Greetings from the Acting Chief Librarian

As Acting Chief Librarian of the QC Libraries, I am pleased to present this expanded issue of PageDown, the newsletter of the Queens College Libraries. Thanks and appreciation go to Ms. Lisa Flanzraich for serving as our editor.

We welcome aboard Dave Williams, who is our new Web and Digital Services Librarian. Our interview with him focuses on his unique skill set for developing our digital presence on the web. Thanks also to our various correspondents for presenting their observations on various aspects of the Libraries’ operations, programs, collections, and facilities.

Our lead article notes the completion of several renovations that are making a very positive impact on the delivery of our Public Services. Our 2012–2014 transformation of the third (main) floor, including three new Mediascape rooms and new ergonomically designed furniture that enhances comfort for students’ reading, study, and research. Forty additional computers, a new and expanded Public Services desk, and a glass-enclosed Research Services room contribute to convenient service for our college community. Thanks also to a private donation from Mr. and Mrs. Charles and Szilvia Tanenbaum, renovations also include a state-of-the-art classroom, the Charles J. Tanenbaum Special Collections Seminar Room. Another long-needed upgrade to our facilities is a New Media Center in the Music Library, funded by the Student Tech Fee.

Other articles describe valuable collections, which distinguish the Libraries and add distinction to our holdings. Thanks to CUNY and the CUNY Council of Chief Librarians, anyone with a valid CUNY email address may now sign up for a free annual digital subscription to the New York Times. In addition, we recently acquired two electronic book (e-book) packages from Business Expert Press and JSTOR. Both Business Expert Press and JSTOR are accessible on and off-campus with no restrictions on downloading or the number of simultaneous users accessing it.

A piece relevant to the award-winning motion picture Lincoln updates us on the treasure trove of materials covering the life and era of our twelfth president, which comprise the Gross Lincoln Collection. The Library has added 60 new volumes to this collection. We bring you news of our Civil Rights Archive along with the college’s celebration of the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer. Another unique collection, available to our users and located in the Department of Special Collections and Archives, is the collection of the Seamen’s Church Institute. Our report describes the impact of Hurricane Sandy on the Institute’s headquarters located in Port Newark. Fortunately, the papers and records held at Queens College were undamaged and recovery efforts are noted. Substantial contributions and monetary gifts to the Music Library have enhanced its reference collection, chamber music scores and parts, and scores of twentieth-century compositions.

A successful library does not live by services and resources alone. A number of exhibits are discussed in this issue of our newsletter, including the Afikim Foundation’s When Humanity Fails, a traveling exhibit about the liberation of the Nazi death camps, STUDENT MADE, a showcase of student creativity across the disciplines; and VITALITY: The Arts of Brazil. Be sure to read the informative piece on the public domain. Last year’s exhibit articulated how copyright law increasingly places restrictions on using materials freely.

The Queens College Libraries serve as the destination of choice for the college community. Our services and resources support the teaching, research, and learning mission of Queens College. We assist our users in helping them fulfill their educational, professional, and life goals and aspirations.

A Word from Dr. Robert A. Shaddy

Dr. Robert A. Shaddy, who served as Associate Dean and Chief Librarian at Queens College from 2006 to 2013, was on Fellowship Leave for 2013–2014 Academic Year. Dr. Shaddy used the leave to work mainly on a book, tentatively titled “Only in Paris Can You Find Anything Like This”: The Paris Stories of James T. Farrell. According to Dr. Shaddy, “I have enjoyed having the opportunity to work on my sabbatical projects—that related to Farrell’s Paris stories, of course—but also to have been granted the time to read in other areas and to be able to fully focus on my research and writing. The year was a special experience for me.” In June 2014, Acting Provost Elizabeth Hendrey assigned him to the position of Head of Special Collections and Archives in the Libraries.
Have you admired our ongoing makeovers lately? The latest renovations in Rosenthal Library have transformed our building into a much more user-friendly environment. Built in 1988, before the explosion of digital technologies, we had been faced with satisfying the growing demands of patrons for more comfortable computer workstations and wireless space. Starting with the reconstruction of the Reading Room on Level 2, the relocation of borrowing and copying services during Spring Semester 2012, and ending with the reconfiguring of Borrowing and Information Service Desks on Level 3, we have accomplished much toward creating an up-to-date Library Commons.

The Library Commons, also referred to as an “information commons,” is a space that is designed to combine both library services and a computer lab offering research assistance and providing access to the latest software and equipment. This Learning Commons is a place where students can talk, meet, study, and get assistance in successfully completing research assignments. The Commons is an active space and is often alive with the voices of students working together to promote energetic, engaged learning.

Today, we can be proud of the dynamic changes here at Rosenthal. Level 2 has been rewired for data networks, the lighting is much brighter, and we have a brand-new print and copy center with scanners and easy-to-use card dispensers. Students now have access to 72 new PC and MAC workstations. A new SMART computer classroom has 33 workstations equipped with dual PC/MAC capabilities, Doc Cam (the equivalent of an overhead projector), and DVD CD Blu-ray—a format that can store large amounts of data.

New turnstiles have been installed on the Library’s main entrance on Level 3, thus ensuring better security for students and faculty. Distinctive signage in bold letters and the installation of directories help users find their way on all six floors. The desk at Borrowing Services allows students to check out library material, including Interlibrary Loan and Reserves. The Information area has been redesigned to better accommodate increased activity and quick, easy-to-answer questions. Library faculty at our glass-enclosed Research Center facilitate the use of electronic resources so that students learn how to do independent research projects and homework.

The Charles J. Tanenbaum Room is a state-of-the-art seminar room with conferencing and webcasting technologies. Another addition to our library is the installation of three new Mediascape rooms. Located in the back of Level 3, these rooms allow library patrons to collaborate in a connected world through the integration of furniture and technology. In addition, guest kiosks have been strategically placed for quick lookup of materials in the CUNY catalog.

To further enhance the library space, the furniture on Level 3 has been replaced with ergonomically designed furniture, giving the library a much-needed new look. The addition of lounge seating near the windows on the Level 2 Commons has provided a place for students to relax while taking advantage of the natural lighting. The renovations have changed the library building from a place of quiet individual study into a dynamic collaborative learning and research unit that provides access to the latest technology. As another phase of renovations is planned in the near future, the Library will continue to update its facilities to further bring its building into a state-of-the-art Learning Commons living up to the Queens College motto “Discimus ut Serviamus: We learn so that we may serve.”
Meet Ambassador Rolf Swensen: Acting Director of QC Libraries

If President Obama were to appoint an Ambassador to the Queens College Libraries, that title would go to one loyal, ever-ebullient, and bighearted colleague: Dr. Rolf Swensen, Acting Chief Librarian, who has been at the helm of the Queens College Libraries since September 2013.

This Spring, PageDown Editor Lisa Flanzraich chatted with Swensen in his cozily decorated office filled with paintings, prints, sculptures, and nostalgic tchotchkes given to him over the years by friends and colleagues. A people lover first, this natural-born diplomat knows how essential it is for our students to be well-educated and information-literate in order to succeed in both their college and chosen professions. “Queens College not only offers the best bang for the buck, but it also affords a remarkably diverse student body a high-quality collegiate experience with many distinguished faculty,” Swensen said. Dr. Swensen has a distinguished background as well as a long and dedicated commitment to our library and college. He began here in 1993 as a Social Sciences Bibliographer, but he traces his love and appreciation for libraries back to childhood. “When I was eight years old,” he reminisces, “my father used to take us to the Darien Connecticut Public Library, which occupied a small narrow store. I especially liked the orange-colored short biographies for children and read about Kit Carson, Steven Foster, and Louisa May Alcott. That’s how I got interested in history, libraries, and books. My mother also took us into the palatial NYPL where I remember seeing an exhibit of rare stamps. So libraries have been in my blood and my family’s blood since I can remember.”

When Associate Dean and Chief Librarian Robert Shaddy first planned for his sabbatical leave in January 2013, he asked Rolf to serve as Acting Chief Librarian during his absence. Swensen immediately agreed. “I told Robert that it would be the capstone of my career, which began when I served as Chief Archivist of the National Archives of Papua New Guinea,” he said. “I follow a long line of distinguished Chief Librarians, including Matthew Simon, Lois Schneider, Sharon Bonk, Shoshanna Kaufman, and Robert Shaddy,” he added.

The original plan was for him to serve from 2013-2014; however, an updated plan is for Swensen to serve as Acting Chief Librarian until a replacement can be found following a national search.

Swensen’s wide lens gives him the ability to understand how to build on the strengths of his 50 colleagues and staff and plan for the ever-changing fluid nature of services against the restrictions of ever-tightening budgets. “It’s best to build on people’s unique qualities,” Swensen said, reflecting on the wisdom of his archives mentor James D. Porter, State Archivist of Oregon. “We have so many strengths to rely on here both from our hardworking support staff and our professionals.” Paraphrasing and reinterpreting the famous quote of the German-American architect Ludwig van Der Rohe, Swensen smiled and said: “We are doing more with less.”

Those of us who have had the pleasure of knowing Rolf, or at least having been introduced to him, realize that he has his own inimitable style, wit, and grace along with a certain way of befriending and charming students, faculty, community leaders, donors, and patrons alike. Ever jesting in puns and wordplay, you cannot help but like him. This valuable trait bonds Dr. Swensen with the Library and helps make it the nucleus of learning, studying, special events, and academic activity. “I consider this the most distinctive and beautiful building on our 75-acre campus. What an honor it is to use the desk that belonged to Congressman Benjamin S. Rosenthal for whom the building is named. Our bell tower is the symbol of the campus.” Swensen said and added, “As Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard University (1869-1909) said: ‘The Library is the heart of the University.’”

Rolf is also an avid hiker, backpacker, and naturalist on both the East and West Coasts. Last but not least, as a devoted aficionado of culture and humor, Rolf’s life motto is “From Shakespeare to the Three Stooges and Back!”

Lisa Flanzraich, PageDown Editor

Meet Dave Williams: Web and Digital Services Librarian

Obviously, Dave Williams, our new Web and Digital Services Librarian, enjoys the complexities of library web design. And he is eager to apply his background and skills to contribute to access of library services and materials. Since we are very pleased to have him on board, we thought that you would like to meet him. PageDown Editor Lisa Flanzraich presents an interview with Dave.

LF: Hello, Dave. Would you like to tell us a little bit about your technical background in library web development and how you got interested in this specialization?

DW: As a technologist, the creative aspect of working with systems that I most enjoy is the opportunity for problem solving. In my experience, the best developers and programmers have a natural curiosity for how things work, and when presented with an interesting puzzle they find solving it hard to resist. I wouldn’t say that I’m one of the best, but I do share that curiosity. And when presented with an interesting or challenging problem, I find producing an elegant solution extremely gratifying.

LF: How do you think the gap between content people and technical people can be bridged in an academic environment? How can they learn from each other and benefit from each other’s knowledge?

DW: I think the gap isn’t actually as large or difficult to bridge as some might think. In part, it’s just a question of presenting information in a way that non-technical people find easy to digest. And it isn’t always necessary to have a deep understanding—people drive automobiles without knowing everything about how to repair them, after all. They just have to know the rules of the road and how to operate a car!

But where web-based technologies are concerned, people from academic backgrounds already have a substantial understanding. Not only were they born in a research-oriented environment, their components are ultimately built around structured information—content that can be parsed by people and software alike—using semantics common to most writing styles: headings, lists, paragraphs, tables, etc.

LF: What would you like to accomplish with your unique skill set in Web and Digital Services Librarianship?

DW: Over the past several years, the Queens College Libraries have put together an impressive collection of online tools that have delivered real value to the academic community, and I’m proud to have contributed in making that happen. Not only can I help in facilitating technological changes and bring these developments to the college, I can apply my background in development and systems toward evaluating and testing resources, making certain we achieve the maximum benefit.

Our big initiative right now is to improve access for library patrons using mobile devices, and to do it in a sustainable, responsive manner.

Dave Williams, Instructor Web & Digital Services Librarian
Lisa Flanzraich, PageDown Editor
Electronic Resources On The Move!

Often electronic resources—such as e-books, e-journals, streaming video, digital images, and even audio—can seem invisible, but did you know that Queens College Libraries have approximately 250,434 e-books? If these were physical books you could stack them one on top of the other and they would stand around 3,162 feet. If the Statue of Liberty—151 feet tall—wanted to read the book at the very top of the stack, she would need to stand on the shoulders of 21 other Lady Liberties to reach it. If she stood on top of the Empire State Building—1,250 feet tall—she would still need another 1,761 feet to reach. Of course, Queens College students, faculty, and staff can read any of the Libraries’ e-books with just the click of a mouse using the CUNY Catalog or the Libraries’ database page.

This year CUNY’s Textbook Initiative Fund enabled new electronic resource purchases, which were chosen specifically for their high value for student coursework. New resources include e-book packages from Business Expert Press and JSTOR, in addition to other electronic content such as Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5®), Ives’ Audit Analytics, and Oxford’s Berg Fashion Library. We’re working hard behind the scenes to make sure our users can use electronic resources just as easily as a print resource.

Recently the Libraries’ Substitute Electronic Resources Librarian teamed with the Center for Teaching and Learning to help faculty integrate electronic content into coursework. Look out for emails containing helpful tips and information on upcoming workshops. If there is anything specific you would like to see more of—ranging from troubleshooting help to resource development—send an email to Kelly Blanchat, Electronic Resources Librarian, at Kelly.Blanchat@qc.cuny.edu.

Otherwise, we’re adding new resources frequently, so check the Libraries’ website for news.

Happy (digital) reading!

Kelly Blanchat
Electronic Resources Librarian

Free Digital Subscription to the New York Times for the CUNY Community

Thanks to CUNY college libraries and the CUNY Council of Chief Librarians, anyone with a valid CUNY email address may now sign up for a free annual digital subscription to the New York Times!

Enjoy using this resource right away by registering for an Academic Pass with an active Queens College e-mail address (Instructions and FAQ).

E-Books From Jstor & Business Expert Press Are Now Available for Queens College Users

Queens College Libraries recently acquired two electronic book (e-Book) packages from:

BUSINESS EXPERT PRESS
A collection of 23 e-books covering management and leadership for business and economics; available on the Libraries’ database page and in the CUNY catalog.

JSTOR
A full collection of 2013 e-books covering Language & Literature, Business & Economics, Film Studies, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Religion, Science, and Sociology; available on the Libraries’ database page and in the CUNY catalog.

Both Business Expert Press and JSTOR are accessible on and off campus with no restrictions on downloading or the number of simultaneous users. Enjoy!

For questions, please contact Kelly Blanchat, E-Resources Librarian Kelly.Blanchat@qc.cuny.edu.

Did you know that Queens College Libraries have approximately 250,434 e-books?
The popularity of Stephen Spielberg’s 2012 motion picture Lincoln has sparked renewed interest in the Thirteenth Amendment (1865), which legally freed four million former slaves in the United States. Daniel Day-Lewis won his third Oscar for his gripping and convincing portrayal of our embattled 16th president, but some of the ideas presented in the movie have been questioned by critics and scholars alike.

The movie Lincoln is based on the book by Doris Kearns Goodwin, Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln (2005). While the book tackles the whole careers of Lincoln, William Henry Seward, Salmon P. Chase, and Edward Bates, the movie concentrates on the final passage of the Thirteenth Amendment early in 1865.

In “Confronting the Fact of Fiction and the Fiction of Fact,” New York Times critic Manohla Dargis and A.O. Scott charge that “Mr. Spielberg and the writer Tony Kushner have shaped the facts to their own ends.” After noting certain incorrectly presented facts about the vote in the House of Representatives, Dargis and Scott state that the “deeper objection to ‘Lincoln’ has to do with the way it turns the history of African-American freedom into the story of a heroic white man.” (2/23/2013)

In “History, Politics & Fiction,” James Oakes, Distinguished Professor of History at the CUNY Graduate Center, cautions that Lincoln’s alleged sanction of bribes to secure votes for the amendment is “pure fiction.” Oakes also warns, “Most troubling of all is the fabrication of a division among Republicans over the Thirteenth Amendment.” (CUNY Clarion, 2/2013)

To read more about the accuracy of Kushner and Spielberg, visit the Hal and Ida Gross Lincoln Collection, comprising more than 750 volumes located on the third floor of Rosenthal Library. David Donald, perhaps the premier Lincoln scholar, makes the following observation in his biography, Lincoln (1995):

“If Lincoln used other measures of persuading congressmen to vote for the Thirteenth Amendment, his actions were not recorded. Conclusions about the President’s role rested on gossip and later recollections like those of Thaddeus Stevens, who remarked, ‘The greatest measure of the nineteenth century was passed by corruption, aided and abetted by the purest man in America.’” (p. 554)

Since Hal Gross donated and endowed his Lincoln and Civil War collection in 2005, we have been letting the interest accrue. As a result, in February 2013 we were able to order 60 new volumes for the collection, totaling $3,000. Following are a few representative titles:


Since Hal Gross stipulated that all of the books in his growing collection should circulate, all readers who have a valid CUNY ID card or Friends of the Queens College Library privileges may check out any title that interests them. Note the unique identification in blue at the top of the spine of each volume: Gross Lincoln Collection, symbolizing the Union that both Abraham Lincoln and Hal Gross cherished.

What a treasure trove awaits you in the Gross Lincoln Collection. Perhaps Spielberg and Kushner should pay a visit!

Dr. Rolf Swensen
Acting Chief Librarian, 2013–2015

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The Civil Rights Archive of the Queens College Special Collections and Archives

Here at the Queens College Department of Special Collections and Archives, we have used the 50th anniversary of major civil rights events as an opportunity to promote awareness of the collections donated to us by Queens College activists, preserving part of the rich history of Queens College students’ involvement in social justice issues.

We were approached by filmmakers at PBS to digitize thousands of items for research for their film Freedom Summer, and gladly accepted the challenge. We are now working on uploading these items to our Civil Rights Archives Website at http://archives.qc.cuny.edu/civilrights.

Additionally, the exhibit “50 Years Forward: Civil Rights at Queens College” is open for view on the third floor of Rosenthal Library, in front of room 300 (the Charles Tanenbaum Room). Look for the installation of an exhibit in the Rosenthal Barham Rotunda for the 50th anniversary of the Mississippi Freedom Project in June 2014.

The Department of Special Collections and Archives has also been developing opportunities for curriculum inclusion to celebrate civil rights and introduce undergraduates to archives. Color and Design II (ARTS 243) students have explored visual materials in the archives, using them to create deeply moving images for flyers, postcards, and presentation at the “Mass Meeting” event run by Art Instructor Ryan Hartley Smith held April 3, 2014. African American History (HIST 278) students used documents from our collections as a basis for understanding history and the importance of primary sources.

We are happy to say that the archives have received more than 50 research requests since January, more than doubling since last year. We are proud to work with such important materials to expand awareness of the history of activism at Queens College. Please stop by for a visit!

Alexandra Dolan-Mescal
Special Collections Librarian and Institutional Archivist
Not surprisingly, the fiftieth anniversaries of the 1963 March on Washington, the federal Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, and Mississippi Freedom Summer 1964 have brought increased interest in student activism: Academics from as far away as Japan used our Civil Rights Archives—as did local high school students, QC design students, and publishers and filmmakers. President Muyskens designated 2013–14 for a “QC Civil Rights Initiative” and assigned me to coordinate its activities.

The year started with two summer invitations from QC SEEK and the Queens Library’s Central Branch in Jamaica, Queens. Both wanted their respective audiences to learn the history of 1960s’ struggles against discrimination and to link them to conditions today. The Civil Rights Archives set out cases displaying movement materials.

An October educational conference followed. Participants were presented with materials and approaches useful for teaching the civil rights movement. Subsequent activities included films about the movement; invited civil rights veterans and attorneys as class speakers; presented theatrical performances of Freedom High and Mass Meeting; saw the publication of archive photographs in Jewish Currents and Queens Jewish Link; and featured several full-page stories in The Knight News.

Most recently, the New York preview of Stanley Nelson’s Freedom Summer, discussion with the filmmaker, inclusion of filmed commentary by alumnae Dorothy Zellner and Rita Schwerner Bender, made for an informative and emotional semester highlight.

My interest in civil rights history is in connecting it with today’s issues; my educational orientation is to “teach students”—not just “teach subjects”; my emphasis is showing the roles ordinary people play. I used the Marshall Ganz approach of the “Personal Narrative” and asked each student: “How long have you lived in Queens? Where did you live before you came to Queens? How do you like it here—what’s good, what’s bad?” One Moslem woman revealed she’s paid below minimum wage; a man from China reported that he lives in substandard housing now; and several explained that the ethnic enclave they live in may have some advantages and supports, but they felt that other Queens communities would not welcome them into their circle.

In addition, SEEK students submitted essays, poems, and stories that related the civil rights movement to their lives. The best were read publicly—and it was awesome! The students understood and saw the connections with racial, gender, and other discrimination in today’s world.

I’m an old activist. I point these young people to the Clock Tower’s plaque and story behind it and also explain that there really was no tuition at QC in my day and we fought against its imposition, too. I say it’s their turn—don’t wait for charismatic leaders to get started. Maybe that’s the best we can do, for now.

Mark Levy
Special Assistant to the President for the Civil Rights Initiative 2013–2014
Superstorm Sandy Floods Seamen’s Church Institute, Records and Artifacts Lost: Recovery Update

When Seamen’s Church moved their archives to Rosenthal Library in June 2011, we brought with us more than 150 linear feet of records dating back to the early 1800s. The move proved especially fortuitous when Superstorm Sandy hit in October 2012, putting all of Port Newark under five feet of water. The Seamen’s Church Institute’s International Seafarers Center located in the port saw three feet of water flood the first floor where, unfortunately, all of the building’s storage space is located. Even with the move to Queens College, we continued to keep more recent administrative records at Port Newark, as well as the records of the Center for Seafarers’ Rights, our legal department dedicated to assisting seafarers exploited by the global maritime shipping system.

I spent a week at Port Newark digging through soaked and molding paper, throwing out what was unsalvageable, and setting aside vital records such as institutional minutes to air dry. The saltwater, mixed with whatever toxic run-off it had accumulated during the flooding of the port, was not enough to completely wipe out one of the world’s most durable technologies: good old-fashioned paper. While we lost plenty (we threw out approximately two-dozen large trash bags filled with records), we were able to save most vital records and about half of the records of the Center for Seafarers’ Rights.

Less fortunate was our small collection of maritime art, including several framed prints which were destroyed, and a collection of a dozen ship models worth thousands of dollars. On a happy note, our insurance coverage has provided us with enough funds to pay a bonafide ship model repairman to come out and fix up the damaged vessels. To answer the question many have asked me: Alas, they did not float during the flood.

Since the storm, the first floor of our building has been gutted and new drywall installed. And, despite the damage, we had seafarers using our center days after the floodwaters receded, even though we had no power, Internet, or heat.

You can read more about Seamen’s Church and Sandy at www.seamenschurch.org.

Johnathan Thayer
Archivist, Seamen’s Church Institute

Writing and Library Research Methods: Fandom and Popular Culture

The Library offered its first three-credit course last spring! Library 170, Writing and Library Research Methods, is a research-heavy writing course which is focused around a different theme each time it’s taught.

The theme for Spring 2014 was fandom and popular culture. Students read and wrote about communities that fans create, the creative practices fans use to engage more deeply with their favorite media products, the sometimes troubled relationships between those who produce media and those who consume it, and more.

While the fan communities studied were very different from the academic community in which students were writing, they both required thoughtful engagement with the work of others in ways that are very context-specific. Considering the differences between the kinds of engagement that are valued in fan communities and those that are valued in academic communities helps to make academic writing more transparent.

The focus of the course is not on basic research skills but on information literacy—and especially the relationship between research and writing. The assignments in the class are intended to help students understand the uses of very different types of sources, put themselves in conversation with other writers, and ask research questions useful and relevant to a particular area of study. Locating appropriate sources is important to these practices because it is closely intertwined with each of them. However, research is understood not as an end in itself but as a way to enter the Burkean parlor of academic writing. Thus, assignments include public writing (in Wikipedia) and an analysis of the ways that different authors use sources, in addition to the research paper.

Fans of the literary detective Sherlock Holmes created the modern cult of fandom. Thus, assignments include public writing (in Wikipedia) and an analysis of the ways that different authors use sources, in addition to the research paper.

Nancy Foasberg, Humanities Librarian

Writing with Graffiti

Teaching the library session in several English 110 courses this year that focused on New York City or The Visual World, I seized the opportunity to demonstrate the research process on a topic that interests me, graffiti. Co-opted nearly half a century ago by New York teenagers, graffiti seemed a good fit for my freshmen, and I enjoyed imagining that some of them may have had a graffitist grandparent. We breezed through topic selection, research strategy, identifying, choosing, locating, and retrieving information in various library resources—from databases to blogs, newspapers to books, ephemera to media—then interpreting, evaluating, and using it to argue a viewpoint, all the while taking on the perennially youthful, even if by now global phenomenon, integral to the urban landscape.

Continuing to thrive and evolve throughout the world while remaining only partly documented and commonly misunderstood, controversial even at its core (the question: Is it art or vandalism? never seems to go away), graffiti offers myriad options to a writer’s thoughtful examination, especially in the city of its modern birth and first glory as a public movement. The fast-paced sessions were fun, yet could not prepare me for the amazing results that many of the students achieved under their course instructors’ exemplary guidance. A sample can be seen in a selection from students’ Personal Archives, the final assignment for those who took two classes together in an FYI Community: a New York City: Urban Memory and Archives 1 (English 110H) course with the topic New York, its building and Montrose Avenue. Among other things, one student’s research paper on the history of the abc carpet & LTD, a landmark New York City retail store that shaped the city’s fashion industry, included an interview with the store’s founder, as well as a selection of photos from his personal archives.

What’s New in the Music Library

Donations

Substantial donations of over 5,000 books, scores, and recordings, as well as monetary gifts of $7,000 by Aaron Copland School of Music (ACSM) alumni and friends, have been received in the past two years. These gifts have significantly enhanced the Music Library’s reference collection (one of the best in New York City), chamber music scores and parts, and scores of twentieth-century compositions.

New Media Center

During the 2011–2012 academic year, the Music Library completed upgrading the lower-level listening area, a space for patrons to use audiovisual recordings, to a vibrant new media center. The facilities of the previous listening area were original to the 1991 building and consisted of outdated and unreliable equipment that was no longer able to accommodate the Music Library’s expanding recordings collection.

Funded by student technology fees, the new media center has 17 computer stations (15 Apple computers and 2 Dell computers), 7 additional desks with power and Internet outlets for laptops, a printing station, and a public access terminal. The computer lab stations, which require logging in with a Queens College account, include software vital for music majors (the Microsoft Office Suite and two music notation programs: Finale and Sibelius), provide easy access to library e-resources (such as research databases, online journals, and streaming audio/video), and have CD/DVD players.

Four stations have music keyboards, and an audiocassette player, LP player, VHS player, and DVD/Blu-ray player are also available for use.

The renovation included upgrading the existing classroom into an electronic classroom and creating a group study room.
Growing Collections: Early Modern Art

Given the challenges facing most libraries, Queens College Art Library is pleased that it can offer its users growing resources acquired by purchase and through gifts, as well as steadily increasing art and media resources online. In the course of the past decade, the material holdings of the Art Library have grown rapidly, thanks to the donation of several major collections.

In the field of Italian and to some extent Northern Renaissance art, the Art Library became, in quick succession, the recipient of the personal libraries of two of its leading scholars. The major part of the library of the late Professor James H. Beck (1930–2007) of Columbia University received in 2007–2008 (nearly 4,000 items) was only three years later followed by an even larger bequest of the complete library of Professor Creighton E. Gilbert (1924–2011) who taught and chaired the Art Department at QC in the 1960s–early 1970s and spent the last decades of his illustrious career at Yale University. His library, which encompasses the entire range of Renaissance art scholarship, from the earliest works published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Italian and Latin (fine examples of the art of printing and bookbinding in the first century and a half after Gutenberg) to the most recent findings, was accurately characterized by its highly experienced specialist appraiser as an “impressive private collection … probably one of the finest of its kind in the United States.”

The comprehensiveness of both libraries brings to Queens College much more than a large number of items new to the collection: reference books, catalogues, pamphlets, reprints—many of them rare and many annotated by the owners—which otherwise would be virtually impossible to acquire. It is, importantly, also through their contextuality—inclusion of relevant publications from disciplines outside of art history proper such as history, literature, religion, philosophy, theology, economics, cultural history, material culture, etc.—that these libraries enrich QC holdings in Renaissance art carefully built over decades, not least with Prof. Gilbert’s advisory contributions.

The legacies—their modern publications now largely processed and accessible—significantly strengthen the research potency of the Queens College Libraries. They are welcomed to Queens College with deep gratitude by the donors’ former colleagues, students, and friends, including the present writer.

Dr. Suzanna Simor
Head, Art Library

The Public Domain: What It Is & Why It Matters

“The Public Domain is the place we quarry the building blocks of culture.”

—James Boyle, The Public Domain

Although copyright is an intimidating subject for many, it’s very important for all of us to understand what copyright does, and also its limitations. In our digital age, the public domain is increasingly important, because public domain materials can be freely digitized and adapted. In this manner, they can be made accessible to all. Furthermore, in a time when forms of creative expression that derive from the work of others are flourishing, a healthy public domain is essential to the existence of future creative works. In addition, derivative works have enriched our culture, including the many movies made from Frankenstein, the literary and film adaptations of the legend of Mulan, and the spoofs of bad movies in “Mystery Science Theater 3000.”

Many cultural organizations depend upon the public domain, including Shakespeare in the Park and other Shakespeare festivals. Twitter accounts can reproduce a work over a long period of time, creating an interesting exploration of how technology interacts with literature and bringing more attention to these works in the process. The project to tweet Samuel Pepys’s diary is a good example.

Public domain works exist in all formats and subjects: books, paintings, photographs, sheet music, translations, and more. The public domain includes not only literary and artistic works but also scientific and historical writings. Even traditional card games like cribbage are in the public domain.

The exhibit also served to warn the public about the dangers that the public domain faces today. Due to copyright term extensions, no new works have entered the public domain since 1991, and none will until 2019. A graph which illustrates the effects of copyright term extensions over time can be found at www.tomswell.com/writings/28c29_Term.html and shows how quickly copyright has expanded, preventing new works from entering the public domain. Due to long copyright terms, there are greater restrictions on the creation of new works that might make use of older ones. Digitization projects are mostly limited to works created before the twentieth century, because securing rights is difficult and costly. There are more and more orphan works, that is, works that are under copyright but for which no rights holder can be found. It is impossible to build upon, digitize or republish such works.

Finally, since copyright now accrues to works automatically, some artists, authors and other creative individuals have begun attaching Creative Commons licenses to ensure that their works can be reused in particular ways without the need to seek their permission. Many find this useful because it allows such individuals to encourage creative reuse of their works.

Nancy Foasberg
Humanities Librarian
VITALITY: The Arts of Brazil

The libraries’ contribution to Queens College’s Year of Brazil was presented through 2013–2014 by Queens College Art Library. The vibrant cultural arts of South America’s largest country were shown in the context of its geography and the formation of its society and culture. Through materials culled from throughout the Queens College Libraries, the exhibition explored indigenous, colonial, and Afro-Brazilian art and their influences; pioneering styles of modern and contemporary Brazilian art; and inheritances that inform Brazilian music, dance, theater, and film. Displays provided insight to connections between the visual and literary arts, and highlight Brazil as a stage for the development of modern architecture.

The first iteration of the exhibit was presented in the Barham Rotunda Gallery of the Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library, November 2013–January 2014. It began with Brazilian history and provided an overview of the land, people, and culture, with overviews of visual arts, music, literature, poetry, architecture, theater, and film. Alongside the exhibit visitors could also view a sampling of images culled from the libraries’ electronic resources. A modest catalog (hard copy and electronic) accompanied and contextualized the resources presented. February—June the exhibit refocused to include a more in-depth exploration of specific subjects.

Visual arts, music, theater, and film were found in the Level 2 lobby; architecture on Level 4; literature and poetry on Level 5; and additional resources, including electronic, were presented in the Art Library on Level 6. VITALITY appreciates the efforts of coordinating curators Suzanne Simor and Alexandra Small; curators Sevastoula Kasparian, Terry Kattleman, and Colette Montoya-Humphrey; and contributions by Paul Remeczki, Donna Schultz, the Music Library, and Multimedia.

Alexandra Small
Art Library

STUDENT MADE: Cross-disciplinary Creativity at Queens College

On display in the Barham Rotunda Gallery of the Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library, March 30–May 30, 2014, STUDENT MADE sampled the inventiveness and creativity of current Queens College students, undergraduate and graduate, across disciplines from the sciences to the arts. Ranging from visual to non-visual, static to non-static, the exhibits highlighted the students’ original ideas and realizations in a diversity of media.

Artworks were created not only by students of art. Among them were photographs by Nathan Tschetter, posters by McLane Teitel and Yingying Lin, mixed-media works by Lauren Nickou and Benjamin Reissman, Elena Akulova’s book jackets, and Rosanne Ebner’s architectural sculpture. A digital collage by Rachel Harris explored the creative power of sound, while Mirana Zuger’s illusionistic site-specific installation Element invited the viewer to participate in spatially surprising ways.

Psychologists also were well represented with visual works. Dana Amrami’s photograph from the Occupy Wall Street protest testified to her interest in psychology, while Rabia Sohail (Psychology and Comparative Literature) found inspiration for her painting in a QC neurophysiology lab, and Alicia Barrientos derived her Neurogenesis drawing from images she encountered while examining brain tissue under the microscope. Marti Breskin’s drawing explored the relationship between a human and a crow, while Aron Weinberg’s (Neuroscience) charcoal related to his service in the military. Sara Wertenteil, a premed student and Studio Art minor, shared that she enjoys “fusing scientific and artistic interests into [her] experiences, such as volunteering as an art teacher in a children’s psychiatric facility.”

One exhibit case held Personal Archives, an inspirational final project of Fall 2013 Freshman Year Initiative Community students who took two New York City-focused classes together, an Arts seminar, and a College Writing 1 course. QC’s youngest, they are off to a flying start.

The college’s strength in writing was palpable in poetry by Stephanie Davis and Brian Matta, and in Daniella Chaim’s historical fiction that explored a multigenerational outlook on the Holocaust, the subject of the display that was concurrently on view just a few feet away in Rosenthal. Yves Cloraec (Literary Translation), fused two creative media in superimposing poetry on digitally scanned and edited watercolor pencil in his “On the Irresponsibility of Art.”

Curated by Suzanne Simor, Alexandra Small, and Alexandra de Luise. Information: artlibrary@qc.cuny.edu; http://library.qc.cuny.edu/information/events.php

Dr. Suzanne Simor
Head, Art Library

Banned Books Display

A note of appreciation goes to our Library Intern Joe Pascullo from St. John’s University for hosting a poster-like session in the Barham Rotunda on Intellectual Freedom and Censorship. The variety of banned books that Joe displayed piqued the curiosity of students who were amazed to find such classics as The Catcher in the Rye, To Kill A Mockingbird, and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn on the table. Joe is passionate about our First Amendment and engaged in stimulating discussions with patrons. The event turned out to be a great success, including the great treats!

Huckleberry Finn, as depicted by E. W. Kemble in the original 1884 edition of the book.
Jennifer Oates


Rolf Swensen


**FILM RESEARCH CREDIT**

Lisa Flanzraich


Pioneer of the Jewish feminist movement, author of over ten works of fiction and nonfiction including the acclaimed novel *A Weave of Women*, and co-creator (with Naomi Rimrod) of *The Women’s Haggadah* for the Passover Seder, Broner transformed the patriarchal rituals of Judaism into a feminist celebration and reclamation of women’s lives. Go to http://estherbronerthefilm.com/index.html.

**SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES**

Alexandra Dolan-Mescal

If you are curious about the sublime, enigmatic, and gifted Detroit folksinger Sixto Rodriguez, who slipped away from fame and fortune in the early 1970s, you will be pleased to know that his under-the-radar life and times have been documented in Searching for Sugar Man, the 2012 Academy Award winner for best documentary.

We own it as a Reserve Library title, and you can view it on Level One in the Media Center for a three-hour limit.

Sixto Rodriguez, aka Sugar Man, was rumored to have died, but two fans, record store owner Stephen Segerman and journalist Craig Bartholomew-Strydom—not believing that he had passed away—decided to investigate his whereabouts, only to discover that he was alive and well in Detroit. Rodriguez subsequently learned from them that in South Africa he had become a highly regarded pop artist much in the manner of Bob Dylan, his voice and guitar inspiring those who had demonstrated in the front lines against apartheid.

Filmmaker Malik Bendjelloul zeroes in on the unassuming and humble lifestyle of this unique musician. Until recently, Rodriguez, now in his seventies, worked as a carpenter and lived in a working-class Detroit neighborhood, championing spiritual values above materialistic wealth and success. We learn all about his Zen-like philosophy, sojourns, daughters, concerts, and sheer love for music. That love is equally returned by his audiences; they bask and beam in his presence when he is onstage.

Most of all, we hope that you will enjoy and appreciate the lyrics and music of this seemingly easygoing but serious man, working for peace and social justice with every strum his fingers take on his guitar—and with every self-written lyric he croons.

Lisa Flanzraich
PageDown Editor