



School of Information Studies

Guidelines for Graduate Directed Independent Study

APPROVED BY THE SIS FACULTY IN AUGUST 2026

Goals and Purpose of the Directed Independent Study

LIS 7909 is a variable-credit (1-3) course that requires 45 hours of work per credit. This course is repeatable for up to 6 credit hours. It provides students with an opportunity for focused study to investigate a problem or subject that meets their particular needs and interests.

A Directed Independent Study (DIS) may not investigate a topic regularly covered in courses offered by the School.

DIS Roles

DIS Supervisor

The DIS supervisor must be a School of Information Studies (SIS) faculty member. Adjunct faculty are not eligible to serve as advisors. The DIS advisor *is not* required to be the student's academic advisor.

Prerequisites

Students in the MLIS program must have completed at least 9 hours of graduate LIS courses before enrolling in a DIS, including all of the core courses and any relevant elective(s). The DIS supervisor will determine whether the student has the appropriate coursework for the proposed DIS. Graduate certificate and non-SIS students (e.g., those in the DDes program) should consult their DIS supervisor regarding prerequisites.

DIS Structure

A student completing a DIS course will include independent reading, research, and/or a project under the direction and guidance of an appropriate SIS faculty supervisor. The student and faculty supervisor will meet together as needed, and agree upon prior to the start of the DIS. The DIS deliverables may include, but are not limited to, written reports, projects, essays, bibliographies, etc. The deliverables will be submitted to the DIS supervisor for evaluation in accordance with the DIS syllabus.

The amount of required work for the DIS is based on the number of credit hours:

- 1 credit, 45 hours
- 2 credits, 90 hours
- 3 credits, 135 hours

DIS Evaluation

The DIS supervisor will determine the final grade for the internship based on the evaluation of the deliverables listed in the DIS syllabus.

Term Prior to the DIS

Planning for the DIS begins at least a term prior to the DIS. All documentation must be submitted by the last day of the term prior to the start of the DIS. For example, documentation for a DIS in Fall 2 must be submitted by the final day of Fall 1.

Step 1: Identify a DIS Supervisor

The student should contact the faculty in the subject area of the proposed DIS. Faculty may agree to serve as a supervisor or recommend another faculty member.

Step 2: Develop DIS Syllabus

The student and DIS supervisor will discuss and develop a DIS syllabus based on the DIS syllabus template and example. The syllabus should include the following:

- Description of the DIS and its objectives
- Description of the DIS deliverables with due dates and how they will be evaluated
- 7- or 14-week DIS outline including topics, scheduled meetings, and readings

Step 3: Submitting the Qualtrics Form

The DIS supervisor will submit the DIS application and DIS syllabus [via the Qualtrics form](#). This document must be submitted no later than the last day of classes in the term prior to the DIS. For example, documentation for a DIS in Fall 2 must be submitted by the final day of Fall 1.

Completion of DIS

The student will be responsible for completing the DIS as described in the syllabus. The DIS supervisor will forward copies of all submitted deliverables as attachments to infostudies@lsu.edu for documentation, and is responsible for assigning the student a grade in Workday Student.

Appendix A: Sample DIS Syllabus

LIS 7909: Directed Independent Study

Semester/Term, Year: Spring 1, 2026

Number of Credits: 3

Student: Mike the Tiger

Project Title: Feline Information Behavior and Archival Habits

Instructor: Edward Benoit, III, Associate Professor

Contact Information: 223 Peabody Hall, 225-578-3158, ebenoit@lsu.edu

DIS Description

Mike the Tiger will explore information-seeking behavior as it applies to non-human subjects, with a particular focus on the archival and library needs of large cats. The study draws on foundational LIS theory, animal cognition literature, and architectural design principles to develop a novel framework for feline information access.

DIS Objectives

1. Analyze foundational and contemporary literature on information behavior, adapting human-centric models to feline subjects.
2. Evaluate existing library and archival spaces for accessibility, comfort, and usability by large cats.
3. Propose a set of evidence-based best practices and a conceptual design for a feline-friendly archival habitat, tentatively titled the "Archivaux."

Required Materials (if applicable)

Selected readings as assigned by the instructor (see Unit outlines below).

Grading Scale & Policies

Standard LSU grading scale applies (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F). Grades are based on the successful and timely completion of deliverables. Feedback will be provided within one week of each submission.

Description of Graded Activities

Annotated Bibliography (30%)

A comprehensive, critically annotated bibliography of at least fifteen sources related to information behavior theory and library/archival space design. Each annotation should

summarize the source, evaluate its relevance, and reflect on its applicability to the feline research context.

Habitat Assessment Report (30%)

A critical review of three local libraries or archival repositories, assessed through the lens of feline accessibility and usability. The report should identify strengths, weaknesses, and specific recommendations for each site, drawing on principles established in the literature review.

Final Project: Archivaux Design Proposal (40%)

A conceptual design document and accompanying set of best practices for the "Archivaux," a specialized archival facility designed to accommodate feline researchers. The proposal should synthesize findings from Units 1 and 2 and include a written rationale, a schematic layout, and a discussion of implementation challenges.

7-week Course Outline

Unit 1: Feline Information Behavior Literature (Weeks 1-3)

Mike will conduct a literature review of information-seeking behavior, beginning with foundational human-centric models (e.g., Wilson's 1981 model, Dervin's Sense-Making Methodology) and progressing to emerging scholarship on animal cognition and non-human information access. He will also explore the cultural history of library cats as a related phenomenon. Benoit and Mike will meet biweekly to discuss readings and progress.

Readings

Wilson, T.D. "On User Studies and Information Needs." *Journal of Documentation* 37, no. 1 (1981): 3–15.

Dervin, Brenda. "Sense-Making Theory and Practice: An Overview of User Interests in Knowledge Seeking and Use." *Journal of Knowledge Management* 2, no. 2 (1998): 36–46.

Vickery, Brian, and Alina Vickery. *Information Science in Theory and Practice*. 3rd ed. Munich: K.G. Saur, 2004. Chapters 1–3.

Maughan, Shannon. "Library Cats: A Celebration." *Publishers Weekly*, March 2020.

Myrick, Hannah Shaw. "The Informational Lives of Animals: Toward a Non-Human Information Behavior Framework." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 74, no. 3 (2023): 112–128.

Theimer, Kate. "Rethinking Access: Inclusive Design for Archival Spaces." *American Archivist* 85, no. 2 (2022): 310–335.

Deliverable: Annotated Bibliography due January 30, 2026.

Unit 2: Assessment of Existing Library and Archival Spaces (Weeks 4–5)

Mike will visit (or virtually assess, with appropriate handler support) three repositories: LSU's Hill Memorial Library, the East Baton Rouge Parish Library Main Branch, and the LSU Special Collections reading room. Using a rubric developed from Unit 1 readings, he will evaluate each space for feline accessibility, environmental comfort, and material organization. Benoit and Mike will meet biweekly to review draft findings.

Readings

Worpole, Ken. Contemporary Library Architecture: A Planning and Design Guide. Abingdon: Routledge, 2013. Chapters 2–4.

Moorman, John, and Frederick Schlipf. The Practical Handbook of Library Architecture. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2018. Chapters 5–7.

Mattern, Shannon. "Infrastructures of the Intimate." e-flux Architecture, 2019. <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/housing/267713/infrastructures-of-the-intimate/>

Wiegand, Wayne A. Part of Our Lives: A People's History of the American Public Library. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Chapter 1.

Deliverable: Habitat Assessment Report due February 13, 2026.

Unit 3: The Archivaux Design Proposal (Weeks 6–7)

Drawing on the annotated bibliography and habitat assessment, Mike will develop a conceptual design and best-practices document for "Archivaux" — a specialized archival facility designed to serve big cat researchers and patrons. The proposal will include a written rationale grounded in LIS theory, a schematic layout, environmental specifications (lighting, temperature, box dimensions), and a discussion of practical implementation challenges. Benoit and Mike will meet weekly during this final unit.

Deliverable: Archivaux Design Proposal due February 28, 2026.

Course Communication Policy

Communication will occur primarily during scheduled biweekly meetings at the Tiger Habitat or online via Zoom. The instructor will respond to email inquiries within 48 hours on business days. Mike is encouraged to communicate any concerns or questions between meetings via email, with handler assistance as needed

Class Attendance

Attendance at all scheduled biweekly meetings is expected and constitutes part of the student's professional engagement with the course. Accommodations for excused absences will be handled in accordance with [PS-22 Student Absence from Class](#).

Academic Continuity Plan

In the event of a campus-wide closure, this course may transition to an alternative form of instruction. I will notify you by email as soon as possible of the format our course will take. Meetings may be held via Zoom and recorded for later review. If alternative formats are not available due to widespread loss of power and/or internet or other extenuating circumstances, the University may schedule makeup days per [Policy Statement 117](#).

Expectations

LSU's general policy states that for each credit hour, you (the student) should plan to spend at least two hours working on course related activities outside of class. Since this course is for three credit hours, you should expect to spend a minimum of six hours outside of class each week working on assignments for this course. [Visit the LSU catalog](#) for more information regarding general information for courses.

LSU Code of Student Conduct

The LSU Code of Student Conduct explains student rights, excused absences, and what is expected of student behavior. Students are expected to understand this code as described [here](#). Any violations of the LSU Student Code will be duly reported to the Dean of Students.

Disability Services

The university is committed to making reasonable efforts to ensure equal access for persons with disabilities. To this end, any student that requires academic accommodations must register with Disability Services and submit a request for accommodations through the DS Access Portal.

You may contact Disability Services at 225-578-5919 or visit their website at www.lsu.edu/disability.

Academic Success

The primary ingredients of your academic success are attending class, managing your time efficiently, taking good notes, and developing good critical thinking and communication abilities. LSU has a number of excellent resources that will assist you in developing these skills. The place to begin is the [Center for Academic Success](#) (CAS). The CAS offers guidance on what learning strategies are best suited to your talents, tutoring in the basic subjects, and workshops on a variety of topics, from note taking to time management. [Communication across the Curriculum](#) assist students in developing the communication skills necessary for academic and professional success. Finally, with respect to professional success, the [LSU Olinde Career Center](#) can assist you in choosing a major and a profession that best suits your talents and passions and help you develop a four year career plan to ensure success when you graduate from LSU.

Permissible Use of Generative AI

As a partner in your learning, it is important to both of us that any assignment submission is a pure reflection of your work and understanding. In this course, using AI programs such as ChatGPT is permitted for the purposes of enhancing your understanding of course materials, encouraging creative exploration and supporting academic growth. These programs should not be used to produce work that misrepresents your abilities or deceives as to the conditions under which the work was completed.

If you choose to utilize AI programs to generate content, you must clearly acknowledge the use of AI generated material. Proper attribution of AI program use should include an explanation of how the program contributed to the assignment and/or your academic growth. Failing to give

proper attribution to the use of AI programs in academic work will be reported to Student Advocacy & Accountability for review under the Code of Student Conduct and may result in impacts to your assignment and/or course grades.

Nondiscrimination, Sexual Harassment, & Title IX

LSU provides equal opportunity for all qualified persons in admission to, participation in, or employment in the programs and activities which the university operates without regard to race, creed, color, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, sex, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, or veteran's status. LSU has implemented a procedure to address complaints for those who believe they have been subjected to discrimination and/or harassment in violation of this policy. Please know that your instructors are here to support you and listen to your experience. We also want you to know that we are mandatory reporters and must report what we know to the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX. All LSU employees, with few exceptions, are required to report instances of sex- or gender-based harassment and discrimination, including sexual misconduct and power-based violence (e.g., sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, retaliation, etc.) for which they may not be the victim, but of which they are aware. The Office of Civil Rights & Title IX is the LSU office responsible for investigating complaints regarding any type of discrimination, sexual harassment, or power-based violence. The Office of Civil Rights & Title IX is located in 118 Himes Hall and the phone number is (225) 578-9000. If you are aware of an individual who has been victimized, you are encouraged to contact the Office of Civil Rights & Title IX or file an online report by visiting [LSU's Domestic & Sexual Violence Support and Reporting](#) website and clicking the [Report an Incident](#) box. If you have been assaulted, harassed, or a victim of violence, we encourage you to contact the Office of Civil Rights & Title IX. Please reach out for help immediately. Some excellent resources available to Baton Rouge residents include:

- STAR (Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response; 24/7 hotline: (855) 435-STAR (7827)
- IRIS Domestic Violence Center; 24/7 hotline: (800) 541-9706
- The Lighthouse Program; (225) 578-5718
- VIA LINK; (800) 273-TALK (8255) [national line but answered from New Orleans]

National resources include:

- RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network); 24/7 hotline: (800) 656-4673
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center

For additional information, visit www.lsu.edu/civil-rights the [Office of Civil Rights & Title IX](#) and review [PM-73](#) (Prohibiting Power-based Violence, including Sex- and Gender-based Harassment and Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct).