



LITERACY  
RESEARCH  
ASSOCIATION



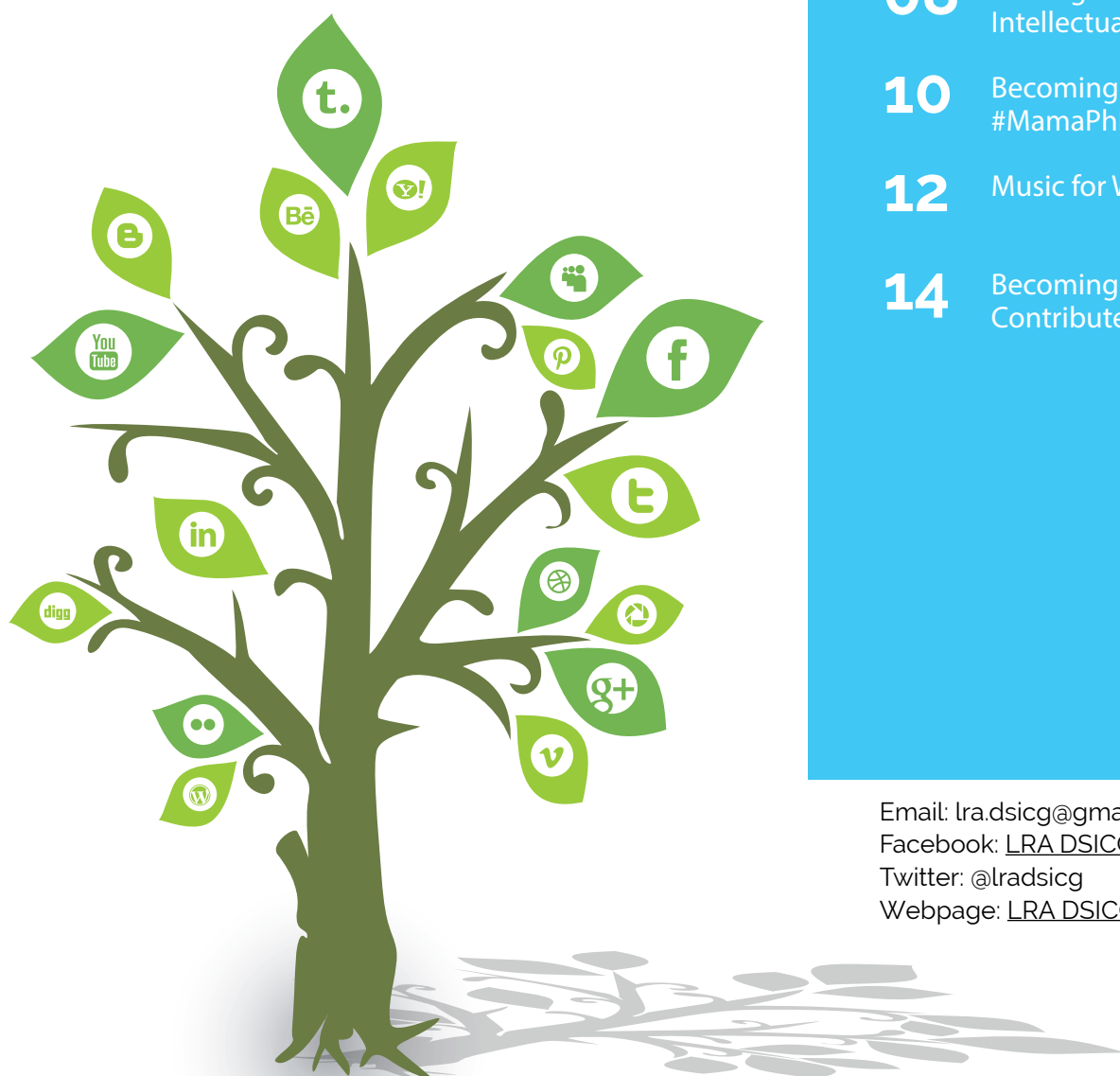
---

# DSICG Newsletter

## Summer 2018



# Doctoral Student Innovation Community Group



## Content

- 03** Mission Statement
- 04** Letter from the Editors
- 05** We're All In This Together
- 07** LRA 2017 DSICG Events
- 08** Finding an Intellectual Home
- 10** Becoming #MamaPhD
- 12** Music for Writing
- 14** Becoming a Contributor

Email: [lra.dsicg@gmail.com](mailto:lra.dsicg@gmail.com)  
Facebook: [LRA DSICG Group](#)  
Twitter: [@lradscg](#)  
Webpage: [LRA DSICG Site](#)



## Welcome to the Literacy Research Association's Doctoral Student Innovation Community Group!

**We are a group organized by doctoral students to support doctoral students.**

The mission of the Literacy Research Association's Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group is to facilitate doctoral students' development as exceptional researchers, scholars, and teacher educators in the field of literacy. This task includes purposeful efforts to (a) encourage doctoral students' participation in the LRA, including annual meetings and publications, (b) meet the unique needs of doctoral students, (c) support doctoral students' professional growth, and (d) create a collaborative community of scholars.

## Mission Statement





## From the **Editors**

---

As we worked on this summer issue of the newsletter, we noticed a theme: community. Across the articles in this issue, we see the necessity and the possibility for community to support us in our work. In her conversation with Kate Haq, Dr. Lynn Shanahan speaks of finding an intellectual home at LRA. In her report on DSICG events, Stephanie Reid shares some of the ways that the Doctoral Student Group events provide a social and intellectual space for community that pushes us to do better work. In her piece on networking, Stephanie explores the intermingling of the professional and social benefits of networking. And finally, Amber talks about getting support from her school community as she cared for her newborn child.

As an editing team, our greatest hope is that this newsletter might serve to further connect our members and foster dialogue about the ways in which we at the LRA-DSICG can lift each other up, challenge ourselves, complicate our understandings, and make great work that improves the lives of literacy learners. We hope you'll join the conversation by sharing your writing with us.

## Contact the Editors

---

**Virginia Killian Lund**

[vkilliz@uic.edu](mailto:vkilliz@uic.edu)

**Kate Haq**

[katehaq@gmail.com](mailto:katehaq@gmail.com)

**Susan Tily**

[tilysusan@utexas.edu](mailto:tilysusan@utexas.edu)

**Michael Young**

[michael-young@uiowa.edu](mailto:michael-young@uiowa.edu)



# We're All in This Together:

## Tapping into Your Doctoral Student Peer Network

by **Stephanie F. Reid**

Other graduate students often have the highest academic friend potential: they are people who are in the same boat as you, people with whom you can grow alongside professionally, people you can continue to catch up with for years to come at conferences, and people who are more likely to be collaborators into the future.

**Dr. Katie Bernstein, Arizona State University (personal communication, March 2018)**

Since beginning my doctoral journey nearly two years ago, I have learned this: one of the most important resources we have access to is each other. My Arizona State University peers talk me through moments of self-doubt, supply endless reading recommendations, and constantly proofread my writing. They make me laugh, smile, and learn. Beyond my own academic institution, the LRA Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group has also been a source of inspiration, information, and connection. Without my peer network, my PhD experience would have been less fulfilling and infinitely more lonely.

So how can you tap into your doctoral student peer network?

To help me answer this question, I sought ideas from Earl Aguilera, a fourth year doctoral candidate at Arizona State University, and Drs. Katie Bernstein and Lauren Harris, Arizona State University professors who have stayed in contact with their doctoral peer group and who value peer collaboration.

**Earl Aguilera: Respect as the foundation of a lasting relationship.** Earl believes that establishing peer connections begins with acknowledging and respecting the work of others, no matter how different their research might be

from your own. Earl offers the following advice:

- "Respect one another's work, even if you don't fully understand it. Mutual respect helps set the stage for meaningful collaboration, productive critique, and enlightening discussion.
- Ask lots of questions about one another's work; not only can this help you expand your own understanding, but it gives your colleagues more opportunities to articulate and further sharpen their own perspectives."



Stephanie (center) shown here collaborating on a research project with Dani Kachorsky, Tray Geiger, and Katy Chapman (not shown in photo) in downtown Phoenix, AZ.

**Dr. Katie Bernstein: Purposefully forge peer connections.** Dr. Bernstein suggests that doctoral students should actively seek to make connections with other doctoral students, both within and beyond their own institutions. We each occupy a space in the vast terrain of literacy research. Investigating who else occupies that same (or similar) territory could help us initiate productive connections. We should be fearless in reaching out to others with common research interests. Dr. Bernstein recommends that:

"If there is someone whose work you admire, their students (who often share their interests or approaches) are often great potential collaborators. When you are planning a conference symposium, for instance, it's great to invite your professor-heroes to be part of it, but always ask if they have any graduate students who would be a good fit, too. Sometimes you get both, which is great for many reasons, but often, meeting their graduate student is the real win."

### Dr. Lauren Harris: Join the graduate student group of your professional organization(s).

I can testify that this is a great idea. Dr. Harris issued this advice before I attended my first LRA conference, as did Dr. Dani Kachorsky and Dr. Maria Goff, former doctoral peers at Arizona State University. Buoyed by their encouragement, I showed up to the LRA-DSICG business meeting and ran for office. I am so glad I did. I enjoy serving this community of doctoral students and, after a year of mostly online communication with the LRA-DSICG committee members, it was exciting to see so many people in person at the last conference. The number of people I knew at LRA in 2017 had tripled from the year before! If you are interested in being involved in the LRA-DSICG, here are a number of events to attend and ways to contribute.

#### Throughout the Year:

- Got an idea for a collaborative project? Use our social media outlets to pitch your idea and connect with likeminded doctoral students.
- Help us get to know your work: Post articles you have written to the LRA-DSICG Facebook page.
- Reflect on and share your experiences as a doctoral student by writing for this newsletter. Contact the editors if you're interested.
- Look out for other networking opportunities: the LRA-DSICG Proposal Mentoring Project and LRA Proposal Peer Review Groups, for example.
- Participate in the LRA-DSICG Membership Survey to share your ideas and feedback.

#### DSICG Events at the LRA Conference:

- Attend the DSICG Networking session and breakfast on day one of the conference.
- Come to the daily Study Group sessions and the Academia 101 session on Saturday.
- The Happy Hour event is a great way to meet other doctoral students, as is the Graduate Student and Newcomer's Breakfast (Thursday morning).
- Be there at the LRA-DSICG business meeting on Friday morning to run for one of the open positions.

Details of all our conference events can be found in the conference program, in our newsletter, and on our website.

**My two cents: Doctoral companions are also lifelong peers.** During the first years of my PhD program, a group of other PhD students who work in similar or related fields pulled me into their own existing network. Dani, Maria, and Kelly have been unofficially mentoring me since week one of my PhD experience. Importantly, we have a lot of fun, too. We hunted (unsuccessfully) for soup in Nashville, and we wrapped up LRA this year with a Disney movie. Maria graduated last year. Kelly and Dani just graduated. We are no longer in the same PhD program together with immediate access to each other, but the network remains intact. Decades from now, I am certain that we will still be hugging each other and saying hello in the lobby of the LRA conference hotel.



Happy post-presentation faces at LRA's 2017 Conference in Tampa, FL. Peer support from Dr. Dani Kachorsky helped make this a memorable first LRA presentation for me.

# LRA 2017: DSICG Events

by **Stephanie F. Reid**

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

-Lilla Watson



## The DSICG Study Groups

In response to our 2017 Membership Survey, our daily study groups at LRA 2017 sought to meet the needs of our Doctoral Student Innovative Community Group (DSICG). Expert faculty shared their knowledge and experiences regarding data collection and organization, data analysis methodology, and writing for publication. Furthermore, the scholars leading each of the three DSICG Study Groups emitted powerful calls to humanize the research in which we engage. During the Wednesday session, Dr. Tamara Butler, Dr. Keisha L. Green, and Dr. Detra Price-Dennis shared their ideas on building honoring yet practical relationships with research participants and their communities. In Thursday's session, Dr. Lamar L. Johnson, Dr. Mary McVee, and Dr. Catherine Compton-Lilly explored how humanizing theoretical frameworks and data techniques can help scholars build towards more equitable constructions of social reality. On Friday, Dr. April

Baker-Bell, Dr. Maneka D. Brooks, and Dr. Theda Gibbs Grey asked attendees to consider what their responsibilities are in how they portray themselves and various communities in writing.

## Additional DSICG Events at LRA 2017

We hosted the Doctoral Student Networking Session on Wednesday morning and a Happy Hour on Friday evening. Those who attended enjoyed either breakfast or hot appetizers sponsored by our DSICG and great conversation with both old and new friends and colleagues. On Friday morning, we hosted a second breakfast intended to unite the faculty mentors and doctoral students who participated in the Proposal Mentoring Project. The Proposal Mentoring Project pairs doctoral students who wish to present their research at the LRA Conference with faculty volunteers who help guide students in writing high quality proposals. This breakfast provided mentors and mentees with time and space to meet in-person. Following the Proposal Mentoring Breakfast, we held our annual business meeting. We provided DSICG updates during this meeting and elected new members to the DSICG leadership team via electronic ballot.





# LRA Secretary Lynn Shanahan

## Finding an Intellectual Home

by **Kate Haq**



**Dr. Lynn Shanahan is a strategic, well-rounded academic who found an intellectual home at the Literacy Research Association (LRA).** She has been invited to continue in her service as the Association secretary, a role she sees as critically important. When I interviewed Dr. Shanahan this past June, she stated her belief that the Literacy Research Association “only survives through volunteer work” and she encourages involvement at all levels. Initially brought on at the end of Arlette Willis’s term as president of LRA, Lynn was mentored by the outgoing secretary, Diane Tracy. She has worked with past presidents Janice Almasi, Pat Enciso, Rebecca Rogers, and our current president, Gay Ivey. As secretary, Lynn meets with the executive board and the board of directors over the course of each year. During these meetings, she takes notes, tracks action items, and compiles bios for each new slate of officers. She also participates in revising the Association bylaws and planning the annual conferences.

As a doctoral student, I have worked closely with Dr. Shanahan in class and on research projects. She is a dynamic person who speaks quickly—her stream of consciousness revolves around problem solving and critical analysis. I have learned to

take notes when she focuses her attention on my research in order to capture her thoughts! I admire Lynn because she has strategically placed herself in positions that have helped her to extend her teaching career from K-12, to teacher preparation, and into her current home at the University of Buffalo (UB). At this research institute, she feels challenged and is involved in a variety of research initiatives centered around literacy. Lynn was hired by the University’s department of Learning and Instruction after graduating from the very same program, which is a rarity in the academic world. Her determined approach to her career, her studies, and her service is commendable and a model for those of us who are new to the field.

Lynn spoke to me about her early experiences as a K-12 educator at practitioner conferences, which she found to be somewhat limiting in scope. And although she had taken on diverse roles in her school district, challenging herself and her knowledge base, she felt “restless.” Lynn applied to the PhD program at UB in 2000, where Janice Almasi introduced Lynn to the LRA conference experience. According to Lynn, she “found a home where people were debating ideas and multiple perspectives. It was a place where I could learn and grow.” The restlessness Lynn had felt was gone; she considers that first literacy conference to be a critical turning point in her life. She realized “this is what I am supposed to be doing.” Dr. Shanahan reminisced about her experiences at those first conferences, where “the literacy faculty indoctrinated you in. You knew you could learn there and push yourself. I remember doc students giving their first presentations and their advisors getting up there and



introducing them beforehand. That was a really welcoming and exciting experience."

That personalized experience at LRA helped shape Lynn's career as she connected with scholars at subsequent conferences and moved her body of work forward. Lynn talked about how the LRA conference has grown, the tensions that have arisen, and the ways in which this growth has impacted the "vibe" of the conference. To work towards inclusiveness and to build strength, LRA has begun sending out surveys to members, the results of which help leadership better understand members' interests, needs, and service potential. Lynn believes it is incredibly important for doctoral students, who have specific needs in terms of orientation, networking, and recognizing and growing research potential to complete these surveys in order to make leadership aware of all participants' feedback.

Lynn believes that to maximize your experience at the conference, be sure to "go to sessions that present different viewpoints. You need to have that dissonance to help broaden your landscape and see who is in LRA. This helps you learn about the intellectual community that is present in that space." In addition, be sure to sign up to review proposals, take advantage of the LRA mentoring program, go to the business meetings, and find time to attend the plenary addresses so you can be part of the ongoing conversations of LRA. In typical Dr. Shanahan's purposeful fashion, she methodically worked towards a key leadership position by first reviewing proposals and then becoming an area chair before she was invited onto the executive board as secretary. Lynn's academic and personal path is full of goal setting and determination and I believe we would be wise to heed her solid advice.



**"That personalized experience at LRA helped shape Lynn's career as she connected with scholars at subsequent conferences and moved her body of work forward."**



Kate (University of Buffalo) has been a professional elementary educator since 1985. She successfully defended her dissertation titled *Positioning of Homeless Adolescents Towards Literacy and Life: An Ethnographic Narrative Inquiry* in May at the University of Buffalo. Her research interests include teacher identity in neoliberal times and exploring the convergence of critical literacy, homelessness, and activism with young adults.

## Becoming #MamaPhd: Balancing Family and Academia

Beginning a doctoral program can bring on a wave of emotions: excitement, apprehension, hope and uncertainty. Add pregnancy to the mix and the wave of emotions can feel like a tsunami! At six months pregnant with an almost 2-year old at home, I began my doctoral program at the University of Tennessee - Knoxville (UTK) while also serving on my local Board of Education. Adding the work of a doctoral program to my board service, alongside my growing family, was only possible because of a strong support system including my husband, extended family and friends.

Because I completed my undergraduate degree at UTK, I was familiar with campus and the best way to navigate terrible parking --- trekking across campus in August humidity is a guaranteed way to arrive sweaty and out of breath for your first doc class! My baby bump made it fairly evident that I was going to have a sidekick attending classes soon, but I proactively contacted all of my professors prior to the start of the semester to share my due date and the ways the pregnancy might impact my coursework and class attendance. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I learned a key lesson that I have carried throughout my doctoral work: ask questions!

By involving my professors early in the process, we were able to work together to balance my doctoral work and pregnancy. Using Zoom or Skype to participate in class helped me keep class absences to a minimum. If your professors aren't familiar with this technology, seek out another student who may be willing to be in charge of using one of the platforms to get you to class. Fellow students in my cohort were an essential part of my success the first year of my program. From offering to send me class notes, setting up the Zoom sessions, or simply handing me a clean diaper, I was lucky to join a diverse cohort that celebrated my role as a mother.

Another learning curve associated with beginning a doctoral program while pregnant, is understanding how and when to say no. The academic cultural norm was shared by two student presenters at our orientation who encouraged new students to "say yes to everything." While this standard was used to encourage students to stay competitive for future opportunities in academia, I found that in my case, it was difficult advice to follow. Although I was eager to 'say yes' and had committed to attend my first LRA with a newborn, as the date for the conference grew closer, I decided it wasn't feasible for me to attend with my one month old. While I was disappointed that I missed out on the opportunity to learn and network, it was the best decision at the time for my role as a #MamaPhd. In the spring semester, I was given the opportunity to join a dinner event for a visiting author, hosted by our Center for Children's and Young Adult Literature. Saying yes to that invitation allowed me to interact with colleagues outside our classes and to connect with author Matt de la Peña.

#MamaPhD

Amber Rountree, 2nd year doctoral student,  
University of Tennessee-Knoxville

Starting my second semester as a doctoral student, I realized the challenges would be different with a breastfeeding infant versus being pregnant. For numerous reasons, the optimal situation for me was to bring my son with me to class. While I didn't anticipate any concerns from my professors, I made sure to contact them prior to the first class to explain that they would have an auditing infant. The highlight of one of my courses was teaching about Piaget's ages and stages, and using my son as a live demonstration of the sensorimotor stage!

Although there were many times when I put aside my reading to nurse my son, I also made sure to hand the children over to my husband so I could go out for a quick cup of coffee with my colleagues. Pregnancy and parenting can add a layer of logistical challenges to doctoral work, but being proactive and developing relationships with colleagues can help ease some of the strain. Whether it is your first child or your fourth, be sure to seek out support within your department and from your colleagues, helping you balance family life with academia.



**Editors' note:** We know many members of the LRA-DSICG share the experience of being caregivers for others while working on the PhD, and many others anticipate sharing that experience in the near future. Whether it's welcoming a new baby, parenting older children, or caring for an aging parent--we recognize no two experiences are alike. We are eager to include many voices in this conversation, and invite pieces from caregivers who are willing to share their insights about navigating this particular work/life balance.

# Music for Writing

by Kate Haq (@katehaq) and Katarina Silvestri (@k\_silvestri88)

On good days, I can access my quiet, spacious office, revel in the tranquility and watch the sunlight pour in through the windows and get stuff done. Other days my mind needs a distraction and I plug into my Amazon playlist to move my typing fingers along to the beat of Trombone Shorty, Alicia Keys, and the Dave Matthews Band. We asked all of you to share your writing playlists and got some great responses. Thanks to scholars at these institutions for sharing their musical inspirations:

- University at Buffalo
- Syracuse University
- Brock University
- Binghamton University
- Georgia State
- LSLP @ UPB Medellin
- St. John's University
- University of California, Berkeley

Music soothes and inspires, but our tastes are unique to each of us. You may be looking for something new or something older to motivate your work. So in no particular order, we give you suggestions to help find your muse:

- Anything Backstreet Boys
- New York Jazz playlist
- Kev Choice- 88 Steps to Eternity (album), Juan Pablo: The Philosopher by Ezra Collective, Everything Scatter by Fela Kuti
- Yo-Yo Ma Radio on Pandora
- Pandora Station: Pop/Ambient SW
- Featured artists: A carefully curated ambient/post-rock/industrial/mainly instrumental stylings of Steven Wilson, NIN/Trent Reznor, God is an Astronaut, Explosions in the Sky, Massive Attack, Aphex Twin, and Boards of Canada. Tool, A Perfect Circle, and some 70s rock occasionally makes an appearance.
- 60-80 beats per minute music. Anything instrumental by Gary Lamb
- William Grant Still (today, anyway)
- These days, mostly Psytrance and Epic Music



# Music for Writing

- I usually listen to either instrumental jazz or classical, mostly Amazon Music playlists. My favorites are probably: the aptly titled Jazz for Writing (<https://music.amazon.com/playlists/B074FDRgPB>) and Classical for Writing (<https://music.amazon.com/playlists/B01HYESSR6>), but they also have Jazz for Reading, Jazz for Creativity, Jazz for Studying, and Classical for all of the above, as well. Sometimes, I will specifically listen to my favorite instrumental albums (some include Miles Davis' "Kind of Blue"; Tony Rice and David Grisman's "Tone Poems"; Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' "Reflections in Blue"; the Dave Brubeck Quartet's "Take Five"; or "99 Must-Have Mozart Masterpieces").
- When I'm having a really hard time shutting the world out (I have two children--11 and 13--still at home, and teach full time while they're at school, so the house is rarely quiet when I usually listen to either instrumental jazz or classical, mostly Amazon Music playlists. My favorites are probably the aptly titled Jazz for Writing (<https://music.amazon.com/playlists/B074FDRgPB>) and Classical for Writing (<https://music.amazon.com/playlists/B01HYESSR6>), but they also have Jazz for Reading, Jazz for Creativity, Jazz for Studying, and Classical for all of the above, as well. Sometimes, I will specifically listen to my favorite instrumental albums (some include Miles Davis' "Kind of Blue"; Tony Rice and David Grisman's "Tone Poems"; Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' "Reflections in Blue"; the Dave Brubeck Quartet's "Take Five"; or "99 Must-Have Mozart Masterpieces"). I sometimes listen to white (<https://music.amazon.com/albums/B002OV75K6> or [https://youtube/wzjWlxXBs\\_s](https://youtube/wzjWlxXBs_s)) or pink noise (<https://music.amazon.com/albums/B007NX7REO> or <https://youtu.be/CQBiglRlBk8>), alpha sounds (<https://youtu.be/5LXhPbmoHmU>), or nature sounds (<https://music.amazon.com/playlists/B075YgY2GK>) on Amazon or YouTube.

## Links to Playlists

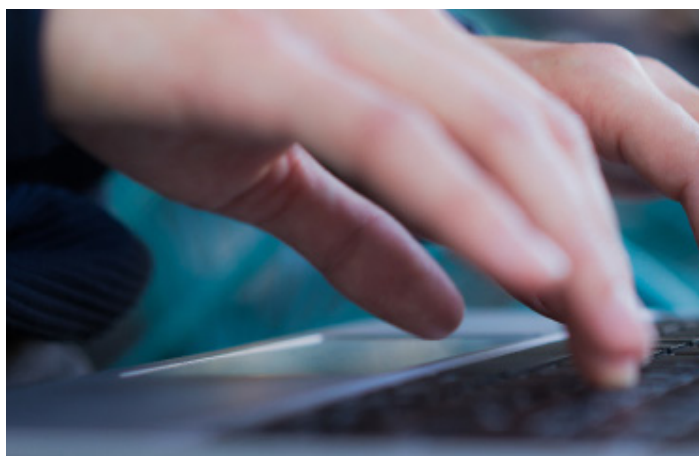
Pandora Pop/Ambient SW: <https://www.pandora.com/station/play/662485026018112525>

Backstreet Boys: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fnDeDfaWCg>

New York Jazz Lounge: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_sI\\_Ps7JSEk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sI_Ps7JSEk)

William Grant Still: <https://open.spotify.com/artist/0KkJoXozXmbRdmpy7zCmYA?si=wsHHTZy4RG63ytC-c1D0Wrw>

Just go to YouTube and search for DJ Electric Samurai and Epic Music VN



## Become a Contributor



### We are currently looking for additional DSICG newsletter writers.

As we continue to evolve, the DSICG Newsletter Committee hopes to include more voices from our community. We invite you to contribute! Propose an article, column, infographic, or alternative media composition to the editors. We welcome all new ideas, and are willing to try new things! Or, select from our pre-existing topics and columns. We are currently looking for articles for the topics listed here.

#### Contact:

vkilli2@uic.edu  
 katehaq@gmail.com  
 tilysusan@utexas.edu  
 michael-young@uiowa.edu

