

## Up Front

## Kelly Robinson

## At Work in the News

Since graduating from GSLIS in 2004, Kelly Robinson has worked for three of the top news organizations in the United States. In Washington, D.C., she worked as an intern at National Public Radio and later was hired as a news librarian at CNN. Last September she became the assistant librarian at The Christian Science Monitor in Boston. She is an advocate for student internships, and is scheduled to speak this spring at Michigan State University on "Internships: The Gateway to News Librarianship."

**K**elly Robinson grew up in Carbondale, Pennsylvania, loving libraries. "For as long as I can remember, the library has been the place I've gone to learn.... I've known how to use the Dewey Decimal System since I first learned to read."

While in college, Robinson started working at the circulation desk at Penn State's Pattee Library. "When I got the job at the library, I was like, 'This is it — I want to go work in libraries.'" Robinson continued working at the Pattee Library two years after she graduated. In 2002 she enrolled at Simmons GSLIS.

**Interning at NPR**

As graduation drew close, Robinson felt she needed more practical work experience before going job hunting. "One day at GSLIS, a bunch of us were talking about the librarians who work at NPR [National Public Radio]. And then I remembered that at the end of their shows, [the reporters] often thank the librarians. The librarians! It was like Whoa! News librarianship! Why did I not think about this before?"

So Robinson made an opportunity for herself. By the following summer, she had arranged an internship at NPR in Washington, D.C. She recalls her first day on the job. "I was terrified I was not going to know what to do or say. But of course they have interns there every semester, so they're used to having people be awkward and scared. And [when I arrived], I was welcomed with open arms by the librarians! Alphonse [Vinh '86LS] was excited to meet me, to meet a student from Simmons." For three months, Robinson provided reference services to well-known NPR journalists such as Nina Totenberg, Barbara Bradley Hagerty, Eric Westervelt, and Scott Simon.

Returning to Simmons in the spring, Robinson immediately started looking for a job. She applied for more than sixty jobs that semester. "I was proactive in pursuing a job, and it worked out because I had job offers and interviews. I felt comfortable going into an interview, because I was doing them so frequently. I learned a lot about how different organizations run, and how



Photos by Olivia Gatti

jobs differ, and that told me a lot about what kind of a librarian I could be."

Robinson is passionate about the importance of real-world work experience in preparing for a library science career. "It's so important if you've never worked in a library to see its inner workings. If you want to be a librarian, you should make time. Depending on the semester, I had three part-time jobs in school. I made sure that I got out there and made opportunities for myself."

**CNN**

Robinson moved down to D.C. the day after graduation. "I didn't have a job yet, but I had more than ten interviews lined up — three with CNN — and I knew I wanted to live there, so felt sure I'd find a job." Her confidence was justified. Four weeks later, she began work at CNN. "I was intimidated that first day. But my NPR internship had made me feel good about myself. I knew that I could do the job, that I had references and the academic preparation. I felt like I was definitely competitive."

Robinson was one of four librarians at CNN's Washington bureau. She provided reference services to its editors, producers, and reporters, and supported their video needs for programs and packages by conducting searches in the archival database. She also created workshops on blogs and RSS Feeds, and catalogued and indexed videotapes. "Four library assistants log the 'raw' videotape shot by the camera crews. This involves viewing the tapes and then writing descriptions that are used to index them. One entire wall of the library is rolling shelves of videotapes.

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## Snapshot **Olivia Gatti**

*“If I could have wheels on my shoes all the time, I would!”*

Olivia Gatti, the dean's fellow for editorial projects, worked for over five years as a news photographer and photo editor, most notably on the staff of *The Eagle Tribune* in North Andover, Massachusetts, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 2003 for reporting. She enrolled at GSLIS last summer and works in two school libraries in the Cambridge Public School District. Gatti is a member of the first all-girl flat-track roller derby league in Boston, where she is known as Roxy Redlight. She lives in Brighton with her husband, Mike.

**Q:** So, tell me about being a roller derby queen. It's fantastic! It's been a do-it-yourself project, so we're really proud of it. We practice three nights a week, but if I could have wheels on my shoes all the time, I would. I joined roller derby after watching the girls practice one evening. I had always loved roller skating as a kid, and wanted to get involved in a team sport again, so this sort of combined the two. It didn't take long to get addicted to the excitement of the sport. It provides me with an outlet to blow off steam. But the best part of it has been the girls. I love practicing with them. I've never had so much fun or so many friends.

### **Tell me about your first career as a journalist.**

I worked all over Massachusetts and New Hampshire as a freelance photojournalist. I cut my teeth on exciting stories like “Pumpkin Festival” and “Town Hall Meeting.” At some point, I started assisting the photo editor at the Associated Press and got to cover every big news story in Boston — the 9/11 disaster, the clergy sex abuse scandal, the Boston mob, and big sporting events and teams. I built up a pretty good portfolio and was hired as a staff photographer at *The Eagle Tribune* newspaper in Andover. I worked nights for almost two years and covered some tragic events. It was exciting, eye-opening, painful, and amazing.

### **Why did you leave it?**

I was working as the photo editor at *The Improper Bostonian*, but had grown tired of the hustle and bustle of news every minute of every day. It demands your life from you, and I wasn't ready to give it all of me.

### **Your father is a librarian. Is that how you got interested in the profession?**

One of my earliest memories is the library at Human Resources, a school for severely physically handicapped kids in Long Island, New York, where my father was the librarian. He is one of the greatest librarians I know, so when I was making the choice to become a librarian, I took a long look at his life as a librarian, and there wasn't much I didn't like.

### **What do you like best about volunteering at the Beebe School Library?**

Planting the seed. Last week I helped a third-grader use an encyclopedia for the first time, and it was the best feeling.

### **What do you like least?**

Highly populated urban schools need better support from the state. The library is run well, but could be so much more with additional staff and a bigger budget.

### **Why do you think LIS will be a good fit for you career-wise?**

I'm a people person, and the flow of the school library keeps me constantly busy serving the needs of the school community. And I'm as eager to learn as some of the students, and I think they can sense that, too.

### **What's something you're passionate about professionally?**

First, getting more books into the hands of students. At the library, we have to limit how many books can be taken out, because the budget is next to nothing. Someday I hope I won't have to say no to students who want to check out a fourth, fifth, or sixth book. Second, creating an atmosphere where students want to be. So much of the environment we live in is rushed, frantic, even hostile. I hope wherever I end up working, students will know the library is a safe, fun place that exists for them.

### **Has there ever been a pivotal experience in your life?**

Covering the Merrimack River drowning in 2003 for the newspaper. In early December, seven little boys from Lawrence, Massachusetts, ventured out on to the frozen Merrimack River and fell through the ice. Four of the boys drowned. I had never been confronted with tragedy on that level before. I had to evaluate my role as a journalist and a human being often during that time because I was so affected by the events. I wanted to respect the families and their grief, yet I had to tell their story. I still think about them.

### **What has been the biggest lesson you've learned in life?**

That life is short. Always kiss your loved ones goodbye.

### **What are your professional aspirations?**

I want to continue my education in the library field, especially in reading, literacy, technology, and social change. I could see going on for a Ph.D. eventually. I also plan to continue using my camera.

### **Do you have an object that you particularly cherish?**

A teacher once gave me a small metal stamp, the kind they used in printing presses. On it was a camera. She said it reminded her of how observant I was. For me, it represents my need to understand the world around me. I take it in through my eye, like a camera.

**Interview by Victoria Thatcher**



## At Work in the News, Continued

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“A typical request might be from an editor or producer who was doing a story on insurgents in Iraq. So, I would search the CNN database and find images of troops patrolling the streets or mosques being taken over by insurgents, gunfire between the two groups, and so on. Then their interns would pull the actual tapes, look at them, and say if the tapes were suitable or not. This whole process depends on the ability of the library assistants to write the descriptions of tapes so that the librarians can index them properly and then find them easily later on.”



Photos by Olivia Gatti

Robinson describes the pressures of her CNN job as intense, but exciting. “You have fifteen requests backed up, and everyone is on deadline and they’re crashing, which means their deadline was five minutes ago. So, for example, someone might call and say, ‘We’re going on air in two seconds. I need to know how to pronounce so-and-so’s name.’ Or someone might say, ‘I need to know how many people were killed in Iraq yesterday. We’re going on air right now — I’ll stay on the line.’ So I’m thinking: Where can I find this information? Is it an authoritative source? And I have to verify it. I have to find different independent sources that are going to confirm it.” Robinson says that the job itself was not stressful, but there were some intense days. “You know, sometimes you got a little tense in the neck.”

When she wasn’t working the reference desk, Robinson instructed CNN staff on searching databases and also found time to establish an internship program. “My manager supported me in setting up the program. I did it because I wanted students to see what we do, to help them have [the kind of] enriching, valuable experience I had at NPR. I’m proud of the fact that the intern program is now part of the library description there.

“People are the best and the worst thing about any job. What drove me to become a librarian, what I love about this work, are people — working with people, supporting people. I love working with news reporters, editors, producers. I love the [news] itself. I love the excitement of working under deadlines. I feel like I’m helping educate the public and bridging gaps, helping connect people to other parts of the world.” Although Robinson enjoys working with journalists, she said she wouldn’t consider becoming one herself. “Nope, never. I wouldn’t want the stress of it. But I’m supporting them and that feels good.”

### **The Monitor**

After a year at CNN, Robinson went looking for a job back in Boston and quickly found one at one of the most respected newspapers in the United States — *The Christian Science Monitor*. “I was eager to try working in print. I love newspapers. Maybe it’s about aesthetics. I like to turn the pages, to look at the layout of the newspaper, to have it in my hands.”

“My first day there, people came to my desk and wanted to meet me. They had actually *read* my bio and seemed genuinely interested and excited to have a new family member. It was awesome.”

Robinson says that working for the *Monitor*, she still has the excitement of a deadline-driven news organization. “There’s pressure, but unlike CNN, we’re working on the next day’s paper. The *Monitor*’s deadline is noon. So from 8 a.m. until then, we’re saturated with questions from the journalists and editors, fact-checking their stories and verifying sources. Sometimes we do research [to get] more background information for a story.”

### **What’s next?**

Robinson’s aspirations for the future are simple. “I don’t like plotting out my life. I can’t envision the opportunities that might, that *are*, probably going to come my way. I’ve fantasized about working abroad. But I have no idea what the future holds, and that’s really exciting.”

Interview by Victoria Thatcher

## GSLIS Grant will Educate Vietnamese Librarians

The GSLIS has received a \$1.8 million grant to prepare a new generation of Vietnamese librarians for key leadership positions to run some of the country’s largest university libraries and help further its educational system.

The grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies will pay for 25 Vietnamese librarians to study at GSLIS, before returning to Vietnam and completing coursework in their home country, taught by Simmons faculty. Emphasis will be placed on developing leadership and information management skills during their course of study.

While in the U.S., the Vietnamese librarians will also visit major American information centers, such as the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

The new program builds on GSLIS’s years of experience in educating Vietnamese librarians.

In 1993, the school became the first major American library program to help Vietnam rebuild its library system and information infrastructure. Upon successful completion of the new program, the Vietnamese librarians will receive a master’s degree in library and information science from Simmons.

Today, Simmons-educated librarians fill influential positions at libraries across that country. Among its graduates are the deputy director of the National Library, and the director of the General Science Library in Ho Chi Minh City.

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## February Events

**February 9, Thursday, Fundraiser event for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society at Pizzeria Uno** at 280 Huntington Avenue, 5:30 - 8:00 p.m. The restaurant will donate 15-20 percent of the total bill to the Society when a voucher is presented with their check. Vouchers can be picked up at the GSLIS office, or by contacting Nancy at [Rossiter@simmons.edu](mailto:Rossiter@simmons.edu) or at x 2695. Donations can also be made online at <http://www.active.com/donate/tntma/tntmaNRossit>.

**February 13, Monday, Boston Wikipedia Meet-Up.** The Boston Wikipedia Meet-up group will introduce Wikipedia, highlight "cool" content, and demonstrate advanced techniques. Wikipedia is an a multilingual Web-based free-content encyclopedia. The meet-up is sponsored by the Simmons Graduate School of Library and Information Science Alumni Board and Boston Wikipedia Meet-up Group. Please RSVP at <http://alumnet.simmons.edu>. Special Functions Room, First Floor, MCB. 7:00 p.m.

February 20, Monday, President's Day holiday. No Classes.

## Career Workshop Calendar

A series of career preparation sessions will be conducted for GSLIS students by Meri Cayem and Kelly Jo Woodside in the Career Resource Library, P304. Please register if you plan to attend a workshop: <http://my.simmons.edu/libraries/collections/career/workshops.shtml#gslis>.

### Daytime Workshops:

**February 7, Tuesday, Resume & Cover Letter Workshop.** Career Resource Library, P304. 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

**February 21, Tuesday, Job Search Tips & Resources.** Career Resource Library, P304. 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

### Evening Workshops:

**February 8, Wednesday, Resume Workshop.** Career Resource Library, P304. 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.

**February 21, Tuesday, Job Search Tips & Resources, Part 1.** Career Resource Library, P304. 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.

**February 28, Tuesday, Job Search Tips & Resources, Part 2.** Career Resource Library, P304. 5:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

**March 1, Wednesday, Cover Letter Workshop.** Career Resource Library, P304. 5:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

## Writers Wanted!

The GSLIS Publications team is looking for people interested in writing for our publications and website. Assignments range from *InfoLink* articles to profiles to coverage of events such as Alumni and Professional Development Day. Although we can't pay you, you get the benefit of working with a *great* team as well as another item for your portfolio.

Those interested should submit three writing samples to Jennifer Doyle at [jennifer.doyle@simmons.edu](mailto:jennifer.doyle@simmons.edu).

We look forward to hearing from you!

## Folks on the Move

The Massachusetts Orchid Society has named their library the Paul F. Engelberg Library, in recognition of **Paul Engelberg** (LS '05), who volunteered from 2000 to 2005 as the Society's librarian. At their January meeting, the Society's president, Peter V. Tishler, presented Paul with a plaque citing him for having "assembled and made available to all members a world-class collection of literature." Engelberg now works for the Simmons Libraries (Library Assistant, Access Services).

**Jason Soohoo** (student) has received a scholarship from the Massachusetts Library Association to attend their conference in fall 2005.

Professor **Jeannette Bastian's** article entitled "Open Forum: Something Old, Something New, Archives Education at Simmons" was published in the New England Archivists Newsletter. Volume 33, Number 1, January 2006.

**Peter Simms, Brian Scalise, and Matthew Krug** have been selected for assistantships as part of a new diversity initiative entitled the Daniel S. Cheever, Jr. Presidential Assistantship. This initiative was established in collaboration with the Career Education Center and the Academic Support Center.

Professor **Nancy Rossiter** will be competing in the Hyannis Triathlon in June to raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Working with Team in Training (TNT), the world's largest endurance sports training program, she and other participants are training in honor of a particular cancer survivor.

## In next month's issue...

Do you blog? Do you want to?

Read all about it in the March Information Link, coming soon to a web site near you.

And in the meantime, check out the GSLIS Alumni Association's new blog, at <http://gslisalum.typepad.com/>.

## InfoLink

*InfoLink* is the monthly newsletter of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College. Its purpose is to provide school- and career-related information and to foster community among the many diverse people who make up the school.

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Copy deadline for the March issue is Monday, February 13, 2006.