

A Letter from the Staff Council Chair

by Thomas Lawson Lark

At this point, it's hard to write a letter like this without sounding cliché. So let me get a few things out of the way right now so I won't have to say them later: "unprecedented times," "the new normal," "social distancing," "troubling," "toilet paper shortage." OK, let's move on.

I'm glad that despite all of the above clichés, we are still bringing you the Chronicle this semester to highlight some of the work that is being done both on and off of campus. While things are far from easy these days, I am grateful to be at Smith (even if only partially right now!). I know that I would not be doing as well if I had stayed with some of my former employers.

While we may not be seeing each other for fun events like cider and donuts on campus, the members of your Staff Council are still busy working on behalf of staff. We continue to meet with the college administration and advocate for all. As you can imagine, this has been especially important lately. We have stressed the importance of retaining affordable healthcare during the pandemic, and appreciate that the college took action to cover the employee share of healthcare premiums for all who are furloughed. We have highlighted the lack of access to affordable childcare options, and the college has recently rolled out two new initiatives to help families who need childcare. We continue to push for resources that will make balancing work and life better for Smith staff — both for now and in the future.

I hope you took the time to fill out the survey Staff Council sent out in partnership with the Office for Equity and Inclusion. Hundreds of you have let us know what is and is not working for staff at Smith. Your answers will inform us about what other issues



Staff Council, October 2019.

Staff Council 2019–21

Brian Bocchino, Staff Accountant, Controller's Office
 Jennifer Burwell, Scheduling Coordinator, Registrar's Office
 Jon Cartledge, Digital Asset Specialist, Imaging Center, Art Dept.
 Jessica Drawe, Administrative Assistant, Admissions
 Ashavan Doyon, Communications Coordinator, College Relations
 Jessica Flynn, Payroll Manager, Controller's Office
 Dawn Hines, Asst. Director, Development
 Brenda Jameson, Recruiting Coordinator, Development
 Colleen Keenan, Associate Director for Client Systems, ITS
 Thomas Lark, Financial Systems Coordinator, Dining Services
 Amanda Lopez, Dining Room Coordinator, Dining Services
 Ann Mayo, Manager Security and Guest Services, Museum of Art
 Heather McQueen, Resource Manager, Clark Science Center
 Kristina Mereigh, Associate Director, Health Services
 Elly Mons, Health Professors Advising Director, Clark Science Ctr.
 Maddy Neely, Administrative Coordinator, School for Social Work
 Davis Rivera, Electrician, Facilities Management
 Alison Schoen, Student Programs Coordinator, Student Engagement
 Barbara Solow, Assistant Director for News, College Relations
 Erin Smith, Stockroom Service Specialist, Clark Science Center
 Rashad Uqdah, Catering Cook, Dining Services
 Lucinda Williams, Acquisitions Supervisor, Libraries
 Vanessa Williams, Administrative Assistant, Dining Services
 Debra Wright, Gift Planning Coordinator, Development

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we should be focusing our efforts on.

Lastly, I want to say thank you to all of the Smith staff who have chosen to retire this fall. I know that some people were more than ready for this time to come, and for others it was a much harder decision. We appreciate all of the work you did in making Smith a better community for all and wish you the best of luck and good health going forward.

Unprecedentedly-
Thomas Lawson Lark

Open Enrollment 2021

Open Enrollment will be held November 2 – November 31

The college is switching health insurance providers to Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts effective January 1, 2021

Insurance costs and benefits
will remain the same for 2021

The annual HR Fair will be held virtually over the course of November

The October 2020 **HR Update** contains information regarding the upcoming Open Enrollment 2021 period:

If you have any questions, please contact Human Resources at hr@smith.edu or or hrbenefits@smith.edu

Chronicle Staff

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Presidential Colloquium Series

Attorney and activist Bryan Stevenson. NRDC President Gina McCarthy. Award-winning historian Jill Lepore. Gender equality advocate Mona Sinha '88. These are a few of the leading thinkers who will speak this spring in Smith's Presidential Colloquium series.

Designed to provide a forum for conversation with prominent thought leaders from a variety of fields, Smith's Presidential Colloquia are open to all at no charge. To allow maximum participation, all spring colloquia events will be presented virtually. Advance registration is required.

Coming this spring:

New Yorker writer and Harvard historian Jill Lepore will discuss "This America/That America" at 7 p.m. Tuesday, February 23

Mona Sinha '99 (executive producer) and **Sam Feder** (director) will discuss their new documentary, "Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen" at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 2

Bryan Stevenson, founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, and a widely acclaimed lawyer—will speak on "Just Mercy: The Movement for Justice and Redemption" at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 11

Gina McCarthy, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, will discuss "Climate Change and Social Justice: Strategies for Meaningful Progress" at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 23

Disability rights advocate **Judy Heumann** and Harvard professor **Tom Hehir** offer a colloquium "On the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act" at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 1

To register for these free events, or for more information about the speakers, see the Presidential Colloquium information [online](#).

Staff Council Website: smith.edu/staffcouncil

Facebook: facebook.com/SmithStaffCouncil

Staff Council email: staffcouncil@smith.edu

Chronicle email: chronicle@smith.edu

Sign up for the Staff Listserv:

- go to <http://tinyurl.com/q7w6qdr>
- click on the blue "Join Group" button,
- choose your email preferences and click "Join Group."

The COVID-19 Chronicles

By
Nanci Young, College Archivist



We are experiencing an extraordinary historic moment where the COVID-19 pandemic is reshaping the way we work, play, teach, learn and relate to one another.

The Smith College Archives needs your help in collecting material that documents individual student, faculty and staff responses to the pandemic.

You can help by sharing documentation of your personal experiences. We especially encourage the donation of photographs and other media as file uploads, rather than as links to online posts.

The materials donated will be made available for research use by anyone, and available on the open web for anyone to see. This is a wonderful opportunity for us all to tell our stories, but it also means that anyone can have access to this information. You may request that the materials be embargoed for a five year period.

We're looking for materials that document your experiences during the following events:

Initial responses to the announcement that the College would move to remote learning and that most of the campus community were required to leave campus

Process of leaving campus, your colleagues & workspace

Preparing to work from home

Impacts of working from home

Maintaining mental & physical health during this time

Here are some questions to help you start thinking about documenting your experience. You can answer all, any, or decide on your own what to share.

1. What was your initial response to hearing that Smith would move to remote/distance learning?
2. How did you discuss the closure of the College and shift to remote learning with student employees?
3. Can you describe your experiences saying 'goodbye' to those students?
4. Can you describe some of your experiences saying 'goodbye' to colleagues?
5. Can you describe what it is like to set up and start to work remotely? Are there routines that you have integrated into remote working? Have you created new routines to face these challenges?
6. How have you been supported working at home?
7. How has your research been affected?
8. What has surprised, disappointed, or reassured you about this experience?

We are seeking accounts of your personal experiences from when you first heard about COVID-19, and the impact it is having on aspects of your life, particularly relating to your Smith experience. You may contribute as often or little as you like.

Fill out the [Archives COVID-19 Project Contributor Form](#) to begin sharing your documentation. Once completed, you will receive a deed of gift for the materials. A deed of gift is required for all permanent donations to Special Collections. If you have physical materials, please hold onto them until the Archives staff are back on campus to safely receive them. This form is only open to students, faculty and staff members of the Smith community.

Nanci Young, college archivist (nyoung@smith.edu), is available to answer questions.

Neilson Library Progress Update

By Charlie Conant, Senior Project Manager, Facilities



While it's yet to be known when the Smith Community will be ready to receive the new Neilson Library and Alumnae Gymnasium, the soon to be completed and fully furnished buildings will be handed over to Smith College in February of 2021. The design team and contractors have been working uninterrupted since the COVID-19 shutdown and are diligently tying up loose ends inside the buildings and out on the central campus landscape.

As temperatures drop, four new high efficiency gas boilers will provide heat for the building. Unlike other larger buildings on campus, Neilson and Alumnae Gym will not receive steam from Smith's Central Boiler Plant. Neilson Library's high-performance building envelope and low temperature heating system will make it one of the most energy efficient library and archival storage buildings in New England and adaptable to Smith's future plans for campus wide geothermal heating and cooling.

Lecture and performance space will soon be realized in the outdoor amphitheater located at the intersection of Wright Hall and the Neilson North Addition. At the top of the amphitheater is one of four new public entrances to the new library. This entrance will bring you directly into the library café. The lower level entrance to Wright Hall on the left is now flush with

an accessible path that winds from Burton Lawn up to Chapin Lawn. Trees planted between the amphitheater terraces are selected to have a high canopy that will eventually shade areas of the amphitheater without obstructing views to presentation areas at the base.

The sunken courtyard allows daylight into the underground compact book storage area, study carrels and soft seating areas. Five trees are planted adjacent to the granite walkway connecting the two courtyard entrances. The courtyard will be accessible during regular library hours and provides a second means of egress from the underground portion of the building. The courtyard walkway is the only location where under-slab radiant heating is provided to keep the path dry and clear during inclement weather. Not necessarily energy efficient, but essential to maintaining clear access through the courtyard year-round

Interior finishes are now being completed throughout the building. Floors will have carpet, oak flooring, polished concrete and tile in wet areas. Much of the wood flooring is installed over rubber padding to quiet footsteps in the building. Wall surfaces are painted plaster, oak bookcases, oak paneling and full-height glass partitions that will close off the classrooms, offices and the collections areas. There is a great deal



The picture below is the glass enclosed atrium in the north addition. Like the oculus, it provides daylight from windows above to the interior of north addition. Oak millwork paneling lines the inside of the atrium walls. The atrium glass walls separate the open space from the reading rooms on levels 2 and 3 and railings protect the openings between the level G Media Hub and level one café.



There are too many newly envisioned spaces in the new Neilson library to cover in detail for this article, so I hope this provides some insight into the beautiful and functional library building that has been envisioned and designed for Smith. Work will continue over the next few months towards the completion date with the installation of finishes, audio visual technology, wayfinding and donor signs, furnishings. We'll also be doing the commissioning and testing of building's HVAC, plumbing, fire alarm, lighting control and security systems.

of transparency between floors and between opposite ends of the building. The transparency provides interesting views throughout the building and enhances the feeling of not being isolated in the large expanses of building. However, there are several quiet areas where one can also “squirrel away” if so desired.

When entering the south addition grade level entrance, one first encounters the special collections storage area. It is essentially a four-story glass box within the building, that houses the Sophia Smith Collection, The College Archives and the Smith Rare Book Collection. Having its own envelope within the greater building exterior walls provides enhanced climate control for the collections. Though the collections appear readily accessible, a robust security system is being installed to protect the collections.

At the very center of the 1909 Neilson is the oculus and spiral stair that connects the two library service points on levels G and one. The glass roof of the oculus is over 70 feet above level G and provides reflected daylight off of a curved venetian plaster wall into all levels of the core building. In the evening, the oculus is illuminated by up-lights embedded in the floor on level G and track lights inside the oculus at level 2.

Important Updates for Smith College Employee Benefits

By Jon Cartledge, Editor

Employee Assistance Fund for Critical Needs

The college has created a dedicated Smith College Employee Assistance Fund to support employees and their families with critical needs. All requests will be kept confidential. If you have questions about the [application](#) process, contact covid19info@smith.edu.

Retirement Plan

If you are a participant in the Smith College Defined Contribution Retirement Plan, and you qualify for a coronavirus-related distribution or loan, there are [options](#) available to you through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Doctor On Demand*

With Doctor on Demand, you can have a virtual doctor visit using live video on your smartphone, tablet, or computer (availability limited for overnight hours). Visit [DoctorOnDemand.com](#) to get started.

Behavioral Health Care Options *

Behavioral Health Access Center: Call 888-777-4742 to speak with a licensed care advocate. They answer calls 24/7 and can direct you to resources, including tele-mental health and virtual care options.

Virtual visits: If you are currently in treatment, speak with your behavioral health provider about having virtual visits either by secure video or telephone. You can use Harvard Pilgrim's online provider directory, Find a Provider, to find behavioral health providers who offer virtual visits. Behavioral health virtual visits are also available through Doctor on Demand.

United Behavioral Health/Optum's Public Crisis Line: Call (866) 342-6892. Open 24/7, this emotional support helpline is free of charge and available to all.

**Behavioral Care Options and Doctor on Demand are available until 12/31/20. New services will take their place in the New Year.*

OptumRx - Prescription Drug Benefits

OptumRx has instituted several measures in response to federal and state directives:

Refill-too-soon restrictions have been lifted. Members taking maintenance medications can obtain early refills, if they have refills remaining on-file at a participating retail or mail-order pharmacy.

Members who utilize Optum Specialty Pharmacy can receive a one-time, 90-day supply of chronic specialty medications versus the traditional 30-day supply.

EyeMed Vision

Should you need glasses or contacts, you can use your benefits from home at [participating providers](#). It is possible to order glasses to be delivered to your home. Your vision benefits are applied automatically.

Flex Spending Accounts

Effective March 27, 2020, over-the-counter drugs are considered eligible expenses in FSA plans. Participants will no longer need have a prescription to prove eligibility. Menstrual care products (i.e. tampons, pads, etc.) are also eligible.

Elections for Dependent Care FSAs can be changed when your daycare needs change. If this applies to you, submit your changes through Workday.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

During this crisis, you can turn to Smith's Employee Assistance Program for guidance and resources. EAP is now open to ALL employees, including casual workers. This includes access to the [EAP website](#) for teletherapy, legal, & financial consultations. The therapy benefit has been expanded to 12 sessions per condition per year. Call 800-828-6025 and identify yourself as a Smith employee.

Interview with the Smith College Staff & Faculty White Accountability Group

By Barbara Solow

The Smith College Staff and Faculty White Accountability Group was launched this fall as a collective learning space about changing white supremacy. We asked the group's facilitator, Tobias Davis—inclusion education trainer/facilitator for the Office for Equity and Inclusion—to reflect on how the effort is going.

Here's what Davis and his co-facilitators, staff members of Religious and Spiritual Life, had to say. They are: Matilda Cantwell, director; Maureen Raucher, operations and finance manager; interns Anna Ostow, Greenlee Brown '21 SSW and Rowan Van Ness.

What are the goals of the White Accountability group?

The Smith College Staff and Faculty White Accountability Group is a group of white-identified staff and faculty who are looking to learn, share resources, connect and collaborate with others in order to unlearn internalized messages about white supremacy and commit to changing ourselves and our communities,—including the Smith College community. One of our other goals is that the group be accessible to newcomers at any time. To that end, we have created a Moodle page with a section of foundational information and weekly modular assignments/activities for reflection and action.

How many Smith community members are involved and is there a good representation from the staff?

We currently have over 200 faculty and staff enrolled in our Moodle page. Our monthly meetings have between 40–100 participants, many of whom are staff.

What's been the most inspiring thing about the group so far?

The willingness of its members to really dig down to better understand how we benefit from white privilege, and— more importantly—how we can actively work to uplift BIPOC voices and dismantle racism and anti-Blackness wherever we can: in ourselves, in our units at Smith, and in our larger communities.

What's been the most surprising thing about the group?

The overwhelming response! When we started, we pictured this group would have maybe only 20–30 participants. Instead, we have more than 200. Dismantling white supremacy is not an easy topic and one that many white people tend to avoid, so it's heartening to see this level of commitment from Smith staff and faculty.

Can other campus community members access the group's reading list or other resources?

Absolutely. While the group is intended to be a space for white people to learn about and dismantle the white privilege and white supremacy we have internalized, all of our materials are available via Google docs and can be accessed by the entire Smith community. Please email Toby Davis at tdavis@smith.edu if you would like access to those materials.

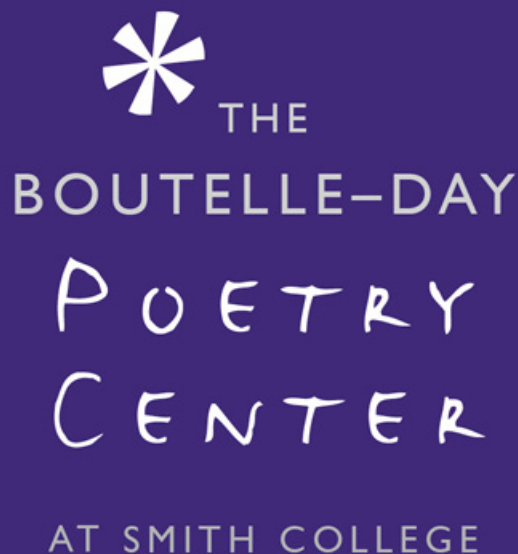
If you would like to join the white accountability group, please fill out this [form](#).



images courtesy of Smith College Archives

Making Connections Through Poetry

By Jen Blackburn



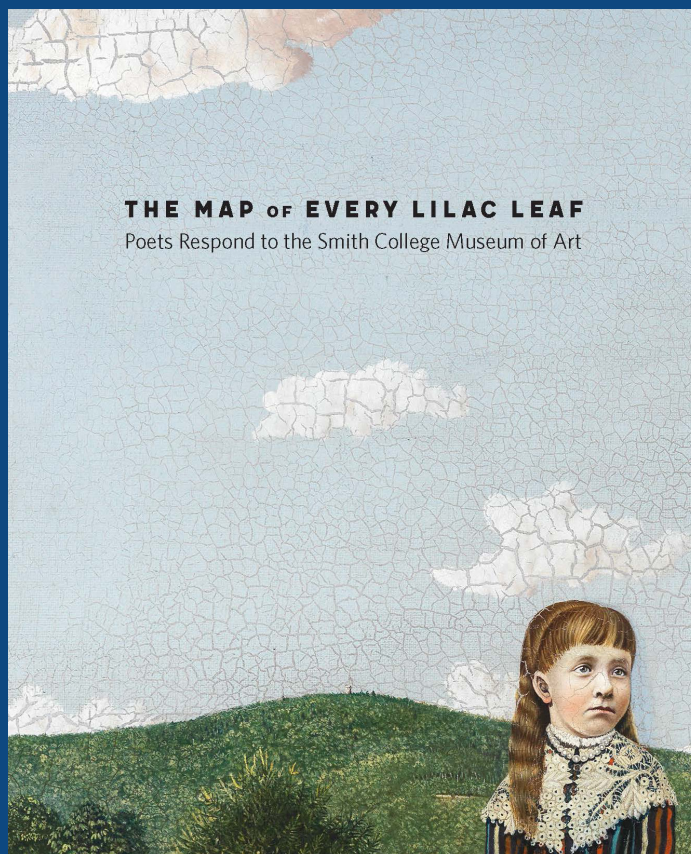
Over the last few months, the Poetry Center has seen a number of changes— first, and most noticeably, we have a new name! We’re now called the Boutelle-Day Poetry Center at Smith College, a name that honors our founder Annie Boutelle and memorializes alumna Tammi A. Day AC ’05, whose foundation’s transformational gift will allow us to bring more poetry to the Smith community and beyond.

Since March 2020, we’ve been busy—in the late Spring, we were able (with the help of our amazing student volunteers) to send electronic Poetry Care Packages to our audience, full of virtual poetry postcards, video links, craft projects, recipes, and more. Our renga project, *Voices from Afield*, was a collaboration among Smith students, faculty and staff to make poetry together from our own homes. Starting in Fall 2020, we launched a virtual reading series with a reading by Mark Doty in September, and early October saw the launch of *The Map of Every Lilac Leaf: Poets Respond to the Smith College Museum of Art*, a collaborative effort between the BDPC and SCMA to celebrate the museum’s centennial and the world-class poets— including 6 distinguished alumnae— who’ve participated in our reading series over 20+ years.

On October 21st, we welcomed Tracy K. Smith, Pulitzer Prize winner and US Poet Laureate from 2017–2019, for a reading and renaming/dedication of the Boutelle-Day Poetry Center. Poets Carmen Giménez Smith (Nov. 17) and John Murillo (Dec .1) will join us before the end of the Fall semester. Registration links can be found on our [website](#), and all are welcome!

Keeping our season running has been a massive effort, and nothing we could have done alone (we’re a small operation!). We’re able to keep going because of the dedicated work of staff across the college. Thank you to everyone who’s helped us troubleshoot through new challenges! Oh, and if you miss our poetry postcards showing up in your Smith mailbox (we know of at least one office that would give dramatic readings), you can sign up to receive virtual postcards [here](#).

Hope to see you all again in person soon—for now, see you online!



Our Pandemic Playlist: Finding a Bright Spot in the Midst of a Crisis

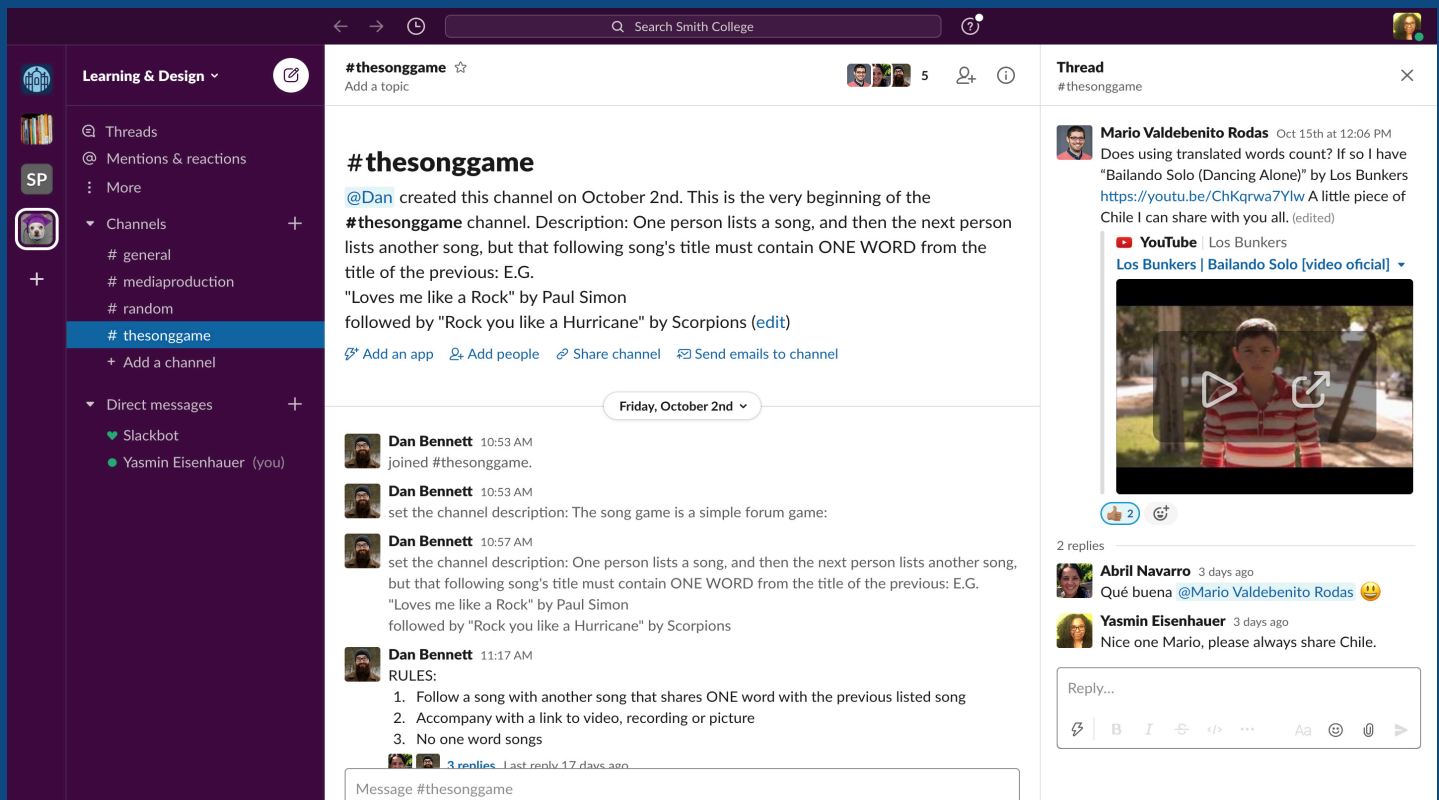
By Yasmin Eisenhauer

Ah, 2020. To say it's been intense is an understatement. COVID-19 response planning presented significant challenges for Learning & Design (L&D), a 5-person team of instructional technologists and educational media producers. Our work began in earnest early March. Moving at an unyielding pace and with a short turnaround, we quickly aligned with department and institutional efforts to ensure academic continuity at Smith—our foremost priority was to prepare faculty for the shift to alternate modes of instruction by the end of spring break on March 20.

Looking back at what feels like eons ago, I'm grateful for two things. One, the collaboration across the greater staff and faculty to meet our goals. Together with colleagues, we delivered a robust workshop program during the course of spring and summer. Two, in spite of our remote work status, L&D was able to stay connected as a team. Making the shift to telework during a pandemic was disruptive, and at times, disorienting. The moment itself required focused work, and the team had to be mindful of how we managed our time, energy and interruptions.

Carving out time to attend to team culture and team building activities was not new, but doing so during a pandemic became a bright spot. Working remotely, these low stakes, humor-rich, opt-in sessions could now extend to partners, pets and children (and on occasion, included guitar solos). Taking time for a bit of levity allowed us to be human in the midst of a crisis.

I share this experience not to minimize the personal or collective trauma of this moment but rather, offer it as an idea for normalizing wellness and reinforcing Smith's culture of care. On our pandemic playlist: [Skribbl](#), [Codenames](#), and an asynchronous, ongoing song game via the team's Slack channel.



The image shows a screenshot of a Slack workspace. On the left is a sidebar with a navigation menu for the 'Learning & Design' team, including options for Threads, Mentions & reactions, and a list of channels. The '#thesonggame' channel is selected and highlighted. The main content area displays the channel's description, which explains the rules of the song game: one person lists a song, and the next person lists another song whose title contains one word from the previous song's title. The channel was created on October 2nd. Below the description are several messages from 'Dan Bennett' detailing the channel's setup and rules. On the right side of the screen, a 'Thread' window is open, showing a video post by 'Mario Valdebenito Rodas' from October 15th. The video shows a man in a red and white striped shirt dancing. Below the video are two replies: one from 'Abril Navarro' and one from 'Yasmin Eisenhauer'.

The Smith College Staff Creative Arts Showcase



Dan Bennett - By forcing him to limit other activities, social distancing has provided Dan the space to focus on his drawing, allowing him to add several new illustrations to his collection.



Pamela Dodd's love of plants in all their various forms, coupled with her urge to create, inspired her to make concrete leaf castings.



Laura Wallace's love of nature has always revolved around opportunities to “see” nature up close and personal. So, wildlife photography, with single overarching challenge of “getting close to critters,” was an almost instinctive hobby to begin.

This beautiful work is being shared as part of the [Smith College Staff Creative Arts Showcase Virtual Preview](#). We encourage you to also submit your creative pieces! Please let us know if you are interested in participating and sharing your work in the Showcase on campus and/or the Virtual Preview.

How are you staying engaged creatively through art, music, or other mediums? How do your activities bring you comfort and help you create community while staying at home? We are looking for pieces that represent you, that share an experience, that tell a story. Perhaps you have been working on a creative piece for a while—a quilt, painting or bag that is just awaiting some finishing touches? Or maybe you have recently taken a photo of a breathtaking sunset while out on an evening walk? We encourage you to submit your creative pieces to the Virtual Preview so we can share your work with your fellow staff colleagues.

Supported by a 2020 Innovation Challenge Grant, the Showcase is designed to highlight the creativity and talents of staff. Our hope is to help the Smith College community become more aware of—and enjoy—the creativity of staff members across campus. Art and creativity can connect us even during this time while we are apart.

Meg Thacher's book, *Sky Gazing: a Guide to the Moon, Sun, Planets, Stars, Eclipses & Constellations*, was released on October 13. Published by Storey Publishing (an imprint of Workman Press), *Sky Gazing* is a guide to observing the sky from wherever you are, day or night, no telescope required. Kids aged 9–14 will learn how to find objects in the sky and delve into the science behind what they see, whether they live in a dark rural setting or under the bright lights of the city. Star charts will guide them in spotting constellations throughout the seasons and in both hemispheres, while they learn about constellation myths from cultures around the world. Each chapter has guides to special events and binocular observing. Activities engage kids and their grown-ups in hands-on science.

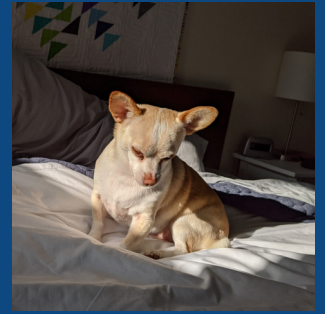
Meg is a Senior Laboratory Instructor in the Astronomy Department. This is her twenty-second year at Smith. She's been writing for children's magazines since 2013, publishing thirty nonfiction features, infographics, profiles, DIY experiments and a reader's-theatre-style retelling of a Welsh folktale. *Sky Gazing* is her first book.



Got a pet photo you'd like to share? email us at chronicle@smith.edu



Top: (from left to right) Caoimhe by Jessica Drawe, Merle by Andrew Maurer, Macie by Elly Mons, Padfoot and T-Spoon by Robin MacEwan, Baxter and Pipping by Nick Baker, Marco by Rebecca Davis, Chewie by Travis Grandy



Bottom: (from left to right) Tic, Tac, and Toe by Davis Rivera, Mocha by Davis Rivera, Nicole & Pebbles by Davis Rivera, Cooper, Waffles, and Kitty Piddles by Jess Flynn, Snoops by Ashavan Doyon, Zelda by Elly Mons, Max & Merlot by Davis Rivera, Lizzo by Jess Flynn, Snowy by Betsy Coulter, Marta by Barbara Solow

Pet Corner

