



Founders' Type

A Newsletter of the Friends of the Northern Illinois University Libraries

*Issue no. 31
Winter 2002*

Upcoming Programs

Presenter: Richard Powers

Topic to be announced
February 27th, 2003
7:30 pm, Library Staff Lounge

Presenter: Bob Self

Topic to be announced
April 2003

Ice Cream Social

Friday, April 25th, 2003

**For more information,
call: 753-9838 or e-mail:
libraryfriend@niu.edu**

Friends Web Site:

<http://www.niulib.niu.edu/friends/>

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From the President. . .

Greetings to all fellow Friends of the NIU Libraries.

This newsletter is being prepared for release just following our second program of this season. I am still euphoric after having the opportunity to tour the recently renovated Regional History Archives and Rare Books departments. This was truly an inspiring and rewarding experience. We are fortunate to have such a well-developed and carefully maintained collection of true treasures. In addition to tax dollars needed to accomplish the renovation, the "Friends" organization continues to make valuable contributions to this collection. I am proud of all who make this possible. Glen Gildemeister and his staff were exemplary tour guides. This was a well-attended program. I personally would like to see it repeated. I encourage you to make the effort to attend the programs that our committee has planned.

I once again, encourage each member of the Friends of the NIU Libraries to keep involved with your organization. I have a special appeal at this time. Our diligent program committee has done a great job at lining up this year's events. However, the untimely vacancy of the Chair position, due to a career transfer, has left us with the need to fill that position. The committee is in place and is already set about making the plans for the upcoming season. The Friends needs someone to step in to help coordinate these efforts and report the schedules to Glen Gildemeister so they can be published in our newsletter. This Chair position also aligns one for the subsequent role of President. I will be vacating this position at the conclusion of my second term to take my place as Vice President in the fall. I sincerely hope to have a member contact me, or Glen Gildemeister, so we can implement this smoothly. This is a great opportunity to show your support of the Friends and exercise some of your own interests.

Thank you all for your support. Please continue to bring book donations to the library for offering in our ongoing book sale cart. This continues to be a great money source. So let's clean some shelves! I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming activities and events.

--Ralph Crafton
President

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Submissions for the NEXT edition of *Founders' Type* are welcome. All submissions will be considered and printed as space allows. Please direct any such materials to: Kay Shelton, Northern Illinois University Libraries, DeKalb, IL 60115. All unsigned items are contributed by the editors.

Private Press Exhibit

In the 1950s, in the Midwest especially, there was a revitalized interest in the art of hand printing, referred to as the Print Renaissance. Private presses flourished, usually with the owner selecting work he or she wanted to reproduce and then using a vintage machine to create a small number of multiples of



each item. Alongside the Print Renaissance, artists began to explore the form and expressive potential of hand-made books. A current display in the hallway near the escalators of the fourth floor of the library and in the Rare Books Room includes several examples of both tools and finished books utilizing the rich tradition of hand printing and innovative bookmaking by hand. The exhibition consists of a working press replica and 30 books from the Private Press Collection.

The Rare Books Room houses a 600-pound oak working recreation of a common hand press of the 17th century. Joe Frieders, a student of the Department of Industry and Technology, built the press as a senior woodworking project. After three months of construction, individual press parts were pegged and glued together at its present location. From 1976 until 1983, this operated as a private press under the name NIU Common Press. Several examples of items printed on this press by former Rare Book Librarian Anthony Bliss and the Northern Illinois Bibliographic Society are displayed alongside the press. Diagrams located in the hallway explain the mechanics used to make a print with this hand-operated machine. The display case in the hallway houses a printed example alongside the tools used to create the booklet *Founders' Founders*.



Inside the Rare Books Room, twenty books from the collection show the great scope of private press output. Along the west wall, various works created by collaboration or in an unusual fashion are displayed. The craft and through that went into the creation of

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these beautiful objects is apparent in the books on view. The Shewin Beach Press reprinting of Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad or The New Pilgrim's Progress* is an example of reinforcing the content of a book by creatively forming the object itself. The two reprinted, traditionally bound volumes are set in a case resembling a suitcase. The contemporary drawings of travels by Heather McAdams reflect both its content and lasting resonance. Alongside it on the shelf sits the Bieler Press book *Wild Parrots and the King of La Brea* by Gerald Lange. The green wooden covers physically illustrate the jungle depicted in the text. Located on the shelf below, *Crazy Quilt* from the Women's Studio Workshop is a book designed and printed by Maureen Cummings. Quotes from women in mental hospitals are arranged with drawings evocative of quilting to raise the issue of pressures for these women to stay in the domestic realm. The creation of unique cases and binding, the use of brass or wood for the covers, and page layout are just a few ways the books on display inform the viewer of what is possible with a book. The wide range of styles and content displayed help one appreciate the printed book form as art.

Across the room is a vertical glass case dedicated to the Perishable Press of Walter Hamady. An internationally recognized bookmaker, works by Hamady display skill, depth and usually a strong humorous vein throughout each. Besides his own poetry and writing, Hamady also collaborates with contemporary poets and visual artists for some of his many projects. Two of the books from his GabberJab series are displayed alongside three collaborations. The NIU Special Collections has over 80 other books from this press available for viewing in the Rare Books reading room. Two glass cases in the hallway contain

a variety of book forms from the Private Press Collection of NIU's Rare Books and Special Collections. The books include a 15-foot long accordion-folded book, miniatures fewer than three inches square, and Carrie Ruggie Saunder's *Tulips*. Saunders' fragile book form consists of three small sheets of delicate, folded paper shaped into a flower, with a poem hand printed on the innermost layer (p. 2, lower right).

The hallway exhibit can be viewed anytime the library is open. This includes the history, tools, and a printed sample from the NIU Common Press and miniature and non-traditional books. The Hamady books, other private press books and more items of the press in the Rare Books Room are viewable Monday through Friday, 8 am to noon and 1-4:30 pm. The book forms on display are a small selection of the Private Press Collection. The Private Press Collection exhibit will be on display from now until July 2003.

--Jessica Witte

Graduate Student, Department of Art

Ask-A-Librarian Service

NIU Libraries first instituted its "Ask-A-Librarian" service in Spring Semester of 1999. Ask-A-Librarian was originally created to respond to Ready Reference (brief, factual information, such as "What is the capital of Bolivia?") questions. As expected in an academic environment, we also have many faculty, staff, and students with questions regarding starting points for research. Ask-A-Librarian was also designed to offer brief assistance in this regard.

Today, Ask-A-Librarian is indeed utilized by our local patrons who want to save themselves a trip to the library. However, due to the increasing number of distance education courses at NIU, more and more of these students who rely solely on remote access to complete assignments are turning to Ask-A-Librarian for assistance. We also have many more students taking courses at branch campuses and satellite locations. For many, Ask-A-Librarian is their only opportunity for interaction with a professional librarian. Additionally, we receive requests for assistance from residents from all over the state of Illinois, as well as from alumni, scholars, and the general public located both near and far. We recently received a request about an NIU dissertation from a student studying in Thailand.

--Please see Page 5

From the Dean's Office



I am pleased once again to report on a number of activities which have advanced our programs of service, collections, and scholarly reputation. We have initiated a repositioning of our copiers in the periodicals area to reduce congestion. Currently, the copiers are adjacent to the stacks, and it is at some times an overcrowded situation. Copiers will be repositioned to the west side of the periodicals room, thereby reducing congestion and making it a more hospitable experience for copier users. We continue to enjoy very good traffic on our continuing book sale shelves now located in the main lobby.

NIU is host for the Illinois Cooperative Collection Management Program (ICCMP), a 20-year-old consortium of more than 100 academic libraries. For the past several years, Associate Dean Mary Munroe has been spearheading a very large project to produce computer manipulable tapes of the holdings of 80 of these libraries. There are 30 million items held in these 80 libraries, and the ability to extract these holdings by subject, language, dates of publication, etc., will be a major contribution to collection development, the assessment of collections, the preparation of grant requests, and cooperative purchasing arrangements. There are only a handful of states that have undertaken such a large project, and NIU has played a leadership role.

As many of our friends know, the University Libraries have the world's finest collection of Horatio Alger books and periodicals. Earlier this year, a private press, Polyglot Press in Philadelphia, launched a reprinting project that starts with Horatio Alger and goes on to cover another dozen major authors. For each author selected, his or her entire output is made available. In the case of Horatio Alger, the plan calls for issuing Alger's 128 books in five formats: paperback, trade hardcover with dust jacket, leather collectors' edition, large-print edition, and a Spanish edition. I have served, with pleasure, as a senior consultant to this group in providing many hundred scans of Alger book covers, internal illustrations, and other Alger-related materials. Some exceedingly scarce items have been scanned from our library collection. The publication of Alger's entire book-length works will be a milestone and will be issued with high quality material, custom-set type, and with high legibility fonts. We should all be pleased that Alger was selected as their very first project, and we have tried to support the project in every possible way.



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The university will undergo its decennial accreditation review by the North Central Association some time next year. Every major unit, including the library, has to prepare a status report of progress since the last review, and current activities. The libraries' report has recently been completed, and portrays a library which has been moving ahead with enhanced services and creativity on every front through the splendid support of its faculty and staff. It is a report that can be read with considerable pride and will place the NIU Libraries in a very favorable light for the forthcoming visit. Again, I extend my warmest support and regard for all those who have assisted the library, through the contribution of funds or their time to insure that extra margin of excellence.

--Dr. Arthur Young
Dean of the NIU Libraries

... Continued from Page 3

The overwhelming majority of the questions we receive today are **not** of the Ready Reference variety. A recent survey indicates that over 70% of Ask-A-Librarian questions are patrons asking for assistance with detailed database or catalog searching.

How does this impact the way libraries and librarians meet the information needs of our users?

For one, it has forced us to become more flexible and creative in responding to our patrons. We can't simply ask them to come to the library so we can show them a print resource in our Reference Collection. Nor can we demonstrate complex or advanced database searching to them in person.

Responding to patrons in the Digital Age necessitates using a variety of tools including phone calls, faxes, e-mails, and regular mail. We also develop detailed tutorials and pathfinders and put them online to help our patrons find what they need.

In an attempt to simplify the process of providing customized service to patrons at a distance, the library has ordered ViewletBuilder 3 software. With this software, one can easily capture computer screen-shots and then add explanatory or instructive text and voice-overs to the picture to demonstrate a search in the online catalog, a research database, etc. A series of screen shots can be played in sequence like a streaming video to provide step-by-step instructions. Librarians and library staff will be able to create customized tutorials based on a patron's question, burn the tutorial onto a CD or DVD, and then send them to that patron.

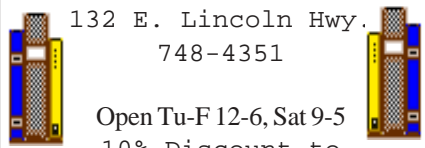
For further information, please contact Leanne VandeCreek, Ask-A-Librarian Coordinator, at lvandecreek@niu.edu or 815-753-4025. The Ask-A-Librarian question form can be found on the library's website at: <http://www.niulib.niu.edu/> Click on "About the Library," and then in the row of buttons across the top, click on "Ask-A-Librarian."

--Leanne VandeCreek
Social Sciences Librarian

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Library Exhibits

- Founders Memorial Library Lobby:
- Title: *Stuck on Literature: American Authors on*
- *USPS Stamps*, featuring stamps of Joan Metzger
- December and January exhibit
- Southeast Asia Collection:
- Title: *Children's Books of Southeast Asia*
- *Art of Burma*, from Burma Collections
- Continuing exhibits on the Fourth Floor
- Rare Books & Special Collections:
- Title: *Selections from the Private Press Collection*,
- Rare Book Room and Fourth Floor Hallway

There will be a university-wide exhibition from Jan. 13th to Jan. 31st, 2003 called *The University Collects*, including Rare Books, Anthropology Museum, Burma Art, and many others in the Jack Olson Gallery, Arends Hall.

Friends of the NIU Libraries Program Series

Those attending the September 10th Friends program, the first for the 2002-03 year, spent an evening sharing in another's passion. The speaker, William Baker, Professor of English and the library's English subject specialist, has had since the 1960s a passion for rare books and Victoriana. His passion seems to turn to obsession when discussing one writer particularly, Mary Ann (Evans) Cross (1818-1880) a/k/a George Eliot. Baker is co-author along with John C. Ross of a well-annotated and carefully organized work on all of Eliot's books in English as well as other languages entitled, *George Eliot: A Bibliographical History* (Oak Knoll Press, 2002).

Why collect books? In answering, Baker began by reading a passage from Nicholas A. Basbanes' *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books* (Henry Holt, 1995):

The issue at hand was the phrase "A gentle madness." Dr. Haskell F. Norman, a San Francisco psychiatrist, wanted to know if we were talking about actual madness, or just a harmless hobby? He thought for a moment before framing his response with a question of his own:

"All right, why does one collect books?"

He paused once again, then continued at a measured pace.

"Assuming you have the means to collect, why would you collect books rather than something else? That's the big question to begin with, I think, because if you're wealthy enough, you can collect anything you want. People who collect books have a certain intellectual curiosity, I think, about books, period, and what books represent to them. The transition between collecting books as objects and collecting books for information is to differentiate, if you will, between work and play."

Why George Eliot? Ironically, in Baker's explanation, the first Eliot novel he read, *Middlemarch*, he found boring. However, it was the second novel, *Daniel Deronda*, that Baker became hooked on Eliot, something that evolved into a lifelong interest in her works, both as a scholar and collector. In furthering, "Why does one collect books?" he was able to explain why some individuals, including himself, have a passion for collecting. There is a certain rivalry between collectors to be in sole possession of an item. Collectors have an accumulative instinct, an interest in acquisition that pursues the best copy available of a favorite author. Collecting feeds passion.

Know what you're doing when you collect, Baker advised. Know the subject well, even when to question authority. Collection decision can run amiss. Baker provided an example of a purchase of a framed, signed picture of Eliot taken in 1858. Eliot pictures are scarce as she had a phobia of photographs. There are very few actual images of her. It was not until after Baker bought the picture that he learned that it was not a true picture from 1858, but rather a picture reproduced from the original negative plate in the early twentieth century with Eliot's signature superimposed on the picture. He thought he was buying an original copy made in 1858. When collecting, decide what your interests are, for example, first editions or particular formats. Baker's collecting focuses on Eliot's books and not her letters. The reason? "Letters belong in one single collection." Collectors need to realize that book collecting will entail financial obligations, some possibly significant.

Some mystery was added to the presentation when Baker announced that earlier that day he had placed a bid on Ebay, an online auction site, for a copy of Eliot's *Agatha*. *Agatha* is one of the great classic forgeries unmasked by John Carter in his article, "George Eliot's *Agatha* 1869- and After" in *Book Collector* 6 (Autumn 1957): 244-52. Baker did not disclose his bid, but indicated the item would make a valuable addition to his collection. The bidding closed during the presentation. To break the suspense, Baker did place the high bid and is now in possession of the book.

--Byron Anderson
Head of Reference

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