Fall 2010

Connections Newsletter Fall 2010

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The Art of Dining

Libraries’ Newest Digital Collection Combines Visual Appeal With Historical Insight

As you plan your Thanksgiving dinner, you might take inspiration from an 1880 Grand Pacific Hotel menu featuring leg of black bear; loin of buffalo; and your choice of red, black, or gray squirrel; an Eau Claire House menu from 1882, including saddle of venison with currant jelly or leg of antelope with port wine sauce; or an Alexander’s Hotel 1883 menu offering baked Tennessee o’possum with sweet potatoes.

If you are more conventional, you might just want to go to a nice restaurant for roast turkey, chestnut dressing, giblet gravy, and cranberry sauce, with soup, appetizer, dessert, and beverage included. But you won’t get it for the $4 menu price the Sands Hotel and Casino charged back in 1958.

These menus, and thousands more, form the UNLV Libraries’ menu collection, one of the largest and most significant menu collections in the United States. Fifteen hundred of these menus were scanned for the digital project “Menus: The Art of Dining” through funding.

Menus: The Art of Dining continues on page 9
The library connects us with the insight and knowledge, painfully extracted from Nature, of the greatest minds that ever were, with the best teachers, drawn from the entire planet and from all our history, to instruct us without tiring, and to inspire us to make our own contribution to the collective knowledge of the human species. I think the health of our civilization, the depth of our awareness about the underpinnings of our culture and our concern for the future can all be tested by how well we support our libraries.

— Carl Sagan, Cosmos

FROM THE DEAN

This quotation always makes me think of the many different ways people interpret libraries: as places, as collections, as services. Our buildings are filled with students working independently at computers in the information commons and in groups clustered around movable white boards — learning and sharing. To most people, this is a library.

I want you to take a closer look and to consider Carl Sagan’s words about how libraries “instruct us without tiring” and “inspire us to make our own contribution to the collective knowledge of the human species.” Beneath the surface of the physical place is a complex network of experts, services, collections, and initiatives — all working together to support learning and knowledge production. A wide range of individual activities are continuously under way: collection digitization, instruction partnerships, web page design, database development, and more. These seemingly disparate activities when woven together form the rich tapestry that is everything the Libraries are. What we do is intentional, driven by the university’s mission of teaching, research, and community engagement. In this Connections issue, you’ll read stories showing how our faculty and staff make it happen. We recently launched our newest digital collection, “Menus: The Art of Dining.” Funded by a federal grant, this stunning collection spanning centuries will prove to be a rich resource for historians, graphic artists, and culinary students. The Las Vegas menus from the 1950s and 1960s should spark many memories for anyone who dined here during that remarkable era.

This article about our connections with the UNLV history department shows how our humanities librarian underscores that everything we do is dependent upon the experts who make it happen. The article about our connections with the UNLV history department shows how our humanities librarian underscores that everything we do is dependent upon the experts who make it happen.

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The Libraries promote student learning and information literacy at many levels. Library faculty members work with colleagues across the curriculum to embed information skills into courses. They serve on the university’s General Education Committee and participate actively in the university process to create universal learning outcomes that include information literacy. In addition, the Libraries are engaged in benchmarking skill levels of incoming students using a standardized test, iCritical Thinking™, developed by the Educational Testing Services. Space planning in Lied Library and the branches intentionally focuses on the creation of interactive learning spaces and up-to-date equipment. However, as the facilities age, the challenge becomes ever greater to keep pace with the equipment, furniture, and spaces needed by our students for their educational experiences. This is, of course, exacerbated by the current economic environment.

The high praise for the library in our recent accreditation report is well deserved and serves as a model . . .

— Neal Smatresk, President, UNLV

LIBRARIES COMMENDED BY THE NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

This spring, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) reaffirmed the university’s accreditation. NWCCU had seven specific commendations for UNLV, including one that singles out the Libraries’ efforts in assessment, information literacy, and building community through spaces.

Sandra Elman, president of NWCCU, writes in a letter to UNLV president Neal Smatresk that “the commission finds laudable the establishment by the university, in particular its libraries, of a highly effective and robust program of assessment data gathering that is used on an ongoing basis to improve resources and services, the libraries’ leadership in promoting greater information literacy as an integral part of the student learning experience, and an exemplary commitment to providing modern and spacious library facilities in support of teaching and research.”

Smatresk says, “The high praise for the library in our recent accreditation report is well deserved and serves as a model for how student-centered and service-oriented values have made our library an integral part of student learning on our campus. I feel that under Dean Iannuzzi’s leadership, we have a leading example of a 21st-century library.”

The library is proud of its approach to assessment and evaluation. Over the past three years, staff developed a user-centered evaluation framework that forms the basis for its strategic plan. The Libraries have fostered a culture of assessment, using both formal and informal methods to collect feedback and a database to store and display the statistics. The Libraries promote student learning and information literacy at many levels.
In March 2010, the Akademie der Künste in Berlin opened an exhibit titled “Wiederkehr der Landschaft” (Return of Landscape) that focuses on Las Vegas and Venice. In the words of the curator, Donata Valentien, “They are cities of myths that are as different as the landscapes from which they emerged — water and the desert. Historic and current documents, plans, and photographs reveal the history of these cities and their respective landscapes. They tell a story about both the prudent use of the landscape and the arrogant destruction, about sustainable and failed strategies of urban development.”

A year before the exhibit opened, Valentien, curator and director of the architecture section of the Akademie der Künste, and co-curator Anna Viader Soler, both prominent landscape architects, visited Las Vegas to find historical and visual materials for their exhibit and to conceptualize their presentation of Las Vegas. They spent two days in Special Collections with director Peter Michel, selecting photographs and maps most illustrative of Las Vegas’ landscape and urban development. The materials were scanned by the Libraries’ Web and Digitization department and sent to Germany. The subjects ranged from the original Stewart Ranch to the Colorado River before and after the construction of Hoover Dam as well as aerial and satellite photos. The resulting exhibit panel (one of three) was 6 feet long, with images, maps, and text labels superimposed over a map of the region.

An accompanying collection of essays, “Return of Landscape,” edited by Valentien, includes an essay on Las Vegas by Nicole Huber and former UNLV architecture professor Ralph Stern. The book is richly illustrated with aerial photography of the two cities by Alex MacLean. Copies of the book are in the Architecture Studies Library and Special Collections.

A panel from the exhibit comparing Las Vegas and Venice at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin titled “Wiederkehr der Landschaft” (Return of Landscape) using materials from Special Collections.
What do these seemingly unrelated scenarios have in common?

• Professor Marcia Gallo changes the way she teaches her beginning history course.
• Thomas Joseph Birmingham, David Huggins, and Junichi Miyamoto, senior history majors, each receive the 2010 Lance and Elena Calvert Award for Undergraduate Research.
• Graduate students Sherri Bakelar and Mandy Crispin design tutorials for history courses during summer fellowships.
• Liesl Carr-Children, an assistant researcher, works on the Nevada Test Site Oral History Project with Mary Palevsky, project director, and receives the first Dr. Hal K. Rothman Doctoral History Graduate Student Endowment.

What might seem like random events were actually intentionally constructed by the University Libraries to complement each other and, together, create a framework for deep collaboration between the Libraries and the academic departments; in this example, the history department. The relationship between the history department and the Libraries demonstrates the depth and complexity of the Libraries’ role in the students’ educational experience. Starting with faculty by working with them on assignment design; then by focusing on students at the beginning, middle, and end of their undergraduate academic careers; then by supporting graduate students as scholars and as teachers; then finally by partnering with scholars to create new content.

History department chair David Wrobel says, “The Libraries are nurturing undergraduate research, from the large introductory survey classes to the advanced senior capstone projects, in ways that will advantage our students as they compete with others for places in graduate school, professional schools, and in the job market.”

University Libraries dean Patricia Iannuzzi says, “It’s part of all of our jobs to graduate self-sufficient lifelong learners.”

I can often help them identify relevant collections or data. It’s fun to explore the amazing online collections and archives out there.”

Being a generalist gives Finley an edge when assisting students and faculty members. “One of the most satisfying aspects of my job is answering the question ‘Who would know that?’ I can tap into a vast network of people who keep track of what scholars are working on at UNLV and around the world,” says Finley.

As with her collaboration with the history department, says Patricia Iannuzzi, dean, University Libraries, “Priscilla’s active oversight of the graduate fellowships and her contributions to the Faculty Institute and corresponding assignments are representative of the many different ways that library subject liaisons are embedded in student learning.”

Priscilla Finley joined the UNLV Libraries in 2002. She holds a master of library science degree from Syracuse University (2001) and a master’s degree in English from State University of New York, Binghamton (1991). She was recognized in 2010 with one of the Libraries’ top honors, the UNLV Libraries McPhee Librarian of the Year Award.
LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY CONNECTS WITH LIBRARIES’ UNIQUE RESEARCH COLLECTIONS

ExporTech Participants Learn Important Research Skills Through Libraries Partnership

According to a new report by Brookings Mountain West, to succeed in a post-recession economy, Las Vegas and other metropolitan centers of the Intermountain West need to capitalize on a national push to increase the export of goods and services to foreign markets.

Last spring, the UNLV Libraries began promoting library resources and providing research assistance as a partner in the ExporTech program. ExporTech is designed to help manufacturing companies develop export plans to enter or expand in foreign markets to increase their sales and, ultimately, create more jobs in Nevada. The program is administered by Nevada Industry Excellence, the Department of Commerce, and UNLV’s College of Business in partnership with the Libraries.

Business librarian Patrick Griffis attended ExporTech sessions, demonstrating how library resources could be utilized for the export plans being developed by the seven participating local companies. He held workshops at Lied Library to instruct program participants and student interns on how to effectively utilize the Libraries’ online subscription databases to gather information needed for completion of the export plans. Griffis continued to meet with individual company teams for research consultations throughout the export plan development process.

ExporTech was “truly a win-win-win collaboration,” according to Terry Culp, business manager, Nevada Industry Excellence. He thanked dean of Libraries Patricia Iannuzzi and Griffis for their support, calling it a real-world initiative that will have positive economic impact. Culp says, “Our clients made many positive comments regarding UNLV as they became more familiar with the talent and resources we have here.”

The Libraries’ support was vital to the completion of the export plans. The digitized collection is fully searchable and includes detailed historical information about the menus.

“The menu collection has widespread appeal,” says Su Kim Chung, manuscripts librarian, who selected the menus and wrote the narrative for the website. “For historians, these menus offer a wealth of cultural and social information; for those in the culinary industry, they serve as a resource on food preparation and lifestyle; and for anyone who has lived in Las Vegas or visited frequently, they are a nostalgic reminder of past dining experiences.”

Menus have aesthetic appeal, too, displaying artistic elements particular to their historical time periods. For students of menu design, they serve as examples of graphic design, placement, and layout. Menus set the tone of an establishment, combining beauty, function, and profitability through the use of typography and layout to drive customers to higher-priced items.

KNPR Nevada Public Radio commentator and restaurant critic John Curtas, himself a collector of old menus, says, “A menu is important as an advertisement and a guidepost/dictionary to the restaurant’s food. Everything from the graphics to the information contained (and left out) tells you a lot about a place before you ever take a bite.”

The UNLV Libraries began collecting (and sometimes purchasing) menus, many from Las Vegas restaurants, as a means to support assignments in the new Hotel Management Department, “The menus will be an excellent resource for culture and cuisine students. There is the historical side in addition to the practical aspects of costing out items to determine prices and designing menus.” She believes comparing old Las Vegas menus with today’s corporate restaurant offerings will help students understand the large role that restaurants play in the hotel experience.

The majority of items selected for this digital project came from the Bohn-Bettoni Collection, purchased by the UNLV Libraries from Henry J. Bohn’s daughter in 1970, which consists of approximately 2,000 restaurant and banquet menus dating from 1870 to 1930. Chung explains the collection’s origin: “Bohn, editor and publisher of Hotel World magazine, an early hotel and restaurant trade publication, collected both American and Canadian menus for many years and subsequently purchased for his collection the scrapbook of Henri Bettoni, a London restaurant manager of the late 19th century.”

Visit “Menus: The Art of Dining” at digital.library.unlv.edu/collections/menu

Menues

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The UNLV Libraries began collecting (and sometimes purchasing) menus, many from Las Vegas restaurants, as a means to support assignments in the new Hotel College in 1969. More than 40 years later, the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration can use the digitized menu collection in classes like “Food Service Operations Fundamentals.”

According to Jean L. Hertzman, assistant professor in the Food and Beverage Management Department, “The menus will be an excellent resource for culture and cuisine students. There is the historical side in addition to the practical aspects of costing out items to determine prices and designing menus.” She believes comparing old Las Vegas menus with today’s corporate restaurant offerings will help students understand the large role that restaurants play in the hotel experience.

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The University Libraries wishes to thank the following individuals, corporations, and foundations for their generous support from July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010. The Libraries Honor Roll recognizes alumni and friends who help make possible the dynamic blend of preservation, research, and cutting edge technology the Libraries offer. Donors support the Libraries through the Dean’s Associates, Investors Circle, and Honor and Memorial programs. Every gift is important and valued. It is our wish to recognize all donors accurately. If there is an error in your listing, or to make a change in the way your name appears, please contact Rhianne Reynolds at 702-893-2235 or email at Rhianne.Reynolds@unlv.edu.

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UNLV LIBRARIES ADVISORY BOARD — CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

The members of the UNLV Libraries Advisory Board are dedicated volunteers with a shared mission: Increase awareness of the Libraries throughout the Las Vegas Valley and help secure private support. In addition to supporting the Libraries as Dean’s Associates with $1,000 or more unrestricted gifts annually, they also cultivate prospective donors and future board members. They reach out to friends and colleagues, inviting them to Library events; arranging tours for groups like the Junior League of Las Vegas and the Red Hat Society; and providing library speakers for meetings of the Rotary Club, the CEO/CFO Group, and similar organizations.

Board members’ backgrounds vary widely — from retail entrepreneur to marketing consultant, from lawyer to educator, from community leader to gaming executive . . .

from community leader to gaming executive — but all are united in a passionate belief in higher education and a desire to share the Libraries’ remarkable resources.

In the last few years, new board members have significantly expanded the Libraries’ community base. Recent additions include board chair Joe Kennedy (’94), president of JA Kennedy Real Estate; alumna Melinda Kennedy (’98); Kristian Lehtinen, principal and partner, Lovaas & Lehtinen, PC; Jennifer Lewis, vice president, Lewis Operating Corporation; and community leader Nancy Shepherd.

“I joined the board to become further involved with the Las Vegas community and to support the people, materials, and resources ensuring a continuing development of higher education,” remarks Lehtinen. “I am impressed by the dedication of the library staff in the expansion of community and UNLV connections. I’m excited to spread the word to colleagues, friends, and clients about the multitude of resources available for the Southern Nevada business community.”
LIED LIBRARY EXPANDS QUIET COMPUTING

Lied Library has added eight new computer workstations in the quiet area of the third-floor book stacks. This is part of our continuing efforts to accommodate user requests for a variety of work and study spaces. Lied now has 271 general-purpose student computer workstations in addition to special-purpose and group-study workstations and those that support the Media Lab and Lied’s classrooms.

WELCOME: THE COFFEE BEAN & TEA LEAF®

The Book ’N’ Bean on the first floor of Lied Library is now being served by The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf®. Join your friends and colleagues for a favorite beverage, pastry, snack, or sandwich in our comfortable, modern café.

SEATING ADDED ON SECOND FLOOR OF LIED LIBRARY

The second-floor Research & Information Desk has been removed to provide additional user seating. The Research & Information Desk on Lied Library’s first floor will now serve as a convenient, one-stop service point for research assistance as well as for computing and microform questions.