I write this in the unusually dry July haze of a Washington summer. As we move gently toward August, staff across the Institution are taking vacations or going out to do field research, while the Libraries’ reference staff direct and train the crowds of summer interns and graduate students who flock here every summer. Yes, we are an educational organization, and for a short time, summer interns glory in their views of what really goes on behind the scenes. Meanwhile, Libraries staff have been finishing up our strategic plan which will undergird our efforts for the coming years and inspire us to move forward to meet future challenges. We are imbued with the notion that 20 percent of our energies are devoted to keeping the wheels of our traditional services and operations running while 80% of our efforts are focused on retooling ourselves to meet the information needs of tomorrow’s digitally savvy users. We see a future in which we:

- Create a compelling environment for connecting, collaborating and exploring across disciplines and information boundaries
- Enhance and ease the discovery of information in our collections for Smithsonian scholars, researchers, scientists, and the larger world of learners
- Understand and meet user needs, serving users where they live and work
- Build expertise on information discovery, navigation and management of subject disciplines and modern information tools.

The Super Elto 1927
In this issue of Connect, you’ll start to see us in motion,” tweeting, blogging, and facebooking.” These are manifestations of social networking; will they last or are they more likely to change and make way for new ways of communicating? If they change, we will change with them, but our values will remain steadfast:

- Excellence in process, procedures, and services
- Constant experimentation, innovation, creativity, and flexibility
- Responsibility in our personal actions
- Stewardship of resources and collections
- Collaboration, drawing from and sharing expertise and effort for the common good
- Continuous improvement through ongoing learning for individual and organizational growth

—Nancy E. Gwinn

Libraries 2.0

Smithsonian Libraries is blogging, tweeting and facebooking. It’s a 2.0 world and the Libraries is a part of it. If you’d like to keep up with the libraries collections, events around the National Mall, and beyond:

Subscribe to our blog

The Libraries blog has a new look and a new direction and is full of fun facts and features about the Libraries staff and collections.

You can follow the blog in a number of ways:

Directly, Subscribe or via Email

Become a fan on facebook

The Libraries has a page on Facebook, where you can see updates from our blog, view photos and keep up with our latest lectures and events. Become a fan!

Follow us on twitter

Tweet! The Libraries is on Twitter, where you can access our latest blog entries, view photos from our collections, answer Libraries trivia questions and much more. Follow us!
Margaret Henry Dabney Penick Scholar Award Launched

With a generous donation from Margaret Nuttle, the Libraries has established the Margaret Henry Dabney Penick Resident Scholar Program. The program supports scholarly research into the legacy of Patrick Henry and his political circle, the early political history of Virginia, the history of the American Revolution, founding era ideas and policy-making, as well as science, technology and culture in colonial America and the Early National Period. Mrs. Nuttle is a direct descendant of Patrick Henry; the program is named for her mother. The donation will also fund related public programming and strengthen the Libraries’ collections in these subject areas.

In addition to their research, Penick Scholars will be invited to give at least one public lecture and to assist the Libraries in planning a scholarly program and/or exhibition related to their work. The award is for a nine-month period and carries a stipend of $43,000.

For details of the program, send an email to silresidentscholars@si.edu or write to:

Smithsonian Institution Libraries
Resident Scholar Programs
P.O. Box 37012
NMAH 1041 MRC 672
Washington, DC
20013-7012
Creating Products from Libraries Collections

Journal des dames et de modes

Although you may be familiar with the gift shop note cards and calendars bearing Libraries images, did you know that you can buy a leather chair inspired by National Museum of American History Library trade literature or a rug based on designs found in the Dibner Library? By working with the Smithsonian Enterprises’ Product Development and Licensing (PD&L) team, the Libraries has had the opportunity to collaborate with vendors on a wide variety of product lines—including fireplace accessories from Pilgrim Hearth and Lenox figurines.

How does an image become a product?

PD&L staff develop relationships with vendors that they feel will uphold the integrity of the Smithsonian brand and often invite product designers to visit the Institution, giving them an opportunity to find further inspiration and explore the hidden treasures in our collections.

For Libraries material, this could mean poring over a table full of trade literature or viewing rare botanical titles in the Cullman Library. The designers come armed with digital cameras to quickly capture illustrations that catch the eye. Designers then use these images to create items that replicate their patterns and features or are just based on their general style. There are multiple review stages in product design, where both PD&L and the contributing unit have the opportunity to approve the designs, accompanying description and even promotional materials. For all products based on material found in Libraries’ collections, the Libraries receive a portion of the profits from their sale.

What makes a good product?

Often, vendors will approach the Smithsonian with a product line already in mind. They will consider what is commercially viable and how the line will work with their existing products. Product Development and Licensing pursues products that showcase the Smithsonian’s unique collections in a quality product. According to Carol Leblanc, Director of New Business Development and Licensing for Smithsonian Business Ventures, the main goal is to ensure that “every product, in its own way, strives to offer the public another means of learning in an enjoyable, meaningful and authentic way; enhances the value of the Smithsonian name, and provides an opportunity to significantly increase the financial resources of the Smithsonian Institution.”

In June, the PD&L team launched the first official Smithsonian store on CafePress.com. If you’re not familiar with Cafe Press, it’s an online shop that sells user-generated products such as t-shirts, mugs, notebooks and much more. Among the debut collections in the Smithsonian’s store is a selection of seed catalog art from the Libraries’ very own trade literature collection in the National Museum of American History Library. You can buy a variety of products featuring our popular catalog covers—perhaps a tote bag decorated with a quaint Peter Henderson & Co illustration? You can even purchase merchandise with the Smithsonian Libraries logo! How about sporting your Libraries pride with a trendy water bottle? Check out the entire line of Smithsonian wares at Cafe Press! The Libraries receives a portion of the proceeds from all items featuring our images. —Erin Clements Rushing
The increasing availability of digital information forces self reflection on the part of librarians. What is the necessity of a medium between users and the information itself?

In the Warren M. Robbins Library of African Art, head librarian Janet Stanley cheerfully brushes aside the notion that librarians will soon come to be replaced by digital equivalents, and with good reason. The diverse nature of her responsibilities shows true reference librarians to be indispensable parts of their discipline, rather than passive conduits between users and information.

For instance, Stanley spends considerable effort in helping laypeople find information about previously anonymous pieces of art they have in their homes, which she affectionately terms “the antiques roadshow request.” One inquiry made by a woman from New York in October 2006—for the painter of a portrait allegedly given to her father in the 1940s by the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie—highlights the kind of detective work that can go into solving such riddles of family lore.

Of course, Stanley is also devoted to aiding scholarly work, in which case the breadth of her knowledge is especially useful to researchers moving outside of their areas of expertise. Such broad familiarity with the different subdisciplines that form the field of African art is the product of Stanley’s years of experience—at the Warren M. Robbins Library of African Art for 30 years, and a librarian for nine years before that—during which time she has helped build up the most impressive national collection in this field. Sometimes, the same graduate student whom she helped edit a research proposal will donate materials to the library’s collection years later. Such longitudinal involvement in the careers of scholars epitomizes what she calls the “gatekeeper function” of the reference librarian: she introduces people to the field and they later help keep her current.

In some ways, the fact that a simple Google query on African art frequently cues users to her library sums up the place of the reference librarian in a digital age: the Google search is insufficient on its own, but leads an inquiring mind to someone who can help.

Stanley has kept up with the times by putting up web bibliographies designed to introduce inquiring laypeople and unfamiliar scholars to basic texts in the different sub-disciplines of the field, and selectively indexing books and chapters—especially, rare African imprints that cannot be found on digitized collections such as JSTOR—that she knows are helpful to her users.

—Kannan Mahadevan

praise from library users

I wanted to write and thank you for all of the assistance you offered me during my recent visit . . . I completed a considerable amount of work on my fall course, “African Expressive Culture as History”. . . . I am tremendously grateful for your generosity and hospitality. Hopefully, I’ll make it back to the Library in the near future—Nate Plageman, Wake Forest University

I told you that you were a star! Fantastico, really . . . You have done a wonderful job and I am eternally grateful. I can now do some useful research on Ewe figurines.—Herbert Roese, England

Have I said that you are “amazing?” If I haven’t, then know you that you are! . . . I’m equally dumbfounded and thankful, awed and cowed by your research prowess. Now, as I just explained, urged, and even exhorted, you really should write up a short piece on this, addressing the complexities of non-attribution . . . detailing your search methodology—Gregory Rutledge, University of Nebraska
Dibner Library Endowment Created

Since 1976, the Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology has preserved and promoted the generous gift of the Burndy Library and its founder, collector Bern Dibner, of 10,000 rare and precious volumes and 1,600 manuscript groups. This collection has grown in breadth and depth to form one of the cornerstones of the Smithsonian Libraries' collections.

Ever since, the Dibner family personally and through The Dibner Fund has generously supported the Dibner Library and its programs including the Dibner Library Resident Scholar Program. Now Frances K. Dibner has established an endowment for the Library to ensure it will continue to inspire historians, researchers, and librarians to explore the scientific roots of our civilization and trace the technological developments that have shaped the world as we know it today.

Additional donations to the Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology endowment are welcome.

Contact Nancy E. Gwinn, Director, at gwinnn@si.edu for further information. —Nancy Gwinn

09/28/2009
Caldwell & Company Digital Archive Now Available

Margaret Caldwell & her mother, Mrs. Henry B. Caldwell

On Saturday, February 28, 2009, the Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum Library celebrated the release of the new online Caldwell database to feature over 35,000 photographs and drawings from the Caldwell & Company archive collection.

Margaret Caldwell, great granddaughter of E.F. Caldwell, spoke about the firm’s origins, craftsmanship, clients and importance in the decorative arts world. She showed many photos and drawings from the collection on the screen, and there were several originals on display.

Jennifer Cohlman gave an overview of the digital project and a live demonstration of the Caldwell database. Over 100 people enjoyed the talk, viewed the displays and celebrated at a reception following the presentation.

The project received funding from the Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO). —Jennifer Cohlman

09/27/2009
Recent Events: William Noel and Singer/Audubon

William Noel: Deciphering Archimedes Palimpsest and Creating Digital Manuscripts

In the first in a series of speakers to address the Institution on the future of libraries, museums and archives in a digital world, the Libraries, the Smithsonian Institution Archives and the Smithsonian Chief Information Officer presented William Noel, Curator of Manuscripts and Rare Books at the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

His lecture concerned the conservation, imaging and scholarship of the Archimedes Palimpsest, a privately owned codex that has been revealed to contain unique texts not only of Archimedes of Syracuse, but also of Hyperides, an Athenian orator from the fourth century BC and of Alexander of Aphrodisias on Aristotle’s categories. Dr. Noel discussed the history of the book and the project, its digital presentation on the web, and other manuscript imaging projects currently underway at the Walters Art Museum.

Afternoon Tea with Audubon

On June 10, 70 guests gathered for an event celebrating the gift of a double-elephant folio facsimile of John J. Audubon’s Birds of America to the Libraries. This impressive and valuable work, published by Robert E. Abrams of Abbeville Press and donated by photographer Jonathan Singer, resides in the Joseph F. Cullman 3rd Library of Natural History in the National Museum of Natural History. In addition to a private viewing of this rare book, guests also got an up-close look at Jonathan Singer’s famed Botanica Magnifica and the original printed folio of Audubon’s Birds of America, the size of which inspired Singer’s work.

Singer, Smithsonian research scientist and botany curator John Kress, and the Libraries’ own Leslie Overstreet, Daria Wingreen-Mason and Diane Shaw were on-hand to display the three double-elephant folios and answer questions.—Liz O’Brien
Mary Augusta Thomas

The Libraries is pleased to announce Mary Augusta Thomas as the new Deputy Director. Thomas previously served as Associate Director for Reader Services and Strategic Planning, a post she held since 2002. Her new responsibilities include directing the operation of the Libraries’ twenty branches in the Smithsonian’s museum and research centers, working with Smithsonian staff on library planning issues to support the mission of the Smithsonian, and directing the administrative services department for the Libraries. Thomas has demonstrated outstanding leadership in her 33 years of employment at the Smithsonian Institution.

She has served on numerous pan-institutional groups and is currently a member of the Smithsonian Collections Advisory Committee. She recently completed the Smithsonian’s first two-year Executive Leadership Development Program. Thomas’s publications include An Odyssey in Print: Adventures in Smithsonian Libraries (Smithsonian Press, 2002), Information Imagineering (ALA Editions, 1998) and “Publishing for LAMA Workshop” (1997).

A Virginia native, Thomas holds an artium baccalaureates degree cum laude in medieval studies from Mount Holyoke College. She completed a research year in medieval studies at the University of York, in England and earned her master’s of library sciences from The Catholic University of America. Her honors include the Distinguished Service Award from the District of Columbia Library Association (2001) and the Smithsonian Institution Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Equal Employment Opportunity (1999).—Liz O’Brien

09/25/2009

Martin Kalfatovic

Martin Kalfatovic with Smithsonian Secretary G. Wayne Clough, during a tour of the Libraries Pennsy Drive facility in December 2008

Newly appointed Assistant Director for Digital Services Martin Kalfatovic began his career at the Libraries as the interlibrary loan technician at the Smithsonian American Art Museum & National Portrait Gallery Library. After receiving his graduate degree from The Catholic University of America, he was promoted to Reference Librarian. In 1993 he became the Libraries’ first Information Access Coordinator, managing electronic resources and outreach. With the formation of the Information Systems Division in 1997, he took over all responsibilities for the growing Libraries web presence. The importance of the web to the Libraries was formalized in 1999 with the creation of the New Media Office under Martin’s leadership. Since that time, he has taken on additional pan-Institutional responsibilities and serves as a valued member of Smithsonian’s technology community. He is the deputy program manager of the Biodiversity Heritage Library, which aims to digitize and make openly accessible the historical literature that supports biodiversity research. Active in the library profession, he is the author of Creating a Winning Online Exhibition, (American Library Association, 2002), as well as other books and articles, and is a regular speaker at library and technology conferences.—Liz O’Brien

09/24/2009
Hop on Board!

Board members Kay Dryden and Fred Ward look on as conservation technician Phuong Pham demonstrates book preservation techniques.

On June 25-26, the Libraries Advisory Board held its summer session at the Smithsonian Institution Service Center (SISC), located in Landover, Md. This new Smithsonian building houses the Libraries Book Conservation laboratory, Digital Imaging Center and off-Mall book collections and includes state-of-the-art meeting rooms. Eleven Board members, hailing from California to southern Virginia to New York, traveled to Maryland for two days of meetings at the facility.

The Board was treated to a tour of the expansive facility where they met Libraries’ Phuong Pham and Vanessa Haight, who demonstrated book preservation techniques and answered questions regarding binding repair, mold susceptibility, and custom-made cardboard enclosures used for stabilizing fragile items. David Holbert was on hand for a briefing of the imaging center, which houses high-tech digital scanning cameras to create web-ready images of the Libraries special collections. Mike Hardy finished up the tour in the Libraries Research Annex, which holds thousands of items gently placed on movable electronic shelves. The Board then strolled through the Office of Exhibits Central, where Smithsonian staff envisions, creates, and builds exhibits for all museum locations.

The Smithsonian Institution Libraries Advisory Board holds three sessions per year. We anticipate the next meetings to be in New York City in October 2009.—Liz O’Brien