility of improved professional opportunities that might otherwise not be available. This relationship will also allow the mentee to exhibit the skills that they bring to the table and allow the mentor to polish them up and present them in a way that allows the mentees stars to shine. This relationship should allow for a strengthened resume.

Support and Participation
We will support the mentors and mentees in a variety of ways. First, we will build a pool of mentees for the mentors to peruse, and submit a selection of mentees. We will then act as a go between for the two parties in order to ensure that communication is being established and proper follow up is being done. SIG DL will also be building Twitter chats in order for parties to have a common method by which to begin communicating.

We have begun soliciting mentors, based upon their contributions to the world of digital libraries and have received considerable response off of the preliminary emails. Based upon demand, SIG DL will continue to reach out to working professionals in the digital library arena. For mentees, we will begin to solicit applications through the SIG DL social media streams. Based upon demand and mentor availability, we may also solicit the ASIST community as a whole in order to reach a broader spectrum of mentees.

Moderation
The moderators will do an initial survey of the mentors, requesting feedback on hot topic issues that they feel are the most important to the field. We will also send a survey to mentee applicants, requesting what skills or information they feel are the most important to them. We will then collate the answers between the two groups in order to build a hot topics discussion between the two groups, which will also be presented on social media in order to circumnavigate time zone differentials. SIG DL will moderate the discussions as well as discuss any answers or discussion points submitted by individuals who may be unable to attend the Annual Meeting in person.