TWO PROJECTS OF WHICH DAN WAS PROUD

ONESEARCH: A POWERFUL DISCOVERY TOOL

This summer, after more than a year of intensive preparation, Wesleyan University Library staff and their consortium partners at Connecticut College and Trinity College implemented a new library system and discovery tool to replace the former library catalog. OneSearch is now the primary place to search for records of library materials, both print and electronic, and to discover and access journal articles, images, databases, and all types of library publications. The new system, using the ExLibris Primo platform, was chosen because it is powerful and user friendly, adaptable to mobile devices, handles multiple formats and electronic resources well, and will enable staff to make resources available more efficiently. Over the next year, we will continue to enable additional features of the OneSearch system, as well as add more sources of content searchable from OneSearch. If you have any questions or comments, e-mail librarysystems@lyris.wesleyan.edu.

NEW LIBRARY WEBSITE DESIGN

Along with implementing a new library system, the whole Wesleyan Library website was updated this summer as part of a campus-wide program to update the entire Wesleyan University website to a responsive design that works well on phones and tablets as well as larger computer screens. Rather than just change the programming in the background so the site adjusted to different screen sizes, we took the opportunity to revise and reorganize the content and navigation. To prepare for the update, we conducted a series of interviews and usability tests with several students and a few faculty to see how people were using the library’s website, what was working well or not so well, and what features people wanted to see in a revised site. Based on those tests, we worked with University Communications and ITS to design a site that better fits the needs and expectations of current students and faculty. Now the more frequently used features are more prominently displayed, and the full range of resources and services are easier to find. Along with all the resources and services, you can easily keep up with the latest library news from the social media feeds displayed on the library home page. If you have any comments or ideas for further improvements, please let us know at reference@wesleyan.edu.

— KENDALL HOBBS, REFERENCE LIBRARIAN —

IN MEMORIAM

The library and the Wesleyan community mourn the unexpected passing of Caleb T. Winchester University Librarian Daniel Cherubin on September 13, 2017, as this issue was being prepared. A full article will appear in the next issue.

STUDENTS REFLECT ON DISPLAYING THE “OTHER”

This past spring, “Uncovering Wesleyan Treasures: A Critical History”—a pop-up exhibition presenting objects, publications, and documents from Special Collections & Archives and the Archaeology and Anthropology Collections—took place in the Davison Rare Book Room. Students enrolled in Museums, Objects and Empire (French 325) curated the exhibition and introduced the results of their semester’s coursework through bilingual guided visits.

How can the appeal of “exotic” objects to the Western world, from the Renaissance until today, be explained? How can the voices of the people who produced those objects be heard? What political and moral implications are at stake in the exhibition of such objects? These questions, which directed the organization of the exhibit, emerged from course readings focusing on the history of French private collections and museums in France. Then the curatorial work itself began. During several individual and group sessions led by Archaeological Collections Manager Jesse Cohen and SC&A Director Suzy Taraka, the students were able to select the objects and documents they wanted to present and, at the same time, to become familiar with the analytical methods specific to material culture and primary sources. Once the selection was made, the group devoted itself to researching the history of those objects and their significance. This phase seemed to be the most exciting for the students, as visiting graduate student Esther Rodriguez Camara pointed out: “Personally, understanding the relations that can be established between documents and objects has been one of the best things about the process of organizing a pop-up exhibition.”

The objects selected were very diverse, from Edward Curtis photographs to antique Egyptian items to documents on the gamelan of Wesleyan. The set of objects chosen addressed three aims: presenting the history of the collections, comparing American and French practices in exhibiting and collecting non-Western objects, and enabling the public to question the gaze directed at these objects, in both the past and present.

From this ephemeral exhibit, there remains the memory of a rich pedagogical experience enabled by the resources of Wesleyan collections and the staff managing them. The results of the research (in French), which the students published as blog posts, can be read here: http://french325.site.wesleyan.edu.

— CAROLINE HERBELIN, VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF FRENCH (2016–2017) —
STUDYING MEDIA HISTORY THROUGH PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES

On May 4, students in the Media and Power in Latin America: From Quipus to Twitter course staged a pop-up exhibition in Olm’s Special Collections & Archives. Over the semester, students worked with a team of library and staff members to identify original media objects housed in Wesleyan’s collections that were produced in or about Latin America. As individuals, they researched the history of objects ranging from a pre-Columbian paper beater to a rotating town. Students also researched the history of objects related to the content of the research efforts. At the exhibition opening, students displayed the results of their hard work to the Wesleyan community, complementing the gallery with exhibition materials that delved more deeply into the history of the objects on display.

The Andrus family gift is especially rich in LEC books published during the Shiff period. These books are truly impressive: large in scale, seductive to the eye, lovely to the touch. Artists and photographers ranging from Berenice Abbott to John Wilson are represented in the Andrus family gift. Offerings include works as varied as Genres (Illustrated by Jacob Lawrence), Rainer Maria Rilke’s Sonnets to Orpheus (with color woodcuts by Baithus, printed and editioned with woodblocks cut by Weisley’s own Keji Shinohara), and selections from Baudelaire’s Les Fleurs Du Mal. These books are especially rich in LEC books published during the Shiff period.

Founded in 1929 by George Macy, LEC books marry classic literature with illustrated, tastefully designed editions of enduring literary classics. Even the name of the library, the Limited Editions Club, became the lucky recipient of a superb collection of more than 125 titles published by LEC, the generous gift of the Andrus family. Perhaps best known at Wesleyan for the eponymous Andrus Field (named for John Andrus, Class of 1862), the Andrus family has a long tradition of collecting both art and books. Their recent gift reflects those interests.

Archival Assignments

A substantial collection of LEC ephemera enriches the Andrus gift. Offerings include works as varied as Genres (Illustrated by Jacob Lawrence), Rainer Maria Rilke’s Sonnets to Orpheus (with color woodcuts by Baithus, printed and editioned with woodblocks cut by Weisley’s own Keji Shinohara), and selections from Baudelaire’s Les Fleurs Du Mal. These books are especially rich in LEC books published during the Shiff period. These books are truly impressive: large in scale, seductive to the eye, lovely to the touch. Artists and photographers ranging from Berenice Abbott to John Wilson are represented in the Andrus family gift. Offerings include works as varied as Genres (Illustrated by Jacob Lawrence), Rainer Maria Rilke’s Sonnets to Orpheus (with color woodcuts by Baithus, printed and editioned with woodblocks cut by Weisley’s own Keji Shinohara), and selections from Baudelaire’s Les Fleurs Du Mal. These books are especially rich in LEC books published during the Shiff period.

When I started doing research at Special Collections & Archives the fall of my senior year, I had only a broad sense of what to look for: I knew I was interested in Wesleyan’s decision to become coeducational in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the fall of 1969, in fact, the SC&A reading room became so important to me and my project. Join the Fall Reading Room Tour and find out more about the history of special collections and archives at Wesleyan University! For more information, visit https://library.wesleyan.edu/sca/.