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## FROM THE DEAN

At the Libraries we speak often of the impact we have on campus and of how we use our expertise and resources to support students and partner with faculty researchers. If you read *Footnotes* or our impact reports, you know how much effort we make to improve the student experience—not just in our buildings but across Northwestern’s campuses.



An initiative I am especially proud of is our multipronged, long-term commitment to reducing the effects of rising textbook costs on students.

We’ve written about our textbook pilot program with Associated Student Government, in which we acquire certain costly textbooks for high-enrollment classes and make them available for short-term checkout. It’s one of the growing number of alternatives to students’ purchasing textbooks.

Now the Libraries are a leader (partnering with the Office of the Provost) in a new campus project, Affordable Instructional Resources, that takes this a step further. AIR encourages the adoption of open educational resources—free, unrestricted digital teaching materials created by and shared within the academic community.

Thanks to a new grant program, exciting original course texts and related learning objects are being created by eight Northwestern faculty in AIR’s pilot cohort. This is important work, and we aren’t in it alone. Our consortium partners from the Big Ten Academic Alliance and other major research libraries are all keenly focused on creating and adopting more such materials.

Together, we at the Libraries are finding new ways to make college more affordable for all students.

Sarah M. Pritchard  
Dean of Libraries  
Charles Deering McCormick University Librarian

## Software tool allows unprecedented analysis of collections

The simplest way to explain the software tool GreenGlass is to say it allows easier, more robust analysis of print collections.



But that undersells its potential, according to assessment and planning librarian Qiana Johnson. GreenGlass, a new software tool available at the Libraries, takes all the collection data from a library's catalog, compiles it efficiently in new ways, analyzes usage, and even compares data with other libraries, from peer

institutions to digital repositories like HathiTrust.

"This allows us to find hidden pockets of strength," she said. "What if we had a strength in Norwegian literature and never knew it?"

Spoiler alert: Johnson checked. We don't.

"We frequently talk about the strengths and unique qualities of our collection," she said. "Now we can assess just how unique our collection really is. Can we back up our claims with better analysis?"

Spoiler alert: Johnson checked. We can.

"Compared with other Big Ten Academic Alliance libraries, almost 50 percent of our collection is considered rare—held by five or fewer libraries,"

said Johnson, noting how that information would have been extremely laborious to discover without the software. "Now we can see if these are items that the local community is using heavily. Even if they aren't, are these items so rare that we should keep them for the good of the world?"

GreenGlass also allows better library planning by answering significant questions about a collection: How heavily is it being used? How old is it? How much does it overlap with peers? How many similar items are in libraries across the state? In the country?

Knowing those answers lets libraries build collections more wisely, said Johnson. With inter-library loans making it easy for scholars to check out materials from faraway shelves, the Libraries can refine a collection in a way that builds on local strengths and lets other institutions fill in gaps. Better analytical tools help librarians determine when less duplication is acceptable—or when duplication is the right call for heavily used items.

"Most libraries have 10 copies of *The Tempest*," Johnson said. "Better analytical tools might show just two copies are circulating. Should those other copies be stored off-site or removed from the collection? We can answer questions like this so much more easily now."



## Students flock to University Library for Write Nights

The Writing Place, a peer-to-peer writing consultation center, partnered with Northwestern Libraries twice last year for special late-night sessions during Reading Week.

Last year's Write Nights in fall and winter quarters were held in Core, the Libraries' most popular group study space and headquarters for the Writing Place. From 8 p.m. until midnight, librarians and peer consultants held brief one-on-one sessions to offer students guidance on term papers or last-minute research advice.

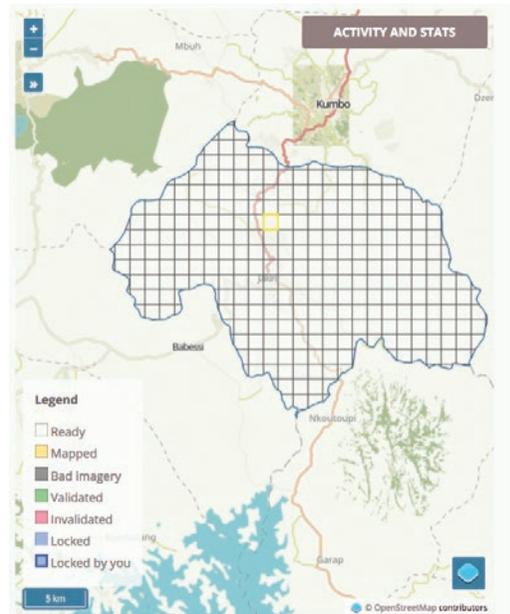
## Mapathon teaches skills that aid humanitarian efforts

A political science professor and an Africa mapping specialist joined geographic information librarians last spring to host a “mapathon” that will aid refugee relief efforts in Cameroon.

Weinberg College professor Galya Ben-Arieh’s seminar Refugee Knowledge Hub: Action Research, Ethics, and Practice teaches students research methods, including the use of mapping technology. Librarian Anne Zald helped organize the mapathon—a crowdsourced project that improves the quality of online mapping data available for humanitarian work—in collaboration with Ben-Arieh and visiting instructor Jessica Bergmann of Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team.

For many areas where natural disasters or conflict occurs, detailed local maps are hard to find, according to Zald. Better maps are crucial for aid organizations trying to set up service points, move supplies, and track settlements. That’s the case in Cameroon, where English-speaking groups have been staging an armed rebellion against French-speaking government forces since 2016.

Students at the event used online tools to study satellite images of Cameroonian villages and fill in map details. The edits will be verified by experienced mappers and others with local knowledge.



“The mapathon connects students to global issues, promotes our geospatial services, and builds our staff’s skills with the latest open mapping tools,” Zald said. By incorporating geographic information systems into courses like Refugee Knowledge Hub, librarians can help provide a more powerful analytical tool for students and faculty studying displaced populations.

“There are already tons of people in Core toward the end of the quarter,” said engagement librarian Chris Davidson. “By holding Write Night there, we’re reaching people who are already here at the point of need.”

Writing Place consultants are Northwestern undergraduates “trained to work with the writers more than the writing,” said Elizabeth Lenaghan, assistant director of the Writing Place and director of Weinberg College’s Cook Family Writing Program. Rather than critique the writing, “our students will say, ‘Let’s talk about how you analyzed this quote’ and ask leading questions” that guide the writers to do their own editing.

Meanwhile, librarians provide quick lessons on basic research methods. “We coach them to

not use the first article they find,” said Davidson, “but to press on to find sources that are even more on point.”

Typically, consultations require scheduling in advance, so Write Night allows students to get help even after they’ve waited too long to ask for it through normal channels. But Write Night also raises awareness of the services that are available all quarter, so that students who plan ahead can get more thorough attention the next time a research paper shows up on the syllabus.

Future Write Nights will be held in other spaces on campus, such as Elder Residential Community, to raise awareness among students who might not regularly visit Core.

# Art history class spotlights rare books

Objects from the Libraries' collections take center stage in many Northwestern classes, but a recent Weinberg College class also starred a librarian: Martin Antonetti, director of the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections and University Archives, who led a spring-quarter art history class about rare books.

In Special Topics in Baroque Art: History of the Book, Antonetti led students to hands-on discoveries with early-modern manuscripts and printed books from the McCormick Library. His aim was to teach students to be their own "biblio-archaeologists"—investigators who glean knowledge about an earlier time period or society based on the clues left behind in printed materials.

"The class is not just about old books," Antonetti said. "It guides students to make a series of ever-widening inferences based on a book's material features."

Choices like paper, illustrations, and binding reveal decisions made by a book's author, publisher, and printer, but careful observers can also uncover hidden clues about interactions involving sellers, readers, and sometimes even censors.

"The physical form of a book affects the way a text is understood and disseminated," Antonetti said. "We can study a book to understand how



*Martin Antonetti introduces students to De historia stirpium, one of many rare books used in his class.*

people read, how they ingested information, how they made sense of their world."

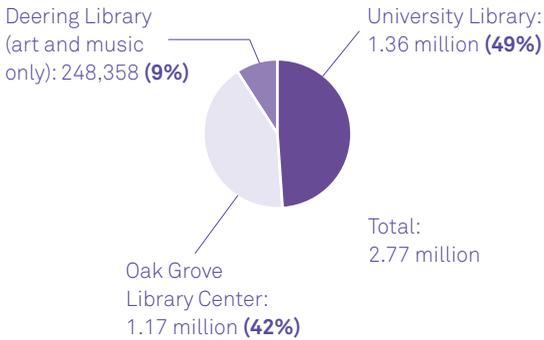
Antonetti—who has led similar courses at Smith College, Mills College, Columbia University, and the Rare Book School at the University of Virginia—also teaches students to observe how works change from edition to edition over time and distance.

"More and more, art history teaches the social impact of art," he said. "The meaning of a work *then* is different from what we take away *now*. Knowing what to look for in a book lets you glean more information than what's available by simply reading the text."

# 2018–19 by the numbers

For more facts, visit [libraries.nu/LibFacts](https://libraries.nu/LibFacts).

## Print book titles by location<sup>1</sup>



**72%**  
Percentage of titles in Library of Congress class M (music) that have circulated<sup>2</sup>



**7,247**  
Items held only at Northwestern Libraries<sup>3</sup>



**2.43 million**  
Print titles in English—  
87% of the print collection



<sup>1</sup> Does not include Math, Mudd, and Schaffner Libraries

<sup>2</sup> Highest percentage of any Library of Congress class

<sup>3</sup> Defined by title and edition

Source: GreenGlass analytical tool (see story inside)