

SIUE LIS Interim Dean Ruckh Proves Strong Steward of the Library

by Megan Wieser
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EDWARDSVILLE – As you travel through Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Lovejoy Library, you will see that libraries are evolving to be utilized by students in new ways with technology, opportunities for greater collaboration and engagement, maker-spaces, and other possibilities.



Library and Information Services (LIS) is advancing under the direction of Interim Dean Eric Ruckh, PhD, who brought his proven history of service and thoughtful leadership to the role on January 1. Lovejoy Library, in particular, is at the heart of the Edwardsville campus core, and is thriving as a central force in the University's student engagement and success initiatives and academic excellence broadly.

"Our faculty and staff of LIS have been working to envision how we can fully embody a 21st century library rooted in excellence, committed to equity, and dedicated to student success and learning," said Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Denise Cobb, PhD. "This leadership transition has allowed us the opportunity to come together and imagine a bold, new future that would honor the core of librarianship and create a transformative vision for the library of our future."

"I am tremendously grateful that Dr. Ruckh was willing to take on this critical leadership role," she continued. "His commitment to liberal education, discovery, equity, inclusion, student success, and academic excellence provide a strong foundation for his leadership. Importantly, his thoughtful and collaborative demeanor provides space for trust-building and risk-taking as the library's faculty and staff work together to imagine an even brighter future."

An intellectual historian and historian of modern Europe, Ruckh has served SIUE for 23 years, first in the Department of History (1999-2013) and since 2013 as director of the University Honors program. During the last two decades, he has led the reform of the University's general education program (2005-2008) and was co-chair of the Academic Continuity Task Force (2020-2021), which helped guide the University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I am deeply honored that the chancellor, provost, and faculty and staff of LIS trusted me to take on this responsibility," Ruckh said. "I have deep training and experience in higher education. Our collective mission is to cultivate reverential and critical thinking. Together, these two coordinated attitudes allow people to thrive. This dual mission aligns with the central mission of academic libraries to be sites for emancipatory exploration, discovery and invention."

A sound steward of Lovejoy Library, Ruckh has focused on building community, facilitating critical conversations about the future, and creating a collective vision so that his dedicated colleagues in LIS can continue to:

Teach students the fundamental skills necessary to acquire true knowledge of the world

Inoculate students against misinformation

Support faculty across the university in their research

Offer diverse patrons a welcoming place for inquiry, contemplation and self-reflection

“I am humbled every day to come into Lovejoy Library — a building named after Elijah P. Lovejoy, one of the country’s most important abolitionists, a man who died defending the quality of all human beings and their right to freedom of expression,” shared Ruckh. “I have been warmly welcomed by the faculty and staff of LIS. I am heartened by their collegiality and the strength of their commitments to their librarianship and scholarship. I am excited to be working with them to build the next stage of Lovejoy Library’s future.”

Ruckh earned a bachelor’s from Bucknell University in 1989 and a doctorate from the University of California, Irvine, in 1997.

He will serve as LIS’ senior leader until a permanent dean is named following a national search, which is slated to launch in the next academic year.

SIUE Library and Information Services (LIS) consistently strives for new and inventive ways to deliver information to students, faculty and the community. LIS is home to Lovejoy Library, the heart of the University. The library provides SIUE faculty and students the information required for their academic pursuits that result in improving our communities. LIS faculty and staff nurture SIUE students’ scholarship with resources that support the collaboration and innovative thinking needed to succeed in the global marketplace.