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Spotlights: Faculty, Alumna, and Courses

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Spotlight – Faculty



Stephen Parks, J.D., MLIS, is the current State Librarian of Mississippi, having been reelected by the Mississippi Legislature for a second term in January 2020. As State Librarian, he is tasked with overseeing the State Library, more commonly referred to as the State Law Library. By state statute, the Library provides law library services to the Mississippi Supreme Court, other state courts, state officials, and the general public.

Originally from North Carolina, Parks obtained his undergraduate degree from East Carolina University before moving to Mississippi to attend law school at Mississippi College. After obtaining his law degree in 2010, he began working at the Mississippi College Law Library and began the MLIS program at the University of Southern Mississippi. While working at the Mississippi College Law Library, he taught Legal Research to first-year law students. He graduated from the LIS program in 2013. He has been teaching as an adjunct with the LIS program since 2015, primarily teaching LIS 664: Government Resources and Publications.

His background and focus are in the legal research and government resources field. He currently serves as a member of the Depository Library Council, an advisory committee to the Director of the

Government Publishing Office, where he lends his expertise as a law librarian and director of a State Library that works closely with government documents.

Since becoming the State Librarian in 2016, Parks has strived to increase awareness of the State Law Library and its resources. He has started a Newsletter and has spoken at various functions around the state of Mississippi. He has also become more active in the Mississippi Library Association, currently serving as the Association's Vice-President.

More information about the State Library of Mississippi is online at <https://courts.ms.gov/research/statelibrary/library.php>



Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden with Stephen Parks, J.D., MLIS

Spotlight – Alum



Dr. Tekla Ali Johnson earned a Ph.D. in history with an emphasis in African American Studies at the University of Nebraska in 2005. At UNL, she studied World Systems Theory with Andre Gunder Frank, American Cultural and Social History with Dr. John Wunder, and Africana Studies with Dr. Venetria Patton, Dr. Jeanette Jones, and Dr. Walter Rucker.

She was introduced to Africology at UNO's Black Studies Department by Professor James Conyers. Ali Johnson has served on the faculty at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, where she was Coordinator of the African/African American Studies Minor and History Program. She has taught Africana Studies and Public History, leading students in service-learning and internships at museums, libraries, and archives.

She earned a Masters Degree in Library Science from the University of Southern Mississippi in 2015. She completed her master's research project, "African American Archival Resources: Representation in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia," under the direction of Dr. Teresa Welsh and Dr. Elizabeth Haynes. She recently led a team that won a National Parks Service Civil Rights Grant and a Knight Foundation's Grant for a digital humanities project that will virtually reconstruct segments of African American neighborhoods of Charlotte, North Carolina, lost during urban renewal.

Dr. Ali Johnson serves as Co-PI on a third grant-based project to teach HBCU students archival/historic

preservation skills. Dr. Ali Johnson spent a treasured semester as a scholar in Residence at the James Weldon Johnson Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies at Emory University under the leadership of the late Dr. Rudolph Byrd, where she completed her first monograph, *'Free Radical': Ernest Chambers, Black Power, and the Politics of Race* (Texas Tech University Press, 2012). The work earned a coveted National Council of Black Studies Book Award.

Dr. Ali Johnson has been active in community and social justice initiatives for most of her adult life, including working to free prisoners-of-conscience from America's social movements. She currently teaches at the University of South Carolina and serves as a Historian working in the Special Collections Department at Johnson C. Smith University. Having first fallen in love with history at the Great Plains Black History Museum in Omaha, Nebraska as a teenager, Dr. Ali Johnson's MLIS degree from Southern Miss has allowed her to work in archives well as history, a privilege for which she is eternally grateful.

Spotlight—Technical Courses

In recent years, technical competencies and emergent technologies have increased importance in LIS education and as a factor in ALA accreditation. At Southern Miss, both undergraduate and graduate LIS students must take at least one technical elective and may choose from three.

LIS 416/516: *Technology in the School Library.* A survey of technology utilized in elementary and secondary school libraries.

LIS 457/557: *Information Technology and Libraries.* Examines various applications and contexts in which computers and other forms of information technology are utilized in different types of information centers and libraries.

LIS 458/558. *Web Design and Evaluation.* Introduces principles of Web design and development including basic HTML and XML coding, Web usability, and the evaluation of Web sites including library Web sites.