Ce qui se passe...

The newsletter of

Ellender Memorial Library
Nicholls State University

www.nicholls.edu/library

Fall 2009

The Forbes Collection: Beautifying the Library Through Art

Here at Ellender Memorial Library, patrons often ask us about the beautiful display of artwork on various Library walls. These paintings and drawings can be found in the stairwell and throughout the second floor of the Library. Interested patrons stop, stare, walk around the portraits and landscapes, then bombard librarians with questions:

Where did we get the collection?
Do the paintings belong to the University?
Who is the artist?

The answers to those questions are that the collection itself is on loan. Dr. Ben Forbes, a retired accounting professor who taught two years at Nicholls is the benefactor. Forbes, a dedicated educator, began his teaching career at the University of Southern Mississippi, where he taught for 8 years, before spending 23 years at the University of New Orleans, from which he retired in 1989 as Professor Emeritus. He came to Nicholls in 1991 and taught until 1993.

Forbes currently resides in Thibodaux. He says he has been collecting art for almost 40 years.

The pieces which he so graciously has loaned to Nicholls are all rendered in a realistic style. Many of them are portraits, character studies of people with interesting faces. Forbes also has loaned out various paintings of wildlife and cityscapes, as well as a few still life images.

Bottom and Right: Various pieces from the Forbes Collection, which adorn the walls of the Library.

Library Hours

Monday – Thursday
7:30 am – 11:00 pm
Friday
7:30 am – 4:30 pm
Sunday
4:00 pm – 12:00 am

Note: For changes to schedule due to holidays or emergency closures, please see the library website. All patrons are asked to leave the library 15 minutes prior to closing. The phone number for library hours is 985-448-4660.

On the Fly Classes

We offer On the Fly Classes in Research Methods, Literature, Musicology, and Culinary Arts Resources, among others! Contact Melissa Goldsmith at 448-4626 if you have a group of three or more students who would like a session we do not currently offer.

The Information Literacy instruction team will also be creating a battery of classes designed to enhance research skills. These sessions will cover everything from understanding how search engines retrieve information, to using Boolean operators correctly, to the more advanced skills like using search histories, thesauri, and standardized subject headings (or descriptors).

Library Tip

Remember to bring your Colonel Card (student ID) with you when you come to the Library, since it doubles as your library card.
Soar Higher With On The Fly Classes

So there you are, lying awake at midnight, counting sheep—but suffering from insomnia since you’re worried about how you’re going to learn to use electronic books. Making those rubber band balls before bed just can’t relax you anymore because you know you will need to find book and article sources concerned with the culinary arts, with business, and with music. You keep wishing you could obtain research skills that will be useful throughout your academic career.

If this describes you, you might be interested to know that our On the Fly Classes are listed at this url: www.nicholls.edu/library/dropinclasses.htm. Classes for this semester include Library 101 (for beginning users); classes on library resources for various disciplines, such as business, computers, culinary arts, education, music history, and nursing; and classes on the use of ebooks, online journals, and web search engines. For example, the class on becoming a Power User will show how to search many databases for articles simultaneously, use Interlibrary Loan with a few clicks, and even make the database software create a bibliography.

Another special topic, Science Fiction/Fantasy, will appeal to Harry Potter, Buffy, and Twilight fans, while So You Wanna Be a Rock-and-Roll Star will examine resources for songwriters and show how to find out information about popular music or how to find software that could help you launch that garage band.

A Spirited Text (Book Review)


The Strange Case of William Mumler, Spirit Photographer is a fascinating snapshot of an individual, an era, and of a bygone belief system. Kaplan uses primary source documents—including prints of original photographs—to tell the story of a Boston photographer whose big break came in March 1861 when he developed a self-portrait that appeared to feature the spirit of his long-dead cousin. Coat-tailing on the extremely religious spiritualist movement, Mumler made a small fortune photographing various living subjects—each of whom would be accompanied by the vague apparition of a deceased relative, a spirit guide, or a historically significant person acting as a mentor or guide.

Kaplan details how the father of spirit photography first moved to New York to maximize his business, and finding himself constantly investigated by photographers, scientists, and police, was ultimately tried for fraud in 1869. Fortunately for Mumler, no one was ever able to determine exactly how he managed to create his spirit photographs. Though acquitted, he was ruined. Mumler died in poverty in 1884.

Basically a summary of the ordeal which lead to the trial, the opening chapter of Kaplan’s book-length study explains how spiritualism actually helped feed the call for spirit photography. In essence, the chapter examines spirit photography as part of larger phenomena, such as the women’s movement which informed spiritualism and the photographic testing of the physical boundaries of reality, such as the time-motion studies of E. J. Marey or Eadweard Muybridge.

In his second chapter, Kaplan chronicles early accounts of Mumler in the press, beginning with an entry from the October 1862 Herald of Progress article called “Spirit Photographs: A New and Interesting Development.” He also includes brief editorials from the Banner of Light during the latter months of 1862, and these attest to the ongoing debate on the veracity of both spiritualism and spirit photography.

The third chapter excerpts P.T. Barnum’s “Spiritual Photographing” from his book Humbugs of the World: An Account of Humbugs, Delusions, Impostures, Quackeries, Deceits, and Deceivers Generally, in All Ages (Carleton Publishers, 1866). Here Barnum (who testified against Mumler in his 1869 trial) uses thinly veiled sarcasm to all but accuse Mumler of using a spiritualist accomplice, with the photographer giving the spiritualist a $5.00 kick back from every widow and widower who had a spiritual photography sitting.

In the next chapter, Kaplan balances the story by reproducing the entire argument of prosecutor Elbridge T. Gerry, as presented before Justice Dowling on May 3rd and recorded by Andrew Devine of Baker, Voorhis and Co. Law Publishers. In his final chapter, Kaplan chronicles the Mumler trial in the press. Entries from The Daily Tribune and the New York Times attest to the circus atmosphere which informed the trial, as they tell of people crowding the Tombs Police Court hours before testimony began on any given day.

Kaplan’s conclusion brings this entire text full of diverse primary documents to a fulfilling close, returning to the practice of tying together loose ends by summarizing the mindset of spiritualism. Here, he presents theories by various scholars which place studies such as hauntology, the theory of the uncanny, theories of mourning, and theories of paranoia.
Back to the Basics: Encyclopedias and Wikipedia

We all knew that kid in school. (S)He was the one who not only read the encyclopedia cover-to-cover, but bragged about it later! And of course, no matter how bad a day we were having, we could always assure ourselves by repeating the mantra, “at least I’m not that kid.” Little did we know that “Encyclopedia Brown” was actually onto something.

In the digital age, it is often too easy to forget that some of the best information resources are the most basic. Sure we can access millions of journal articles now with a point and a click. And we can use the services of Interlibrary Loan to get a copy of almost any book ever published. But what is lost in the rush to get bigger and better information is the fact that sometimes what a researcher (especially a student) really needs are the basics—the who, what, when, where, and why of a subject under consideration. When such information needs arise, we would all be best served to model our behavior after that kid, and find an encyclopedia. But before we run to Britannica or World Book, we need to realize that these reference books come in all shapes and sizes.

A quick glance in our online public access catalog yields specialty encyclopedias like The Encyclopedia of Artificial Intelligence; The Encyclopedia of Marine Science; Larousse Gastronomique: The World’s Greatest Culinary Encyclopedia; The Encyclopedia of the New York School Poets; and The Encyclopedia of Elder Care, to name a few. And these are just titles published this year. Entries in these books give the lowdown, the fundamentals on any subject, and often include a bibliography of other sources.

And then there’s Wikipedia, the so-called bane of serious research. Regardless of one’s predilection for wikis of any kind, a researcher would need to be hiding under a rock to not understand the potential usefulness of a real-time repository of encyclopedic knowledge. A 2008 article1 found that most encyclopedia had an accuracy rate of 95%, Wikipedia had one of 80% (although the article notes other published studies have found its accuracy rate to be 95% or higher), so researchers need to verify entries. However, any good researcher always verifies any resource, whether print or electronic.

Reference Writing For Fun and Intellectual Profit

When most people think of reference books, they imagine boring encyclopedia entries about famous historical figures, countries, and popular events or games. Few of us would ever conceive of opening Britannica or World Book just for fun, to learn something about the history of college football, or about The Beatles, or about biochemistry or catfish. Even fewer would believe that writing such encyclopedia entries could be both fascinating and rewarding.

Meet Tony Fonseca and Melissa Goldsmith. Librarians here at Nicholls, they both routinely contract encyclopedia entries, through publishers such as Greenwood Press and Salem Press. Fonseca has a literary background, and Goldsmith has spent her entire life studying music, so as you would expect, they have written entries on benchmark novalias and novels (Fonseca has written on Varney the Vampire and on William Saroyan’s The Human Comedy), and on musicians (Goldsmith has penned entries on the recently deceased folk singer Odetta and on the Cuban band leader Perez Predo). However, both often look for Calls for Writers in fields and for subjects with which they are not so familiar.

For Fonseca, writing an encyclopedia entry offers the opportunity to learn about someone or something with which he has only passing familiarity. For example, he recently contracted entries on the philosopher Colin Wilson, and in his research learned that Wilson was not only prolific, but eclectic, writing novels in almost every genre, in between studies of left and right brain consciousness. Immediately afterwards, he had to learn everything about vampire fiction authors like Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Poppy Z. Brite, and Laurell K. Hamilton, as well as about films like Love at First Bite and Vampire in Brooklyn. Of the former he discovered long-lost tidbits about the actor George Hamilton, and of the latter he uncovered a little known story about an accidental stunt double death. He’s also been able to write about—after lots and lots of research—his favorite musicians (Missy Elliot, Professor Longhair, and Freddy Fender), as well as important subfields in psychology (Forgiveness Theory and Men’s Mental Health).

For Goldsmith, writing an encyclopaedia entry offers the challenge of exploring a subject area she has never approached before and of writing succinctly. Her article about Bonnie Raitt was the first one she has ever written about the musician or about country music (in Raitt’s case, “blue-eyed soul”). She also wrote about a composer she had not written about since she was a graduate student: Luigi Nono, a student of Arnold Schoenberg and husband to Schoenberg’s daughter Nuria.

In Spring 2009, Goldsmith took on a different kind of contract encyclopaedia writing experience—not writing an entry for a specific person or thing, but compiling an extensive appendix of 1940s popular musicians, composers, and their hits. Selecting the most memorable tunes as well as weeding out some musicians and composers was difficult work, but in the end the appendix promises to be extremely useful for both encyclopedia users and for music scholars.
Library News

Sandi Chauvin (Serials), Deannie Eusea (Circulation), Sherrill Faucheaux (Cataloging), Tony Fonseca (Serials), Melissa Goldsmith (Reference/Instruction), Angela Graham (Documents), Jeremy Landry (Automation), Carol Mathias (Library Director), Lynette Tamplain (Serials), and Anke Tonn (Interlibrary Loan) attended the The Louisiana Library Network Conference (LUC). The conference featured expert presentations on maximizing the use of the library’s Online Public Access System, as well as discussion groups and networking seminars.

Jody Stroud, son of Sandi Chauvin (Serials), is currently training with his Army National Guard unit, the 3rd Battalion 156th Infantry Regiment, at Camp Beauregard in Pineville LA. The battalion is preparing for deployment to Afghanistan in January, 2010.

Tony Fonseca (Serials) co-authored an article with Van Viator (Reference/Instruction), “Escaping the Island of Lost Faculty: Collaboration as a Means of Visibility,” appears in the fall issue of Collaborative Librarianship. He also had an article appear in the October 2009 issue of portal: Libraries and the Academy. Titled “Are We There Yet? The Difficult Road to Re-Create Information Literacy” was co-authored with Melissa Goldsmith (Reference/Instruction), as well as librarians from LSU-A and McNeese. Fonseca also recently organized the Louisiana Chapter of the Association of College and Research Libraries’ (ACRL-LA) one-day seminar on Return-on-Investment Analyses for Academic Libraries.

Melissa Goldsmith (Reference/Instruction) co-authored the article “Are We There Yet? The Difficult Road to Re-Create Information Literacy,” which appeared in the Oct. 2009 issue of portal: Libraries and the Academy. The article reports on surveys conducted by the statewide Information Literacy Committee in 2002, 2006, and 2008. She also co-presented a multimedia session called “Preventing Your ROI (Return-on-Investment) Analysis from Becoming a ROI Pain” at the LOUIS Users’ Conference in Baton Rouge. She also hosted a LOUIS sponsored resume building and information session for students at the LSU School of Library and Information Science. She is currently serving as guest editor of a special themed issue of Louisiana Libraries (the journal of the Louisiana Library Association). The theme is information literacy, and articles will explore lesson plans, point-of-use instruction techniques, and assessment. The issue is due out in Spring of 2010.

Carol Mathias (Library Director) and Anke Tonn (Interlibrary Loan) attended a one-day seminar called Return-on-Investment and Academic Libraries.

Van Viator (Reference/Instruction) co-authored “Escaping the Island of Lost Faculty: Collaboration as a Means of Visibility,” in the fall issue of Collaborative Librarianship. The article argues for a multidisciplinary approach to academic librarianship, with an emphasis on collaboration as a means to develop visibility. He also has had an article on using Yahoo, Google, and other popular culture Internet interfaces to introduce students to the use of library databases accepted. The article will be included in the Spring 2010 issue of Louisiana Libraries.

Upcoming Events: Get Ready to be Scared Silly!

The Publicity and Public Relations Committee (PaPR) will be hosting the second annual Halloween Party on the 2nd floor of the Library. The event will be held on Thursday, Oct. 29th from 2:00-4:00, with the costume contest from 3:00-4:00. All students, faculty, and staff are invited to dress in their scariest or funniest costumes and join the fun. Food and other refreshments will be provided by the Library, and prizes and certificates will be awarded to winners. If you have any questions, contact Sandi Chauvin at 448-4677.

Library Sends Contingent to A+ Scholars Dinner

Seven librarians, Tony Fonseca, Melissa Goldsmith, Neil Guibeba, Carol Mathias, Clifton Theriot, Anke Tonn, and Van Viator attended the 14th Annual Sponsor A+ Scholar Event on Oct. 7, in the Cotillion Ballroom of the Bollinger Memorial Student Union. Each fall, the Nicholls State University Foundation hosts the Wine and Food Extravaganza to raise money for scholarships. Proceeds benefit Nicholls students who demonstrate leadership ability—along with outstanding grades. The fundraiser began in 1996, and has raised some $300,000 since.

Ellender Memorial Library Goes to Hollywood

The theme for the 2009 Welcome Back day celebration was “Hurray for Hollywood,” and as usual Ellender Library staffers showed up in full force. Students visiting the library table were treated to miniature versions of Let’s Make a Deal and Catch-21, and everyone went away with smiling faces, a prize (even if it was a mini-skull, colorful erasers, books, or faux bling), or cookies by the handful.

Participants were also invited to strut their stuff on Nicholls’ Idol. Danny Gorr of Serials brought a karaoke machine, and other librarians showed up in costume, as either Miss Saigon, Charlie Chaplin, or Baby Jane. Colorful wigs and clown hair were omnipresent. The Library’s contingent was organized by Lady Pierson of Circulation.

Contributing Writers this Issue: Tony Fonseca, Serials; Melissa Goldsmith, Reference/Instruction. Managing Editor: Tony Fonseca. Editorial Staff: Sandi Chauvin, Melissa Goldsmith, Danny Gorr, Carol Mathias, Daisy Pope, Lynette Tamplain. Technical Consultant: Jeremy Landry. The statements and opinions included in these pages are those of the newsletter staff only, and not those of Nicholls State University or the University of Louisiana System.