



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
LIBRARIES

THE MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA LIBRARIES

continuum



NIMBLE NAVIGATORS

INSIDE:

**THE ELEPHANT
IN THE LIBRARY**

**I SEE DEAD
PEOPLE**

**OVERCOMING
OBSTACLES**

ISSUE 4

FALL 2006

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN
MCKNIGHT PRESIDENTIAL PROFESSOR
Wendy Pradt Lougee

EDITOR
Christopher James

DESIGNER
Mark Fox

PHOTOGRAPHER
Jayme Halbritter

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Timothy Cronin

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Erin George, Christopher James, Wendy
Pradt Lougee, Mary McDiarmid, Jessica
Nordell, John Troyer, Lucy Vilankulu

continuum is the magazine of the
University of Minnesota Libraries,
published three times each year.
It is mailed to a broad readership
that includes audiences both on
and off campus.

continuum supports the mission of the
University Libraries and our community
of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and
friends by providing information that:

- > highlights news, events,
developments, and trends
within the Libraries
- > examines issues facing
libraries globally
- > provides a forum for dialogue
- > connects the many constituencies
of the Libraries

continuum is available in alternative
formats upon request. Contact:
(612) 625-9148 or james052@umn.edu

Send correspondence to:

continuum Editor
University of Minnesota Libraries
499 O. Meredith Wilson Library
309 19th Avenue south
Minneapolis, MN 55455
james052@umn.edu

SHORT STACKS 4
News from the University of Minnesota Libraries

NIMBLE NAVIGATORS 6
*Successful graduate students today must
cope with the vagaries of a complex research
environment. But graduate students have
always traversed a tricky landscape.*

I SEE DEAD PEOPLE 9
*A recent Ph.D. grad reflects on how the
Libraries resurrected his research.*

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARIES 10

A GIFT BORN OF PASSION 12
*A recent gift to University Archives will help
illuminate an influential figure in American history.*

THE ELEPHANT IN THE LIBRARY 13
*Writing a doctoral dissertation can seem like a
task of mythic proportions. Fortunately, the
University Libraries can help turn this 'grueling
slog' into an 'epiphany.'*

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES 14
*Nontraditional graduate students confront
challenges that their traditional counterparts
don't face. As a result, they forge unique
relationships with the University Libraries.*

For more information about the University of Minnesota Libraries
visit www.lib.umn.edu



Printed on recycled paper containing 10% post-consumer waste

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer
© 2006 by the Regents of the University of Minnesota



AUTUMN SONNETS

How can we name it "fall," this slow ascent
 From dawn to dawn, each purer than the last,
 As structure comes back through the golden tent
 And shimmering color floats down to be lost?
 How can we name it "fall," this elevation
 As all our earthly shelter drops away
 And we stand poised as if for revelation
 On the brink of another startling day...

—May Sarton, *Autumn Sonnets*

Many a poet has captured the themes of fall, of autumn. It's the time of year when we celebrate the earth's bounty. It's also a time of transition, heralding a change of seasons. Some see it as a time of new beginnings. All these themes seem appropriate for this issue of *continuum*, which coincides with the beginning of the academic year and focuses on graduate students and the graduate student experience.

Graduate students are a community that represents both new possibilities and new challenges. They often come to the University fresh from their undergraduate years, and honing their research repertoire is essential to their success. The increased engagement within a discipline requires greater facility with the methods and tools of scholarship. And with deeper involvement in research comes expectations for publication and sharing one's knowledge. The process culminates in the dissertation, a significant contribution to scholarship that draws on their years of investment in study.

Our authors in this issue cover a range of topics associated with graduate students, but three themes stand out: graduate students are a uniquely demanding constituency, they reflect critical dimensions of change within disciplines, and they offer an opportunity to explore new models of academic support.

Perhaps no other community challenges the research library more than graduate students. They are often the heaviest users of collections, the most voracious consumers of information, the most demanding for in-depth assistance. And the diversity of graduate programs requires a cadre of librarian experts in all fields to support the rich mix of interests. As the essay "Nimble

Navigators" suggests, the maturation process for these students requires increased sophistication in dealing with relevant documentation in their chosen fields. Target resources could lie buried in archives on campus or in distant collections across the globe. Finding critical data or documenting discoveries can rival finding the proverbial needle in a haystack. Library workshops are useful, but the one-on-one interaction with individual librarians is often critical to understand the resources and to fully exploit relevant tools to aid in the inquiry process.

Change within disciplines can be gradual, as new paradigms or theoretical movements take shape, or jarring when new discoveries prompt more seismic change. Emergent new fields (such as ethnic studies and neuroscience in the last several decades) and new interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary themes have changed the academic landscape significantly.

The impact on the library is equally profound. At a basic level, students and faculty are increasingly drawing on multiple libraries. But the obstacles to scholarship that spans several disciplines are not insignificant. How do we bring coherence to the literature of a new interdisciplinary field when publications are scattered in diverse sources, in physical collections or online archives? Graduate scholarship often brings these trends to the fore, harbingers of evolving emphases within a discipline.

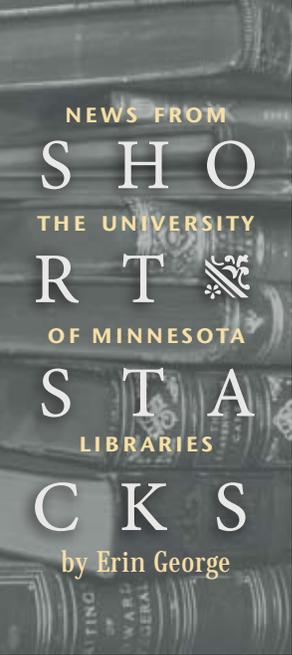
In light of new research emphases and opportunities to exploit new technologies, libraries are challenged to develop services and tools that meet the unique needs of individual disciplines and, increasingly, interdisciplinary research teams. Beginning this fall, our digital library lab is developing a service that will draw on descriptive data about individual interests in order to present a discipline-specific view of library resources to graduate students through the University's web portal. Customized services are clearly an important part of the Libraries' future and the graduate student community will be important partners in these developments.

Graduate students play many roles: as maturing scholars, pioneers in new research frontiers, and potentially agents of change. Their use of and contributions to the scholarly record represented in libraries are important part of their transitions. Jessica Nordell's interview with three award-winning graduate students ("The Elephant in the Library") offers a glimpse of the role the Libraries play, particularly in providing support through the dissertation process, that ultimate rite of passage. But perhaps Katja Gunther offers the best insight of the transformation during graduate school:

"...You change from being a student to being a student and also an expert," she says. "It's an emotional and intellectual transformation."

Wendy Pradt Lougee

WENDY PRADT LOUGEE
UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN and MCKNIGHT PRESIDENTIAL PROFESSOR



A University Treasure Trove

The University Archives serve as the documentary memory of the University of Minnesota. The Archives began in the 1920s when William Watts Folwell, the first University President and Librarian, started collecting University publications and faculty papers. At the time, no policy existed for collecting University and departmental records, and in the 1940s, a formal archival program was established with the University Libraries as the Archives' administrative home. The Archives collect faculty and department papers, photographs, audio-visual materials, campus maps and blueprints, and student and staff organization records. Building on President Folwell's collecting work, the Archives now include over 65,000 publications produced by University groups and units. Departmental collections are complemented by the personal papers of notable University faculty and alumni such as heart surgeon C. Walton Lillehei and Nobel Prize winner Norman Borlaug. In addition to collecting and preserving traditional print materials, the Archives and the Libraries are developing the University Digital Conservancy to manage and preserve the core



digital content of the University. The Archives are open to the University and broader community, and you can learn more at:

<http://special/lib.umn.edu/uarch/>.

The Great Kerlan Get-Together

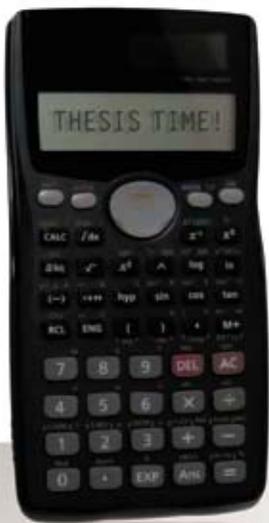
With comments from "I remember that story" to "This was my favorite book" overheard during its run, the *Kerlan Treasures: Gems From the Trove* exhibit enjoyed smashing success at the 2006 Minnesota State Fair. Located in the Fine Arts Building, which hosted over 250,000 visitors during the Fair's 10 days, this University Libraries exhibit combined showcasing the art in the world renowned Kerlan Collection of Children's Literature with highlighting the process art and manuscripts follow to become books. The exhibit included works by local illustrators like Cheng Khee Chee (*Old Turtle*) and Wanda Gag (*Millions of Cats*), as well as nationally known artists and illustrators such as Betsy Bowen, Tomie dePaola, and Gustav Tenggren. Libraries staff were thrilled to have surprise visitors like a niece of Wanda Gag tour the exhibit and noted authors Isabell Monk and David LaRouchelle give spirited and standing-room-only storytelling sessions. Learn more about Kerlan and all the Children's Literature Research Collections at: <http://special.lib.umn.edu/clrc/>



The Libraries are STEPping UP

Over the last two summers, the University Libraries have been delighted to employ students as part of the STEP-UP program, a Minneapolis workforce development and job placement program that recruits, trains, and places motivated 16- to 21-year-olds in meaningful summer jobs. The University of Minnesota has been among the top STEP-UP employers and, in 2005, was recognized as the largest employer. For the Libraries, STEP-UP students have worked in Wilson Library Stacks Maintenance and in the Health Sciences Libraries Circulation and Interlibrary Loan departments. Emily Nolan from the Bio-Medical Library explains that they were thrilled this year to have their two 2005 STEP-UP students return. When talking about the students, Nolan beams, "I've been impressed with their industry, curiosity, intelligence, and dedication to the library." This opinion is echoed in a letter Libraries staffer Patrick Murphy received in the summer of 2005 from a professor who had visited Wilson and was assisted by a STEP-UP student. The letter explains that the student "went way beyond the call of duty helping me...She did all of it with a smile and eagerness, which warmed my heart."





It does just about everything but write your paper and wash your car

Three weeks to write a paper and no idea where to start? Assignment Calculator (www.lib.umn.edu/help/calculator/) to the rescue! The Calculator helps University students, faculty, and staff organize and set deadlines for the key steps to finishing academic papers. The Libraries developed this tool in 2001 in collaboration with the University's Center for Writing. To start the Assignment Calculator, the assignment's beginning and due dates are entered and an option is given for choosing the subject area. Then the software does the rest, giving 12 steps toward completion including selecting a topic; designing a research strategy; finding, reviewing, and evaluating sources; and revising and rewriting. For students, staff, or faculty working on a dissertation or thesis, the Libraries offer a complementary Dissertation Calculator (www.lib.umn.edu/help/disscalc). This Calculator, developed in 2003, was a collaboration among the Libraries, Center for Writing, Center for Teaching and Learning, and Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy. When beginning and completion dates are entered, this Calculator walks through 18 stages from "understanding expectations" to "getting closure" after submitting the dissertation. E-mail reminders can be set providing nudges and encouragement along the way.

Entomology, Fisheries and Wildlife – Oh My!

The University Libraries' Entomology, Fisheries and Wildlife (EFW) Library is a wild zoology collection that began with the collections of Otto Luggler, the first Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station entomologist, and Father Francis Jager, a noted faculty member whose bee collection came to the library in 1930. EFW's subject strengths are found in areas such as aquaculture, bee and bee-keeping literature, entomology, fisheries management, herpetology, ichthyology, ornithology, and wildlife management. Serving as the primary collection for the Department of Entomology and the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology, the library's many collection strengths are complemented by an extensive rare books collection. Notable volumes include the earliest English language work on entomology published in London in 1634. You can visit the EFW Library in person at Hodson Hall on the St. Paul Campus or online at: <http://efw.lib.umn.edu>.



Wanna hear about my collection?

Since 2001, the Friends of the Libraries have celebrated the always creative and sometimes surprising world of book collecting through the Student Book Collection Contest. Entrants must be full- or part-time students at the University; winners are chosen in both undergraduate and graduate student categories. The contest celebrates the art and science of book collecting and gives student collectors the opportunity to meet others who share their passion for books. The Friends honor the winners at their Annual Dinner, and this past May, Steve Claas and Andrew Von Duyke were recognized as the 2006 graduate student winners. Taking first place, Claas entered "The Works of August Derleth," whose expansive writing about life in a small Wisconsin town Claas says he collects because "Derleth's unique contribution to American literature lies not in the value of any particular work, but in his oeuvre taken as a whole." Von Duyke received second place for his Polar Literature collection (historical, biographical, and fictional accounts of the Arctic and Antarctic regions), which he explains "not only mirrors my interests, but also chronicles the paths and events that shaped where and who I am today."





NIMBLE NAVIGATORS

SUCCESSFUL GRADUATE STUDENTS TODAY MUST COPE WITH THE VAGARIES OF A COMPLEX RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT. BUT GRADUATE STUDENTS HAVE ALWAYS TRAVERSED A TRICKY LANDSCAPE.

When I started my Ph.D. program at the tender age of 25, I had some desperately vague notions about what I was about to do.

Perhaps I was just experiencing culture shock: unlike college students, graduate students end up going where their area of research is supported or where they can get a reasonable stipend (the luckiest got both). You don't generally get to go where the snowboarding is good or where you can fancy yourself lingering in the mist-hung hills of New England. In my case I ended up in the Deep South, at a large university that avowedly sought to import some northern ivy to their fair institution.

On some days I felt like grad school was just college without dorms, parties or flirtations. Other times I felt that I had inadvertently wandered into a medical or law school, with cutthroat competition, constant pressure to produce and Machiavellian stratagems for weeding out the weak.

by Lucy Vilankulu

The greatest challenge, I discovered, was in finding out exactly what I was supposed to be doing. Research, yes—but how? When I started talking to faculty, librarians and graduate students recently at the University of Minnesota, I found that some of the challenges I faced are still part of graduate student culture today.

Although some undergraduates do very advanced research, they are on a different timeline from most graduate students. Generally they have focused topics and shorter projects in which to develop an idea. They don't need comprehensive searches, just a few solid references. By contrast, a graduate student might work on a thesis for years. They need comprehensive searches. They need to know that they aren't replicating someone else's research or using techniques that have already failed. They need to get

into subject databases and specialized resources that are not readily available to everyone. They may not even know the basics of methodology in their field and other related fields.

The Unravel the Library workshop series at the University Libraries provides undergraduate students with foundational library skills, but what do the Libraries do for graduate students, who have advanced and unique research concerns?

A UNIQUE POSITION

The University of Minnesota Graduate School covers the Twin Cities and Duluth campuses and has over 9,000 students engaged in some 180 graduate programs, from Aerospace Engineering and Mechanics to Work and Human Resources Education. It's second in enrollment only to the College of Liberal Arts. Unlike the undergraduate population, whose median age is 20, graduate students range in age from 22 to 80. Many have families of their own and may work full-time in addition to their studies.

Aside from these distinguishing factors, graduate students find themselves in an interesting position research-wise. By the time they are accepted into a Master's or Ph.D. program, they are expected to have a handle on library research skills. As librarian Janice Jaguszewski points out, this is often not the case. "This is especially true in the sciences because they've spent so much time in the lab—they haven't always had a lot of papers to write. Also a lot of our graduate students are international. They're coming to us from other countries. They may have had very different experiences with resources that were available to them, or they may come from very small colleges with few resources."

Now the liaison to the geology department, Jaguszewski began her University of Minnesota career as the math librarian. She spent a lot of time in the mathematics department mailroom because "that's where people were." Graduate students and faculty coming in for their mail would end up recalling that they had research questions to ask.

Now that science and engineering library functions are housed in Walter Library, subject librarians "have to work a little harder," Jaguszewski says, "since you're not immersed in the department. As the web has developed, and especially in the sciences, the Libraries have acquired a lot more electronic resources, so students have less reason to come and interact with us. So we've made more of an effort to go to them. When I go to the geology department I have office hours over there and so I can sit there with a laptop. It makes me more visible."

This visibility has led to an increase in e-mails and phone calls about research issues. Although graduate students contact Jaguszewski by phone and computer, they often do so after having seen her in the department.

In addition, subject librarians attend graduate student orientations within departments to explain library resources. "Grad students don't have the networks

continued on page 8

Graduate Students at the U: A Snapshot

52% Female, 48% Male

Number of graduate students: **10,650**

... international students: **2,572**

... master's and doctoral degrees awarded annually: **2,653**

... graduate level courses offered annually: **7,693**

2005 statistics provided by the Graduate School

Graduate Students and the University Libraries

The University Libraries subscribe to over 400 databases and provide a rich array of library services. To help graduate students and others take advantage of these resources, the University Libraries frequently offer free, open workshops. Students, staff and faculty can register online at: www.lib.umn.edu/registration/

Some Examples:

BEYOND BOOKMARKS: NEW TOOLS TO ORGANIZE YOUR ONLINE RESEARCH

Newly-developed services can help researchers organize references to web sites in more effective and efficient ways. This workshop provides tour a few of these new services and discusses how they can facilitate the research process.

CREATE YOUR POSTER IN POWERPOINT

Getting ready to do a poster at an upcoming conference? Learn pointers about using PowerPoint to create the poster as one giant slide, and send it to a large-scale printer.

INTRODUCTION TO SCIFINDER SCHOLAR

Covers the basics of using the SciFinder Scholar database including hands-on time at the end of the class.

UNIQUE INDEXES EVERY RESEARCHER SHOULD KNOW

Looking for a dissertation, the number

continued on page 8

NIMBLE NAVIGATORS *from page 7*

yet that faculty have,” Jaguszewski explains. “They need help identifying other people in their area of research. Even when you need some materials that perhaps we don’t have on campus, faculty tend to know other people who can get it for them. Grad students don’t have those connections. We have a special service, Rush Document Delivery, which allows us to get materials from other institutions quickly if the need is extremely urgent.”

In addition to orientations, Walter Library offers workshops designed specifically for graduate students. A course called “Keeping Current in the Sciences,” for example, teaches participants how to set up current awareness alerts through various databases and websites so that they’re informed about the latest research in their topics.

“I think the worst thing you can do is go in to defend [a thesis or dissertation] and find that you’ve missed something central,” Jaguszewski adds. “We have highly technical databases that are somewhat difficult to use, so we spend a lot of time teaching graduate students how to use the tools that are available to them.”

One challenge of current graduate research is the increasing interdisciplinarity of projects. It’s very hard for people to stay on top of subjects because they need to have some familiarity with research and methodologies outside their own area.

For example: Amy Myrbo, a Ph.D. candidate who has written her dissertation on carbon isotopes in lakes, used Walter Library for most of her work in geology, but often found herself at the Entomology, Fisheries and Wildlife Library for aquatic sciences papers, and in Wilson Library for historical research on lakes.

A RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP

Marcia Pankake is the subject librarian for English and American literature, French, and Italian, in charge of library collections for those areas. “We love graduate students,” she says with unfeigned enthusiasm. “We learn from them. As they’re learning things and as we make suggestions about where they might go to get certain kinds of information, or what directions they might take their research, then we learn things, because we have to hunt to keep up with them.”

Graduate students push forward the frontiers of knowledge because they are invested in new research, and they require new resources with which to pursue their studies. “They’re asking for subscriptions for new journals that we might not have had,” Pankake says. “They’re asking us to buy books in areas that we may have been buying in lightly. It allows us to stretch the library collections in new ways. And they become friends over the years. It’s a reciprocal relationship. Sometimes that relationship continues for years. There are people who have graduated from here who go off to teach in Japan, or Denmark, or Michigan, and they come back here in the summers because they know our library.”

continued on page 18

EXAMPLE WORKSHOPS... *from page 7*
of times an article has been cited, the rank of a journal? Learn about indexes such as Digital Dissertations, Journal Citation Reports and the citation indexes.

FINDING ELECTRONIC FULL TEXT: TIPS AND TRICKS

The University Libraries provide access to hundreds of thousands of articles online. This class shows you how to access electronic full-text resources from MNCAT (the University online catalog) and from various University-subscribed databases.

LIBRARY TOOLS & RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT TEACHING & LEARNING

This workshop is designed for faculty and instructors wanting to explore methods, resources, and services that enhance teaching and learning at the U.

REFWORKS BASICS

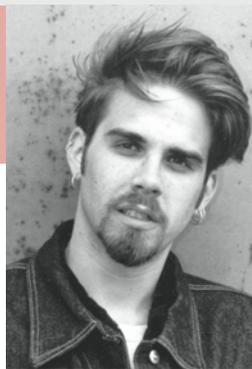
Learn the basics of using RefWorks, the Web-based citation manager available to all U of M faculty, students and staff. The workshop covers adding references to RefWorks exporting references to Word, and selecting a style (MLA, APA, etc) for your bibliography. See <http://www.lib.umn.edu/refworks/> for more details about RefWorks.

COPYRIGHT AND FAIR USE AT THE UNIVERSITY

Whether you’re working as a teaching assistant, using resources from the web, or planning to publish, you’ll need to know these dos and don’ts for the digital age: copyright basics and how they apply to technology-based teaching and learning.

FINDING STATISTICS AND GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

Explore the University Libraries’ collections of U.S., UN, European Union, Canada and Minnesota government publications, with an emphasis on specialized databases and statistical resources.



It's a little known fact, but the University of Minnesota owns a fantastic collection of books on the subject of the dead human body.

In 1983, Minneapolis funeral director Bill McReavy and his wife Kathleen donated the Death and Burial Collection to the University on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the department of Mortuary Science. The collection's materials span roughly four centuries and are a must-read for anyone interested in dead bodies.

Now, I realize that most people do not want to spend their free time reading about, for example, 19th century embalming pumps, but I am not one of those people. Because, well, I see dead people, and I see them a lot. Seeing dead people isn't exactly a new thing in my life since my father is a funeral director and I grew up seeing dead bodies. But last summer things got weird, even for me, and human corpses were all I saw.

I suppose I should explain the situation a bit more. Last summer, I finished writing my Ph.D. dissertation (in comparative studies in discourse and society) entitled "Technologies of the Human Corpse," and that meant I spent every day, and I mean every hour of every day, thinking about dead bodies. I would think about dead bodies over my morning coffee, while I was eating lunch, and then later at night when I wondered why I was single and had no social life.

Not only did I spend all my time writing about different methods of final disposition for the dead, but I was also filled with a deep sense of dread and self-loathing that I would never finish my work. A good friend of mine asked if maybe the reason that I felt so anxious about finishing my dissertation was that all I thought about was dying. I told him that he had a point, but that the main reason for my distress was that in my haste to finish my dissertation I had

produced some bad, and I mean really bad, chapter drafts. To help illustrate what I mean, I submit the following excerpts from two notes

that my advisor attached to these early drafts:

CHAPTER 1: *"Just because I haven't written comments next to each paragraph doesn't mean that each and every paragraph doesn't need work. The whole chapter needs extensive rethinking, re-conceptualization, reworking, researching, and rewriting."*

AND CHAPTER 2: *"Almost every sentence needs help. I could not undertake to fix/rewrite them all. That's not my job and it would take too long. The problem is that because of this situation it's often hard to see where you are going or what your point is."*

What I needed to do, in a nutshell, was more research, and that's when the Death and Burial Collection in the Bio-Medical Library pulled me from the depths of despair. It's a peculiar thing to say, I know, that a collection of over 230 texts dedicated to death and burial made me feel better, but it really did. Yet I wasn't entirely in the clear, since I needed help navigating both the collection and countless other resources in the Bio-Medical Library.

Along came reference librarian Katherine Chew, who only affirmed my long-held belief that librarians can answer any question. I would e-mail Katherine, asking her for some books or journal articles on a dead body subject such as "defining death," and she would promptly respond with a four-page bibliography filled to the brim with titles. It was amazing. What's more, the very fact that I had a reference librarian to turn to—one who oversaw a Death and Burial Collection—made some of my British friends who work in the field of death studies quite envious. One friend in particular (whose own book on American funeral directors is in the Death and Burial Collection) didn't believe the collec-

continued on page 17



DEAR FRIENDS,

Fall is here and students are excited to be on campus. This issue of *continuum* is about graduate students and as you read this fall issue, you will learn more about the services and resources that the U of M Libraries offer to graduate students.

So, what are the Friends of the Libraries doing to encourage and support students to best use these many services and resources? What are we doing to help make the library experience a productive one so that these students will continue as consumers of library services for all their lives? The answer is that the Friends are doing a lot, and I would like to share a few of our programs with you.

Since 2001, the Friends have sponsored a Student Book Collection Contest where students show and submit essays that discuss their own special collections of books (see Short Stacks, p. 5). Some started their collections when they were very young and have continued the love (for some, passion) of collecting. Students explain how and why their interest began and how they want to expand their collections. We have had some wonderful submissions such as a delightful collection of miniature books, a collection of pop-up books and a collection of the works of novelist Kenzaburo Oe. The winners are announced at the Friends' annual meeting in the spring of each year and the book collections are featured in a public display in Wilson Library.

Each year the Friends also recognize two students who work in the Libraries; these students are nominated for going above and beyond their everyday job responsibilities to make an outstanding contribution to the Libraries. Speaking of students, we also are very excited to be in the process of recruiting a student to fill one of our positions on the Friends Board of Directors. Perhaps it will promote a lifelong love and support of libraries!

The Friends have great plans in store for this academic year, and we welcome your ideas and suggestions for ways we can support our students in their library experiences. We, of course,

encourage you to join the Friends and help us promote and support the mission and vision of the University of Minnesota Libraries. We'll present some very exciting public programs this year, which you can read about in this issue of *continuum*. You will meet some fascinating people as well as learn about the stimulating programs and projects the Libraries are sponsoring.

MARY MCDIARMID
PRESIDENT, FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARIES

EMPOWERING OUR MOTIVATED STAFF

The Friends of the Libraries are known for their innovative programs that serve University of Minnesota students and the general public. But the Friends also serve another important group—the more than 400 staff members of the University Libraries.

Specifically, the Friends sponsor the Staff Development Grant program, which since 1996 has awarded grants of up to \$750 to two or three Libraries staffers each year. The grants support a broad range of activities including “travel, study, research, conference attendance and publication preparation,” according to Friends board member and awards committee chair Patrick Coleman.

Recipients are chosen by the Friends board through a competitive application process and announced each spring. Recipients have a year to complete the activities funded by their grants.

Archivist Susan Stekel Rippley, who received funding in 2005, used her grant to travel to Chicago and California to research 18th-century British publisher Joseph Johnson. She visited the Newberry Library in Chicago as well as the Huntington Library and Getty Research Institute in California. During her trips, she compared illustrations in some of Johnson's books held in those libraries with

copies in the Bell Library collection at the University of Minnesota. Stekel Rippley says she “found some unexpected and intriguing variations” that are now the subject of an article she’s writing for publication in scholarly journals.

Other recent Staff Development Grant recipients include:

- ✿ Librarian Nancy Herther (2006), who attended in-depth training on several citation databases used heavily by University graduate students and faculty;
- ✿ Librarian Julia Kelly (2005), who attended a conference in Denmark to promote AgEcon Search, an online research repository co-sponsored by the University Libraries;
- ✿ Archivist Karla Davis (2006), who traveled to New York City to interview Richard Lee Hoffman, who created the Libraries’ Givens Collection and compiled its first 3,200 volumes;
- ✿ Librarian Donald Johnson (2006), who will travel to Istanbul to research titles for the Libraries’ Middle East literature collections.



Archivist Susan Stekel Rippley

To join the Friends of the Libraries, complete and return the form with the envelope provided in this issue of *continuum*. For additional membership information, call (612) 624-9339 or email LANAYA STANGRET at stangret@umn.edu.

JOIN THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARIES!

TRANSFORM—In all outstanding universities—and in the libraries that undergird their intellectual vitality—the difference between adequacy and excellence increasingly rests on the ability to adapt.

¶ The University of Minnesota is currently engaged in an unprecedented process of strategic repositioning. This extraordinary effort will poise the University to become one of the top three research universities in the world. ¶ By becoming a Friend of the Libraries, you’ll play a vital role in this transformation. The Libraries are among the University’s most crucial assets, and your membership dollars will provide essential support to acquire and maintain important research collections, and for the technology necessary to share those collections with users.

ENGAGE—Membership in the Friends of the Libraries also helps:

- › Fund innovative new library programs and events that fuel learning and discovery
- › Stimulate contributions and encourage gifts, endowments and bequests to the University Libraries
- › Encourage use and appreciation of the University Libraries among audiences on campus, in the state, and across the world

CELEBRATE—But that’s not all. When you become a member of the Friends, you join a dynamic, engaged community of thousands of people whose interests mirror your own. The Friends share a love of learning, of scholarship, and of literature. You’ll be invited to attend stimulating and thought-provoking events celebrating books, knowledge, and the University Libraries’ collections.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- › Borrowing privileges at most Twin Cities campus libraries (for certain membership categories)
- › Invitations to lectures, exhibit openings, author readings, and other special events at the University Libraries. Recent events have featured speakers and performers like Lynne Rossetto Kasper, Charlie Bethel, and Michael Dennis Browne
- › A subscription to *Continuum*
- › Discounts at the University of Minnesota Bookstore, located in Coffman Memorial Union

A Gift Born of Passion

by Christopher James

A recent gift to University Archives will help illuminate an influential figure in American history.

Philanthropy comes in many forms. Sometimes, the motivation to give is pure altruism—a desire to help through a donation of time or money. In other cases, benefactors value the recognition that comes from their association with the causes they fund. And in other cases, a donor is so committed to an issue or program that the impetus to contribute is born of passion.

Harold Rosenthal's philanthropy fits squarely in the third category. His recent gift (with his two nephews) of \$12,000 to University Archives will allow staff to process and catalog the personal papers of noted University alum Max Lowenthal. Rosenthal, himself a University alum and a relative of Lowenthal's, is passionate about learning and preserving the history of his kinsman's life and career.

In a recent interview with *continuum*, Rosenthal shared his passion by explaining Lowenthal's notable achievements. Lowenthal, who earned a B.A. from the University of Minnesota in 1909 and later a law degree from Harvard, was a lawyer who advised several U.S. Congressional committees in the 1930s and 1940s. Throughout his career he was a vocal critic of corruption in big business and government; his book *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*, published in 1950, was a sharp—and controversial—indictment of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI.

Lowenthal was also a lifelong personal friend of and adviser to President Harry S. Truman. He was particularly influential regarding Truman's stance on Palestine. Rosenthal explained, "Max was there to deter much of the opposition Truman was receiving to the idea of permanent establishment of a Jewish state." Truman was eventually successful in overriding considerable opposition in the State Department to mobilize support for the Zionist ideal.

Rosenthal's eyes brightened as he recalled an experience he had as a teenager when he spent an evening with Lowenthal: "I had just returned from a Zionist summer camp—Brandeis Camp Institute—in the Poconos. I called Max Lowenthal and went to see him in New York. We had



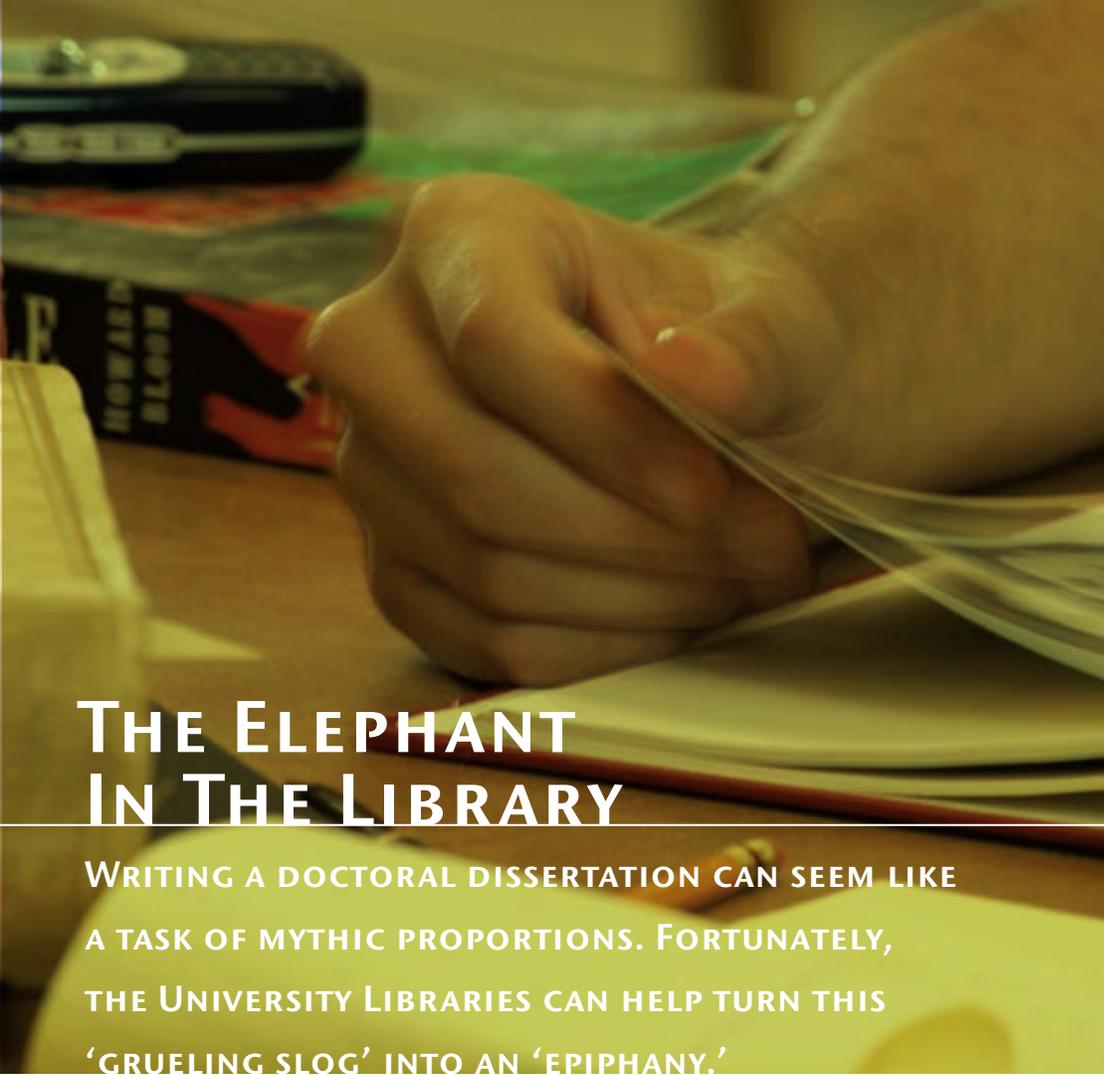
dinner. He asked me all about my experiences at the camp, and then he said, 'Come with me; we'll walk over to the Columbia University library.'" When they got there, Lowenthal helped Rosenthal find materials on Zionism. "He was very amiable, very low key," Rosenthal recalled. "You'd never know about his prominence."

Rosenthal has researched Lowenthal's life for more than a decade. He has spent time at the Truman Presidential Museum and Library in Independence, Mo., which contains much correspondence between Truman and Lowenthal. He has also visited the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest, where a tip from archivist Linda Schloff led him to the 72 cartons of Lowenthal material at the University of Minnesota Archives.

"When I first came to University Archives," Rosenthal recalled, "the archivists nearly embraced me, because up until that point only two researchers had inquired about the Lowenthal collection. It was just waiting to be explored. The question was how the processing was going to be financed, and I had no idea. I let it linger for a year. I started to talk to my two nephews, Brent and Jamie." Each agreed to give \$5,000 to the University to help process the collection, and Rosenthal himself contributed the remainder.

Once the collection is processed it will be significantly more accessible for researchers. Eventually, University Archives staffers plan to create finding aids for the collection and publish them online so the collection's contents can be available to a global research audience.

"The research that will be available in these 72 cartons will be an immense treasure trove for researchers to learn about Max Lowenthal and his life," Rosenthal said, his passion clearly evident. "It's a remarkable opportunity for scholars to learn about Zionism, but also about the history of government and big business. It's going to be invaluable." ●



THE ELEPHANT IN THE LIBRARY

WRITING A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION CAN SEEM LIKE A TASK OF MYTHIC PROPORTIONS. FORTUNATELY, THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES CAN HELP TURN THIS ‘GRUELING SLOG’ INTO AN ‘EPIPHANY.’

Asking graduate students to describe the dissertation-writing process recalls the fable about the blind men asked to describe an elephant.

One of the men touches the animal’s leg and says an elephant must be like a tree; another, touching its tusk, says it must be like a spear. A third, touching its side, says the animal must be like a wall.

Likewise, graduate students’ descriptions of writing a dissertation—an original piece of research that can be upwards of 300 pages in length—are different: it’s a learning experience, or a marathon, or an exercise in insanity. It’s an epiphany, or a grueling slog, or a flaming hoop one jumps through—and the path to tenure is on the other side.

As in the fable, the truth lies in some combination of the descriptions. And regardless of the particularities of one’s experience, all agree that writing a dissertation is a long,

by Jessica Nordell

challenging process. *continuum* spoke with a few recent University of Minnesota Ph.D.s to learn how they surmounted the common hurdles graduate students face when writing their theses, and what—if anything—libraries did to contribute. (The following students not only wrote dissertations, but triumphed—each won the University’s “Best Dissertation” prize this year.)

The pitfalls a graduate student faces while writing the dissertation lead many students to abandon the thesis entirely. (There are no definitive national statistics on attrition from Ph.D. programs, but studies suggest it may be up to 40 or 50%). Obstacles range from procrastination, to struggling with funding and income during the writing of the thesis, to simply being disconnected from other graduate students.

continued on page 14

Barbara Lovitts, author of *Leaving the Ivory Tower: The Causes and Consequences of Departure From Doctoral Study*, says students who hold research and teaching assistantships—and are therefore in regular contact with other students and professors—drop out at a much lower rate.

Recent U of M graduate John Troyer, who wrote his dissertation on the ways technology has altered the human corpse and the meaning of death in our culture, says he was often overwhelmed by the “sheer vastness of the project.”

“I used to run marathons,” he says, “and I remember during my dissertation, thinking, ‘I wish I just had to do a marathon.’”

Troyer also recalls writing in his apartment throughout one grueling summer, watching sweat drip down his arms into his computer’s keyboard. “There were several times,” he says, “when I thought, ‘This is insane.’”

Jess Haines, a recent epidemiology Ph.D., suggests that students leave during the thesis because “life gets in the way.” Other job opportunities present themselves; family responsibilities increase—since the process takes years (a Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota takes approximately six), there’s ample opportunity for one’s life circumstances to change.

Haines believes simply staying motivated about one topic is the most difficult part of writing a thesis. “If you’re only moderately interested...” Haines trails off, laughing. “It *really* matters that you’re interested.”

One of the best pieces of advice Haines received when preparing to write her thesis was this: choose a topic you’d read articles about even if you weren’t writing about it. For Haines, this topic was weight disorders; her dissertation consisted of developing and implementing an intervention to prevent weight-related disorders for grade school children. And even though Haines, who just accepted a faculty position at Harvard University, is passionate about this research, it was tough going at times. “You end up with this huge thing that no one is going to read... given the length of the process, I thank the lord I’m still interested in the topic,” Haines says.

But she finished, as did Troyer, as did 750 students at the

University of Minnesota this year. And if a student is able to develop the discipline and endurance he or she needs, there are tremendous resources available to help him or her move forward—including, according to the recent dissertation-prize winners, the University Libraries.

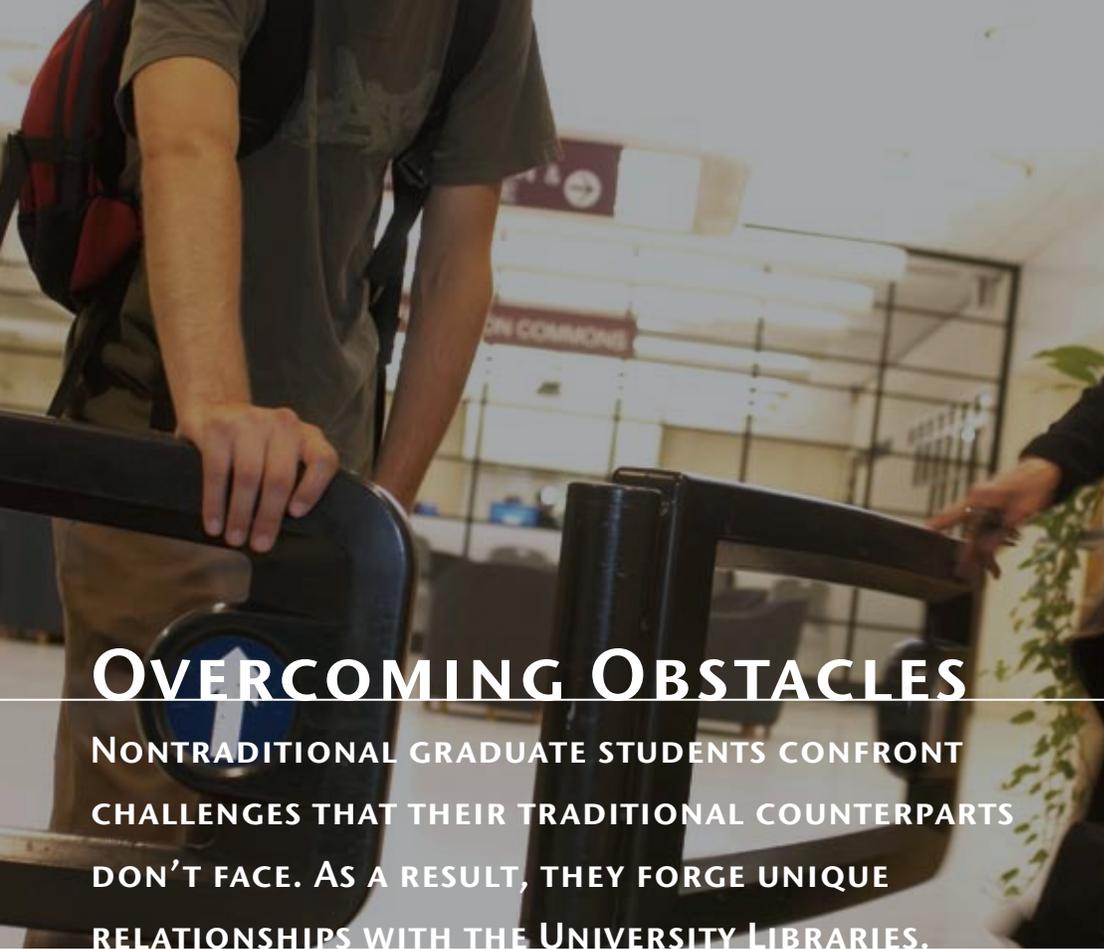
While Haines prepared her dissertation, she used the Libraries extensively, doing literature reviews, borrowing books about statistical methods, and searching and reading electronic journals through the Libraries’ website. Being able to check out textbooks for an entire semester was helpful, too, as “writing a dissertation takes a *long* time.” Additionally, she used a service called Ovid Auto Alert (an electronic database service provided by the Libraries), which sent her the most current articles and research on her topic each week; this allowed her to stay on top of the current research in her field, all while sitting at her desk.

Resources aside, Haines points out that the Libraries were simply ideal places for her to work. Research and writing takes hours of concentration, and having a dedicated academic space is a boon. “I’ve always liked libraries as a place to be,” she says. “I like the silence, and the hum. It’s a good place for me to work and think.”

Recent U of M Ph.D. Katja Gunther, a new sociology professor at California State University-Fullerton, also used the Libraries’ online resources when researching local women’s movements in Eastern Germany since the collapse of state socialism. Gunther’s dissertation concerned the ways that East German women have responded politically and socially to western ideas and influences, and how they have mobilized on their own behalf after the reunification of Germany. She did her fieldwork in the German cities of Rostok and Erfurt, and she used the Libraries’ e-journal subscriptions to read full-text articles from sociology journals online. She also used a library resource called “Libraries 2 U” to have entire chapters or articles emailed to her as .pdf files. Traveling in cities where academic resources may be limited, she says, this service is a godsend.

Troyer, for his part, found the librarians themselves immensely helpful. His research involved browsing old textbooks from the mortuary science collection; fortunately

continued on page 18



OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

NONTRADITIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS CONFRONT CHALLENGES THAT THEIR TRADITIONAL COUNTERPARTS DON'T FACE. AS A RESULT, THEY FORGE UNIQUE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES.

Jenny Sommerness is hard to talk to.

It isn't reticence or a disagreeable personality that makes connection with Sommerness difficult. The Ph.D. student in Educational Policy and Administration is friendly, bright, and motivated. What makes it hard to speak with Sommerness are the very qualities that define her as a nontraditional student: she's engaged in a rigorous academic program that would challenge even the most single-minded student, but she is also a busy mother of three children.

I tried four times to interview Sommerness by phone for this story, but her complicated schedule made a live interview impossible. Ultimately, Sommerness e-mailed me insights into her life as an adult graduate student who has mastered the competing demands of motherhood and advanced scholarship. I also talked to two other nontraditional students whose lives are just as complex.

UNIQUE NEEDS

At the University of Minnesota, thousands of nontraditional graduate students like Sommerness juggle significant chal-

by Christopher James

lenges like full-time careers, family duties, and cultural differences. These students' multifarious lives set them apart from "traditional" students who have usually entered graduate school directly, without delay. Not surprisingly, nontraditional students say they have specific needs of—and relationships with—the University Libraries.

Across the country, nontraditional graduate students say they rely on libraries to support their academic work. A 1993 study of some 450 nontraditional graduate students at Texas Tech University revealed that customized orientations aimed specifically at nontraditional students improved retention rates dramatically. Students in the study were asked to rank 16 possible orientation topics, indicating which they felt would be most beneficial to their academic success. They ranked "library services" and "conducting a library search" first and second, respectively.

But what exactly is a nontraditional student? The academy hasn't settled on a single standardized definition, but re-

continued on page 16

searchers have found that nontraditional graduate students are usually older than the norm—often in their late 20s and frequently in their 40s or 50s. In addition, studies show that nontraditional students typically face dilemmas that fall into three categories. Some face dispositional challenges—that is, issues of self-perception or attitude that make them feel daunted when they compare themselves to students whose lives are relatively free of rival demands. Others face institutional challenges like limited hours for campus services they need to use. But the majority of nontraditional students face situational challenges: demanding careers, family pressures, or cultural or language barriers. These situational challenges may be the most difficult ones to overcome.

SCHOOL AND BOYS

Family responsibilities present challenges for Sommerness, who is the mother of three young boys. All three were born during the eight-year period in which she's been a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, and she's learned to adjust her schedule accordingly. She's taken a full semester off from her program during the birth of each of her children, but she's also relaxed her course load over time.

"I have taken only as many classes as I can fit into my life and schedule," Sommerness says. "With our first two sons, that was typically two three-credit classes at a time. But since the birth of our third son, I have only taken one class per semester."

For Sommerness, her children are a top priority. "Family responsibilities always have come first for me. Many times, this was to the detriment of my sleeping schedule."

She does her academic research and study only when family duties have been completed.

"I compartmentalize as much as I can, and do (academic) work when it is time to work, but I play with the boys and do family things at all other times," Sommerness says. This is particularly hard during finals, when academic pressures are high and, coincidentally, family responsibilities also peak. Sommerness frequently finds herself up late at night, "at times needing to pull an all-nighter, like I did in my



SQUARE PEGS?: (L-R) Sommerness, Zimmer, and Seo capitalize on library resources to help them fit atypical lives into a typical academic structure.

undergraduate days. My boys still wake up the same time every day—whether or not I have slept the night before!"

When Sommerness is studying late at night, she depends on full-text versions of journal articles she can access through the University Libraries website. In fact, she says she prefers online articles to print versions.

"I actually retain information longer, and more extensively, than if I read an actual text version of the same information," she says. "Online versions of materials are actually an adaptation or support for my learning. This, in addition to saving time and trips to campus, causes me to search the library collections online often."

THE LANGUAGE OF LIBRARIES

Bosu Seo is a Ph.D. student in Applied Economics, studying health economics and applied labor. He also works part-time as a student coordinator of the University's SMART Commons, a technology and learning center co-sponsored by the University Libraries and located on the St. Paul campus.

Seo says his status as an international student is the biggest challenge he faces in his academic life. He is a Korean national who studied at Korea University in Seoul before coming to Minnesota.

When he first used the University Libraries, language differences made library research challenging. Seo speaks English but wasn't familiar with some terminology he encountered

in the library. He says librarians helped him get past language barriers.

“Everything in Magrath Library is in English, and I had difficulty finding material because of language,” Seo says. “It was an uncomfortable experience, but I asked lots of questions at the reference desk during my first year. For example, I didn’t know the word ‘quarto’ (a term for an oversized book) until a librarian told me what it meant.”

REMOTE CONTROL

Jeanne Zimmer is a Ph.D. student in College of Education and Human Development, studying evaluation methods for education. She also juggles a high-pressure, full time career as Executive Director of the Dispute Resolution Center, a St. Paul nonprofit.

She says her biggest challenge is not being able to be physically present to take advantage of resources and services on campus. “When I started my program, the thought of trying to sign up for a 15-week semester” was daunting, Zimmer says. “I’m trying to juggle the demands of my job: client service, board meetings, and government meetings,” all in addition to her studies. “It’s a challenge to manage that. I wondered, how can [nontraditional students] stay connected to what’s happening at the U and learn about resources that may help us succeed?”

Because her job is so demanding, Zimmer often finds herself accessing campus resources like the Libraries remotely. Her physical separation from campus means she needs a strong knowledge of how to engage with campus services from home or from work.

Zimmer says her own orientation to the resources of the University Libraries was slow, but now that she knows more, she thinks the Libraries are essential. Because her time on campus is limited, she needs to access materials quickly and easily, so she uses online full-text journal resources, electronic reference, and delivery services (like the Libraries’ Point-to-Point) to avoid traipsing across campus to find materials stored in remote facilities.

“It took me a while to figure out how to use the Libraries,” Zimmer says. “At first I was walking over to Wilson to browse the stacks. Then I would call or email a librarian. When you get to online portals to scholarly journals, it’s a miracle. Everything is there.”

EFFICIENCY AND COMMUNITY

It’s clear that nontraditional graduate students need to make efficient use of limited time, and libraries have met that need with automated services and online access. But it’s also clear that nontraditional students feel a need to be connected, whether they’re on campus frequently (like Seo) or visit less often, like Sommerness and Zimmer. The need for connection is particularly acute among nontraditional students, who often must sacrifice social and leisure activities because of compressed schedules. Libraries can help provide that sense of community.

“The books and articles I get from the Libraries give me such a strong connection to campus,” Zimmer says, “even when I’m not there in person. When you go to graduate school, it becomes your extracurricular activity. All my life I’ve wanted to be in a nonfiction book club, and that’s what graduate school is for me.” ●

CONTINUED

I SEE DEAD PEOPLE *from page 9*

tion existed until I showed it to her on the library’s website. It helped that her own book was in the collection, thereby making it “very comprehensive” in her opinion.

I still do not know how I finished my dissertation last summer. I really don’t. All those days and hours in front of the computer are a blur, but somehow I successfully defended my dissertation last September and then graduated in May. And even though I’m done, I still think about dead bodies everyday. Some habits never change. ●

John Troyer is a recent graduate of the Ph.D. program in Comparative Studies in Discourse and Society at the University of Minnesota. He is one of four winners of last year’s Best Dissertation Award, given by the University of Minnesota Graduate School.

ELEPHANT... *from page 14*

for him, the University of Minnesota has not only one of the oldest mortuary science programs in the country, but a librarian responsible for mortuary science resources, Katherine Chew. Chew helped Troyer compile bibliographies of useful books. “I can’t say enough how helpful she was,” says Troyer.

While the process of writing a dissertation may be arduous, the payoff may be equally great. Troyer says writing his thesis not only transformed the way he saw death (“I have a deep appreciation for questions of mortality—death remains the one thing we cannot control”), but taught him exactly how people write highly researched books. “Now that I’ve written my dissertation,” he says, laughing, “I think I could write a really good dissertation.”

Gunther says one cannot write a dissertation and remain unchanged: “you change from being student to being a student and also an expert,” she says. “It’s an emotional and intellectual transformation.”

For Haines, the transformation involved understanding that she could be an independent researcher. For her, the dissertation writing process was an incredible learning opportunity: “The most valuable part of the whole process was the opportunity to really think through a problem—this was a great gift for learning.” And she credits the University Libraries directly with her own transformation from student to independent researcher: knowing she can find answers to her questions within libraries is empowering, and it fuels her belief in her own power as a researcher. Says Haines, “I don’t always have to walk over to my advisor or to a statistician. I can answer my questions myself through the Libraries.”

Accolades aside, Ph.D. students also have some ideas about how libraries might be more helpful for graduate students. Gunther believes for students doing fieldwork, the “Libraries 2 U” book and article delivery service can be essential. While her funding allowed her to use the service with impunity, the costs associated with it may make it prohibitive for some students. Gunther suggests creating grants for graduate students to use “Libraries 2 U,” or else find some way to waive the fees associated with this service. Haines also emphasizes

the importance of electronic journals; during some of her graduate years, journal articles were sometimes unavailable simply because the subscriptions had been cancelled. In recent years, the Libraries’ improved budget has enabled it to restore cancelled subscriptions and add new journals to its research collections.

The key to writing a dissertation seems to be simply refusing to give up, no matter how appealing that option may seem. Since the thesis is a document of original research, it’s not surprising that the libraries—vast hubs of source material—play a large role in its completion. So if you’re a UMN graduate student in Rostok, and you’re losing interest, and the sweat is dripping down your arms into your keyboard, steel yourself and keep going. And if you want a pick-me-up, call a librarian. ●

NIMBLE NAVIGATORS *from page 8*

Of course, graduate students also learn from librarians, Pankake suggests. “When graduate students get to the point of working on their thesis, they might want to sit down and talk with me about some things that they might not be comfortable saying to their advisors—in other words, confessing their ignorance about how to do it. Often I work with graduate students as they’re refining their thesis topics and show them the sources of information that will help them. And sometimes I even end up on dissertation committees.”

Pankake says the Libraries are always looking for new ways to support graduate research. “We would like more ways to create communities of readers among our graduate students,” Pankake says, citing successes in Medieval Studies and the Center for Early Modern Studies. “We’re trying to find more ways to encourage very easy communication with students—not only with us, but so that they can communicate with each other.”

THE BIG BAD INTERNET

The Libraries’ efforts to provide students with credible online information have affected graduate students as well as the much-touted “gameboy generation” of undergrads.

While most people I talked to admit that graduate students use the internet almost as much as undergrads, they also believed that graduate students were less likely to stop at what they get from Google, or uncritically accept information from less-than-credible sources.

Kelly Harness, an associate professor in Musicology, points to the usefulness of JSTOR, an online repository of journal articles launched in 1995.

“It’s searchable, so that students are able to find out what articles might be of use to them, as in an index, but they can also link to the article in its original format, print it out, download it, do whatever they want with it. It’s an excellent way for grad students to get access to good, peer-reviewed, highly-respected journal articles.” She goes on to suggest that students, after consulting JSTOR, will note a preponderance of relevant articles in a journal, and be inspired to “actually troop into the library to look at the journal.”

“That kind of browsing,” Harness goes on, “the kind where you happen to notice the books on either side of the book you’re looking for, or the other articles in the journal, doesn’t happen in a targeted search. After you’ve been doing this for a while you realize how important serendipity is to the whole process of research. The fact that you read article A allows you to make sense of article B. I encourage students to go to the library and browse the shelves, browse tables of contents.”

Like many graduate students, Amy Myrbo has often made use of online research supported by the Libraries. “My three favorite achievements in civilization are the bicycle, the dishwasher and the online journal,” she said. “Using Google Scholar can sometimes be easier than using an index—Geo-Ref (an online geology index) is a big one for us. Anyone can search on Google Scholar, but you can’t read the articles in full text unless your institution subscribes to the journal.”

It has been over ten years since I started graduate school and eight since I left without a degree. I’m still somewhat baffled about the whole business. Perhaps if I had had access to a repository like JSTOR, or an enthusiastic and resourceful librarian like Marcia Pankake, I would be Dr. Vilankulu now, instead of just Citizen Vilankulu. ●

SEEDING, SUPPORTING, AND SUSTAINING INTERDISCIPLINARY INITIATIVES

More and more academic research is interdisciplinary, pulling together resources and content from several academic disciplines. Interdisciplinary research allows for unprecedented connections between and among disciplines, but it also requires new kinds of support and presents challenges for researchers and institutions. Gail Dubrow, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Minnesota and former Associate Dean for Academic Programs in The Graduate School at University of Washington, conducted a study in 2005 with Jennifer Harris, a researcher and administrator at the University of Washington. The study explored emerging trends in interdisciplinary research (IDR) and the challenges it presents.

The study, available online[†], made use of a variety of investigative techniques, including self-study activities, focus groups, and online surveys. Through conversations with IDR program directors and administrators, the authors highlight several emergent themes, including the difficulty of finding appropriate administrative homes and physical space for IDR activities. Some IDR program faculty say that they are required to operate like a department without the full administrative support that departments typically garner. Other concerns include IDR program directors feeling “stretched thin” and faculty who feel they should be rewarded for undertaking IDR activities and be relieved of some responsibilities in their primary disciplines.

Dubrow and Harris also explore how to build intellectual community among IDR researchers. Establishing intellectual community can be difficult, since IDR students and faculty are dispersed throughout institutions without obvious ways to communicate and share information. The authors suggest that allocating dedicated IDR student space, offering speaker series and social gatherings for students, and convening meetings for faculty are ways to foster collegiality. However, Dubrow and Harris also indicate that at the University of Washington (and, they imply, other institutions), current budgets often do not provide this support.

An online survey of graduate students in IDR programs showed that the students are likely to choose a program based on intellectual passion over desire for career advancement and are more likely than single-discipline students to pursue careers outside of academe. The results also show a lack of opportunity for IDR graduate students to gain experience teaching in interdisciplinary settings and that most are not engaged in program governance or policy creation within their program.

Dubrow plans to conduct a similar study soon at the University of Minnesota.

[†] http://www.grad.washington.edu/Acad/interdisc_network/ID_Docs/Dubrow_Harris_Report.pdf

SIGNED, SEALED, AND GRADUATED

Graduate students have been a part of University of Minnesota culture since the first master's degree was awarded in 1880. Anna Shillock (pictured) received her diploma when she graduated with a master's degree in literature in 1897. She later became a high school German teacher at Minneapolis's East High (now Edison High) and died in 1957. An editorial that year in the *Gopher Grad*, the U's alumni magazine, said, "Her passing...etches afresh the picture of a titian-haired, pale blue-eyed German teacher...reciting literature with passion to those whom she knew had yet to learn of the life and the beauty of the spoken languages of Europe."

Images and historical research provided by University Archives.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
LIBRARIES

499 Wilson Library
309 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MPLS., MN
PERMIT NO. 155