

Founders'

A Newsletter of the Friends
of Northern Illinois University Libraries



Type

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Faculty Liaison's Column

Dear Friends,

As you can see from the articles in this edition of Founders' Type, it has been an especially busy and productive semester for the Friends. In addition to some fine programming, both on campus and off, the Friends have also been responsible for helping the



Friends of the Library Spring 2006 Programs

Artemus Ward

*Justice John Roberts and the
Future of the U.S. Supreme Court*
Thursday, January 19th, 7:30 pm
Staff Lounge, Lower Level

Carl Lindahl

*Charity With a Vengeance: The
Politics of Mardi Gras in Cajun
Louisiana*

Thursday, March 9, 5:00 pm
Illinois Room, Holmes Student
Center

Mark Fischer

*What You Really Need to Know
About Oil in the Middle East*
Wednesday, March 22, 7:30 pm
Staff Lounge, Lower Level

Telephone: (815) 753-9838
e-mail: libraryfriend@niu.edu
<http://www.niulib.niu.edu/friends/>

Library continue its ongoing effort to conserve library materials. Through the generosity of Friends like you, the Board of the Friends sponsored the purchase of "Rainy Day Bags," which will be distributed to library patrons checking out books during inclement weather. These sturdy plastic bags, featuring the "Friends Owl" logo designed by Charles Larry, should help to keep library books from getting wet, and therefore save the Library the replacement costs of water-damaged and moldy books.

As you can see from the listings on this page, we have even more exciting programming coming up for the Spring. Artemus Ward, an assistant professor of Political Science at NIU will talk about the U.S. Supreme Court. Carl Lindahl, from the University of Houston, will be giving a talk co-sponsored by the Center for Research on Festive Culture through the History Department and the Friends. And finally, Mark Fischer, from the department of Geology will fill us in about oil in the Middle East. There may be even more programming to come this spring, so watch your mail for details and stay tuned!

Lynne Thomas,
Faculty Liaison

Announcements

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 your name. Keep up on Friends events and news electronically!

Did you know that NIU employees, both faculty and staff, who are Friends of the Library can have their annual memberships and gifts to Friends endowments deducted directly from their paychecks? NIU employees can designate the Friends of the NIU Libraries for charitable giving using the “Stop/Start Payroll Deduction Authorization” form provided on the Human Resource Services webpage at: <http://www.hr.niu.edu/resources/forms.cfm>. Please contact Lynne Thomas, the Faculty Liaison, for further details, at (815) 753-9838, or at libraryfriend@niu.edu. For University staff, Friends membership also grants longer checkout periods for books from the University Libraries.

Do you wish to honor a colleague, friend, or loved one? Purchasing a leaf, acorn, stone, or tree for the Friends “Ensuring the Future Tree” is an enduring tribute, as well as providing a lasting, tax-deductible commitment to excellent scholarship at NIU. Contact the Friends at 753-9838 to request your brochure today!

Thank you for your support!



In Memory of the First Floor Carpeting, 1977-2005



The Friends of the NIU Libraries are pleased to announce the publication of *Castle On A Hill*, a pictorial history of NIU, by University Archivist and Friends Treasurer Glen A. Gildemeister. This lovely, limited-edition book is available for sale at the Village Commons Bookstore, the University Bookstore, the DeKalb Gallery, and on Amazon.com. Proceeds from the sale of the book benefit the Friends of the NIU Libraries.

A Day at the Newberry
Lewis and Clark and the Indian Country
November 5th, 9-5 pm.



On December 5th, a group of Friends boarded a bus to the Newberry Library in Chicago, to view the Newberry's exhibit *Lewis and Clark and the Indian Country*, and to hear photographer Richard Mack and filmmaker Sally Thompson talk about the Lewis and Clark Trail. This photo, which features the Friends along with Richard Mack, was provided by the Public Programs Coordinator for the Newberry, Rachel Bohlmann. Thanks especially to Kathy Wright, Chair of the Friends Program Committee, for coordinating the trip!

If you have suggestions for similar programming, please contact Lynne Thomas, the Faculty Liaison, at lmthomas@niu.edu or 753-0255

EDITING HISTORY:
THE GRIFFITH LETTERS AND THE CIVIL WAR
Joan Metzger, Assistant University Archivist
November 9, 2005, 7:30 pm

Frank Griffith, a Civil War soldier in Company K, 116 New York Volunteer Infantry from 1862 –1865, was stationed on the western edge of the war in Louisiana. Although the Regiment participated in a few raids and several battles, they mostly performed guard duty in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. During this time Griffith occasionally was called upon to do carpentry work for the officers. After being wounded in the Battle of Pleasant Hill, LA in April 1864 he was transferred to the Veterans Reserve Corps where he performed duty as a hospital steward in New Orleans, and after being sent to Washington, D.C. as a barber, and a cook. While serving his country, Frank wrote frequently to his wife Thankful, and other family members. 106 of his letters to his wife survived, plus seventeen letters written by other family members. How the Griffith family letters ended up in the Regional History Center in Founders Memorial Library at NIU, and how they became published in a book was the basis of the talk by Joan Metzger, Assistant University Archivist in the RHC, sponsored by the Friends of NIU Libraries.

The DeKalb connection for the letters is a more involved story. Following the war in 1875 Griffith moved to Sandwich, Illinois, possibly because his good friend Acil Ames lived in nearby Somonauk. Griffith's third daughter Cora Elsie married William Minard and moved to DeKalb where they raised their family. Their daughter Edna married John Baird, and their daughter Elizabeth married William Burrows. The Burrows' later moved out of state. The Griffith letters were passed through this family, and apparently the family ran out of heirs, so following the death of Elizabeth, Mr. Burrows sent the letters to the Methodist Church in DeKalb, where the Baird family had been members. The Methodist Church, in turn, gave the letters to the Regional History Center.

Between 1980 and 1996 the Griffith letters were organized and transcriptions begun. By the time Metzger took on the project about half the letters had been transcribed. Glen Gildemeister, University Archivist, asked Metzger to complete the project. In transcribing the letters Metzger was drawn into Griffith's story.

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Through the letters, Griffith became a person that Metzger came to know and relate to. Far from dry, Griffith's life was, according to Metzger, "sort of like a soap opera." The handwritten letters were written under poor conditions due to the war and included the use of an odd assortment of pens and pencils, different types of paper, and little opportunity to check spelling. One letter on display was written on two pages of paper "confiscated" from an architect's office and measured 12" by 18 ½." It took Griffith a week to completely fill both sides of both sheets with writing.

Producing a book was not Metzger's ambition, but there was just too much material in Griffith's story for an article to be sufficient. Gildemeister encouraged Metzger to pursue writing a book using the Griffith letters. To accomplish the task of creating and editing a book of history Metzger did research in Buffalo, New York and Sandwich, Illinois. All the people she worked with were most helpful in finding materials useful in discovering more about Frank Griffith and his family. As editor, Metzger put in basic punctuation and paragraphing to make the letters more readable, but left misspellings. With the exception of one letter that was written after the war, all the letters were included in the book. Eventually a publisher was sought and Heritage Books agreed to publish the final text.

Griffith seemed to be a well-read person who came from a literate family, a fact that presented itself as Metzger read aloud a number of the letters during her presentation. Griffith, born April 26, 1835, had a stroke in 1918 and died November 17, 1921 at the home of his daughter Harriet in Sandwich. He was buried in the Oak Ridge Cemetery in Somonauk.

For those interested, Metzger's book, *The Griffith Letters: The Story of Frank Griffith and the 116'th New York Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War*, is available from Heritage Books at www.HeritageBooks.com, and through Amazon.com.

By Byron Anderson and Joan Metzger

An Evening with Jill Thompson and Brian Azzarello

November 16, 2005, 7:30 pm

Members of the Friends may relate terms like “comics” or “comic books” with certain images, such as Blondie, Dick Tracy, or Beetle Bailey. Traditional comics such as these are still very much around; however, during the 1970s, a new form of comic began to appear. The works became more serious, mature, and literary than traditional comics. They’re sometimes referred to as graphic comics, a term used to disassociate the works from the juvenile and/or humorous connotations of traditional comics and comic books. Graphic comics are a long-form of comic book, usually with a lengthy and complex story line with involved and detailed artwork. Some have been criticized for being violent and sexual. They’re often referred to as graphic novels. Some graphic novels have a continuous story, and others are compiled into anthologies or collections of loosely related pieces and look more like a book. Graphic novels have become a popular item in public library collections. Even the NIU Libraries have an extensive collection of these comics in the Rare Books/Special Collections Room. This collection can serve as the basis for research in areas such as art and popular culture.

Jill Thompson is a comic artist with a vivid imagination. As a 1987 graduate from the American Academy of Art in Chicago, she started to garner acclaim from her work on “Wonder Woman,” “Swamp Thing,” “Black Orchid,” and the award-winning title, “Sandman” with Neil Gaiman. Brian Azzarello is a writer and editor, who, according to him, “just fell into it,” meaning into the occupation of writing and editing graphic comics. He has penned runs of Superman and Batman, and came to prominence with the Vertigo title, “100 Bullets.” He believes that editors are “like a fresh set of ears,” and good editing is crucial to the final product.

Thompson scripts her own stories and gets ideas from dialogue, either in talking with someone else or back and forth with herself. She became immersed in and was influenced by Japanese manga, a word meaning comics and/or cartoons. Manga is well respected both as a Japanese art form and as a form of popular literature. For Thompson, art is primary, and in graphic comics she believes that the artist should be able to draw a page without any words and readers should be able to get an idea of what’s going on. Thompson admitted that sometimes she “couldn’t draw fast enough to keep up with what the characters want to do.”

Some of Thompson’s works have been adapted, for example, “Scary Godmother,” a successful children’s book, was adapted into a successful stage show, “Scary Godmother: Halloween Spooktacular,” and “Scary Godmother: Revenge of Jimmy,” premiered on the Disney channel. She helped with both of these adaptations.

Those in the audience, especially the die-hard fans, benefited by having a Q&A format with Thompson and Azzarello, which focused heavily on the comics industry. Thompson passed around original pieces of her artwork, many of which are available for sale on her website, www.jillthompsonart.com. Finally, for those who brought along personal copies of their works, autographs were provided.

Byron Anderson

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