THE LEVER INITIATIVE AND NEW MODELS OF ACADEMIC PUBLISHING

Wesleyan University Library is a member of the Oberlin Group, a consortium of 80 liberal arts college libraries in the United States. For more than 25 years, Oberlin Group libraries have compiled statistical information on our resources and services, negotiated agreements with content providers, and shared ideas and expertise. Concerned with the increasing cost and declining quality of scholarly publishing, the Oberlin Group has created the Lever Initiative to review the state of academic publishing and explore new open access models that might better serve the needs of 21st-century scholars. (“Open access” refers to making published materials freely available online; the costs of publication are borne not by the reader but by libraries, schools, or consortia.)

The Lever Initiative Task Force worked with TBI Communications to conduct an environmental scan of current academic book publishing. TBI conducted surveys and interviews with librarians, faculty members, scholars, and representatives of academic presses. The resulting report was released in early April and the findings include:

• Oberlin Group library directors are increasingly concerned about the escalating cost of scholarly books and their extreme specialization. Many are interested in short-form monographs (longer than an article but shorter than a book) and an open access publishing model so books are freely available to all.

• In part because of promotion and tenure concerns, Oberlin Group faculty members continue to value publisher prestige, editorial quality, and efficient distribution in deciding where to publish. Innovative features such as integrated multimedia are not as important as these traditional measures.

• Many established academic presses are experimenting with a variety of open access publishing models, with funding sources ranging from author/institution fees to crowd-funding.

The next step for the Lever Initiative is to determine how the Oberlin Group might best support new models of open access book publishing—by establishing its own open access press; by collaborating with one or more existing publishers that are experimenting with new models of scholarly publishing; by supporting initiatives by publishers or others who are finding ways to make scholarly books freely available; and/or by organized advocacy for a shift to open access publishing.

— PAT TULLY, UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN —

A FRIENDS OF WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES PUBLICATION

continued from other side

member Hira Jafri ’13, and soon to be MA ’14 in psychology, has been training with Preservation Librarian Michelle Biddle for five years and undertaken highly skilled projects for Special Collections & Archives for the last two years. For example, she creates specialized protective housing for newly acquired artists’ books that often come in unusual shapes. This spring she has been stabilizing a scrapbook from Samuel James Allen Conner, class of 1892, meticulously vacuuming and wiping each page to remove a century of dust and soot, and protecting the photographs and other items as needed. Jafri says she enjoys comparing the campus in the photos with today’s campus—in some ways they are remarkably the same and in others vastly different. Primary documents such as these are much valued for the glimpse they give researchers into campus life of that period.

If you would like to join the Friends in order to help support the library’s events and programs, donate books to the sale, or be added to the Friends mailing list (paper or email), send an e-mail to libfriends@wesleyan.edu or visit wesleyan.edu/lib/friends. The Friends also have an ongoing Adopt a Book program specifically to raise money for preservation work for the collection. And for those of you who are always looking for a good book, stop by the ongoing book sale on the first floor of Olin Library.

— JENNIFER HADLEY, LIBRARY ASSISTANT AND COORDINATOR OF THE FRIENDS —
TRAUMA—whether profound or subtle—left its mark.

FRIENDS OF THE WESLEYAN LIBRARY UPDATE, SPRING 2014

The Friends of the Library are pleased to cap their annual meeting on April 24, 2014 with a talk by Molly Barton ’00 entitled “Write Better Together: an inside look at a new generation of social networks and websites that empower writers.” Ms. Barton taught the senior seminar for Wesleyan’s Writing Certificate this spring. Formerly the global digital director at Penguin Random House, she founded a start-up inside Penguin called Book Country (bookcountry.com), “the most supportive writing and publishing community on the web” — where writers can get feedback on their manuscripts, and if they desire, publish them as e-books. Barton left Penguin in February to work more closely with the NYC tech and start-up community. She is working on a number of undisclosed digital initiatives with major media companies, and serving as strategic advisor to publishing-related start-ups in New York City and Silicon Valley.

Thankfully, interest in the printed book doesn’t seem to be flagging. The Friends Book Sale on May 10 focused on ex libris books from the final round of the library’s weeding project. We also have been grateful to receive many donations for next fall’s book sale. It is such a pleasure to speak with donors about their books, many lovingly collected and with family history, and an honor to be entrusted with offering them to new good homes. Funds raised from these sales will help support next year’s events and projects.

At Reunion/Commencement, we hope to showcase some of the interesting preservation work being done for Special Collections & Archives. Friends student board members and other alumni will be on hand to discuss the preservation work of Special Collections & Archives and to answer any questions you might have.

LEISURE READING—WHAT’S THAT?

In this issue of Friends of the Wesleyan Library Update, we continue to highlight the recent and varied additions to our leisure reading section. A selection of graphic novels were added last year, one of the most popular being Gulp: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal by David Sedaris. Science fiction and fantasy novels are also popular, with a mix of books on science topics written for a popular audience such as Ten for a popular audience such as Ready Player One by Ernest Cline and some books to be read for fun. It’s a great time to visit the library and enjoy a good book.

—MELISSA BEHNEY, SCIENCE LIBRARIAN

FROM THE ARCHIVES: THE GRATEFUL DEAD AT WESLEYAN

On May 3, 1970 the Grateful Dead came to campus and played at the foot of Foss Hill. That academic year saw some of the most intense social and political turmoil of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Woodstock festival had happened just the previous summer, and in the face of growing resistance to the Vietnam War, President Nixon announced on April 30, 1970, a mere three days before the concert, a military incursion into Cambodia, significantly widening the scope of the war. The resulting protests spread across college campuses nationwide, leading to a Wesleyan student strike called at a meeting the night of May 3, following the concert, and eventually the tragic deaths of four students at a campus protest at Kent State University the following day. Added to these events were the New Haven trials of Bobby Seale and other members of the Black Panther Party for the murder of a suspected FBI informant, an event that drew daily protests on the New Haven green. For many, the Foss Hill concert was seen as relief from this turmoil, while for some it was an opportunity to galvanize further political action.

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Preservation Work—a scrapbook from Samuel James Allen Conner, class of 1892

The Friends of the Wesleyan Library are pleased to provide an update on the Friends of the Wesleyan Library, Special Collections & Archives, and to introduce some of the interesting preservation work being done for Special Collections & Archives. Friends student board members and other alumni will be on hand to discuss the preservation work of Special Collections & Archives and to answer any questions you might have.

—ALEC MCLANE, MUSIC LIBRARIAN AND DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD MUSIC ARCHIVES—

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