Holiday time is a good time to celebrate accomplishments with an invigorated spirit for moving ahead in the new year. The Smithsonian Libraries has much to be thankful for. It was a splendid year for development, with SIL receiving over $4,700,000 in new funds. Most supports the Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) digitizing project, which is administered by the Smithsonian Libraries on behalf of the BHL Consortium. Other funds support our individual branch libraries, general acquisitions, preservation and technology. We are grateful to our Libraries Board members and other supporters for their kindness and generosity.

We will soon be implementing some new services relating to new styles of social networking. Along with active wikis, we’ll be launching a Libraries blog. We are also planning to begin a formal process of strategic planning to ensure that we are aligned both with the Smithsonian’s goals and objectives under our new leadership while we continue to transform our services.

2008 marks the 40th Anniversary since Smithsonian Secretary S. Dillon Ripley created the Smithsonian Institution Libraries as its own administrative unit with a Director. It’s the ruby anniversary, so red is our color and we have an exciting new theme that will begin to appear on all our publications. Many events will mark the year, including an exhibition opening, a rededication of the Dibner Library when it reopens, a birthday party, a speaker series, and a gala at the Donald W. Reynolds Center.

My staff and I wish you all a happy holiday season. See you in 2008!
The Dibner Library facility has been closed, with the collection secured under plastic wrap to safeguard against the work in the ceiling of the stacks. Kirsten van der Veen, who usually works in the Dibner Library, has been relocated to the Joseph F. Cullman 3rd Library of Natural History. But together with the staff of the Cullman Library, she has been donning hard hat and safety shoes to retrieve well over 1,000 books and manuscripts from the Dibner Library stacks for researchers to use in the Cullman Library reading room. The work has meant both packing boxes of books for transport or hand-carrying them in a pinch.

Staff of the American History Museum Library have fielded numerous queries over the year. Recently, for example, Chris Cottrill and Mike Hardy assisted NMAH curator Peggy Kidwell to verify popular culture information related to the 1957 Sputnik satellite launch and a recording of a doo-wop song in the NMAH collection, “Hey Maryann,” by the group The Sputniks. Peggy had two other Sputnik songs she wanted to verify as authentic - Billy Mitchell and the Basie-ites, “Satellite Beep Bop” (1958?), and “Rock-Krister, Sputnik Rock and Roll” (ca 1958/1965), by the Swedish rock musician Rock-Krister. A web search confirmed the existence and release date of these songs.

An illustration of a Dietzgen drawing board from the Libraries’ trade literature collection is included in the new publication, Tools of the Imagination: drawing tools and technologies from the 18th century to the present.

The book accompanies an exhibition of drafting and drawing instruments at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. Library staff Jim Roan and Mary Ann Wilson helped researcher Barbara Ahlberg locate materials from the NMAH Library’s trade literature collection.
This year’s Libraries’ Spencer Baird Society Dinner, an annual gala designed to increase awareness and financial support for the Libraries, guaranteed guests a wild time.

The dinner, which was called “An Escape to the Wild Side” with Animal Planet television host, Jeff Corwin, was held at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Zoological Park. Co-Chairs Frank and Betty Quirk and Pam Braden ensured that the event received excellent ticket sales and underwriting from generous sponsors (see list, bottom right.)

Over 200 guests enjoyed a lecture by Corwin followed by a leisurely stroll down the Zoo’s Asia Trail. As guests stopped to watch the fishing cats or the popular red pandas, they sipped cocktails and enjoyed a variety of Asian-themed foods including curry dipping sauces, coconut shrimp, beef skewers with vegetables and panda shaped cookies.

National Zoological Park Director, John Berry, Libraries Director, Nancy E. Gwinn, and Acting...
Secretary, Cristián Samper, visited with guests as they made their way along the trail. The evening ended with a silent auction and dessert at the Giant Panda House.

The proceeds will be used for the acquisition of library materials that support wildlife conservation research at the Zoo.

The Libraries gratefully thank the event’s benefit committee and the many volunteers who worked so hard to make the evening a fantastic escape to the wild side!

Photographs by James DiLoreto.

Clockwise from top left:
Jeff Corwin thrills the audience with a tale.
The crowd enjoys a VIP reception at the Cheetah House.
The Honorable Russell E. Train visits with Jeff Corwin.
Smithsonian Acting Secretary Cristián Samper mingles with guests

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Barbara & Pete Howton, Kingfisher Systems
TRUSCO Capitol Management
Vias Ltd.
Warren M. Robbins Library Works to Increase Endowment

The Warren M. Robbins Library at the National Museum of African Art (NMAFA) is working to increase the size of its new endowment to $100,000. Last summer, library staff raised just over $60,000 in honor of its 35th anniversary and established the Warren M. Robbins Library Endowment. The fund will help strengthen the financial foundation of the library and help preserve and document the written word of Africa’s artistic heritage.

Now staff hope to increase the size of the endowment and its annual yield in order to purchase more resources and to continue to stay current with new literature in the field. The Warren M. Robbins Library, a branch of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries, is used extensively by researchers, curators, artists, and students from all over the world, and enjoys the reputation of being a premier library in the field of African art.

Silvio Bedini, 1917-2007

When Silvio Bedini retired in 1987 from his position of Deputy Director of the new National Museum of History and Technology (now the National Museum of American History), he stayed on at the Smithsonian with the title of Keeper of Rare Books in the Smithsonian Libraries. This was most apropos, for Silvio had been the person who shepherded the amazing gift to the Institution in 1976 of nearly 10,000 rare volumes and manuscripts of science and technology from Bern Dibner and his Burndy Library. With his appointment, which provided continuing access to the Smithsonian and its libraries, Silvio sustained a productive intellectual life, publishing volume after volume in the history of science and technology. The Libraries’ catalog contains 36 entries, 15 of which were published after his retirement. Silvio faithfully donated every one of his volumes to the Libraries and kept in touch with staff. The Smithsonian Libraries are pleased to establish a fund in his name for purchase of library materials in the history of science and technology, so that future scholars and researchers will continue to benefit from his generous and caring spirit. Donations may be sent to Smithsonian Institution Libraries, PO Box 37012, Washington, D.C. 20013-7012, Attention: Catherine Fraser.
The NMAH trade literature inventory team are featuring a “trade-lit of the month” item – something found in the inventory that merits special attention because it is unusual, appealing, humorous, strange or all of the above. Herewith is our first entry, penned by Cassie Mancer:

How does one serve “a tastier-looking deviled crab and eliminate the hazard of uncleanliness”? Serve it in the McKee Glasbake Crabshell. These realistically crab-shaped baking and serving vessels were part of McKee’s “Glasbake” line of heat resistant glassware.

Other sea-life-themed Glasbake products included a “Crab Seafood Server” in the shape of a lobster and the “Seafood Service Set” with a fish-shaped seafood server and six scallop-shaped “individual baking shells” (Stout 1972: 201).

The Glasbake line was introduced in 1917 (Stout 1972:22). Items manufactured using the Glasbake material also included casseroles, pie plates, loaf pans, coffee makers, and other kitchenware, in competition with Pyrex (Stout 1972:22). Glasbake baking vessels were “guaranteed against breakage in oven [due to heat] for two years from date of purchase” and featured a “Heat-Quick” bottom that promoted even cooking. They were also designed for storing food in the refrigerator.

The Glasbake Crabshell had five advantages over natural crab shell: size conformity (which ensures even baking), “a flatter bottom to prevent toppling”, heat resistance to prevent cracking, sanitation, and a neat appearance. The advertisement includes a recipe for deviled crab baked in the Glasbake Crabshells.

In a competitive process, the Smithsonian Institution (SI) selected Mary Augusta Thomas, Associate Director for Reader Services and Strategic Planning, to be one of the eleven inaugural participants in the new Succession Management and Leadership Development Program. Says writer Daniel Friend in the November issue of The Torch: “This initiative aims to build a deep talent pool within SI of potential leaders who can manage complex organizations, solve problems, delight and educate visitors and be careful custodians of our national treasures and ecological environment.” Thomas directs the operation of the Libraries’ twenty branches and works with staff on library planning issues.

Sources:

- McKee Glass Co., McKee made us look good— McKee Glasbake Crabshell, No Date.
Happy Anniversary Smithsonian Institution Libraries...

The Libraries will celebrate 40 years of service to researchers and the public in 2008. A year of special activities is being planned in conjunction with the Libraries’ 40th anniversary. Stay tuned for details!