An affair of the heart

By Becky Schergens ('62),

Vice Chair, SMU Libraries Executive Board

How fortunate I was to have parents who read to me from birth and encouraged reading early and often. As a result, books became my dear friends, opening my mind and my world and allowing me to go to strange and wonderful places through their pages. I loved the adventures of Babar and Celeste at bedtime. Those stories came full circle when I read them to my mother to lull her to sleep in her final days.

As a child, I learned that books resided in libraries and discovered the branch next to my elementary school. Besides entering first grade, the most important rite of passage was having my own library card. So many years later, I was still thrilled to receive my card to the Arlington, Virginia, library and almost delirious at having one to the Library of Congress.

At SMU, my first classes were close to the majestic Fondren Library. It became my other campus home since studying in the dorm was a challenge. The stacks were a refuge for research, writing, and studying. No Google or computers here. Research consisted mostly of card catalogs and large, unwieldy Reader’s Guides. Unlike the computer searches of today, meandering through the stacks, or riffling through the card catalog turned up books and subjects that added unexpected surprises to my learning experiences.

Being invited to serve on the SMU Libraries Executive Board was the penultimate library experience: It confirmed libraries’ continuing magic and introduced me to their increased power in the digital age. What a revelation to see the Information Commons grow, priceless documents preserved in new formats, and student accessibility increased with an experimental 24-7 schedule this term. Imagine, no 9 p.m. curfews on weekdays!

As times have changed, the SMU Central University Libraries have more than responded to the 21st century while preserving the legacies of the past. When we say that the library is the heart of the University, it is a pledge to support a resource where knowledge resides and learning continues. It is our gift for generations to come and, from my perspective, a real affair of the heart.

A lunch date at New York’s Algonquin Hotel

It started with a picture and grew into a passion.

Alumna Judy Hahn’s (’59) collection of books, manuscripts, and memorabilia from New York City’s famous Algonquin Hotel is one of the newest additions to the DeGolyer Library.

“Every collection is so personal. Judy’s collection demonstrates the scholarly benefits of really focusing in on a narrow area and pursuing it in depth,” says DeGolyer Director Russell Martin.

Hahn’s collection, which consists of more than 800 books and several hundred manuscripts, centers on a group of outspoken writers, critics, and actors who met for lunch daily at the hotel between World War I and the Great Depression and who became known as the Round Table. “The collection reflects her high regard for these individuals as artists, not just as personalities,” Martin says.

Hahn says she fell in love with Round Table grande dame Dorothy Parker’s writing while still in high school. Hahn traces her fondness for SMU to an American literature course with then-newly arrived Assistant English Professor Pascal Covici Jr.

“It was culture shock to me to transfer from up East in 1957,” she says, adding that Covici was also from the East Coast and that his demanding class helped ease her transition.

After graduating, Hahn married and worked as an advertising copywriter at Neiman Marcus, where her then-husband was an assistant buyer who frequently stayed at the Algonquin on buying trips, on which she accompanied him once a year.

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What was the Round Table?
The lunch group got its start in 1919, when Vanity Fair writers Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, and Robert E. Sherwood met in the Algonquin Hotel’s Rose Room with other literary friends to welcome back New York Times war correspondent Alexander Woollcott. The Vicious Circle — as the dozen or so journalists, playwrights, authors, and actors called themselves — became a daily ritual that lasted nearly a decade. The group was notorious for its outrageous anecdotes and quips, which were preserved in newspaper columns of the day.

“You can’t teach an old dogma new tricks.”
Writer and poet Dorothy Parker

“They say he rides as if he’s part of the horse, but they don’t say which part.”
Playwright and editor Robert Sherwood, reviewing cowboy hero Tom Mix

“It took me 15 years to discover that I had no talent for writing, but I couldn’t give it up because by that time I was too famous.”
Humorist, critic, and actor Robert Benchley

“Repartee is what you wish you’d said.”
Journalist Heywood Broun

Algonquin Hotel continued from page 1

One year her husband presented her with an original Algonquin Round Table line drawing by New York caricaturist Al Hirschfeld.

That led her to start her collection, first with thank-you notes and other so-called “bread and butter letters” from Round Table members such as Parker — a critic, poet, and short story writer who lived at the hotel — and humorist Robert Benchley. Other Round Table members included The New Yorker editor Harold Ross, author Edna Ferber, and actor Harpo Marx.

As Hahn’s career took off, she was able to enlarge her collection with more substantive letters, such as a 10-page Parker wrote to Benchley during a tedious vacation in the Alps. A similar letter from the same vacation was published in Esquire magazine, Hahn says, adding that she thinks hers is better. “It’s funnier and has more meat in it.”

She later expanded her collection beyond the Round Table to include items from the hotel itself and a large collection of James Thurber memorabilia. These additions include a letter written by actor Sir Laurence Olivier on Algonquin stationery, as well as a bellman’s jacket and a wheeled brass luggage cart given to Hahn by the hotel.

Although some people recommended selling her collection piece by piece, Hahn decided to donate it to SMU, where it can be studied by scholars and she can visit and enjoy it from her home in Plano. Most of all, she wanted the collection to remain intact. “Russell, I felt, was interested in the books and keeping the collection together,” she says.

INTRODUCING TEHANO

Far left, SMU Press editor Kathryn Lang, author Allen Wier, and DeGolyer Library curator of photographs Anne Peterson attended a reception honoring Wier, whose fourth novel is Tehano (SMU Press, 2006), which is set in Texas during the final years of the 19th century. Wier presented a lecture and signed books at the October 26 event hosted by the Clements Center for Southwest Studies, the Friends of the SMU Libraries, and the SMU Press.
Bridges between scholarship and citizenship come easily for Assistant Professor of English Martha Satz, who recently launched a Jewish book discussion series called “A Mind of Her Own: Fathers and Daughters in a Changing World.”

The series, funded by a “Let’s Talk About It” grant from the American Library Association, is one of several in libraries across the country aimed at breaking down barriers between the academic community and the community at large, she explains. She says she hopes participants will not only enrich their knowledge of Jewish literature and culture, but also exchange views about their own values and cultures.

“I chose the fathers and daughters series because it is a topic not often broached. And certainly all, both Jews and non-Jews alike, can engage and identify with this topic,” she says. The talks are structured as guided discussions facilitated by Satz, a noted scholar of Jewish literature, as well as issues of diversity and identity in contemporary American society.

The group meets in DeGolyer Library’s bookcase-lined Texana Room every two weeks between October 4 and December 6 for discussions that range from Sholem Aleichem’s classic Tevye the Dairyman to recent titles like Bee Season by Myla Goldberg.

Satz, who has a background in literature and philosophy, has taught Jewish-American literature courses to undergraduate students at SMU and graduate students in the Master of Liberal Studies program for more than a decade. She also has lectured on Jewish books at the Dallas Holocaust Center and in area temples.

Visit smu.edu/cul/webnews/jlt.jpeg or call Carol Baker at 214-768-2942 for more information about the series.

Assistant Professor of English Martha Satz, a noted scholar of Jewish literature, leads a discussion in DeGolyer Library’s Texana Room.

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Other topics on which she has published include writers Jane Austen, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, and Richard Wright; issues of gender and race in children’s literature; and aspects of genetic engineering and the disability community. She is on sabbatical this term researching and writing a book on adoption, race, and literature.

In the news

On the Screen and in Print

The Dallas Morning News

Robert Miller’s June 6 “Business Day” column spotlighted a summer exhibit at the Hall of State in Dallas’ Fair Park that was created by DeGolyer Library. The exhibit showcased rare artifacts of the Texas Republic, including the Mexican Gen. Santa Anna’s headquarters flag that was captured at the Battle of San Jacinto.

Fox Television

DeGolyer Library’s Texana Room had a star turn in the Aug. 28 episode of Prison Break. The drama series about escaped inmates on the run, which has been filming its second season in Dallas, stopped on campus July 5 and transformed SMU into “St. Louis Tech.” The Texana Room became a hearing room for authorities, including Prison Warden Henry Pope (Stacy Keach).

SMU alumni and Prison Break location manager Bill Poague (’86) and assistant location manager Tyler Graham (’03) handled logistics during the TV series’ on-campus shoot.
FRIENDS, MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Pursuing passions
Join award-winning art historian Alessandra Comini at the annual holiday luncheon as she reflects on her new memoir, In Passionate Pursuit. Comini spent six decades traveling the world as she studied the lives of artists including Austrian Egon Schiele and German Kathe Kollwitz.
December 5, noon, Royal Oaks Country Club, reservations required

Tour one of America’s finest private libraries
The Harlan Crow Library, featured in Architectural Digest, includes treasures such as letters from the signers of the Declaration of Independence, Napoleon’s writing desk, and Admiral Richard Byrd’s Antarctic navigational instruments. Sam Fore, the collection’s librarian, will give a private tour that highlights materials related to the presidency, the Supreme Court, the American West, and Texas history.
March 1, 3 p.m. reception and 3:30 p.m. tour, reservations required

A feast for the mind
Dine with notable SMU and Dallas leaders at Tables of Content, an evening of dinner and conversation that benefits the Friends of the SMU Libraries. Participants choose their hosts when they make reservations for this annual event. Table hosts will include award-winning WFAA-TV film critic Gary Cogill, book collector Michael Collins, and syndicated columnist Lee Cullum. SMU Board of Trustees member and civic leader Caren Prothro is honorary chair of Tables of Content in honor of her mother-in-law, Elizabeth Perkins Prothro, a founding member of Friends of the SMU Libraries.
April 14, 6 p.m. reception and silent auction, 7 p.m. dinner, Collins Executive Education Center, reservations required

Literary legacy
The Book Club of Texas was founded in 1929 by Stanley Marcus to promote excellence in bookmaking and encourage fellowship among Texas book lovers. It has published limited-edition books by writers such as William Faulkner, John Graves, and Frank Dobie. Russell Martin, director of DeGolyer Library, will review the club’s history and describe its current projects at the annual dinner meeting.
May 1, 6 p.m., Mercury Grill, reservations required

Welcome new Friends
New members of Friends of the SMU Libraries who have joined as of March 11, 2006.

April Adamson
John and Kathaleen Bauer
Ed and Julianne Biehl
Catherine E. Bruff
Ali Dadpay
Ruth Henderson
Nancy Nicol Martinez
Michael J. Marz

Stevenson Moore, V
James E. Murphy
Laura Nye
Nuntiya Pitughatwong
Richard Range
Elizabeth Lee R. Thompson
Martha Moore Trescott
Adam J. Zaner

Visit smu.edu/libraries/friends for more information.
Author Jane Roberts Wood, who burst onto the national literary scene with her 1987 novel The Train to Estelline, says it never occurred to her to donate her papers until she got a call from DeGolyer Library Director Russell Martin requesting them.

“He said that it was one of the most personal decisions that a writer can make, and I had never even considered it before,” she says.

“In fact, when I told my husband, he said, ‘You don’t have any papers. You throw away everything,’” she says with a laugh. She admits to throwing out a good many things during several moves over the last 15 years, but adds, “I don’t throw away papers about my writing. Maybe I don’t have boxes and boxes, but what I have I think will be choice.”

Her donation includes one of the last interviews granted by British novelist Iris Murdoch, as well as Wood’s notes on how she snagged that historic meeting. Her papers also will include her manuscripts in various stages of completion, first editions of her novels, and correspondence with celebrities who have optioned her works for movies.

In addition, the Jane Roberts Wood Collection will include details of conversations with West Texas ranchers for The Train to Estelline, the first of three volumes about a West Texas schoolteacher in 1911 conveyed with deceptive subtlety through a series of letters. It also includes notes from Wood’s research in historical collections in Helena, Arkansas, for another book in the trilogy.

Wood, a fellow of both the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, says she is honored and delighted to donate her collection to SMU, where she taught fiction writing in the mid-90s.

Of her work at SMU, the Argyle, Texas, author says, “That was a wonderful experience. I had small classes in a small classroom, and there was plenty of time for each student.”

She says she always has been grateful for the professional support she got at SMU from colleagues, including C.W. Smith, now the 2006 Dedman Family Distinguished Professor of English, and Marshall Terry, the E.A. Lilly Distinguished Professor of English.

“I feel close to SMU because of some good friends I have there like Charlie Smith,” who she says gave her the encouragement she needed to leave teaching and write full time by telling her she always would be welcomed back at SMU.

Wood’s papers will include her manuscripts in various stages of completion, first editions of her novels, and correspondence with celebrities who have optioned her works for movies.

The Train and more are stopping at DeGolyer

Through TexShare, SMU now offers Business Source Complete, a comprehensive database providing more than 9,200 full-text journals in addition to financial data, industry reports, major reference works, books, country reports, company profiles, and more.

SMU now participates in Google Scholar’s Library Links service. On-campus users can click through to access SMU’s full-text holdings from searches in Google Scholar. Off-campus users should add “Southern Methodist University” to their Google Scholar Preferences to enable this linking.

Within the last year, the Central University Libraries consummated deals with the major publishers Blackwell and Springer to make available nearly all of their online journals to the SMU community. Blackwell’s journals are available at Blackwell Synergy and Springer’s at SpringerLink. Also, for the first time, Nature will be fully available online to the SMU community beginning in December.
A new development team has been assembled to raise funds to improve Central University Libraries facilities, services, and collections. Together the team brings experience in grant writing, fund raising, event planning, and volunteer coordination.

Anne Brabham is new development officer for Central University Libraries, where she coordinates day-to-day development operations. She works with the SMU Libraries Executive Board and coordinates the Remember the Ladies! Campaign, which is raising $1 million to fund a full-time archivist for the Archives of Women of the Southwest. She brings experience in political fund raising and nonprofit management.

As director of development for campus development, Bonner Allen devotes her time to raising funds for Central University Libraries and Student Affairs. Most recently she was development officer at Children’s Medical Center of Dallas. Her background also includes political fund raising.

Andrea Luttrell compares her job to literary sleuth Nancy Drew. As library/education grant writer, she develops proposals for library grants from nonprofit and government agencies. Luttrell is a former grant writer for the Children’s Nature Institute, and her position is funded by a grant from the SMU’s Provost’s Office.

Joining forces for libraries’ future

“One of my favorite things to do is take my children to the library and see what books they choose. It is so rare to find a place in today’s world that fosters learning and discovery for all generations.”
—Amy Carver

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REFLECTIONS ON SMU-IN-TAOS

When SMU-in-Taos dedicated the new home of the Fort Burgwin Library in 2004, an annual tradition was born. Since the opening of the Fred Wendorf Information Commons, members of the Libraries Executive Board have held their July meeting in Santa Fe — and then traveled to Taos to participate in Cultural Institute weekend classes and field trips led by SMU faculty on topics including archaeology, geology, art and literature, cultural traditions, and fly-fishing.

“The meeting in Santa Fe and classes in Taos are a wonderful way for library board members to connect with one another and to SMU,” says member Susan Nowlin, who took the fly-fishing seminar with her husband, Boots. “We meet only three times a year, so it’s a real plus to promote teambuilding around the Cultural Institute activities, which are exceptionally well organized and lots of fun.”

The 2007 Cultural Institute will be offered July 12-15 and July 19-22, and classes include “The Secret City: Los Alamos and the Atomic Age,” “From Kivas to Cathedrals: Religious Art and Architecture of New Mexico,” and “The Living Geology of Northern New Mexico: By Land and by Water.”
Opening new windows to SMU history

Since Joan Gosnell took over as SMU archivist, the University’s historic collections have become both easier to access and easier to see. That’s because new shelving and lighting were among the first improvements after her arrival in 2004.

Now that she’s dealt with the comfort factor inside the collection, she’s working to get as much of the collection as possible available on the Internet. That way, students, faculty, and alumni can access SMU history from the comfort of their homes, offices, or public libraries.

One new project is called The 500 Best. “I know that many people ask for the same or similar things over and over again. So what we’re trying to do is get our 500 best photographs of SMU on a Web site so people can get that themselves,” she says.

So far, more than 100 images have been scanned, and the staff is working to design a site that can be accessed easily.

Gosnell, whose position is funded by a grant from the Summerlee Foundation and the Summerfield G. Roberts Foundation, describes the archivist as a combination of historian and librarian. She holds master’s degrees in both subjects.

“My job is to care for the archives, which are defined as an organization’s noncurrent records that have permanent value,” she says.

Those records include 400 collections in all, ranging in size from a folder to many boxes of materials. They encompass yearbooks, directories, university publications, presidential speeches, photographs, course schedules, and other materials that document the students, faculty, and administration throughout SMU’s history.

Noteworthy collections include presidential speeches, the most complete being those of SMU’s fifth and longest-running president, Willis M. Tate (’54-’72, ’74-’76), who presided over a time of national turbulence and University expansion.

In his inaugural speech in 1955, Tate said that a nation remains free only as universities are free in their quest for truth. Ten years later, he won the prestigious Alexander Meiklejohn Award from the American Association of University Professors for support of academic freedom. He also launched a massive program to evaluate the goals and education provided at SMU. “It’s sort of the beginning of the professionalization of the university,” Gosnell says.

Come in, we’re open

SMU’s newest late-night hot spot isn’t a club or restaurant – it’s Fondren Library Center. The Center began a 24/7 schedule during the fall 2006 term in a pilot program funded by the Office of the Provost and the Student Senate.

“For years SMU students have been asking Central University Libraries to provide a library study facility 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” says Gillian McCombs, dean and director of Central University Libraries. An online survey of students conducted in spring 2006 named a 24-hour study hall as the most needed new library service.

The areas available 24 hours a day include the first-floor main entry, the Government Information Resources Department, the Reference and Information Commons (excluding Academic Computing Service classrooms), and the basement student lounge.

The Center is staffed each night by a student worker, and a security officer checks all tables every hour. During extended hours, library users must enter the building with a valid SMU ID card and be prepared to show ID to the library security officer after 10 p.m. The SMU Police Department is available to escort students to their cars or residence halls throughout the night.

The first semester of service has been “an unqualified success,” says Tinsley Silcox, interim director for library public services. He cites a daily average of 83 visitors between 2 a.m. and 8 a.m. since the program began at midnight September 15, a number that has gone as high as 168. More than 2,500 people used the Center during extended hours in the first month of availability.

“We’ve had nothing but positive feedback,” Silcox says. “We’re so grateful to the Provost and the Student Senate for helping us fund this project.”
**Exhibits**

See it at DeGolyer Library: Swiss painter Karl Bodmer’s engraving View of the Rocky Mountains, from German explorer Prince Maximilian von Wied’s Travels in the Interior of North America between 1832-34.

- Through January 26 Overland Narratives: The Plains & the Rockies Revisited, DeGolyer Library
- Through January 12 Engineering at SMU, Fondren Library
- Through January 12 Homecoming 2006, Fondren Library
- February 5-April 29 The Art of the Caricature: Prints from Vanity Fair, 1869-1900, Hawn Gallery, Hamon Arts Library

**Events**

* (Reservations required)

- December 5 Annual holiday luncheon: Art historian Alessandra Comini’s “In Passionate Pursuit,” Royal Oaks Country Club
- March 1 Private tour of Harlan Crow Library
- April 14 Tables of Content
- May 1 Annual dinner and meeting

For event and exhibit details call 214-768-3225.

**Library Contacts**

DeGolyer Library/Special Collections  214-768-2253
Fondren Library – general library information 214-768-7378
Fondren Library
  Information Desk  214-768-2326
  Circulation/Reserve  214-768-2329
  Government Information Resources 214-768-2331
Friends of the SMU Libraries  214-768-1939
Hamon Arts Library  214-768-2894
Norwich Center for Media and Instructional Technology 214-768-3199

**Web site**

Central University Libraries smu.edu/cul/