



*News from*

## INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATIONAL BIOGRAPHY

Fall 2023

### News and Updates

- **The 2023 Conference took place on October 5-7, 2023**, Theme: Life Stories Across Times and Spaces.
- **The New Board!** At its Business Meeting, the ISEB thanked Edward (Ed) Janak for his dedicated service for the past three years as the conference chair (online, 2021), President (2021-22), and Past President (2022-23). Jie Zhang succeeded Ed as Past President, and Sherry Mou stepped up to be President. Yacine Kout was nominated and unanimously supported as President Elect and 2024 Conference Chair. Ludovic Sourdout was selected to replace Yacine's unfinished term. Penny Seals, who was on the membership drive subcommittee last year, was elected to become the new ISEB Social Media officer. The rest of the board remain the same: Penny Craig (Secretary), Prairie Endres-Parnell (Treasurer), Lucy Bailey (Journal Editor), and Jared Stallones (At-Large). A complete roster of the new board and a brief introduction of each board member can be found at the end of this newsletter.
- **ISEB on Social Media!** Penny Seals, our new Social Media czar, broadcast conference sessions and events throughout the two-and-a-half days. Please see the end of the newsletter for our many social media links.
- **Meet US in St. Louis** for the 2024 annual conference! October 3-5, 2024, ISEB returns to St. Louis for its 40<sup>th</sup> annual conference (in partnership with SOPHE). The theme is **Educational Life Writing: Exploring Wisdom, Warfare, and Welfare**. A CFP will follow in January. Stay tuned.
- **Spring Event!** On February 28, 2024, **Dr. Christopher N. Poulos**, Professor and Head of Department of Communication Studies of University of North Carolina, Greensboro, will give a Zoom presentation on the theory and practice of ethnography/autoethnography. All are invited. Details will follow soon!

### Recap of the 2023 Oklahoma Conference

From **October 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>**, at the Hefner Room of the Courtyard by Marriott Oklahoma City Downtown, **13 sessions** and **30 presenters** from Australia, Canada, India, Japan, and the US covered a wide range of topics on life writing. Thanks to Ed Janak, who kept the conference for those who were joining on Zoom; Penny Craig, who ensured the smooth running of internet and onsite connections; Prairie Endres-Parnell, whose daily lucky surprise draw brought excitement at the end of every day; and Penny Seals, who diligently posted on Instagram streams of photos and event as they took place. At the joint Banquet of the ISEB and SOPHE (The Society of Philosophy and History of Education), Jie Zhang delivered a captivating presidential address, entitled "Eileen Chang and the Literary Sojourner." Though an unfamiliar name to most of the audience, Eileen Chang turned out to be one of the most important Chinese writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through her works and legendary life. The speech was streamed online and a handful of online attendees joined those at the banquet to ask questions.

A shout-out to all the graduate student presenters and other first-time participants and a salute to all the rest. From Indian politician and poet (Limbu and Nanda) and ancient China’s philosophers (Yeh and Yao) to early modern and contemporary American educators (Prochner, Tyson, and Atkinon) to heart-wrenching autoethnography (Ross, Freebersyссер, Moore, Bingham, and Abernathy), they shed new light on conventional subjects. Others looked at notable, historical, and personal lives from a wide range of angles and through varied lenses—juvenile biography aiming at STEM fields (Miller), a parallel between a private life and the history of pop music (Stafford), the symbiotic relations between students and mentors (Brown and Helvie-Mason), “a grounding helix” between a rural place and its people (Hany), and variant reflections on the personal and the political of immigrant lives (Lumbreras and Sourdôt). Audiences wandered through three wars, two continents, and five countries with a Chinese scholar (Wang) and collaborated on an experiment of group listening and answering (Joyce and Tamashiro). All this research enriched ISEB’s mission in life writing of the educators and educational life writings.

At the **ISEB Business Meeting**, Jie Zhang thanked Jared Stallones and Prairie Endres-Parnell for their help finding the 2024 conference site; she also expressed gratitude to outgoing board members Edward Janak and Vanessa Garry for their exemplary service. Secretary Penny Craig revealed ISEB’s new logo and Instagram site. *Vitae Scholasticae* editor Lucy Bailey led the discussion of moving the journal online in the near future. (Back issues of *Vitae Scholasticae* volumes 25-32 are on the ISEB web site.) Yacine Kout was nominated and unanimously approved as the new President Elect; two new members were elected to the board: Penny Seals and Ludovic Sourdôt.

## Featured BIOs of ISEB Members

At the conference, we asked two participants—a veteran and a first-timer ISEB member—to reflect on their experiences with the ISEB and their outlook of the organization. Here are what they shared:



**Edward (Ed) Janak**, Professor of Educational Studies at University of Toledo, first learned about ISEB when he took a class on educational biography in graduate school. He went to his first ISEB conference in 2008 and presented research from his dissertation. He got great feedback suggestions from a remarkably kind and generous audience (Thalia Mulvihill immediately came to his mind). Linda Morice, then editor of the ISEB journal, *Vitae Scholasticae*, talked to him about potential publication opportunities. He also heard an incredible variety of stories from the presenters and was truly awestruck by the gathering and sharing of “these really cool narratives.” Since 2015, Ed has attended all the annual conferences and in recent years served on the Executive Board, taking leadership roles and spearheading the ISEB in a new direction.

Over the years, Ed has published several articles and book reviews for *Vitae Scholasticae*, and he always finds the revision and editorial feedback amazing. In fact, his association with *Vitae Scholasticae* and other ISEB activities has allowed him to reframe a book project he is working on, switching from “a kind of traditional history” to “a collective biographical approach.” From his early days as a somewhat aimless, enthusiastic graduate student participant to his leadership in recent years, Ed looks fondly at how his academic trajectory has been nurtured, molded, and enriched by the ISEB (along with the Pop Culture Association). From people like Linda and Thalia

who mentored him to the new website and ISEB logo unveiled at this year’s conference, there are too many things to like about ISEB. Ed sees “nothing but good and positive as the group’s moving forward.” (SM)

\* Ed graciously agreed to share a video he sent in in place of an in-person interview. [Click here](#) to view it.



**Marcus Brown** grew up in Houston, Texas, and works as a TRIO Student Support Services Coordinator at Tarleton State University, where he is currently pursuing an EdD. Marcus enjoys sports, gaming, and advocating for those who can’t advocate for themselves. Marcus and Dr. Lora Helvie-Mason presented their research entitled “Communicating Student Support: Self-Advocacy and Educational Biography as Opportunities to Foster Belonging” at his first ISEB conference at Oklahoma City this year. Marcus was impressed with the presentations and the research others are doing and have done. In the 1<sup>st</sup> session, he felt immediately welcomed the moment Dr. Sherry Mou introduced herself and welcomed him into this new

community. Marcus cherished the relationships built between presentations. He loved following up with presenters and hearing their passions and expertise. He especially appreciated Susan Hany’s presentation named “Beyond Rural Code 4,” and he was “shocked to hear the similarities in experience we had within our cities.” Marcus feels our stories are very important for one another to learn and grow as a diverse society. The ISEB gives a platform for individuals to explore some lost stories or stories through a different lens. He also thinks it’s important for his students to have an opportunity to connect with others who can push them to greater heights. He went back to campus raving about how he enjoyed the ISEB experience and sharing all of the information he learned. Marcus will definitely attend the St. Louis conference in 2024. As for a topic, he is leaning towards exploring barbershop talks in urban communities and their research value or exploring biases between street gangs and fraternities. (JZ)

### ISEB Executive Committee 2023-2024

Position	Person	Affiliation
Past President	Jie Zhang	Trinity University
President	Sherry Mou	DePauw University
President Elect / Webmaster	Yacine Kout	U. of North Georgia
Secretary	Penny Craig	Ball State University
Treasurer	Prairie Endres-Parnell	Tarleton State University
Journal Editor	Lucy Bailey	Oklahoma State University
At-Large	Jared Stallones	U of Northern Colorado
At-Large (Social Media)	Penny Seals	Samford University
At-Large	Ludovic Sourdot	Texas Woman’s University

**Jie Zhang** values her connection with ISEB on both professional and personal fronts. The diverse life writings approaches have helped her contextualize literary texts, while the ISEB community has become a grounding force for her family history. She expresses gratitude to Roy Tamashiro for introducing her to ISEB years ago.

**Sherry Mou** started serving on the ISEB Executive Committee in 2021. She specializes in collections of women’s biographies, especially those in classical times; this makes ISEB a natural home and a source of much needed contemporary perspectives in life writing for her.

**Yacine Kout** has been involved with life writing in general and autoethnography in particular since 2016. He has served as the ISEB webmaster since 2022. He was also nominated and voted 2023 ISEB president elect, thus, the chair of 2024 ISEB Annual Conference in St. Louis, Missouri.

**Penny Craig** served in several positions before taking the responsibility of secretary for ISEB in 2019. She has been a member for over fifteen years and enjoys the family-like atmosphere that welcomes new and old members alike. She currently teaches in the Department of Special Education at Ball State University where she is also Director of Undergraduate Programs.

**Prairie Endres-Parnell** just finished serving her first year as treasurer, and very much appreciates the structure that Dr. Helvie-Mason put in place for the job! She currently teaches at Tarleton State University, has served on the ISEB board in various positions since 2018, and has been a member since around 2015. She appreciates the small, close organization and looks forward to seeing it grow and welcome new members.

**Lucy E. Bailey** has been a member of ISEB for close to 2 decades, supporting in varied roles over the years: board member, participant, reviewer, conference organizer, and president. Since 2016, she has been the editor of *Vitae Scholasticae: The Journal of Educational Biography*, the organization's international peer-reviewed journal.

**Jared Stallones** first attended the ISEB Annual Conference in 1997 and has been an enthusiastic supporter and contributor ever since. He has presented at the Conference numerous times and has published articles in *Vitae Scholasticae*, but this is his first time to hold office in the Society. Jared currently serves as Dean of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Northern Colorado.

**Penny S. Seals** was recruited to ISEB's membership drive through the introduction of Vanessa Garry. Penny currently serves as the Associate Director of the Academic Success Center at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. She earned her PhD in Educational Studies in Diverse Populations from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Her current research interests center on the history of African American education in the South, with a particular focus on examining the historical relationship between race and education.

**Ludovic Sourdout** first attended the ISEB Annual Conference in 2022 after hearing great things about the organization and the conference from Edward Janak. He works with teacher candidates at Texas Woman's University, his current research focuses on the pedagogical possibilities of popular culture for teacher education. He is looking forward to contributing to ISEB's mission as an at-large member on the executive committee.

*We wish you a season of peace, wonder, and joy!*



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