Cuba-based Documentarians Give 40-Year Archive of Political Film to Tamiment Library

We envision e-books that link ideas and people—actually foster their own scholarly networks.”

—NYU Press Director Ellen Chodosh on Enhanced Networked Monographs (p. 2)

Notebooks, Once Thought Lost, Trace Development of a Germinal Downtown Writer

96 Year Old Film Mysteriously Turns Up, Needs Expert Preservation. We Get the Call
NYU Press Envisions E-books, Enhanced

NYU Press, founded just under a hundred years ago, is creating new capabilities for scholarly publishing in the digital age. In a collaboration with the Libraries’ Digital Library Technology Services (DLTS), the Press is leading a project, funded by a grant of $786,000 from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, to enable scholars to press to enrich e-books with features that will make reading just the first of many ways to engage with content.

“With each digital project, we see more potential,” says Ellen Chodosh, director of NYU Press. “Now we envision e-books that can link ideas and people—actually foster their own scholarly networks.”

The books will feature multimedia; links to archival content; and semantic tagging to make names, places, and key concepts more findable on the web. Readers will be able to annotate and comment interactively, forming scholarly communities to share ideas around particular works. The three-year project, Enhanced Networked Monographs, is underway.

NYU Press is in the forefront of digital scholarly publishing. Its Keywords print series (keywords.nyu-press.org) collects essays in humanities and social sciences, each focused on a single topic (American Cultural Studies, Asian American Studies, Children’s Literature) and set of debates. Selected essays from each volume are available on the website, where readers can search keywords to find connections within and across the volumes, and find classroom tools and other associated content. In another digital project, Connect-ed Youth and Digital Futures, the Press is a partner with the University of California at Irvine, publishing a book series in print, e-book, and open access digital formats, with funding from the MacArthur Foundation.

Monica McCormick, program officer for digital scholarly publishing for the Libraries and NYU Press, is project coordinator for Enhanced Networked Monographs. Reporting to both the Libraries and the Press for the past eight years, McCormick has overseen a succession of creative and increasingly complex Libraries/Press collaborations.

“The Press has long been one of the most forward-looking academic publishers,” says Dean of Libraries Carol A. Mendel, “and the Libraries is a leader in exploring the interactive media content of the worldwide web. Scholarly authors, too, are seeking new ways to interact with audiences online. Our cover story explains how NYU Libraries and NYU Press are collaborating to create ‘enhanced networked monographs,’ laying the groundwork for new modes of university press publishing. We are grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its commitment to the evolution of scholarly digital resources, and we are excited to continue our role in reinventing the future of collection, preservation, and publication.”

Tim Johnson Named Head of Tamiment Library & Wagner Labor Archives

Tim Johnson, librarian for Africana Studies, Food Studies, and Anthropology since 2005, has been named head of the Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, effective September 1, 2015.

Johnson studies the intersection of communism and the African American community and has authored articles in the journals Science & Society and American Communist History. He holds a master’s degree in African History with a minor in African American History from City College of New York, where his thesis was on the reaction to the Haitian Revolution in the United States, 1791-1804. His MLS is from Case Western Reserve University, his BA from Earlham College in Richmond, IN.

“Tim Johnson is steeped in the history of labor, the civil rights movement, and American communism,” says Dean of Libraries Carol A. Mendel, “and he has been building collections and fostering research at NYU for a decade. His skillful librarianship and deeply held research interests will augment Tamiment Library’s collections and its national reputation.”

Tamiment Library was established more than 50 years ago to archive the documents of left politics and present new scholarship in labor and the Left. Johnson played a role in acquiring the papers of the Communist Party, USA, one of Tamiment’s largest and most significant acquisitions of the past decade. He was an organizer of a 2006 conference that brought Angela Davis and Pete Seeger to Tamiment to honor their friends James and Esther Jackson and explore the impact of the Jacksons’ activism.

Johnson takes over leadership of Tamiment Library from Timothy Naftali, who joins the faculties of the Department of History and the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

Estela and Ernesto Bravo Give Film Archive to NYU

Estela and Ernesto Bravo, known for their close observation of social protest and political movements in Latin America and the Caribbean, have donated their archive of moving image to Tamiment Library: 828 hours of video interviews of Fidel Castro, Nelson Mandela, Angela Davis, Gabriel García Marquez, and many others. The material sheds light on 40 years of politics, foreign policy, and the Cold War as seen from Latin American and Cuban perspectives. Tamiment has undertaken a major project of conservation, preservation, and archival description to open the archive to research. On May 4, Ms. Bravo and her husband and creative partner, Ernesto Bravo, joined current Tamiment Library head Timothy Naftali for a discussion of their work and a screening of newly digitized footage from the Archive. Tamiment will unveil a Bravo website for public access later this year.

A Message from the Dean

The world of networked information is ever changing and always surprising. It demands of research libraries constant creativity and new capacities. Two new grant funded projects featured in this issue perfectly illustrate innovative responses to these demands.

Our new project (page 4) to preserve contemporary composers’ websites and their related original digital files is a natural, if complex, next step in our work of preserving important multimedia content. We are working with composers to select examples of their music and arrange online access to it in ways that meet their needs for intellectual property protection. In the same project, we are working with Internet Archive to develop better methods of capturing the interactive media content of the worldwide web.

Scholarly authors, too, are seeking new ways to interact with audiences online. Our cover story explains how NYU Libraries and NYU Press are collaborating to create “enhanced networked monographs,” laying the groundwork for new modes of university press publishing. We are grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its commitment to the evolution of scholarly digital resources, and we are excited to continue our role in reinventing the future of collection, preservation, and publication.
Project Aims to Archive Music at its Very Best

Kent Underwood, musician, music scholar, and archivist of music, is naturally concerned with the limitations of compressed formats like MP3 for sound recordings. They might be fine for casual listening. But for archiving a composer’s work?

“Compressed formats are no substitute for the master-level recordings that truly reflect a composer’s achievement,” says Underwood, head of the Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media (AFC). To address the issue, the AFC has enlisted several partners in a two-year project, Archiving the Websites of Contemporary Composers, funded by a grant of $480,000 from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The goal is to ensure that websites of musical composers can be collected, preserved, and made discoverable at an audio/visual quality higher than current archiving standards allow.

The team represents a wide variety of expertise. San Francisco-based Digital Library Technology Services (DLTS) will connect the Libraries’ repository and IA’s Archive-It service to ensure that the highest-quality multimedia assets are held according to formal digital preservation standards, and easily discoverable. A researcher from the Tisch School of the Arts’ Moving Image Archiving and Preservation program will work with composers in the project to evaluate their expectations for and satisfaction with their archived sites. The Libraries already have 300 sites in its Archive of Contemporary Composers’ Websites, collected using IA’s Archive-It software. For the new project, April Hatthcock, scholarly communications librarian, and Underwood are working with about 100 composers on agreements to integrate master-level audio and video elements into their websites once the new tools and software are ready for testing.

“Many music websites have enormous research value as primary sources in music history,” says Underwood. “But websites are unstable and vulnerable to loss. This project will give us the tools we need to ensure that Internet-based musical content doesn’t disappear from the cultural record.”

Grad Students Get New Tools for Digital Scholarship

While one student searched the streets of early modern London, another mapped foreclosures in modern-day New York City. Both were mastering mapping software at the Geospatial Analysis Workshop this spring, part of a series of nine Digital Humanities (DH) workshops funded by a grant to GSAS from the Polonsky Foundation and organized by the Libraries’ Digital Scholarship Services (DSS) staff. Daylong sessions focused on copyright issues, bibliographic metadata extraction, core computer skills for humanities researchers, coding, project development, large scale text analysis, and more. Above, Andrew Battista, Librarian for Geospatial Information Systems (GIS), helps a graduate student integrate data sets into GIS software.

Celebrating a Life in Art, a Life as Art

A capacity crowd in Fales Library April 14 was treated to a delightfully idiosyncratic presentation focused on copyright issues, bibliographic metadata extraction, core computer skills for humanities researchers, coding, project development, large scale text analysis, and more. Above, Andrew Battista, Librarian for Geospatial Information Systems (GIS), helps a graduate student integrate data sets into GIS software.

Kathy Acker: Notebooks

Fales Library has acquired 35 notebooks—from novel, essayist, punk poet, and feminist Kathy Acker (1947-1997). They date from 1968, when Acker was a philosophy student at UC-San Diego, to 1974, when she was back in New York City, her birthplace, involved in the St. Mark’s Poetry Project and other art and literary scenes. The notebooks contain not only drafts of Acker’s first six books, but also poems, stories, diaries, and literary experiments related to language and narrative. For many years thought to be lost, the notebooks “are foundational to the Downtown Collection,” says Marvin Taylor, head of Fales Library. “They show Kathy Acker becoming Kathy Acker, one of the leading intellectuals of the avant-garde.”
New Faces

KELLY JOHNSON
LIFE SCIENCES LIBRARIAN

Formerly: Veterinarian, Greater Birmingham Human Society, Birmingham, AL.
Education: MLS, University of Alabama-OVM; Texas A&M University; MS, Zoology, Texas Tech University; BS, Zoology, Auburn University, AL.

Library collections and research services are rapidly evolving, so I’m finding this an exciting time to begin my library career. In my previous profession, I saw firsthand how the changing information landscape affected life sciences research and practice. At NYU I look forward to supporting researchers as they explore new frontiers in the life sciences and to positively influencing students’ research practices and proficiencies as they grow as scientists.

CAITLIN MACKENZIE MANNION
REFERENCE & RESEARCH SERVICES LIBRARIAN, NYU SHANGHAI

Formerly: Adjunct Reference & Instruction Librarian, NYU
Education: MA, Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, NYU; MLSIS, Long Island University, Palmer School; BA, French Language and Literature, and BM, Musicology and Violin, SUNY Potsdam.

A longtime goal of mine has been to work as a librarian abroad, so I am thrilled to be in Shanghai. I recently completed a very fruitful two-year training in the Instructional Services department at the Libraries, helping students become more creative scholars. They often think of research as something that begins after they have selected the topics for their papers. I help students see that if they make libraries, helping students become more creative scholars. They often think of research as something that begins after they have selected the topics for their papers. I help students see that if they make research part of their initial planning, they will be equipped to find more interesting, original topics and develop them more effectively.

Charling Fagan Named Library Director, NYU Shanghai

In the summer of 2013, Charling “Sha” Fagan had just retired from Sarah Lawrence College after 25 years as director of libraries and academic computing. With a recently acquired MPS degree in education, she planned to divide her time between teaching English as a second language and volunteering near her home in Westchester County, NY. Then she had a call from NYU, asking her to help get the library at NYU Shanghai up and running.

“It was an opportunity I could not pass up,” says Fagan. Born in Nanjing and educated in the United States (including an MLS from Case Western Reserve University), she had spent part of 1984 as a library consultant in Shanghai. Curious to see how the city had changed, she accepted the position of interim library director, stepping in as NYU Shanghai opened its doors in August 2013. With her fluency in Mandarin, deep experience in academic librarianship, and enthusiasm for Shanghai, Fagan took to the job. She has now been named director.

“Shanghai today is an amazing metropolis, and NYU is in the heart of it,” says Fagan. “Everyone is working together so purposefully on staff development, collection building, space planning, and other key issues. NYU Shanghai’s mission is to be a comprehensive research institution for the 21st century, and I am very excited to be leading the library’s effort to support that mission as part of NYU’s global network.”

2015 Fales Lecture: The Origins of A,B,C

I’m not a scholar of the alphabet,” said Johanna Drucker of UCLA, delivering this year’s Fales Lecture in English and American Literature. “I study scholarship of the alphabet. Who knew what when?” Throughout history, even now, “there are raging arguments about its origins and development,” Drucker said. She cited the Hellenistic, Biblical, Celtic, Ethiopic, and cabalistic study; Herodotus, Josephus, Cadmus, Chishull, and Fry, among many other sources. A capacity audience in Fales Library on April 1 learned, among much else, that all alphabets except those in China, Japan, and Korea originated in Phoenicia. Some 17th and 18th century scholars believed the alphabet was a gift from God, too wondrous to be manmade. But archaeological discoveries changed the scholarship. Drucker said, “in the nineteenth century, when the earth began to be scraped.” Drucker, a professor of bibliographical studies, ended in today’s digital age, when “all programming languages are based on what the nomads were doing thousands of years ago.” The Fales Lecture is sponsored annually by Fales Library and the English Department.

Houdini Film Reappears

Harry Houdini (1874-1926), the illusionist and stunt performer, was known for his sensational escape acts, but he also had a short lived movie career. His first full length feature, the 1919 silent, The Grim Game, was widely considered his best. Unfortunately, it vanished. But late last year a print and negative of the film turned up in Brooklyn in the collection of an elderly Houdini devotee, and Turner Classic Movies (TCM) bought them.

Then the Libraries’ Barbara Goldsmith Preservation and Conservation Department got a call. Kimberly Tarr, head of the Media Preservation Unit, was asked to inspect the elements, confirm the content, and recommend technical specifications for digital transfer. “This is the type of dream project that first lured me into the field,” says Tarr. “I know how rare an opportunity this was. It’s not every day that a lost silent film is found, let alone one starring a legend.”

TCM plans to broadcast this newly restored film later this year.

Lyrical Labor Works

Poets are often inspired by constraints. Challenge five of them to visit the Tamiment Library & Wagner Labor Archives and compose work based on what they find there, and you will be rewarded with five unique perspectives. Artist, poet, and NYU faculty member Jill Magi did just that. The resulting work, by turns lyrical, political, and humorous, was presented at a March 25 reading in Tamiment by Magi, Robert Fitterman, Paola Javier, Maryam Parhizkar, Elena Rivera, and Johannrodgers. Magi, who teaches expository writing through the study of textiles, as well as poetry, at NYU Abu Dhabi, was a union member for 10 years. Among the work in her 2014 collection, Labor (Nightboat Books), is a series of found poems derived from the indexes of books in the Tamiment collections, including this fragment:

work...
imaginative, leisure and, non-wage, pace of, patterns of, and pleasure, as pleasure, as social self.
The NYU community has lost a cherished, longtime member: University Archivist Nancy Murphy Cricco, who passed away on April 1, 2015. Leading the University Archive for 23 years, Nancy helped NYU shape its public relations, preserve its history, and tell its story compellingly. Nancy was a true citizen of NYU—resource and friend to presidents, provosts, and their administrations, to every school at the Square, and to her colleagues in New York, Abu Dhabi and Shanghai. No exhibition that touched upon University history could happen without Nancy’s guidance and curatorial skill. As a teacher in NYU’s Archives and Public History program and a mentor generous with her time, Nancy helped shape the standards and mission of countless future archivists. Nancy earned a BA in English literature and an MA in American Studies at NYU and was co-author, with Joan Dim, of The Miracle on Washington Square, a history of NYU published in 2001.

Nancy’s colleagues and many close friends throughout NYU will miss her energy, warmth, and wit. The University community sends its deepest condolences to her husband of 42 years, Carl Cricco, their four children and five grandchildren, and their extended family. Nancy’s colleagues are planning a memorial to be held this fall.