

Ampersand

UCLA

Maps,
Directions,
ParkingFaculty & Staff
Portal

Webmail

Directory

Contact Us

Terms of Use

Site Map

 Search

ENGAGE



IS Lab Continues to Provide Student Resources in the New Remote Learning Normal



By Joanie Harmon

IS Lab Director Diana Ascher ('17, PhD) works to keep Zoom spaces safe, harness relationships within the profession to keep students on path to graduation and careers.

APRIL 9, 2020

The IS Lab is usually the hub of activity for MLIS and PhD students in UCLA's Department of Information Studies. Located in the GSE&IS Building in North Campus, the IS Lab provides computing resources, reference services, hands-on workshops, and, of course, the world-renowned collections of the UCLA Library.

Faced with the challenge of providing not only these day-to-day student resources, but also the robust in-person internship and professional development experiences that are a hallmark of an IS degree at UCLA, IS Lab Director Diana Ascher ('17, PhD) has come up with a plan.

Within the new normal of remote learning, Ascher has moved everything a student needs – from reference services and access to UCLA software and course readings to professional development workshops and meetings with potential employers – to virtual platforms. Ascher has also taken measures to ensure against “Zoom-bombing” incidents by setting a number of safeguards in place.

Ascher, who is also the Department's digital instructional support librarian, shared with *Ampersand* her strategies to keep UCLA IS students on track with their courses, continue their research, and receive the best experience possible in the transition to remote learning at UCLA, while still paving the way for their successful graduation and beginning their careers in the library and information fields.

Ampersand: What are some of the most vital resources of the IS Lab that you now have to provide remotely?

Diana Ascher: I am happy to report that the IS Lab, conceptually, has metamorphosed into virtual spaces in which the IS Lab Staff members and I may continue to serve our patrons. These include [Reference Services](#), which are supplementary resources to support students' research and reference needs virtually. Students can find information on electronic access to journals, databases, ebooks, and research guides, along with recommended resources from IS Lab Staff members.

Intended for IS faculty and instructors, [Instructional Support](#) concerns online instruction workflows, information on teaching with Zoom, copyright concerns in the virtual classroom, and more. [Training](#) includes virtual workshops, tutorials, and how-to guides pertinent to all five specializations in the MLIS Program, as well as professional development and continuing education skills development.

Finally, the [Virtual Commons](#) is intended for IS students to support the ongoing operations of student groups and other student-focused activities during this period of remote instruction. Meetings may be convened in dedicated breakout rooms and students may engage with one another organically, outside the bounds of course-related work. We hope to foster in this virtual space the free exchange of ideas and sense of community that has flourished in the IS Lab's physical space over the past year and a half.

&: How is UCLA IS equipped to deal with any privacy breaches like Zoom-bombing?

Ascher: Every innovation provides new vulnerabilities to exploit, as we've seen with Zoom bombing. Fortunately, the developers at Zoom seem to have been working round the clock to improve security. We tested out some of the new features designed to deter and mitigate Zoom bombing, and we haven't had any difficulties thus far. Here's what we've implemented to protect our IS Lab Zoom spaces from this type of disruption.

First, each IS Lab Zoom space requires initial registration. The links to register have been shortened to prevent bad actors from finding our spaces by searching for URLs that contain “zoom.us.” We don't print the actual URLs for these Zoom spaces.

Each IS Lab Zoom space has a Waiting Room, where anyone who has not registered must wait until granted access by the host. I encourage students to use their full names so moderators can confirm eligibility for access. And, each IS Lab Zoom space is monitored by myself and/or an IS Lab Staff member, who has the ability to remove Zoom bombers from the space.

&: What has been the response from students so far on the adjustments you've made to get through the Spring quarter smoothly?

Ascher: I was pleased to receive several messages from students this week, approving of the changes and soliciting advice about how to approach new situations arising from the complexities of remote instruction. We've been adding answers to these inquiries to the Frequently Asked Questions page on the [IS Lab website](#), and creating new resources to guide students through this crazy time. Folks may submit suggestions via the website, too.

For example, as I was answering your questions, I received a request from a student for links to digital portfolios of alumni; shortly, I'll add a page to our website to provide some examples. The most important part of creative problem-solving is listening.

&: How will the virtual environment we are now in impact the intellectual and social exchanges among your students?

Ascher: In my view, student groups will be key in facilitating ongoing engagement among the student body. I hope this engagement will take place in the IS Lab Community space, where students may congregate virtually and student groups may hold meetings.

I'm meeting with LISAA (UCLA's Library and Information Studies Alumni Association) members to discuss how our alumni may support current students during this pandemic. The IS Lab is now managing the “Graduates Speak” initiative, and these opportunities to learn from alumni will be provided through the IS Lab in an asynchronous format. We recognize Zoom fatigue, and want to make these sessions accessible to more students on demand. Some of the other ideas being discussed entail facilitating informational interviews and other means of learning best practices directly from alumni.

&: One of the key features of the UCLA MLIS program is the Internship Program and the ability to network with professionals. How will the shift to remote learning impact students' ability to do this and begin planning for their careers in the field?

Ascher: Understandably, students are concerned that cancelled internships and uncertainty about the length of time that shelter-in-place conditions will persist will wreak havoc on job prospects. To this concern, I can only point out that the whole world is contending with these issues, and our relationships with internship sites and hiring managers will remain strong.

For our part here in the IS Lab, we will make virtual spaces available for students to engage with alumni and potential employers. I'll also be offering professional development workshops so students may present their education, experience, skills, and interests most effectively to potential employers.

That's how we work—identify a need, and find a way to meet it in the current environment.

Tags: [COVID-19](#), [Department of Information Studies](#), [Diana Ascher](#), [Remote Learning](#), [UCLA Department of Information Studies](#), [Zoom](#)

GSE&IS in the News

Earl Edwards: Lack of Dedicated School Staff to Serve Homeless Students
Quoted in EdSource

Miriam Posner: The Supply Chain Mess Over PPE

Interviewed by One Zero

Tyrone Howard: Children of Color with Pandemic Trauma Need Support, Not Punishment

Featured in
Silliconeer

Popular Posts

Frank O. Gehry Foundation Gift to UCLA Will Advance Design-Based Learning

February 4, 2021

New UCLA Research Effort Aims to Increase Diversity of Educators in California

February 1, 2021

Doreen Gehry Nelson: Design-Based Learning Brings Innovation to Teaching Critical Thinking Skills

February 4, 2021

