A mild-mannered but very engaged faculty member called me recently, and with a sigh asked, “Why doesn’t the online catalog work better for users?” I assured him that the librarians share many of his concerns about this issue, and that we are working to make it more user-friendly. Serious changes have really begun in earnest.

To demonstrate this fact, go first to the library home page, and in the left column click “Indexes and Databases Beta Test Site.” This new way of accessing Wesleyan’s numerous indexes and databases is an important step towards a Web 2.0 presentation of information of various types, easily searchable, and in the case of indexes and databases, without having to scroll tediously through the lengthy alphabetical listing of these resources. We are especially interested in your reaction to the Beta Test Site, and we would much appreciate your opinions about it.

Wesleyan University Library has recently appointed Steve Bischof (currently Wesleyan’s science librarian), to be our new systems/discovery librarian. Although this is a Wesleyan position, Steve will work closely with the CTW Consortium to explore ways to implement changes in our shared online catalog to make it more user-friendly. Steve will lead a group of librarians from the Consortium and ITS staff from Wesleyan who will look at the ways in which library users work at the present time. Some issues they will address include what search terms and strategies users are likely to employ, and what they expect to find in the library catalog. The group will then work to implement changes to the catalog that best reflect the ways in which our users work.

User expectations of privacy are a major concern to us. Recent research indicates that the younger the library user, the less concern they have about individual privacy on the Internet. Faculty and librarians of all ages are more concerned about privacy than student users, and privacy is an issue that we will address in any redesign of our online catalog.

We will apply our conclusions about user needs in our investigation of the library systems marketplace, so that we construct a catalog most suitable to Wesleyan’s requirements. We believe users want all formats of information to be noted in one resource, even if the “locations” of the actual content may differ. For example, some content will be on the physical shelves of Olin. Some might be at Trinity, while some might reside in the institutional repository currently under construction. Format will vary from e-books to student theses to online data sets. We are also well aware that amazon.com and Google are extremely popular and familiar search engines for many users. We do not intend to fight this reality but, rather, to adapt to it.

Steve Bischof’s new position is called systems/discovery librarian for a good reason. The new Caleb will be about using, to best advantage, digital tools to serve the library user. Wesleyan Library’s role is precisely that — to understand the process of information searching so that we can better assist our users to locate what they really want and need. But we also want to construct a system to help you discover for yourselves. Our goal is to make Caleb do just that.

— BARBARA JONES, UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN —
THE GLORY THAT WAS ROME

Tourists in Rome do not always find it easy to make out the stories told in the hundreds of ancient reliefs that decorate walls, arches, and fountains scattered around the city. To the rescue comes Olin Library’s Special Collections with a striking volume of 81 etchings, which allows us to see these remains, if not exactly with the eyes of the ancients, at least in a more pristine state.

Admiranda Romanarum antiquitatum ac veteris sculpturae vestigia anaglyphico opere elaborata,… [“The wonderful remains of Roman antiquities and old sculpture worked in bas relief; from marble originals currently existing on arches and old ruins on the Capitoline hill and in the palaces and gardens of the most important men in Rome drawn and etched by Pietro Santi Bartoli with antique elegance…”] was printed without a date in Rome by Giovanni Giacomo De Rossi (1627–91), who tells us that he took charge of the project and bore all the costs.

The volume begins with an etching of the famous triumphal procession of the Emperor Titus following his victory over the Jews and the Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, which decorated the Arch of Titus at the southeastern end of the Roman Forum. In Bartoli’s plates it is easy to discern the Jewish ritual objects captured by the Romans, but the publisher has added helpful footnotes identifying the “golden table,” the libation ladle, the trumpets, and the golden seven-armed candelabrum. We proceed from the Arch of Titus to the nearby Arch of Constantine, then back to the Capitol and the sculptures from the demolished Arch of Marcus Aurelius. The publisher then takes us on a treasure hunt of Rome’s leading villas and palaces in search of ancient sculptural fragments and reliefs. One of the most intriguing features of Olin’s book is what it reveals about Roman aristocratic antiquities collections: who in the 1600s owned a particular famous work that we now see in the museums? Print curator Clare Rogan spotted pieces of the celebrated Ara Pacis, Augustus’ Altar of Peace (now reconstructed), in the Villa Medici, for example, and there are surely other discoveries to be made.

The book was the brainchild of Rome’s most prolific print publisher in the late 17 century. Giovanni Giacomo de Rossi knew that foreign visitors and educated collectors had a limitless appetite for images of ancient Rome, but it was not cost effective to commission new designs in a competitive print industry where piracy was the norm. De Rossi shrewdly maneuvered to win monopoly protection for his plates from Pope Alexander VII (1656–67). With papal backing, for which he gratefully dedicated the book to the pope’s nephew Cardinal Flavio Chigi, De Rossi could invest in designs from the city’s leading etchers, secure in the knowledge that he could sell them profitably. Olin Library’s volume brings together publisher, etcher, and patrons, the trinity responsible for the success of the De Rossi print shop and for its remarkable documentation of antiquities now all but vanished.

—LAURIE NUSSSDORFER, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND LETTERS, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY —

NEW INDEXES AND DATABASES SEARCH INTERFACE LAUNCHED

The spring 2008 semester marks the debut of a new software interface, Metalib, for searching the list of 180-plus indexes and databases to which the library subscribes. Indexes and databases provide access to discipline-specific information generated from scholarly journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, newspapers, and reference materials for both students and faculty in their research endeavors. Metalib has been adopted by many academic institutions in recent years due to its flexibility and customization features.
FRIENDS OF THE WESLEYAN LIBRARY

The Friends welcomed Karl Scheibe, director of the Wash Center for Retired Faculty and professor emeritus of psychology as the new chair of the Friends Board. Richard Adelstein, professor of economics, now serves as vice-chair, and Anne Thompson is the secretary. The Board is exploring new strategies such as membership expansion and special events in order to support the valuable collections and work of the Wesleyan University Libraries.

The spring calendar began in March with a powerful exhibit in the lobby of Olin Library of a print series by Amos Paul Kennedy Jr. entitled “Fourteen Quotes from Rosa Louise Parks, Civil Rights Activist.” Kennedy, a highly-regarded letterpress printer, papermaker, and builder of artists’ books who gave a talk for the Friends to a standing-room-only crowd in October 2006, loaned his works to us in honor of Women’s History Month. Kennedy returned to Wesleyan last month as a guest lecturer, and he agreed to display and sell other prints, with a portion of the proceeds to benefit the Friends.

On April 22nd, Friends members joined Suzy Taraba, head of Special Collections and university archivist, in a workshop entitled “Artists’ Books 101” for a hands-on look at some of the most fascinating books in Wesleyan collections. Artists’ books embody the book as an object, a text, and a work of art and make the reader think about the act of reading and the nature of the book, often in subtle ways. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to spend time examining these works in the stately setting of the Davison Rare Book Room in Special Collections. On May 7th, the Friends cosponsored another talk in Special Collections. In conjunction with an exhibit at the Davison Art Center entitled “Music and Modernism in the Graphic Arts 1860–1910,” Stephanie Weiner, associate professor of English, spoke on “Decadent Christians and Cricketer-Aesthetes: A New View of the 1980s in Art Press Books” and explored the connections between poetry and the visual art of book illustration of the period.

On May 10, the Friends will hold a book sale in Olin lobby. Though not as large as the mega-sale held in 2006 (the first sale in 20 years), this one will have much to offer book collectors of all kinds.

If you would like to find out more about Friends events or to become a member, please contact Jennifer Hadley at jthom@wesleyan.edu or (860) 685-3897. 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, DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES —

Dot Samson (continued from page 1)

devoted to her job of providing a high level of timely support service to both students and faculty. Dot mastered the use of numerous online library systems including Voyager, the Docutek E-Reserve system, FrontPage, MS-Office, and MS-Access. She also created numerous templates and forms to make our course reserve system run efficiently and smoothly. Procedures that Dot established for Reserves/E-Reserves will continue to be used for many years to come.

Needless to say, her personality, dedication, and contributions will be sorely missed in the Reserve Department. We all, therefore, thank Dot Samson for all her accomplishments and contributions to Olin Library, and we wish her the very best as she moves on to the next phase of her life.

— EUNJOO LEE, HEAD OF ACCESS SERVICES —

Metalib will offer many benefits to both the users of our databases as well as the library staff members who update and maintain this list for the Wesleyan community. Metalib offers a number of search options for users that are unavailable in the previous search interface while it also preserves some of its organizational structure. Under development since fall 2007, the new interface can be searched in a number of ways: by overarching discipline (social sciences or natural sciences), by specific subject (e.g., history or psychology), the specific name of the database (e.g., Historical Abstracts), or by database type (index to articles, data/statistics, images, etc).

In addition, the new interface suggests some “starting points” which cover books and many of the more important and commonly subscribed academic journals and magazines in a variety of disciplines. This is the default option when entering the system. For shorter projects and general research, these might be all that users will require. If they need more, they can select a specific subject area or discipline from a list of indexes that are the most likely to be useful for research in that discipline.

If searchers are looking for a specific index or database they are already familiar with, searching for it under the “Title” tab is the quickest way to get there. The “Search” tab is another way to search for a specific index, or to search for many indexes using a variety of search criteria. For example, users can search for all “Data and Statistics” sources (a type of database) relevant to “Social Sciences” (a discipline). The steps above outline how to find specific indexes and databases to access and search: find an index, click on the title to open that index, and search it. There also is an option to search across more than one database at the same time by using Metalib’s own search interface. To access this feature, users should click the “CrossSearch” option. Enter a keyword, an author, a title, or other search term(s) to look for items in the Wesleyan Library Catalog, the WorldCat index of books in many different libraries, and Academic OneFile’s extensive list of academic journals and magazines. Currently, the library is testing this option with these few indexes. Searching across several different databases at the same time might be useful if the purpose is to obtain only a few relevant results, but testing has indicated that connecting to and searching in subject-specific databases individually produces more precise and more extensive results.

—DIANE KLARE, HEAD OF REFERENCE AND KENDALL HOBBS, REFERENCE/INSTRUCTION LIBRARIAN—
SYSTEMS/DISCOVERY LIBRARIAN AND WHY WE NEED ONE AT WESLEYAN

On July 1, 2008 Steve Bischof, who during the past eight years has served as resource assessment and then science librarian at Wesleyan, will become systems/discovery librarian. The position is a new one for Wesleyan, having been reorganized from the collection development librarian position that became vacant after Ed Allen’s retirement last summer. Reconfiguration of the position was not a decision the library made lightly; collection development continues to be of vital importance in providing students and faculty with the resources they need for teaching, learning, and research. After an outside consulting firm, however, analyzed the library’s organization last year and recommended implementing the reconfiguration, the librarians weighed the pros and cons and made the decision to implement this change.

It is now about 30 years since libraries have had online systems and systems librarians to manage them. The new systems/discovery librarian’s responsibilities at Wesleyan will include traditional systems work—creating links between a variety of library, campus, and vendor computer systems, downloading data into the online catalog, and working with staff to automate and streamline their work. But as more of the library’s collections have become electronic, traditional ways of locating library materials are proving inadequate. Many electronic resources contain thousands of items—journals, books, images, musical works, or datasets—and it is sometimes difficult to provide direct access to these items through the library catalog. Straight alphabetical lists of electronic journals and databases were useful when there were only a handful of electronic titles, but that model is far less useful now that Wesleyan has access to literally hundreds of databases and thousands of electronic journals.

The library profession is exploring a variety of new applications to make it easy for people to discover and use information resources, whether or not the library actually owns them, and regardless of the format they are in. This is the “Discovery” part of the systems/discovery librarian’s job—developing and implementing applications so that students and faculty can easily “discover” and use the resources they need. In recent years, libraries have conducted interesting, if not always successful, projects to improve access. Federated searching is one example of performing a single search simultaneously in a large number of databases. This is clearly a tantalizing concept, but one that has yet to become fully realized. New catalog interfaces or “skins” are being developed that allow people to easily refine their searches until they have a list of just the resources they are interested in. These have been more successful but there is still room for technical improvements. Wesleyan librarians are interested in these projects and clearly understand their promise, but with their many other responsibilities they have had little time to evaluate or implement new access models.

This is what Steve will be working to implement as systems/discovery librarian. Steve has a background in systems and already does a variety of library systems work for Wesleyan and the CTW Consortium (Connecticut College, Trinity College and Wesleyan University). In addition, he understands the current trends in library discovery tools and has new and innovative ideas about how these might be implemented to improve our library services. Steve is deeply committed to working with librarians, staff, faculty, and students to create ways to make it easy to access library and other information resources.

And what is the library doing about collection development and the Science Library? We have distributed some collection development responsibilities among several other librarians to ensure that all subject areas are just as well-covered as they have been in the past. A search is currently underway for a new science librarian and furthermore, Steve will continue as science librarian until his replacement has been hired.

— PAT TULLY, ASSOCIATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN —