

CHECK IT OUT

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

May 2006

SCIENCE LIBRARY RENOVATION AND NEW COMPACT SHELVING

One of the ongoing and most labor-intensive responsibilities of librarians at Wesleyan is to evaluate library space and how best to configure it to meet the needs of its users. In the past two years, this process has produced three major projects. Already completed is the de-accessioning of extra copies of selected titles for which the library owned three or more copies. The JSTOR journal review initiative, begun in spring 2006, will examine the bound journals in the library stacks that are also available electronically through JSTOR (a digital provider of academic journals mainly in the humanities and social sciences). Physical access, when necessary, will be maintained through the 5-College Library Depository, of which Wesleyan is a member. Removal of selected JSTOR titles will create much-needed stack space for additional book acquisitions to support our curriculum and research.

The third phase of the ongoing library space evaluation will be the installation of compact shelving in the basement of the Science Library beginning in summer 2006. When the project is completed in early 2007, the amount of shelf space will be double its current capacity, which will allow for another 15 years of collection growth. The renovation will also include upgrades to the HVAC system, which is original to the construction of the Science Tower in the 1960s.

continued on page 3

WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY

From the University Librarian

WHAT MAKES THE WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES UNIQUE?

The library frequently hosts tours and orientations for other university departments, as well as for outside visitors. Because we are eager to show our library facilities, and to convey a sense of our ever-changing role on campus, we are very pleased to offer these introductory tours. In one recently held session, we discussed how 21st-century libraries and library work require a new *lingua franca*, technological expertise, and specialization reflecting the rapid changes in academic research and curricular interests. Because of the broad interests of Wesleyan University faculty and students, we must also depend on other libraries to provide Wesleyan students and faculty with access to research materials they need for their work. A large and ever growing percentage of this material is delivered to our users electronically, while much of it still arrives as a photocopy or the actual book from the lending library. This arrangement is, of course, reciprocal, since we lend large amounts of our materials to other libraries that do not own them. A recent question from a Wesleyan staff member was, "If academic libraries are all buying the same books and journals, then what makes Wesleyan's library unique?" Thinking about this important question, I would like to share some of my thoughts about what makes Wesleyan libraries "unique."

First, there is the importance and the significance of the library as a "place." Is the facility physically attractive and does the ambience help to encourage study, thought, and quiet reflection? When a library is considered in this way, I believe that Olin Library takes high honors. Librarians often hear students say, "On the campus tour, when I stood in the Campbell Reference Center and gazed

out onto Andrus Field, I chose Wesleyan." There is something wonderful about the fact that Wesleyan students actually refer to the library as "Club Olin." The splendid entrance to Olin Library was designed by McCoy, Meade, and White and it was completed in 1928. The marble, brass, mosaic floor, and chandeliers, all highlighted in the morning sunshine, are truly an example of magnificent and harmonious architectural design. Many of my library colleagues at other colleges work in late 20th-century brick or concrete block boxes with no distinctive architectural features except that of efficient design. Olin Library's historical importance as a building demands specialized maintenance and care, but I believe that Olin Library as a place is well worth the expense. The building clearly contributes to our uniqueness. Since the addition of the Information Commons in 2005 as well as other innovations, we have proven that a neo-classical building can be redesigned to foster an innovative 21st learning environment, while it retains the beauty and the glory of an earlier architectural style.

A library's holdings are, of course, a vital component of what makes it unique. It is true, as the staff member asked during the tour, that the collections of most liberal arts college libraries are similar, especially since libraries increasingly purchase licensed "bundles" of electronic journal subscriptions from distributors. But the special collections and institutional archives that every library maintains and preserves are unique to each institution. These often include the scholarly production of our faculty. These special collections are also expensive to maintain; they require security, climate-controlled storage, physical repair, and careful monitoring of use. Like the

continued on next page



Olin Library building, our especially rich special collections are well worth the investment. Through these collections we can ensure that humanities majors learn to use primary manuscript resources in a “laboratory for the humanities,” just as science students use a chemistry laboratory. Olin Library’s special collections, consisting of rare books, priceless first editions of the classics in literature and history, as well as the archival history of the university and a first-rate collection of local history materials, is priceless in every sense of the word. At the present time a music scholar from Japan is using the John Cage papers in Olin Library. These original papers are, of course, unique, and he cannot do his research anywhere else. Even digitized copies of these papers are not adequate for the kind of research in which the originals must be consulted.

Wesleyan’s Special Collections and Archives also serves the Middletown community. The proprietor of a local delicatessen told me recently how much he appreciates the easy accessibility of our Special Collections and Suzy Taraba’s course on the history of the book. The year 2006 will be Wesleyan University’s 175th anniversary, and Special Collections and Archives will provide exhibitions of long-ago images of Wesleyan and of Middletown that are simply unavailable elsewhere. Since the Wesleyan libraries began to collect books during the mid-19th century, our general stack collections are also especially rich with books and other materials that many newer institutions simply do not possess.

Personal research service and instruction for Wesleyan students is offered by trained research librarians. This service, generally not available in other academic libraries is, in my opinion, one of the features that distinguishes the Wesleyan libraries from other research-oriented libraries. Wesleyan students are able to quickly arrange one-on-one research sessions with a librarian who is a subject specialist in the field the student wishes to work. Our subject specialists are easily approachable and they are eager either to help with a specific research project or to teach general research skills through a variety of information literacy

sessions in which students can learn to distinguish a peer-reviewed research journal from a non-credentialed newsletter or an anonymously posted Web site of dubious research value. Students learn which of Wesleyan’s discipline specific databases are most appropriate for their research, and they receive instruction on how to perform accurate online searches that will reveal the best possible resources for their research.

The research services offered to students at Wesleyan are valuable not only for the research project currently at hand, but will provide students with lifelong skills and research expertise as well as self-confidence in locating and critically evaluating information sources both in their university careers and beyond. The librarians believe strongly that information proficiency is a fundamental skill, indeed, one of the new campus “essential capabilities” that underlies a broad undergraduate education. If our students wish, they are also welcome in the libraries to be left alone to engage in their independent pursuits. They may, for example, curl up in a comfortable easy chair with an art book to anticipate an upcoming trip to the art galleries of Europe or elsewhere. Independent, private, quiet, unfettered interaction with literature, music, and art is still what many of students still value, and that possibility will always be encouraged in the Wesleyan libraries.

I frequently advise both parents and prospective students to view these important library-related issues when they are choosing between a large university and a smaller liberal arts college. It is no exaggeration for me to state that the Wesleyan University Library is one of the finest and, indeed, unique college libraries in the United States in terms of physical beauty, depth and breadth of collections, and service to students and faculty, and the community at large.

— BARBARA JONES, UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN



The basement currently holds bound science journals (some dating back to the 19th century), half of the Science Library monograph collection, and surveys. As the project gets underway, the floor will be cleared of its contents. The monograph collection will be relocated to the second floor of the Science Library along with some bound science journals that are not available online. The balance of the collection in the basement, along with the Cutter Collection (a lesser-used resource that is located on the Science Library's second floor), will be temporarily relocated off-site until the project is completed.

The compact shelving will be electronically controlled by library users and will allow for a limited number of shelving rows to be moved at any one time within a section. The mobility of the shelves is made possible through the use of tracks that are installed in the floor and guide the shelves from side to side. By reducing the amount of walking space between the rows of shelves in any one section, the library will be able to gain additional shelf space for books and bound journals. Safety features will include sensors so that the shelves will become immobile should someone be in between two sets of shelves while browsing the collection. In addition to open compact shelving, the basement will also include a separate caged area of compact shelving to secure valuable materials currently stored off-site.

When the construction is completed in late November 2006 and the collection is returned by January 2007, it will include the science bound journals, the integrated psychology bound journals currently housed in the Science Library "annex," the Cutter Collection, items from Special Collections and Archives stored off-site, and books currently in storage in the basement of Amato's Toy Store on Main Street and in the basement of the Public Affairs Center (PAC).

The purpose of this project is to create room for collection growth and to provide Wesleyan library users with a centralized location for many items that are currently not accessible, available only on a recall basis and, therefore, not browseable. The renovated space, in addition, will offer a more secure area for those resources that the library owns but should be housed in a more controlled location than is currently available. In this manner, the library will continue to provide and preserve the deep and rich collection of both contemporary and historical resources for our research needs for the foreseeable future.

—DIANE KLARE, SCIENCE REFERENCE LIBRARIAN

175 YEARS OF WESLEYAN "STUFF" IN THE ARCHIVES

As the campus gears up to celebrate Wesleyan's 175th anniversary, many little-known facts about our history are coming to light. Did you know that a Wesleyan student held the world's record for holding his breath in the late 1920s? Were you aware that a Wesleyan man was the governor of Alaska from 1909 to 1913? How about the extracurricular activities of students in the 1830s, including a club devoted to vegetarianism and another to missionary activities?

In addition to the expected documents that support research into these and other burning questions about Wesleyan history, the University Archives is a treasure trove of memorabilia, more colloquially known as "stuff" from our past. These items are far more than just paper records. For example, we have a modest—but interesting—collection of T-shirts of the past, including several from student gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning groups. We have freshman beanies from the 1930s and longtime English professor and University librarian Caleb T. Winchester's commencement robe. Wedgewood china featuring Wesleyan buildings can be seen in an exhibit case on the third floor of Olin. Splendid trophies, 19th-century footballs, and the field hockey ball used in the first Wesleyan intercollegiate field hockey match—an early artifact from women's athletics in the second period of coeducation—are on display in the SC&A reception area. The top hat box of Willbur Fisk, Wesleyan's first president, and his personalized fire bucket remind us that material culture can open up new avenues to understanding past customs and technology. An enormous collection of scrapbooks and 19th-century photo albums offer visual and material records of the past, along with significant preservation issues. A 1909 Wesleyan Taft Day button documents a presidential campus visit. A fraternity balloting box from the early 1920s, with its original white and black marbles, reminds us that the phrase "to black ball someone" (that is, to vote against him or her) comes from a physical object. All of these artifacts, and many more, can be studied—for academic purposes or just for fun—in the Wesleyan University Archives. "Lost and Found Wesleyan," an exhibition focusing on old and new customs, will feature some of the unusual artifacts in the Archives. The exhibit will be on display in Olin from May 25 through the summer.

—SUZY TARABA, HEAD OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND UNIVERSITY ARCHIVIST





SUMMARY OF LIBRARY NEWS 2005/2006 WITH A LOOK TO THE NEAR FUTURE

The Information Commons opened in September 2005, offering an expansion of study space and an increased number of computers on the first floor of Olin Library. Furniture and equipment for this area include a total of 26 computer workstations, plenty of chairs, a scanner, and a color printer as well as two new laser printers. In addition to the traditional research assistance available at the Reference Desk, the Commons also offers technical support staff for the use of the computers, software programs, and the printers during the same hours that the Reference Desk is open. Room 106, adjacent to the Information Commons, hosts writing tutors who are available several evenings per week for drop-in consultations. The Information Commons also has a SARN (Student Academic Resources Network) representative available to assist students with questions involving the Math Workshop, the Career Resource Center, the Language Resource Center, Life Sciences Mentored Study Groups, the Dean's Tutoring Program, the Health Professions Partnership Initiative, and the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program. In short, the Information Commons offers one-stop shopping for students seeking information and help on a wide variety of topics, and it has proven to be a very popular study space for our students this year.

- Trillian, an online chat room program, was set up in September 2005. This program allows students to contact a Reference Librarian for real-time reference or research questions from either AOL Instant Messenger, MSN Messenger, and Yahoo Messenger.
- Many new databases were added to Wesleyan's collection of online resources

during this academic year. Some of the highlights here include Early English Books Online and the Eighteenth Century Collections Online (which offer digitized versions of the full text of all books and other printed materials published in Great Britain from 1475 through 1800), the Value Line Investment Survey, Westlaw Campus, Smithsonian Global Sound, the Architectural Index, and others.

Looking ahead to the immediate future, faculty and students can look forward to the Wesleyan University Library's book sale scheduled for the Exley Science Center lobby on May 13. By the beginning of next fall term, the library will be well underway with the compact shelving project described in greater detail elsewhere in this newsletter. When completed later in the year, science periodicals, a large percentage of materials currently held in off-site storage, and the Cutter Collection presently on the second floor of Science Library will be housed in the compact shelving. This means that a large percentage of library materials that until now were available only by special retrieval request will be available for open stack browsing. Also, by the end of 2006 the library's JSTOR Journal Review Project (See Check It Out, February 2006, page 2) will be well underway. This will enable us to provide for additional stack space to accommodate future collection growth, and also to investigate the possibility of creating additional attractive study spaces within Olin Library.

—ALAN J. NATHANSON, BIBLIOGRAPHER/REFERENCE LIBRARIAN



LIBRARY DEPARTMENTAL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

OLIN LIBRARY, FRONT DESK	685-2660
REFERENCE AND RESEARCH	685-3873
CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT	685-3877
RESERVE OFFICE	685-3852
INTERLIBRARY LOAN.....	685-3876
ACQUISITIONS DEPARTMENT	685-3834
CATALOGING DEPARTMENT	685-3476
SERIALS DEPARTMENT	685-3888
ART LIBRARY	685-3327
PSYCHOLOGY LIBRARY	685-2770
PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT	685-3875
SCIENCE LIBRARY	685-2860
SCORES AND RECORDINGS	685-3898
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS/ARCHIVES....	685-3864
WORLD MUSIC ARCHIVES.....	685-3826



Check It Out is a publication of the Wesleyan University Libraries that has been published three to four times annually since 1998. Its purpose is to offer timely information to students, faculty, and staff of recent developments in library technologies and resources available at Wesleyan that will assist them in using the libraries in the most effective ways possible.

Articles are contributed by library staff members, and the publication is edited by Alan J. Nathanson, bibliographer/reference librarian, anathanson@wesleyan.edu, (860) 685-3869.

FUNDING FOR CHECK IT OUT IS PROVIDED BY THE FRIENDS OF THE WESLEYAN LIBRARY