ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign Library
Mortenson Program to Expand with Second Gift of $2 Million

C. Walter and Gerda B. Mortenson have honored the Library with a second gift of $2 million, to be used to significantly expand the activities of the current C. Walter and Gerda B. Mortenson Distinguished Professorship for International Library Programs.

"This new gift, which we hope will create the new Mortenson Center for International Librarianship, will provide our Library with a unique opportunity to establish and develop connections and relationships with libraries and librarians throughout the world," says University Librarian David E. Bishop.

Currently, the professorship sponsors the research visits or graduate library education of several foreign librarians per year, as well as a lecture series. The new gift will expand the scope of these activities to such an extent that, pending official approval, the program will be renamed the C. Walter and Gerda B. Mortenson Center for International Library Programs.

"The world's libraries provide not only preservation of ideas, but increased communication," Dr. Mortenson wrote about this new gift in a recent letter to the Library. "With increased exchanges of ideas among the world's peoples will come increased tolerance...Therefore, additional funds were provided with the hope that increased communication among peoples of the world through the world's libraries will catalyze tolerance and understanding in the world."

The professorship, the only program of its kind in the country, was inaugurated in 1988 with the appointment of Marianna Tax Choldin, then head of the Library's Slavic and East European Library, as the first Mortenson Distinguished Professor.

Since then, the professorship has hosted seven Mortenson fellows from around the world for periods ranging from several weeks to one year, sent a UI librarian to Great Britain for a month to study British library automation procedures, and sponsored Librarian of Congress James Billington as the first Mortenson lecturer.

With the new endowment, according to Dr. Choldin, at least one additional long-term fellow and two additional short-term fellows will be able to visit the Library. Also, UI librarians may be able to travel abroad to conduct substantial and mutually beneficial research.

Another enhancement includes plans to augment the currently available Library orientation programs for international students and scholars.

"We would like to add an orientation for international faculty, and perhaps develop programs for them throughout the year," says Dr. Choldin. "We'd like to make clear that if you're from another country and you need help in our Library, there is a presence in the Library specifically for you."

Another possible enhancement of the Mortenson international programs may be the creation of cooperative efforts between the Library and the international area centers and programs within the University's diverse academic community.

This might include provision of graduate assistantships to foreign students, who not only would learn the working of a major research library, but would also contribute their time and expertise to the Library and take their experience back to their homelands to disseminate to their own students.

A third activity under consideration is financial support of conferences aimed at improving national and international efforts to develop library collections worldwide and provide access to those collections. "With the strength of the Library's international collections and the expertise of its academic and professional staff, Illinois should be a leader in such efforts," notes Dr. Choldin.
Library Attic Yields Unusual Finds

A chance visit by some library faculty members to the Library’s attic has yielded unexpected additions to the Library’s collections.

Lurking among dusty storage boxes and old furniture were more than 100 World War I-vintage French posters, several player-piano rolls, many old railroad timetables and other railroad-related items, and a boxed exhibit dealing with typography and book making.

The chance find came during a visit from Norman Stevens, the library director of the University of Connecticut at Storrs, whose hobby is library history.

"While he was talking about old library furniture, I thought of visiting the Library attic," remembers Karen Schmidt, head of the Library’s acquisitions department. "We went down the middle corridor of the attic and saw these boxes sitting back toward the elevators. When we looked in the boxes, I just said, "Oh my God, look at this stuff!"

Among the finds were eighteen player-piano rolls in a box labeled with the name of Phineas L. Windsor, the Library’s director from 1909 to 1940. According to Library Friend Marian Thompson, Mr. Windsor’s granddaughter, Mr. Windsor had a player piano in his home in Urbana, from which these rolls presumably came.

The rolls have been moved to the Music Library, which has a player piano as part of its equipment. "The faculty like to use these player-piano rolls instead of recordings to study performance practices of ragtime," says Music Librarian William McClellan.

Also in the attic were components of a large exhibit, dated 1909, dealing with the history of typography and the art of book making. The box’s shipping label shows that it was sent from the Rockford Public Library to a library school instructor at the UI, and that the materials were used for classroom instruction.

Included in the items are examples of early paper watermarks, fancy initial letters, printers’ marks, and samples of printers’ inks that look bright enough to have been printed yesterday.

Yet another attic find was a crate of old railroad publications, including reports to stockholders and timetables from the nineteenth century. "We have a lot of railroad materials in the stacks, like annual reports, so we were able to fill in a lot of gaps," says Vince Golden, chief library clerk for Special Collections.

The most spectacular find, however, was the 106 French posters, which apparently had remained rolled up in the attic, untouched, since the 1920s. The posters are now housed in the University Archives, where they join the Archives’ already large collection of World War I and World War II home-front “public service” posters from the American Library Association and the Advertising Council.

"We believe these were collected by, or acquired at the request of, Phineas Windsor, the head of the Library at the time, as part of the Library’s World War I documentation efforts," says Assistant University Archivist William Maher. "My guess is that because the posters are unconventional in size and bibliographic format, they were progressively shunted aside and eventually moved to the attic.”

Predominant among the posters are advertisements for French war bonds (a primary medium for French war propaganda), the YMCA Union Franco-Américaine, and home-front exhortations to economize and conserve. Others include advertisements for soldiers’ hostels, antituberculosis and health-care campaigns, and celebratory weeks.

"A number of these posters are done by leading poster artists in France during World War I,” notes Mr. Maher, “including Jules Abel Faivre, Francisque Poulot, W. Philman Bunley, Georges Dorival, Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen, Adolphe Willette, and Lucien Jonas. They show in very vivid terms how nations have vilified their enemy countries for their own selfish purposes.”

The economization and conservation posters, however, are by 13-year-old and 14-year-old schoolgirls. "They’re really quite nice," he adds.

Because the posters sat undisturbed for more than 60 years, the paper and inks have remained surprisingly intact. The recent handling needed to identify and store them, however, has already led to some paper damage.

"Unfortunately, though we would like to see these used, even the most careful handling will cause further damage because of their extraordinary size and brittle condition," says Mr. Maher. "A very effective way to deal with that is mylar encapsulation with a sheet of buffer paper to stabilize deterioration, but we don’t have the $1,200 it would take to do that.”

If you are interested in helping preserve these striking posters for the Library’s research collections, please contact Sharon Kitzmiller, the Library’s annual funds development officer, at 227 Library, 1408 W. Gregory Dr., Urbana, Illinois 61801, or call (217) 333-5683.

The Library is Looking For . . .

Funds to purchase America and the Holocaust, edited by David S. Wyman, for the Library’s Jewish Studies collection.

Cost is $1,100.

$86.95 to purchase History of the Royal Astronomical Society, volume 1, an important addition to the Physics Library’s history of science collection. Also $65 for the SPACE-90 satellite database, which allows PC-computer users to retrieve data on more than 4,600 satellites from Sputnik 1 through the 1995 planned launches.

Funds to purchase Revolution and Romanticism, 1798-1834, a selection of books of first or early editions of works by or important to the English Romantic poets, for the English Library. The 25-volume work costs $1,119; donations for individual volumes are also accepted, ranging in cost from $35 to $65.

If you would like to donate any of the items mentioned above, or if you are interested in learning about other badly needed books, please contact Sharon Kitzmiller, the Library’s annual funds development officer, at 227 Library, 1408 W. Gregory Drive, Urbana, IL 61801, or telephone (217) 333-5683.

Professor Donald McIntosh and model horse, veterinary medicine class of 1890. One of the many photos from the University Archives to be preserved thanks to a donation by Carl J. Sheve through our Library is Looking For . . . column.
Unique Slavic Reading Room Celebrates Anniversary

In 1970, a quiet revolution occurred in the field of Russian and East European studies, a revolution that may not have rivaled the Russian Revolution of 1917, but an important one nonetheless.

It was the opening of the Slavic and East European Library's Doris Duke Reading Room—the only place in the country that combines, in one location, access to the most important reference tools in the field as well as to the library personnel with the specialized language and bibliographic knowledge to answer even the most difficult reference questions.

The Library held an anniversary party December 14 to celebrate this momentous occasion. It also honored the man who played a pivotal role in building this important Library collection: Ralph T. Fisher, professor emeritus of Russian history and former head of the UI's Russian and East European Center.

Says Senior Slavic Bibliographer Larry Miller, who joined the Library in 1959 as its first full-time Slavic librarian, "It was the tremendous resources Ralph poured into this library and the very close relationship he had with our library director in the '60s, Robert Downs, that were the most important factor in creating this reading room."

To get an idea of just how revolutionary the reading room was (and still is), one need only know that today, twenty years later, not one library in the country has yet been able to duplicate it, not even the Library of Congress.

"No other library has this kind of centralized Slavic organization," notes Mr. Miller, who was in charge of the Slavic and East European librarians until 1982.

That's quite a change from the Slavic collection Professor Fisher found here when he joined the faculty in 1958. Then, the collection was ranked thirty-fifth in the country; it did not even have a subject specialist devoted to it.

Professor Fisher's arrival on campus, however, changed all that. As the organizer and first director of the then-new Russian and East European Center, it was he who convinced the Library to hire full-time Slavic librarians. And with his faculty's blessings, it was he who saw to it that the new center, in its fundraising, fund-disbursing, and other activities, gave the highest priority to building an outstanding library collection.

"Mr. Downs didn't have to be pushed," remembers Professor Fisher. "As soon as he saw how interested we were, he did everything he could to help us. He really made things happen. Later, I remember him telling me, 'Gosh, if these people want that so much, I ought to help them.'"

Not that the Library hadn't been collecting Slavic materials before 1958. In fact, the Library apparently was the first in this country to conduct a publications exchange with the then-new Soviet Union in the 1920s, at the behest of Vladimir Lenin himself. The correspondence can be found in Lenin's collected works.

It was not until Professor Fisher's arrival in 1958, however, that the Library developed a comprehensive approach to collecting Slavic and East European works. The result—a collection of Slavic materials in the humanities and social sciences that is considered the third largest in the country, and the best west of Washington, D.C.

"Our most outstanding collections are the Russian and Ukrainian materials in history, politics, and literature," says Robert Burger, head of the unit, "and that's all thanks to Larry Miller and Dmytro Shchoryn, who have been collecting these materials for us for thirty years. We also have a very strong microfilm and microfiche collection that includes long runs of periodicals that aren't available on paper. And, we have many obscure things that people are amazed that we have, such as agricultural publications from the '20s and '30s that no one else has. These are our beacons."

Eastern European countries are also well represented in the unit, including Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Romania.

Combine these massive holdings with the professional help only librarians familiar with the field can provide, and it's no wonder scholars from around the world flock to here since the reading room opened twenty years ago.

In fact, as a direct result of the reading room's creation, two world-famous, unique programs were born: the Summer Research Laboratory on Russia and Eastern Europe and the Slavic Reference Service. The laboratory, since its founding in 1972, has served more than 1,800 scholars. The reference service, headed by Helen Sullivan, has served many more. Both programs have received federal and foundation funding through the Russian and East European Center.

The programs have been so successful, in fact, that the unit now serves more non-governmental researchers in the Slavic field than any other institution in the country, except the Library of Congress. "The reference service, in particular, reflects a national need," says Mr. Burger. "People call us because they need help locating something in the country, and they don't have the tools or the expertise to do it themselves."

Keeping up such an active acquisitions program has become increasingly difficult in past years because of inadequate state funding for the University and because the dollar has dropped considerably in value compared to foreign currencies.

Mr. Burger's biggest concern, however, is not with current acquisitions, but with his old holdings.

"The issue of preservation is starting to nag us and nip at our heels," he worries. "We need to focus attention on this, but we don't have the staff or the funds to take care of this. In thirty years, the riches we've built up so carefully may be totally inaccessible."

"Slavic and East European books tend to be printed on low-quality paper," he says, "so a higher percentage of our books are more brittle than what's found in the general collection."

Meanwhile, however, scholars continue to bombard the unit with requests for the kind of help only the unit's staff of twenty specialists can provide.

Says Mr. Burger, "We get calls all the time from people who were here during the summer or have used our reference service saying, 'I'm so grateful to you. I teach at a small college; without your collections, I'd be lost. So, we're really helping in a national educational effort.'"
Mortenson Program Provides Opportunity to Chinese Librarian

When Peking University librarian Sun Zehua was accepted last summer into the UI's Graduate School of Library and Information Science, he ran into one problem—no financial aid.

The library school had no fellowships available for him because of budget constraints, and the United States would not issue him a visa without the promise of financial assistance or employment.

That's when Mr. Sun ran into the Library's Assistant History Librarian Priscilla Yu, who happened to be at the Peking University Library last summer to do research.

Through her efforts, Mr. Sun's plight reached the desk of Mortenson Distinguished Professor for International Library Programs Marianna Tax Choldin. Within a month, Mr. Sun was on his way to Urbana as a new Mortenson Fellow.

"I received a library science degree from Peking University nine years ago, and I've worked at the Peking University's Library since then, but the education is different in the States," explains Mr. Sun about his desire to study at the UI.

"Here there is more advanced technology, especially computer technology. I was astonished to see the circulation hall, with so many terminals. I had never seen anything like it before—it's very impressive.

"And the teaching method in school is different. Here, professors always encourage students to give their opinions on what they teach. In China, it's more old-fashioned—the teacher just tells a lot, and students don't get very involved. It's a passive way to learn."

Since starting graduate school last fall, Mr. Sun has taken courses in online information systems, cataloging and classification, indexing and abstracting, and advanced library automation. In addition, as part of the Mortenson fellowship, he works half-time as a graduate assistant in the Asian Library.

"Mr. Sun has been a great asset to our Asian Library," says Dr. Choldin. "There is no doubt whatsoever that his stay here is mutually beneficial and that the Library is gaining substantially from his help."

Mr. Sun's stay in the United States is not his first trip abroad for professional reasons. Because of his position at the Peking University Library as the acquisitions librarian in charge of foreign books, he spent six months in Great Britain in 1984 in a program sponsored by the British Publishers Association.

"That experience was very helpful for me in my acquisitions job because I knew better how foreign publishers and booksellers went about their business," he says.

Pursuing the graduate degree and working in a major American academic library, says Mr. Sun, should help him further his career even more when he returns to Beijing.

Unfortunately, Mr. Sun had to resign his position in Beijing in order to study abroad—a new requirement of Peking University since late 1989.

"Before I left, however, the librarian of the Peking University Library told me, 'We support your efforts to study further, and we hope you can come back to this library after a period of study,' " says Mr. Sun.

Mr. Sun plans to complete his graduate study by May 1992.

From the University Librarian

Sometime during the next academic year, the Library expects to acquire its eight-millionth volume. For us, it's another important milestone in our stewardship of one of the nation's foremost research collections.

Some people, however, wonder what we could do with so many books. No one in an entire lifetime could possibly read eight million books, they reason, so why keep acquiring more and more?

The answer lies in the dual purpose of a research library, which is not only to provide the latest information on virtually any field of interest, but also to provide access to the scholarship of the past, upon which any current research must be based.

Indeed, as I have visited other libraries as a consultant, it has become clear to me that few other libraries can provide for their researchers the historical richness that our Library can provide—a richness that is the result of nearly a century of work.

Certainly, emerging university libraries can expend tremendous amounts of money over the short term to provide access to the latest information, but for most disciplines, that is not what scholarship is all about. Rather, it is the ability to look back at the efforts of scholars over an extended period of time. That's what makes the impending acquisition of our eight-millionth volume important.

— David F. Bishop
Library Giant Robert B. Downs Is Dead at Age 87

Robert B. Downs, library dean emeritus and library school dean emeritus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, died February 24, 1991. He was 87.

"Robert Downs was a great librarian and a great man," said Richard Dougherty, president of the American Library Association and professor of information and library studies at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. "His influence on libraries and the people served by them extends throughout the world. As a scholar, librarian, and defender of intellectual freedom, Robert Downs had few equals. He was a man of vast intellect, integrity, and conviction. For myself and many others, he was a distinguished role model and friend who will be greatly missed."

"Librarianship has lost a giant," said David F. Bishop, University Librarian of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "Robert Downs had a profound influence on the University of Illinois, its library, and on so many librarians across the country and around the world. He will most surely be missed by all of us."

It was during Mr. Downs’s long tenure as library dean, from 1943 to 1971, that the University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign grew to its present position as one of the world’s greatest research libraries, the third-largest American university library, and the largest state university library.

And it was under Mr. Downs’s deanship, from 1943 to 1958, that the University of Illinois Library School (now the Graduate School of Library and Information Science) consolidated its position as the leading program in the nation for library education.

“Robert Downs, more than any other single librarian, brought academic libraries into the second half of the twentieth century,” said Patricia Stenstrom, head of the UI’s Library and Information Science Library. “For twenty-eight years, he influenced the direction of research libraries in America, and that influence will be with us for a long time.”

To the general public, Mr. Downs is probably best known as the author of the 1956 best-seller Books That Changed the World, which has been translated into seventeen languages, expanded and revised twice, and sold several million copies. The book’s popularity eventually led to a series of sequels, including Books That Changed the South and Memorable Americans.

During the height of the McCarthy era, Mr. Downs also became well known as a vigorous defender of intellectual freedom. His strong public statements against censorship, made while president of the American Library Association from 1952 to 1953, ultimately led to President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1953 “Don’t Join the Book-burners” speech.

Eventually, in 1960, Mr. Downs published a book condemning censorship, The First Freedom, which one reviewer called “a fighting book, wholehearted in its repudiation of censorship and unimpressed by the opposition.”

Mr. Downs also was instrumental in the formulation and implementation of the Farmington Plan, a federally funded program administered by the Association of Research Libraries from 1947 to 1972, to purchase foreign publications. In many cases, books acquired through this plan form the nucleus of important foreign collections at research libraries throughout the country.

Mr. Downs’s influence, however, extended far beyond the issues of censorship or acquisition of foreign publications. His book American Library Resources, first published in 1951 and updated every ten years since then, is considered one of the most important books on librarianship this century. Mr. Downs was at work on the latest revision at the time of his death. William Vernon Jackson will continue that project.

He was also a highly respected international consultant whose work took him to places as varied as Afghanistan, Mexico, and Japan. For his work in developing the Japanese National Diet Library after World War II, Mr. Downs was awarded the prestigious “Decorated Order of the Sacred Treasure” in 1983 by the Japanese government.

Mr. Downs was also a leader in the field of library education. During his long tenure as dean of the UI’s Library School, he taught courses in college and university library administration and research of American librarianship. He also worked relentlessly for years to create the nation’s first Ph.D. program in library science, eventually chairing many doctoral committees and becoming the mentor of many of the country’s leading academic librarians.

Mr. Downs was born in 1903 in Lenoir, N.C. Although a high school dropout, he voraciously read books while employed in such jobs as fire ranger and rancher. He eventually earned an A.B. degree from the University of North Carolina (1926), and a B.S. (1927) and M.S. (1929) in library science from Columbia University.

Before coming to Illinois, he had been a librarian at the University of North Carolina, the New York Public Library, and Colby College; from 1938 to 1943, he was the director of libraries at New York University.

He was the author of more than 450 books and articles. He was the recipient of numerous awards, including the Decorated Order of the Sacred Treasure (Japan), the Joseph W. Lippincott Award (the American Library Association’s highest honor), the Clarence Day Award, and the Melvil Dewey Medal for creative professional achievement. He also received six honorary doctorates from universities across the country.

Mr. Downs is survived by his wife, Jane; two daughters from his marriage with Elizabeth Crooks Downs, Clara Downs Keller, of Salinas, Calif., and Roberta Downs Andre, of Avon, Conn.; three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Memorial contributions may be made to the UIF/Robert B. Downs Memorial Fund. The fund has been established to support the Rare Book and Special Collections Library.

Architecture School’s modeling room, ca. 1893. One of the many photos from the University Archives to be conserved thanks to a donation by Carl J. Sheve through our Library is Looking For... column.
Calendar
May
“The Diversity of the Caribbean.”
Main Corridor
University Archives
“In Memoriam: Aaron Copeland (1900-1990) and Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990).”
Music Library
Music Library
“Illinois Labor Newspapers.”
Newspaper Library
“Maps from the Eugene Derdeyn Collection.” Rare Book and Special Collections Library
June
“Robert Bingham Downs, 1903-1991, Perspectives on the Past.” Main Corridor
“Champaign-Urbana Vaudeville.”
University Archives
“Illinois Labor Newspapers.”
Newspaper Library
July
“Robert Bingham Downs, 1903-1991, Perspectives on the Past.” Main Corridor
“The Cubs of Summer.”
University Archives
“A Gathering of Notables.” Rare Book and Special Collections Library
“Illinois Labor Newspapers.”
Newspaper Library
Continuing Exhibits
“Current Events from the Documents Library.” South Main-corridor Wall Case
“Campaigns from the Advertising Council.” Basement Hallway Wall Case

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