

LIBRARY LETTERS



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Notes from the University Librarian

Welcome back to campus for the 2005/06 academic year – and if this is your first year at Washington and Lee University, please consider this a special welcome and an invitation to get to know the Library's collections and staff.



Roger L. Conover, Executive Editor of the MIT Press, once referred to the library as a "miracle," because libraries "convey acquired information from generation to generation which...only living things are supposed to be able to do." Certainly libraries have in a sense always been living things, changing on a daily basis and adapting to meet the needs of the current generation of scholars and students. A century ago, our users came to the library to use printed books and journals, or perhaps to examine a manuscript. Today, while those needs continue, much of the information we provide is in digital form and can be used by W&L faculty and students from anywhere in the world. The modern university library somehow manages to integrate the past and present, the world of print and the world of cyberspace, the "library without walls" with the library as a valued *place* for study, contemplation and intellectual exchange with others.

You'll find elements of all these roles in this issue of *Library Letters*, from our latest digital acquisitions to a gift of early newspapers from alumnus Fred Farrar. Kyle Felker, from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, joins us as our first Technology Coordinator – and I'm happy to add that Arthur J. Lidsky, of the Boston firm of Dober, Lidsky, Craig and Associates, Inc. began his space study in the Leyburn Library in June 2005, as the first step in our journey toward renovation. You'll be seeing more of Mr. Lidsky this fall as he embarks on meetings with faculty and students to hear your thoughts about Leyburn – what's good? what's not? what can we do to improve your comfort and productivity when you visit Leyburn?

Have a great semester – and let us know what we can do to help.

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Friends of the Library Organized at W&L

With Bob Huntley, former University President, as its first board chair, Friends of the Library of Washington and Lee became official. Its mission is to support "the academic mission of Washington and Lee University through activities which strengthen the Library's collections and services, promote greater awareness of the Library's needs and resources, encourage monetary or in-kind contributions to the Library, foster closer community and Library relations, and stimulate the intellectual life of the community."

Chairman Huntley sees it this way, "The Friends association allows those who love the library to meet and share their ideas and suggestions and to introduce others to its treasures. We may also find ways to add to its strengths."

The organization is accepting annual memberships. Any one joining by June 30, 2006 will be a Charter member and receive special recognition as such in Friends publications.

A kickoff event will be held during Homecoming, September 24, at 11 a.m. in Leyburn Library.

For more information, contact Friends Coordinator Karin O'Callaghan at 540-458-8642 or ocallaghank@wlu.edu.

Kyle Felker Becomes First Technology Coordinator



John Tombarge is smiling because he now has excellent help with technology-related projects; Kyle Felker (on left in the photo) has come in as Technology Coordinator and Reference Librarian. Kyle is a University of Southern Mississippi grad; received his MLIS from Louisiana State and came to us from the University Libraries of University of Nevada Las Vegas. Besides unpacking his many books, Kyle enjoys cooking, reading and outdoor sports. We know we will all benefit from his experience and expertise.

Library Acquires Important Historical Document Access

Leyburn Library, the Law Library and the Provost's Office are cooperating in the purchase of the *LexisNexis U.S. Serial Set Digital Collection*, an online form of what probably can be considered the single greatest publication series of the U.S. Federal Government. It also arguably can be considered the single most important collection of primary source material for the study of U.S. history for the 19th century and most of the 20th century.

The *LexisNexis U.S. Serial Set Digital Collection* product is a mammoth project, under way for several years and due to be completed by the end of 2005. It consists not only of the digitized images of documents, but also extensive indexing and other search tools that the publisher is creating. To date, the digitized *Serial Set* collection contains over 336,000 documents, including over 9 million pages and over 46,000 maps.

Coming into existence with the 15th Congress (1817), the *Serial Set* developed into the Federal Government's archival record of the growth of the young nation, covering social conditions, scientific advancements, Western and foreign exploration, international relations, geology and natural resources, economic policies, census counts, and more. Works on such major topics as slavery, the Civil War, and relations with Native Americans are invaluable.

As the nation and government grew in the 20th century and the early effects of the "information explosion" began to be felt, the *Serial Set* became more specialized, with a focus on Congressional publications. Even so, it includes reports of investigations into Pearl Harbor, the Black Panthers, the Iran-Contra affair, and much, much more.

Laura Turner Tenured

Technical Services Librarian Laura Turner received tenure in May. After graduating from the University of Texas at Austin's School of Library and Information Science, Laura returned to her native Virginia to join Leyburn's staff in January 1999. She is grateful to the library staff and faculty colleagues for helping her reach this pinnacle and looks forward to serving the university community for many more years.

Fred Farrar '41 Makes a Big Donation

It took a hand-truck to get everything that Fred Farrar wanted to donate in the doors! Merrily Taylor, University Librarian, and Vaughan Stanley, Special Collections Librarian, were on hand to receive it, too!

On May 30, Fred Farrar '41 donated 105 original newspapers highlighting historic events from the 17th to the 20th centuries. These newspapers will serve as invaluable teaching aids for our journalism department. Fred also donated 38 bound volumes of 18th and 19th century periodicals and several more periodicals in their original paper wrappers (unbound).



Stephanie Wiechmann '07 worked over the summer to create a web site about the collection. To read more, go to <http://journalism.wlu.edu/Farrar/index.htm> or follow the link from the Library's home page under Special Collections.

'05 Student Assistants Feted at End of Year Party

Each year 30 to 40 students provide invaluable service to the Library staff. They do anything and everything, from shelving books to tracking vacation time. And they do it efficiently and with a smile!

At the end of the year, the Library staff likes to show its appreciation by treating the students to a **big, homemade** lunch (plus some Kenney's fried chicken).

Graduating seniors were given an end-of-year gift and asked to select a book to be plated in his/her honor.

It's hard to imagine the Library working so well without our student help!

