



PERSPECTIVES

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Oberlin Celebrates OhioLINK Membership

Oberlin's status as the first private liberal arts college library to join OhioLINK was celebrated at a ceremony in the Main Library on Monday, January 15. Participants in the celebration included Tom Sanville, Executive Director of OhioLINK; Ray English, Oberlin's Director of Libraries; and Karen Wolff, Dean of the Conservatory, who read remarks on behalf of President Dye.

OhioLINK is a broad-based consortium of Ohio academic institutions that greatly facilitates the sharing of library resources. OhioLINK functions through a central online catalog and circulation system that reflects the holdings of all participating

libraries. The OhioLINK database currently contains almost six



Tom Sanville, Executive Director of OhioLINK, welcomes Oberlin to membership

million titles representing over 20 million items.

With Oberlin's participation in OhioLINK, faculty and students use OBIS to search the OhioLINK central catalog and request books

directly without library staff intervention. Books are sent from participating libraries via a rapid delivery system, arriving usually within two or three days of a request.

Ray English characterized OhioLINK as a "state-of-the-art system for sharing academic library resources." "It's the envy of other states, a model that is being copied due to the enormous improvements it brings in access to library resources. Participa-

tion in OhioLINK marks a major milestone that increases enormously the library resources we can provide for Oberlin students and faculty," he said.

—continued on p. 7

Approval Plans: A New Era in Collection Development

This spring the library will begin a series of approval plans for several academic departments in an initiative designed to improve the process through which books are selected and added to the collections.

Approval plans are established through an arrangement between a library and a book vendor. They function according to profiles that

represent carefully chosen criteria for book selection. Under such plans, the book vendor automatically sends to the library titles fitting these criteria. Those books that match the library's collecting needs are added to the collections and those not considered desirable are returned to the vendor.

In recent months the library staff have been working with

faculty in several departments to finalize the approval plan profiles. Once the plans are activated, faculty and library staff will review the books that begin to arrive on approval. The new approval plans should enable the library to provide quickly and routinely a high percentage of titles that would otherwise require more

—continued on p. 3

Sven Birkerts: *The Gutenberg Elegies*

That we live in an "Electronic Age" is indisputable. However, at just what point the age became "Electronic" and assumed its capital-letter status remains interestingly much less clear. One might imagine the pause at the cross-



Sven Birkerts

roads, a dispassionate critique of choices, and perhaps even an affectionate, lingering look at the ebbing world of the codex book. But if pause there was, it was only momentary, for the haste to greater technology has seemed to proceed largely unimpeded. It is against this backdrop that Sven Birkerts' *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age* (New York, 1994) has made its striking appearance: it is a critique and a lingering look at a crossroads now past.

Birkerts' essays are the wide-ranging musings of a consummate book lover, sometimes probingly critical, sometimes richly autobiographical, invariably aimed at teasing apart what it means to read and how that meaning is challenged by the "Electronic Age." The question of meaning may be tauntingly complex, but one suspects that for Birkerts reading

is never far from reverie. It becomes the experience of resonance, the indulging of a "subjective associative impulse," "the slow and meditative possession of a book." Memorably, he writes, "We don't just read the words, we dream our lives in their vicinity."

The scope of Birkerts' criticism is broad, ranging from audio books to CD-ROM pedagogy, to Stuart Moulthrop's interactive novel, *Victory Garden*. And his critique proceeds out of his closely considered *experience* of the act of reading, experience forged as a youthful denizen of the used-book-store scene, a young would-be novelist, and, today, a prominent essayist and critic. His visit to Oberlin (April 24, 4:00 pm), under the auspices of the Friends of the Library, promises both to challenge and amply reward.

Steven Plank
Professor of Musicology

Friends of the Library Spring 1996 Programs

Thursday, February 22, 4:00 p.m., Kendal Auditorium

Faculty Book Talk by Wendy Kozol, Visiting Assistant Professor of History, author of *Life's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism*

Wednesday, March 20, 4:00 p.m., Wilder 101

Faculty Book Talk by June Goodwin and Ben Schiff, Professor of Politics, authors of *Heart of Whiteness: Afrikaners Face Black Rule in the New South Africa*

Wednesday, April 24, 4:00 p.m., Wilder 101

Sven Birkerts, author of *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*, will speak on "Reading: From Atom to Bit"

Saturday, April 27, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Art Library

"Researching Your Art Object," short course taught by Jeff Weidman, Art Librarian

Sunday, May 5, 2:00 p.m., Library of Congress

Baltimore-Washington Regional Program at the Library of Congress, "Change Before Our Eyes: The Developing Electronic Library"

Saturday, May 25, 3:00 p.m., King 106

Commencement Weekend Program. Speaker: Milton J. Yinger, Emeritus Professor of Sociology

Approval Plan...from p. 1

labor-intensive selection and acquisition, freeing both faculty and librarians to focus on higher-level collection development work. Since they entitle the library to better discounts, the plans will also help hold down costs. The library expects that as much as 20 percent of the books it acquires each year will come through the approval process.

While the plans represent a new acquisitions process for many faculty and library staff, the Conservatory Library has had a successful approval plan since 1988. Approval plans have also been an important collecting tool in many large academic libraries for over three decades. The library expects the approval plans to change and grow with time, as staff and faculty become more familiar with them and as Oberlin's curriculum changes.

Ben Custer Named Honorary President

Benjamin A. Custer '31 was named Honorary President of the Friends of the Library at the organization's annual dinner on November 4.

Mr. Custer has remained interested in and committed to the Oberlin College Library throughout his distinguished career as a librarian and in his later retirement. He has been a member of the Friends of the Library Council since its inception in 1991, and he has also served on the Library Visiting Committee since 1989. In 1990, he and his wife Emiko, who is also a retired librarian, established a life income trust that represents the single largest gift to the library by an individual donor.



President Dye congratulates Ben Custer

This trust will eventually become a major discretionary endowment fund. The portion of the fund that is already in place supports the publication of *Library Perspectives*.

Friends Honorary and Life Members

The Friends of the Library awarded one honorary and two life memberships at their annual dinner on November 4. Honorary membership recognizes extraordinary contributions or outstanding service to the Library or the Friends of the Library, while life membership honors individuals who have made generous contributions to the Library or to the Friends.

William G. Roe

'64 was designated an honorary member in recognition of his exceptional support for the Friends of the Library and the Library generally. In 1991 he provided a generous membership challenge which was instrumental in the success of the first Friends membership drive. In recognition of this challenge he was named the first life member of the Friends of the Library in that same year. In 1992 he joined with Wallace



Drs. Chuang receive Life Membership certificate from William Perlik, Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Sprague '38 in another successful matching gift challenge to boost membership in the Friends. Mr. Roe has served as chair of the Library campaign, and he has been a member of the Library Visiting Committee since its inception in 1989. He recently made a substantial gift that is being used to establish an endowment for library preservation and to fund a two-year project to convert bibliographic records for scores in the

Conservatory Library to machine-readable form.

Drs. Wuu-Shung and Mann-Mann Chuang

were awarded life memberships. The Chuangs have used the remainder of matured gift annuities, which they established in the 1980s, to create a Chinese Language Book Fund. This generous endowed acquisitions fund will be used to purchase Chinese language books published in Taiwan and China in support of the East Asian studies program.

Life membership was also awarded to an anonymous donor who has established a generous acquisitions endowment fund in order to help maintain the Library as a leading scholarly resource. Income from this fund will be used to purchase scholarly materials addressing areas at the forefront of the natural sciences or humanities.

Purchases with Friends Funds

In October the Friends Acquisitions Committee authorized the use of Friends of the Library funds to acquire a variety of resources that will improve support for selected curricular areas and generally enhance the Library's collections. The following is a summary by category of the most recent Friends purchases:

Major Reference Work (\$2,250)

The *Dictionary of Art* (Grove's Dictionaries, 1994-) is the new, comprehensive, definitive English language reference encyclopedia of art and art history (to be completed in 34 vols.). The Friends continue to allocate funding for this important reference source.

Enhancing New Curricular Areas (\$7,000)

1. Professor Eva Florensa, Spanish Language and Literature, is working to fill gaps in the collection of medieval to eighteenth-century literary texts and criticism in Spanish literature.

2. Professor Davida Gavioli, Italian Language and Literature, is surveying library holdings to fill gaps, particularly in Italian language texts by important contemporary novelists and poets.

3. Professor Lynn Lukkas, a new faculty member in Studio Art, is offering courses in basic techniques and concepts used in

interactive and time-based media, such as video and digital imaging.

4. Professor Thomas Newlin, Russian Language and Literature, who offers courses in nineteenth-century Russian poetry and prose (Dostoevsky, Pushkin, and Tolstoy), is identifying additional Russian and English language texts for the collections.

Funds provided by the Friends will significantly enhance the Library's collections in support of each of these areas.

Multicultural Acquisitions (\$1,000)

This funding will be used to acquire titles particularly in the areas of Hispanic and Native American studies. These materials will help the Library respond to both the curricular and extra-curricular needs of Oberlin's increasingly diverse, multicultural student body.

Video Materials (\$1,500)

The use of video-based instructional materials continues to increase, especially in such areas as African-American Studies, English, History, Religion, Sociology, Theater, Women's Studies, and the Conservatory. This additional funding will help develop the Library's core collection of important, high quality video materials for use in teaching.

Anti-Slavery Materials (\$2,000)

This funding complements prior Friends' allocations and permits continued acquisition in this area as materials become available on the market.

First Editions and Rare Books (\$1,500)

These funds will be used to continue acquiring first editions of literary works and other rare books for the Special Collections Department. Such materials support specific courses in areas such as Art History, English, and History.

1995-96 Council Friends of the Oberlin College Library

Benjamin A. Custer '31,
Honorary President
Marian H. Baum, President
Ruth I. Hughes '85,
Vice President
Nathan A. Haverstock,
Secretary
Nancy Cooper '51
Cathlin Davis '96
Samuel Goldberg
George and Jane Hannauer
Robert H. Jackson
Marlene D. Merrill
Carl Peterson
Lois G. Peterson '37
Mary E. (Molly) Raphael '67
Barbara Richards '61
Steven Valdez '96
Janice Zinser

Ex-Officio and Appointed Members

William Rothstein,
Chair, General Faculty
Library Committee
Eric Carpenter, Collection
Development Librarian
Jessica Grim, Reference
Librarian
Ray English, Director of
Libraries

Friends Meeting Highlights

At their annual meeting on November 4, the Friends of the Library considered reports from standing committees and elected council members and officers for the coming year. The organization also voted to provide monetary support for the Metcalf Student Assistant dinner, which each year honors the library's outstanding student assistants who are graduating.

A major portion of the meeting consisted of a very lively

discussion that generated numerous ideas for future activities, including ways to increase membership and support for the library, as well as possible directions for programming and increased publicity.

Minutes of the Friends Council and Membership meeting are available on request from:

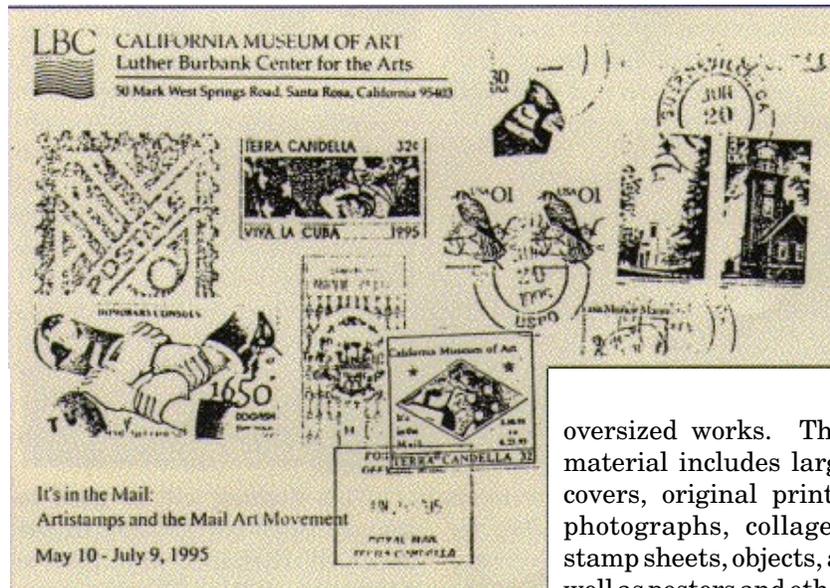
Friends of the Library
Mudd Center
Oberlin College
Oberlin, OH 44074-1532.

Art Library Acquires Terra Candella Archive

The Friends of the Oberlin College Library have recently made it possible for the Clarence Ward Art Library to acquire an important archive of mail art. The archive was assembled over a twenty-year period by Harley (Harley Francis), a painter, sculptor, draftsman, printmaker, and important figure in the mail art movement, who worked, taught, exhibited, and curated shows in and outside of Oberlin for nearly twenty-five years before his move to California in 1989. The name of the archive is Harley's own designation for his artistic production and participation in the mail art movement.

Mail art, also known as stamp or correspondence art, is a unique artistic movement in which the results of the art-making process are included in and are, in fact, the material constituting the correspondence, thereby combining mental and material process and product. Initially begun to circumvent the often stultifying and exclusive art gallery system, mail art soon developed into a bona fide artistic movement, prompting numerous exhibitions, serious criticism, and an extensive body of scholarly literature.

The Terra Candella Archive includes the work of 1,254 artists and contains works in a wide



From the Terra Candella archive

variety of media, with an emphasis on artists' stamps. The archive consists of three sections. The first includes over 3,300 covers (envelopes) of artistic and philatelic note and over 850 sheets of artiststamps, not including the hundreds of single stamps or stamps on covers, thus making the archive one of the largest collections of artiststamps in existence. This section also contains over six hundred catalogues and periodicals, thus providing a unique source for tracing the history and evolution of mail art.

The second section of the archive consists of some three hundred three-dimensional or

oversized works. This material includes large covers, original prints, photographs, collages, stamp sheets, objects, as well as posters and other forms of documentation

for mail art and artiststamp activity.

The third part of the archive consists of Harley's original mail art material. This collection of over five hundred pieces includes Harley's original stamps, other of his original art works, printer's proofs, and a group of studies in various media.

As a complement to the Art Library's growing collection of artists' books, the Terra Candella Archive provides unique and invaluable pedagogical and research material for Oberlin College students, faculty, and Art Museum curators—as well as students and scholars beyond Oberlin.

Covell Gift of Art Books

Jon Carter Covell '30, Professor Emerita of Art History at California State University, Long Beach, has donated a substantial portion of her personal collection of books and slides to Oberlin.

Professor Covell is the author of several books on Japanese and Korean art and culture. Her gift includes approximately one thousand volumes of primarily English language titles on Buddhist

art, with an emphasis on Korean art and culture.

Her donation provides an important complement to the Art Library's collections, which are already strong in Chinese and Japanese art. Professor Covell's slide collection represents paintings, sculpture, and places associated with Buddhism, primarily from China and Japan, but also India.

Friends Update

As of mid-January the Friends of the Oberlin College Library counted 712 current members. This total includes 4 honorary and 20 life members, 350 contributing members, 254 student members, and 84 who have contributed to other library funds or donated gifts-in-kind.

Oberlin has Ties to Unique Indian Library

Oberlin College has a number of ties to a unique library in Madras, India that provides rich documentation for the history and culture of the Tamil people.

The Roja Muthiah Research Library is based on a collection assembled by Roja Muthiah, a Tamil sign painter who developed a passion for collecting materials related to his people. Over a fifty-year span, until his death in 1992, Muthiah collected more than 100,000 books, 1,500 journals, and a half-million newspaper clippings that he stored in hand-made wooden bookcases in his home near Madras. His collection covers an eclectic range of subjects—including folklore, religion, cinema, medicine, and women's studies—that record the Tamil culture of Southern Indian in rich detail.

Following Muthiah's death his collection was purchased by an international consortium headed by the University of Chicago, which collaborated with an Indian charitable trust to establish the new Roja Muthiah Research Library in Madras to house and provide access to the collection. The

university also raised over \$1 million to organize and preserve the collection in the new library and to microfilm major portions of the collection for use in Chicago.

Paula Richman, Professor of South Asian Religions at Oberlin, acted as a consultant to the University of Chicago in their original assessment of the Roja Muthiah collection, evaluating a variety of materials including religious texts, books on temple practices, pilgrimage guides, pan-Indian epics, and religious polemical pamphlets.

In May 1995, Sankaralingam, Director of the Roja Muthiah Library, and James Nye, Bibliographer and Director of South Asia Reference at the University of Chicago Library, visited Oberlin and presented a program on the library.

Joseph Getter and Kate Wolfe, two Oberlin alumni who have both worked in the Oberlin College Library, presented a workshop on public services at the Roja Muthiah Research Library as part of their travels on the Indian subcontinent.



Joseph Getter and Kate Wolfe (left) with staff of the Roja Muthiah Library

OhioLINK...from p. 1

Tom Sanville welcomed Oberlin to OhioLINK, noting that Oberlin has "the largest library collection of all Ohio private liberal arts colleges" and it "contributes significantly to the vastness and richness of OhioLINK resources."

Sanville also spoke about future directions for the OhioLINK system. He indicated that OhioLINK plans to expand rapidly the electronic resources that are accessible through the Internet to member libraries. An example is the electronic version of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (see related article, page 2) that is now

available to OhioLINK campuses through a consortial subscription. Sanville also described plans for a statewide catalog of digitized images that will be accessible electronically.

In remarks prepared for the occasion, President Dye commented that "the dramatic changes occurring in academic libraries suggest that the standards for measuring excellence in libraries are also changing. It used to be that we assessed a library's quality solely in terms of the size of its holdings and the breadth and depth of its collections. In the emerging library environment, it is now clear

that we must also assess a library's quality in terms of its ability to make information that it does not have in its collections rapidly available to its users. Judged by that standard, Oberlin's membership in OhioLINK puts our library in an extraordinary position."

Library Perspectives, a newsletter for users and Friends of the Oberlin College Library, is issued three times a year. Printed from an endowed fund established by Benjamin A. and Emiko Custer. Editors: Ray English, Jessica Grim, and Dan Zager.