The reading room of the Law Library in January Hall, early 1920s. Today the building is home to the East Asian Library, which consists almost entirely of materials in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. The two libraries still share something in common. The new Law Library, located in Anheuser-Busch Hall, boasts one of the premier research collections on the legal systems of modern-day China and Japan.
MOST OF US, I suspect, appreciate the thrill of a good hunt, but ultimately we like to find what we’re looking for. These days, with more information at our fingertips than we could ever navigate in a lifetime, it is crucial that we at least know where to find good help.

Much of this issue of Off the Shelf focuses on the evolving role of Washington University Libraries in the digital age and the increasing importance of close collaboration—with our faculty and students, our supporters in the community, and our fellow institutions.

Collaboration is essential to understanding the impact of new technologies. How to reap the rewards, and how to limit the risks, are lessons that can be learned more effectively, and more enjoyably, when people share something in common—like the library.

In this issue, we address one of the largest technological issues facing libraries today: the mass digitization of the printed word. As millions of books, journals, and other publications become available electronically, librarians are rethinking the services we provide, emphasizing speed, convenience, precision, and seamless integration of our widely varied collections.

Technology is also transforming how we organize our physical space. As we grow with the University as a whole, we are devoting more room to inspiring, technologically rich spaces that allow for quiet study, collaborative work, and innovative research.

At the same time, we find ourselves falling back on the things that make our libraries special. A digital archive of civil rights-era oral histories, an uncommon collection of German texts, and the unique bequest of a highly unusual collector are just three of the treasures highlighted here that you will find nowhere else in the world.

I’m pleased to be able to share with you some of the exciting developments unfolding at Washington University Libraries. I hope you enjoy this issue and find something here that you’ve been looking for.

SHIRLEY K. BAKER
Vice Chancellor for Scholarly Resources & Dean of University Libraries

ON THE COVER
Images from Washington University Libraries’ online exhibitions and digital archives. For more, visit www.digital.wustl.edu.
LIBRARIES HOST SATIRIST CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

In February, the University Libraries sponsored an Assembly Series lecture by novelist and political satirist Christopher Buckley. Buckley reminisced about his education, travels, years as a political operative, and adventures in publishing, often eliciting laughter and applause from the audience in Graham Chapel. The recent movie Thank You for Smoking is based on Buckley’s novel by the same name.

Born in 1952, Buckley graduated from Yale University; his father is William F. Buckley Jr. At just 24 years of age, Christopher Buckley became managing editor of Esquire magazine.

Five years later, he published his first bestselling novel, Shining Through Bamboula: The World of a Tramp Freightler, and became chief speech writer to then Vice President George H.W. Bush. Fortune magazine called him “the quintessential political novelist of his time,” and Tom Wolfe declared him “one of the funniest writers in the English language.” Buckley has won the Washington Irving Medal for Literary Excellence and the Thurber Prize for American Humor.


Friends of the Libraries were invited to a reception that preceded the lecture. Attendees were able to converse with Buckley and have books autographed. Seats at the lecture were reserved for guests of the Libraries.

Buckley’s talk was the Libraries’ annual Neureuther Lecture. Financial support was provided by an endowment left by alumna Carol Neureuther, who sought to encourage the lifelong enjoyment of reading. Previous speakers have included Marian Wright Edelman, Salman Rushdie, Frank McCourt, and many other highly respected authors.

In addition to this lecture, Neureuther’s endowment purchases scores of books each year for the Libraries’ Popular Literature Collection and supports an annual student book collecting essay competition that is now in its 20th year.

PETITIONS GO ON DISPLAY

On March 3, the Washington University Libraries hosted a reception and exhibition of the original 1846 petitions filed by Dred and Harriet Scott asking the St. Louis Circuit Court to grant them their freedom. The documents, which were transported under armed guard to the Department of Special Collections in Olin Library, were on temporary loan by arrangement with the Missouri State Archives.

The reception capped off a three-day symposium commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Supreme Court’s infamous decision to deny the Scotts their freedom. That decision, which declared that blacks had no rights as U.S. citizens, exacerbated tensions between the North and South just before the Civil War.

The symposium (co-sponsored by the College of Arts & Sciences, the School of Law, and the University Libraries) featured over 30 prominent legal scholars and historians, including some of the country’s foremost authorities on the Dred Scott case. Over 200 people participated, including many Washington University students, faculty, K-12 educators from the St. Louis public schools, and the family of Lynne Madison Jackson, great-great-granddaughter of Dred and Harriett Scott.

The petitions that were on display in Olin Library represent only a small fraction of court documents related to the Dred Scott case. On view in Olin Library, were on temporary loan by arrangement with the Missouri State Archives, in cooperation with the Office of the St. Louis Circuit Court.

NATURE AND LANDSCAPE FEATURED IN SHOW OF ARTISTS’ BOOKS

In April and May, Olin Library was the site of an exhibition of 153 books designed and fabricated by more than 80 book artists from around the world. Entitled ARCADIA ID EST: ARTISTS’ BOOKS, NATURE, AND LANDSCAPE, this traveling exhibition was produced by the Centre for Fine Print Research at the University of the West of England in Bristol, and has traveled throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, and the United States.

The exhibition examined the many ways book artists have used nature and the landscape to observe or comment on the world. From traditional pictorial works to commentary on social, ecological, or political issues, the books depicted landscapes ranging from 18th-century English countryside to the industrial and nuclear waste of urbanized societies.

In conjunction with the exhibition, a free panel discussion and opening reception were held and a group of Washington University students took part in a book-making workshop entitled Arcadia and the Metropolitan Landscape, offered through the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts.

NATURAL HISTORY FEATURES IN SHOW OF ARTISTS’ BOOKS

This May, an exhibition highlighting Department of Special Collections opened in Olin Library. Entitled CELEBRATING RESEARCH, the exhibit features some of the many unique and outstanding books, manuscripts, media, and artifacts that enrich research here at the University.

Among the many treasures on display are handwritten drafts and notes by such writers as Samuel Clemens, Walt Whitman, Tennessee Williams, and Samuel Beckett; a rare and lavishly illustrated 1896 edition of the works of Geoffrey Chaucer; street car plans and photographs from the St. Louis Car Company; original magazine artwork by legendary illustrator Al Parker; ancient cuneiform tablets and Egyptian papyri; and historical letters documenting the founding and early development of Washington University.

Celebrating Research coincides with the upcoming release this fall of a new book by the same title, published by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and featuring profiles on rare and unique collections at dozens of major academic libraries. The ARL membership includes the libraries of some 125 leading North American research institutions.

The exhibit, which is on display in the Grand Starcase lobby and Gorgias Reading Room in Olin Library, will run throughout the summer.

ON THE COVER

A Look Back:
EVENTS & EXHIBITION NOTES

The text in this Inside Back is conveniently located in the Preservation Unit. For evaluation and treatment, damaged books are removed from their original spines and reattached if possible. The materials chosen at left are from a recent exhibit prepared by Preservation Unit staff members Anthony Delauriers, Mary Whitely, and Roxanne House, highlighting the Libraries’ efforts to repair damaged materials and prevent damage before it occurs. Library users are invited to handle library books with care. For more on the Preservation Unit and links to preservation resources of the Unit, visit www.library.wustl.edu/units/preservation.

© From the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, printed in 1486 at William Morris’s Kelmscott Press; © 2010

© Death mask of the poet James Merrill (1926-1986) by John Hodge

© Friends of the Libraries

© Mary Butkus

© Aaron Welborn

© Christopher Buckley

© John Hodge

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When Washington University’s first main library (now Ridgley Hall) opened in 1905, browsing was not exactly encouraged. As at many other serious research institutions, the books were kept in “closed stacks.” To get your hands on one, you had to check the card catalog, write down the call number, then take a seat in the reading room (now Holmes Lounge) while a “runner” set off down a shadowy corridor, often candle-in-hand, to fetch it for you. If you needed something after hours, tough luck!

Fast forward to the 1960s and the unveiling of the John M. Olin Library, complete with modern architecture, stylish furnishings, longer hours, and “open stacks” inviting you to help yourself. The new building brought some big changes, but they paled in comparison to what was to come. In 1974, the library began the long process of automation that would lead to its first computerized card catalog almost ten years later. Less than ten years after that, the internet would change everything.

Like every other aspect of campus life, the library has evolved with the times. Today Olin Library and the University’s 13 school or departmental libraries offer convenient access to materials and computers, well-appointed facilities, late hours (plus the coffee to get you through them), and a “digital library” that never closes. Need something after hours? You’re probably in luck!

Though the improvements have been swift and dramatic, the pace of technological change is constantly accelerating. Today online and electronic resources account for nearly half the Libraries’ acquisitions budget, a percentage that is expected to rise. As new technologies become familiar fixtures of our daily lives, most of us are devoting more time to checking our e-mail and less to checking out conventional books. Increasingly, students and faculty are calling for seamless digital access to all information, with everything easy to find, download, and manipulate from the convenience of a single screen, on campus or off.

The key to all of this is digitization: the conversion of words, images, and sounds into digital bits that can be compressed, searched, and retrieved at previously unimaginable speeds. Writing about digitization and the powerful computing that accompanies it, Gregory Crane, digital humanities scholar and professor of Classics at Tufts University, states that “we are facing a shift that may eclipse the significance of print and approach the impact of writing itself.” But that’s only part of the story.

Digitization is creating more learning opportunities for more people, delivering both well-known and hard-to-find materials to classrooms, homes, and offices worldwide. Which raises the question: If the future of information is digitization, with everything available online, are libraries losing out?

Far from it. In the digital age, the role of libraries is becoming more important and more far-reaching than ever.
THE GOOGLE REVOLUTION

Though at times it seems like an established part of our daily lives, Google, Inc. opened its corporate headquarters a relatively short while ago, in 1998. Its stated mission, then as now, was to “organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.”

Today Google has assumed a place of prominence—some would say dominance—in our culture. It is the most comprehensive, most widely used search engine on the web. Its name has even slipped into our speech, as in, “I Googled the museum and got directions.”

Google exemplifies how technology has changed our relationship to information, both in our everyday lives and in academia. With just a few keystrokes, we can track down, verify, extract, annotate, cross-reference, and peruse almost anything.

“Librarians have been talking about Google for a while,” says Andrew Rouner, director of Washington University’s Digital Library Services. “For a search engine, its simplicity was appealing, because it minimized what you had to learn in order to use it. But now Google’s influence on the library world has redoubled since the introduction of Google Books.”

Rouner is referring to the company’s recent venture of scanning books and posting some or all of their contents (depending on copyright restrictions) on the web, where they may be searched and read by anyone. This kind of digitization—of books, images, maps, or other traditionally published materials—is not exactly new. Libraries, archives, and museums have been scanning their older and more valuable holdings for years in order to make them more broadly available and preserve them for future generations.

What makes Google Book Search different is the scope of its vision and the industrial scale of its operations. The process involves a variety of publishers and more than a dozen major research libraries around the world, including Michigan, Harvard, Oxford, the New York Public Library, and even such supporting players as the National Library of Catalonia.

Millions of books owned by these institutions are being scanned and added to Google’s “virtual card catalog.” The company’s scanners don’t discriminate on the basis of content. Popular titles available at your local bookstore are digitized right alongside the traditional stock-in-trade of academic libraries—scholarly monographs, rare books, and multiple editions of individual works.

Google doesn’t release figures on how many titles it has already scanned, but the company has been clear about its ultimate target: Every book ever published!

The enormity of that ambition has aroused controversy, especially among authors and publishers worried that the internet giant plans to give away their intellectual property for free. Several lawsuits aimed at halting Google are pending and may not be resolved for years.

Meanwhile, the company’s specially designed scanners race ahead, leafing through thousands of books—is one thing. Ensuring that future readers will be able to find and use those of the academy. Indeed, its mass-digitization efforts promise to advance the spread of knowledge dramatically. But in the library world, the real digital revolution is not just about scanning books. It’s about a new model for cooperation among public and private institutions hoping to build, share, and preserve their unique collections. And this is where Washington University Libraries have an important role to play.

UNIQUE HOLDINGS GAIN IMPORTANCE

In 2006, Washington University joined the Open Content Alliance (OCA), an international consortium of more than 50 educational, cultural, commercial, and governmental organizations mobilizing to build a free online archive of public domain books and media. Formed less than two years ago, the alliance announced last December that it had already digitized 100,000 books in the public domain, all downloadable through its website, the Internet Archive (www.archive.org).

The goals of OCA are similar to those of Google’s Book Search project, with a few key differences. One is copyright—the alliance is reproducing only works whose copyright has expired or whose authors have given their permission. Another is selectivity. Rather than digitizing materials indiscriminately, members of OCA are focusing on the strengths of their individual collections.

For example, the Missouri Botanical Garden, with one of the finest botanical libraries in the world, is digitizing rare books and prints on plant life. And the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is contributing books on railroads, agriculture, and Illinois history including a collection of historic volumes on Abraham Lincoln. Other OCA partners include the Smithsonian Institution; the universities of California, Virginia, and Chicago; Yahoo; Xerox; and London’s Royal Botanic Gardens.

Every library has something that no one else has,” says Shirley B. Baker, vice chancellor for scholarly resources and dean of University Libraries. Washington University Libraries will most likely focus on the Henry Hampton Collection, see “Eyes’ Interviews Go Online,” p. 12.)

But Washington University Libraries’ contribution won’t necessarily stop there. A recent collection analysis revealed that, out of 3.7 million items held by the Libraries, approximately 400,000 aren’t held by libraries digitizing their books through Google. Of those, 490,000 items, somewhere between 7,000 and 30,000 may not be held by any other library in the world. “Those will become our future preservation and digitization targets,” says Baker.

BALANCING ACCESS AND PRESERVATION

Of course, making a digital copy of a book—or thousands of books—is one thing. Ensuring that future readers will be able to find and use that digitized file is something else entirely. This is where the speed and convenience of digitization run up against the complexities of long-term access and preservation.

The printed book is an admirably durable piece of technology. It requires no mediating device and, with proper care, can remain


Library of Congress 1800

Louis Daguerre 1837

Sir Anthony Panizzi 1839

Melvil Dewey (of Decimal System fame) 1887

Gabriel Naudé 1631

Johannes Gutenburg introduces movable type in Europe 1455

Jacques-Auguste de Thou reorganizes the Library of the King with books standing vertically, spines facing out 1662

First school for correspondence courses started by Sir Francis Bacon 1697

First school for correspondence courses started by Sir Francis Bacon 1697

Digital databases and journals at WU Libraries www.librarywustl.edu/findart.html

Internet Archive www.archive.org

Open Content Alliance www.openccontentalliance.org

Washington University Digital Gateway www.digitalwustl.edu

Missouri Botanical Garden Digital Library www.botanicus.org

MBoks at the University of Michigan www.lib.umich.edu/mdp

Google Book Search www.books.google.com/googlebooks/about.html

“Eyes’ Interviews Go Online,” p. 12)
functional for centuries. However, even books wear out, some more quickly than others. From the 1840s to the 1950s, most books published in the United States were printed on cheap acidic paper, which deteriorated more rapidly than the rag papers of previous eras. Today, many of those books are turning to dust, and while they may have been cheap to produce, they are costly to preserve.

Libraries have always had to contend with the impermanence of their materials, and digital materials present new challenges. Computers improve and file formats change—yesterday’s 5¼-inch floppy disk has given way to today’s ultra-compact flash drive. But what good is the information stored on such devices if later users do not have the tools to open them?

In addition to long-term storage, there is the need to think about hardware and software compatibility, disaster recovery, media quality, the integrity of original data, and—last but certainly not least—the careful organization of information for easy retrieval.

Here again, collaboration is key. The best minds in librarianship are working with computer scientists to find solutions for organizing and preserving electronic information, especially materials that are “born digital,” for which there has never been a hard copy. Cassandra Stokes, a systems analyst working with Andrew Rouner in Digital Library Services, is involved in that effort. Part of her job is to make sure the Libraries’ digital holdings are both easily accessible and useful to future researchers.

“Librarians want to make searching simple, but they also want to ensure the best search results possible,” says Stokes. “With digital materials, people expect to be able to search not just the text of a resource but the intellectual context as well. They want the context as well as the text, in other words. So we’re working to provide that.”

An important part of that undertaking is creating good metadata, a technical term for descriptive information about a text or resource. Metadata literally means “data about data,” and other than its name it’s nothing new. It’s the “card catalog” information we use whenever we look up a work’s author, title, or subject. Unlike a card catalog record, however, metadata can be embedded into a digital resource so that it’s always there, like a unique fingerprint, and the context it provides can be quite elaborate.

Metadata can also be quite labor-intensive to produce. Scanning a single photograph, for example, can be done in no time, but creating the metadata to go with it involves serious intellectual work. It requires the ability to anticipate what people will want to know about that photograph: who created it, when and where, what it pictures, what subjects or keywords might help someone find it, what other images it relates to. And so on. Librarians, of course, are experts in managing and classifying such information, and simple scanning is no substitute for the work they do to help people find what they need.

The labor involved in creating a single, well-designed digital resource raises an important point: Digitization is not cheap. The new technologies that make it possible for libraries to share their valuable collections electronically offer many advantages, but saving money isn’t necessarily one of them. They require computers, backup systems, and other equipment that must be maintained, updated, and staffed. To ensure the best use of limited resources, digitization also requires extensive collaboration. This is why Washington University’s relationship with the OCA and fellow institutions is so critical. By sharing information, we can stay on top of the opportunities—and risks—presented by digital technology. We can ensure that our digital resources use the most standard, secure, and well-structured formats, so that the Libraries’ collections may be used for generations to come. In this way, collaboration serves the interests of both access and preservation.

In the end, digitization may not be cheap or easy, but it provides the state-of-the-art access and searchability that today’s students and researchers expect. The truly exciting part comes when we see what people do with all this information. After all, the new technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for cross-referencing and linking texts, revealing a whole host of relationships that had been invisible when words were confined to the printed page.

“What we’re seeing with digitization is literally a new way of interpreting texts, and those don’t come along too often,” says Rouner. “In the 19th century, creating an index of a given text could be a life’s work. Nowadays we can perform searches across multiple works and create multiple indexes instantaneously. That’s a fundamental shift.”

WHAT’S AHEAD

Of course, given all the excitement surrounding digitization and the increasing demand for more of it, the question inevitably arises: Are libraries going to abandon their books? Not by a long shot. Printed books will always have their function—and demand. (You don’t have to be a Harry Potter fan to know that.) Besides, most electronic books and journals cost as much as, if not more than, print editions. Even if money were no object, it still wouldn’t be a simple matter of replacing physical volumes with electronic ones. The vast majority of books already in the public domain (and there are a lot of them) won’t be digitized anytime soon. All of which means that libraries will continue investing in new books for the foreseeable future.

Even if everyone preferred reading digital books, simply providing electronic access wouldn’t fulfill the mission of Washington University Libraries. “Digital technology has given us some powerful new tools,” says Shirley Baker, “but it has also created an urgent need for libraries to help their communities understand how to use those tools and make the most of them. And with the proliferation of information that’s happening today, our job is bigger than ever.”

Though their mission remains unchanged, libraries are rethinking their collections, services, spaces, and opportunities for pooling resources. Indeed, what is the benefit of hundreds of libraries housing copies of the same materials, especially if they are available electronically? Why hold on to physical collections that faculty and students prefer to access online? Freeing up physical space can make the library an even more inviting study and meeting place, somewhere people feel welcome to meet, work, contemplate and, of course, browse to their heart’s content.

Libraries have come a long way since the days of card catalogs and closed stacks. With powerful new ways to share and preserve our unique collections, we are ready to venture much further still.
Das Book: THE CONTEMPORARY GERMAN LITERATURE COLLECTION

BY AARON WELBORN

AN UNUSUAL ARRANGEMENT

When browsing among the stacks of Olin Library and you could easily miss the largest collection of contemporary German literature in North America. But there it is, tucked away between Islamic Studies and the quiet faculty carrels on Level A, as Brian Vetruba is more than happy to point out.

Vetruba is the catalog and subject librarian for Germanic Languages & Literatures. Among the many reasons why he likes his job, one of them is the steady stream of new books across his desk (between 800 and 1,000 every year) representing the latest fiction, poetry, and literary fiction being published in German-speaking Europe today—most of them provided to Washington University by the publishers free of charge.

“It’s an unusual arrangement,” says Vetruba, who holds master’s degrees in German, West European Studies, and Information Studies. “Most publishers don’t give away their books for free, especially to libraries.”

But the Contemporary German Literature Collection is part of a longstanding partnership among Washington University Libraries, the Department of Germanic Languages & Literatures, and more than 120 large and small publishers across Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Like many successful partnerships, it began with an idea.

MUTUAL INTERESTS

In 1980, Paul Michael Lützeler, who is now the Rosa May Distinguished University Professor in the Humanities, was a young associate professor in charge of organizing the St. Louis Symposium on German Literature held every two years at Washington University. The theme that year was contemporary literature since 1965. It was Washington University. The theme that year was on German Literature held every two years at in charge of organizing the St. Louis Symposium the Humanities, was a young associate professor mutual interests

Like many successful partnerships, it began across Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Vetruba is the catalog and subject librarian for

Brian Vetruba has been with Washington University Libraries for six years. A native of Minneapolis, he earned his master’s degrees in German and West European Studies from Indiana University and a master’s degree in Information Studies from the University of Toronto. While a student, he studied and lived abroad in Austria and Germany and interned for a member of the German parliament. As a catalog and subject librarian, Vetruba is responsible for selecting, acquiring, and processing library materials related to Germanic Languages and Literatures, European Studies, and Comparative Literature catagories.

representing not only literature but also criticism, philosophy, and the social sciences. The Suhrkamp/Insel Collection was given its own shelfmark in Olin Library, which it quickly started to outgrow.

When I realized this was going to work, I started writing other publishers,” Lützeler says. Over the next two years, with the help of his colleagues Gregor Schwarz, Jim Poug, and James McLeod, Lützeler contacted every large, medium, and small literary press across Europe publishing in German. Most agreed to the plan.

Within a few short years, the collection had grown into the largest of its kind, and the bibliography was a hit. “I want to assure you that we are making great use of the bibliography and appreciate the good work you are doing,” wrote one professor at the University of Toronto. Today, in lieu of a print edition, the annual bibliography is posted on the German department’s website, where it is freely available to all scholars, librarians, and students of German literature worldwide.

A FOUNDATIONAL COLLECTION

There are sizable collections of German literature at other universities, of course, but Washington University is unique for its emphasis on contemporary writers. “This is the collection of contemporary German literature,” Lützeler says. “No other library in the United States or Canada—or Germany, for that matter—has anything like it.”

The collection serves as the research base of another initiative Lützeler started: the Max Kade Center for Contemporary German Literature at Washington University. Every year since 1985, the Center has invited one prominent writer and one leading critic from a German-speaking country to teach a graduate seminar on contemporary German literature. The visitors are supported by a grant from the Max Kade Foundation in New York.

As the Center and the collection have grown, other organizations have lent their support, including the Volkswagen and Thyssen foundations and the German Academic Exchange Service.

The Center also publishes a scholarly yearbook, Gegenwartsliteratur, and awards annual fellowships for junior faculty and Ph.D. candidates from around the country to come to Washington University to use the collection. Lützeler himself has received many awards for his research and teaching, including the Guggenheim and Fulbright grants, a Distinguished Faculty Mentor Award, the German Cross of Merit First Class, the Goethe Medal, and the Austrian Great Medal of Merit.

Of course, in the increasingly consolidated world of international publishing, executives who know him come and go, so Lützeler makes a point of staying in frequent touch. Every three years, he travels to Germany for the Frankfurt Book Fair, the world’s largest book publishing expo. There he meets and greets publishers’ representatives, recruiting new partners and reminding old ones of how much they are appreciated. “When they see me coming, they say, ‘Oh, great. Here comes that guy who wants it all for free,’” Lützeler jokes. But despite the rising cost of international shipping, participation in the program remains high. Even many small publishers, who have limited resources, remain committed.

“They realize that what we’re doing is important,” Lützeler says. “We’re training the next generation of scholars.”

Brian Vetruba, Catalog/Subject Librarian for German, European Studies, and Comparative Literature

Brian Vetruba has been with Washington University Libraries for six years. A native of Minneapolis, he earned his master’s degrees in German and West European Studies from Indiana University and a master’s degree in Information Studies. At Washington University, he studied short, describing books and resources so that library users can find them in a big part of the job, but he also serves as a liaison to German and Comparative Literature faculty and students, provides reference services and bibliographic instruction, and edits the Library News for German Studies blog on the Libraries’ website.

One of his professional activities involves recruiting people with foreign language skills to work in libraries. As a member of the Western European Studies Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), he and colleagues from around the country are working on a survey of academic librarians to get a better sense of what foreign language skills contribute to their work, and whether it would help them to know other languages.

Vetruba may add another language to his own repertoire soon. He is currently trying to read Harry Potter in Swedish.
“Eyes” Interviews Go Online

When Leola Montgomery first heard on the radio that the Supreme Court had found in favor of her husband, Oliver Brown, in the landmark decision Brown v. Board of Education, she could hardly wait for her children to get home from school. “Oh, we just had a hallelujah time,” Montgomery recalled. “Thanks be to God that this had happened, that something was going to be done for his people, at last.”

Those words were recorded in 1985 in an interview for the award-winning PBS documentary film series Eyes on the Prize. None of the footage with Leola Montgomery ever made it into the final film, but thanks to the efforts of Washington University Libraries’ Film & Media Archive, her memories of that historic day—along with the eye-witness accounts of scores of other Americans who served on the front lines of the civil rights movement—will no longer be consigned to the cutting-room floor.

The interviews are part of the larger Henry Hampton Collection that the Libraries acquired in 2002. Hampton, a 1961 graduate of Washington University, produced more than 60 major films in his lifetime, of which Eyes on the Prize is the best known. Twenty years after its release, it is still considered the definitive documentary work on the civil rights movement.

BEHIND THE SCENES

According to David Rowntree, special media collections archivist, researchers began asking for copies of the transcripts almost as soon as the Libraries acquired the Hampton Collection. “That was the impetus for putting them online,” Rowntree says. “There was a lot of demand to share these interviews with the public.”

It would not be an easy task. The original transcripts were stored on 5½-inch floppy disks that had been used by Hampton’s production company, Blackside. After tracking down an old disk drive that could read the outdated disks, the Film & Media Archive staff then had to meticulously edit and reformat the text with the help of a team of student workers, checking the written versions against the actual audio footage as they went.

Once the new transcripts were created and catalogued, they were handed over to Digital Library Services, a new unit of the Libraries created in 2006. Staff in that unit formatted the transcripts to make them fully searchable online.

A NEW RESOURCE

The great benefit of all this work is that visitors to the Libraries’ website can read the interviews in their entirety, or search for specific terms without having to pore over thousands of pages of text. A quick search for the term “Freedom Riders,” for example, yields 118 occurrences of that phrase in 72 different interviews. Readers can peruse Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) leader James Farmer’s recollections of those first attempts in 1961 to break down segregation in interstate bus travel across the South. They can read former Alabama Governor John Patterson’s reflections on the subject, as well as the remarks of Robert Kennedy’s executive assistant John Seigenthaler, the Rev. C.T. Vivian, and others.

Currently, the website features only those interviews conducted for the first six episodes, which collectively make up the first part of the Eyes on the Prize series, covering the years 1954-1965. An additional eight episodes that were released later comprise the second part of Eyes on the Prize, spanning the years 1965-1985. Last fall, almost 20 years after its original release, PBS rebroadcast part one of Eyes on the Prize. No date has been announced for the release part two, but the Film & Media Archive continues to process hundreds of hours of original film, video, and audio footage. As more interviews are transcribed, catalogued, and digitized, they will be added to the Eyes on the Prize Interviews website, which will eventually include every interview (there are more than 1,000) conducted for the entire 14-hour television series.

Eventually, audio and video clips will be added to the transcripts, so that users will be able to read along as they watch or listen to the interviews, preserving a complete record of the interview process.

IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND

Although much of the raw material in the interviews had to be left out of the final production, its value as historical and documentary source material is inestimable. “The Eyes on the Prize interviews of the activists who led the southern freedom struggle are an incredible resource for scholars, teachers, students, and filmmakers around the world,” said Clayborne Carson, professor of history at Stanford University and director of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute, who visited the Film & Media Archive earlier this year. “The transcripts are amazingly rich, providing raw details and vivid insights about the transformation of modern American race relations.”

Washington University faculty and students are already using the collection. For example, Joe Thompson, assistant professor of English and African and African American Studies, is interested in the choices producers made while filming the documentary and how those choices ultimately shape viewer perceptions. In a senior seminar he taught this spring, Thompson had students visit the Hampton Archive to examine production materials firsthand. “For every story told in the actual documentary, there are countless other important stories that present multiple angles from which the civil rights movement might be viewed.”

“A quick search for the term ‘Freedom Riders,’ for example, yields 118 occurrences of that phrase in 72 different interviews. Readers can peruse Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) leader James Farmer’s recollections of those first attempts in 1961 to break down segregation in interstate bus travel across the South. They can read former Alabama Governor John Patterson’s reflections on the subject, as well as the remarks of Robert Kennedy’s executive assistant John Seigenthaler, the Rev. C.T. Vivian, and others.”

The interviews and materials in the Hampton Collection require a different kind of analysis than most students are used to. “It’s a challenge. But the reward is learning how to navigate a body of material like that for themselves.”

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE EYES ON THE PRIZE INTERVIEWS COLLECTION:
WWW.DIGITAL.WUSTL.EDU/COLLECTIONS
How Do We Stack Up?

QUANTITY VERSUS QUALITY
Not so long ago, there was one statistic that far outweighed all others in the world of library rankings: the number of volumes held. The bigger that number, the better the library, and the more value it offered to the people who used it.

Why? Because librarians wanted to have whatever their patrons requested. Thus, universities like Harvard, Michigan, Berkeley, and Texas could boast of having the best libraries in the country because they had the biggest collections.

But is quantity the best indicator of quality? In recent years, economic pressures and demands for accountability throughout academia have forced college libraries to find new ways to measure performance. How well, for instance, are libraries servicing their patrons? How accessible are their holdings? And given the high cost of new buildings, what are libraries doing to make the most of their existing space?

“For years, libraries have been measuring everything but the quality of service,” says Gail Oltmanns, associate dean for organizational development at Washington University Libraries. “We could have all the books in the world and still not be meeting our users’ expectations.”

So what do users expect? To find out, the University Libraries joined hundreds of other academic institutions in 2004 and 2007 in conducting a comprehensive user satisfaction survey. Developed by experts in service quality assessment at Texas A&M University, the survey was adopted by the Association of Research Libraries and has been implemented by more than 300 libraries worldwide.

The survey measures perceptions about the quality of service that libraries provide as well as the level of service that library users expect. Questions focus on collections (print and electronic), customer service, and physical facilities. Respondents are encouraged to comment on what they like or don’t like about the current state of library affairs.

Granted, convincing busy people to take yet another survey is not easy, Oltmanns says. Nor are libraries short of numbers to crunch. “We’re compiling stats all the time,” she says. “The number of reference transactions, interlibrary loan requests, hits on our website. You name it, we’re probably counting it.”

But the need for personal feedback has especially grown in the last ten years, as the internet has rapidly altered the information landscape. Up against the speed and convenience of popular search engines like Google and Yahoo, libraries are revisiting their traditional role of information providers and focusing more on services that users can’t get online.

The survey helps with that. “By conducting it every three years,” Oltmanns says, “we can get longitudinal data on how we’re doing. We can also compare ourselves to other institutions and see what they’re doing better.”

SURVEY SAID
In both 2004 and 2007, the survey results indicated Washington University Libraries are meeting the overall expectations of students, especially undergraduates. Students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the Libraries’ facilities, particularly after the renovation of Olin Library. However, they also called for more areas devoted to group study and collaboration, greater wireless access, and more sophisticated technology.

Customer service rankings were generally on par with user expectations, with collections presenting a more mixed picture. On the whole, respondents were pleased with the expanding range and accessibility of electronic publications, but graduate students and faculty voiced some disappointment with the corresponding decline in new scholarly books purchased in certain disciplines.

Such criticisms are invaluable for helping libraries respond to the needs of their communities. Many problems identified in the survey have relatively quick and easy solutions (such as e-mailing reminders about overdue interlibrary loan books), while others require a more long-term investment of time and resources (such as building electronic journal collections across disciplines).

Of course, surveys are only one way of gathering feedback. Interviews, focus groups, website traffic, and the old-fashioned suggestion box are also good ways of regularly gauging what people want out of their library.

Adaptation is not always easy or painless, but it is essential to the future of Washington University Libraries, and perhaps to libraries in general. “It’s important to demonstrate to ourselves, to our students and faculty, and to the University that we’re doing what our users want us to do,” says Oltmanns. “In the future, it might not be the number of volumes that sets libraries apart from one another, but the number of people who keep coming back to them.”
Philip Mills Arnold: A MOST SIGNIFICANT DONOR

BY ERIN DAVIS, CURATOR OF RARE BOOKS

AN ACTOR’S GESTURE, A STENOGRAPHER’S NOTATION, A LETTER IN THE ALPHABET, A NATION’S FLAG. They are all examples of signs. Signs are the building blocks of language and human expression. To Philip Mills Arnold (1911-1994), one of Washington University Libraries’ great patrons, they were also the source of a lifelong fascination that began when he was a student here during the Great Depression.

In 1969, Arnold donated his remarkable collection of books and manuscripts in the specialized field of semiology (the study of signs) to the Department of Special Collections, and for the next 35 years he worked closely with library staff to enhance its holdings. The collection currently numbers some 1,000 items, and new materials are added through a $4 million bequest Arnold’s degrees in chemical engineering from Washington University. Arnold worked for nearly 40 years at Phillips Petroleum Company, retiring as vice president for research and development in 1976. Throughout his distinguished career and into retirement, he continued to seek out antiquarian bookshops worldwide.

Like many bibliophiles, he initially purchased books according to whim, picking up whatever interested him at the time. But soon his collecting settled into a number of carefully researched themes that, intentionally or not, were wholly unrelated to his professional life. He developed distinguished collections of early modern books on ciphers and early editions of the medieval philosopher Boethius. His main area of interest, however, focused on the emerging discipline of semiology.

The American philosopher Charles W. Morris has defined semiology as “a theory of signs in all their forms and manifestations, whether in animals or men, whether normal or pathological, whether linguistic or nonlinguistic, whether personal or social.” For Arnold, who had an engineer’s appreciation for codes and symbols, semiology became not just a pastime, but one of the great passions of his life. He identified important developments in the field and collected landmark works in its major areas of enquiry: cryptography, the decipherment of ancient writing systems, languages for the blind and deaf, memory and mnemonics, palaeography, the philosophy of language, shorthand, signs and symbols, telegraphy, and universal writing.


Arnold was especially interested in works that explain a communication system’s theoretical underpinnings. In a 1989 letter to the Libraries he wrote that “in the field of communication for the blind and deaf, I excluded books printed in Braille or other raised letters that do not explain the system used; in shorthand and cryptography I excluded books written by such methods that do not explain the methods.”

The Arnold Semiology Collection is used by researchers studying semiotics and the history of ideas and languages, as well as by practitioners—artists, graphic designers, performers, cryptographers, and others—who seek to inform their work through a greater understanding of the nature of communication. Washington University English professor Joseph Loewenstein, a long-time user of the collection who had the opportunity to meet Arnold at a library-hosted reception, recalls a modest, charming man who “knew his collection thoroughly—knew not only the vagaries of the book market or the publication history of major works in iconography, cryptography, and linguistic theory, but had a scholar’s knowledge of the works in his collection. He had remarkable insight into what would have abiding interest and for the kind of range that would make the collection not only a resource, but a stimulant.”

In speaking of his collection, Arnold once said that it was fitting that what had “its inception and inspiration here should ultimately find its way back to Washington University, to find there a home.” He would no doubt be pleased to know that his collection continues to inspire new generations of scholars.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ARNOLD SEMIOLOGY COLLECTION

Francisco de Paula Martí, Poligraphía, à Arte de Escrever em Cifra de Diferente Modo (1588). On secret codes, imaginary alphabets, and writing in invisible ink.

John Bulwer, Chirologia, or, The Natural Language of the Hand (1644). Concerning the hand and how it may express words and concepts.

Charles Aloysius Ramsey, Tachographia, seu Ars Celenter & Compendiosa quaestet inter Penasum Veneto (1683). Modified version of the shorthand system used by Samuel Pepys (1663-1709) in his Diary.

Johannes Trithemius, Steganographia (1520). A survey of ancient Danish runes and monuments.

John Chadwick, The Decipherment of Linear B (1953). How the oldest form of Greek was eventually cracked.

Olivier Worm, Monumentorum Libri Sex (1643). An alphabet of flowers, for思想 and words.

Philip Thicknesse, A Treatise on the Art of Decyphering, and of Writing in Cipher (1774). A musical alphabet, substituting notes for letters, for conveying secrets.

Cosmas Russell, Thesaurus Artificialis Memorien (1779). Mnemonic system employing visions of heaven asched as mnemonic prompts.

Giovanni Piero Valeriano, Compendio del Gran Volume de Nohla del Bne e Legggiamente Scrivere Tutte le Sorti di Lettere e Cavalleri (1576). A compendium of proper nouns.


Andrea Auciuti, Declamation Magistral sobre las Emblemas de Andres Auciuti (1740). Short verses on moral subjects, each illustrated by an emblem.


Mary Butkus, The Three Epistles of St. John (1688), printed in Moon type, a setting system for the blind developed by William Moon (1503-1644).

Mary Butkus, De Laudibus Sancte Crucis Opus (1565), by Rabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mainz. Mary Butkus,

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Huestis Named New Associate Dean for Technology

Jeffrey C. Huestis has been appointed associate dean for technology for Washington University Libraries, effective July 1. He joins the Libraries’ top tier of administration, which includes Vice Chancellor for Scholarly Resources and Dean of University Libraries Shirley K. Baker and four other associate deans.

Jeff joined the staff of Washington University Libraries in 1982 and has served in several leadership roles, most recently directing applications and information resource development in networking and library technology. In his new role, Jeff will oversee the complex technological infrastructure used to manage the Libraries’ collections and services. He will provide leadership for collaborations with the local, national, and international information community, on issues of network access, identity authentication and authorization, data storage and retrieval, and other shared services.

In addition, he will advance the platform for the development of the Libraries’ Digital Library Services and for the Libraries’ and the University’s web presence.

Jeff earned a BA in comparative literature from the University of Southern California; an MLS from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and an MS in computer science from Washington University. Vice Chancellor Baker says, “The Libraries benefit tremendously from Jeff’s deep knowledge of both libraries and technology. We are delighted to have him in our senior leadership team.”

Head of Special Collections Serves on NEH Panel

Anne Posega, head of the Department of Special Collections, served as a grant evaluator for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in late 2006. Along with a panel of other professionals, her task was to review grant proposals that educational or cultural organizations had submitted to the NEH’s Division of Preservation & Access.

The panel was made up of humanities faculty members and librarians from universities or cultural institutions across the country. Each evaluator reviewed the individual grant proposals, assessing the strengths and weaknesses, as measured against NEH grant guidelines. Then they met in Washington, D.C., to discuss the proposals, compare notes, and make recommendations as to which grants most deserved funding.

“The process is time-consuming, but very interesting. I’d do it again, if I had the opportunity,” commented Posega after returning from the panel’s meeting. “From a broad perspective, it’s fascinating to consider the impact the proposed activities would have on scholarship. And from my perspective here at Washington University, I found it very helpful as preparation for writing grants that would benefit our libraries.”

Posega has worked in the Special Collections since 1987. She has a BA from St. Mary’s College (Indiana) in English, writing, and French; an MFA degree in poetry writing from Washington University; and an MLS from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

NEW FACES

Jaleh Fazelian

Islamic Studies Catalog/Subject Librarian

Jaleh joined our staff as Islamic Studies catalog/subject librarian in September 2006. She comes to us from Hanover College, Indiana, where she was the archives and government documents librarian. In addition to an MLS from Indiana University, Jaleh holds an MA in Historical Studies, with a focus on women in Iran since the Islamic Revolution.

As a catalog/subject librarian, Jaleh is responsible for the selection, acquisition, cataloging, and processing of Islamic and Near Eastern Studies materials, serving as a liaison to faculty and students, and providing reference services and bibliographic instruction.

Nadia Ghasedi

Film & Media Archivist

In February, the Libraries welcomed Nadia to the Film & Media Archive. As Film & Media archivist, she will be largely responsible for managing the archive’s audiovisual cataloging system, as well as assisting with preservation work.

A native of St. Louis, Nadia recently graduated from the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation at the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York. Prior to that, she earned a BA in communication arts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Todd Hignite

Modern Graphic History Library Curator

Todd began work as the Modern Graphic History Library curator in February. Working with University Archives, he is responsible for developing and processing our growing collection of pictorial graphic culture.

Todd received his MA in Art History from Washington University in 2002. Since then, he has published and edited the journal Comic Art and worked as a freelance writer and curator, organizing a number of exhibitions devoted to 20th-century comics and illustration art, including Speak: Nine Cartoonists (Pratt Manhattan Gallery, New York City), and R. Crumb’s Underground (Nerba Burnes Center for the Arts, San Francisco). He co-edited the book Strips, Toons, and Bluesies: Essays in Comics and Culture (Princeton Architectural Press/Washington University) and recently authored In the Studio: Visits with Contemporary Cartoonists (Yale University Press).
J. Scott Horn
GIS Analyst

Scott was appointed as a Geospatial Information System (GIS) analyst in April. He is based in the Earth & Planetary Sciences Library, where he will work with students, faculty, and library staff on geospatial technology initiatives in the Libraries, including outreach, data access and acquisition, instruction, resource evaluation, and future planning.

Scott has extensive experience working with GIS technology and teaching others how to use it. He holds a master’s degree in geology from Indiana State University and has worked as a GIS analyst for the Utah Geological Survey.

Kasia Leousis
Reference/Subject Librarian for Art & Architecture

Kasia joined the Libraries this February as the reference/subject librarian for Art & Architecture. In 2006, she earned master’s degrees in Art History and Library Science, both from University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, where she was also employed in the Special Collections and Art Libraries.

At Washington University, Kasia will be responsible for developing reference and instructional programs for the Kranzberg Art & Architecture Library, serving as a faculty liaison, providing reference service, and aiding in collection development.

Aaron Welborn
Writer and Editor

Aaron came on board this March as writer and editor. He is based in Olin Library, where he works with the Director of Communications to promote and publicize the activities of Washington University Libraries. In that capacity, he also serves as managing editor of Off the Shelf.

Prior to coming to the Libraries, Welborn served as project and editorial coordinator in African and African American Studies at Washington University. He earned an MBA in creative writing from the University of Alabama, where he also worked as an editor for the University of Alabama Press, Alabama Heritage magazine, and the literary magazine Black Warrior Review.

Librarians, faculty, and staff who have news or story ideas related to the Libraries should contact Aaron at awelborn@wustl.edu.