iCommons Renovation

Over the summer, the main level of the Mortensen Library was renovated to break down the barriers to collaborative learning. Remember the old blue carrels? Remember the old plastic hard chairs? Do you remember thinking, that there just had to be large windows on the main level of Mortensen Library? Well, the look and feel have all changed. Thanks to the Provost’s Office, the Parents Association, as well as Information Technology Services and the Library staff, much of the main level of the Library was transformed. The Dorothy Goodwin Café has made a big impact on how the University community uses the Library. The students and faculty members are staying!

We combined the Reference staff and the User Branch Assistants into one informational service point. We lowered all barriers to conversation, collaboration, and group work. And the best — the windows were exposed! Two more cPODS (collaborative pods) were constructed. Next time you are in Mortensen Library, notice the new rhythm, the conversations, the Ah-Ha moments, and the sense of community.

What you all want to know is the old blue carrels have a new home in a community service organization in Massachusetts.

Thank you to everybody who drilled holes in the concrete floors (that was fun), pulled wires, moved furniture, took electric drills to the carrels, ripped up carpet, installed carpet, moved in all the new furniture, and saw and understood a vision of how libraries are changing. Thank you.
Throughout the year, I find myself coming up with tasks I’d like to complete, things I’d like to try, and thoughts I’d like to devote further time to, well, thinking about. Swept away in the madness that is the regular semester, I generally don’t get any further than scribbling a note to myself and stuffing it in my desk. But once Summerterm rolls around, and borrowing and lending requests dwindle, I rifle through my top drawer, extricate those crumpled pieces of scrap paper, and earmark a few projects to tackle.

One thing that I’ve had in the back of my mind to look into for months now is a software package called **Odyssey** that allows libraries to send and receive articles electronically. We already have a similar program, **Ariel**, but not all libraries use it because of its high cost and the occasional problems with installation and maintenance (Ariel has an ‘I do not play well with others’ mentality and doesn’t always interface well with other pieces of software. Or hardware. Or librarians.) **Odyssey**, on the other hand, is available free-of-charge and is relatively easy to get and keep working, which makes it appealing to libraries with fewer financial and technical resources. Since so many patrons indicate on their request forms that they would prefer electronic delivery of photocopies whenever possible, it seemed worthwhile to try and put **Odyssey** into use so that we could add to our pool of lending libraries that send via computer. A few months in, we’ve already received hundreds of documents through **Odyssey**, many of which came from institutions that previously sent articles to us through the mail or from whom we hadn’t requested at all because they didn’t use **Ariel**. Because late summer and early fall are traditionally slow times in Interlibrary Services, I wouldn’t be surprised to see that number triple by the end of the year, and that may be an estimate on the low side, depending on how many requests are submitted.

The success of these two significant summer projects only encourages me to look forward to next year, when I can tweak something else to improve the functioning of the ILS department. Has anybody seen my pile of scrap paper?
Hartford College for Women (HCW) came into being in the 1930s, but hit its stride with the appointment of Laura Johnson as dean in 1943. Although it would be 1958 before Miss Johnson was granted the title of president, she began to set the tone for the college immediately.

Miss Johnson was born in 1911 in Wallingford, VT. She earned both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree from the University of Vermont and a second master’s degree from Radcliffe. Her experience before coming to Hartford included teaching assignments at Concord Academy and at Bancroft School, both in Massachusetts. She had also served as a resident head at Simmons College.

In 1959, HCW moved from a house on Highland Street to the former Seaverns estate on the corner of Elizabeth and Asylum Streets. The grounds of this estate were originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted II, the son of the designer of Central Park in New York City, Smith College in Northampton, MA, and many other projects. On the idyllic Asylum Street campus, Miss Johnson established her own office just inside the front door of the main administrative building.

Miss Johnson was never simply a career woman. She did not make a distinction between the role of gracious homemaker and that of a professional administrator. She lived in the main administrative building of the college during the academic year, retreatinng in the summer to a much-loved house in Clarendon, VT. She presided over the campus as she might have presided over her own private grounds. The college community became her family. She welcomed informal visits to her office from students, faculty, and staff. During HCW’s early years, the college focused primarily on the needs of young undergraduate students who could not afford to go away to college during the years of the Depression. During Miss Johnson’s tenure, the college expanded its mission to include programs for older women and those in transition. Although unmarried herself, Johnson was acutely aware of the challenges of combining career and family.

Miss Johnson believed that by the time a woman completed her most demanding child-rearing years she could be ready for as many as 30 more years of productive service. Miss Johnson also recognized that after even a few years out of the workforce, a woman might need to refresh her skills and acquire new ones. Her convictions contributed to the development of programs for displaced homemakers and programs for working women who were blocked in their careers due to a lack of training and confidence.

Miss Johnson was the first woman to be elected to The Hartford Courant board of directors. In 1972, she became a director of Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company, the first woman to serve as a director in a Hartford-based insurance company. She also served as a trustee of many colleges, schools and other non-profit organizations.

After retiring from HCW in 1976, Miss Johnson moved to Farmington Woods in Avon. During her last years, she pursued her love of nature through her involvement in the Connecticut Horticultural Society, for which she served as president, and the Bee and Botanical Society in Vermont. She died of cancer in 1980 at the age of 69.

On November 9, 1964 Linda Case described Miss Johnson in an article published in The Hartford Courant. According to Case, “Laura A. Johnson presides over the school with the finesse of a hostess, the insight of a teacher and the practicality of a Yankee farmer.”

From the Archives of the University of Hartford.
In Memoriam – Ethel Bacon

Ethel Bacon, who was a vibrant and spirited presence on campus even into her later years, died November 6 at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown at the age of 86.

“Ethel Bacon’s life was testimony to her devotion to the University of Hartford”, said President Walter Harrison. “No one cared more about the University; no one knew more about its history. She was extraordinarily helpful to me as a new president in teaching me about the University, and throughout the years I turned to her for information about our history, our values, and our people. I join thousands of University community members who mourn her passing and remember her with fondness.”

In 1938, Bacon arrived at the Julius Hartt School of Music (the Community Division of the time) to study with noted pianist Irene Kahn. Two years later she entered what was then called the Hartt College of Music. After graduating in 1944, she started teaching at Hartt, and while working on her master’s degree was employed part-time in the library. In 1957, Hartt joined with Hillyer College and the Hartford Art School to form the University of Hartford. Two years later, Bacon’s position as music librarian became full time, but she continued to teach piano part time until 1966. In 1965, Hartt named Bacon outstanding alumnus of the year “for selfless dedication to the school and its library.”

It was the University’s first chancellor, Vincent Coffin, who persuaded Bacon to become the University’s first archivist on a part-time basis, a position she continued when she retired as music librarian in 1987, and actively maintained until 2006. In a profile published in the Observer in 2006, Bacon said the archives always fascinated her, “maybe, because I’ve lived through all those years” of University history.

In 2001, the University’s Alumni Association presented Bacon with its Distinguished Service Award.

A multifaceted woman, known for her trenchant sense of humor, Bacon’s life away from the University was an exceptionally full one. She traveled widely all over the world and was a member of the Appalachian Mountain Club for more than 50 years. A favorite pastime for many years was dogsledding, and in 1997 her children’s book, To See the Moon, was published, inspired by her beloved Siberian huskies.

She is survived by her sister-in-law, Charlotte J. Bacon of Wethersfield, two nephews, two nieces, many grandnieces and grandnephews, and a cousin, Harold Kelley.◆
The President’s College, the outreach arm of the University Libraries, offers short non-credit courses and other programs for members of the larger community. The program, under the directorship of Humphrey Tonkin, chair of the Mortensen Library Board, is also open to current and retired faculty and staff of the University. While anyone can participate in the courses, one can also become a Fellow of the President’s College. The $100 annual fee provides parking privileges, library borrowing privileges, discounts on events on campus, and a substantial discount for President’s College courses. To sign up, or to be added to the President’s College mailing list contact Judy Kacmarcik (kacmarcik@hartford.edu; 860.768.4269).

The program for the spring will include the following offerings:

**Masters of Reality: Caravaggio to Vermeer — Patrick McCaughey**
The 17th century was a period of intense and exciting change in art and architecture. Although Rome became the dominant centre, important national schools emerged across Europe. Rubens in Flanders, Rembrandt and Vermeer in Holland and Velasquez in Spain all contributed to the brave new landscape of art in the 17th century. (Fridays, February 6, 13, 20, 27; March 6, 2009.)

**Sensation, Mystery, and Subversion: The Woman in White and the Moonstone — Dianne Harrison and Catherine Stevenson**
This course will explore the roots of these novels in Gothic and crime fiction, investigate their innovative narrative structures and talk about their impact on later novels – from the works of Dickens and Thomas Hardy to the contemporary mystery novels. (Tuesdays, February 10, 17, 24; March 3, 10, 2009.)

**Humphrey Tonkin** will provide a four-session introduction to Shakespearean comedy in preparation for the Hartt School’s production of Love’s Labor’s Lost, on Mondays, January 26; February 2, 9, 16 (the play will be performed from February 19 to 22.)

**Bob Gruskay** will give three introductory talks on Lucia, Butterfly and La Sonnambula: in preparation for the simulcasts of the Metropolitan Opera coming to Hartford in the spring (lectures on Wednesdays, February 4; March 4, 11, respectively - in preparation for the performances on the following Saturday.)

**Joe Voelker** will lead the Ulysses Book Club, a small group of readers that will meet every two weeks throughout the semester to read James Joyce’s novel Ulysses together. (Thursdays, February 12, 26; March 12, 26; April 16, 30.)

**Jean McGivney-Burelle** will give a three-session course on solving mathematical problems, looking with fresh eyes at some of the basic mathematical concepts, like prime numbers, Pascal’s Triangle, and more. (Tuesdays, March 24, 31; April 7.)

**Michael Schiano** will look at what he calls the “confluence of musical styles” in the Beatles - everything from Gershwin, Elvis, and doowop to the classics. (Wednesdays, May 6, 13, 20.)

**Michael Lankester** will offer a five-part series on “The Symphony After Beethoven.” (Mondays, April 6, 13, 20, 27; May 4.)

**Lou Manzione** and colleagues in Engineering, Technology and Architecture will present a five-part series on cutting-edge developments in their fields. (April 1, 15, 22, 29; May 6.)

For updated information or to register for these courses, visit the President’s College website:

www.hartford.edu/presidentscollege
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Update on Open Source

It has been a while since I last wrote about the Libraries’ plans to move to open source. As such, now is probably a good time to give an update on how those plans are progressing.

I mentioned previously that WALDO, the academic library group that the University Libraries are a part of, had been working with an open source service vendor to custom tailor applications to suit our needs. Since then, a lot of work has taken place, and some of it has included staff here. Jennifer Olson has been working with the Cataloging team, while I have been busy working with the Acquisitions team and playing a more lead role in the work done on Browse Indexes. Sam Cook has recently been tapped to work with a committee focusing specifically on how music resources work in the open source integrated library system of Koha.

The work being done with LibLime, our service vendor, has already produced some tangible results. Some of the modifications we have requested have been easily accommodated within the original Koha staff client. The original programming, based on the robust nature of shared work and inspection, supports these sorts of improvements. However, for requests that are more specific to our needs or that depart more radically from what the core programming supports, the staff at LibLime has a novel approach. They write a helper application that, while separate from the Koha staff client, integrates seamlessly. This approach allows both the helper application and rest of the staff client to upgrade on a separate timetable while allowing other customers to pick and choose what products fit their needs. These applications will all be offered under an open source license as well. Currently in production for WALDO is an acquisitions application called GetIt that will handle order placement, payment, tracking, budgeting, and vendor communication.

As I mentioned earlier, a lot of work is being done by our colleagues in WALDO to prepare this release of Koha, and it spans all the aspects of backroom library work: from circulation and course reserves to cataloging and authority control, from deleting item records to creating brief bibliographic records and fine thresholds to permissions granularity. And if you want to know more about it, please let me know. I can either get additional information and documentation for you, or I can get someone to grant you access to LibLime’s Development Projects website as an observer. Or, if you’re really keen for a piece of the action, there’s still time to participate. Just let me know! ♦
Elisabeth Ramsey Swain was a popular and highly respected member of the Biology department at the University of Hartford for many years. She first joined the staff of the original Hillyer College in 1954. Three years later, Hillyer joined with the Hartford Art School and the Hartt School to form the University of Hartford. During the 1950s she was the pioneering force behind the University’s growing biology department. She was chair of the department for 26 years. Many of her students went on to careers in the sciences. Her students remembered her as an inspiring teacher and devoted mentor.

In 1982 Swain won the Roy E. Larson Award for Excellence in Teaching. A press release quoted her as noting the importance of continued learning “because the field is constantly changing - everything I learned in graduate school is obsolete.”

Today, the pace of progress in the life sciences makes it increasingly more difficult to stay current. In Swain’s honor, the University of Hartford Library has recently received an endowment to acquire the JSTOR Life Science Collection, with over 5.5 million pages available online today and scheduled to grow to more than 7 million. At its completion, it will comprise a minimum of 160 titles that will help today’s students and faculty keep pace with rapidly expanding knowledge in the biological, health and general sciences.

Swain graduated from Wilson College with a degree in Physics. She received her MA and PhD in Zoology from the University of Pennsylvania. Her strongest personal interests were in comparative anatomy, developmental anatomy, and microscopic anatomy zoology. She contributed more than 2000 drawings to O. E. Nelson’s *Comparative Embryology of the Vertebrates*, which earned her an international reputation in the field of biology. This volume became a classic in undergraduate science programs. In addition to her many on-campus administrative and committee responsibilities, she was active in numerous voluntary organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Organization of Women, the Red Cross, and Pilot International, a women’s service organization.

After her retirement in 1985 Swain had more time for her hobbies, which included gardening, traveling, and needlework. She was an avid collector and restorer of old cars and had a particular fondness for model T’s. At one time she owned seven classic cars, including a 1953 Lincoln convertible.

*From the Archives of the University of Hartford.*

Elisabeth R. Swain, PhD – A Remembrance

I was a delinquent alumnus for many years following my graduation in 1962. Although I occasionally thought of U of H, I successfully overcame any temptation to reestablish a connection with the University. Nevertheless, a persisting realization was the positive influence that U of H faculty had had on the course of my professional life. For many of us who made our careers in the life sciences, this was particularly true in regard to Professor Elisabeth R. Swain. As mentioned in the accompanying article on the JSTOR Life Science Collection that has been established in her honor, Dr. Swain was founding chair and principal lecturer in the Department of Biology and a popular and highly-respected member of the University community for many years.

During the period 1958-1962 that I was a student, Hillyer College, Hartt School of Music and the Hartford Art School were forged together to become a full-fledged university on an extensive parcel of land with ambitious plans for the future. Ours was the first class to graduate from the new Bloomfield Avenue campus. This was a
Chasing Down the Mystery of Zero
– Nick Wharton

The phone rang in the Reference Office of Mortensen Library, an ordinary University of Hartford ring, but the patron calling on the other end would send me on the strangest research ride of my career. The patron asked innocently enough, “Do you have the Journal ‘Computers and Automation’? I popped open my browser and diligently checked our online catalog to see that, yes, indeed, we have the title. “Well, that’s great!” he said. “What I’m really looking for is a one page story that I had read in 1970, I believe. It was one of those stories that before emails, was photocopied and sent from office to office via inter-office mail or by hand. It’s called the ‘Story of Zero,’ and it was a parable about how the number zero was first introduced to Roman Civilization.” Luckily, we held the 1970 volume. This sounded pretty solid. Then, the patron added that 1970 was what he remembered, but maybe it was around that date plus or minus two years. My high spirits and willingness to help sank, a little, but we owned 1968 to the 80s with a couple of title changes. So, I said that I would give it a look and get back to him.

In this computer age, this librarian prefers to find his answers online rather than walk down into the lower level and thumb through the actual volumes. I pulled no punches in searching our eJournals AtoZ list. Journal not online. I checked for a website for the journal. Came up empty. I did a quick Google search looking for the “Story of Zero” or “Story of 0.” As Google does so well, I had thousands of hits to peruse. After several pages of finding nothing, I resigned to leave my desk for the Mortensen Stacks.

I jotted down the call number and trekked on down the stairs passed the warm, wafting smell of coffee from the Goodwin Café and followed the trail of call numbers down to the back of the stacks. The 1968 volume was missing. My window for finding this article dwindled. I pulled down 1970, starting from the middle and working either way is my methodology of choice. Ugh, 1970 has no index. I jumped through the 12 issues perusing the Table of Contents. Not one article title with the word zero. The other issues had indices, but no articles with the word zero.

I called the patron back with my bad news. I got nothing was what I wanted to say. Yet, I persevered and kept going. Is there any other information you can remember that may help me? “Yes, the journal was edited by Edmund C. Berkeley. He may have written the story. It should be on page 1 or 2.” Yes, I knew now that the editorials were all early.

It was especially satisfying to find the needle in the haystack. Well maybe I really found the eye of the needle.

A Remembrance ➔ page 8

time of tremendous upheaval and change. In retrospect, it is a credit to the faculty and administration that saw the University through that phase of its development that our education and social evolution were not adversely affected by the dynamic situation around us. On the contrary, while laying the foundation for a world-class university, Dr. Swain and her colleagues attended to their day-to-day teaching and administrative responsibilities with undiminished vigor and enthusiasm. There was an entrepreneurial spirit among all involved that not only is unusual in most stable academic environments, but also was an inspiration to those of us exposed to it.

During this year’s homecoming celebration, I took the opportunity to visit the U of H to observe firsthand the results of the many recent changes that have been profiled in the Mortensen Library ReSources and other University publications. Like many returning alums, I was greatly impressed by the size and breadth of today’s campus community. Clearly, the vision that Dr. Swain and her colleagues held for the future of the University of Hartford in those early years has largely been realized.
Chasing Down the Mystery of Zero

on in the volumes, but a few were on the back covers. I did sneak back to search the web for Berkeley and zero or ‘0’ for another empty effort. No hope there.

I was rejuvenated by the new information and went back to the basics, checking the author index for 1968 (volume missing, index there with 1969!). No zero in either year. I flipped open 1970, once again. With no index, I just started with the table of contents. Nothing. I flipped through the first pages, looked at all the back pages. On the back cover of issue 12 of 1970 there was a one-page article with an off-set paragraph listing the numbers 1 through 0 in a line. Could this be it? A little article entitled “The Empty Column” turned out to be the missing “Story of Zero!” I had done it!

It would have been cool enough if that ended the story right there. In the postscript to the article, the editor, E. Berkeley (remember him), notes that this parable was printed in the January issue and that he had located the originator of the story after his plea for information. Subsequently, in April, that very journal printed an article by William J. Wiswesser concerning his idea for a “New Notation” for chemical symbols which would trade the symbols of the periodic chart for something more logical, sensible and, once learned, easier to use. Professor Wiswesser had written the parable to preface his revolutionary idea for chemical symbol notation. The parable describes how a Roman Empire Official might have scoffed at the use of the “revolutionary” Arabic numbering system with its ridiculous use of the symbol ‘0’ and five different characters for 1 through 5 when the Roman system used just two, “I” and “V.” As we know now the Wiswesser Line Notation never really took off, but it was tried out by the United States Government (Thank you, Google!).

In a final twist to the story, it turns out that the patron had from memory tried to write down his own version of the parable. He was amazed upon receiving the original via email that his memory had played such tricks on him that he very clearly mis-remembered the machinations and had taken great leaps to embellish the satirical elements drastically.

I have no idea if the research journey will be all that interesting for anyone except me, but it was a significant moment in my career. It was especially satisfying to find the needle in the haystack. Well maybe I really found the eye of the needle. The moral I learned: Sometimes you can start out looking for zilch, find the column empty and end up with much more of the story. ✤

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A Welcome to Allison Grebe

With Elizabeth Abbe’s departure to the Connecticut Historical Society, the Mortensen Board of Visitors needed a new liaison from Development. So, let me introduce Allison Grebe. Allison began her career at her alma mater, Susquehanna University, where her responsibilities included running the student calling program, coordinating the Parents Executive Committee and Business & Industry Campaign, organizing Family Weekend, and supporting the University’s $60 million capital campaign.

She moved to CT in 2000 to become the associate director of annual giving at the UConn Foundation. Prior to arriving at the University of Hartford in October 2007, Allison was the director of the annual fund at The Ethel Walker School. In addition to overseeing fundraising related to the school’s $1.3 million annual fund, she also managed the Alumnae Board and coordinated the school’s first-ever online auction. Allison is a senior development officer at the University of Hartford with more than a dozen years of fundraising experience.

Allison lives in Farmington. She’s an avid sports fan who enjoys spending time with friends and exploring the great outdoors in her free time. ✤
**Staff Happenings**

*Ben Ide*, Head of Technical Services, co-presented “Steampunk Cataloging: Retro-futurism in Taxonomy & Metadata Management” at the 2008 New England Library Association (NELA) Conference in Manchester, NH. The mid-October presentation was given with his former Harvard colleague Jane Ouderkirk and “described how the future of content management mimics the practices of the Victorian era when the organization of information was a flourishing endeavor and why a new golden age of classification is emerging. Rumored to be obsolete, in fact the need for catalogers’ skill sets is in a state of more rapid growth than at any time since the birth of MARC and automated catalogs.” The presentation was given in full Victorian garb and was, by all accounts, a rousing success.

*Jennifer Olson* has been promoted to the position of Senior Cataloger at the Allen Library. This promotion reflects the hard work and dedication she has shown over the past seven years. Congratulate and cheer her on, as Jennifer continues to work towards her Master of Science in Library and Information Science from Simmons College. Encompassed in this new position’s responsibilities are added cataloging duties and supervision of staff, namely Andrew King, former Access Services Coordinator and newly hired part time Cataloging Coordinator at Allen Library.

*Sam Cook* was promoted to the position of Public Services Librarian at the Allen Library on July 18, 2008. Sam, who earned his MSIS from University at Albany, SUNY in 2006, accepted the opportunity to become a professional librarian. Sam also holds a BM in Clarinet Performance degree from the Hartt School. The Public Services Librarian supervises circulation, maintains the stacks, trains staff and provides formal and informal reference and bibliographic instruction to students, faculty and staff. In addition, the Public Services Librarian supervises the students and the Public Services Coordinator.

**In Memoriam – John Mcgavern**

*John Mcgavern*, director of the University’s library system for 34 years, died quietly on September 10 at Hanover Terrace Healthcare in Hanover, NH, at the age of 82. He graduated from Harvard University in 1949, and went on to earn a master’s degree in library science from Simmons College.

Mcgavern first started working at the University in 1959 at the original Hillyer College library. After a summer vacation, he returned to find that the librarian had left and he had been appointed to succeed him. Several libraries of the components of the new University of Hartford were scattered all over the city at the time — the Hillyer library on Hudson Street, the art library at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Ward College’s library on Niles Street, and the science and engineering library in the engineering school near the Colt building. He developed all of those libraries except Hillyer’s, supervised them through their growing periods, and oversaw their merger when the Harry Jack Gray Center was built in 1988. The music library, already in place when he arrived, had been located at The Hartt School’s original building on Broad Street.

The quiet and unassuming librarian received extensive national news attention in 1977 after surviving a gunshot in the neck when his bus from New York City was held hostage. Asked by the *New York Times* if he desired revenge, he said, “If I wanted to seek revenge, there would be no difference between me and the man that shot me.”

Mcgavern retired from the University in 1993 and devoted himself to reading literature, science and Buddhist texts; cooking; playing the piano; and listening to chamber music. His survivors include a brother, David, of Concord, MA; two nieces; and two nephews.
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