

THE LIBRARIES AT **MASON**

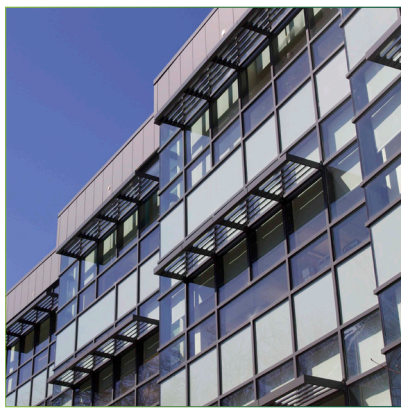
SPRING 2025

PEOPLE • RESOURCES • EVENTS



HEART OF THE UNIVERSITY

ACCESS



Editor

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About the cover

The libraries are the heart of the university—vital, central, and organically connected to every person, entity, and function at Mason, designed by Anne Chesnut.

The Libraries at Mason

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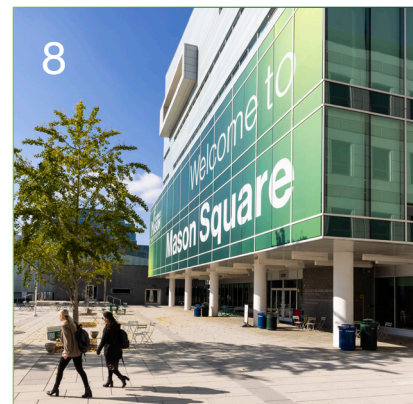
Questions or comments?

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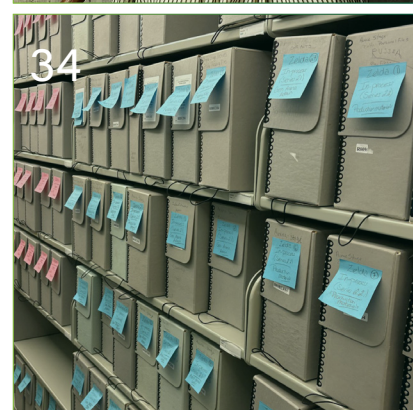
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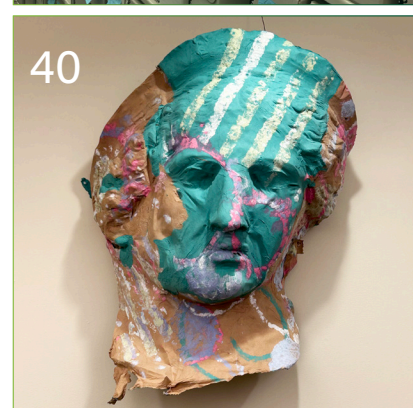
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Access

The heart of the University Libraries' work



Whether it is delivering information that is accessible to all, designing services that speak to students and faculty from all walks of life, teaching library instruction with a variety of learning styles in mind, or negotiating with publishers to ensure that our researchers can use innovative technologies like artificial intelligence, we are dedicated to providing a solid foundation for everyone in our community to grow as scholars and researchers.



With over 600,000 visitors to our libraries each year, we know our spaces are important to our community, and we are committed to making them as effective as possible through a Noise and Space Assessment this past year.

We also know that we grow best through direct input from students, and we now know more than ever thanks to our new Student Libraries Advisory Council.

As always, the libraries are invested in facilitating critical analysis, both by faculty and students in their research and creative activities, and by our own faculty and staff, such as through new Assessment Fellowships and the intensive work with primary sources that takes place in the Center for Mason Legacies. I hope you enjoy reading about what has been going on in our three libraries over the past year, and I'd love to hear what resonates with you.

Anne C. Osterman
Dean of Libraries

Our Libraries

Fenwick Library, Fairfax, VA

Mason Square Library and Law Library, Arlington, VA

Mercer Library, Manassas, VA

699,584

Building usage

1,314,547

Website visits



20,846

Items checked out



2,228,332

Electronic journal articles accessed

7,257

Items borrowed from other Institutions

226,761

E-books used

15,373

Print and physical content purchased

5,272

Electronic content
purchased or subscribed

Q & A A Conversation with Kathy Perry

By
Viviana Calderon

What does “Access” mean to you?

The George Mason University Libraries’ role in providing access has never meant just buying the books and putting them on the shelf. Access starts by anticipating the needs of students, faculty, staff, and members of the community even before they enter the buildings. Each of these users approaches the library from a unique perspective and from different levels of knowledge and experience with academic libraries. Their needs run the gamut and change over time. For the first-year students, the organization of the books may seem totally foreign from what they may have seen at their local public library while graduate students and faculty members may need highly sophisticated research materials, extensive interlibrary loan requests, or access to primary research materials housed in the libraries’ Special Collections Research Center. Access begins with adequate signage to help everyone navigate through the building, as well as well-designed web pages to help the users navigate the resources and guidance to be found on the libraries’ web pages. And, ultimately, when needed, access also means helping them find the right staff member to help with their research needs.

Have you seen barriers to access that students, faculty, or staff may face when using libraries?

Technology has made it much easier and faster to share information, such as through electronic resources instead of print, but current paywall and rights restrictions can be complex, to say the least. At its worst, it can seem that resources vanish from platforms overnight. Another issue is the growth of available information, including information created by AI, now growing at exponential rates. A third issue we all face now is the rise of disinformation and the need to assist users in evaluating the resources they see. Librarians have a key role in helping people evaluate sources through improving information literacy.

For many years, you led VIVA, Virginia’s consortium of academic libraries, of which George Mason University Libraries is a member. What are some of the ways that a library consortium supports access?

Since its inception in 1994, VIVA has been very successful in providing vast collections of e- journals and e-books for the VIVA members. These collections level the playing field so that core research materials are available at all the Commonwealth’s public colleges and universities and many of our nonprofit private colleges and universities. This has meant that students at two-year community colleges have access to many of the same research materials as those at the doctoral institutions. VIVA has also improved the statewide cooperation for interlibrary loan so that the collections can be more broadly shared across the Commonwealth. Further, VIVA members are working with faculty to develop open access and affordable textbook materials. Taken all together, these efforts assist shared goals of improving affordability, leveling the academic playing field across all of the Commonwealth’s public colleges and universities, and building a foundational statewide collection.

You recently joined the Library Advisory Board. What has your experience been so far?

As a new member, I have truly enjoyed seeing the libraries from the perspective of a community member. At my first meeting I had the pleasure of hearing about the Gustav Klemp Collection Translation Project from Dorothee Schubel, *Metadata and Cataloging Librarian*, and Amanda Menjivar, *Manuscripts and Archives Librarian*. This project has increased access to these fascinating World War I primary sources. ■



Kathy Perry
Advisory Board Member

Fenwick Library exterior

What does Access mean to the University Libraries?

“ Libraries are dynamic spaces that go beyond being a repository of books. They embrace technology and innovation to meet the needs of their patrons, offering access to vast digital collections. Libraries continually transform to serve their community and continually strive to improve access and engagement.”

— Lara Bushallow
Director, Digital Technologies and Services

“ Providing access to scholarly resources for Mason’s students and faculty involves all the behind-the-scenes work including ordering, procuring, receiving, and invoicing for all resources including books, e-books, databases, e-journals, datasets, and streaming media. Access also involves setting up and maintaining stable electronic access to crucial resources to support our community.”

— Bridget Euliano
*Associate University Librarian,
Access and Resources Management*

“When people think of Access Services, the visualization that comes to mind is the information desk. However, it is so much more than that. Our department is a conduit for connection that enables library users to discover, request, retrieve, and use the library’s collections, spaces, and services.”

— Kaitlyn Kinney
Head, Access Services

Outreach and Programming

Fenwick Library hosted their first Night at the Library event, spearheaded by Lorena Jordan, *Policy and Government Librarian*. Seventy-two students from twenty-seven different programs attended and had a chance to enjoy pizza and interact with our library colleagues. Students were also given the opportunity to leave questions for specific librarians, along with their contact information, and the respective librarian can connect with them.

The official exhibit opening of *“The Change We Want to See”: Artists and Social Transformation* was held in September 2024. Megan Reichelt, *Theater, Dance, Arts Management, and Women and Gender Studies Librarian*, Stephanie Grimm, *Art and Art History Librarian and Fenwick Gallery Manager*, and Cindy Badilla- Meléndez, *Music and Media Librarian*, collaborated on this project by drawing from works from George Mason’s Special Collections Research Center, and discussed how artists engage with social change. Art reflects upon a past event to interpret and contextualize the experience, and the same can be said for their exhibit.

Spaces

ShakeSmart, a healthy on-the-go cafe, opened on September 12th with a celebration including free shakes. Located just outside the main lobby doors, patrons lined up outside all the way down to the clock tower to get to try their protein shakes, acai bowls, and avocado toast. ShakeSmart continues to be a hot spot for studying and people-watching near the big Fenwick windows.

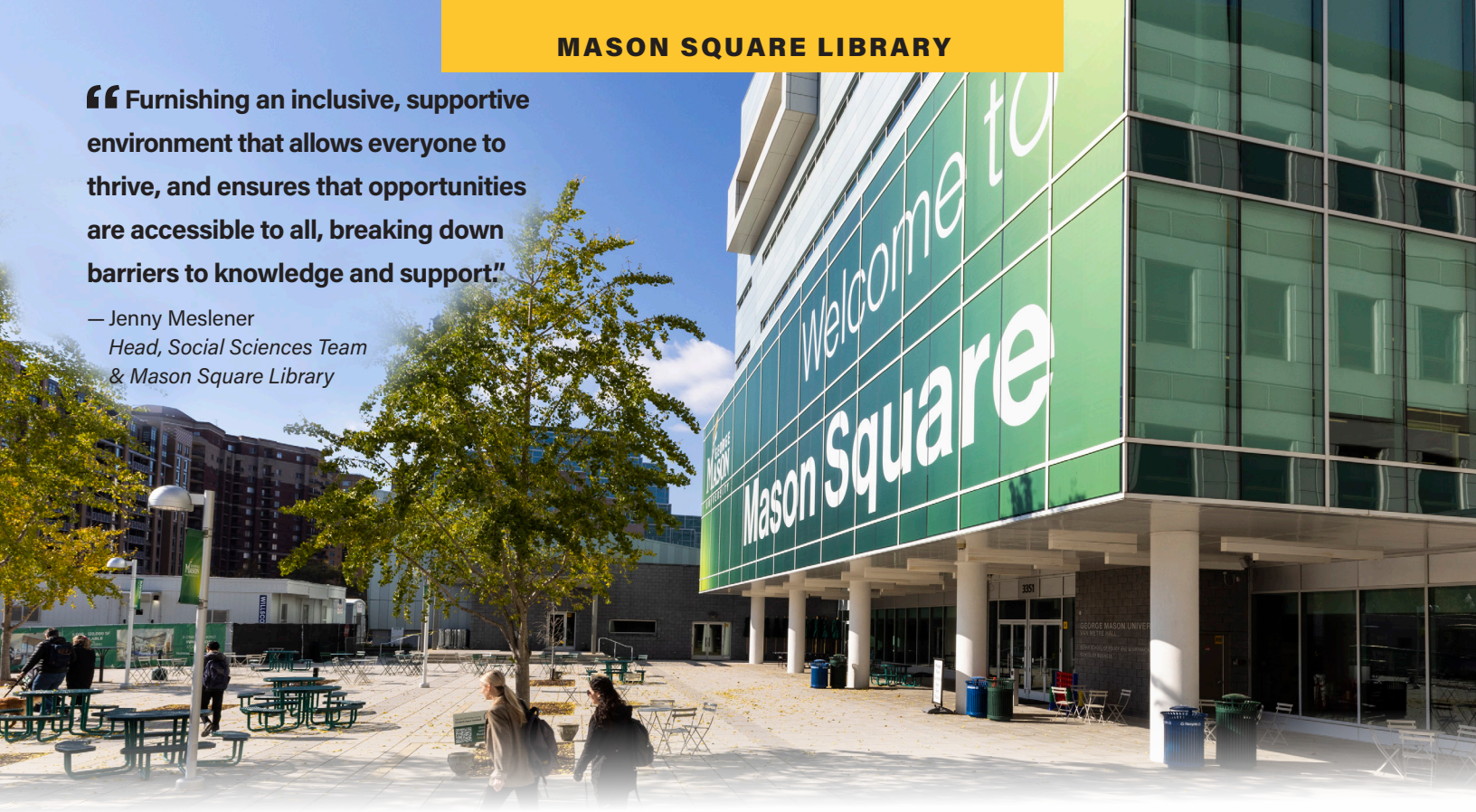
On March 31st, Fenwick Library hosted the grand opening of a new seed library. Seed libraries have quickly grown in popularity around the country, being found in public libraries, community centers, community gardens, makerspaces, and university libraries. The concept of the seed library model is that the library is stocked with seeds, which patrons take, grow, and then return seeds to the library. They promote growing your own food, wellbeing, community, and learning in a hands-on way. Since the grand opening, the seed library has been a popular stop for students in between classes. So much so that it had to be replenished within the first week! The new seed library is located at the bottom of the atrium stairs in the Fenwick lobby.

“Whether it’s our spaces, resources, or working with our librarian experts, University Libraries are for everyone. It’s our job not only to ensure that the Mason community knows this, but also to protect this idea as central to our mission.”

— Maoria J. Kirker
Lead, Teaching and Learning Team

“Furnishing an inclusive, supportive environment that allows everyone to thrive, and ensures that opportunities are accessible to all, breaking down barriers to knowledge and support.”

— Jenny Meslener
Head, Social Sciences Team
& Mason Square Library



Outreach and Programming

It was a busy year for outreach activities at Mason Square Library (MSL) on the Arlington campus. The academic year kicked off with the Fall Welcome Fair, and MSL was invited to table alongside other campus services and clubs, as well as community partners. This also tied in with the University Libraries' SmartStart programming.

Exactly one week later, the library teamed up with University Life to host Live! With the Library on the newly renovated Mason Square Plaza. This event featured a series of lightning talks on library services and utilizing them for in-depth research. A high portion of overall attendees chose to stay for the entire series of talks. Other highlights included the Spring Mini Welcome Fair, monthly Brain Power Hours beginning in September, and various passive programming initiatives like de-stress puzzle stations, rotating topical displays, and a community Question of the Week.

Spaces

Mason Square Library continued to make improvements to library spaces. In the previous academic year, the College of Engineering and Computing assisted in a large refresh of the library's upper floor as part of an ongoing partnership. This past year saw the finalization of that refresh. All remaining furniture arrived and was installed to complete the open concept study space. Sound panels were also added to aid in dampening city noise.

While the lower floor did not receive the same massive overhaul, the library team still found ways to improve upon the space. Over the summer, staff and student assistants took on a large moving project. During that project, the main library stacks A-Z were reconciled, and study tables were moved. This moving project allowed for easier patron browsing, better light flow, and more accessible pathways throughout the space.

“In Data & Digital Scholarship Services, the word ‘access’ has many meanings. We provide access to: data; software and hardware for digital scholarships; and expert assistance for digital research. We strive to make our in-person and virtual services, such as consultations, our website, and research guides, accessible for all.”

— Alyssa T. Fahringer
Digital Scholarship Consultant

“Libraries are spaces of inclusive, shared exploration. Our patrons decide to experience community simply by virtue of their presence in our spaces, alongside others, even in private study carrels. Equitable access within academic libraries isn’t just about resources and services provided; it’s also an invitation to take up space and add to scholarly discourse.”

— Alex Baker
Head, Science and Technology and
Mercer Library



Outreach and Programming

As part of outreach and programming efforts, the Mercer team participated in the University Libraries’ SmartStart initiative in the fall, an initiative which aims to orient students to library services. Mercer also participated in Welcome Week activities on the SciTech campus.

In December, Mercer held a de-stress event that included building brick stations and a DIY de-stress kit area with lip balm, hand cream, focus-aiding toys, and pencil cases. The event also featured a service dog brought to campus by University Life.

In addition to larger events, Mercer has continued to maintain a small welcome table, often stocked with snacks and/or library pens and sticky notes for student use. A nearby white board hosts questions and polls to inspire community engagement.

Spaces

In the summer, the Mercer team’s conference and break room space underwent a cleaning and reorganization that allowed it to be used for team meetings and employee breaks. This change has allowed space for teambuilding and better team cohesion, and it has created better access to supplies used to triage potentially damaging emergencies such as roof leaks.

Minor moves and reorganization also took place within the library itself. Some patron computers were relocated to ensure adequate space for their usage without disruption from staff entering/exiting a nearby office space. Mercer leadership has continued to work with the University’s ADA Coordinator to pave the way for forthcoming upgrades to the library’s assistive technology. Mercer also received a new Sensource People Counter to help track library usage. ■

“Creating smooth and efficient support for library resources, spaces, and opportunities by reducing financial, physical, and systemic barriers for library staff. It means fostering transparency, effective operations, and seeking to create clear communication channels across all facets of business operations.”

— Heather Garritty
Assistant Dean for Administration

Data Literacy & AI

By
Wendy Mann

Since OpenAI introduced ChatGPT in late 2022, we can't seem to escape the AI hype. Reactions to Generative AI (GenAI) seem to range from "it's a magic box that will solve everything," to acceptance and use, to skepticism, to "it will replace us." Data and Digital Scholarship Services' (DDSS) goals are to teach data literacy skills and how to use data and GenAI wisely.

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List of all DDSS's workshops

<https://infoguides.gmu.edu/ddss/workshops>

For close to fifteen years, the University Libraries' DDSS has been teaching fundamental data literacy skills to help students and researchers to better understand and to improve their data work. DDSS routinely teaches drop-in workshops, workshops organized by academic departments and research groups, and guest lectures for data focused or research methods classes. They participate in events such as the University Libraries' monthly AI Salon Series, where they discuss data, digital scholarship, and artificial intelligence. They organize and host workshops during International Love Data Week; teach workshops as part of the University Libraries' partnership with the Office of Graduate Education's Travel Research Incentive Program (TRIP) for doctoral students, and Graduate Research Connections (GradReCon).

DDSS's research guides

<https://infoguides.gmu.edu/dsc>

In addition, DDSS provides research consultations where they answer data-related questions. To reach more users who may not be able to attend a workshop, DDSS reaches a wider audience through their research guides which describe guidelines for data work and recommend existing training available through university subscriptions, e.g., LinkedIn Learning, or refer users to open and freely available tutorials curated by DDSS.

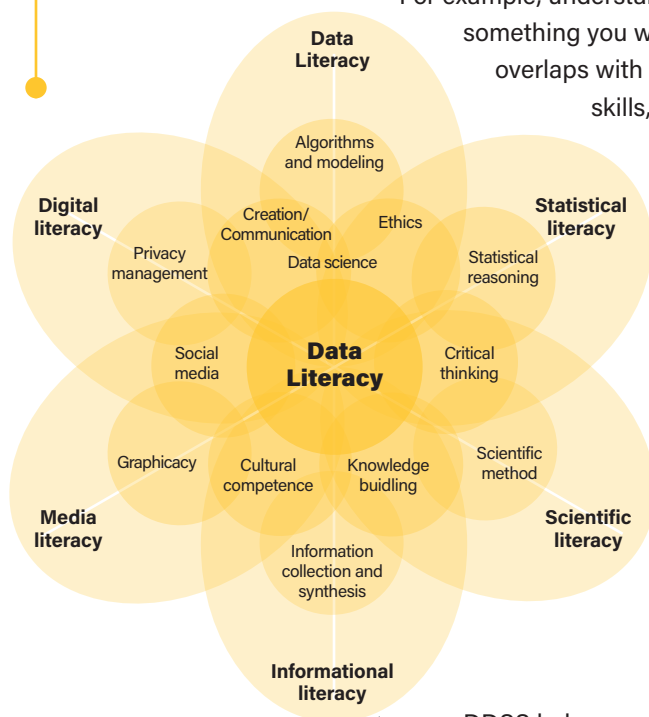
DDSS advises researchers on a wide variety of data, beyond numbers. In other types of analyses, such as text analysis and digital humanities, the fields have been using (AI)-based tools for years. Digital humanists have used methods such as natural language processing, sentiment analysis, and topic modeling to uncover patterns in text-based corpora, since researchers began using computers to aid in their scholarly endeavors.

What does any of this have to do with AI?

An essential skill for understanding inputting data into a generative AI tool such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Claude, etc. is the ability to provide it with detailed instructions on what to do with data and interpreting the resulting outputs. If you've used a GenAI tool, you've learned how to interact with them. Performing more complex tasks such as data analysis requires an additional level of data literacy skills. For example, one common use of GenAI might be asking it what to make for dinner by entering "What can I make for dinner with eggs, broccoli, and garlic?" When you ask for recipe recommendations, you're already learning how to interact

How different modern types of literacies interact

Source: Elaboration by authors of Beyond Data Literacy: Reinventing Community Engagement and Empowerment in the Age of Data. September 2015



AI Council's guide

<https://infoguides.gmu.edu/>
Artificial-Intelligence

with the tool. Assuming you know how to cook, then the next steps are straightforward, but if you don't know how to cook, then it might be less clear what to do next. An experienced cook can critically evaluate recommended recipes and notice unusual ingredients or steps. But, if cooking is not your forte, then you may not notice any problematic suggestions. Similarly, using GenAI to process, query, analyze and visualize data, requires basic data skills, and this is where data literacy and the ability to critically evaluate information comes in.

What is Data Literacy?

There are levels of data literacy. At its core, it is the ability to understand and interpret data. For example, understanding how to read a statistical table, chart, or visualization—like something you would see published on a website or in a newspaper article. Data literacy overlaps with other literacies and skills. Some key skills include critical thinking skills, being able to question the source, quality, and reliability of data; computational literacy, the ability to use computers, understand data files, formats, storage, etc.; understanding fundamental statistics and math; and awareness of privacy implications, data protection requirements, and ethical considerations in data collection and use.

The data and computer skills necessary for working with software and data files carry over to using GenAI. The main difference is that instead of selecting items through a software interface, or writing code, the user instructs or asks ("prompt engineering") the GenAI tool. You can find all upcoming workshops at library.gmu.edu/workshops.

In addition, algorithmic literacy is essential to understanding how data is processed and analyzed. The Libraries' AI Council developed a useful guide that anyone can use (it's not just for data).

DDSS helps researchers responsibly integrate AI into their data work and analytical methods by guiding them through skill development and understanding these tools. Many of the students and researchers they assist are new to data work and need to build their technical skills. DDSS aims to be accessible to beginners by offering guidance through consulting and instruction. Importantly, they focus on teaching their clients self-sustaining skills, meaning they don't do the work for them but teach them as they learn, enabling them to eventually work independently. Ultimately, with AI and data literacy, researchers' comfort level with data will determine their success in working with GenAI. ■

Back to the Eastern Front

Improving Access to the Gustav Klemp World War I Collection

By
Amanda Menjivar
Dorothee Schubel



Photographic postcard of Gustav Klemp in his army medic uniform, 1915

The Collection

Gustav Klemp (1882–1941) was a professional house painter from Podgórz in West Prussia who emigrated to the United States in the early 1920s. His memorabilia from the First World War were passed on to the next generations and in 2014 were donated to George Mason's Special Collections Research Center by Klemp's grandson, Richard Passig. This collection, filled with numerous observations and experiences collected during a crucial time in European history is a treasure trove now accessible for researchers. But there is a catch: the texts are in German, mainly handwritten in an obsolete script. How to provide access to interested contemporary individuals?

Transcription

Gustav Klemp utilized Kurrent script, as it was taught in public schools in the late nineteenth century in Germany and commonly used in German speaking countries and communities until the mid-twentieth century. For today's German speakers it is difficult to read. But because Klemp's handwriting is neat and consistent, an AI-based transcription tool would produce a usable machine-readable German text. *Transkribus*, developed in Austria and run by an international cooperative, was the tool of choice.

Translation

Google Translate provided a decent and legible English version on a first pass, but the specialized translation tool DeepLTranslate rendered a text closer to its original language and tone. This text needed only minimal editing.

In the last few years before the war, a dispute arose among the nations every moment over some political matter. Sometimes it was over Morocco, sometimes in Algeria, even in the Balkans there were often disagreements. It had been believed since 1908 that war would break out at any moment, but each time the worst was averted by numerous exchanges of notes. However, the constant and hasty armament of the nations made it clear that things would become serious in the not-too-distant future.

Access to History through Narrative and Images

In 1914, Gustav Klemp was drafted into the German army and served in the medical corps on the Eastern Front. He kept in contact with family and friends by sending postcards and creating pictures and photographs. After the war he drafted a long narrative and described his service time, written down in a very short time span. It is a unique document of his life, of change, and surely of world history.

In the following years Klemp experienced the war on the Eastern Front battling the Russian army. During the spring and summer of 1917, Klemp fought in the Carpathian Mountains of Romania. When in the fall a winter encampment was erected, Klemp took some time and painted a watercolor picture of a nearby monastery—in its front yard fallen soldiers were buried.



Monastery and war cemetery
near Soveja, Romania 1917

In the narrative Klemp evoked the context and atmosphere of this time:

The Romanians also saw our artillery's mistake and when it fell silent again, the enemy was already back on the hill.... Thus ended the attempt to take the left high ground, where we also had to mourn a great loss of dead and wounded. [excerpt of narrative]

Preservation and Universal Access

Gustav Klemp wanted to preserve his memorabilia for future generations. The University Libraries and SCRC safeguard the physical collection and have made its contents accessible in a published finding aid. The fragile objects were digitized in 2019 and published in George Mason's digital image repository LUNA, together with transcriptions and translations of texts on postcards and art works. The text of the narrative in German and in English translation, each encompassing more than 90 pages, can be found in George Mason's digital repository MARS.

Though this collection was physically accessible before this transcription and translation project, now Gustav Klemp's story truly comes to life, and new and deeper historical context can be applied. ■

Finding aid

<https://aspace.gmu.edu/resources/c0250>

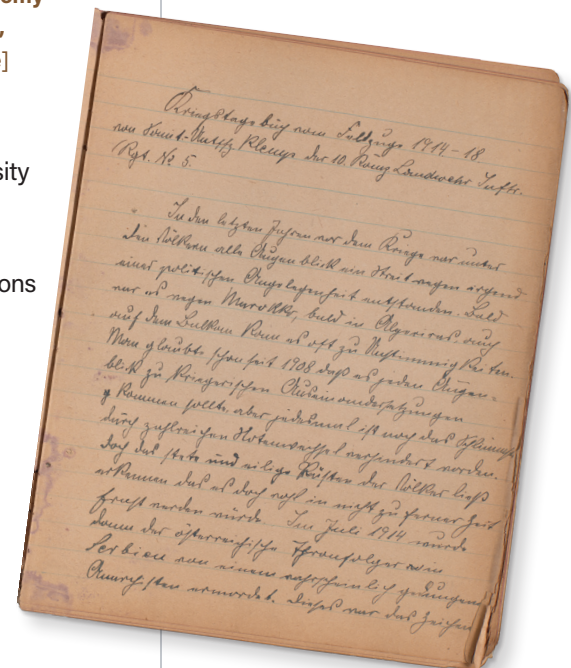
Digitized images

<https://images.gmu.edu/luna/servlet/GMU~11~11>

Narrative, transcription and translation

Gustav Klemp World War I collection, C0250

■ ■ ■ ■ ■



Page one of Gustav Klemp's
Kriegstagebuch

Unlocking Scholarship

How the University Libraries Supports Open Access and the Future of Research

By
Joanna Lee

At its core, open access (OA) is the practice of making scholarly research freely available to the public, without paywalls or subscription barriers. Open access increases the visibility and impact of research by allowing broader audiences—including educators, policymakers, and the general public—to benefit from scholarly findings. George Mason University Libraries offer a suite of digital repository services that empower researchers, students, and scholars to share their work widely and openly, ensuring stable, long-term access to scholarship and fostering innovation and collaboration across disciplines.

A key driver of the increasing demand for repositories is the 2022 Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) memorandum. This directive mandates that all federally funded research publications and associated data be made immediately publicly available starting no later than the end of 2025. The policy expands existing open access requirements to a broader range of funding agencies and eliminates embargo periods, ensuring that publicly funded research is accessible to everyone.

The repository services the libraries support will play a critical role in helping researchers comply. Disciplines such as biomedical and life sciences have established centrally-funded repositories such as PubMed Central, but many fields do not have existing repository infrastructure. Scholars in these fields may increasingly rely on university-hosted repositories to meet public access requirements.

At the heart of Mason's open scholarship efforts is the **Mason Archival Repository Service** digital repository (MARS; mars.gmu.edu). MARS serves as a general repository for Mason-affiliated scholarship, providing a space where researchers can deposit work they have the rights or permission to share.

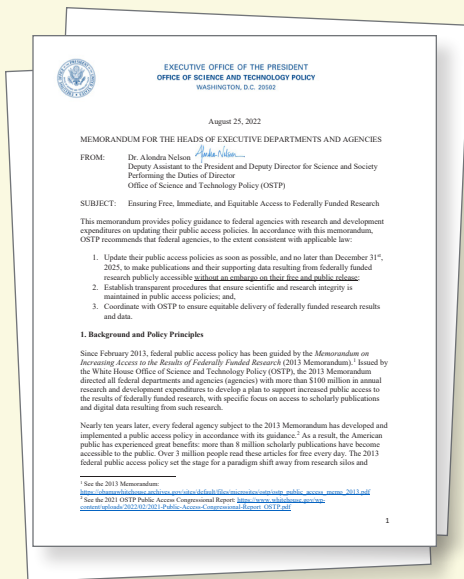
For researchers working with data, the **George Mason University Dataverse** provides a robust platform for sharing final research datasets. Hosted by the Office of Research Computing and managed by Data & Digital Scholarship Services (DDSS), this repository ensures that researchers can store, manage, and openly disseminate their datasets while meeting data-sharing requirements set by funding agencies and journals.

The libraries also provide access to the **Open Science Framework for Institutions** (OSF), a collaborative research management tool hosted by the Center for Open Science (COS), a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing transparency and reproducibility in research. Through the libraries' membership, researchers can associate their projects with George Mason University and share final data and publications. Importantly, OSF is part of the NIH's Generalist Repository Ecosystem Initiative (GREI), which supports researchers in depositing data in generalist repositories when discipline-specific repositories are unavailable.

For scholars in the social sciences conducting qualitative and multi-method research, the libraries' membership to the **Qualitative Data Repository** (QDR) provides access to high-quality data curation and storage services. QDR specializes in preserving and sharing digital data from qualitative research, ensuring that these valuable datasets remain accessible and reusable for future scholarships.

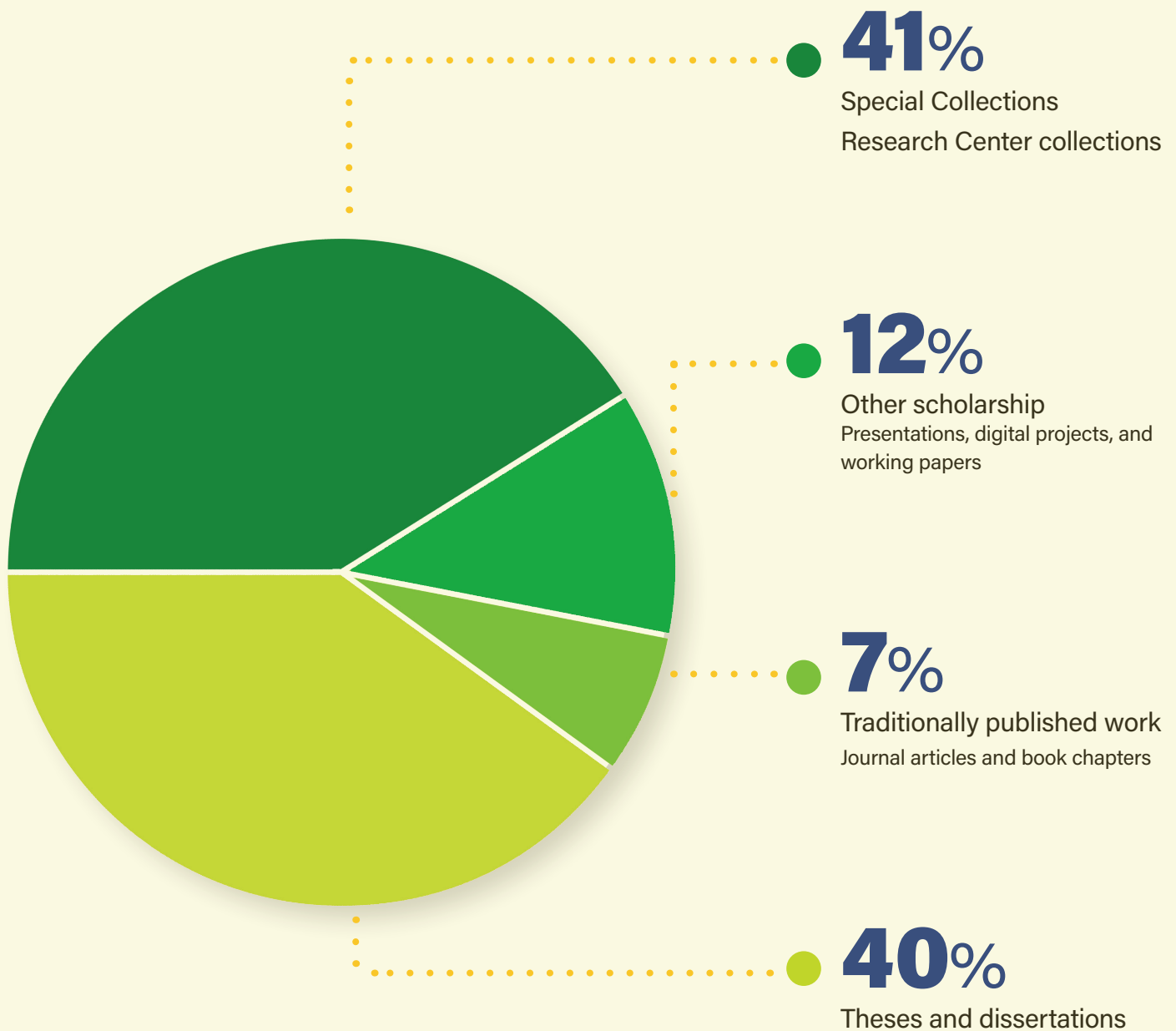
George Mason's digital repositories serve as a vital resource for researchers navigating the evolving landscape of scholarly communication. By providing open access to research outputs, these services support the university's goals of enhancing the visibility and impact of George Mason scholarship while contributing to the global research community. ■

For more information on how to use these repositories or to support open access at George Mason, visit our InfoGuide on repository services (infoguides.gmu.edu/research-support/repository) or contact publish@gmu.edu.



A 2022 memo from the Office of Science and Technology Policy, Ensuring Free, Immediate, and Equitable Access to Federally Funded Research, instructs federal funding agencies to update and implement policies to expand immediate public access to federally funded research data and publications no later than December 31, 2025.

What will you find in **MARS?**



Advocating for Access, One Student at a Time

By Meg Meiman



The Student Libraries Advisory Council is anything but SLAC(K).

The phrase “making libraries accessible” can encompass a range of meanings: for example, seamlessly guiding users to online resources through the website; ensuring that students, no matter what their **mobility requirements** are, can easily enter and navigate the building; or making **library services** much more apparent to students, staff, and faculty. With these examples in mind, and eager to increase ways of getting direct feedback from students about the University Libraries’ services and spaces, the Student Libraries Advisory Council started in June 2024.

Our hope was to recruit a group of students who meet regularly with library staff to communicate their own ideas about the libraries’ collections, services and spaces. We also wanted a group to represent the larger student body’s views of the libraries and, at the same time, communicate information about our resources, services and plans out to the larger student population—with the overarching goal of addressing the present and future needs of the student community. Our goal, in short, was to draw on SLAC’s insights to make the libraries accessible in the broadest possible way.

“The primary role of the Student Libraries Advisory Council is to... increase accessibility to the resources for the entire George Mason community. The council serves as a focus group and advocacy tool to help the library make collaborative decisions [and] meets to discuss how the library can make these resources more accessible to our students. SLAC allows students to voice their perspectives, share feedback, and serve as liaisons to their student communities.”

— Naomi Eskenazi



During summer 2024 we recruited undergraduate and graduate students from George Mason and worked with our group of 12—eight graduate students and four undergraduate students—to set established meeting times for the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 semesters. While recruitment for more undergraduate students is still underway, our current group of SLAC-ers for the 2024–2025 academic year represents most of the major colleges and schools.

From **SLAC’s very first meeting**, student members shared their thoughts and asked questions about subjects ranging from **Fenwick Library’s hours**, to the libraries’ communication channels, to the **website design and layout**. These discussions have been eye-opening (in a good way) for



everyone involved, since they have helped library staff better understand what students—or at least this group of students—are looking for when they navigate the libraries' website, **how they appreciate having a librarian come to their class** (they find it highly useful), and what services they may be unaware of. This last point—what students may be unaware of—surfaced in the first couple of meetings, and points to future directions and goals for both SLAC and the libraries.

Naomi underscored this point about students' awareness of services in describing and what her experience as a member has been like thus far:

“Entering Fenwick Library, I was taken aback by the space and the abundance of resources that were offered. Utilizing these **resources** made me feel I was maximizing my experience at George Mason. I was delighted to later be invited to join the SLAC, as I had formerly been on the team that created a similar council for American University's library. During my time on SLAC, I learned I had only scratched the surface of what the library has to offer.”

— Naomi Eskenazi



In May, a few members of the Student Libraries Advisory Council will graduate so—in the spirit of inclusivity and accessibility—we want to have even more student representation for next year, particularly undergraduates and students from the SciTech and Mason Square campuses. For this reason, meetings will move to a hybrid format, and we are eager to continue, again in Naomi's words, to have “an impact on promoting access to the vast resources the library has to offer.” ■

Noise & Space Assessment

By
Mallory Jenkins

Have you ever gone to the library to work, but couldn't find any quiet space? Have you ever sat in a Whisper or Silent space within Fenwick Library and found you couldn't focus because of how loud it was?

At the University Libraries, we are working to determine how we can create a more accessible environment within our library spaces for all George Mason University affiliates. In doing so, we are also gaining a greater understanding of our student body.

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Accessible libraries provide students and staff with an environment that meets their personal and academic needs. The University Libraries strive to provide a welcoming, comfortable, and safe environment that promotes intellectual exploration, research, and learning. To ensure the University Libraries are meeting student expectations, library users are expected to adhere to the Library Community Standards and Expectations, respect others, and silence their phones. Meeting these standards helps create an accessible library space, but that doesn't seem to be happening at Fenwick Library despite new protocols and campus partnerships with Campus Police put in place by the University Libraries' Access Services and Facilities Management Departments.

Fenwick Library experienced a sharp uptick in noise complaints and incident reports in the academic year 2022–2023 as campus spaces began to loosen social distancing protocols. Disruption in library spaces has continued to increase over time, making what was once a space that aligned with student expectations and needs increasingly more inaccessible and misaligned with noise expectations. Students through various feedback mechanisms, including coming directly to the Information Desk, expressed an inability to focus and work in library spaces where quiet is expected to be found.

What did we do about it?

The Noise and Space Assessment (NSA) was initiated from a desire to assess and identify opportunities to re-shape the current library climate to better serve our students and staff. In a review of previous noise and space assessments completed for Fenwick Library and by evaluating noise policies at other universities, four research questions were set to assess Fenwick Library. In Fall 2024, the NSA project was put into motion looking at a variety of factors library occupancy, exiting signage, furniture placement. Two main data collection activities were completed to collect information on space use, in the form of noise readings, and capturing student perceptions via an online survey.

Assessment Questions

1

Do the current noise zones align with the current student bodies needs and wants?

2

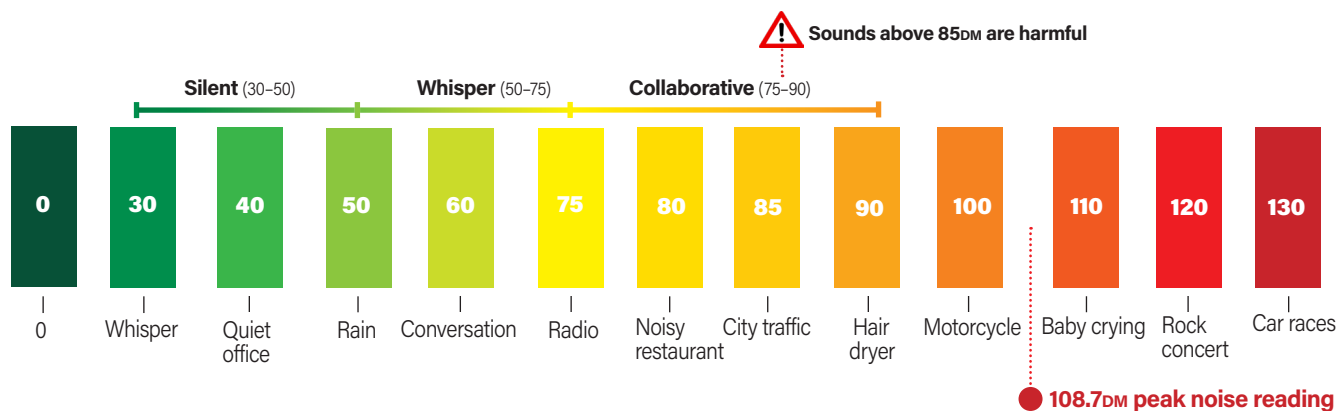
What are the 'correct' noise zone designations for Fenwick Library?

3

How is the furniture in various library spaces impacting the noise levels?

4

How do students feel about the current state of Fenwick Library? What are their concerns?



Noise readings (in decibels) were collected across four weeks of the Fall 2024 semester to encompass both busy and idle times within the academic schedule—this included the first week of class, midterms, a random week, and finals week. Based on the current structure of Fenwick Library, 15 zones throughout all five floors were segmented apart based on several factors taking into account the current noise zones, furniture, and shelving located throughout the building.

To gather student perceptions, an online survey was made available for students to express their preferences and concerns regarding Fenwick Library current noise signage, areas of preference, and meeting student needs. The survey was available through the libraries social media account, emails, and QR codes placed around Fenwick Library and at the Johnson Center.

What did we find?

On average, across all four weeks, none of the seven silent zones recorded within what was established as a silent range (30–50 dB) for the assessment and four of our seven silent zones were consistently reading within the collaborative range (71–90+ dB). Essentially, the noise zones within Fenwick Library seem to be ineffective in conveying what students can anticipate when choosing a location to study or collaborate in Fenwick Library. While you may think, well, if there are a lot of students then it is going to be louder! Surprisingly not! In the second week of data collection, Fenwick Library experienced the highest occupancy, and the lowest noise readings captured in the assessment. And peak noise readings (up to 108.7 dB!) were when occupancy was especially low. What does seem to impact noise levels is the furniture within a zone. Areas with group furniture had the highest noise readings and areas with individual furniture had the lowest. Students provided thorough feedback on their experiences, over half of responders expressed frustration with the high noise levels in the library.

What's next?

The University Libraries plan to use the data and insights collected in this assessment to inform how to reconceptualize the use of Fenwick spaces to support the continual and evolving needs of the George Mason student body. This assessment not only tells us how Fenwick Library space is being used today, but what areas need to be examined for change. The University Libraries are the heart of the university, both physically on the Fairfax Campus, but also in the services and resources provided to students, faculty, and staff. This assessment serves as the foundation to support that vision from a space perspective. ■

Assessment Scale

Decibels [LAeq]
Source: Soundear.com

- Effective noise range
- Harmful noise range
- Peak noise findings

Assessment Timeframe

1

Noise Assessment weeks

First week of classes | Aug. 26–30
Midterms | Oct. 7–11
Random | Nov. 11–15
Finals | Dec 9–13

2

Noise Assessment times

11 am – 12 pm | M–F
2 – 3 pm | M–F
5 – 6 pm | M–F
8 – 9 pm | M–F

Designing with Accessibility in Mind

By
Hannah McLaughlin



At Mason Publishing we are working to make our e-books accessible to all. While we are a small operation and don't have the time and resources to remediate all past publications, one thing we are doing is working to create "born accessible" books moving forward. This can mean different things for different books depending on their intended audience and format, but it essentially means to design our books with accessibility in mind and provide an option for anyone who may need to use assistive technology to access the information in each book.

There are different levels at which we can do this. We focus more heavily on accessibility in the titles we are creating for the George Mason community—specifically for professors who plan to use the books in their classes and make them open access. Books published under the GMU Press imprint, on the other hand, are typically intended initially for print so are limited as to which accessibility features can be applied; however, there are still steps we can take to make sure even these are born accessible and easier to transition into an e-book format.

At the basic level, we are making sure that we can provide an EPUB (electronic publication) version of all of our e-books moving forward. EPUB's are inherently more accessible than other file types, because they allow the reader to adjust font type and size—among other features. We are also designing each book with accessibility in mind from the beginning. This means having a clear hierarchy and reading order and using paragraph styles to delineate headers, sub headers, and body text. We also make sure that hyperlinks include meaningful text, and that the information provided in tables is easily understandable and repeated in captions. We work with our authors to provide alternative text for any images included in each book. Designing with accessibility in mind means making sure there is an appropriate color contrast, and that color is not the only way information is being conveyed. We also make sure that each table of contents is formatted correctly, as well as endnotes, footnotes, and indexes to allow for robust navigation.

In Mason Publishing we use InDesign to typeset and design our books. InDesign is an Adobe publishing software which includes additional accessibility features that can be added to books in the initial stages, or later when transitioning from a print publication to an e-book.

InDesign allows for semantic tagging of various parts of the book before exporting to the desired file type. Tagging can also be added after converting to an EPUB and is much better at providing accessibility than paragraph and character styles alone. We take advantage of the PDF accessibility checker included with Adobe, as well as EPUB accessibility checkers such as Ace by Daisy, and we are working to make sure accessibility metadata is added to our e-books so that those who need these features are able to find them.

These are just a few ways we are working to make our e-books more accessible; this is an ongoing and evolving process, and each book brings its own unique challenges. We are grateful to our library colleagues and George Mason University's Assistive Technology Institute for providing training and resources to help us in this process. Keep an eye out for updates from us as we're currently working with George Mason professors on two open access e-books for classroom use. ■

If you have a book project that you think would be a good fit, please reach out at publish@gmu.edu!

E-book advantages



Screen read.

E-books can be read on many electronic readers: desk and laptop computers, tablets, smartphones, and e-reader devices.



Accessed everywhere.

They are downloadable where the reader is for immediate use or saved for later.



Portable.

Many e-books can be saved on a single device.



Easy on the eyes.

By adjusting screen brightness or using the dark mode eye strain is reduced.



Adjustable.

Type and image size can be enlarged or reduced. On tablets and smartphones, the screen orientation can be changed between portrait and landscape.



Searchable.

Keywords can be digitally searched. Bookmarks make referencing easier.



Interactive.

Embedded audio and videos can enhance the reading experience and included external links can offer additional information.



Text to speech.

E-books with this feature allow anyone to listen rather than read and benefits those with a learning disability or with visual impairment.



Easy updates.

Authors and publishers can update at any time saving time and costs involved with traditional reprints.

Locally Grounded Digitally Boundless

By
Mandy Katz

Putting names to “anonymous” Black faces from 1960s photographs of Loudoun County horse country.... Combing the lines of Mason family account books to track the routes of slaving ships and the lives of individuals they held in bondage.... Probing the fates of “Black lives next door” by tracking our region’s lost or displaced African American communities.... Examining genealogies and deed books to glean the lived experience of local African Americans bearing the name of our county (and its British founders), “Fairfax,” to ask, What’s in a name?

These are just some of the many projects undertaken through the Center for Mason Legacies (CML), a project of George Mason University Libraries and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Even as it grows, CML remains true to its origins in student-led research and dedicated to breaking down barriers between academic scholarship and the communities under study, which is why its research is accessible to anyone with an internet connection. CML’s approach takes aim at other barriers, too, through its emphasis on community history, connecting lay scholars with academics to enrich a traditional archive constrained by the absence of history’s non-elites and “unlettered” actors. Most important, perhaps, for student growth, CML’s pedagogical approach, Affective Historical Praxis, seeks to break down the divide between researchers as people and the subjectivity of those they study.

Since 2018, the center has been demonstrating how campus-centered, locally grounded questions about Northern Virginia can yield insights with national impact and lead to novel research methodologies that researchers can replicate in any region. Today, CML has grown into a research hub that brings faculty, students and community together

to pursue research and learning centered on probing “forgotten” histories and democratizing access to those stories, for further scholarship as well as community benefit.

Gunston Hall and CML founding

It was the forgotten people of Gunston Hall, our namesake’s nearby plantation, that inspired the 2018 summer research project that led to CML’s founding. A cross-disciplinary team of undergraduates, funded by OSCAR and guided by George Oberle, *History Librarian*, with other faculty historians, sought answers to their questions about how slavery supported the lifestyle and leadership of George Mason IV, who was known more for his authorship of Virginia’s Declaration of Rights than for his mastery of a vast slave enterprise. Immersing themselves in the documents and spaces of Gunston Hall, they combined that field work with study of maps and documents, including reading across historic documents and records from multiple regional archives. The names and identities and life details they found returned to the record people whose identities had long been covered over.

CML's approach "Digital Reconnaissance"

The project demonstrates CML's approach of embracing without discrimination a spectrum of methods from the traditional to the cutting edge, everything from old-fashioned, "analog" documentary analysis to geospatial mapping and other techniques of the digital humanities, all in pursuit of what scholar Jamila Moore Pewu calls "digital reconnaissance." What unites all CML projects is a grounding in theoretical frameworks of Black and gender studies and the promotion of "liberatory" scholarship. Much of this work begins at the University Libraries' own Digital Scholarship Center, which trains students in creating interactive online StoryMaps—combining geographical location and narrative—and in creating media-rich online exhibits through Omeka, an open-source web publishing platform (developed, as it happens, at George Mason University).

To ensure broad access to such knowledge, project advisors Oberle, Wendi Manuel-Scott and Benedict Carton—who together would found CML—guided the students to produce digital exhibits, which became part of the ongoing Enslaved People of George Mason project. Ultimately, their work was translated into a moving physical memorial on central campus.

Research categories

CML's research projects today fall into four major topic areas:

- **Black Lives Next Door** draws the region's long race history forward into the modern era through close analysis of our school and campus development and of the region at large;
- **Community Histories** harness our scholarship and digital platforms to connect local history resources and connect lay historians with academic researchers;
- **George Mason, the University** includes examining the role of race in its founding and cultural history;
- **The Mason Family** entails both digitization and traditional documentary editing of papers held by University Libraries as well as projects on regional slavery, the Confederacy and Reconstruction.

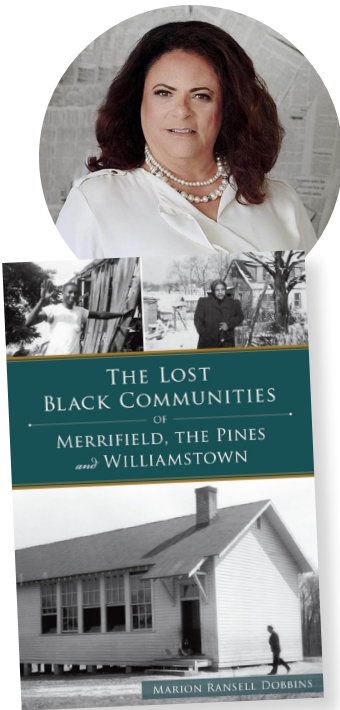
On the pedagogical side, CML practitioners have shared their approach with practitioners and audiences ranging from local high school students researching their families and community, to members of Virginia's chapter of the American Council on Education Women's Network. CML graduate students have also been preparing lesson plans for various educational levels that use historical maps to interrogate historic concepts and documents and using digital resources of the Libraries' Special Collections to examine local and campus history. Like other CML productions, these, too, will be shared online. ■

CML's first project looked behind not just Gunston Hall's front rooms but its narrative, to reveal the denizens of its back stairs. Today, the center applies similar methods to a range of similarly "hidden" people and histories tied to the Masons' legacies.

Capturing Memories

A Profile of Marion Ransell Dobbins

By
Mandy Katz
Tammy Rogers



Top to bottom
Marion Ransell Dobbins and
her publication *The Lost Black
Communities of Merrifield, The
Pines, and Williamstown*

Opposite
A Broad Hoe

An elongated handle gleaned from wooden timbers. The blade, forged by the fire of suffering, cuts the earth with accuracy strengthened by freedom seeking ancestors.

You could almost say that doctoral student Marion Ransell Dobbins was born into her current role of Center for Mason Legacies Community Historian. As a seventh-generation member of Fairfax's African American community, she recalls absorbing tales of her forebears' lived experience as a child at her grandmother's knee in the late 1950s. She early on gleaned the importance of collecting and preserving such oral narratives and has dedicated her adulthood, including her studies at George Mason University, to carrying on in her grandmother's role of community griot, an African term for story keeper, collecting a unique archive of Black history narratives and enriching them with further scholarship.

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CML's mission and method likewise draws on community narrative to fill gaps in our knowledge of how the past was experienced by all kinds of people, broadening archives and accounts built on information from a minority of lettered elites. Community history enables scholarly consideration of artifacts and knowledge collected outside academia, whether in digital, documentary, or narrative form, and stored in the homes, collections, hard drives and minds of private persons and small organizations.

Dobbins has honed the approach through her work and life experience. From YouTube documentaries to papers, lectures and educational programs, she has shared her knowledge with modern audiences through varied outlets. She has at times put her physical presence in service to storytelling: As a costumed interpreter, she channeled an ancestress she learned of from her grandmother, Jenny Williams. Williams, born into slavery, raised her family in a dirt-floored cabin, young Marion was told, cooking all their food in a single pot. Years later, she put those cultural memories to use as she bent over a large stock pot to demonstrate historically accurate eighteenth-century cooking methods for visitors to Monticello.

Dobbins' master's thesis on the Baptist church and community building among freedmen, drew on personal and community narratives, based in the once thriving Black community near Merrifield where she spent her early years. The research grew out of the searing childhood experience of seeing that world torn asunder, her grandmother's tight community scattered in a matter of weeks by the stroke of a bureaucrat's pen. Dry public records can never capture the human drama that ensued when, in 1965, county officials appropriated the small farm community, The Pines, founded by Dobbins' great-grandfather in 1905, as the site for a (never built) school. De facto segregation and the scant compensation provided for their settlement in the county's growing center meant the dislocated residents were exiled far from their generational homes.

That experience of resilience and loss, Dobbins says, and seeing how it broke her grandmother's heart, solidified her commitment to ensuring that the stories of African Americans in Fairfax County are heard and protected. "The good thing about me," she said, "is that I have been here. I'm my own artifact."

Historians have sometimes tended to dismiss oral history as a less than “serious” methodology, but Dobbins’ work, like CML’s, demonstrates its essential utility to scholars. The center’s studies of slavery’s and segregation’s effects in the region show how interviews and personal accounts can be combined with conventional research methods to provide entrée into stories too often buried under dominant narratives.

To surface these stories, Dobbins’ deep community roots enable relationships of collaboration and trust with local African American and history-gathering communities, enabling CML to access local and oral sources otherwise hidden and scattered across the landscape and to learn from those who gathered them. For lay history keepers, she inspires confidence that CML can provide a secure repository and platform for their narratives and, through scholarship, amplify their carefully tended artifacts and narratives, all without coopting their work. Central to this process is CML’s recent relationship, financially supported by University Libraries, with TheirStory, a novel non-profit digital platform for oral history. Dobbins’ community historian role includes mastering and making use of TheirStory’s video-editing, storage and transcription services, which she is already putting to work in oral histories conducted with a local Baptist leader and other community leaders. Most important, TheirStory ensures these narrative riches, rather than moldering in inaccessible academic archives, can be shared widely online. “The University Libraries are deeply invested in applying technology to research and collections work, both to expand our capacity and increase discovery of these important resources. Serving as a Foundational Partner for TheirStory is an excellent example of this work,” said Anne Osterman, Dean of Libraries.

Dobbins brings a sense of urgency to the task, explaining, “We have got to capture those memories before people are gone, because once they are gone, so are their memories.” For her and CML alike, integrating these histories with CML’s educational programs, public lectures, and historical archives ensures that the contributions of African Americans in Fairfax County are accessible, recognized, and valued. More broadly speaking, placing local narratives in conversation with other perspectives safeguards a range of viewpoints, offering a fuller understanding of past change and development in our region and beyond. ■



Bridging Access and Education

An Interview with Korey Singleton



By
Ashley Blinstrub

The University Libraries has strived to ensure that all of our community members can access our spaces and resources. This work has always been a priority but with the updates to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we have been working to understand what this change means for libraries. I sat down with Dr. Korey Singleton, Deputy ADA Director for Accessibility and ATI Manager, to discuss the library's partnership with the Assistive Technology Initiative (ATI).

Can you tell me a bit about your office and the work that you do?

The Assistive Technology Initiative started years ago, and it initially started as a way to provide technology-related accommodations to a faculty member who was blind. It has expanded over the years to include textbook accommodations for students with print disabilities, web accessibility, captioning, etc. We provide technology-related supports and services to individuals with disabilities who need those types of accommodations. So, students with disabilities who need technological support are referred from Disability Services. The ADA coordinator refers to any employees with disabilities who need that kind of support. We also have the broader mission of looking at the accessibility of all the digital assets here on campus; so, not just individual apps or tools used in the office, but our enterprise applications as well. This includes our learning management system, content management systems that host our websites, kiosks and any other platforms that deliver information and services around campus. And then, obviously, in partnership with you guys, our library resources. You guys manage the largest repository of digital content on the campus. And you play a critical role supporting instruction and research here at George Mason University. It makes sense we partner with you to ensure that those digital assets are as accessible as possible.

What are the main implications of Title II for the University Libraries?

I would say this, and this is kind of the way the ATI office has operated over the years, if there is no plan, then you will get sued. If you are planning, then you have a process to remediate content quickly and reduce turnaround times. For example, the ATI has a process for captioning videos. If somebody comes to the library and says, "Hey! This video is not captioned." We have a process to get that turned around pretty quickly, usually within a couple of days they'll have what they need. This is my personal opinion, but I think most people are



reasonable. They're not going to file a lawsuit with that kind of turnaround time. Same thing with a document, we can turn them around on the same day if they are not too big. If they are bigger, we may take a little bit longer, but we can do it.

If there are questions about how we're integrating accessibility into the procurement process, we can answer those questions. If there are questions about how we are approaching the integration of accessibility into the annual reviews of digital repositories that the University Libraries contracts with, we have an answer for that. I think being able to answer those questions and the practical steps we take to move forward are critical to our ability to comply with the upcoming Title II changes.

I think the biggest change that we will see broadly across the country is that institutions are starting to have discussions that they've never had before around digital access. And they're putting plans in place that they never had before. And having those plans will increase communication and increase accountability.

How has this partnership between the library and ATI helped George Mason students?

I think the main thing is it provides access to critical resources for George Mason students. On one hand, we have students who we know still take advantage of the physical location. They offer a quiet space for them to study and learn and to be able to kind of decompress. For those who are using assistive technology and do not have their own device, they have a space to access closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs) or access assistive technology, again, in a space on campus that makes it easier for them to do their work. Also, we can offer accessible



resources to those who need to conduct research or access resources from the library that are being shared in the classroom. Students can stream videos that are captioned. They can download a transcript. They can navigate a library database that is more accessible to them. And if it's not accessible, the library has a point of contact that ATI staff can reach out to and provide them with support. So, I think we are communicating more effectively, and we are working hand-in-hand to ensure that we're starting with accessibility at the very beginning of the discussion. This includes adding accessibility language during the procurement process and more proactively reviewing existing solutions as we go forward.

Can you talk about the history of the partnership between ATI and the University Libraries?

So, when I first came in, that partnership consisted of a series of assistive technology labs. The University Libraries had computer labs and students would naturally come in and access whatever they needed. So, we partnered with the University Libraries to ensure the assistive technology was on some of those workstations.

That's how the partnership started. It has broadened over the years. As the libraries changed, we have adapted based on those changes. The university kind of started pushing BYOD model...bring your own devices to campus. As students started to do that, there has been less of a need for a physical location for assistive technology. The partnership has since shifted to our office, focusing more on the resources that libraries provide. This includes reviewing the libraries' websites, apps, and the articles used for research and instruction.

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“I think the biggest change that we will see broadly across the country, is that institutions are starting to have discussions that they've never had before around digital access.” —Korey Singleton

“We [ATI] can offer accessible resources to those who need to conduct research or access resources from the library that are being shared in the classroom.” —Korey Singleton

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What do you think is important for library staff to know about accessibility?

Accessibility starts from the beginning not the end. So, when you're thinking about purchasing something, when you are talking to vendors about different collections that you might try to bring and make available to the community, that's when the accessibility discussion should be starting.

Sometimes it can be overwhelming because people feel like, well, I'm not an accessibility expert. This is too much to think about. I think the biggest thing with accessibility is picking one thing and starting there. If the only thing you do is make sure the images are accessible (i.e., add alt text), you've done a huge thing. If the only thing you do is ensure all the videos are captioned, that's a huge step forward as well. Because once you've crossed that line, then the next line is a little bit easier. You can take a very targeted approach and stretch it over years if you have to. University Libraries staff might be thinking *what can I do? What change can I affect?* In truth, the staff have a huge impact. That one change reverberates throughout the institution, so those decisions really do have a significant impact. ■

Preserve. Access. Amplify.

The George Mason University Libraries Special Collections Research Center (SCRC) supports the research and teaching missions of George Mason University by collecting, preserving, and providing access to hundreds of archival collections, artists' books and rare and unique publications that document the history of the state and the nation, and supports a multitude of academic programs.

Our mission is to help others know what we have, to amplify our holdings and to help students, faculty, and the larger George Mason community about these materials. Our archivists collectively spend thousands of hours each year making our collections accessible, long-lasting, and sharing our holdings through exhibitions, events, and instructions.

One of the best parts of working at George Mason's SCRC is helping others learn about our collections and the amazing materials that we get to work with every day!

Making these treasures accessible to as many people as possible takes multiple forms, as you will see in these pages. One of these—personally, my favorite—is hosting public events that feature one or more collections with speakers who share their knowledge and experiences related to these materials.

Inside the Vaults

32 **Hayden B. Peake Historical Intelligence Collection**

A large donation, numbering over 10,000 books and magazines, as well as a small manuscript collection,



34 **Zelda Fichandler Papers**

George Mason is the official repository of the Arena Stage Records and the papers of Zelda Fichandler, one of the founders and first Artistic Director of Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage and a leading figure in the regional theatre movement for over 50 years.



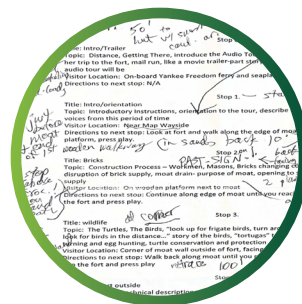
36 **Between the Lines** *Life Within and Beyond the Bounds of World War I*

Selections from SCRC's collections related to World War I will be on display in the SCRC exhibit space at Fenwick Library.



38 **Breaking Down Barriers** *Dr. Joel Snyder Audio Description Archives and the Path to Accessibility*

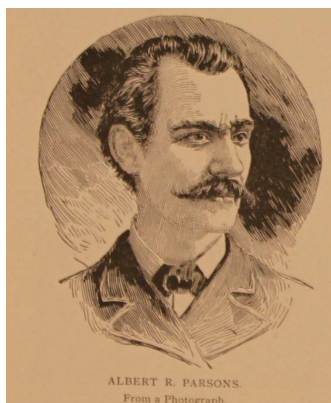
A recent acquisition that is particularly significant because of its collection of papers focus on accessibility and inclusivity.



Historical Intelligence Collection

*Hayden B. Peake and
the Historic Intelligent Speaker Series*

By
Lynn E. Eaton



The “special collections” part of our title is truly appropriate to the collections of related materials brought together by one person.

One of our largest donations, completed in 2021, is the Hayden B. Peake Historical Intelligence Collection. Numbering over 10,000 books and magazines, as well as a small manuscript collection, everything is based around intelligence topics of various sorts.

Preserving History

Peake concluded his lengthy and well-respected intelligence career as the curator of the Central Intelligence Agency's Historical Intelligence Collection. In that position, Peake read and/or reviewed incoming materials to share information with agency members. The CIA collection was created after World War II by the first Director of Central Intelligence, Allen Dulles, to bring together resources old and new for use by the intelligence community. The idea was to create a resource for CIA staff similar to the way a law library serves lawyers: examples of past work, biographies, research materials on functional parts of the job, etc. Dulles' work and vision laid the foundation for curators of the CIA collection beginning in the mid-1950s through years of growth, refinement, and retrenchment.

While Peake managed the agency's collection, he concurrently built his own personal collection of books, pamphlets, magazines, journals, and other items related to the history of intelligence operations the world over. The wide-ranging work of CIA agents and staff—from case officers to technical engineers and analysts (think of the character Q in the James Bond world)—and the variety of cold and hot conflicts around the world in which they played some role is reflected in the diverse subjects and languages represented in the collection. Mr. Peake's work over the past forty years of reviewing, researching, and purchasing titles has created a comprehensive and inclusive collection of many first edition English-language nonfiction books about military and political intelligence. Intelligence work is not a new initiative in international relations, of course, and Peake's collection includes publication dates from the seventeenth century to the present. Mr. Peake sought out works that are in exceptional condition and usually feature original dust jackets; the number of signed and first editions is truly amazing. Peake's collection is also rich in its variety of topics, date range, country of origin, and extent of authors. In addition to the extraordinary depth and breadth of the collection, for anyone interested in the history of intelligence studies, intelligence activities, and their presentation in popular culture, the Peake collection is an excellent resource.

As a part of our Historic Intelligent Speaker Series, in October 2024 we inaugurated the series with an evening meant to honor the work of the donor, Hayden Peake. Mr. Keith Melton, a collector in his own right, was the speaker. Beyond a few intriguing and appropriately mysterious adventures over the years gathering materials for Mr. Melton's own collection that makes a large part of the Spy Museum, Mr. Peake and Mr. Melton have an obvious friendship

5. 3. 34.



It is the generosity of donors, like Mr. Peake and Dr. Snyder, that truly makes the work we do with researchers from around the world, our students, faculty, and our community possible. Join them in supporting these collections at library.gmu.edu/support. ■

Zelda Fichandler | Papers

The movement and evolution of American theatre

By
Meghan Glasbrenner



Zelda Fichandler, circa 1960s
C0010

September 2024 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Zelda Fichandler, one of the founders and first Artistic Director of Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage and a leading figure in the regional theatre movement for over 50 years. The Special Collections Research Center is the official repository of the Arena Stage Records.

Zelda's Legacy

Under Zelda's leadership, Arena Stage expanded both physically, opening a second performance space (the Kreeger Theater) in 1971, and artistically, becoming the first racially integrated theatre in the nation's capital, as well as the first regional theatre to transfer a production to Broadway (*The Great White Hope*), to tour behind the "Iron Curtain" of the Soviet Union (*Inherit the Wind*, directed by Zelda), and the first recipient of the Regional Theater Tony Award. Zelda herself was awarded the National Medal of the Arts by President Clinton in 1997.

To mark this occasion and amplify the rich research opportunities in our holdings, SCRC hosted a speaker's event featuring the authors of two newly published books about Zelda Fichandler's life and work. These featured guests, who were introduced by current Arena Stage Executive Producer and President Edgar Dobie, included Mary Robinson, the writer of the oral history biography *To Repair the World: Zelda Fichandler and the Transformation of American Theater*, and Todd London, compiler and editor of a book of essays and speeches that Zelda herself had begun, but never finished, titled *The Long Revolution: Sixty Years on the Frontlines of a New American Theater*. The event concluded with a Q&A session moderated by Dobie, including questions from the audience, among whom were several individuals who knew and worked with Zelda during her long career at Arena Stage, along with current George Mason University College of Visual and Performing Arts students and faculty. The discussion covered aspects of Zelda's life, the legacy of Arena Stage, and the current state of regional and residential theatre across the country. Following the discussion, attendees were able to view a special selection of items from both the Zelda Fichandler papers and the Arena Stage records, many of which were used by Robinson and London in researching their books and featured heavily in the narrative of Zelda's life and career.

Starting from scratch

However, at the time of its use for these projects, the Zelda Fichandler papers was unprocessed, meaning that while many of the materials had been rehoused in archival boxes and acid free folders, the collection lacked arrangement and description, both physically and intellectually.



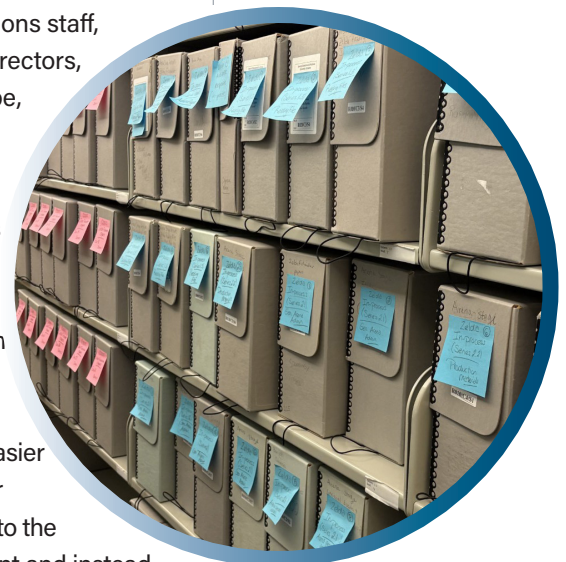
Groundbreaking ceremony for "Arena II" which would become the Kreeger Theater, August 28, 1968.

C0017

That lack of description made it incredibly difficult to access and understand the resource effectively by researchers. With knowledge of the publication of both Robinson and London's books, SCRC made processing of the Zelda Fichandler papers a priority, and work on the collection is ongoing as of this writing. Comprising approximately 105 linear feet of mixed materials, the collection contains the working and personal papers of Zelda Fichandler, with the bulk of the materials centered around her professional career, starting with her founding, along with Thomas Fichandler and Edward Magnum, of Arena Stage in 1950 and spanning through the early 2000s. These items include correspondence about productions staff, and finances, personal and professional communications with playwrights, directors, and actors, speeches and remarks given by Zelda. Given the collection's scope, content, and sheer volume of material, processing is an essential step in achieving SCRC's goals of preservation, access, and availability.

Getting a collection from bare bones description to this fully processed stage is necessary for long-term preservation and access. In her role as Artistic Director for Arena Stage, Zelda engaged in a significant amount of correspondence with actors, directors, writers, and other performing arts professionals. Arranging these various pieces of correspondence by their function as pieces of correspondence first, rather than by the content of the letters themselves, both preserves the content of these conversations over many years and facilitates easier access through descriptive folder titles devised from correspondent last name or organization title and the year(s) of coverage. This allows the most direct access to the collection's content, as it removes assumptions of use through division by content and instead provides researchers with a central access point.

Advancing the Zelda Fichandler papers to this fully processed status will culminate in the publication of a searchable finding aid. Additionally, accurate and complete description reveals the collection's coverage beyond Arena Stage, covering the fullness of the regional theatre movement and evolution of American theater in the second half of the 20th century. ■



The current, in-process state of a portion of the Zelda Fichandler papers

Between the Lines

Life Within and Beyond the Bounds of World War I

By
Meghan Glasbrenner

Selections from SCRC's collections related to World War I will be on display in the SCRC exhibit space at Fenwick Library. Titled *Between the Lines: Life Within and Beyond the Bounds of World War I* the exhibit features photographs, correspondence, journal entries, and other items, including both German and American military experiences and examples of how the war impacted daily life and entertainments. While the bulk of these materials were pulled from three distinct collections, in total the exhibit features materials representing over a dozen manuscript and rare book holdings. The process of conceiving and curating this exhibit relied heavily on SCRC's robust and complete metadata, arrangement, and description of materials in a variety of collections and formats.

Connections and Discoveries through Metadata

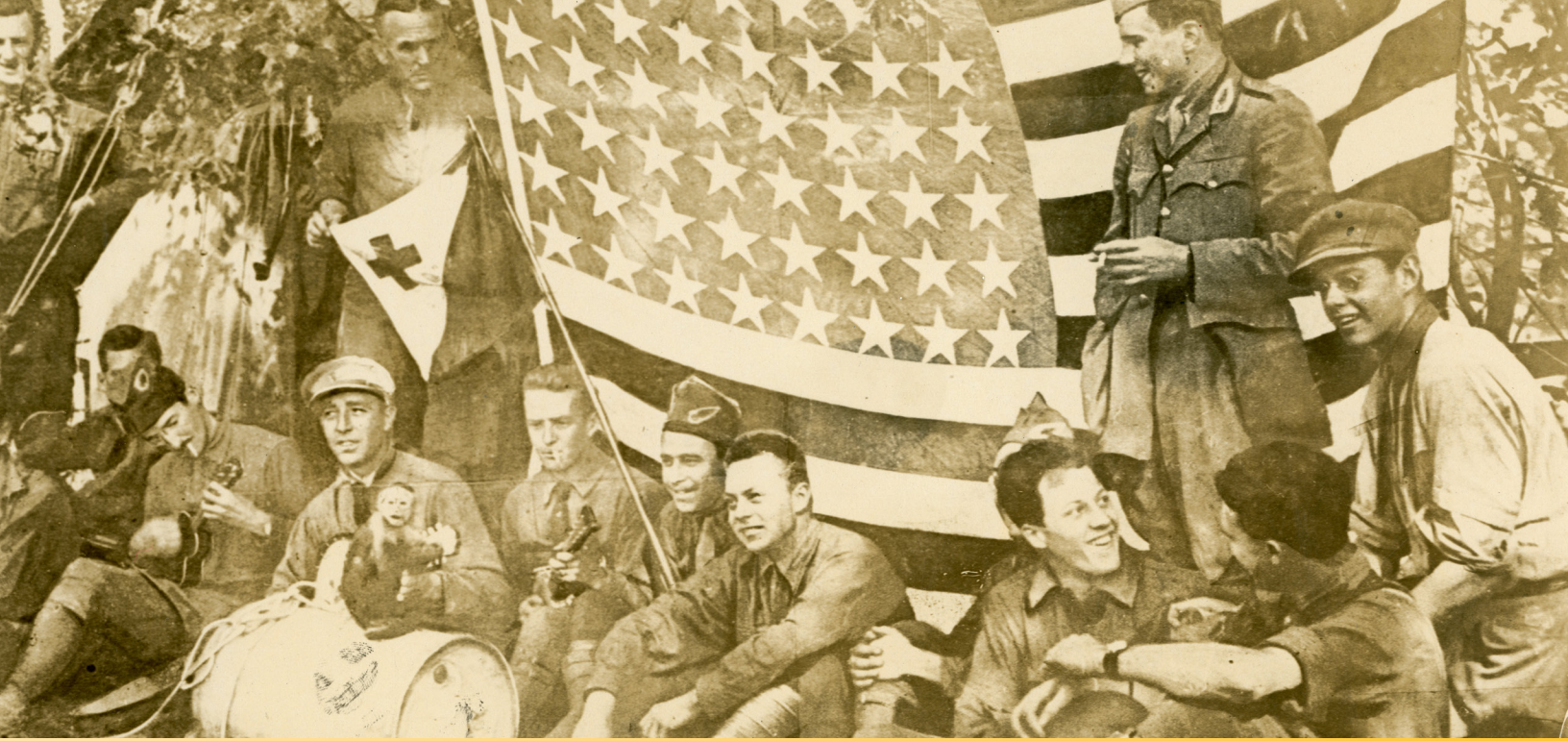
The initial idea for the exhibit came from the recent processing and reprocessing of three directly WWI focused collections. In September 2023, Meghan K Glassbrenner, *Processing Manager*, completed the processing of the Diary of World War I Red Cross Canteen worker Florence Bishop, a single item collection consisting of a handwritten personal diary recounting Bishop's experiences volunteering in France during the war. The second collection, the Gustav Klemp World War I collection, contains certificates, postcards, artwork, commemorative medals, and a handwritten narrative by Gustav Klemp, a Prussian artist and German army medic during the First World War. Reprocessing of this collection included making the German language materials accessible through transcription and translation done by Dorothee Schubel, *Metadata & Cataloging Librarian*, and subsequent updating of the item-level metadata, both in the Finding Aid and digital collection, which Glasbrenner also assisted with compiling. Soon after Glassbrenner began processing the **Thomas Griest World War I collection**, a 10 linear feet collection containing correspondence, photographs, military field orders, and ephemera created and collected by American soldier Thomas Griest primarily during and immediately after his time serving with the 406th Telegraph Battalion in WWI.

Working on these three collections so closely together highlighted the fact that the center had multiple collections of WWI materials. Adding the Library of Congress Subject Heading for the event in creating finding aids revealed another collection in our holding, the **Underwood and Underwood World War I press photographs**, which coincidentally was in the process of being prepared for digitization. But more than just their centering on the same large scale historic event, each of these collections covered different individual experiences within this larger shared experience. While both Klemp and Griest experienced the war as soldiers, they served not just in different armies, Germany and American respectively, but fought on "opposing" sides of the global conflict. Bishop was not only a woman, but a volunteer, experiencing an entirely different side to the war, while the Underwood and Underwood photographs provided another American perspective but one that covered Allied troops from different countries. The collection includes images of everything from the reality of "no man's land" on the Western Front of Europe to Liberty Loan Parades back in New York City.



Bugler August Fest and 406th
Telegraph Battalion "mascot"
Hardtack, circa 1918–1919

Thomas Griest World War I collection,
Detail of C0515



Concert for American soldiers,
March 5, 1918

Underwood and Underwood World War I
press photographs, Detail of C0502

And yet, within these very different experiences, there is commonality in the everyday experiences and practices, such as writing letters and engaging in large and small entertainments. It was this overlap of the personal and the universal that was the inspiration for *Between the Lines: Life Within and Beyond the Bounds of World War I*. But there were still more pieces of the story that needed to be filled in beyond what these collections could offer. This provided us with the opportunity to also use the exhibit to show the connections that exist between seemingly unrelated collections and materials, connections that are only discoverable and accessible through accurate, complete, and robust description and metadata.

For example, something as seemingly small as the inclusion of dates facilitated the discovery of two 1917 United States Food Administration posters promoting civilian conservation of resources for WWI troops in the **Martin Cohen theater collection**, and a 1918 draft classification card in the **Alexander Haight family collection**. Additionally, robust and complete description of collection contents at the folder level revealed that the **Charles Rodrigues playbill** collection contained playbills for Broadway productions of contemporary titles with "The Great War" as a central plot element. This includes one, *The Better 'Ole*, or, *The Romance of Old Bill*, that was written by British humorist Bruce Bairnsfather, whose "Old Bill" cartoons, found in the **Thomas Griest World War I collection**, are also featured in the exhibit. Additionally, collaboration with Metadata Services for our Rare Books collection expanded the scope of the contents for the exhibit, introducing contemporary editions of *Vogue* magazine, a French pocket atlas, sheet music, and later works demonstrating the legacy of World War I, including a 2009 illustrated tribute to poet Siegfried Sassoon's poem "Everyone Sang".

Collectively, the exhibit aims to capture these varied real-life experiences and contemporary accounts, focusing on the war's history, impact on daily life and popular culture, and its legacy following the armistice on November 11, 1918. By pulling from a variety of collections this exhibit also expands awareness of the scope of SCRC's holdings and the importance of complete arrangement, description, and metadata in facilitating these various and potentially unexpected connections and uses. ■



Postcard featuring a photo of three
German soldiers reclining on the
roof of a shelter with dogs, May 14,
1918. Gustav Klump World War I collection,
C0250

Breaking Down Barriers

The Dr. Joel Snyder Audio Description Archive and the Path to Accessibility

By
Annie Waddell

The world can be full of barriers that make it difficult for some individuals to access the same experiences, opportunities, and knowledge as others. For those who are blind or have low vision, these barriers are often even more pronounced when it comes to engaging with visual media. The key goal of making the world accessible is to break down these barriers so that everyone, regardless of ability, can learn about and experience the world. At the Special Collections Research Center, we strive to make our collections accessible to all of our users. One of the latest and most exciting acquisitions is the Dr. Joel Snyder Audio Description Archive—a collection that is particularly significant because of its focus on accessibility and inclusivity.

Audio Accessibility

The collection contains the working papers of Dr. Joel Snyder, a pioneer in the field of audio description for the arts and entertainment sectors. Audio description is a form of accessibility aid designed for individuals who are blind or have low vision. It provides an additional audio track that narrates the visual elements in films, television shows, theater performances, and other forms of media. This narration covers everything from body language and facial expressions to setting descriptions and action details in order to make visual experiences accessible to those who cannot see them in the traditional sense, allowing them to engage with the media on a deeper level.

As the founder and CEO of Audio Description Associates, LLC, Dr. Snyder has spent decades working to ensure that individuals who are blind or have low vision can enjoy the same cultural experiences as everyone else. He has collaborated with museums, theaters, cruise lines, national parks, corporate brands, and entertainment companies to implement audio description services across a wide range of industries. His efforts have helped to transform everything from museum tours to Hollywood films, making them more accessible to those who might otherwise be excluded from fully participating in these experiences.

Snyder's journey in the field began in the 1970s when he worked with The Washington Ear, a nonprofit radio service in the Washington D.C. metro area that provided spoken versions of newspapers for individuals who were blind or had low vision. Through his positions at the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Captioning Institute, and through founding his own company, Audio Description Associates, Snyder helped shape the field into what it is today.

Throughout his career, Snyder has emphasized that accessibility is not an accommodation but a human right. His work intersects with landmark legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and networks like the American Council of the Blind (ACB), demonstrating the essential role of systemic advocacy in fostering equity. The Dr. Joel Snyder Audio Description Archive offer a behind-the-scenes look at the practical strategies, policy engagement, and personal dedication that have driven these efforts forward.



Dr. Joel Snyder, Ph.D. - President
Audio Description Associates, LLC

other seasons?
off gangplank 1. 50' to hut w/ snorkeling, bench
cont. on to 1. 20' bench on 1. turn rt. 4 benches
100' 1. U-turn

Title: Intro/Trailer
Topic: Distance, Getting There, introduce the Audio Tour, introduce characters, Emily holder on her trip to the fort, mail run, like a movie trailer-part story and part selling you on how great the audio tour will be
Visitor Location: On-board Yankee Freedom ferry and seaplane from Key West
Directions to next stop: N/A

On boat or w/ snorkeling or d. load

Title: Intro/orientation
Topic: Introductory Instructions, orientation to the tour, describe how big the island is, the voices from this period of time
Visitor Location: Near Map Wayside
Directions to next stop: Look at fort and walk along the edge of moat until you get to wooden

Just before fort

Stop 1. — *start after getting player nav. to 1st wayside*

Set of handwritten notes that Dr. Snyder created while drafting the audio description tour for Dry Tortugas National Park in Key West, Florida

Preserving a Life of Advocacy

As a dedicated record keeper, Snyder collected a vast array of materials over the years, photographs, reports, publications, pamphlets, memos, letters, and more, that tell the story of the worldwide development of the audio description profession. These materials include both formal documents and more personal communications, offering a behind-the-scenes view into Snyder's experiences and the people he worked with throughout his career.

These papers show a long history of advocacy, highlighting not only the technical and professional evolution of the audio description field but also the personal dedication Snyder showed to making the world more accessible for people who are blind or have low vision. The Dr. Joel Snyder Audio Description Archive provides a glimpse into the efforts of one individual who, for more than four decades, helped build the foundation for a more inclusive world. But the collection, while invaluable, is currently in an unprocessed state.

The Importance of Archival Processing

Thanks to the generosity of the Joel Snyder, his brother Solomon H. Snyder, MD, DSc, Phil, and sister-in-law Eliane G. Snyder, who provided funds to support the processing of this collection, we are now able to take the next step in making these materials accessible. The importance of archivists lies in their ability to take large, chaotic accumulations of materials and turn them into something that can be easily accessed and understood. By making these papers accessible, we are ensuring that Dr. Snyder's legacy will continue to inspire and guide others who are working to build a more accessible world for all.

Continuing the Work of Accessibility

Dr. Snyder has spent more than 40 years breaking down the barriers that prevent people with low vision or blindness from experiencing the world in the same way as others. His work in audio description has changed the lives of countless individuals, giving them access to films, theater productions, museums, and more.

Once the collection is fully processed and available to the public, it will offer a wealth of knowledge and inspiration for those who wish to continue Dr. Snyder's work. The Dr. Joel Snyder Audio Description Archive will stand as a testament to the power of one individual's advocacy and perseverance in making the world a more accessible place for all. ■

Folk Art, Fibers, Feelings, and [re]Formations

By
Liz Johnson

Fenwick Gallery is a unique two-wall space that resembles the shape of an open book. Its walls, much like pages, are filled with stories—visual literature that surrounds viewers with new cultures, ideas, and inspiration. Each exhibition becomes a chapter, offering narratives that are told through artistic expression. What Fenwick Gallery does best is invite students, faculty, and visitors to step into the space and gain access to new worlds—one exhibition at a time.

Flow of Tradition

*Chinese Folk Art
in Lunar New Year*
February 1–18, 2024

Curators

Drs. Lili Zhu and Tao Pang

Visiting scholars, Folklore Department

In collaboration

Dr. Lijun Zhang

Associate Director, Folklore Program

Support

Dr. Lisa Gilman

Professor, Folklore and English

Flow of Tradition explored cultural heritage through Chinese folk art. Lunar New Year traditions are often passed down through families and communities, but this exhibition brought them into a public space, inviting students to connect with a culture they may or may not be familiar with.

The exhibition showcased a mix of historic and contemporary examples of folk arts including traditional paper-cutting, New Year prints, clay sculptures, embroidery, and various handcrafted decorations that beautifully captured the essence of renewal

and celebration. These art forms, deeply rooted in Chinese tradition, are powerfully vehicles for storytelling, symbolism, and community connection. A significant focus of the exhibition was on how folk art is not just a relic of the past, but a living tradition that continues to evolve while staying connected to its roots.

Fenwick Gallery also partnered with the Modern & Classical Languages and several student groups to host a live lion dance demonstration and tea ceremony. This interactive element reinforced the theme of accessibility, transforming the library into a vibrant space of cultural exchange. ■

Metamorphosis

March 11–April 21, 2024

Artists

Jennifer Lillis

Adjunct Professor, School of Art and
MFA Visual Performing Arts, 2019

Christopher Kardambikis

Associate Professor, School of Art

In *Metamorphosis*, faculty artists **Jennifer Lillis** and **Christopher Kardambikis** reinterpreted history by reconstructing ancient narratives through paper pulp. Their works transformed classical figures and myths, allowing viewers to experience antiquity in a tactile, contemporary format. The use of paper—a widely available and often overlooked medium—emphasizes how art can be both physically and conceptually accessible.

The paper pulp used in the works was created from recycled prints as well as dyed abaca and hemp fibers. The artists beat, dyed, and formed the pulp into large sheets, which they then pressed over 19th century plaster casts from the university's collection—pieces originally cast from Greek antiquity through medieval Europe. The process of enveloping these casts with paper introduced fiber arts into the history of these objects, creating a malleable and accessible transformation.

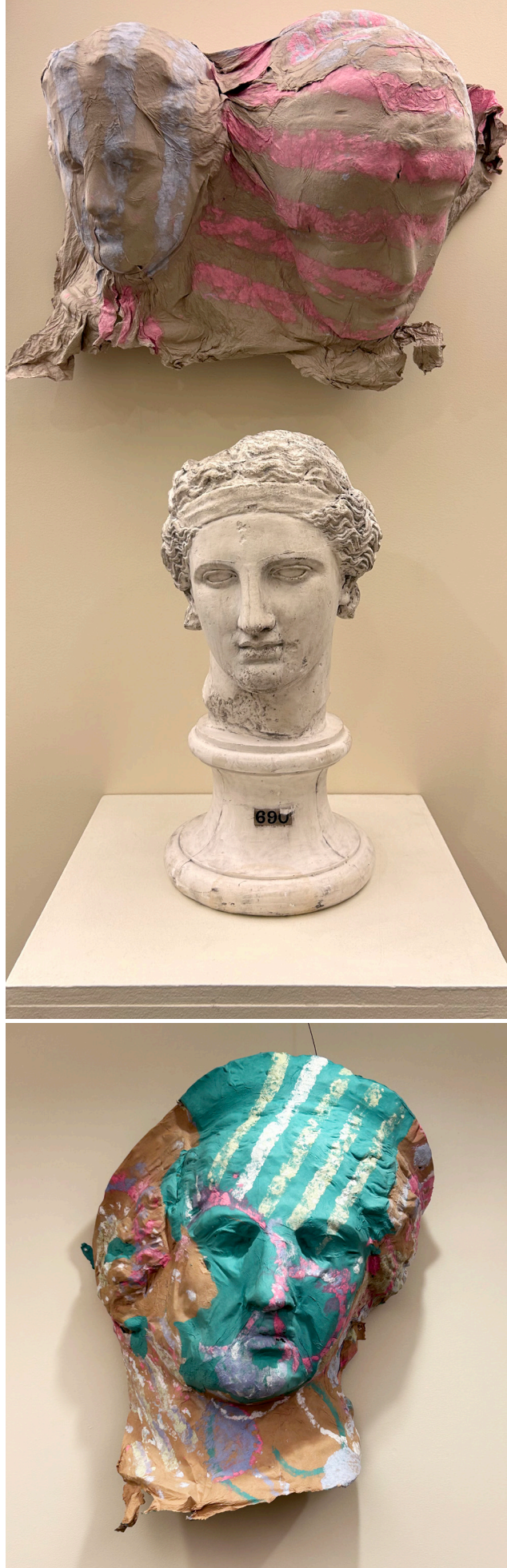
As part of the exhibition programming, Lillis joined Dr. Chris Gregg, Assoc. Professor, *History and Art History*, for a talk on Greek and Roman art, plaster casts, and artistic transformation. Lillis also led a hands-on workshop where participants experimented with paper pulp to create their own sculptural pieces. ■

Opposite

Installation view, *Flow of Tradition*, with costumes pieces from a Lion Dance demonstration

Top to bottom

Installation views, *Metamorphosis*, 2024



blue, as a feeling

May 10–July 20, 2024



Late Comeback Press is a Northern Virginia-based micro press, founded by George Mason alumni Caroline Kim and Rachna Soun. In Spring 2024, the artists returned to campus to work with the AVT class “Dynamic Publishing,” in which students work alongside visiting artists to develop an original publication. In collaboration with the class and Late Comeback Press, Fenwick Gallery organized the exhibition *blue, as a feeling*, showcasing the full catalog of the Press’ work, including poetry zines and comics, with elements from some of the books transformed into large-scale panels and interactive elements on the gallery walls.

Small press publishers like Late Comeback Press are vital platforms for sharing original voices and works that may not otherwise be represented by conventional or mainstream publishing. The Press’s work tends to be existential and introspective, and their small scale of publishing and production allows for a wide range visual and poetic expression. *blue, as a feeling* aimed to create a space that mirrored these qualities, bringing private acts of reading into a public space and blurring the divide between personal and shared experiences. In contrast with traditional exhibitions, where touching the artwork is usually discouraged, this exhibit put all the Press’s publications at hand and encouraged visitors to sit, read, and reflect in the gallery. The exhibition culminated with a book launch for the work produced during the residency with “Dynamic Publishing,” and celebrated the work of the student and faculty contributors. ■



blue, as a feeling

late comeback press
may 10–july 12

Top to bottom

Installation view, *blue, as a feeling*, 2024



RE(FORM)ER

August 26–November 16, 2024

Artists

Jorge Bañales

Steven Luu

Artists **Jorge Bañales** and **Steven Luu** use their work to examine access to personal and social transformation. Their pieces question how individuals navigate identity shifts, cultural expectations, and the structures that shape them. By exploring themes of change—whether physical, emotional, or societal—*RE(FORM)ER* highlights the ways in which art can serve as a means of reinterpreting one's place in the world.

This exhibition's placement in Fenwick Gallery made it particularly poignant, as students themselves are undergoing transitions in their academic and personal lives. The themes of transformation and accessibility resonated within the university setting, emphasizing the ways in which artistic expression can intersect with moments of change. ■

Above
Installation view, *RE(FORM)ER*,
2024

Expanding Artistic Access

Through these exhibitions, Fenwick Gallery demonstrates how access to art is not just about physical entry into a space but about providing meaningful engagement with diverse ideas, histories, and emotions. By integrating art within the university library, these shows ensure that creative expression is woven into students' daily experiences, reinforcing the idea that art is for everyone. ■

Recognizing the George Mason Community

The University Libraries are built not only on books and resources, but on the people who bring its mission to life. The libraries proudly recognize the incredible faculty, hardworking staff, driven students, and generous donors. Whether it's through teaching, learning, supporting others, or giving back, these individuals are at ***the heart of the libraries' success.***



The University Libraries hosted its first Library Awards Night on April 30, 2025 to celebrate our George Mason Community 2024-2025 award recipients.

Celebrating Excellence

46 **Supporting Students**

Undergraduate Research Prize

Graduate Research Fellow

Registered Student Organization Fellowship

Student Assistant Scholarships

49 **Faculty Research**

Fenwick Fellow 2025

Empowering Ideas through Fenwick Fellowships

52 **Staff Recognition**

Distinguished Library Faculty Award 2025

Assessment Fellowships

Staff Excellence Award 2025

Years of Service

Undergraduate Research Prize 2025



Kathryn Orlosk

The 2025 Undergraduate Student Research Prize was awarded to Kathryn Orlosky for her paper, "Temporal and Coinfection Dynamics of Parasite Prevalence and Intensity in Two Estuarine Hosts." The selection committee noted,

"Ms. Orlosky's work clearly demonstrated a careful research design and presented her methods and results in a remarkably cogent and thoughtful manner. Her work filled an important gap in the scholarly literature for her field, and it represents important findings to help better understand the complexity of parasites in crabs and shrimp to the ecosystem in the region."



This year's committee was comprised of George Oberle, *Chair, History Librarian*, Kenneth M. Budd, *Library Advisory Board representative*, Lynn E. Eaton, *Director of Special Collections Research Center*, and Dorothee Schubel, *Metadata and Cataloging Librarian*.

Graduate Research Fellow 2025



Fanni Farago

This fellowship was made possible by "The Student Research Endowment for the University Libraries," which was a funding initiative of the Libraries Advisory Board. This is the inaugural year for this award, and we are excited to be recognizing the research of Fanni Farago, *Sociology PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology*.

Farago's study is titled "In Flux: How Career Services Professionals Adapt to Changes in U.S. Higher Education and Serve Immigrant-Origin Students." The study, which documents the challenges and opportunities career services professionals face in scaling and improving the impact of their work at public institutions, will raise awareness of the complex nature of career services work and inform institutional decision-making around career services resources and accessibility for immigrant-origin students.

This prize was established and made possible through philanthropic gifts from donors.



This year's selection committee was comprised of Elena Landry, *Chair, Global Programs and Foreign Languages Librarian*, Kathleen Kehoe, *Library Advisory Board representative*, Chris Magee, *Social Sciences Librarian*, Megan Reichelt, *Theater, Dance, and Women & Gender Studies Librarian*, and Bob Vay, *University Archivist*.

Registered Student Organization Fellowship

The libraries would like to congratulate the recipients of the Registered Student Organization Fellowship, **Crochet for a Cause**!

Crochet for a Cause, is driven by a simple yet powerful mission: to channel the art of crochet into creating positive change. Through our creative stitches, we weave together a community dedicated to crafting with compassion and purpose. By crafting items such as blankets for the homeless and caps for premature babies, we intertwine our passion for crochet with a commitment to making a difference.

The RSO Fellowship will provide an available space for RSO meetings, award funds for library-centered events or programming, and more



This year's selection committee was comprised of Maoria Kirker, *Chair, Lead, Teaching and Learning Team*, Nicole Gordon, *Collection Assessment Specialist*, and Marissa Burkland, *Science & Data Librarian*.



Members of Crochet for a Cause



Student Assistant Scholarships 2025

Two undergraduate students were selected to receive the 2025 University Libraries Student Assistant Scholarship for the 2025-2026 academic year.



Nicolo Miguel Ofilas Ulit

Undergraduate student worker in
Access Services

About the Scholarship

The Student Assistant Scholarship endowment for the libraries was established through Giving Day efforts by the generosity of the University Libraries Advisory Board and George Mason alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of the university. The purpose of the endowment is to award scholarships each year in order to assist student employees of the libraries with their educational expenses.



This year's selection committee was comprised of Chris Magee, *Chair, Social Sciences Librarian*, Kathy Perry, *Library Advisory Board representative*, Raeshelle Cooke, *Computing Librarian*, and Lorena Jordan, *Policy and Government Librarian*.



Livia B. Santos

Graduate student worker in
University Records Management
at the Special Collections
Research Center

“Each year, the libraries have the privilege of awarding scholarships and research grants to students thanks to the generosity of our donors. Dedicated donors created the University Libraries Research Endowment because they understood the critical need to nurture research in all of its many forms.”

— Kendra Brown
Director of Development



Fenwick Fellow 2025

Dr. Manjusha Nair

The University Libraries are pleased to award Dr. Manjusha Nair, Associate Professor Department of Sociology and Anthropology, the 2025 Fenwick Fellowship for her strong proposal, *Enduring Pasts, Hopeful Futures: India, Africa, and the Possibilities of a Shared World*.

Project Summary

The Indian Ocean networks, which emerged in 800 BC, connected Asia, the Middle East, and Africa by moving objects, cultures, ideas, and people. These networks involved social exchanges that went beyond the market and showed ways of co-existing in this world that was more reciprocal than stratified. They were interrupted by Western colonialism from the 16th Century, under which the Indian Ocean became a conduit in the circuits of capital. Nevertheless, historians argue that the circulations across the ocean continued creating an often unsettled but organic unity between India and Africa, at least in the port cities. With the end of colonization, the efforts to envision postcolonial solidarities based on these past connections never materialized. Under the aegis of contemporary globalization, there is once again a flurry of movements between India and Africa across the Indian Ocean. What forms do they take? What exchanges and reciprocities do they enable? What possible communities do they create? These questions form the basis of my second book project, *A Crisscross World: Africa, India, and the Indian Ocean Present*.

“ I am honored to be a Fenwick Library fellow this year. At Fenwick, I will use two databases: World Newspaper Archive, African Newspapers, Series 1, available from 1903 through 1922, which provides more than 70 searchable African newspapers published in Sub-Saharan Africa, and Struggles for Freedom: Southern Africa database maintained by JSTOR, within which I will focus on E.S. Reddy India and Southern Africa Collection, to examine Indian support for the anti-apartheid movement.”

Award Presentation

In recognition of the award, Dr. Nair will present the results of their research project to the University community at a public Fenwick Fellow Lecture in Spring 2027. ■



Empowering Ideas

Through Fenwick Fellowships

By
Viviana Calderon

This spring, the Fenwick Fellows Lecture Series kicked off with three exceptional presentations. On April 8, 2025, the University Libraries welcomed Jesse Kirkpatrick, Huwy-Min Lucia Liu, and Amaka Okechnukwu, to discuss the research findings from their fellowships.

The Fenwick Fellowship is awarded annually to one or two George Mason tenured, tenure-track, or multi-year appointment term faculty members to pursue a research project that uses and enhances the libraries resources while advancing knowledge in their field.

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Jesse Kirkpatrick

AI Strategies

Cultural and Institutional Shaping of Global AI Infrastructures and Security Implications

Abstract. This talk explores how cultural values, and institutional priorities influence the development of artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructures on national and global scales.

By examining economic and cultural determinants across different countries, this project aims to better understand how these factors shape AI strategies and their subsequent effects on national and international security. Drawing insights from a three-year, \$1.39 million research project supported by the Department of Defense, the discussion will shed light on the comparative contexts of AI and their implications for global security dynamics.

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Huwy-min Lucia Liu

Governing Nature in China
The Emergence of the Chinese National Park System

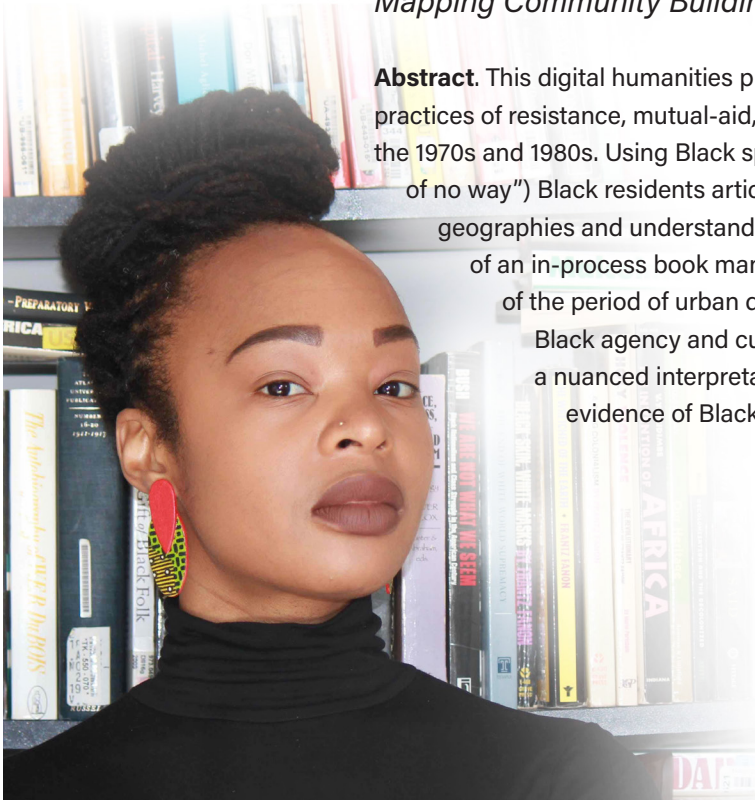
Abstract. In 2021, the Chinese government inaugurated its first five national parks. Intriguingly, China had already established a variety of protected areas prior to this. As such, the creation of the Chinese national park system is not a story of a new environmental commitment to conservation. Instead, it reflects the emergence of a new approach to governing nature in China. This project explores what the Chinese national park system is, how it has come into being, and why at this particular time, aiming to understand both how nature is governed in China and how this governance has evolved.

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Amaka Okechukwu

Black Belt Brooklyn
Mapping Community Building and Social Life during the Urban Crisis

Abstract. This digital humanities project aims to map, illustrate, and historicize Black practices of resistance, mutual-aid, institution building, and vitality in Central Brooklyn during the 1970s and 1980s. Using Black spatial production (or an emplaced “making a way out of no way”) Black residents articulate a Black spatial experience counter to official geographies and understandings of urban space. This project, a digital component of an in-process book manuscript, aims to push scholarly and popular understandings of the period of urban decline, and particularly conclusions generated about Black agency and cultural responses to urban decline, in order to provide a nuanced interpretation grounded in oral history, archival, visual, and spatial evidence of Black life. ■



Distinguished Library Faculty Award

2025



Janna L. Mattson, *Online Learning Coordinator and Instruction Librarian*, has been with the George Mason Libraries for 18 years. She was recognized by the selection committee for how she “ably manages the Libraries’ virtual reference service, which takes significant time and organizational abilities to coordinate each semester”; how she “has been instrumental in collaborating with stakeholders within the Libraries and other university units to ensure a smooth transition from Blackboard to Canvas”; and that she is “an incredibly prolific and highly regarded scholar with an impressive scholarly output.” Janna’s strengths as a supervisor were also highlighted, and one of the supporters for her nomination wrote, “Janna’s ethic of care and her ability to manage employees as whole people set her apart as an extraordinary leader.”

The University Libraries commends Janna for her contributions to the George Mason University Libraries and George Mason University community. The Award will be presented officially at George Mason’s annual Celebration of Teaching Excellence ceremony, hosted by the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning.



This year’s selection committee was comprised of Alyssa Fahringer, *Chair, Digital Scholarship Consultant*, and including Alex Baker, *Head, Science and Technology and Mercer Library*, Lara Bushallow, *Director, Digital Technologies and Services*, Michael Hunter, and Kaitlyn Kinney, *Head, Access Services*.



Elise Mertz

Assessment Fellowships

2024 — 2026

The University Libraries Assessment Fellowships are intended to support and promote the growth of assessment expertise and generate informed outcomes. Eligible library faculty or staff were encouraged to submit proposals. The fellowship provides additional annual compensation to acknowledge the work done above and beyond current responsibilities. Professional development support of either fully funded attendance at the Library Assessment Conference in November 2024 or relevant training, such as from online sources.

Two fellowships were awarded in the cycle of September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2026.

Elise Mertz, *Online Learning Specialist*, for an assessment of the effectiveness of the information literacy tutorials on the libraries’ How Do I...? webpage, and

Cindy Badilla-Meléndez, *Music and Media Librarian*, for a collection assessment of the libraries’ streaming video collection. Both projects will demonstrate important assessment outcomes for the libraries as well as build internal expertise related to assessment.



Cindy Badilla-Meléndez

Staff Excellence Award

2025

Sarah Madorma, *Teaching and Learning Assistant*, consistently steps up to take on additional instruction when her team is short-staffed and often teaches at the level of a librarian. Her dedication to student learning is reflected in her leadership in assessment, including her significant work on the Student Learning Assessment Plan and her development of a self-paced assessment training for library instructors. Sarah's commitment to accessibility, including her work with the ATI Lab and her creation of library-wide trainings, contributes to the library's impact by helping our materials be accessible to all. She embodies a positive attitude, and her creativity and collaborative spirit have made a profound impact. Sarah's work truly enhances the library's mission by improving student learning, fostering inclusivity, and transforming the teaching and learning environment at George Mason.



Pesu Cadmus, *Research and Instruction Support Specialist*, has gone above and beyond in supporting our students, faculty, and staff. His work has been integral to the growth and continuity of these programs, providing essential instruction, consultations, and resource support. Pesu's dedication is further exemplified by his active participation on multiple library-wide committees, his contributions at outreach events such as SmartStart and De-Stress Days, and his unwavering positive attitude, which fosters collaboration and community. He consistently approaches challenges with creativity and a can-do spirit, as seen in his contributions to visual design projects to support student outreach for the library. Pesu's efforts have not only enhanced the library's operations and services but also created a more supportive and engaging environment for all.



This year's selection committee was comprised of Elise Mertz, *Online Learning Specialist*, and including Tammy Rogers, *Executive Assistant*, and Emily Nilson, *Database Integrity and Analysis Specialist*.

Years of Service

We recognize the following libraries faculty and staff for their service to George Mason University and/or the Commonwealth of Virginia.



5 Years

Andrew Rouser

Director,
Mason Publishing

Emily Nilson

Database Integrity and
Analysis Specialist

Elise Mertz

Online Learning
Specialist

David Lemmons

Instruction Coordinator

10 Years

Bradley Saunders

User Services and
Experience Coordinator

Melody Kujat

Collection Strategies
Specialist

Alyssa Fahringer

Digital Scholarship
Consultant

15 Years

Joanna Lee

Digital Publishing Lead

20 Years

Elyse Becker

User Services Specialist

Jessica Bowdoin

Head, Resource
Licensing and Delivery

25 Years

Shannon Hogya

Access Services
Assistant and Document
Fulfillment Coordinator

Paul Coley

Cataloger and
Binding Specialist

Chan Chet

Library Systems
Administrator

30 Years

William Perrin

Access and Consortial
Loan Specialist

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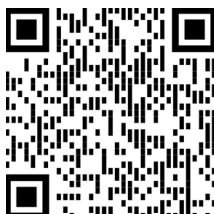


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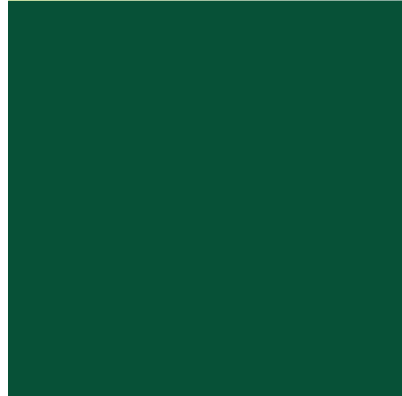
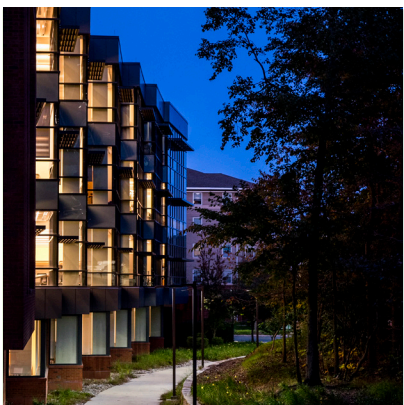
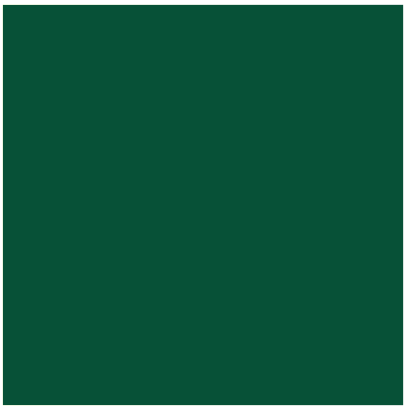
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