

**C&IS** Human  
Communication  
Research Lab

*Keywords:* knowledge; questions; predictions; explanations

2019-2020  
Third Year Review

*“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.”*

~ Zora Neale Hurston

*“We shape our tools and afterwards our tools shape us.”*

~Marshall McLuhan

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August 2020

The C&IS Human Communication Laboratory is a collaborative research space in Reese Phifer Hall at The University of Alabama and completing the third year was one filled with great uncertainty (due to COVID-19), however, many new exciting things happened in the lab in the third year and we enter into the fourth year with a freshly remodeled space and many new members who make up the lab.

In this third year in review, we provide an overview of the lab space and resources, the students who use this space for their research endeavors and accomplishments in the last year. We hope you agree that the C&IS HCRL continues to be an excellent *return on investment* and a conduit which allows us to generate collaborative student research. It is a place that has proven to encourage interdisciplinary studies and mentoring of students up the academic chain from undergraduate to doctoral students. As you review the following pages, we hope you are as thrilled as we are about our past, present, and future in the HCRL! Please continue to follow our progress as we embark on another exciting year of inquiry – you can find more information about the lab and its current members below, but also this information is continually updated at the lab’s webpage:

<https://djgriffin.people.ua.edu/cis-human-communication-research-lab.html>

Last, I would like to acknowledge and thank the people who assisted in making the remodel happen in the HCRL and for all of their continued support of this collaborative research space. Thank you Dean, Dr. Mark Nelson, Senior Associate Dean, Dr. Beth Bennett, Assistant Dean, Dr. Sara Hartley, Director of the ICIR, Dr. Kim Bissell, Associate Research Scientist - ICIR, Dr. Anneliese Bolland, and Program Assistant to the Doctoral Program, Jackie Hayes. Many thanks to you all for everything thing you have done to assist us in the HCRL. Your efforts do not go unnoticed. They are always appreciated, and never taken for granted.

Sincerely,



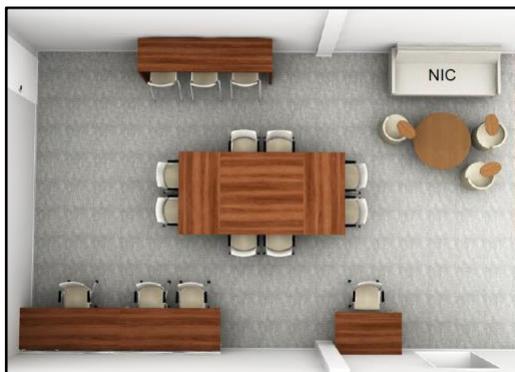
Darrin J. Griffin,  
Director of C&IS HCRL



## HCRL Space and Resources

Out with the old, in with the new!!! Come visit the newly remodeled space on the fourth floor of Reese Phifer Hall. The space features fresh carpet and all new furniture. You might not recognize it when you visit.

The C&IS Human Communication Research Laboratory is ~500 sq./ft. of space located in the Institute for Communication & Information Research at Reese Phifer Hall. It is equipped with computers, a conference room table, a large TV monitor, and desk spaces for funded graduate assistants. The lab space is excellent for holding research meetings, conducting survey research, and experimental studies that involve human subjects. It has allowed for increased productivity in mentoring undergraduate and graduate student researchers and provides a think-tank style environment. Over the past several years, the HCRL has cultivated a mindset and way of doing research which teaches students to embrace, utilize, and share their unique experiences when collaborating with other members. It provides inspiration and support beyond what can be described in words on these pages.



## Graduate Members

The C&IS HCRL serves as a space for graduate students to produce and collaborate on research projects. During the 2019-2020 academic year, we had three graduate students and one post-doc student working in the lab. Below is a description of their accomplishments last year.



Mackenzie Pike was a second-year (now graduated) master's student in Communication Studies. She developed and defended her thesis entitled "The Power of words: The impact of power language in financial disclosure". Mackenzie had her first conference presentation at SSCA, "Semiotic analysis of kneeling in football." Mackenzie served as the lab manager for the Fall 2019 semester. Mackenzie is now a doctoral student at UT Austin.



Samuel Hakim, spent part of his time as a second year C&IS doctoral student, serving as the assistant to the lab manager (Fall 2019); in Spring 2020, Sam was the HCRL lab manager. He was a co-author on two peer-reviewed published papers: 1) "Looking for information in all the right places? Outlet types of social media information and National Basketball Association fan desires" and 2) "#EndtheStigma to #RealMan: Responding to athlete mental health disclosures of the NBA's DeMar DeRozan and Kevin Love." He is currently editing a revise and resubmit solo-authored manuscript entitled, "A tale of no cities: Analysis of fan identification and fanship in the Premier Lacrosse League." He successfully passed his comprehensive exams over the summer and is going into his final year and dissertating.



Andrew Laningham is a master's student and partially funded as a research assistant in the Communication Studies Department at UA. In Spring 2020, he assisted in the writing of an NSF extramural grant partnering with Mechanical Engineering. The grant was successfully funded and he is a full-time research assistant on the project for the Fall 2020 semester. The project investigates robotics in law enforcement. He spent the summer developing the overview and design for his master's thesis – to be completed Fall 2020-Spring 2021.

## Post-Doctoral Researcher



Fareed Bordbar, PhD, (2018) Educational Psychology. His research expertise is in educational and psychological measurement, assessment and applications in evaluating human conscious/unconscious information processing. During his post-doc period, he has been engaged in collaborative interdisciplinary research with Dr. Griffin in the C&IS HCRL. Their collaboration has resulted in the preparation and submission of a competitive proposal to the “Credibility Assessment Standardized Evaluation (CASE) Challenge” conducted by the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA), a research organization within the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. Fareed is currently a part-time (9-month appointment) post-doctoral researcher on a NSF grant entitled, “Mitigating Risks in Future Police Work through Social Telerobotic Communication” that is a partnership with Mechanical Engineering.

## Undergraduate Researchers

The following undergraduate students worked on their own research projects in the C&IS HCRL during the 2019-2020 academic year.



Christian Bender spent his last year as an undergraduate focused on cross-cultural deception. During his three years as a member of the lab, he co-wrote a published book chapter with Dr. Griffin entitled “Cultural perspectives on deception.” Christian is also a co-author with Dr. Griffin on an article that appeared last summer in the newsletter for the Alabama Department of Mental Health. His study in the lab was entitled, “Truth-telling in everyday life,” which examines deception among international college students. Christian was recipient of a Spring 2020 Randall Outstanding Undergraduate Research Award.



Sydney Burkhart spent her final year as an undergraduate student completing her third year in the lab. She primarily researched American Sign Language and continued working on a project "Virtual reality and sign language" with Dr. Griffin which aims to determine whether virtual reality based teaching of ASL will produce higher retention and accuracy than traditional textbook based methods.



Sage Hart was a fourth year mathematics major (now graduated). Sage worked on a variety of research projects including the “probability elimination hypothesis” and the “prolific scholars research paper.” He served as the lab’s math and statistics guru.

## HCRL Librarian



James Gilbreath is the Lab Librarian. He worked to support the other members of the lab in their research endeavors, giving research suggestions and obtaining library resources when requested. Mentoring lab members has initiated his own research project examining verbal and nonverbal communication in the context of taboo topics and the impact liminal spaces can have on behavior.

## New Lab Members for 2020-2021

At the close of the academic year the C&IS HCRL group realized we were facing attrition due to many members graduating. We set out to recruit new members through a formal process that involved applications submitted through the C&IS Engagement Portal and through a process of selection of some of our better known champion students in the college. Below are our new members who went through the entire application, interview, and selection process.



Cheyenne Hayes is a fourth-year undergraduate and new AMP student. Cheyenne is majoring in Communication Studies with a minor in Criminal Justice. She is interested in generational communication and technology. This past year, Cheyenne presented research at the 2020 URCA conference. She is starting the Fall 2020 doing an independent study with Dr. Griffin focused on nonverbal elements of tattoos.



Elizabeth Tagg is currently a sophomore majoring in Communication Studies and Religious Studies. Her work examines a particular instance where human frameworks for morality are applied to animal behavior, the impact on perceived levels of ethical capability and social complexity. Elizabeth is a new AMP student.



Brock Preston is a first-year Master's student in Communication Studies. During the 2019-2020 school year he developed a research study through an independent study with Dr. Griffin examining veracity in social support. In November 2020, Brock will be a panelist at the NCA convention speaking about inclusion in education following a paper on STEM American Sign Language communication. This paper was developed in a Winter Interim course on Deaf Culture.

## Awards & Recognition

**Darrin J. Griffin, Director:** Tenure & Promotion to Associate Professor. Recipient of the 2020 College of Communication and Information Sciences Board of Visitors' Research Excellence Award. Co-Pi on newly funded NSF grant "Mitigating Risks in Future Police Work through Social Telerobotic Communication."

**Mackenzie Pike, MA Student:** Completed her thesis, titled "The Power of Words: The Impact of power language in corporate financial disclosure" in Fall 2019 to complete her Master's degree in Communication Studies. Mackenzie presented this project in the Three Minute Thesis competition for The University of Alabama and was awarded third place. Mackenzie was also awarded the 2020 Communication Studies Outstanding M.A. Teaching Award and the 2020 Outstanding Teaching by a Master's Student Award for C&IS.

**Christian Bender, Undergraduate Student:** Recipient of a 2020 Randall Outstanding Undergraduate Research Award.

## Past Lab Members (pursing academic goals)

Though we have many past members of the HCRL, we have reserved the space below in our year in review for those who are continuing on in their academic journey. This is not a judgment of other students who go on to live full professional lives or spend their time seeking truth or happiness in other ways (we envy those students). However, here we focus on those past members who continue reaching for academic peaks.



Zachary Arth, PhD (2019) was...first and foremost a legend. He was a C&IS Doctoral Student and served as the lab manager for the 2018-2019 academic year. As a doctoral student he developed a collaborative manuscript with Dr. Griffin, "Truth Interview" that is published in the *Journal of Media Literacy Education*. His 2019 dissertation is entitled "Framing the Game Through a Sabermetric Lens: Major League Baseball Broadcasts and the Delineation of Traditional and New Fact Metrics" and has resulted in two journal publications. Zach is a tenure-track faculty at Marist College where he serves as an assistant professor of sports communication and is now in his second year. His presence continues to be missed and he left a major void in the HCRL.



Heath Howard graduated from UA with an undergraduate and MA degree. He is currently a doctoral student at West Virginia University, he has defended his comprehensive exams and is now developing his dissertation. His MA thesis, done in collaboration with Dr. Griffin, won the *Outstanding Thesis Award* at the International Communication Association in Washington, DC (May, 2019) and has recently been resubmitted after receiving a R&R in a regional communication journal. Heath is a past HCRL champion!

# Group Photo

COVID-19 sort of put a damper on things at the end of last school year. Research suffered and it took away the moments for us to celebrate our research accomplishments and victories. As a group we stayed together. As you can see from the photo of our last lab meeting, we maintained a positive mindset and enjoyed working with one another. May the 2020-2021 year be another successful year in the C&IS HCRL...one full of great ideas, collaboration, and research success!

