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## Know Thy Staff: Fran Rice, the Libraries' Chief of Technology

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# Know Thy Staff: Fran Rice, the Libraries' Chief of Technology

By Anu Viswanadha

Fran Rice is an Associate Professor and Director of Information Systems & Digital Access at Roesch Library. I am a graduate student studying computer science. When I sat down to talk with Fran, I learned a lot about a little-known but essential library department — and even walked away with a job offer! Read the interview below to learn more about the work of the Libraries' IT department, Information Systems and Digital Access (ISDA).

Anu: How would you describe what you do?

Fran: The department deals with:

- Providing solutions to hardware problems and technical support in the library.
- Working on digitization (converting existing data into digital form).
- Planning for new services such as investigating a platform, such as Omeka, to host online exhibits.
- Helping to build the University's institutional repository, called eCommons. The repository provides a place to archive faculty scholarship, journals, theses, dissertations, projects, and other files that highlight the University's commitment to transformative education and ground-breaking research.
- Maintaining library specific applications such as the libraries catalog, ILLiad, and EmbARK.

Anu: What does your typical day at work look like?

Fran: A typical day at work is never the same; new tasks come up on a daily and hourly basis. Some tasks I frequently work on include:

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- Working with Libraries Council and Dean's Council
- Ordering equipment
- Administration
- Creating user accounts
- Working with distribution lists

on a typical research essay if the library and OhioLINK did not provide access to books and journals? Two students recently found out.

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Anu: What degrees did you pursue?

Fran: A bachelor's degree in history, a master's in business administration, and a master's in library science

Anu: What interested you in this path?

Fran: As a UD undergrad, I worked in the library as a student employee. After graduation, I continued to work in the library and have worked in libraries ever since. When libraries began to automate, I was in a position to be trained and helped implement the first automated library system here at UD. After that, I was hooked. With technology, you never know what to expect. It constantly changes, and it is always challenging.

Anu: What brought you to UD?

Fran: I have lived in the Dayton area all my life. UD was the only four-year university close enough to home that I could continue to live at home; this was what my parents wanted. I had a great experience as a student worker, so I was very interested in continuing to work on campus.

After graduation, Nicoletta Hary, the head of the cataloging department, offered me a part-time job, which

evolved into a full-time job. Except for a few years when I worked at a public library, I have worked here at UD.

Anu: How has your job changed since you have started working here?

Fran: My work has changed as I have worked with several departments. Every department is different, and there is always something to learn and an opportunity to grow.

Anu: What's one thing that might surprise people about your job?

Fran: Typically, people don't know much about the work or even the existence of the Libraries' IT department (ISDA), so pretty much everything surprises them.

Anu: What's one thing you love about your job?

Fran: The people and the variety — but pretty much everything.

Anu: What is the one thing you wish people knew about the library?

Fran: I wish people knew the library has a lot more than just books. People don't realize we have a large number of special and unique cultural objects and art.

Anu: Who would you like to sit next to on a 10-hour flight and why?

Fran: I would love to sit with a family member because we can be comfortable and speak for hours or sit and read a book for a while or even take a nap. If I sat with a celebrity, I'm pretty sure I wouldn't be that comfortable, and we would run out of topics after a while.

— *Anu Viswanadha is a Roesch Library Knowledge Hub student employee working toward a master's in computer science.*