Spotlight On: Regional History Center Collections

Regional History Center Featured Collection

The Ransom Family Papers

This exciting collection has it all: romance, war, family feuds, genealogy tracings, pioneer life, 1800s medical pamphlets, and a black sheep or two.

The Ransom family settled in Roscoe, Illinois in the mid-nineteenth century. Over four generations are represented in this collection, spanning from 1789 to 2009, with a large focus on Dr. Giles Ransom and his two sons in the late 1800s. The three were well-revered doctors in the Rockford area. The Ransoms were meticulous in their record keeping, both personal and business related, and the collection reflects this through their extensive letters, diaries, medical notes, and personal ephemera.

Highlights of the Dr. Giles Paddock Ransom Family Collection (RC 275) include Civil War correspondence, a personal account of a Lincoln-Douglas speech, letters home while building the Hoover Dam, historical accounts of Rockford and Roscoe, IL, letters about college life in the early 20th century, and log books for patient visits and payments.

The full collection is now open for researchers in the Regional History Center. Check out the full inventory online http://www.ulib.niu.edu/regnist/RC%20275.pdf, or stop by Founders Library, Room 400, to research the collection in person.
Greetings from the Regional History Center!

Located in Founders Memorial Library (room 400) the RHC began as the NIU archives in 1964 and has since grown into a multifaceted research center which houses three related sets of historical records: University Archives, Regional Collections, and Local Government Records (Illinois Regional Archives Depository). The Center’s mission is to acquire, preserve, and make available to the public the most significant historical records of the northern Illinois region. We actively collect from the eighteen northern counties of Illinois excluding Cook County. The RHC is a great place to visit if you’re looking for history regarding NIU, as well as business, family, or genealogical records from the northern Illinois region.

I’ve been with the Center for nearly a year now and didn’t realize how unique our collections were until I was recently helping one of our donors. She had given us her personal records which pertained to an organization located in McHenry County. She was also interested in finding a home for additional materials that dealt more with research she’d done in her southern Illinois hometown—an area traditionally outside of our collection scope. “I'll help you find a regional history center closer to your hometown,” I told her. After putting my searching skills to the test I came up empty-handed. I couldn’t even find a town or county archive, let alone one for the southern Illinois region.

The RHC truly has such a unique mission! We document the lives of individual families, businesses, and organizations for eighteen different counties. The Center is a “one-stop-shop” for topics that have impacted northern Illinois: war, labor, women’s roles, or farm life. We also have some equally important, but more obscure topics: Presidential elections, the Swedish influence on Rockford, railroad timetables, or Westclox Inc. of LaSalle—all of these things help tell the story of life in northern Illinois. I have yet to touch on the value of our University Archives or the Illinois Regional Archives Depository! Next time, I suppose.

Until then I welcome you to check out our website (http://www.ulib.niu.edu/reghist/) or stop by for a visit in person. We can also be found on Facebook and Flickr—if you’re an active user simply do a search for “Regional History Center” and add us as a friend.

Katharine White
Curator, Regional History Center

Save These Dates:

October 7, 2010. The Regional History Center will host “Someth’n to Write Home About: Letters from the Regional History Center Collections,” an exhibit and reception from 4 to 6 at Founders Memorial Library. The exhibit is located in the Library’s lobby, reception and open house in the Regional History Center (Room 400). This event is free and open to the public.

October 16, 2010. If you are on campus for Homecoming, look for the Regional History Center booth in Barsema Alumni and Visitors Center. In light of Barsema’s five-year anniversary, the RHC will be featuring images of campus and its ever-changing buildings through the years. Plus, come meet the RHC’s mascot, Archie Archive!
I am honored to serve this academic year as President of the Friends of the NIU libraries. Every time I walk through the doors of Founders Library I still feel excited by what I might find. I could discover a new scholarly book, an obscure research monograph, or a rare manuscript. All of these items are equally valuable on my personal serendipity scale of library holdings. I believe that the traditional bricks and mortar library is still just as relevant now as it was before the onset of the digital revolution. In addition, I would further argue that the mission of the Friends is even more significant now than when we were founded in the early 1980’s.

My personal love of libraries began as soon as I could read, but did not really mature until I first entered the Robert W. Woodruff library at Emory University as junior debater doing research in high school. That same summer, I started working at my local public library directing the summer reading program for kids. As a high school senior, I was able to spend many hours at the nearby University of Georgia library researching my English term paper on Rudyard Kipling. During my first year at the University of Vermont, I began working at the Special Collections Department of Bailey-Howe Library as a Work-Study student. By my final year in college, I was allowed to inventory and catalogue a large donated collection of rare 1920’s and 1930’s black and white photographs.

During my M.A work at Northern, I began my continuing journey of discovery at Founders library. Some of my research led me to our collection of 1960’s social protest literature on such activist groups at the Black Panther Party. In my four years of doctoral study at the University of Missouri, I supplemented my graduate assistantship with weekend shifts at the Special Collections Department of Ellis Library. As patron traffic allowed, I inventoried a donated collection of Fourth of July Orations that dated from 1790 to 1880. Many of these rare speeches were by Daniel Webster or Edward Everett—that “other” speaker at Gettysburg. My favorite moment occurred one Sunday afternoon when I was assigned to verify the inventory entries of an autographed book collection presented to Walter Williams, the founding Dean of the Missouri School of Journalism. After locating a small volume by noted Physicists Max Planck, I observed that the author had indeed penned a brief note to Williams with a date and signature. What was not listed on the inventory sheet, however, was the fact that Albert Einstein had written the “Foreword” to the book and had also signed his name—“A. Einstein”—after addressing Williams with several lines of poetry! I remember staring at the carefully written signature with my hands shaking.

Amazon.com recently reported that sales of “e-versions” of books now exceed printed titles. Perhaps I will invest in a Kindle someday, but the feeling of holding and engaging the printed word can not be duplicated. I relish each time I open a book, monograph, or manuscript and encounter the unexpected. Let us all pledge to promote all Friends presentations and events for this new academic year. Who knows, perhaps someone at a Friends event could experience their own special serendipitous moment?
Friends of the NIU Libraries
Annual Meeting
Founders Library, Rare Books and Special Collections
3:00 p.m., Monday, June 14, 2010

The Annual Meeting was attended by board members (Byron Anderson, Ferald Bryan, Patrick Dawson, Sharon Dowen, Gary Gresholdt, Anne Kaplan, Ron, Klein, Linda Schwarz, Lynne Thomas, Drew VandeCreek, and Jerrold Zar) as well as several members of Friends of NIU Libraries and library staff.

Ron Klein, chair, called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m. He thanked board members and Lynne Thomas for their efforts this past year.

Lynne Thomas also thanked the board, asked those present to suggest ideas for programs to be sponsored by the Friends, and encouraged individuals to contribute to the Friends’ endowment fund.

Patrick Dawson added his thanks indicating his appreciation not only for those who contribute to the endowment fund, but also appreciation for the programs sponsored this past year and the time and efforts expended by board members. He noted that Special Collections especially depends on donations. He indicated Special Collections is attempting to develop unique areas such as its science fiction collection.

Sharon Dowen, Treasurer, provided a brief report. She indicated that as of April 30, there was a balance of $26,752.34 in the operating account, $260,592.41 in the endowment principal fund, and $15,348.65 in the expendable endowment fund.

Ron Klein indicated there were two items of business to be conducted at the annual meeting: the election of new board members, and the election of officers. Klein reported that two current board members whose terms were expiring had agreed to being renominated (i.e. Michael Spires and Drew VandeCreek), and two new individuals who agreed to nomination (i.e. Dee Coover and Carla Montgomery). He called for nominations from the floor; there were none. He asked for a motion to approve the nominations. Linda Schwarz moved approval; Anne Kaplan provided the second. The motion carried. Klein noted Ferald Bryan, outgoing Vice Chair/Program Committee Chair, would assume the position of Chair in accordance with the constitution and by-laws. He indicated that Mary Lincoln had agreed to nomination as Vice Chair/Program Committee Chair and that Sharon Dowen and Gary Gresholdt had agreed to renomination as treasurer and secretary respectively. He asked for nominations from the floor. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve the nominees. Jerry Zar moved approval; Sharon Dowen provided the second. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned, and those in attendance enjoyed a short social time and refreshments.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Gresholdt
Secretary
A Letter From the Faculty Liaison

The fall semester has arrived! (Where did the summer go?) We have lots of great programming planned, and we hope that you will join us as we finish off 2010 in grand style.

On Thursday, August 31, from 4-6 pm, we will be hosting our annual back-to-school wine and cheese reception for Friends members and NIU faculty; invitation flyers have already gone out. Join us in Rare Books and Special Collections on the 4th floor of Founders Memorial Library for wine, snacks, and lively conversation!

On Friday, October 1, 2010, at 7:00 pm, we hope that you will join us in kicking off The Big Read with the DeKalb Public Library. This year’s Big Read selection is Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild*. Join us at the DeKalb Public Library to receive your free copy of the book, and stay for An Evening With Jack London, presented by Michael Oakes of Oakes Educational Theater. This event is part of The Big Read, an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest. Rare Books and Special Collections will also be hosting an exhibition in conjunction with the Big Read, *Jack London and His Radical Writer Friends*, for the month of October.

On Monday, November 29, at 7:00 pm, we have a real treat. Gregory Beyer (NIU School of Music faculty), Pulitzer-Prize winning composer Shulamit Ran (University of Chicago), and David M. Gregory (Wheaton College) have agreed to participate in a pre-concert lecture as a Friends of the NIU Library event prior to the November 29 New Music Ensemble concert featuring the music of Ran and Gregory. The concert will take place in the Boutell Memorial Concert Hall at 8 p.m. More details will be coming soon!

As always, we are grateful for your programming ideas. Send them along to libraryfriend@niu.edu, comment on our Facebook page, or call us at 815-753-9838.

Thanks for your continuing support of the Friends of the NIU Libraries. We hope that you will join us for these exciting events!

Lynne M. Thomas
Faculty Liaison

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A Note from NIU library’s Circulation department:
- NIU Annuitants/retirees can contact Cliff Golden or Madelyn Nelson 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 Madelyn Nelson at 815-753-9846.
Announcements:

If you have books you’d like to donate to The Friends book sale at NIU Library, please contact Jayne Crosby-Lindner (815) 753-9843.

Don’t forget to visit the Founders Cafe on the lower level of Founders Library!

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Friends of the NIU Libraries
Financial Activity
Twelve Months Ended 6/30/10
(as of 8/03/10)

Operating Account
Balance, July 1, 2009 $21,794.24
Revenues $12,978.06
Expenses $(7,848.96)
Balance, June 30, 2010 $26,923.34

Endowment Principal
Balance, July 1, 2009 $329,272.81
Revenues $840.00
Change in Value $(55,772.36)
Tnsfr to Expendable $(13,658.04)
Balance, June 30, 2010 $260,682.41

Expendable Endowment
Balance, July 1, 2009 $1,690.61
Tnsfr from Principal $13,658.04
Balance, June 30, 2010 $15,348.65

Total Endowment $276,031.06
2009-2010 Friends of NIU Libraries
Board Members and Officers

Ferald Bryan (president)
Mary Lincoln (vice president, program chair)
Sharon Dowen (treasurer)
Gary Gresholdt (secretary)
Patrick Dawson (ex officio)
Lynne M. Thomas (Faculty & Program liaison)
Drew VandeCreek
Nancy D. Castle

Michael Spires
Anne Kaplan
Linda Schwarz
Jerry Zar
Byron Anderson
Ron Klein
Carla Montgomery
Dee Coover

Thank you to our Life Members
(donating $1000.00 or more)

Adra Baker-Gallagher
Paul & Jean Burtness
Glen & Dawn Ericksen
Deborah Erickson
Glen & Jamie Gildemeister
Elroy & Urla Golden
Deanne Holzberlein
Samuel & Corinna Huang
E. Nelson & Marilyn S. James
William C. Johnson
Yvonne Johnson
Barbara & David Johnson-Wint
Harriet Kallich
Ron Klein
Josephine Korcek
Mike Korcek

Judith M. Looney
Scott & Kathy Miller
William & Josephine Monat
Carla W. Montgomery
Charles & Mary Munroe
Todd & Joanne Nebel
James Block Pick
Ron & Barbara Provencher
Gordon Rasmussen
Lawrence Rast
Larry & Judy Sill
Sally Stevens
Peggy Sullivan
Rebekah Wilson
Arthur & Pat Young
Jerrold & Carol Zar

Member Benefits:

- Receive a 10% discount on merchandise at the following stores:
  - Ed Ripp Fine Art Books, Chicago
- Receive a 15% discount on merchandise at the following online stores:
  - Arcadia, (www.arcadiabooks.net)
Yes! I/We wish to join the Friends of NIU Libraries at the following level:

- $1,000 or more Life Member
- $500 Benefactor/Corporate
- $100 Donor
- $50 Family
- $35 Individual
- $10 Student (Must show ID)

Enclosed is a gift of $______________

(Installment plans are available for large gifts)

Please charge to my 

- Visa
- MC
- Discover

Credit Card Number__________________________________________
Expiration Date_____________________________________________
Signature____________________________________________________

Make checks payable to Friends of NIU Libraries

Would you like any of the following brochures?

- Library Book Fund
- Ensuring the Future Tress
- Friends of NIU Library

If a gift is in memory or in honor of someone, please include the purpose.

NIU also offers Payroll Deduction for faculty and staff.

Mail to: Friends of NIU Libraries, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115-2868

Thank you for your support!