

Founders'

A Newsletter of the Friends
of Northern Illinois University Libraries



Type

Issue No. 37
Spring 2005



Faculty Liaison's Column

Dear Friends,

It has indeed been an exciting school year. This semester, we have been graced with impressive programming about the legacy of science fiction writer Philip K. Dick, the biological basis for how



Friends of the Library Spring 2005 Programs

Annual Meeting & Ice Cream Social

*featuring: Neil Shalin, author of
Out by a step: 100 Greatest Players
Overlooked by the Baseball Hall of Fame*

Thurs., June 2nd, 4:00 pm
Founders Library Staff Lounge
Lower Level

Ice Cream: 4:00 pm

Meeting: 4:30 pm

Talk by Mr. Shalin: 5:00 pm

Mr. Shalin has graciously consented to sign copies of his book for anyone who is interested.

Have A Great Summer!

Telephone: (815) 753-9838
e-mail: libraryfriend@niu.edu
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memory works, and the life and work of Albert Einstein, in honor of the World Year of Physics. In addition, partially through the generosity of the Friends, the Library recently celebrated the addition of our 2 Millionth Volume to our collections. Reports on all of these events can be found inside this issue of *Founders' Type*.

Coming up, at our Annual Meeting and Ice Cream Social, we will elect officers, and welcoming some possible new members to our Executive Board. We will also be regaled about our national pastime by Neil Shalin, who is the author of *Out By A Step: 100 Greatest Players Overlooked by the Baseball Hall of Fame*. We hope that you will join us in kicking off summer with frozen custard from Ollie's and baseball.

Over the summer, the Executive Board will be making plans for the upcoming school year. The Program Committee will be working on programming for next year, and the Friends will continue to work to support the Libraries and their educational mission.

Your support of the Friends of the NIU Libraries is crucial to our continuing success. Thank you!

Lynne Thomas, Faculty Liaison
Friends of the NIU Libraries

Announcements

Congratulations to Jessica Stocker, Reference Department, and Brian Prall, Circulation Department, who have been chosen as this year's winners of the Katherine Walker Library Scholarship Award. The winners of this scholarship receive a certificate commemorating the award and a significant increase in pay for the upcoming year.

The University Libraries continues with their Two Million Penny Challenge. The money raised will be used to establish an endowment in support of the University Libraries' collections. (Of course, all monetary donations of any size are cheerfully accepted!) If you would like to make a donation, or host a penny jar, please contact Library Administration, at (815) 753-9802.

The Friends of the NIU Libraries will hold their Annual Meeting, and an Ice Cream Social, featuring frozen custard from Ollie's, on Thursday, June 2nd, from 4-6 p.m in the Staff Lounge, Lower Level of the Library. A limited number of parking passes are available for members. Please contact Lynne Thomas, Faculty Liaison, at (815) 753-0255, or libraryfriend@niu.edu, to request a pass. Neil Shalin, author of *Out by a step: 100 Greatest Players Overlooked by the Baseball Hall of Fame*, will give a short talk following the meeting. Please join us!

If you are interested in being added to an electronic mailing list of upcoming events and activities for the Friends of the Library, please email libraryfriend@niu.edu, and we will be happy to add you to the list. Keep up on Friends events and news electronically!

The University Libraries will be participating in University Summer Hours again this year. Please see our Hours website, <http://www.niulib.niu.edu/hours.cfm>, for details.

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The Shadow of Philip K. Dick

Stephen Wright

March 31, 2005

In 1980, Stephen Wright was a graduate student in music at Indiana University, reading Asimov and Clarke. He ran across Philip K. Dick's "Time out of Joint," and the rest, as they say, was history. He was hooked, by the quirky personalities of Dick's characters, and the interesting concepts about humanity put forth in Dick's books. Stephen came to NIU in 1985 partly because NIU has a great science fiction magazine collection that includes many of Dick's works. Dick's books influenced Wright's thinking and philosophy, just as they influenced culture in general. Shades of Dick's influence include the idea that reality is not what it seems (recently prominently featured in the Matrix films), and Dean Koontz characters that have a "Philip K. Dick" moment.

Philip K. Dick was born in 1928 in Chicago. Early in life, his family moved to California. His twin sister passed away during infancy. He spent much of his life in Northern California, and the San Francisco area. Married five times, he had three children. He died in 1982 from a stroke. He is buried in Fort Morgan, Colorado, although he never lived there. His parents liked it when they were passing through.

Dick attended Berkeley for one year, then dropped out due to agoraphobia. Jobs that he held include that of a record clerk and an announcer for radio. He began writing in the early 1950s, mostly short stories that were published in science fiction magazines. Over the course of his career, he wrote over 150 short stories. One of his first published stories was *The Defenders in Galaxy* (1953). In this story, we see the future Earth, where mankind is at war. Humanity turns the war over to robots and hide underground—the robots stop the war without notifying humans. Because short stories didn't pay very well, Dick soon turned to writing novels. His first, *Solar Lottery*, was published in 1955.

In 1962, the novel that put Dick on the map was published. *Man in the High Castle* won Dick the Hugo Award. In a five year period, he wrote 16 novels, many of which are now being republished by Vintage. In the late 1950s Dick tried mainstream writing. He wrote seven such novels but none were published until after his death.

Dick has become highly collectible. Original editions of his novels can sell for up to \$1000 on the market. In 1987/88 Steve wrote a secondary bibliography on Dick and sold it for the cost of copying and sending. Today, a rare books dealer is selling it for \$200.

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Dick's work has been adapted for music (*Valis*, 1981, from *Exegesis*), and in comic books (Dick's religious experiences, which he wrote about in an 8,000-page "Exegesis," were illustrated by underground cartoonist R. Crumb). However, Dick's most substantial influence on popular culture has to be in movies. Many of his novels and short stories have been adapted into films. John Lennon enjoyed *Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) so much that he wanted to make it into a movie. *Total Recall* (1990), the first of Dick's works to be made into a film, was adapted from *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale* (1966). *Blade Runner* (1982) was adapted from his work *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) in the last year of Dick's life. In 1995 *Screamers* was adapted from *Second Variety* (1953). In 2002 *Imposter* was made from the 1953 story of the same title. Also in 2002, *Minority Report* was adapted from the 1956 story of the same title. In 2003, we saw *Paycheck* from the 1953 story of the same title; *A Scanner Darkly* was produced in 2005 from the 1977 story of the same title. There is also a rumor that *The Golden Man* (1954) is being made into a movie.

--Lynne Thomas, with the assistance of Angie Schroeder

Synaptic Plasticity: A Cellular Correlate for Learning and Memory

Dr Anis Contractor

April 14, 2005

Synaptic plasticity is not a term that easily rolls off the tongue, nor easily understood by laypeople. Yet this topic was an interesting talk given by Dr. Anis Contractor from the Department of Physiology at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. The presentation, "Synaptic plasticity: a cellular correlate for learning and memory?" was sponsored by the Friends as part of their program series.

Dr. Contractor's research involves synapses, neuronal communication, and plasticity. These areas have to do with the brain's formation of learning and memory. He reported on his research in this area and his experimentation on rats and mice. The brain has approximately 150 billion neurons and a typical neuron makes 20,000 to 30,000 connections with other neurons. This creates an unfathomable number of possibilities that can only be managed on powerful computers.

The key to his research is the understanding of how synapses work. A synapse is the point at which a nerve impulse passes from an axon of one neuron to the dendrite of another. This research is tackling conditions such as autism and mental retardation, which may someday become something of the past.

--Byron Anderson

The University Libraries Two Millionth Volume

On April 7, 2005, the University Libraries celebrated the addition of the library's Two Millionth Volume in Altgeld Hall. The ceremony opened with the viewing of a Flash movie of the history of the University Libraries. Dean Arthur P. Young welcomed guests to the celebration, noting in his remarks that the Two Million volume milestone places Northern Illinois University's library in the top 3% in size of all higher education libraries.

The Keynote Address was given by Nicholas Basbanes, author of *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books*, and *A Splendor of Letters: The Permanence of Books in an Impermanent World*. Mr. Basbanes' talk was entitled: "A Fellowship of Books."

Three celebratory books were presented to Ivan Legg, Executive Vice President and Provost, and Craig Marcus, the President of the NIU Student Association.

The first edition, first issue, in dust jackets, of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy, was added to the Science Fiction and Fantasy Collection on the 50th anniversary of its publication. This work is arguably the basis for the fantasy literature genre, as well as being a lifelong study in linguistic philology by Tolkein, a professor of English at Oxford University.

A unique, hand-drawn Burmese manuscript was added to the Southeast Asia Collection. This hand-colored ethnographic album, ca. 1900, shows people from various ethnic groups in Burma at their daily chores and in their native costume.

The full-text, searchable electronic edition of the entire run of the *Chicago Tribune*, from 1849 to the present, is an indispensable record of our local community, as well of the regional view of the world we inhabit. This resource will serve students and scholars across the disciplines.

The volumes were on display during the month of April on the first floor of Founders' Memorial Library. Once cataloged, the Tolkien trilogy and the Burmese manuscript will be available for use in Rare Books and Special Collections, on the 4th floor of the library. The *Chicago Tribune Online* is available on the Library's web page, under Newspapers.

More information about the Two Millionth Volume Celebration, as well as the individual volumes, is available on the library's web page, at: <http://www.niulib.niu.edu/2millionvolumes/index.htm>.

--Lynne Thomas
Member, Two Millionth Volume Committee

*An Evening with Einstein in the Library:
The First Beautiful Mind*

(A World Year of Physics Celebration)

Dr. Carol Thompson, Professor, NIU Physics department

“When did modern physics enter the learning curve?”

**Dr. Harold Brown, Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus, NIU Philosophy
Dept.**

“Relativity and Relativism: Some Misconceptions”

Dr. Roger Dixon, Fermi National Laboratory

“The Special Theory of Relativity in the Laboratory and in the Imagination”

Monday, May 2, 2005

Einstein once wrote, "The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science" This thought carried through during the final Friends of NIU Libraries program for the year entitled, "An Evening with Einstein in the Library: The First Beautiful Mind." The presenters were Dr. Carol Thompson, Professor, NIU Department of Physics, Dr. Harold Brown, Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus, NIU Department of Philosophy, and Dr. Roger Dixon, head of the accelerator division, Fermi National Laboratory. The program began with a short DVD video program that summarized Einstein's 1930 article, "The World as It Is," a very nice in-house production put together by several library faculty and staff.

Dr. Thompson developed a keen interest over past years in collecting and reading old science books primarily dating from the latter half of the 19th century through the first half of the 20th century. Her talk entitled, "When Did Modern Physics Enter the Learning Curve?" examined at what point physics entered the pedagogy, that is, when did textbooks start incorporating advanced new concepts of physics. Examples of the "modern physics" concepts used were the equivalence of light as electromagnetic wave (1888), the equivalence of mass and energy (1905), and the discovery of the neutron (1932), as well as several others. Thompson divided the science books examined into categories of general (adult), textbooks for college and university (introductory), textbooks for high school and preparatory schools. Most of the textbooks did well in introducing new concepts in timely fashion with the exception of high school textbooks which lagged the others.

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Dr. Brown began by being sure that the audience knew that there was nothing relative about the theory of relativity. He dealt with two postulates: the principal of relativity which says that the laws of nature are the same, and that the speed of light are all the same in the Galilean Universe. Rather than the two postulates being relative, they are contradictory. Einstein worked out the difference by looking for variance, and this lead to his famous 1905 papers on the theory of relativity.

Dr. Dixon focused on the theory of relativity and how it has affected science fiction literature. The problem with space travel for science fiction writers is that it is difficult to bring characters back to where they've begun. Special relativity is defined as the division of relativity theory which relates the observations of observers moving with constant relative velocities and postulates that natural laws are the same for all such observers. lizes special relativity to noninertial frames of reference and incorporates gravitation, and in which events take place in a curved space. General relativity provides sci fi writers with a place where space is bent creating travel short cuts by way of hyper-space, warp speed, black holes, or worm holes.

The program, co-sponsored with the Department of Physics, was timed to coincide with the World Year of Physics 2005. Friends of the Library were able during the month of May to view the multimedia display, entitled World Year of Physics 2005--Einstein in the 21st century, on the first floor in Founders Memorial Library.

Byron Anderson

Thank You!

It has been an interesting and varied year of programming for the 2004-2005 Friends Program Series. Thank you for your continuing interest in and support of the Friends of the Library. We will hopefully have a preview of programming for the upcoming year in the next issue of *Founders' Type*. If you have suggestions for upcoming programming, requests for food at Friends events, or any other questions or concerns, please email libraryfriend@niu.edu, or call (815) 753-9838.

--Lynne Thomas
Faculty Liaison, Friends of the NIU Libraries

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