

*A newsletter for the Friends of the Geisel Library*

December 2007

## From the Librarian

*By Joseph W. Constance, Jr.*

It has, once again, been a very busy semester for the Geisel staff who have dealt with record numbers of students for all types of Library services. Be it circulation, library instruction, interlibrary loan, or technical service, our staff has done an excellent job in making the Library a great place to study and conduct research. The majority of our staff have served the College for many years and both their skill and dedication is appreciated by everyone on campus, most of all by myself, who benefits every day from their great work.

Along with Library staff, I have been taking a long look at our facilities this semester, to see how they might be improved to better accommodate today's students. Though it only seems like yesterday, the restored Geisel Library is now over fifteen years old, and several of our main study areas are showing their obsolescence. Driving our review was the fact that students now study much differently than in the past, due to the changing nature of many academic assignments. Professors now assign far more group projects, many of which demand improved computer stations and specialized furniture. Students also study together considerably more than they used to, something that also demands a different physical arrangement. In libraries, these new configurations, in all their varieties, are now being called the "Information Commons". In an article by our Assistant Librarian, John Dillon, he will provide further details on our hopes and plans for the Information Commons at Geisel which I know you will find informative and enjoyable.

Our fall gathering of the Friends was also very successful, our guest speaker being Russ Francis, former All Pro tight end for the New England Patriots and San Francisco 49ers. A veteran of 14 years in the NFL, Russ had great stories not only of pro football, but of his own family in Hawaii and of his many friends in New England. Russ is now a prominent New Hampshire personality with his own weekly radio show in Concord and a home in Hampton. He also spends considerable time on the west coast, Nebraska, Hawaii, Oregon and many other places. He was a wonderful guest and we look forward to having him visit us again sometime soon.

Finally, I would like to wish all of you a very merry and blessed Christmas with your families, wherever you live. I am continually grateful for your support and I can never thank you enough for thinking of the Library and Saint Anselm for so many years. As always, I look forward to seeing all of you at sometime in the New Year. ☺

## Information Commons Redesigns Coming to Geisel Library?

*By John Dillon, Head of Technical Services and Systems Administrator*

Perhaps like administrators at the Manchester Airport who have continually needed to assess and tailor new facilities to meet ever-changing demands, the staff at Geisel Library have been taking a fresh look at the design of our main student research and study areas. Thus, we have been both re-evaluating how our most centrally used resources are configured on the main floor and envisioning what design changes will increasingly meet the students' research and study needs in the coming semesters.

Though much of the current main level floor plan has served users well for years, new students, course assignments, publishing trends, computer possibilities, and styles of learning have changed our view of what new arrangements best meet student library needs for today and tomorrow.

Currently, for example, our present Atrium attracts the most activity, and as a result, creates distracting noise for those working and studying there. Likewise, the congestion of activity here prevents sufficient space for students to collaborate on projects, and the resulting noise often carries beyond to the Upper Level. The Reference Collection area is also somewhat obsolete predominated by shelving with bound volumes that are now used infrequently by our students, given recent trends towards online publishing. And though the adjoining Periodicals reading room attracts wireless users and groups, the tables are too few and too often we see laptop power cords stretching perilously to the nearest outlets.

Such constraints are worsened by the evolving expectations students bring to the Library as a place of guided research, collaboration, study and relaxation. For example, Librarians have noticed an ever increasing demand by students for facilities that enable them to work together, not only at study tables but also at a computer workstation where 2 or 3 might share the driver's seat. This trend reflects curriculum and assignment changes which increasingly emphasize the socially interactive aspects of learning. For example, a small group of students might be tasked with collaborating on the design of a website or electronic presentation.

At the same time, students still value traditional areas of comfortable seating and quiet that remain conducive to both study

*(Information Commons Redesigns , continued on pg. 2)*

and computer networking, but that are not necessarily tucked away in the far corners of the building. As a pilot site for wireless networking on campus, the Library began recognizing this reality of individual study combined with connectivity years ago. However, with upwards of 70% of our current students now owning their own laptops and increasingly bringing them to the Library, staff have further reason to consider a more flexible adaptation and redesign of facilities.

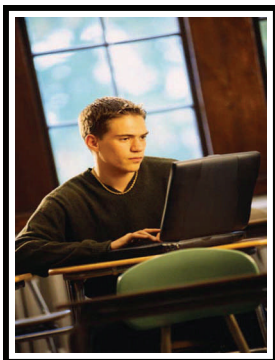
One overarching plan being considered is to establish three distinctly defined and revised common gathering areas on the main level that better recognize and serve the newer needs of our students. This can be achieved by comprehensively upgrading and augmenting our current furniture and computer related equipment in these three common areas.

Specifically, Library staff are proposing that the Atrium would become more exclusively a wireless learning commons. Existing workstations are removed and comfortable seating as well as additional study tables are provided. Convenient platens or power sources will encourage the use of notebooks.

The current Reference collection area would lose most of its shelving and gain computers (displaced from the Atrium) on its perimeter, as well as 2-4 new specialized group workstations. In the center would be new group study tables and chairs making this the central electronic reference and collaboration area. Overall, the lower ceilings and defined enclosure will better contain this activity.

The Current Periodicals area would become an enhanced current affairs learning commons, with a greater emphasis on news of the day as well as new titles in all formats being added to Library collections. Further, the addition of new laptop-friendly lounge chairs and study tables will further encourage use of wireless computing and comfortable collaboration as needed.

Our plans, of course, are still in the formative stage and, along with our entire academic community, we have much to consider before all is finalized. It is, however a most exciting project that we are all looking forward to beginning as soon as possible.



## Book Review

By Jeffrey H. Waller, Head of Reference and Instructional Services

**Egan, Timothy. *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*. Published by Houghton Mifflin, 2006, 340 pp.**

Being originally from Kansas, I'm all too familiar with those gusting prairie winds that seem to blow endlessly, perhaps because there's so little to stand in their way. I can remember numerous high school tennis matches when I and the other players would have to pause in the middle of points as a 40 mph gust hurled dirt from the baseball diamond into our faces. Of course, that was only "dust in the wind" compared to what happened on the Great Plains during the 1930s, when these same winds triggered perhaps the worst ecological crisis in our nation's history.



But why did these winds suddenly start blowing away literally billions of tons of soil, driving away a quarter million people and leaving those who remained in dire poverty? In his National Award-winning book, Timothy Egan spends considerable time setting the scene, describing how government incentives and high crop prices encouraged settlers to descend on the Plains in droves. These "sodbusters" quickly transformed prime grazing lands for cattle and buffalo into overstretched wheat fields. When the rains stopped coming and crop prices plummeted, tens of thousands of farmers abandoned their fields, leaving behind dried-out, torn-up soil that the winds soon carried aloft. Egan foreshadows the Dust Bowl so relentlessly that when the dust storms finally begin, they have an air of inevitability about them.

But rather than offer a dry historical account, Egan personalizes the story by focusing on the experiences of several families scattered throughout the region, based on oral histories and his own interviews of survivors. Their harrowing tales put a human face on the suffering. Egan captures the mounting despair as the settlers see their children become sickened by "dust pneumonia" and their gardens and crops (the sources of both their food and their livelihood) destroyed instantly by passing dust storms. And yet they display amazing resilience and considerable community pride, finding ways to endure until the dust finally receded years later.

By approaching this material with the eye of a storyteller, Egan creates an absorbing account of the Dust Bowl, peopled with recurring characters who quickly earn the reader's sympathy. His writing style occasionally borders on the melodramatic, as he stretches his poetic license to the limit. But generally this book is an engaging look at a truly horrific period in American history. It's recommended to anyone with an interest in environmental history, natural disasters, or stories about how the human spirit responds (for better and sometimes worse) to tremendous adversity. 📖

## Betsy's Books

By Elizabeth Holmes, Collections/User Services Librarian

### What's a "Book" These Days?

Jeff Bezos of Amazon is making a splash with his new E-Book reader, named "Kindle." One library colleague thinks this name is a reference to book burning. Another suggests it is the "kindling of a new interest in reading and knowledge." What do you think? Is the digital era finally taking over "the book" as we know it? As a collection/development librarian, I need to stay current not only with new titles, but with the technologies our patrons will demand to access necessary information.



Lately there has been another media flurry regarding books, digital and otherwise. A very good overview is available in the November 5 *New Yorker*. In his article, "Future Reading: Digitization and its Discontents" (p. 50-54), Anthony Grafton discusses the history of the book from Mesopotamia to the current trend of digitization. He explains that the Library of Alexandria, founded around 300 BCE, was not unlike Google's Book Project, with the goal to amass a comprehensive collection of Greek works.

Like Google, the library developed an efficient procedure for capturing and reproducing texts. When ships docked in Alexandria, any scrolls found on them were confiscated and taken to the library. The staff made copies for the owners and retained the originals, which were stored in heaps, until they could be cataloged.

At the peak of Alexandria's collection it contained more than half a million scrolls, which forced the librarians to come up with a cataloging system whereby works were shelved alphabetically. Six-hundred years later, Eusebius (historian and Bishop of Caesarea) assembled a large collection of Christian writings, and developed a system of cross-references known as "canon tables." These tables have been described as the world's first "hot links" by scholar James O'Donnell, as they enabled readers to find parallel passages in the four Gospels. From here Eusebius mobilized teams of secretaries and scribes to produce Bibles featuring his new study aid – Emperor Constantine ordered fifty. The joint tradition of accumulating large holdings, and making and disseminating copies of texts was begun, and continued through the Middle Ages in monastic scriptoria.

The fifteenth century brought printing, a technology with which we are comfortable and familiar. Are we now entering yet another age, where information will be digitized and collected on servers owned by commercial as well as not-for-profit entities? What of the twin traditions of large libraries collecting works, and making copies available through dissemination? The self-proclaimed aim of Google is to "build a comprehensive index of all the books in the world" – which would certainly dwarf any other library collection. Kevin Kelly of *Wired* describes the massive digitization initiative as "a single liquid fabric of interconnected words and ideas", linking texts from past and present, multilingual, on a similar subject. A *New Yorker* reader responding to Grafton's article asks if in fact this is a "retrograde procedure—a reversal of the process of discrimination (by scholars and librarians) which over time has weighted, classified, and organized the vast bodies of information into an accessible body of knowledge, instead producing a facile and dangerous corruption of the intellectual process."

And what of the dissemination of copies? It is argued that these days more people have access to computers at home than visit libraries or buy books. Digital copies of books will be available world-wide on inexpensive computers. "Kindle" is expensive today, but won't be in the years to come. Heaven knows, none of us grieve the passing of microfilm.

I don't propose to have any clear answers, although I am confident that Geisel Library will continue the tradition of accumulating rich collections, and will continue to make them available, whatever the medium. The library circulated almost 21,000 tangible items in the 2006-2007 school year – a 6.5% increase from the previous year. Our patron gate count was also up, with close to a thousand more visits from the previous year.

I will take a stand however, and state that I support both the traditional book camps, *and* the digital text proponents. I have great hopes for another new technology, the Espresso Book Machine. It is a machine that will capture digital text and print and bind it in book form in less than 7 minutes. Currently there are around 10 in the world – including one at the new Library of Alexandria. How long before we see one in New Hampshire?

To read Anthony Grafton's article, "Adventures in Wonderland" in its entirety, please visit [http://www.newyorker.com/online/2007/11/05/071105on\\_onlineonly\\_grafton](http://www.newyorker.com/online/2007/11/05/071105on_onlineonly_grafton) «

# Finding the Archives

By Keith Chevalier, Archivist



Greetings! My name is Keith Chevalier and I am the new College Archivist at Saint Anselm College. In addition to being the archivist for the college, I am also the archivist for Saint Anselm Abbey and serve as the bibliographer for the Institute of Saint Anselm Studies.

Not only am I new to Saint Anselm College, but also to New England. I am from a distant land called Wisconsin, whose inhabitants are commonly referred to as “cheeseheads.” Far and away from where we were raised, my wife Gwen and I have been welcomed by the wonderful staff at Geisel Library and Saint Anselm College.

A common question I am asked is, “what is an archivist?” An archivist identifies, collects, preserves, arranges, describes, and makes available records of enduring value. What this means is that an archivist is responsible for maintaining the safety and integrity of archival records so that researchers may have access to materials vital to understanding the history of an institution now and in the future. Archival records can include such items as papers, correspondence, and photographs.

The reason why some records are deemed to have archival value and others are not comes down to the circumstances surrounding their creation and use. At an institution such as Saint Anselm College, records are deemed archival for a number of reasons, namely they are non-current records that contribute to the institutional memory of the college. These records are collected and preserved because they show evidence of the institutional functions and responsibilities of the person(s) who created the records. The archival records can also provide a researcher with information on how the records’ creator kept and maintained his/her records. Examples of archival records at Saint Anselm College include a committee’s meeting minutes, papers of the president of the college, a student organization’s letter to the school newspaper on a controversial topic, scrapbooks from the late 1800s, or the Friends Forum newsletter of the Geisel Library.

Since arriving in July 2007, I have assisted in a number of reference requests from individuals interested in subjects ranging from a student researching the history of campus buildings to a college office inquiring about the history of Alumni Hall to a genealogist looking for information about a family member who attended Saint Anselm College’s Academic Department (the college’s former prep school) in the early 1900s.

One of the most interesting requests I have received so far deals with the history of a former Benedictine monk from Saint Anselm Abbey. On behalf of a German scholar, a Benedictine Abbot visited the archives in search of a history written by a Korean Benedictine monk about the communist suppression of a monastery in North Korea. After some research in the Abbey Archives, we found the short history in the papers of Abbot Gerald McCarthy, O.S.B. (1912–2000). This allowed me to do some research on Abbot Gerald’s own history in Korea.

Before Abbot Gerald was elected as the second abbot of Saint Anselm Abbey, he was a chaplain in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. In 1949, communists invaded a Benedictine Abbey which was located in what was to become North Korea, destroying the abbey, detaining the monks, and killing some of the religious. During Abbot Gerald’s time in Korea, many of the religious who secured safe passage to the south were assisted by him in setting up their communities which are still flourishing today. Abbot Gerald’s tour of duty in Korea is documented in papers, correspondence, and photographs housed in the Abbey Archives.

Caring for and providing access to over 100 plus years of historical records is both challenging and quite rewarding. If you are interested in learning more about the archives of Saint Anselm College, please contact me at 603-656-6197. ☞

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## Quotes.....

*“Libraries are starting places for the adventure of learning that can go on whatever one’s vocation and location of life. Reading is an adventure like that of discovery itself. Libraries are our base camps.”*

James H. Billington, 1929 -

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*“A library is the delivery room for the birth of ideas, a place where history comes to life.”*

Norman Cousins 1912 -

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## Contact Us.....

To notify us of a change in address or for more information on making a donation to the Geisel Library, please contact Pam MacPhee, Geisel Library, Saint Anselm College, 100 Saint Anselm Drive, Manchester, NH 03102. You may also telephone (603)641-7301 or e-mail [pmacphee@anselm.edu](mailto:pmacphee@anselm.edu).

*Happy New Year to all of the Friends of the  
Geisel Library Society!*

