February 2008

THE MEMORY OF ELIZABETH SWAIM HONORED

Some of you will remember Elizabeth Swaim who worked in Olin Library as Rare Books Librarian and University Archivist from 1964 through 1998 when she retired. She died in May of 2000. Her memory has recently been honored by the Wendell Free Library, located in Wendell, Massachusetts, 10 miles east of Greenfield.

The Wendell Free Library just celebrated the opening of its new building this past summer. This was the culmination of a two-decade-long labor of love for a town with a population of 1,000—this in a time when many public libraries are either reducing their hours or are closing altogether. As part of the library project, Kathleen Swaim, Elizabeth’s sister and chairwoman of the Wendell Free Library trustees, donated the circulation desk and an outdoor stone amphitheater to honor Elizabeth’s memory. The handsome cherry desk was handcrafted by Mark Ragonese of Bellows Falls, Vermont. The amphitheater, while still under construction, will serve as a performance patio for outdoor events.

Pictures of the Wendell Free Library, the circulation desk and amphitheater can be seen at: www.wesleyan.edu/libr/collections/checkitout/swaim.html

— SUSANNE JAVORSKI, ART LIBRARIAN —

From the University Librarian

CONFERENCE ON RESOURCE SHARING AND COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT TO BE HELD AT VASSAR COLLEGE

The Oberlin Group library directors plan to convene a Mellon-sponsored conference at Vassar College in October 2008 on the shaping of library collections. One of the librarians involved in the initial planning for the conference told the amusing story of how a now retired Columbia University librarian use to take the subway, book order slips in hand, to the New York Public Library, where she checked them against the card catalog. If New York Public owned the book, then Columbia would think seriously before acquiring it. This quaint procedure was the extent of cooperative collection development in the pre-electronic age.

Academic libraries have depended for many years on various collaborative agreements to make optimal use of their acquisitions funds. Our own CTW Consortium is 25 years old, and it still thrives. CTW, last month, appointed Lorri Huddy to lead our three-year Mellon project to provide even broader access to additional content in a wide variety of formats. Other library consortia across the United States have had wide experience with cooperative buying. To further consolidate this burgeoning move toward cooperative purchasing, about 100 librarians, faculty, administrators, and students will convene at the Vassar conference to share ideas and plans about the following topics:

The Academic Library User
In her 2007 Scholarship in the Digital Age: Information, Infrastructure, and the Internet, UC Professor Christine Borgman emphasized the discipline-specific nature of change in scholarly content. The Vassar conference will bring together people from the arts, the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences to gain a better understanding about how they conduct their research, where they publish, and precisely how their libraries fit into their work patterns. As we borrow increasing amounts of materials from other institutions, librarians need to determine the maximum acceptable waiting time for scholars to receive remotely held content to arrive for their local use.

Production, Packaging, and Consumption of Research Materials
The participants at the Vassar conference will engage in discussions directly with publishers themselves on the all-important subject of the economic aspects of publishing. There will also be serious conversations about the massive and ambitious Google Book Project. Other topics that the conference aims to address include the issue of institutional repositories, the continued rise in “gray material,” defined as data that is either unpublished or published in nontraditional formats. The e-book phenomenon as well as the all important issue of journal subscriptions will be a high priority as well.

Shaping Collections in the Liberal Arts College Library: The Daily Impact
The Interlibrary Loan department, once a back room operation in most libraries, has had increased visibility as we borrow more and more for our library users. As we store additional content in our institutional repository, the library will continue to collaborate to an even greater degree with Information Technology Services. This collaboration will, in all likelihood, lead to new types of jobs within the library. As librarians, we will also continue to work closely with faculty, especially those who require large data sets and other types of sophisticated digital information as their disciplines become redefined by rapid changes in scholarly communication. There will also be crucial discussions at the Vassar conference about how library budgets, many of which were structured by early 20th-century categories of knowledge, can become more flexible to meet the rapidly changing modes of 21st
DEFINING GENDER, 1450–1910; A NEW SCHOLARLY DATABASE DONATED TO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Wesleyan is fortunate to have access to a new database entitled Defining Gender, 1450–1910 at no cost to the library through the generosity of Sara and Alan Mendelson, who served as contributors to the database. The donation of this resource to our library was made in honor of their son Daniel Mendelson, Class of 2007, and Alan Mendelson’s brother Sander, who graduated from Wesleyan in 1956. We will have access to this database until 2014, at which time the librarians will have had ample opportunity to evaluate its value to the curriculum in order to decide whether to continue with it as a paid subscription.

The database offers a thematically organized collection of documents taken from 21 British and European archives for the “study and analysis of gender, leisure and consumer culture . . . This exciting collection . . . will enrich the teaching and research of those studying history, literature, sociology, education and cultural studies from a gendered perspective. Key topics that are addressed within the thematic areas include advice, appearance, anatomy, beauty, balls, birth, children, diet, dress, education, etiquette, entertaining, domestic service, fashion, games, health, marriage, medicine, midwifery, parents, recipes, religion, sexuality, sport, speech and theatre.” The beautifully designed home page offers fully searchable access to secondary essays, images of the original documents presented in high quality scans, an extensive biographical index, a useful chronology, a sophisticated topical list, and a keyword search index that provides for searching within historical time periods. Students and researchers in this subject area should find Defining Gender to be an especially valuable resource to both primary and secondary source materials. The database is available from the library homepage under INDEXES AND DATABASES.

— ALAN J. NATHANSON, BIBLIOGRAPHER/REFERENCE LIBRARIAN —

STUDENTS FORM BOOK ARTS CLUB IN OLIN PRESERVATION LAB

Delia Casa '07 and I formed the Wesleyan Book Arts Club during the fall 2006 semester. With funding from the WSA, the club purchased supplies such as paper, boards, and thread. We met in the Olin Library Preservation Lab for our first workshop during Reading Week. The five students who met that afternoon each bound their own long-stitched journals/sketchbooks. Other students who had heard about the club expressed interest in our work, and Delia and I requested additional funding at the beginning of spring term to support continuation of the project. In a workshop that took place during two consecutive Saturdays, the club met once again. Participants took advantage of Michelle Biddle’s expertise as well as the tools in the Preservation Lab. I was able to teach five more students the entire process of how to bind a hardcover sketchbook from folding the paper to cutting the pages.

We discovered that many Wesleyan students enjoy working with their hands. At Wesleyan, we are taught to think in abstract concepts. While this kind of education is clearly important to our education, using our manual skills as well deepens our ability to think in concrete terms. Book arts emphasize the interconnectedness of structure and meaning as the structure of a book is directly related to its function. Each step in the bookbinding process is related to a functional goal, and the success of the project is contingent on the binder’s ability to visualize the entire process and plan ahead for the entire process. Which board, for example, should be measured and cut to complement the book cloth that will be glued to it later in the process? This type of rational, goal-oriented thinking trains the eye and hones one’s manual skills. It is a refreshing accompaniment to our more traditional studies at Wesleyan. It is also especially gratifying to instantly view the product of our labor. To construct a book, however rudimentary, has proven to be a great source of self-confidence and pride for the students who worked with me.

Delia Casa, co-founder of the Book Arts Club said, “Though I care about the arts, I haven’t been able to take many classes outside of my majors. Founding the club was a way for me to learn more about bookbinding, which I had studied in high school.”

I consider myself to have been especially fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in the Olin Library Preservation Lab during my entire four years at Wesleyan. I have had an exceptional opportunity to develop my manual skills in a particularly fascinating project. It is my hope that future Wesleyan students will continue the work of the Book Arts Club to help them experience the great satisfaction that comes from intricate manual activity. I would like to suggest that the club be continued under the direction of another interested student who works in the Preservation Lab. We would also like to thank Michelle Biddle for her support of the club, and to Olin Library for allowing us to use the Preservation Lab for our workshops.

— MICHELE CHUN, CLASS OF 2007 —

continued from front page

century-categories of knowledge. Most crucial of all will be a serious exploration about the limits to which we can realistically expect the consortial model to resolve the numerous challenges that libraries now face.

I am especially gratified with the increased level of faculty and student participation on the Scholarly Communications Advisory Committee and Task Forces, and it is my sincere hope that some of this new interest in library issues will encourage some people from these constituencies to attend the conference at Vassar for serious discussion on the best ways to proceed with the complex issues faced by libraries both now and in the future.

— BARBARA JONES, UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN —

BOOK ARTS CLUB IN OLIN PRESERVATION LAB

Delia Casa '07 and I formed the Wesleyan Book Arts Club during the fall 2006 semester. With funding from the WSA, the club purchased supplies such as paper, boards, and thread. We met in the Olin Library Preservation Lab for our first workshop during Reading Week. The five students who met that afternoon each bound their own long-stitched journals/sketchbooks. Other students who had heard about the club expressed interest in our work, and Delia and I requested additional funding at the beginning of spring term to support continuation of the project. In a workshop that took place during two consecutive Saturdays, the club met once again. Participants took advantage of Michelle Biddle’s expertise as well as the tools in the Preservation Lab. I was able to teach five more students the entire process of how to bind a hardcover sketchbook from folding the paper to cutting the pages.

We discovered that many Wesleyan students enjoy working with their hands. At Wesleyan, we are taught to think in abstract concepts. While this kind of education is clearly important to our education, using our manual skills as well deepens our ability to think in concrete terms. Book arts emphasize the interconnectedness of structure and meaning as the structure of a book is directly related to its function. Each step in the bookbinding process is related to a functional goal, and the success of the project is contingent on the binder’s ability to visualize the entire process and plan ahead for the entire process. Which board, for example, should be measured and cut to complement the book cloth that will be glued to it later in the process? This type of rational, goal-oriented thinking trains the eye and hones one’s manual skills. It is a refreshing accompaniment to our more traditional studies at Wesleyan. It is also especially gratifying to instantly view the product of our labor. To construct a book, however rudimentary, has proven to be a great source of self-confidence and pride for the students who worked with me.

Delia Casa, co-founder of the Book Arts Club said, “Though I care about the arts, I haven’t been able to take many classes outside of my majors. Founding the club was a way for me to learn more about bookbinding, which I had studied in high school.”

I consider myself to have been especially fortunate to have had the opportunity to work in the Olin Library Preservation Lab during my entire four years at Wesleyan. I have had an exceptional opportunity to develop my manual skills in a particularly fascinating project. It is my hope that future Wesleyan students will continue the work of the Book Arts Club to help them experience the great satisfaction that comes from intricate manual activity. I would like to suggest that the club be continued under the direction of another interested student who works in the Preservation Lab. We would also like to thank Michelle Biddle for her support of the club, and to Olin Library for allowing us to use the Preservation Lab for our workshops.

— MICHELE CHUN, CLASS OF 2007 —
FRIENDS OF THE WESLEYAN LIBRARY

A screening of the 1997 film Lolita adapted from Vladimir Nabokov’s 1955 novel, sponsored by the Friends of the Wesleyan University Library on November 30, 2007, drew an audience of over 300 to the Goldsmith Family Cinema. The film was followed by a discussion with Stephen L. Schiff, Class of 1972, who was the screenwriter for the film. This event was the first in the Adaptation Series, a collaborative project sponsored by Library Friends and the Center for Film Studies. The series aims to explore the process of translating literary works to the screen.

Schiff’s adaptation of Nabokov’s classic novel about a sexually precocious young woman won praise from New York Times critics for its “imaginative fidelity” and “sensitiv[ity] to Nabokov’s wit as well as his lyricism.” As Schiff’s anecdotes at the event revealed, he faced many challenges as screenwriter, especially because of the controversial subject of the novel. Barbara Jones, University Librarian, commented, “I am thrilled with the selection of Lolita as the first in the Adaptation Series because I am fascinated by the censorship issues surrounding both the publication of the book and the production of the film.”

Judging from the large attendance at the opening event of the series, there is considerable interest at Wesleyan on the subject of literary adaptation to film. Jeanine Basinger, Corwin-Fuller Professor of Film Studies wrote, “The series is sure to be thought-provoking, entertaining, and educational simultaneously.”

Friends of the Wesleyan Library spring events will include workshops on the care and preservation of books, as well as a book sale. Dates for these events, still in the planning stage, will be announced at a later time. If you would like to support our activities, please consider joining the Friends or sign up to receive our mailing list by contacting Jennifer Hadley at jh0hm@wesleyan.edu or (860) 685-3897. The Friends Web site is located at http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/friends/index.html. We also invite you to visit our continuing book sale, located on the first floor of Olin Memorial Library just outside the Smith Reading Room.

— JENNIFER THOM HADLEY, LIBRARY ASSISTANT, SCORES AND RECORDINGS/ WORLD MUSIC ARCHIVES —

EXPLORING STUDENT STUDY SPACE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PROJECT

Ethnographic studies, traditionally considered a tool in anthropological field research, have become increasingly popular in recent years in helping to determine how best to provide the right kind of space for student study areas on college campuses. The conventional method of space design on campuses in the past has often been “top down”: architects and university staff collaborate without necessarily receiving direct input from future users of the space. Ethnographic techniques, on the other hand, make use of gathering data from campus users of academic space through observation or interviews prior to design changes. In fall 2006, a rearrangement of stack space and the installation of compact shelving in the Science Library basement freed up previously used space and provided an opportunity for a team of librarians and information technology staff to test renovating library study space based on designs driven by student feedback. The team at Wesleyan received training in late 2006 from Nancy Foster, lead anthropologist at the University of Rochester libraries, on anthropological techniques for data gathering and interviewing that she had successfully used to renovate library space on her own campus.

The training received from Ms. Foster included three distinct yet interrelated ways to gather information about student behavior and how students use space for studying and other activities. Following the training, the team solicited students to participate in three separate tasks. Each student was asked to perform only one of the three assignments, the results of which were studied by our ethnography team:

• Group 1 took photographs of more than 20 specific locations on campus (for example: a favorite place to study, workspace in their dorms, the place they find most confusing in the library, or coziest place on campus). A member of the ethnography team interviewed each of the student participants about their photographs in order to explain the personal significance of each one.

• Group 2 used campus maps they were given to track the times and locations of their activities on a specific day during which they had classes and studied outside of class. Like Group 1, these students were interviewed about their maps by a member of the ethnography team so they could explain their activities in greater detail.

• Group 3 participated in a design workshop. Students were taken to the space to be converted and asked to imagine that they were hired as the design architect for the new space. They were given markers and large sheets of paper with which to sketch their ideal workspace.

The results of these three different activities provided the ethnography team with significant information on how students use library and other campus space at Wesleyan. As the team studied the data more closely, common themes began to emerge across all three activities, such as the desire for low, comfortable seating for studying, the presence of plants and artwork in study areas, and the option of having small study areas with some sort of barrier in order not to disturb students studying nearby. During the Spring 2007 semester, these themes were extracted from the data by the team members and then “translated” into various furniture and modest redesign options for the space by working with a facilities project manager during the Fall 2007 semester. The team is now seeking funding to make this new study space a reality sometime during the 2008–09 academic year.

— DIANE KLARE, HEAD OF REFERENCE
KENDALL HOBB, REFERENCE/INSTRUCTION LIBRARIAN —
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORY DEBUTS WITH SENIOR THESIS

Many colleges and universities have begun creating “digital repositories” for faculty and students as a way of showcasing original research produced at their institutions. These repositories include everything from faculty publications to student papers. Wesleyan University has now developed a Web site for the scholarly work produced on our campus. The site, a work-in-progress, may be found at http://dspace.library.wesleyan.edu/handle/10090/113. The contents currently include a small selection of student theses and dissertations.

The inspiration to create this repository grew out of a desire to better highlight the excellent work being done by Wesleyan students and faculty. In spring 2007, we began with a pilot project to collect senior honors theses. Fifty student volunteers agreed to submit their papers in exchange for receiving one free printed copy. The test project was a success, with a high response rate. We plan to expand the opportunity to submit electronic copies to all senior thesis writers this year. There is also considerable interest in digitizing theses and dissertations from past years.

Some faculty and students were concerned that if they submitted their papers electronically, there would no longer be a paper copy kept in the archives. A paper copy of each thesis and dissertation written at Wesleyan will still be retained by Special Collections and Archives; there are no plans to discontinue collecting the physical copies. The availability of digitized copies decreases the wear and tear on the hard copies. It also has the advantage of making Wesleyan theses available to anyone with an Internet connection, which will greatly increase the readership—and the influence—of each thesis. West Virginia University, an early innovator in electronic theses and dissertations, estimated that electronic theses were accessed an astonishing 145,000 percent more than the paper ones. It has also been noted that theses available electronically are cited 2–5 times more often. We do not have statistics on Wesleyan theses yet, but informal feedback has been positive.

The institutional repository is a joint project between the Library and the Information Technology Services. The collaboration is a great success, and we look forward to continuing to develop it. Future items that might be included are graduate theses and dissertations, faculty papers and pre-prints, conference proceedings, and perhaps even historical material from the Wesleyan University Archives. We are committed to maintaining the integrity of our paper collections while increasing their availability and use through electronic technologies.

If you have any questions about Wesleyan’s digital repository, please contact Valerie Gillispie at vgillispie@wesleyan.edu.

— Valerie Gillispie, Assistant University Archivist —

50% of the pre-1990 library book collection needs repair. Help the library preserve these valuable resources by handling library books carefully.

Funding for CHECK IT OUT IS PROVIDED BY THE FRIENDS OF THE WESLEYAN LIBRARY