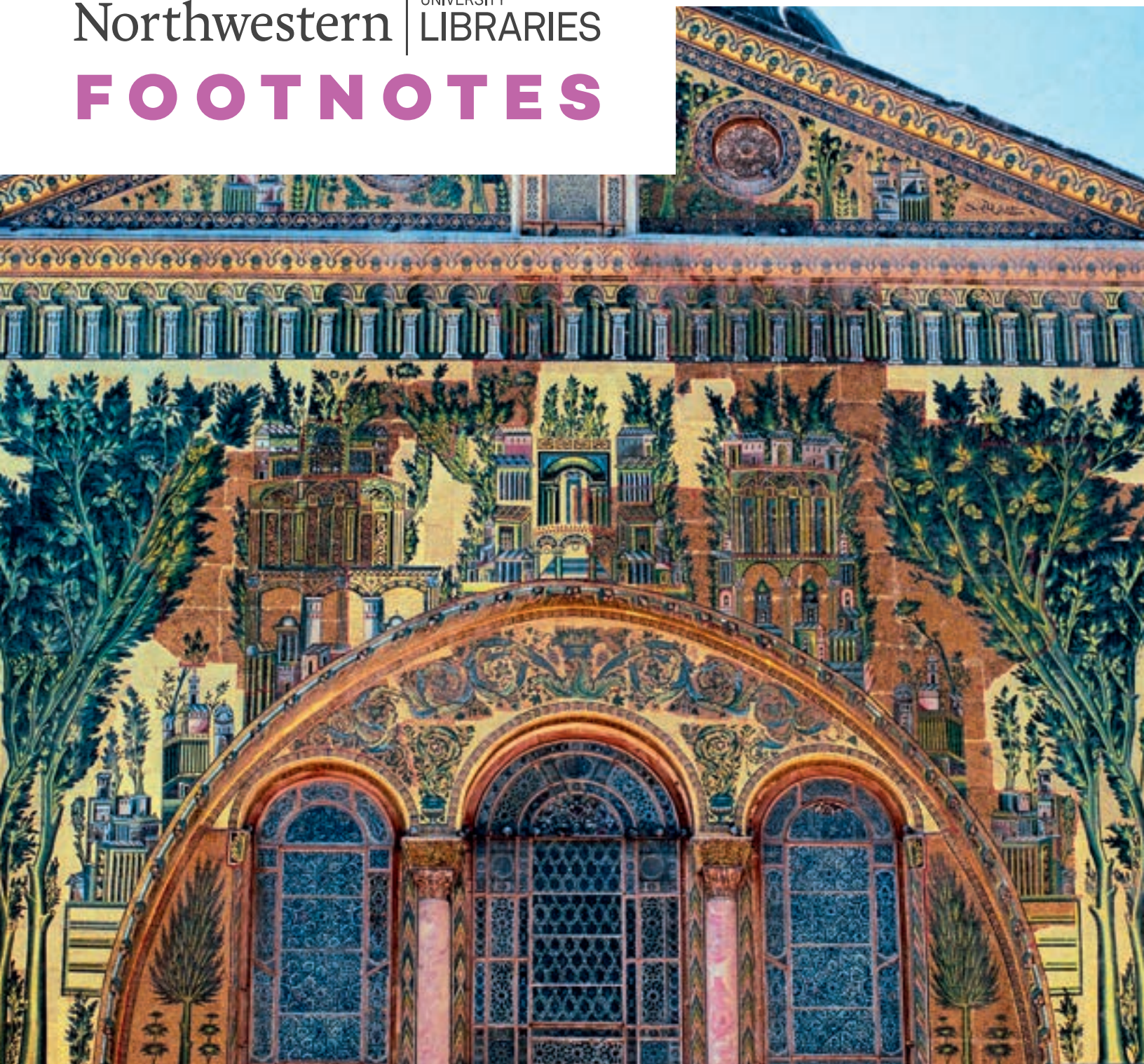


Northwestern | UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES  
**FOOTNOTES**



SPRING 2021 VOLUME 46 NUMBER 1



# FOOTNOTES

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Cover: The façade of the Umayyad Mosque, Damascus, Syria (715 AD/96 AH), photographed in 1979 by art history and humanities professor Ann C. Gunter. The image is part of a recently digitized slide collection documenting Gunter’s photographs of buildings and archaeological sites in the Middle East, primarily in Turkey.

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## Dino Robinson honored with Evanston street naming



On April 4, the City of Evanston named a section of Church Street in honor of Dino Robinson, a production manager at Northwestern University Press.

Dubbed a “resident superstar historian” by Press director Parneshia Jones, Robinson is

also the founder and executive director of Shorefront, a nonprofit organization that preserves the Black history of Evanston and neighboring North Shore communities. In that capacity, he has spearheaded historical preservation efforts, established an archive of Black history at the Shorefront Legacy Center, and, most recently, contributed to Evanston’s groundbreaking initiative to offer reparation money to Black residents whose families suffered from decades of discriminatory housing practices.

Fifth Ward alderman Robin Rue Simmons, who worked with Robinson on building the persuasive case for reparations, put forward a city council resolution in January to name the section of Church Street between Hartrey and Grey Avenues, next to Evanston Township High School. In February, the council unanimously approved the resolution to name Morris “Dino” Robinson Jr. Way.

“It is humbling to be recognized by the city for the work I have pioneered over the last 25 years,” Robinson said.

With national media coverage of the Evanston reparations program and honors like the street resolution, Shorefront has seen an uptick in activity, he said, including a recent award from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Robinson will receive his own copy of the street sign, which “I will probably have at home for just a moment,” he said. “Then I am donating it to Shorefront.”

## In memoriam: R. Russell Maylone, 1940–2020



My friend and former boss R. Russell Maylone, curator of Special Collections from 1969 to 2007, died on December 12, 2020. He was 80 years old. Among his notable accomplishments during his tenure at Northwestern were his roles in acquiring the archive of the

Gate Theatre of Dublin, the Joseph Spear Beck Angling Collection, and the Charlotte Moorman Archive.

Russell’s omnivorous curiosity was well suited to the task of building on and expanding a diverse array of rare materials. He had a phenomenal memory for books and facts—and for the faces and names of the people he encountered. He was an appreciator of fine things.

In the 1990s, when I interviewed for a position in Special Collections, Russell gave me a tour of the stacks, pointing out collections and sounding me out via my reactions. He seemed astonished that I’d never heard of Evanstonian Charles Gates Dawes, Calvin Coolidge’s vice president, whose archive resides at the Libraries. I feared I’d blown it and would not get the job; I didn’t know at the time that his astonishment was mostly bluff. I later noticed that this was a rhetorical device of his—to say, for example, “What, you’ve never heard of Charlotte Moorman?” and then proceed with a smile to tell you about who she was and why she was interesting.

Russell was a kind and trusted mentor to me and to the others who worked under him, an unbossy boss who led by generating a familial atmosphere of committed interest to “Spec,” as we fondly called the department.

Russell had an appealing optimism. He believed this trait was a payoff of grace after surviving a near-fatal accident during his college years. All the decades after that, he thought, were a kind of extra gift.

—*Scott Krafft, curator of Special Collections*

**R**ecently, a student came to the Libraries to research US foreign policy. Of particular interest to him were episodes of the PBS news show *Frontline* from the 1980s and '90s. Finding these old episodes wasn't the challenge—the interlibrary loan system easily located a set. But watching them was something else altogether.

The episodes were on VHS tapes. Who has a machine that can play those anymore?

The Marjorie I. Mitchell Multimedia Center does. More than one, in fact—it maintains a whole closet full of VCRs.

The Mitchell Center specializes in delivering recorded content to faculty and students, no matter the format. At a viewing station there, the student was able to do his *Frontline* research employing a medium that hasn't been common since the phrase “Be kind, rewind” was in use.

A brochure for the 1991 inauguration of the Mitchell Center called it “a model facility for the integrated use of

video, computers, and laser discs,” a description that still accurately describes its role—even the bit about laser discs, which can still be found on Mitchell Center shelves and played on Mitchell Center equipment. But the library users of 1991 might have had a hard time imagining the diversity of media now served up by the center: decades' worth of documentaries, foreign language films, microfilmed magazines and newspapers, recorded poetry, music on LPs and CDs, filmed stage productions from opera to Shakespeare, and DVDs of popular TV shows and movies.

Located on the second floor of University Library, the Mitchell Center was originally known as the Listening and Film Center when the building opened in 1970. The location featured the library's film-viewing equipment, classroom spaces, and the Poetry Listening Center, with shelves of poetry books and corresponding recordings.

Over time, the Mitchell Center has been home to every form of contemporary media. At the dawn of

# HERE TO HELP: MITCHELL MULTIMEDIA CENTER





commercial satellite television, for example, the Libraries acquired a dish, according to University architect Kevin Leonard. Suddenly journalism students could sit in the Mitchell Center and watch news broadcasts from markets beyond metropolitan Chicago as well as other live programming previously unavailable.

Today the center is where students and faculty can find almost every kind of recording, whether it's for a film analysis class or a final paper. (Modern popular-entertainment streaming services are too expensive to license, so students are on their own when they want to catch up on the latest Netflix hit series.)

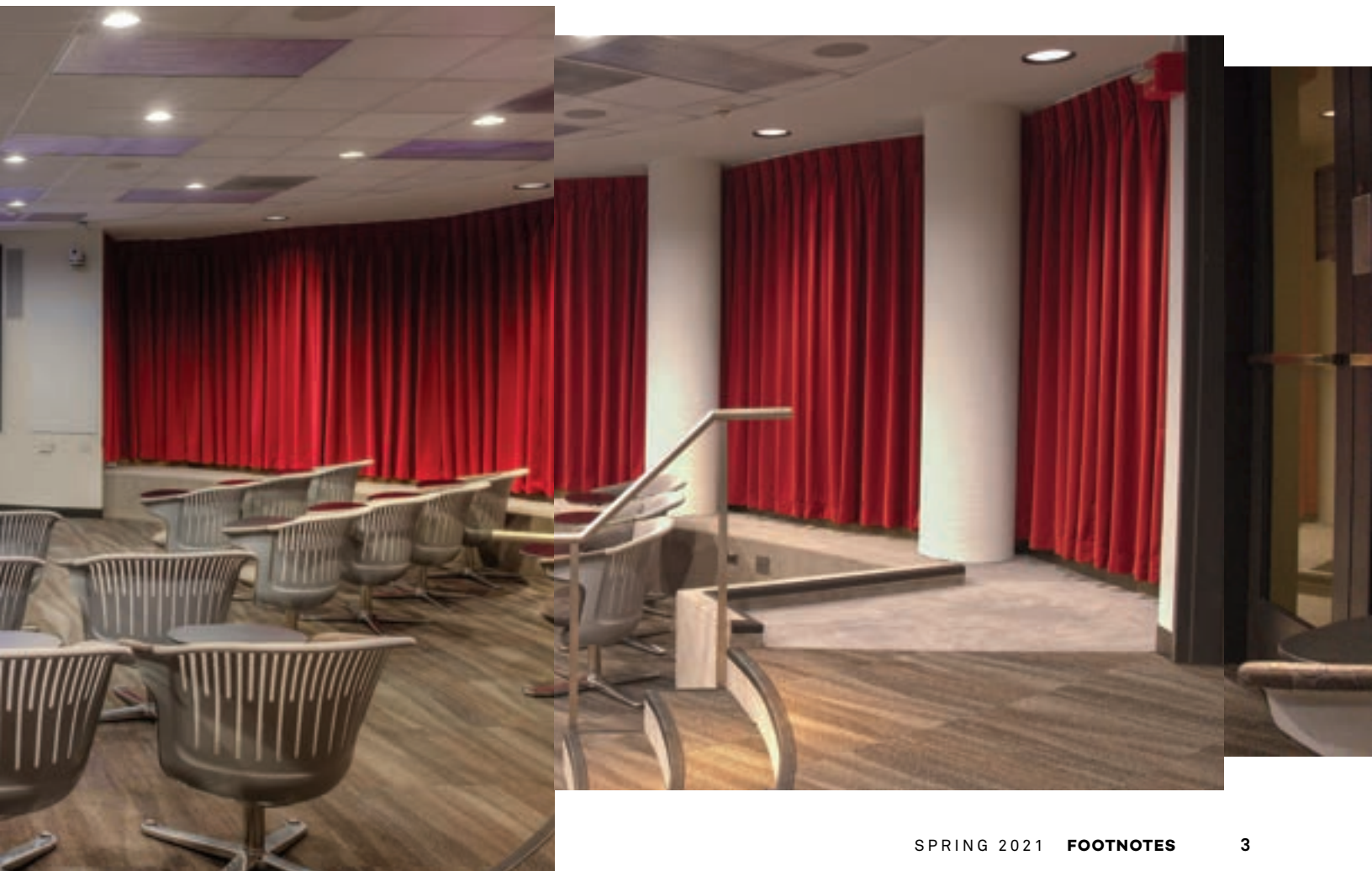
But it's not just about buying, cataloging, or finding essential media for campus, said Natalie Pelster, the librarian who oversees the center. Faculty and students must be able to view the content even if the format is outdated or rare.

"We try to accommodate people's technology needs whenever we can," Pelster said. "If a student checks out a DVD but doesn't have a DVD player, that's no problem;

we can get them an external player that plugs into their computer."

The Mitchell Center is also a hub of spaces that can be used for instruction and group viewings of material. The Forum Room—the round, glass-walled lecture space in the middle of the floor plan—has been recently upgraded for compatibility with modern viewing systems. Where the technology was once analog, it is now entirely digital. Media can be played on a large screen wirelessly from a laptop, and the room boasts robust WiFi so an entire class can use the internet on their computers to view material. The room's formerly fixed seating now consists of rolling chairs that allow the space to be customized for small-group discussions. Nearby, the refurbished Video Theater features a 90-inch screen that can be plugged into a computer to play any digital media.

Today the Mitchell Center ensures the campus community will always stay connected to the media that it finds both essential and entertaining. ■



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

### Vicki Kohn

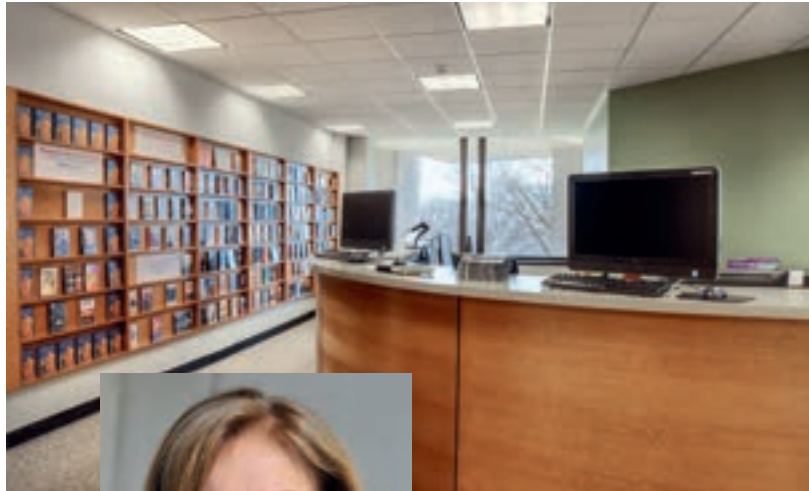
Vicki Kohn ('96 P) has always believed in the magic of media.

"I loved going to the movies as a child, when they showed newsreels beforehand," she said. "You might hear a speech by Eisenhower or see what's going on in the world first-hand. It brought the news to life."

Buoyed by that same fascination with advancements in images and sound, Kohn's mother gifted the funds in 1991 to turn the Listening and Film Center on the second floor of University Library into the Marjorie I. Mitchell Media Center. When Kohn later continued the tradition of supporting the Libraries, she did so in remembrance of the passion she and her mother shared for the role media can play in education.

"It's important for a media center to exist," Kohn said. "It's one thing when something is documented in a book. Maybe you believe it, maybe you don't. But it's harder to disagree with something when you can see it on film."

Kohn, an active philanthropist, is the recipient of the 2021 Deering Family Award (bestowed in a virtual ceremony this year). She recently cochaired a successful fundraiser for the Breast Cancer Research Foundation in Delray Beach, Florida, and is past president of the board of directors for the North Shore



Vicki Kohn, left, and the main service counter of the Marjorie I. Mitchell Multimedia Center on the second floor of University Library.

Auxiliary of Jewish Child and Family Services. The Kohn & Mitchell Family Foundation, her family's grantmaking organization, contributes to a number of organizations including the Bluhm Cardiovascular Institute at Northwestern. She was married to the late Richard D. Kohn, with whom she has two children: David and Valerie ('96 JD).

Kohn looks back on the opening of the Mitchell Center as the beginning of a transformation in how the Libraries were used.

"I remember the wonder on all those faces, people excited that they could come in and have access to all

this new technology," she said. "There was a sense of liveliness there. It brought new enjoyment to learning."

Today the Mitchell Center is where students can find any kind of media to further their research and studies, whether it's a hard-to-find film, a recording on a vanishing format, or a chance encounter with an Eisenhower speech.

"When you can see something for yourself, it stays in your mind," she said. "If you have the curiosity, the right media can pique your interest and maybe lead you to something new that you never expected." ■

# “Best job in the world”

*Retiring research librarian Harriet Lightman looks back on the changes in her field*

Years before the internet, librarians were the original Wikipedia. Because of drunken wagers, of course.

“You’d get questions late on a Friday about the population of an obscure city,” said research librarian Harriet Lightman. “We just knew they were looking this up for a barroom bet.”

Wikipedia largely eliminated that diversion. In fact, the popularization of the internet altered many things about librarianship. As Lightman prepares for her September retirement after a 24-year career at the Libraries, she reflected on how the work of research libraries and librarians has evolved and how the Northwestern community has been served by those changes.

Lightman is retiring as the head of Research and Learning Services, the home of the library specialists who conduct research consultations and classroom instruction, though librarianship was her third career after academic administration and banking. She earned a library and information science degree in 1995 and found her way to Northwestern as a bibliographer overseeing collections for history, philosophy, and

economics—her “dream job.” She has remained a committed subject specialist for the history department since then.

The term *bibliographer* isn’t common in libraries these days. Back in the ’90s, the position managed a large budget to develop the collection for a particular field of study. Bibliographers worked closely with faculty, identified new resources, and bought what was needed.

But libraries—or, rather, the whole world of information—changed. The advent of the internet transformed how people wanted to receive information, resulting in a monumental shift in how librarians met that need. As digital formats emerged, librarians needed new ways to buy and use the new resources; the line at the reference desk was replaced with chat rooms; and the campus community sought more in-person consultation and classroom instruction.

“Some professions pivot on a dime, but libraries change methodically over time. We’ve had to change our expertise,” Lightman said. The changes in librarians’ roles were sometimes tumultuous and scary, but “things have to change. If they stagnate, they die.”

One of Lightman’s proudest accomplishments is helping to found an annual event, starting in 2002, that became known as the Research Resources Forum. A primer for incoming graduate students looking to jump-start their work, it was intended to help demystify the “digital collections” that were just emerging. Today the RRF is an essential outreach effort that connects the library—and its librarians—to students who might otherwise experience digital information overload.

Through all these changes, librarianship has had one constant thread running through it, Lightman said.

“We remain information professionals. We still give people what they need in the best ways we know how,” she said. “It’s the best job in the world.” ■







# HERE TODAY, GONE... NEVER

*RDC staff safeguard  
fragile cultural materials  
for future scholars*







Above, left and center: Glass plates from the Duckworth Archive in their original housing and (below) showing flaking. Above, right: Technician Curt Bozif digitizes materials using one of the Libraries' highly specialized camera systems.

**A**rt history professor Ann Gunter took a lot of photos four decades ago while doing research in the Middle East. Her 2,100 slides captured a moment in time for many archaeological sites and local landmarks, some of which have since been lost to development or war.

In the 1980s this was an important historical record. And in the 2020s?

"As slides, they were almost completely useless," she said. "Without a way to view them and sort through them easily, they might as well have been thrown away."

Gunter, the Bertha and Max Dressler Professor in the Humanities and professor of art history in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, turned to the Libraries' repository and digital curation (RDC) department to digitize (reformat) her slides and add identifying information to make them useful to researchers. The images were reformatted and are now publicly available through the Libraries' Digital Collections portal, searchable by anyone with internet access.

"As digital files, they now have value," Gunter said.

A student doing her senior thesis about a public sculpture in Ankara, Turkey, was able to use Gunter's slides to analyze how the modern built environment reflected changing attitudes about the artwork.

When Gunter brought her project to the attention of librarians, it stood out, said digital projects and outreach librarian Nicole Finzer, because it connected directly to research at Northwestern—a status known as Category A in a prioritization system RDC implemented recently. With so many collections it could be digitizing, RDC had to develop a three-tier system: Category A for research-related work, Category B for materials at risk of deterioration, and Category C for advancing strategic University priorities and other business.

Once a project has been assigned a category, a library committee chooses the projects to be completed year to year. Research needs may top the list, but if the material is on obsolete media or is in danger



The Libraries have digitized more than 1,800 highly flammable nitrate negatives documenting campus life. Above: A 1942 production of *Mr. Popper's Penguins* by the Northwestern-affiliated Children's Theater of Evanston. Right: Students outside Annie May Swift Hall with School of Speech dean Ralph "Cy" Dennis (reclining), circa late 1930s.



of breaking down, the project gets accelerated, Finzer said.

"If it has a pressing preservation need, which is often the case with things like glass negatives or audiovisual materials, it gets an immediate boost," she said. "Some materials need attention before their playback hardware is obsolete or they degrade."

### **Disappearing acts**

The E. H. Duckworth Photographic Archive is an important piece of history in the Herskovits Library of African Studies. Among its 5,000 photos are several hundred glass negatives of everyday African life in the early 20th century. With this now rare medium, negative images are affixed to glass using a thin emulsion. Over time, the glass cracks and the emulsion flakes, risking the permanent loss of the image.

RDC determined that the collection was in imminent danger, Finzer said. But the work was completed in time to preserve all of the images. "Now these digital copies can live on in our repository, and the negatives need never be handled again." Specialists were even able to adjust the exposure on many images so that washed-out areas could be seen clearly for the first time.

A 2020 inventory of all of the Libraries' audiovisual materials revealed nearly 31,000 items on at-risk media, including VHS tapes, film reels, and audiocassettes. That's a daunting number, but not everything needs to be placed in the digitization queue, said Dan Zellner, a production coordinator for RDC. If other libraries have copies, the material may be assigned a lower priority.

To find out where the true rarities lie, librarians used the analytical tool GreenGlass to find materials that are not duplicated elsewhere. The resulting report





The ruins of Myra, Turkey, a Byzantine city, photographed in 1984. From an archive of slides digitized for art history and humanities professor Ann Gunter.

zeroed in on a set of VHS tapes that captured a 1980 interview between the Herskovits Library's then curator Hans Panofsky and anthropologist St. Clair Drake, one of the earliest proponents of establishing African American studies programs. The interview, conducted when Drake was visiting Northwestern, is one of a kind.

"It was so exciting to find that," Zellner said. "It felt good to know we were going to preserve that for posterity."

Though grainy and shot in amateur style, the interview captures Drake in his late 60s reflecting on the study of Black history in America and at Northwestern, as well as his own career.

"We can never anticipate how people will use materials we've reformatted," Finzer said. "But we know that unless we do this work, segments of our history will just fade away." ■

### How faculty can get the most from RDC

The repository and digital curation team typically digitizes materials already held by the Libraries, but faculty projects, like Gunter's slides, represent a chance to further campus research and keep materials from being lost to time, said digital projects and outreach librarian Nicole Finzer.

"If a collection would be used, we want to work with faculty to make it happen," she said.

It can be a Herculean effort, though, because all those materials need to be tagged with the relevant information—metadata—to become searchable and for researchers to make sense of what they're seeing.

"It's a big deal for faculty to undertake a project like this," Finzer said. "We can't do all of the organizing for them. They need to come in with the ability to supply the metadata."

For more information about working with RDC, contact Finzer at 847-467-1666 or [n-finzer@northwestern.edu](mailto:n-finzer@northwestern.edu).

# Parneshia Jones rises to the occasion

*The new head of Northwestern University Press reflects on academic publishing*



Before being named director of Northwestern University Press last fall, Parneshia Jones spent two decades at the 128-year-old institution—a poet at a publisher famous for poetry. Amid her various marketing and acquisitions roles, she developed a catalog of award-winning books including Nikky Finney’s *Head Off & Split* (National Book Award), Patricia Smith’s *Incendiary Art: Poems* (Los Angeles Times Book Prize, Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award), and numerous others.

She even brought five nationally acclaimed poets together for 2017’s Press-sponsored “Black Women as Giants: A Celebration of Gwendolyn Brooks” event, a roundtable dialogue in honor of the Chicago poet and first Black Pulitzer Prize recipient. Jones is an accomplished poet herself; her Midwest Book Award-winning volume *Vessel: Poems* was selected by *O, The Oprah Magazine* as one of “12 New Books of Poetry to Savor” in 2015.

*Footnotes* asked Jones to tell us about her vision for the Press and the world of letters.

**The Press specializes in a broad array of scholarly fields. Can we expect to see any shifts in emphasis during your tenure?**

We are all in a world of major shifts right now. The Press, with its small but mighty staff, is no stranger to shifts, even on a good day. Throw in a global pandemic and widespread social movements, and NUP is doing what it has always done best—evolve and rise to the occasion. We aim to work within the shifts by bringing forth what we’re known for. Over the last few years, we made efforts to add new areas, subjects, and series to respond to the moment of now. Right now, I think bringing our anchor areas of publication to the forefront and putting those anchors in conversations is what will showcase our commitment to our history. That will also allow us to be better situated on the front lines of current and future conversations in the humanities. Personally, I love it when our books and subjects talk to each other, when titles in seemingly disparate fields cohere as a reflection of Northwestern and its mission. “Reinvent the wheel if you must, but adjust and spruce up the wheels that have carried you thus far” is a motto of mine.



**The events of 2020 cast a bright light on institutional racism in America. Can the Press play a role in furthering social justice?**

This is an interesting question. I feel that I have been asked to be part of every diversity and inclusion committee or discussion you can think of. What is important for the Press to make clear to the wider world is that we have *always* done this work to a certain degree. Are we growing, learning, and evolving in light of so many movements occurring now? Absolutely. But again, it's about using your strengths—what we've always committed to, like excellence in humanities publishing and scholarship—and applying that to

*There is a hunger to hear many voices, and we have remained committed to finding and giving publishing voice to as many as possible.*

widen the outreach not only for the Press, but for our authors and readers. Discover what it means to live on the margins as a Los Angeles Chicana artist in the rich narrative novel *Art Is Everything* by Yxta Maya Murray. Read *New Perspectives on the Black Intellectual Tradition* by some of the leading and up-and-coming scholars in Black studies. Then explore what it means to be a mature woman seeking a life of purpose and meaning through work, family, and relationships while facing ageism and invisibility within

popular culture in Michelle Weldon's *Act Like You're Having a Good Time*.

There is a hunger to hear many voices, and we have remained committed to finding and giving publishing voice to as many as possible.

**Has the pandemic presented new difficulties for academic publishing? Or are university presses immune to this sort of crisis?**

The pandemic has no doubt caused an uncharted course in survival for our business. Publishers, bookstores, and authors have had to shift the thinking about how to put a book out into the world, in addition to how to sustain that when everything around us has taken a devas-

tating hit. I am grateful that NUP continues to weather this storm. Moving operations remotely, keeping books on track (every NUP book published remained on schedule), coordinating events entirely virtually, and really losing the essential in-person parts of our business have been difficult. However, there have been some wonderful ironies with more direct-to-customer interaction, such as author events that have become virtual. Those events may have lost their in-person value, but now people from all over the world

can attend. No one has immunity from this shift, but we are learning to live and publish within it. I encourage people to support their local bookstores and publishers because what we offer is helping keep people's humanity intact during this time.

**You're reportedly one of only two Black women currently leading a university press (along with Stephanie Williams at Wayne State University). Is this a sign of the field becoming more inclusive? Or does it have a ways to go?**

I am of two minds about this question. Yes, the industry is changing to be more inclusive. However, how we support these changes, how we understand the need for the changes, and how to sustain them need to be at the forefront of these conversations. In addition to more editors and authors of color entering the arena, we are learning that we need to start from the roots with these changes—not only to address a longtime historic blind spot, but to actually make it a normalcy instead of an advocacy. Something we're especially proud to be part of is a Mellon Foundation-funded fellowship that provides full-time, real-world experience to young people of color who are interested in scholarly publishing. ■



## A \$250 textbook that costs students nothing

*Faculty collaborate to save big money for hundreds of undergraduates*

Thanks to a recent grant funded in part by University Libraries, a cross-campus team of faculty rewrote and reimagined a suite of course materials that—with a price tag of \$0—will save the Northwestern student body tens of thousands of dollars a year.

A team of nine instructors from the McCormick School of Engineering and the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences used a \$10,000 open educational resource (OER) grant to revise digital materials that serve as the textbook for the jointly taught Design Thinking and Communication (DTC) course that every McCormick undergraduate takes. The class gives teams of students a real-world design challenge and

teaches them problem solving, technical writing, and teamwork.

For years, DTC instructors used a homegrown collection of reading materials and workbook exercises that eventually became outdated and that some students found irrelevant. It was time for a refresh, said Lisa Del Torto, a professor in Weinberg’s Cook Family Writing Program.

“We did benchmarking against other institutions and found that some used solutions like ours,” she said. “Then we looked at commercial textbooks and found a lot that could have been excellent, but they would add course costs of anywhere from \$75 to \$250 per student.”

With 500 students a year taking DTC, that’s potentially tens of thousands of dollars the instructors wanted to save. This was a challenge tailor-made for the OER grant.

“This was by far the biggest project we’ve ever reviewed,” said librarian Lauren McKeen McDonald, a member of the OER grant committee. “It was clear this would impact the largest number of students of any grant we’ve given yet.”

In the case of the DTC course, the grant funded faculty work last summer to ready a pilot suite of materials for the fall cohort. The work was varied, including updating reading materials, recording new instructional videos, and designing



link-filled digital syllabus pages—“modules” in Canvas, the online course management system. Canvas integrates digital materials seamlessly; students can log in, check the week’s syllabus, and find all the text, videos, and workbook pages they need in one spot.

Once the new materials are finalized, the collection will be pulled together to create a web version of the text, which can be easily shared with students and faculty from other universities to use and adapt for their own classes—all at no cost, with no restrictions.

As just one example of the kinds of materials that can be updated regularly, instructors created new modules to coach students on self-reflection skills that can improve their teams’ success, said Michele Zugnoni, a Cook Family Writing

Program professor. Then they created video clips of former DTC students talking about what makes a successful team and how to handle conflict.

“That’s advice that enables team building because it is based on things former students have said,” Zugnoni said. “The more we get to know our students, the more we can respond and revise.”

Though instructors had created the original materials years ago, the grant was essential for ensuring the update was timely and thorough, said Alex Birdwell, an engineering professor in McCormick’s Segal Design Institute.

“There are 30 different instructors for DTC, so there isn’t one person who can say, ‘This is my class,’” he said. “This is too big for just one or two people to do by themselves.” ■



Opposite and above: An OER grant funded development of a free suite of learning materials for students taking the Design Thinking and Communication course.

## What are OER grants?

Open educational resources are textbooks, websites, syllabi, and even lesson plans that are free to access and share with few restrictions.

Northwestern’s OER grant program is funded by the associate provost for undergraduate education and the Libraries to encourage faculty to devise alternatives to traditional textbooks and help reduce the costs of a college education.

The grants are just one aspect of Affordable Instructional Resources, a collaboration between the Office of the Provost, University Libraries, Northwestern Information Technology, the Northwestern Bookstore, and the Faculty Senate. AIR promotes campus services such as library course reserves and initiatives like OER that increase access to and affordability of learning materials.

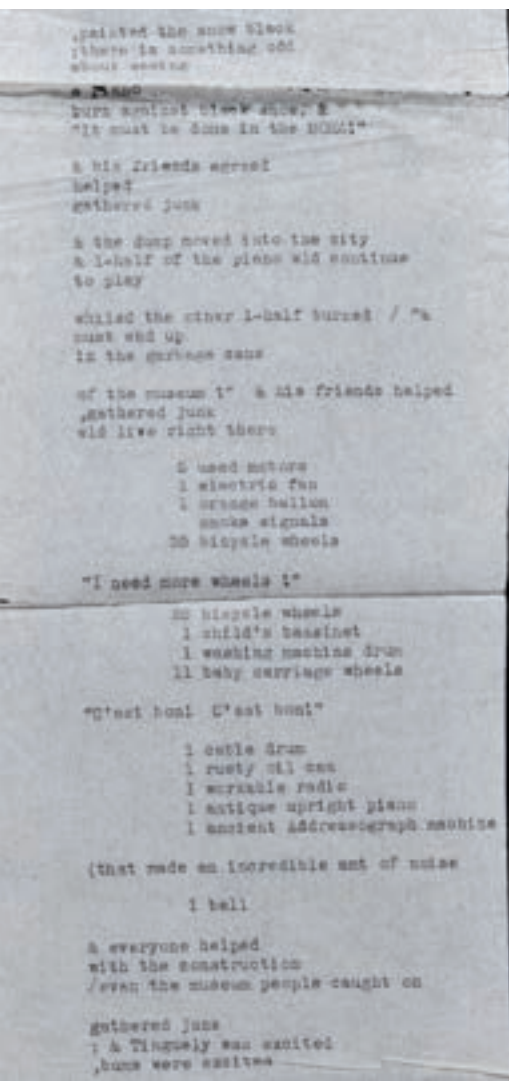
The grant for the Design Thinking and Communication course materials was given to a team of faculty who teach the two-quarter course each year: McCormick faculty Stacy Benjamin, Alex Birdwell, Emma DeCosta, and Kiki Zissimopoulos and Weinberg faculty Lisa Del Torto, Megan Geigner, Kaara Kallen, Laura Pigozzi, and Michele Zugnoni.

# FOOTNOTES

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## Ode upon a commode?

One of the more unusual materials in the Libraries' John Cage Collection is this strip of toilet paper, sent to the composer by poet Ed Baker in 1972. The 54-inch length of tissue bears a typed poem, a handwritten note from Baker to Cage, and these instructions: "The piece is to be re-composed on a (continuous) roll of toilet paper w/no adjustment being made to the paper as it flows through the typewriter."

To preserve the piece, chief conservator Susan Russick wrapped the tissue in Mylar and rolled it like a bolt of fabric, allowing the viewer to unfurl the poem without tearing it. Librarians digitized the toilet paper as an added precaution.

