The pictures that you see in this photo spread are of the delivery and setup of 12 new chairs that the Friends of the NIU Libraries purchased to replace aging chairs on the lower level of Founders Memorial Library. The old chairs, in the spirit of recycling, will be cleaned or reupholstered, and used near the library's new Leisure Reading Collection on the library's third floor. It is our hope that many groups of students, staff, and faculty will enjoy the new chairs (and the new to the area chairs on the third floor) for many years to come.

A plaque indicating that the chairs are a gift of the Friends will be placed on the lower level, so that those enjoying the new seating know from whence it came, namely, from the generous contributions of the Friends.

Thank you for helping us to keep the library a welcoming place.
Currently, the marketable value of a four-year college education is being scrutinized by the very same people who vote on appropriations for higher education: lawmakers. More and more legislation is being proposed that would hold higher education accountable by withholding funding for public higher education if graduates from publicly funded four-year colleges do not find employment. According to U.S. News and World Report, this pay for performance idea is not new; nor is it really a proper metric for measuring educational efforts and success. [1] It represents a rather simplistic view and approach, ignoring multiple factors that influence why college graduates may not find employment. Nevertheless this movement is gaining traction in states such as Florida, Texas, Indiana, and yes, even Illinois, and will have an impact on how lawmakers vote when considering funding for higher education.

Two recent studies make the argument that a college education continues to be a good investment. The first, conducted by the Lumina Foundation in conjunction with the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, notes that even in light of the recent economic downturn, when the unemployment rate was hovering around 10%, over 200,000 jobs were added and filled by people with a bachelor’s degree. [2] During the same time, nearly 6 million jobs requiring only a high-school diploma were eliminated. While the unemployment rate was at about 10% nationally, the rate was 4.5% for all four-year college graduates; it was almost 24% for workers with only a high school diploma. A college degree does still translate to value in the workforce, even in the current economy.

A second study, undertaken by University of Wisconsin demographer Jason Houle, presented Monday 21 January at the American Sociological Association’s annual meeting in Denver, highlights the particular burden of growing student debt. This study demonstrates that about 40% of all students, regardless of socio-economic class, leave school with an average educational debt of $22,000.00. However, it is middle-class families who amass the highest proportion of debt for a college degree, and it is traditionally middle-class families who seek a college education as a means to secure better employment.

These studies emphasize that funding for higher education is precarious. Northern Illinois University (like many other publicly funded higher education institutions in Illinois) currently receives about 23% of its total annual funding from the state of Illinois. Forty years ago, over 80% of NIU’s funding came from the state. Lawmakers continue to seek ways to further reduce funding for higher education, as noted in the Lumina Foundation study. Houle’s study notes that in many cases, to make up the state funding shortfall, tuition has risen. The accompanying cost is passed on to the students, most often as educational debt. It is a quandary to which there is no simple solution.

What do these two studies have to do with libraries? The short answer is, “a lot.” When overall funding for higher education decreases, institutions of higher education look for ways to cut costs. Libraries are, sadly, often at the receiving end of cuts. Even when library budgets are not directly cut, flat funding for academic library budgets constitutes a de facto cut, as the library’s costs (for books, journals, staff, supplies, and other needs) do not remain flat.

Libraries need more champions. Despite doing our level best to support the teaching and research mission of every department, activity, and program on our campus amid rapidly slipping resources, libraries are not always supported at the same level as other programs. We don’t have “alumni,” the way a program, a department, or an academic college does. We don’t inspire the same kind of loyalty that a football team, a musical ensemble, or a beloved student organization might.
Libraries end up in a situation akin to Oliver Twist, asking “please sir may I have some more” and receiving the same answer as poor Oliver – “no, and why do you ask?”

Therefore I am turning to you, the readers, to become library champions. Make your voices heard to legislators and higher education administrators. Spread the message that libraries are critical to the success of higher education and can ill afford to be ignored or simply hope for the scraps when it comes to funding. A great university cannot be great without a great library to support it.

Patrick J. Dawson  
Dean of Libraries


Save These Dates for Friends Events!:

Wednesday, March 6, 2013, 7:30 pm, Founders Memorial Library, Staff Lounge (lower level), Becoming Mrs. Lincoln: The Difficulties and Rewards of Portraying an Historical Figure. This event is free and open to the public.

Wednesday, April 3, 2013, 7:00 pm, Founders Memorial Library, Staff Lounge (lower level), An Evening with Gene Wolfe. In conjunction with DeKalb Public Library. This event is free and open to the public.

Date and time TBA, Friends Annual Meeting and Ice Cream Social, Founders Memorial Library, Rare Books and Special Collections Dept., Rm. 402. This event is free and open to the public.
Major Issues in Scholarly Communication

In recent years, rapidly rising subscription fees have made it more difficult for academic libraries to provide researchers with access to the scholarly journals they need. For decades, most titles were published by scholarly societies for little or no profit. In the 1990s, internationally-owned for-profit publishing conglomerates began buying up scholarly journals and raising subscription rates precipitously. As financial resources became scarcer over the last two decades, university libraries have been forced to devote increasingly larger amounts of money to journal subscriptions; book purchases have also plummeted as a result.

Many scholarly journals now charge over $10,000 per year, and a few have reached over $25,000 per year. Measured as cost-per-page, journals published by for-profit companies are vastly more expensive than those still published by not-for-profit organizations. For example, in the field of Neuroscience, not-for-profit journals charge an average of ten cents per page, while for-profit publications charge eighty-nine cents per page – a difference of 890%! In Economics, the difference is 488%, and in Physics, a mere 332%. \[1\] In addition to the rising costs of individual journals, the number of journal titles in print has also grown rapidly.

This has produced a crisis in scholarly communication. The Right to Research Coalition reports that over the past twenty years, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has increased its journal budget by over 360% and the University of California-Berkeley has increased its outlays for academic publications by 1,300%. This situation has forced virtually all academic libraries to make hard choices between journals, and the resulting serials cuts have reduced faculty members and students’ access to important research. In 2010, for example, the University of Georgia cancelled subscriptions to nearly 600 journals. Since a given individual scholarly article can only be published in a small subset of particular peer reviewed journals, often dictated by tenure or promotion standards, libraries cannot simply substitute lower-priced alternatives for increasingly expensive titles.

As academic libraries have lost patron access for newly-expensive information, many publishers have reported huge profit margins. According to a recent review of industry statement studies, Wiley, a prominent publishing concern, reported a return of 13.1% in a recent statement. Divisions of major publishers specifically devoted to academic journals have reported even higher margins, with Taylor and Francis recording a return of 26.4%, Elsevier 31.7%, and Springer 37%. \[2\]

These large profits reflect the specific dynamics of the academic publishing marketplace. Researchers, many based in universities, provide research articles exclusively to academic publishers at no charge, often as a required part of their promotion or tenure processes. Editors (often unpaid by the publishers, as part of their promotion and tenure processes), coordinate a peer-review process in which unpaid academic referees evaluate submissions. Publishers invest money into the copy-editing, layout, and distribution of accepted articles. Publishers then charge the rapidly increasing subscription fees noted above to a set of customers overwhelmingly made up of the same universities at which the academic research is done, and provided for free to the publishers.

A considerable amount of the research published in for-profit academic journals originates in grants provided by federal agencies, like the National Science Foundation, which means that publishing firms not only receive their product at no charge from professors and other researchers, they also benefit from a de facto government subsidy. American taxpayers support important research in a variety of fields, only to find that they do not enjoy access to its findings outside of expensive journal subscriptions maintained by an increasingly small number of academic libraries.

Open Access advocates argue that taxpayer funded research should be a matter of public record. They have sought to address the crisis in scholarly communication by building new online access points in which this public record might reside, and where all interested parties might consult academic research. They also
seek to remind academic authors that they are often able to negotiate with publishers to allow the deposit of their articles into open access repositories. Their initiative has produced resources like PubMed Central, and contributed to the growth of Open Access Journals, like those found in the Public Library of Science. Individual universities’ institutional repositories represent another important component of the Open Access movement. For example, NIU Libraries host Huskie Commons (http://commons.lib.niu.edu), which exists to preserve and provide electronic access to research done at the University including dissertations, departmental and university-specific data, and as open access articles by university-affiliated researchers.

Individuals seeking to learn about their rights as an author and how to negotiate with publishers to retain those rights should contact Drew VandeCreek at drew@niu.edu.

Drew VandeCreek
Director of Digital Initiatives


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Southeast Asia Digital Library Project

On September 30, 2012, Northern Illinois University Libraries completed work on a grant from the United States Department of Education funding the development of the Southeast Asia Digital Library (http://sea.lib.niu.edu). Begun in 2005 with a four-year grant of $780,000 and extended with a subsequent 2009 grant of $759,996 from the TICFIA (Technological Innovation and Cooperation for Foreign Information Access) initiative within Department of Education’s Title VI program, the project has worked with a number of individual and institutional partners in Southeast Asia to produce a wide variety of digitized materials intended to support instruction in the region’s less-commonly-taught languages.

Unfortunately, in May 2011 the entire TICFIA program was defunded by Act of Congress, resulting in the loss of the project’s final year of grant support. Nevertheless, NIU and its contributing partners have worked together to find ways to keep the project moving forward and provide newly digitized materials. The Lontar Foundation of Jakarta, Indonesia provided a wealth of image and video materials shedding light on Indonesian cultural life. Khon Kaen University (Thailand) provided a large collection of northeastern Thai palm leaf manuscripts. The Vietnamese Nom Preservation Foundation contributed a collection of documents written in Chu Nom, the Chinese-like script that Vietnamese used to record their own language in the period after independence from China in 939 CE. The National University of Malaysia furnished a collection of books from the Institute of the Malay World and Civilization library. The Mandalay Marionettes Theater of Burma contributed videos of performances of traditional Burmese puppet shows. The Living Memory Project of Brisbane, Australia contributed videos of interviews with East Timorese nationals imprisoned in their country’s struggle for independence and the Living Memory of the Khmer Project provided videos of interviews in which Cambodians discuss their nation’s development from the 1950s through the 1990s, including the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975-79.

Participation in the TICFIA program provided the University Libraries with an opportunity to work with projects based at a number of leading American institutions, including Harvard University, Yale University, the University of Chicago, the University of Virginia, the University of Wisconsin, Indiana University, Michigan State University and the University of Washington.

With the end of grant funding, SEADL project co-directors Hao Phan (Curator, Donn V. Hart Southeast Asia Collection, University Libraries) and Drew VandeCreek (Director of Digital Initiatives, University Libraries) have turned their attention to the task of attracting an ongoing stream of new materials to the project repository and website. The project’s second grant included a component devoted to the development of technology allowing interested scholars to upload Southeast Asian resources directly to an account monitored by project staff members, where they might be reviewed, and from which they might ultimately be added to the SEADL. This approach has already resulted in the receipt of a number of individual items, and several additional, larger sets of materials are presently being discussed with potential contributors.

Drew VandeCreek
Director of Digital Initiatives
Notes from the Faculty Liaison

It's going to be a great spring for programming. I hope that you'll join us!

If you didn't get the opportunity to attend our January 10th exclusive opening event for the Vice + Virtue exhibition at the NIU Art Museum, we have two additional close-up viewings of books scheduled in the next few weeks. On Wednesday, January 30th at 3:30 pm, and Tuesday, February 12th at 12:30 pm there will be additional opportunities to view the books on display as part of the exhibit up-close and personal.

In March, we welcome historical interpreter Laura Keyes. On Wednesday, March 6, 2013 at 7:30 pm in the Staff Lounge of Founders Library, Laura will present a talk on “Becoming Mrs. Lincoln: The Difficulties and Rewards of Portraying an Historical Figure.” Laura will be discussing the research and the work that goes into re-creating a historical figure. I’m told she will also bring some small samples of historical costuming for attendees to examine.

In April, in conjunction with DeKalb Public Library, we are pleased to welcome SFWA Grand Master and award winning author Gene Wolfe on Wednesday, April 3, 2013 at 7:00 pm. Mr. Wolfe will be signing books from 7 to 7:30 pm, and then we will have a discussion of his groundbreaking novel In the Shadow of the Torturer with the Science Fiction Book Club beginning at 7:30 pm. There may be fancy cupcakes turning up as our snack, if that factors any into your reckoning.

All of these upcoming events are free and open to the public. We hope that you will join us for some great discussions!

Lynne M. Thomas
Faculty Liaison, Friends of the NIU Libraries

Member Benefits:

Receive a 10% discount on merchandise at the following stores:
- Ed Ripp Fine Art Books, Chicago

Friends tote bags! {email Angie Schroeder (aschroeder@niu.edu) for details.}
Reflections on Books By and About Presidential Speech Writing

As I write these words, there is growing anticipation about President Obama’s Second Inaugural ceremony. News accounts have mostly focused so far on the costs of these festivities, but soon attention will turn to what Obama might say in his second inaugural address. By the time these words appear in print, perhaps Obama’s speech will be hailed as a masterpiece, but the odds are against it. Few presidential inaugurals are remembered and even less approach the eloquent benchmarks established by Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, or John F. Kennedy. Obama’s first inaugural address was considered a disappointment by many because he seemed to be such an excellent communicator during the 2008 campaign. The consensus seems to be that Obama’s first inaugural was a “good,” but not a “great” speech.

Even if Obama’s inaugural addresses do not meet expectations, what a president says in any speech is significant. As Chief Executive, Americans look to the President to address economic issues and this, of course, could ultimately affect their jobs, interest rates, inflation, etc. Soldiers, sailors, National Guard reservists also know that the words of a President, as Commander in Chief, can order them into harm’s way. Foreign leaders carefully study a President’s words for subtle implications of changes in foreign policy.

Since the words of American President matter to so many, how can we learn more about how this rhetoric is crafted and the people involved? It should not be a surprise that many presidents have long used speech writers. George Washington relied on David Humphreys to draft many of his routine speeches and Alexander Hamilton is widely regarded as the chief author of the “Farewell Address.” Abraham Lincoln did write most of his own speeches, but certainly accepted suggestions from advisors such as William Seward to improve his phrasing.

By the 20th Century, presidential speechwriting matured, but the role and style of the writers varied depending on the character of the administration. Robert Schlesinger’s White House Ghosts: Presidents and Their Speechwriters (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), details the inner workings of presidential speechwriting staffs from FDR to George W. Bush. Schlesinger is a journalist and the son of Kennedy speech writer Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

For those interested in moving beyond the summaries offered in White House Ghosts, the books by presidential speech writers are often very revealing. Samuel Rosenman’s Working With Roosevelt (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952) is written in a lively manner that reflects the great challenges FDR faced in exhorting the nation during the Great Depression and World War II. In Clark Clifford’s Counsel to the President, the former speech writer for Harry Truman provides intimate details of the crafting of early Cold War rhetoric. The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhower Years (New York: Athenaeum, 1963) by Emmet John Hughes, explains how Ike relished his role as a strategic presidential communicator. Ted Sorensen’s Kennedy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) became a best seller, but JFK’s chief speech writer and alter ego revealed more about such events as the Cuban missile crisis speech in his last book, Counselor: A Life at the End of History (New York: HarperCollins, 2008). Richard N. “Dick” Goodwin became Lyndon Johnson’s head writer after also working for Kennedy. Goodwin’s Remembering America: A Voice From The Sixties (Boston: Little, Brown & Co: 1988) is every bit as eloquent and insightful as the presidential biographies written by his wife, Doris Kearns Goodwin. More recent presidential speech writers, Peggy Noonan’s What I Saw At the Revolution (New York: Random House, 1990), (which is especially funny) and Michael Waldman’s POTUS Speaks (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000) both describe how closely policy and rhetoric were intertwined in the administrations of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton.
A common trait found in all of these books—not surprisingly—is the high quality of the writing. These writers demonstrate how seriously they viewed their role in crafting the rhetoric of a president. Perhaps President Obama’s chief speech writer, Jon Favreau, will someday write his own “insider’s account” to add to this legacy.

Ferald Bryan
President, Friends of NIU Libraries

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Digital Preservation Study Moves Forward

Researchers at Northern Illinois University Libraries, working with colleagues from the libraries of Illinois State University, Western Illinois University, Chicago State University, and Illinois Wesleyan University, have moved forward on several fronts in their examination of how medium-sized and smaller institutions might provide for the long-term preservation of digital objects. Digital preservation activities consist of more than simply providing for the storage and backup of materials existing in a digital format. They also include the monitoring and refreshing of stored resources, which deteriorate and lose their integrity over a period of approximately ten years.

The migration of materials into forms facilitating their use with new types of storage media and new formats represents another variety of digital preservation activity, as it stands to avert the problem of “stranded” digital objects, such as those saved on floppy disks or in obsolete and/or unsupported applications. Although digital preservation is a complex set of activities, policies, and practices, first movers in the field have shown that the use of specialized, integrated software applications can prove very effective in helping libraries to achieve the above goals.

While many larger institutions have made considerable progress toward the long-term preservation of their digital objects, including but not confined to the installation of such applications, many medium- and smaller sized institutions have struggled to make similar headway. The present study, which participants have named the Digital POWRR (Preserving [Digital] Objects With Restricted Resources) Project, will investigate, evaluate, and, at its close, recommend scalable, sustainable digital preservation solutions for libraries with smaller amounts of data and/or less of the staff capacity, expertise and financial wherewithal that larger institutions have deployed to tackle the problem. Project recommendations will take the form of a list of incremental steps that institutions might take toward the broad goal of digital object preservation, ranging from very basic activities to the installation and use of integrated software applications for digital preservation.

On October 10-11, NIU hosted a meeting of the project’s advisory board, at which project collaborators and expert advisors refined the study’s focus, finalized a set of project activities and a timeline for their completion, and identified a number of digital preservation software applications for evaluation.

Project staff members at Northern Illinois University conducted interviews with a cross-section of Northern Illinois University faculty, seeking information about the types and volume of digital objects that they produce and use in their research, teaching, and other university activities; how they store and access those materials; and their levels of confidence that these measures will prove effective in the long-term preservation of their digital resources. Researchers at other project institutions conducted similar research on their campuses as well. At the same time, project staff members at NIU made arrangements with vendors and open-source providers for the testing of several digital preservation applications.

In the coming months, project participants at Northern Illinois University Libraries will install these integrated applications on a project server; complete a review of available open-source tools that may be used, individually or in combination, in a digital preservation workflow; and begin preparation of a case study detailing the digital preservation challenges and opportunities in evidence at NIU. Collaborators at the other project institutions will produce case studies as well.

The Digital POWRR Project is the result of a grant of $575,000 provided by the Federal Institute for Museum and Library Services (http://www.imls.gov). The project web site is available at http://digitalpowrr.niu.edu.

Drew VandeCreek
Director of Digital Initiatives

10 Spring 2013
Huskie Commons Institutional Repository

In the fall semester of 2012 Northern Illinois University Libraries launched Huskie Commons (http://commons.lib.niu.edu), an online repository presenting free-use copies of NIU faculty members’ peer-reviewed publications, as well as links to student theses and dissertations. Huskie Commons employs open-source DSpace software developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in use at over 1,300 institutions around the world. While outreach activities informing NIU faculty, staff, and students of Huskie Commons’ existence and potential uses are only beginning, the site already contains full-text versions of more than sixty faculty articles, as well as links to more than 4,000 examples of graduate students’ work.

In the past year, Founders Library staffers Drew VandeCreek and Stacey Erdman have solicited contributions of past publications known to have appeared in journals permitting their use in institutional repositories from faculty members in several departments. They will continue this project in the spring semester of 2013. In the future, NIU faculty will enjoy an opportunity to submit publications directly to an account where they can be reviewed and uploaded into Huskie Commons.

The placement of academic publications in an institutional repository offers several benefits. Recent research has shown that articles freely available in institutional repositories enjoy a marked increase in their citation rates. Making scholarly work available to a general public unable to consult scholarly journals available only to library users through expensive subscriptions can also contribute to the development of new knowledge. For example, a young student in Maryland recently developed a new diagnostic test for pancreatic cancer using data made freely available in online institutional repositories.[1] Unlike much of the ersatz information available online, repositories maintained by universities provide users with the assurance that they are consulting reliable, peer-reviewed academic materials.

Scholars may learn if past or pending publications are eligible for submission to Huskie Commons by consulting a web site provided by the University of Nottingham (UK): http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo. Library staff members are also happy to consult this resource on behalf of NIU faculty members.

Faculty members interested in expanding the reach of their research by submitting materials to Huskie Commons should contact Drew VandeCreek at drew@niu.edu.

Drew VandeCreek
Director of Digital Initiatives


A Note from NIU library’s Circulation department:
NIU Annuitants/retirees can contact Cliff Golden or Lynne Smith at the Circulation desk to have your accounts updated to provide full library privileges for life. You must have I.D. and your One-card. For more information contact Cliff Golden at 815-753-0343 or Lynne Smith at 815-753-9846.
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