Wesleyan University will be cutting its budget in order to adjust to the drastic reduction in the value of the endowment. The cuts will affect all University departments, and the library is, of course, no exception. The library’s monograph acquisitions budget, for example, will be reduced by about 47 percent next year. Two senior library positions (including my own) that will become vacant during the summer will not be filled in the foreseeable future. During the next several months, the library will devise and implement plans to adjust to this situation in a variety of ways with the goal of minimizing the impact on library services for faculty and students.

Readers who are interested in further details about the budgetary impact on the library should go to Library Changes at www.wesleyan.edu/lib/transition/changes.html located on the library homepage under the heading ANNOUNCEMENTS/OF NOTE. The information presented here will be updated frequently throughout the coming months as various decisions are made.

— ALAN J. NATHANSON, BIBLIOGRAPHER/REFERENCE LIBRARIAN —

May 2009

CHANGES AT THE WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, 2009–2010

FROM THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

This will be my last letter to Check It Out. By the time you read this most of you will know that I am retiring on May 31, 2009. “Retirement” is misleading in terms of its traditional meaning, since I will be spending part of 2009 offering workshops on the important issue of freedom of expression in the Philippines and Nigeria.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my successor, Pat Tully, associate university librarian, who will be promoted to interim university librarian effective June 1. Pat is an excellent administrator and a professional of the highest order. Pat and I, of course, have worked very closely together for the past five wonderful and challenging years.

I wish to thank all our staff members for their hard work and devotion in making library services at Wesleyan among the most outstanding I have ever seen. After consulting visits to six libraries in Wesleyan’s peer group, I can say with complete assurance that the staff of the Wesleyan libraries is the very best. Where else, for example, does the Interlibrary Loan Department get mentioned in the acknowledgements of a book? This is certainly proof positive that we serve our library users with distinction.

Information Literacy: Many people seem to believe that Google and the Internet have made librarians obsolete. Instead, we are more necessary than ever! Students need to know the difference between a peer-reviewed scholarly Web site and one that is written by a special interest group. They also need to learn how to evaluate “evidence.” Again librarians have shifted much energy to this highly specialized area of information literacy.

Collaboration: Two college presidents recently told me independently that librarians are better collaborators than anyone else on campus. Librarians have made a virtue of necessity in some instances. Regardless of the reason, we do it well, it saves money, and it has made us good managers.

The Library as Place: The library is not just a “book box.” It is a combination of study, social, and performance space, and at Wesleyan these attributes work beautifully. We are fortunate to have an architecturally splendid space for these activities, and it has always been a great pleasure to come to work in the morning into this splendid building.

Advocacy: If the library profession has a downside, it is that we generally do our work behind the scenes, and that work is often taken for granted by the community at large. The American Library Association and the Association of Research Libraries are aware of this issue, and librarians work hard at increasing our visibility in the academic world.

Finally, I would like to thank Alan J. Nathanson who has served Wesleyan
were more than enough volunteers for that enlistees. However, they soon learned that there answered President Lincoln’s call for three-month known as the Wesleyan Guards and they an a Freshman. a few from the upper classes, who would let the University battalion, and drilled all hands, except J. H. Dandy. He was called to the command of the football ground. The only student in college who where now Rich Hall [now the ’92 Theatre] and college turned out on that part of the campus College]. A drill was commenced, and the whole from the steps of the front door [probably South 1864, writing in the Argus in 1880, that day, according to a member of the Class of 1850s, most Methodists and most Wesleyan students were in favor of abolition and freedom. In 1861, Wesleyan students were shocked by news of the attack on Fort Sumter in South Carolina. They gathered to read the news, and then-President Joseph Cummings, a staunch supporter of abolition, made a passionate speech in which he encouraged his students to act patriotically and defend their country. Later that day, according to a member of the Class of 1864, writing in the Argus in 1880, …Dr. Cummings made another fiery speech from the steps of the front door [probably South College]. A drill was commenced, and the whole college turned out on that part of the campus where now Rich Hall [now the ’92 Theatre] and the Judd building stand, then used mainly as a foot-ball ground. The only student in college who knew anything of military drill was a Freshman, J. H. Dandy. He was called to the command of the University battalion, and drilled all hands, except a few from the upper classes, who would let the flag trail in the dust rather than take orders from a Freshman. Most of these students became what was known as the Wesleyan Guards and they answered President Lincoln’s call for three-month enlistees. However, they soon learned that there were more than enough volunteers for that length of service. In addition, many had second thoughts about going to war: Some received discouraging or forbidding word from home; some felt their enthusiasm cool when it was found that the war would last more than a month, and some who had made very belligerent speeches in the chapel, finally came to the conclusion that they were studying for the ministry, and couldn’t go, unless as chaplains. So when the mustering officer came along, and the enlistment papers were signed, there were only fourteen in the students’ company. These 14 Wesleyan students volunteered for three years’ service and formed the 4th Connecticut Infantry along with other local men. This company was the first in the nation officially formed in response to President Lincoln’s call for three-year volunteers. This company later became the 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery. Other students and alumni joined companies in their home states across the north, and a small number joined the Confederate Army— these were all alumni who were originally from the south and had strong sectional loyalties. In total, almost 300 Wesleyan students and alumni served in some capacity during the war. It is an astounding number considering the total enrollment at Wesleyan was around 150 when the war began. One of the early volunteers was Roswell Douglass, the class of 1861 salutatorian. He sent many letters home to his uncle and aunt, and Wesleyan’s Special Collections & Archives now owns these firsthand accounts of his service. There are around 80 letters in all, nearly all of them written by Douglass. The letters are often chatty and Douglass enjoyed boasting about his strength. In June 1861 he cheerfully told his aunt, “Uncle Francis was very fearful lest I should not stand a soldiers life. I think I have given it something of a trial and I stand it first rate. I don’t know as any one stands it better than I do.” Douglass, only 20 years old when he enlisted, was also unintentionally funny in his earnestness: “In the letter to the girls I told of our temperance movement. Now we are in the division it comes very easy to carry out our temperance principles for it is impossible to get liquor.” Although he had a youthful spirit and energy, Douglass saw many of his fellow men killed or injured, and felt the toll the war took on his company and the country. He oversaw the construction of a battery that was almost constantly under fire, and his letter recalling the incident is sobering: The consequence was that the bullets flew uncomfortably close and I had about twenty men hit, some killed while engaged on the work. A major, who came with the working party, was wounded so severely that it was supposed that it would prove mortal. A man stepped outside of the work to pick green apples from a tree near and he immediately came back with a bullet through his wrist. One little fellow was killed instantly, whose home was in Petersburg. He had deserted from the rebs and entered our service. He had been talking about his home just before he fell. Another man was wounded as he was burying a comrade who had just been shot.
Fortunately, Douglass survived the war and lived into his seventies. Six of his sons attended Wesleyan.

Another Wesleyan alumnus, Samuel Proal Hatfield, also served in the 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery. He assembled a photograph album after the war to commemorate his company's service. Hatfield donated the album to Olin Library. It is housed in Special Collections & Archives. Exactly how Hatfield acquired the photographs is not clear, but some are clearly the work of Matthew Brady, George Barnard, and other well-known photographers. The images vividly depict the scale of the weapons and the devastation of the battles. Hatfield wrote in the introduction to the album that he wanted “That our children's children may see with their eyes, as we saw with our eyes, the scenes and places of the great War for the Union. Let we and they forget.”

The importance of memory, for both the individuals involved in the war and the University as a whole, was clearly important following the war. An Army and Navy union of veterans was formed after the war, and this group, along with the Ladies Centenary Association, solicited donations in order to build the Memorial Chapel. In 1871 the Chapel was opened, and it stands as a monument to those who served in the Civil War and other conflicts. The Memorial Chapel is the only religious building in Connecticut that was built to commemorate the Civil War.

The Civil War was a time of great patriotism and great sorrow. The War changed Wesleyan and its students, alumni, and faculty forever. The “Wesleyan Remembers the Civil War” exhibit offers us a look at this extraordinary time, and includes the Douglass letters, the Hatfield photograph album, and numerous other materials culled from Special Collections & Archives. The Civil War had a profound effect on everyone it touched. As the 1880 Argus article about the war wistfully concluded, “Only once in a century can college life be what it was at Wesleyan in war times.”

VALERIE GILLISPIE, ASSISTANT UNIVERSITY ARCHIVIST

NEW LIBRARY WEB SITE INTRODUCED

When faculty and students returned from the March 2009 spring recess, library users discovered an updated library Web site. The new design is a result of several months of work by a committee of library and ITS staff, including interviews with many students.

O n April 21, the Friends hosted a screening of Proceed and Be Bold!, a new documentary about the life and work of internationally recognized printing press and book artist Amos Paul Kennedy Jr., who gave up corporate employment as a computer programmer to concentrate on his art. Kennedy's medium is often the poster because it is his way of creating art—art that is affordable for more people. His socially, politically, and racially charged posters feature quotations from Sojourner Truth and Rosa Parks and phrases such as “coffee makes you black.” The documentary film includes interviews with Barbara Jones, university librarian at Wesleyan, and Gina Athena Ulysse, assistant professor of anthropology and African American studies. Director Laura Zinger has written of the film: “The result is a discussion on the monetary and intrinsic values of art, the goals of an artist, the workings of race and culture, and what ‘the American Dream’ really means.” Kennedy, who was on campus to teach students in both the Art Department and the African American Studies Department, was present at the screening to answer questions, and examples of his work were exhibited during an open house in Special Collections & Archives. If you would like to view a trailer of the film, visit www.brownfinchfilms.com/.

The annual Friends book sale will be Saturday, May 9th from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. in the lobby of Olin Memorial Library. We invite you to enjoy the sale and hopefully find some books to add to your collection. There will also be a silent auction for which you may bid on some collectible items. If you would like to donate books to the sale or volunteer to help at the sale, please contact us.

We thank our friends who have already donated books for the sale, and to others who have recently joined or renewed their Friends membership. These include Michaelle Biddle, Kathryn Briggs, Judith and Shannon Brown, Jim Charbonneau, Marie Clark, Jenny Doster, Elizabeth Emery, Vivian Flowers, Susanne Fusso and Joseph Siry, Lisa Kaufman, Jennifer Lane, Michael Lovell, Richard and Joan Miller, Robert Rosenbaum, Michael Roth, Barry and Jo-Anne Scott, Robert Smith, Clifford Straub, Suzy Taraba, and William and Susan Wasch. If you would like to either join or renew your membership in the Friends or make an additional contribution to support library programs and collections our address is: Friends of the Wesleyan Library, Wesleyan University, 252 Church Street, Middletown, Connecticut 06459-0108.

I would also like to acknowledge the present Governing Board of the Friends, who volunteer their time and energy in support of the library: Karl Scheibe, chair, Richard Adelstein, vice-chair, Marie Clark, Erik Grimmer-Solem, Susanne Javorski, Sharisse Kanet, Janine Lockhart, Steve Machuga, Cecilia Miller, Diane Siecienski, and Anne Thompson.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, I would like to express our appreciation to Barbara Jones for her years of service to the Wesleyan Library, and for her ideas, energy, and tireless devotion to the library. It has been a great pleasure to work closely with Barbara and she will be sorely missed as university librarian. We wish her all the best for a happy, productive, and fulfilling retirement.

— JENNIFER HADLEY, LIBRARY ASSISTANT, SCORES AND RECORDINGS / WORLD MUSIC ARCHIVES —
In the fall semester of 2008, we embarked on a project to update the library Web site which had not been modified significantly in several years. To start the project, we interviewed several students to see how they used the current Web site. The students who volunteered were shown various library Web sites from other colleges and universities and invited to comment on their functionality. The other Web sites were chosen based on differing concepts of how library resources are presented at these institutions. We asked the students how they search for resources, what design features available at the other library Web sites they would use, what they wouldn’t use, or what they found confusing. The same students were also asked to indicate what they liked and disliked about Wesleyan’s library Web site. Almost all students indicated that the library home page was too cluttered. They consistently expressed a desire for the most commonly used library resources to be predominantly displayed, to provide simplified menus, and the ability to search the library catalog from the home page.

Shortly thereafter, the Web Redesign Group began meeting to plan changes based on these interviews. Many of the changes incorporated in the new design were intended to simplify the library Web site and make choices more intuitive by providing tabs rather than links to organize resources. The new Web site features a simple search on the home page for the library’s online catalog, with options to do more complex searching using a specific or guided keyword search. Other tabs link to the library’s list of indexes and databases, the journal locator, an article option that searches one of three available database choices for those users needing quick results, and remaining resources linked from the final tab. All of the newly designed tabs include mouse-overs that provide explanations to the information available under each tab. Additional changes highlight ways to get help, library hours, and library announcements.

Initial feedback from students has been positive, but the Web Redesign Group intends to interview more students and faculty to fine-tune the new site so all our users will be able to find resources quickly and efficiently. The group will continue to refine the library’s Web site as new options for searching Wesleyan’s library resources become available.

— DIANE KLAIRE, HEAD OF REFERENCE
KENDALL HOBBs, REFERENCE LIBRARIAN —

PLANS POSTPONED FOR AN EXLEY STUDY LOUNGE

On October 3, 2008, the Argus ran an article about a study lounge that was to open soon in the Exley Science Center. The lounge, located on the north side of the Exley lobby and attached to the Science Library, was to feature nontraditional furniture, carpeting, and lighting designed from student input following an ethnographic study on student studying habits.

As many Wesleyan community members have probably noticed, the lounge is now full of decidedly traditional looking furniture, and is still not open either through the Science Library or from the Exley lobby. There are a number of reasons for the current state of the room. The first and most important reason is simple: there was still a considerable amount of work to do on the room when the financial crisis hit in fall 2008. The remaining items to be completed would have been new furniture, carpet, security, and fire code modifications.

In order to find a compromise with our new budgetary situation and still allow the room to be used, we have placed the original plans for the room on hold and we will develop an interim solution. The furniture is recycled from the Davenport Campus Center. In order to comply with fire code, the room will only be open from the Science Library side. The Exley lobby door will be alarmed for emergency use only. Unfortunately, this is about as far from a happy resolution as we could have envisioned, but the new financial realities at Wesleyan necessitate changes in many library services and plans.

— ANDREW W. KLEIN, SCIENCE LIBRARIAN —

Check It Out is a publication of the Wesleyan University Libraries that has been published three to four times annually since 1998. Its purpose is to offer timely information to students, faculty, and staff of recent developments in library technologies and resources available at Wesleyan that will assist them in using the libraries in the most effective ways possible.

Articles are contributed by library staff members, and the publication is edited by Alan J. Nathanson, bibliographer/reference librarian, anathanson@wesleyan.edu, (860) 685-3869.