Digging Into Dime Novels

In early January, the New York Public Library made 187,000 images from their collections available to download without restriction, also providing tools for bulk analysis and visualization. This is part of a growing movement on the part of libraries, archives, and museums to make their public domain materials more readily available to the public. Only last year, the British Library uploaded one million images to Flickr to be used, remixed, and repurposed, joining more than 100 cultural heritage institutions that belong to Flickr, including our very own Regional History Center. Where once libraries and archives might have had limited access to their digital collections, either in hopes of control or profit, today they’re investing resources to make them as widely available as possible.

Part of the reason for doing this is philosophical: libraries have a tradition of making information freely available, including a role advocating for fair use, copyright law reform, and open access. January is the month, historically, when new works once entered the public domain. Because of the Copyright Term Extension Act, this won’t happen in the United States again until 2019, which makes it all the more important to make use of those materials already in the public domain by aggressively encouraging their use and reuse. If you don’t exercise a right, there’s a good chance you might lose it.

Another reason is to engage with the public. The Web is huge and libraries occupy a very small corner of it. One strategy for letting people know we exist is to go where the people are, rather than waiting for them to come to us. By posting on social media sites like Tumblr, Flickr, or Facebook, we can get the word out about our collections to a much wider audience. We can also take advantage of tools for interacting with the public that aren’t currently available in our Digital Asset Management System, including things like tagging, commenting, and sharing. This goes beyond just providing access to the collection and allows us to start a conversation with our online patrons.

Which brings us to our digital collections. Beginning this month, select images are being uploaded to Flickr, starting with our dime novel covers. Our first priority when we started digitizing the dime novels was to enable research at Northern Illinois University and beyond, but we also hoped that the wider public would take an interest. Making these eye-catching illustrated covers more easily available will hopefully spark that interest. All of the images currently uploaded have been released with very few restrictions and each includes a link back to the full-text of the book. Nearly 1,400 images have been added already. Please check it out at https://www.flickr.com/photos/niudigitallibrary/albums and stay tuned for further developments!

Matthew Short
Metadata Librarian
The Library’s Credit Course: Research and Information Literacy in the Digital Age

Did you know that in addition to library instruction sessions, aka bibliographic instructions or BIs, the library also offers a one-credit course on library and information research? UNIV 105: Introduction to Library and Information Research provides a framework for the research process and a broad overview of information literacy concepts. While previously defined as the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information in a variety of formats, today information literacy is a much more integrated, cross-disciplinary concept that has evolved to consider the impact of technology on both accessing, creating, and sharing information. More than simply focusing on the basic skills needed to use library resources, information literacy instruction seeks to develop foundational knowledge, such as understanding the process of information creation, evaluating the content, the context, and the format of information, and recognizing the value of information as intellectual property and as a social issue. Essentially, we teach students to think critically about information as we help them develop the skills needed to effectively navigate library resources, access information, and select appropriate sources.

Developed and taught by library faculty, UNIV 105 was first offered in fall 2012; as of this spring 2016, more than 250 students have enrolled in the course. Although this 100 level course is most beneficial for first and second year students because it prepares them for academic research projects, the course is open to all students and useful to anyone who wishes to learn more about the library and accessing quality information. As one former student remarked, “UNIV 105 really benefited my research skills and my overall academic performance. […] I feel as if I have an advantage over other students in my classes because I already am extremely familiar with the databases and library, so when it comes to research projects I can get started immediately and know exactly what to do.”

UNIV 105 is often offered as part of themed-learning communities (TLC), a grouping of two or three courses from across disciplines taken in conjunction to examine common themes. Because instructors of these clustered courses are in communication, students in TLC sections of UNIV 105 have a unique opportunity to directly connect multidisciplinary learning by considering content and researching topics relevant to their other classes. A special section of UNIV 105 is also offered for Honors students and for Research Rookies (undergraduate students matched with faculty mentors in their major to conduct small-scale research projects).

Recently, the course was updated to not only remain current, but to accommodate the changing higher education landscape. In addition to face-to-face sections of UNIV 105, we have conducted hybrid sections that are delivered mostly online with some in-person class meetings. This semester, we are offering the first completely online section. The popularity of this format of delivery is evident in the maximum capacity enrollment for this section. Other changes may also be considered so that the course could potentially fulfill a possible “first year experience requirement” at the university in the future.

Larissa K. Garcia
Information Literacy Librarian
Art & FCNS Subject Specialist
The Accidental Librarian

Growing up, I never thought of becoming a librarian, even though today I am. One of my sisters (I am one of eight) is a school media specialist, and I remember thinking to myself as a teenager “Why would anyone want to be a librarian?” She went on trips to Europe with librarians and had a very teacher-y way of speaking. That just sounded boring and tedious. I wouldn’t discover until much later that librarianship would fit for me because of its values: equal access to information and service to others.

My first year of college was difficult. Like many other eighteen year olds, I didn’t know what I wanted to do. It wasn’t until I was a sophomore that I declared a major in Spanish and a minor in Anthropology. I was lucky enough to study a semester as an undergraduate at the University of the Americas in Cholula, Mexico. I had never had been on an airplane, let alone travelled outside of the United States. This was easily the best college experience I have ever had, living in another country and gaining proficiency in Spanish. I stayed an extra two months after classes had ended and taught English at a local school. From this experience, I learned that I lacked patience for teaching children or teens in a traditional classroom setting. After graduation, I really didn’t have a plan, so I just took a job at a temporary agency for nursing assistants in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It wasn’t very challenging and didn’t use any of my language skills. By chance, I found some information on AmeriCorps and looked through several programs. I decided that I was going to move to California to educate farmworkers, about pesticide safety. It was great opportunity to give back to the community while using my Spanish language skills. When I finished my year of service, I received an educational award that I applied to my student loans.

For the next ten years, I worked with Spanish speakers in a variety of nonprofit settings, such as in a family planning clinic. I knew that I wanted to go back to graduate school, but I didn’t want to be involved in social services because of the higher emotional stress involved in many of my former positions. After taking some career aptitude tests, I surprisingly decided on library school. The professional values fit for me: intellectual freedom, services and access to information among others. I sought a program where I could still be involved in Latin American/Latino scholarship and ultimately found it at Indiana University.

My initial intention after graduation was to work in an academic library, but my first professional position was as a bilingual outreach librarian at Northlake Public Library District in Northlake, Illinois. Northlake had a large Spanish speaking population. I managed the Spanish collection as well as taught computer classes in Spanish. I enjoyed my position there, serving the information needs of an underserved population. My goal, however, was still academic librarianship, so I took a weekend position at Harper College to build my resume. In May 2015, I began here at NIU as an outreach librarian and subject specialist in the areas of foreign language and Latin American/Latino Studies. I get to go out to promote the library on the campus as well as Dekalb. I enjoy working with students in class, the reference desk and in informal settings because I am helping them to be better students and better consumers of information. And that is how I became the Accidental Librarian.

Kathy Ladell
Outreach Librarian
Thank you to our Life Members (donating $1000.00 or more)

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A Note From the Faculty Liaison

Happy Spring Semester! It has been a busy beginning to 2016 already, as I’m serving on the Program Prioritization Administrative Task Force. Given the current challenges with state funding, the Friends of the NIU Libraries need your financial support, more than ever.

When I look at my calendar for the Spring, March is going to be rather epic, between a lot of classes descending upon Rare Books and Special Collections, and Friends events. Our events calendar is rather compressed, and focused on partnering with folks on and off campus, mostly as a function of timing for the speakers involved.

Mark your calendars!

On Tuesday, March 22 at 6:30 pm, we are partnering with DeKalb Public Library to celebrate The Big Read! This year’s book is In the Time of the Butterflies by National Book Award winner Julia Alvarez. Ms. Alvarez will be keynoting at the (New! Improved! Accessible at long last!) DeKalb Public Library, co-sponsored by the Friends of the NIU Libraries.

On Thursday, March 24 at 7:30 pm (yes, you read that right), we will be partnering with the Medieval Studies program to welcome Dr. Robert Berkhofer from Western Michigan University, who will be discussing “Forgery and Faith in the Liber Traditionum of Saint Peter’s, Ghent.” Dr. Berkhofer’s talk will examine motives (both pious and material) for the forgery of documents and the historical rewriting of texts by medieval monks. The lecture will take place in Cole Hall 100 on campus.

And, finally, our now traditional Annual Meeting and Ice Cream Social is scheduled for Thursday, May 5 from 3:30-5:00 pm in Rare Books and Special Collections. Join us for Ollie’s Frozen Custard, good company, and our annual elections, guaranteed to be faster than melting ice cream.

ALL of these events are free and open to the public. Please, join us, and be sure to bring friends!

Lynne M. Thomas
Head, Special Collections and Faculty Liaison, Friends of the NIU Libraries

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Spring 2016 5
A Message from the (former) Dean of Libraries

Unless you were born after the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, you lived through the Cold War. Fear of nuclear war between the US (and their allies) and the USSR (and their allies) meant carving up the world into camps of “us” or “them” through coercion or bribe, and sponsoring proxy wars to achieve those ends. Popular culture was full of cold war artifacts, from bomb shelters in backyards to Hollywood productions like *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and slogans such as “Better dead than Red.” It was an interesting and fearful time, yet there was a benefit from the hysteria. The US felt the need to exhibit to the world that it was better than the USSR, producing superior culture, goods, defense and science.

The “West” had to have a better standard of living, better products and weapons and better science, as exemplified by the Apollo 11 moon mission in 1969. To achieve this, it was understood that huge investments needed to be made in research and education -- and they were -- on the State and Federal level. The need for an educated population to win the Cold War was not lost upon anyone.

Sadly, with the end of the Cold War, we have somehow misplaced the need for an educated population. Funding for education and research on the Federal and State level has been critically diminished. Education is belittled through the rhetoric of radical conservatives to the detriment of current and future generations.

So what does this have to do with libraries? Well, everything. Libraries support the research and education of the populations they serve, both through public academic institutions and public libraries. Cuts in research and education funding become cuts in library funding. The NIU Libraries have suffered a series of funding reductions over the last decade which have had a negative impact upon our ability to support NIU’s education and research mission. We have reached the point where it would require huge infusions of funding to be able to rebuild and maintain the library collection at the level that the NIU libraries once had. Despite the fact that politicians come and go and that political movements shift left and right, I do not see any infusion in library funding happening in the immediate or long term future.

We have embarked upon a new era, an era where it is not merely desirable that individuals financially support public academic libraries, but an era where it is critical. My final message as Dean of NIU Libraries is a blatant appeal that you make a commitment to support either the Friends of the NIU Libraries or the NIU Libraries General Foundation Account with a financial gift to help us fulfil the mission of supporting an NIU education.

Patrick J. Dawson
Former Dean of Libraries

Member Benefits:

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

Friends tote bags! (email aschroeder@niu.edu) or call (815-753-8091) Angie Schroeder for details.)
Ensuring the Future in a Challenging Economic Time

A litany of bad budget news, from the state, higher education in general, and from NIU in particular, as we struggle to adjust to “the new normal” have made it abundantly clear that we must, as we are able, step up to support the institutions that we care about, through advocacy, and, where possible, through direct donations.

If you would like to show your support for the NIU Libraries, one of the most visible ways is through the Ensuring the Future tree, on display in the lobby of Founders’ Memorial Library. This giving tree is a monument to those who have honored friends, colleagues, and loved ones through their gifts to the NIU Libraries, with plaques that help our tree to grow. Your gift to our endowment at the $200, $500, $1000, or higher levels help to make absolutely certain that there will be continuing funds to purchase materials for the University Libraries.

We hope that you will consider showing your NIU pride by contributing to the NIU Libraries through our Ensuring the Future fund. You can request a brochure by filling out the form on this newsletter. More information is available at: http://www.ulib.niu.edu/friends/ensuringthefuture.cfm.

Won’t you join us?

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

Save These Dates for Friends Events!

Tuesday, March 22, 2016. **Keynote: An Evening with National Book Medal Award Winner - Julia Alvarez.** 6:30 p.m. at the DeKalb Public Library, 309 Oak St., DeKalb. Co-sponsored with DeKalb Public Library as part of The Big Read. This event is free and open to the public.

Thursday, March 24, 2016. **Forgery and Faith in the Liber Traditionum of Saint Peter's, Ghent** with Dr. Robert Berkhofer. 7:30 p.m. Cole Hall 100. Co-sponsored with the Medieval Studies Program. This event is free and open to the public.

Thursday, May 5, 2016. **Friends of NIU Libraries Annual Meeting & Ice Cream Social.** 3:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m. in Rare Books and Special Collections, 4th floor of Founders Memorial Library. This event is free and open to the public.
Yes! I/We wish to join the Friends of NIU Libraries at the following level:

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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!