REVELING IN RECORD-BREAKING SUPPORT AND UNPRECEDENTED ACHIEVEMENT

During an extraordinary evening of commendation and reflection, more than 200 guests joined Friends of the SMU Libraries in paying tribute to libraries and literature at Tables of Content (TOC) on April 1.

A highlight of the event was the presentation of the eighth annual Literati Award to journalist and author Rena Pederson in recognition of her impact on culture and the community through her thought-provoking literary contributions.

TOC raised over $100,000 – a record-setting amount – for the University’s libraries. SMU Trustee Bobby B. Lyle ’67 and Lottye Lyle, SMU Libraries Executive Board member, served as honorary chairs of the sold-out fundraiser. For the second consecutive year, the graceful Fondren Foundation Centennial Reading Room served as the setting for the evening of fine dining and captivating conversation.

In her opening remarks, Gillian M. McCombs acknowledged that it was a “truly bittersweet occasion for me – my final TOC appearance, since yes, the rumors are true: I am retiring and planning to relocate to that land of enchantment – and home of SMU’s westernmost campus - Taos, New Mexico.”

McCombs, Dean and Director of Central University Libraries, will step down at the end of June after nearly two decades of achievement at SMU. Among the highlights of her tenure is the recent transformation of Fondren Library.

“Last year when I stood up here, we were still very much immersed in the renovation – this area was only the first phase,” she recalled. “But in September, many of you were able to join us to celebrate the opening of the Starbucks Café, the Collaborative Commons and the Prothro Learning Commons. And yes, sometimes, if you build it, they will come. The opening of those spaces, together with this reading room, truly made Fondren Library the hub it was always meant to be on campus.”

Leading up to the Literati Award presentation, SMU President R. Gerald Turner read a letter by First Lady Laura Bush ’68, SMU trustee and perhaps the nation’s most famous former librarian, congratulating the trailblazing women:

“As an award-winning journalist and author, Rena, you’ve informed and entertained us. You have left a remarkable imprint on Dallas, our State, and our Nation during your prolific career.

“Gillian, at every turn you have served the SMU Libraries with vision and dedication. I applaud the many contributions and lasting impact you have made in your 19 years of service to SMU. Thank you!

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of Appleton, Wisconsin. Bottom daughter Heather McCombs (right) and grandchildren Georgia and James Parnau
delivered a heartfelt toast.

– it is similar to one owned by her late husband, Richard Halsey – for her Taos home;

Libraries Executive Board, presented retiring Dean Gillian M. McCombs with a chair
Content came to an emotional conclusion as Jeff Rice (right), chair of the SMU
leadership led to her selection as a member of the prestigious
Newspaper’s “reference library” to covering the police beat.

San Angelo, to be precise. It was my second home.”

practically grew up in a library – the Tom Green County Library
floor with a book has been as natural to me as walking –

commented: “You could not have picked an award that would
me more – because you probably did not know I
practically grew up in a library – the Tom Green County Library
in San Angelo, to be precise. It was my second home.”

She spoke about beginning her storied journalism career as a
junior in high school, where her tasks at the
Standard Times ranged from clipping news stories to file in the
newspaper’s “reference library” to covering the police beat.
Twenty years later, she served as the editorial page editor for
The Dallas Morning News, where her accolade-winning
leadership led to her selection as a member of the prestigious
Pulitzer Prize board for nine years.
Currently a contributor to The Huffington Post and public radio,
some of her recent articles have focused on the threats to the
U.S. economy posed by hackers and efforts to help women in
the midst of turmoil in Egypt.

Pederson’s latest book – The Burma Spring: Aung San Suu Kyi
and the New Struggle for the Soul of a Nation – tells the
remarkable story of Suu Kyi, now First State
Counselor of Myanmar, who was awarded
the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

All of her work over the years, Pederson’s
columns to sons Greg and Grant, were her
readers’ favorites, she said, setting the
stage for this apt anecdote.

“As part of my sometime quixotic attempts to
be a better mother, I volunteered to teach
the Fourth Grade Sunday School. One day, one of the little girls came up to me and said,
‘Mrs. Pederson, what does Heaven look like?’

“After some thought, I told her, Well, I think you’ll have to
decide that for yourself when you get older, but I can tell you
that I like to think Heaven looks a lot like a Great Big Library …
quiet and peaceful … full of knowledge and ideas and wisdom …
and full of people who value those things.”

Pederson looked around the reading room filled with library
supporters as she declared, “Like you.”

HONORING VISIONARY LEADERSHIP,
SUPPORTING A UNIQUE COLLECTION

In gratitude for the tremendous impact the retiring dean and
director has had on Central University Libraries during her
tenure, generous donors are honoring her by contributing to an
acquisition fund to establish the Gillian M. McCombs Children’s
Literature Collection.
Both historical children’s literature and selections that are more
contemporary will comprise the collection. A specially-designed
bookplate is being commissioned that will pay tribute to the
dean and identify all acquisitions in the collection (see page 8).
The McCombs Children’s Literature Collection is a unique and
important addition to the resources currently offered at SMU.

An avid reader since childhood – “curling up in a chair or on
the floor with a book has been as natural to me as walking” –
McCombs traces her advocacy for children’s literature
collections to what she has described as her “very own personal
Nancy Drew story – The Case of the Almost Disappearing
Library.”

Early in her career, as a new tenure-track faculty member with
the School of Information Science and Policy at the State
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BROWSING FORWARD | Spring 2017

BROOKS GIFT
ENRICHES BYWATTERS
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Jerry Bywaters Special Collections in the Hamon Arts Library announces a gift from the James and Char-
lotte Brooks Foundation of 24 works of art executed
by noted American abstract expressionist painter James Brooks (1906-1972). The gift includes three paintings
and 10 lithographs dating from Brooks’ career before and
during World War II as well as 10 post-war
lithographs and one silkscreen print.

SMU was initially contacted about the gift by John R.
Lane, former director of the Dallas Museum of Art,
who now chairs the Foundation’s art committee.
Born in St. Louis, Brooks moved to Dallas with his
family at a young age and studied art at SMU as well as
the Dallas Art Institute. In 1922, he moved to New York
City, where he attended night classes at the Art
Students League and worked as a commercial artist.
During the Depression, Brooks worked as a muralist
for the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress
Administration. He painted his best-known work from
that period, Flight, on the walls of the Marine Air
Terminal at LaGuardia Airport.

During World War II, Brooks served with the United
States Army as an art correspondent. After the war, he
returned to New York City and became one of the
leaders of the abstract expressionist movement, along
with Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and Philip
Guston, among other artists.

Although Brooks was identified primarily with New
York City, his ties to Dallas are reflected in the fact
that the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts (now the DMA)
was the first museum to exhibit his art. In addition, the
Foundation has a number of Dallas and SMU connec-
tions, including its president, SMU graduate Kathryn
Brooks Dodson ’87. The silkscreen was given in
memory of Helen Brooks Lawrence, who served for
many years as SMU’s art librarian. Other works in the
gift were made in memory of SMU alumni Julie
Lawrence Cochran ’94, Steven K. Cochran ’62 and
Patricia Floyd Lawrence ’90. Also, one of the litho-
graphs was given in memory of Mary Nell Brooks
Nichols, sister of James Brooks and wife of Dallas
artist Perry Nichols, whose papers are housed in
Bywaters Special Collections.

Jerry Bywaters Special Collections serves as a
repository for archival materials and works of art on
paper illuminating the cultural history of the Southwest,
especially in the 20th century. For more information,
visit www.smu.edu/CUL/Hamon/Bywaters.
RECENT GIFT AUGMENTS TEXAS-BASED FILM HOLDINGS

The W. W. Jones Film and Video Collection at Hamon Arts Library recently acquired a collection of 35mm prints and film elements related to the career of local film producer Clyde Knudson.

The collection, donated by film enthusiast Ron Dillard, includes materials from the films Strawberries Need Rain, Black Hooker and High Yellow.

“The centerpiece of this collection is the original camera negatives and sound elements from Larry Buchanan’s feature film High Yellow,” says Jeremy Spraklen, Moving Image Curator for the Jones Collection. “All of these materials are in excellent condition and will give us the opportunity to create new prints, Blu-rays, and digital ceramic packages so that people can see this film as it was originally intended.”

It has been said that anyone with a movie connection to Dallas in the 1960s had probably worked with Buchanan, who directed 29 films. Among the actors he “discovered” was Morgan Fairchild, who had her first film role in his BBall for Pretty Boy, which starred 1950s teen idol Fabian as gangster Pretty Boy Floyd.

Larry Buchanan invented feature filmmaking in Dallas,” says Kevin Heffernan, professor of film and media for the Meadows School of the Arts at SMU. “High Yellow tells the story of a young African-American maid to a decadent wealthy Hollywood family, who tries to pass herself off as white. The film portrays a misogynistic, barely literate, drunken, lecherous, and dissipated clan clearly modeled on the Texas oil billionaires that Buchanan had observed and despised since his childhood in a Dallas orphanage.”

The Jones Collection’s moving image holdings include feature films, news film and video, animation classics, documentaries, television series and student films.

“The acquisition is another significant addition to the Jones Collection’s holdings from Texas-based filmmakers and institutions,” said Derek Kompare, chair of the Associate Professor of Arts Management and Arts Entrepreneurship, Gillian M. McCombs, CUL Dean and Director; Beth Newman, Associate Professor of English; Rebecca Graff, humanities research librarian; and Sylvia George-Williams, science research librarian.

Professor Beth Newman and Kathleen Gallagher, recipients of Central University Libraries’ inaugural Faculty Information Literacy Stipend, recently presented reports on their award-winning projects. They each designed an information literacy assignment for a class they taught in the fall and worked with their respective departments’ liaison librarians on implementation. CUL staff members and the women are (from left) Elizabeth Kittlesworth, Director, Fondren Library; Megan Heuer, CUL head of Information Literacy and communication arts librarian; Kathleen Gallagher, Associate Professor of Arts Management and Arts Entrepreneurship; Gillian M. McCombs, CUL Dean and Director; Beth Newman, Associate Professor of English; Rebecca Graff, humanities research librarian; and Sylvia George-Williams, science research librarian.

The professors’ proposals and final reports are posted online at www.smu.edu/Libraries/Information-Literacy/Stipend/Awardees.

NEW WORKS AND NEW PERSPECTIVES AT HAWN GALLERY

Shared themes of nostalgia and yearning for a paradise lost bridged the contemporary and historical works featured in Dylan Glynn: After Order, After Disorder. Curated by Georgia Erger, the spring exhibition in the Hamon Arts Library’s Hawn Gallery showcased paintings, works on paper, digital prints and animated shorts by artist Dylan Glynn alongside 19th-century photographs from DeGolyer Library’s special collections.

“Glynn, whose practice is rooted in formal life drawing, has developed an ethereal style that captures a fantastical naivety,” says Erger. “Expansive landscapes are sparsely populated by serene, yet impassioned figures struggling to assert their selfhood. Boundaries between bodies and nature are blurred - the rib cage of a figure seamlessly mirrors the veins of a leaf. Lyrical movement, as well as the debt manipulation and layering of color, characterized the diverse array of works on view.”

Past and present blended harmoniously as his work mingled with photographs from the DeGolyer. “The soaring forms, flowers and greenery of Glynn’s Utopia are reminiscent of the lush, perhaps tropical, landscape depicted in the 1890 colored photochrome,” explains Erger. “While the 1860-70s stereographs demonstrate a fascination with dimension and movement beautifully paralleled in the crumpling, decaying plants and thrashing water of Glynn’s animated short, Sister Narcissus.”

The first-of-its-kind exhibit at Hawn Gallery also featured three large-scale paintings produced by the Toronto-based Glynn during his two-week artist residency at Meadows School of the Arts.

In an interview with Erger posted on the Hamon blog, he described the experience: “The residency was such a joy. Although it was also not without its challenges, in terms of the work I was producing! A fellow artist and illustrator, Emily Hughes, had noted that my drawings possessed a strong command of the human figure and suggested that they would translate well into a larger scale. In light of this advice, I set out to create these new larger paintings with an emphasis on movement and gesture. My first painting, Pomelo represented the greatest learning curve, and as such, is the most closely related to my working process.”

In Meadows is one of three large-format paintings created by artist Dylan Glynn during his two-week artist residency at Meadows School of the Arts. The paintings became part of the After Order, After Disorder exhibition.
Bill and Sally Wittliff, creators of The Encino Press, joined Virgil Musick, a faithful collector of their work, for an exhibition opening and panel discussion hosted by DeGolyer Library on February 25. The exhibition, Bill Wittliff – Texas Man of Letters: Selections from the Virgil Musick Collection, features award-winning books from Wittliff’s time at the SMU Press and The Encino Press as well as broadsides, exhibit catalogues and photographs. It draws from a collection donated by Musick to the DeGolyer Library in 2016.

The Wittliffs started The Encino Press in 1963 in the carport of their Austin home. Although his degree was in journalism, Bill Wittliff had a talent for selecting typefaces, paper and colors that produced a distinctive style. The fine press specialized in regional material about Texas and the Southwest, publishing works by J. Frank Dobie, Larry McMurtry, Lon Tinkle, A.C. Greene and other greats of Texas letters. During its two-decade run, The Encino Press won more than 100 awards for design and content.

Wittliff is also a respected photographer and award-winning writer. He was featured in the mini-series Lonesome Dove (1989) and A Perfect Storm (2000) and other movies as well as the Raggedy Man (1981), Euthanizing of a Dog (1996) and Lonesome Dove (1997). A former Army radar operator at the North Pole in the early 1950s and later the founder of a transportation consulting company, Musick noticed something special about Wittliff’s work and started collecting it. During the discussion he related an anecdote about tracking down one of the last Encino Press publications, years after it was issued, paying a sum that he wouldn’t even share with his wife.

Selections from the Musick collection will be on view in the Hillcrest Foundation Exhibit Hall in Fondren Library through June 1. For more information, visit https://www.smu.edu/CUL/DeGolyer/Exhibits/Wittliff.

EXPLAINING ‘A STRANGE INHERITANCE’

In a recent episode of “Strange Inheritance with Jamie Colby,” Sam Ratcliffe ’74, head of the Jerry Bywaters Special Collections in Hamon Arts Library, recounted his astonishment upon learning that a missing Texas masterpiece had been discovered in a dusty West Virginia attic.

A segment of the series, which aired on Fox Business News in February, focused on the recovery in 2001 of a long-lost painting by Texas artist Harry A. McBride of the Battle of San Jacinto. The artist’s larger painting of the battle hangs in the Texas State Capitol in Austin. Ratcliffe, a noted Texas art scholar, knew the painting had been executed in 1901, but thought it had been destroyed in a fire, an assumption he had stated in a footnote to his 1992 book, Painting Texas History to 1900.

The program host interviewed Ratcliffe on July 8 in a room formerly used by the Texas Supreme Court in the Capitol. He provided context about McBride’s significance: “He was the first artist to thoroughly research the sweep of the Texas revolution,” Ratcliffe explained. “He talked to many of the surviving veterans of San Jacinto. He did a lot of research on flags, on uniforms, and was just fanatical about getting the revolution commemorated properly.”

In 2016 Ratcliffe curated the first retrospective of McBride’s work exhibited at Baylor University’s Martin Museum of Art.
University of New York at Albany, she made it her mission to save a neglected, but noteworthy, collection of children’s books. McCombs rallied support from university faculty and administration — including Dean Richard Halsey, who later became her husband — receiving a faculty research grant to support her cataloging project. A local library association also promoted her cause and was instrumental in helping obtain a grant from the prestigious New York State Council on the Arts, which funded an exhibit and a series of programs using the sociologically and culturally significant materials.

Those victories and her subsequent experiences have reinforced her belief that its unique collections make a library great.

The new children’s literature collection is one more example of McCombs’ vision and leadership to leave a lasting legacy for library users on the Hilltop.

• A gift of any amount to the acquisition fund will help in building the collection.

• A $100,000 gift will endow the Gillian M. McCombs Children’s Literature Collection.

To learn more about the endowment opportunity, or to make a gift in Dean McCombs’ honor, please contact Paulette Mulry at 214-768-1741 or pmulry@smu.edu.