News for the Friends of the UMass Amherst Libraries

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Dear Friends of the Library,

As I promised in the Spring “News,” 2013 has been jam-packed with events and celebrations. The Sesquicentennial Celebration has been a focus both for the campus and the Libraries. Our Department of Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) has provided historical documentation of the past 150 years, including a rich collection of photographs and memorabilia, that appears at almost every event related to the celebration. Rob Cox, Head of SCUA, and his staff are due special commendation for their extraordinary dedication in working with such a broad community of constituents to make campus history come alive.

We are also celebrating the 40th anniversary of the opening of the “Library tower”—officially named the W.E.B. Du Bois Library in 1994. Most alums since 1973 have a favorite story about the library, which often include “urban myths” that continue to this day. In this issue, today’s libraries are essential to the teaching and research mission of the university—especially as we move from a print environment into the digital age.

A third major initiative in 2013 is the UMassRising Capital Campaign. The Libraries’ goal in the $300 million campus-wide fundraising effort is $45 million. To this point, we have achieved approximately 86% of our goal. The Libraries must raise an additional $6 million, from now through June 2016, to be successful. Every gift—from $25 to a bequest of $1 million—is important and essential. UMassRising is about more than money. Importantly, it is about taking the Libraries’ services, collections, and facilities to the next level of excellence, for the students, the faculty, and the Commonwealth.

Your continued support of the UMass Amherst Libraries will help us continue the excellent work you see documented on the following pages. Our staff is encouraged and invigorated to know that their efforts are being supported and enhanced by the generous donations of each of you—our Friends.

As always, thank you for your support—now, and in the future.

Jay Schafer
Director of Libraries

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**DU BOIS LIBRARY**

**Myths, Busted**

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**Myth #1**

Bricks have fallen and injured people.

**Reality:** Only small pieces of the brick façade have fallen on rare occasions. A whole brick has never fallen off the building and no one has ever been injured by a brick or piece of brick.

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**Myth #2**

Library builders did not account for the weight of the books.

**Reality:** The building was meant to be a graduate research library, so books were factored into the design. Nor are the top two floors vacant because builders did not account for the weight of the books. Floors 27 and 28 house the mechanical room for the HVAC and elevators.

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**Myth #3**

The Library is sinking into the ground at a rate of 1/4 to 1/5 inch per year.

**Reality:** The Library rests on a giant slab of concrete that hasn’t budged since the building was constructed.

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The Horace Mann Bond Papers (1830-1979) include correspondence; administrative and teaching records; research data; speeches, articles and books; photographs; and Bond family papers. Bond’s major interests were Black education and Africa, particularly as related to educational and political conditions. Correspondents include many notable African American educators, activists, and activists.

The entire collection is digitized and available at credo.library.umass.edu.
Peony of Hope

Internationally acclaimed artist Carrie Mae Weems, an exhibitor in the fall exhibition at the University Museum of Contemporary Art, “Du Bois In Our Time,” worked with Hollingsworth Peonies Farm and landscape architect Walter Hood, to create the Peony of Hope in loving honor of W.E.B. Du Bois. The peony will anchor the new Du Bois Memorial Garden in the center of campus.

A RICH HISTORY

With the help of Department Chair John Bracey, Special Collections and University Archives has acquired the records of the W.E.B. Du Bois Afro-American Studies Department going back to its founding. The substantial collection documents the rich history of the department as well as African American activities, activism, and movements on campus and in the community. Inside the 63 linear feet of materials are papers of many prominent faculty members and other riches that echo national efforts to create African American studies departments, and speak to important events in African American history in the ‘60s, ‘70s, and ‘80s.

NAMING OF THE LIBRARY

As part of the program during the exhibit “Du Bois In Our Time,” Professor Emeritus Michael Thelwell delivered a speech in which he mentioned that the library tower was named after Du Bois in 1994. “All credit belongs entirely to a determined group of progressive graduate students and the leadership of the undergraduate student government who created a campus-wide alliance called the W.E.B. Du Bois Petition Coalition to advance a number of issues,” he said. One of those issues was the naming of the library. In Professor Thelwell’s words, the Trustees outdid themselves by working in elements of Du Bois’s most famous quote from 1903:

“As we march into the twenty-first century, we feel that it is time to go beyond the color line and appropriately name the tower library in honor of one of the finest heroes, not only of Massachusetts but of the world.”

—UMass Amherst Board of Trustees

W.E.B. DU BOIS: A MAN FOR ALL TIMES

Join us for an absorbing one-man show telling the inspirational story of the political and personal 95 year life of W.E.B. Du Bois.

FEBRUARY 22, 2014
Time: TBD
Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center
Great Barrington, MA

FEBRUARY 25, 2014
10:00 am
St. John’s Congregational Church
Springfield, MA

FEBRUARY 25, 2014
4:00 pm
Campus Center Auditorium
UMass Amherst

AN EVENING WITH

Richard A. Baker ’61

ON DECEMBER 12, 2013, Congressman James P. McGovern, hosted a book discussion with Senate Historian Richard A. Baker ’61 and cocktail reception at the Capitol Visitor’s Center in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Richard Baker, who graduated from UMass Amherst in 1961 with a B.A. in History, is the author of The American Senate: An Insider’s History. He was appointed the Senate’s first official historian, a post he held from 1975 until his retirement in 2009. He produced a number of historical narratives, including 200 Notable Days: Senate Stories, 1787 to 2002 and Traditions of the United States Senate, and assisted Robert C. Byrd with The Senate, 1789-1989.

The event was sponsored by the UMass Amherst Libraries and the College of Humanities and Fine Arts.

Ever since its creation, the Senate has been a source of national pride—and national frustration.

—Richard Baker ’61

Historian of the United States Senate, from The American Senate: An Insider’s History (2013)
Every person who graduates from UMass Amherst seems to continue studying what it means to be human and the value of human life. Kenneth R. Feinberg ’67 embodies the UMass Amherst brand of lifelong learning... and lifelong giving back.

In his keynote address at the Kennedy Center in Boston to Library and campus supporters on the 12th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Feinberg, a Washington attorney who was tapped to serve as Special Master of the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund, said simply: “When the president calls, you say yes.”

Feinberg delivered a heartfelt address that honored the solemn anniversary and explained why he has entrusted his extensive professional and personal papers to UMass Amherst Libraries. Members of the 100+ crowd at the Kennedy Library and Museum peppered Feinberg, Chancellor Kumble R. Subbaswamy, and Library representatives with questions about access to the archive, its projected meaning and scope, and the impact of such philanthropy on the campus and the Commonwealth.

Though not necessarily by design, several of Feinberg’s cases are connected to environmental issues, such as Agent Orange, BP Oil Spill, and some of the recent gulf hurricanes. In keeping with the Kennedy legacy, Feinberg’s career, and the environmental successes of UMass Amherst, the Libraries offered a showcase of Sustainability featuring faculty, students, programs, and initiatives involved in the movement on campus.

Alumni repeatedly inquired how and why Feinberg is able to respond after public tragedies and mediate fair financial resolutions in complex, emotionally charged situations, which have recently included the Boston Marathon bombing. “I have to do it if I am called,” he explained, noting that his experience and reputation keep those calls coming.

The question of how he does it was partly answered in the evening’s soundtrack. As guests mingled with faculty and students involved in the sustainability movement at UMass Amherst, selections from the nearly 10,000 classical music recordings Feinberg recently donated to the Library filled the air with Bach, Borodin, Mozart, Puccini, Verdi, and Wagner.

“During the day, I’m working on a project that shows you how uncivilized some people can be and how they willy-nilly, at random, kill and maim people,” he said. “And at night you turn on Mozart, and it’s the height of civilization.” It helps him recognize, he said, “that mankind isn’t all bad.”
A Monumental Birthday

The Library welcomes over a million visitors a year and averages 5,000 visitors a day.

This year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the W.E.B. Du Bois Library, the tallest university library in the world. Opened in 1973, it stands at the heart of campus and, at 28 stories (296 feet), can be seen for miles.

Referred to as the Library tower, the building was designed by architect Edward Durrell Stone. Among other iconic Stone projects are the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Stone was one of the “stars of midcentury modern architecture,” wrote history professors Max Page and Marla R. Miller in The Campus Guide, University of Massachusetts Amherst (Yale University Press, 2013). Miller and Page write that Stone was chosen because the university trustees wanted to make their mark with the new university library building. The Library is “a symbol of the quality of the institution itself,” wrote Stone of his lofty plans. “The size, location, and design of the building must honor the role of the Library in the University.”

Originally, Stone’s design called for limestone siding of the tower, but it was changed to brick during construction to save more than $1M. By the late 1970s, the brick façade began to falter; small shards of bricks spalled, or flaked, from the building. Fearing the problem was worse than just chipping, the building was closed in 1979, and 250,000 books were moved to Goodell until the source of the problem was determined. Once it was found that whole bricks were not falling (as was the unfortunate case at the UMass Boston campus at Colombia Point in Dorchester), the building was reopened, albeit with aesthetically unappealing chain-link fencing around its base. Some years later, Director of Libraries Margo Crist would lead a “whack the fence” campaign, a grass-roots effort to improve the exterior look of the tower, and the Class of ’57 would raise funds in honor of its 50th class reunion to beautify the promenade around the building with planters and benches. (cont. on page 8)
MASS TRANSFORMATION

The largest popular movement to spruce up the Library occurred in September 1986, when approximately 4,000 students and staff participated in “Mass Transformation.” For four days, volunteers worked diligently, removing graffiti, sweeping floors and re-shelving the countless volumes of books that fill the structure. In the end, the stairwells and walls were adorned with student artwork (see “Stairways to Success”), study space was increased, and a new, more efficient research and reference area was constructed on the Lower Level.

In 1994, the Library tower was finally given a proper name. A group of graduate students and undergraduate leaders formed the W.E.B. Du Bois Petition Coalition, to advance a number of issues, one of them being the naming of the Library for the famous sociologist, activist, Pan-Africanist and author, William Edward Burghart Du Bois.

In 2005, the digital age created the need for yet another “massive” transformation of the Library, this time, to accommodate e-resources and academic technologies. The creation of the Learning Commons tripled use of the Library in a single year, and has served as an international model for forward-thinking academic library spaces.

Massive transformation continues to take place in the Library. This year, a major project will update electrical services to meet the growing demands of technology and improve energy efficiency. New occupancy sensors allow lights to be shut off on unused floors while the building is open, until a person is “sensed” (by heat) on the floor. To protect occupants (and materials) in case of fire, sprinklers are being installed throughout the building.

Grass-roots efforts are still making the difference. Philanthropic donations led to the creation of the Digital Media Lab, and the generosity of Friends will transform the Learning Commons, now close to a decade old, to meet the rapidly changing needs of students (see p. 14).

Q & A

Q: “I graduated with a degree in painting and now I run a Graphic Design business. We live in Chelmsford [Massachusetts] and I work with the Chelmsford Center for the Arts. I’m still painting and I have recently started teaching a class called Paint ‘n’ Sip, where you drink wine and I walk you through a painting. It’s great because many of these people haven’t picked up a brush since they were kids.”

A: “I graduated with a degree in painting and now I run a Graphic Design business. We live in Chelmsford [Massachusetts] and I work with the Chelmsford Center for the Arts. I’m still painting and I have recently started teaching a class called Paint ‘n’ Sip, where you drink wine and I walk you through a painting. It’s great because many of these people haven’t picked up a brush since they were kids.”

Q: “Painting my mural! I remember it was my 21st birthday and it was late May so everyone had already left campus and I was all alone in the library painting. I got a chance to leave something behind and mark my passage through UMass Amherst.”

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To read the full interviews and see more historical images, visit the Du Bois Library blog: www.webduboislibrary.blogspot.com
THREE YEARS AGO when I inherited my office in the Du Bois Library from my predecessor, Emily Silverman, it came with a wonderful welcome-gift/hand-me-down—a copy of the Great Towers poster. As I settled in, it earned prominent display, because almost every visitor commented on how much they liked it. I did too, for several reasons: first, the artist was Elizabeth Pols G’78, a long-time UMass Amherst employee and alum. She was retiring as editor and art director of the alumni magazine as I came on board as its editor … and she was on the search committee that hired me. In my early days on campus, Elizabeth was a great help in bringing me up to speed. Then there is the matter of King Kong hanging out at the base of the Empire State Building; he reminded me of Elizabeth’s sense of humor and creativity. Several years later we found ourselves pondering how to celebrate the 40th birthday of the iconic Library tower. Part of the answer was hanging on the wall: the poster. It was created in the mid-1980s to herald “Mass Transformation,” the grass-roots effort to spruce up the Library. The message still rings true: All great towers weather challenges, and our tower would be no different. It takes many hands—and hearts—to keep the Du Bois Library spiffed up for today’s students. Just as when thousands of students and staff wielded paint brushes and dust rags, today we count on thousands of Friends who support the Libraries with their generous donations. The Great Towers poster reminds us that greatness takes time—and willingness to change with the times. It was a treat to be back in touch with Elizabeth about the poster. She kindly dug out the original drawing from under a bed and we had it digitized and preserved. She designed for us an updated poster to mark the latest transformation of UMass Amherst’s “Great Tower,” which we share with you (above), to show our gratitude. It turns out that Elizabeth is also a Library donor. She created the original “Great Towers” artwork pro bono for the Mass Transformation campaign, to help transform the Library. 

By Carol Connare
Director of Library Development & Communication
with special thanks to Max Page and Marla Miller
Event:


Lessons

Research into the campus’s founder and its first black students confirm our pioneering spirit

Since our founding as Massachusetts Agriculture College in 1863, UMass Amherst has pioneered new paths for education. From our earliest days, we have been a campus bent on sharing knowledge as widely as possible. Recent research performed by Robert Cox, head of Special Collections at the Library, shows that this was true at the turn of the last century, when the first African American students enrolled. During his keynote talk “Ghosts of Campus Past,” delivered at the 15th annual Fall Reception, Cox described the lives of half a dozen black male students who studied and graduated during the period from 1897 to roughly the start of the First World War. These men were largely well-educated students from the south, most of whom went on to teach at Historically Black southern universities, extending the knowledge they had gained at “Mass Aggie.” Two became presidents of Historically Black colleges.

“What we don’t know for sure is whether the administration recruited the students, or they applied here on their own,” said Cox. Though he and his fellow archivists have combed university records unearthing stories and treasures to help celebrate the campus’s 150th birthday this year, they have not yet been able to find evidence of any official program or policy that drew the students north. Nor do we have a clue as to why the program seemed to end abruptly. For many years after the First World War, African American students were scarce at UMass. What we do know, said Cox, is that the early African American students were excellent scholars, winners of oratory prizes, earners of good grades, and full participants in campus life. Their activities tell the story of surprisingly full integration with their white counterparts. “In many ways, theirs is the story of UMass Amherst,” said Cox, “the constant reaching for the next better idea, always willing to try something new and experimental."

Reaching even further back in the campus’s history, historian Patrick T. Browne ’94, G’96 explained how the entire enterprise of starting our campus was a tenuous experiment. In his talk, “William Smith Clark: War Colonel to College President,” Browne described a war-weary Colonel Clark, beleaguered by severe losses; his regiment shrank from 1,000 men to just about 100 in less than four years. Browne showed portraits of Clark taken before and after his service, revealing a pronounced maturation. “Clark,” said Browne, “returned home from the war with a drive to better the human lot through education.” Browne shared with reception-goers the story of how the post-war Clark prodded the fledgling campus into existence, crusading his way into the post of very first faculty member, and soon after, the campus’s third president.

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The Campaign for the UMass Amherst Libraries is a quest to help the Libraries realize their fullest potential to serve students. Now through June 2016, the Libraries have promised to raise $6M toward the Library’s final goal of $45M under the $300M campuswide UMassRising Campaign. With your help we can surpass that goal. We boldly seek to raise $10M in support of excellence.

LEARNING COMMONS TRANSFORMATION FUND

To accommodate curricular innovation, the Libraries have expanded the Learning Commons twice since 2005, as well as opened the Digital Media Lab, and hosted one of the campus’s first two team-based learning classrooms. After nearly a decade of providing students with environments that foster informal, collaborative, and creative work and social interaction, it is time to re-imagine the Learning Commons. For the past year we have performed ethnographic studies to determine what our students need. This information will guide our transformation. Improvements we hope to include are a data visualization wall (photo above), quick-charge stations for mobile devices, presentation and team spaces, a technology “sandbox” for trying out new devices, and a 3D printer. The Libraries hope to create “makerspaces” to foster activities that both teach and empower patrons, fulfilling our mission as a hub for community engagement. To raise money for the fund, we are putting our best resource on the task: UMass Amherst’s student callers, who can speak from the heart about how the Library functions in their lives. The callers kicked off the Learning Commons Transformation Fund this fall, and will be calling donors through next spring. They will be reaching out to the campus’s youngest alumni — “graduates” of the Learning Commons — inviting (in most cases) first gifts back to the campus.

GOAL: $2,000,000

SCUA ARCHIVAL TRAINING FUND

Students supply much of the workforce needed to digitize collections. Special Collections and University Archives typically employs up to 10 students a semester to scan documents and input data. “Thanks to the generosity of donors in recent years, we have several large collections to process and the fund will be very helpful in enabling us to dedicate resources to the larger collections,” says Rob Cox, head of Special Collections and University Archives. A gift to the Fund provides students with a paid opportunity to gain hands-on experience with original historical materials and introduces them to professional work in archives and digital library technologies. The ultimate goal of the fund is to provide an opportunity for students to explore a career in history and allied fields and to contribute to the production of new historical knowledge.

GOAL: $50,000
GIFTS OF NOTE

Dr. John Maarbjerg recently donated a significant collection of 500 books and journals on Scandinavian history, with an emphasis on Danish history. The gift includes several long runs of important scholarly journals as well as many multivolume sets and reels of microfilm containing the "Bailiff’s Accounts of East Bothnia, 1560-1607" and the "Stockholm Customs Rolls for East Bothnia." Dr. Maarbjerg, now retired from teaching, earned his degrees at the Danish Technical University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Yale University.

HONOR GIFTS 2013

The Libraries received gifts in honor of the following individuals (From July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013)

Janice G. Altadonna
Elaine C. Barker ’63, G’69
Lorrey J. Bianchi ’69
John F. Boldt
Kathleen M. Casey-Bianchi
Carol Concma
James L. Craig G’96, G’96
Kim D. Fill ’01
Glen Gordon
Pauliee Howarth
Kathryn L. Kern ’89
Amy M. Kramer
Allan J. Kraait
John J. McCarthy, III
Richard P. Nathorth ’79
Gerald (Jay) L. Schafer
Diana Yohe

MEMORIAL GIFTS 2013

The Libraries received gifts in memory of the following individuals (From July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013)

Joseph J. Battista, Jr. G’80
Walter Brickley
Randolph W. Broomey ‘79
Eleanor S. Butt ’50
Marlam Usher Chotman
Mary Cleary G’82
Pauline P. Collins
James P. Cormack Jr. ’50
Joshua R. Gold ’93
Joseph Hopkins
Marilyn F. Kells
Edward T. Kingsbury G’74

Pristhul kjygardu
Den danske Revolution
1500-1800
Für elskelighed selskab

Old Chapel Carillon Rings Again

Just in time to ring in the 150th anniversary of the campus, the bells in the Old Chapel now play automatically three times a day thanks to a planned gift to the Libraries. The 42-bell Dutch-made carillon lifts spirits across campus with strains of “Hail to Thee Our Alma Mater,” a selection of century-old Mass Aggie songs, and the campus’s alma mater, “When Twilight Shadows Deepen.”

The existence of the carillon is due largely to the vision and generosity of Henry Vincent Couper ‘37 and the foundation he set up. A gift in 2012 from the estate of the late Eva Schiffer, professor emerita of Germanic Languages, enabled the purchase of the auto-player and the practice keyboard. Schiffer made a bequest to the Libraries for use in restoring the Chapel, Director of Libraries Jay Schafer pointed the funds to the bells, and Capital Project Manager Richard Nathorth helped install it.

Keeping Pace in Cyberspace

As the digital age transforms libraries from repositories of printed materials to stewards of electronic information, private support grows more critical. No one understands that better than Lorrey J. Bianchi ’69 and his wife, Kathleen Casey Bianchi, who made an additional $300,000 bequest to the Lorrey and Kathleen Bianchi Library Special Collections Fund. The fund was established in 2008 with a planned gift and is now valued at $1M.

“It is a challenge to keep up with technology. Our hope is that our latest gift helps the Library to keep pace with technological changes and continue to provide services at a high level,” says Lorrey. Kathleen says a gift to the library is central to the mission of the campus. “The Library supports undergraduate education, graduate research, and faculty,” she notes.

Jay Schafer, Director of UMass Amherst Libraries, says the Bianchi gift will add depth and quality to many aspects of special collections. “Through private support, the Libraries can collect and preserve the more unique material essential to specialized research,” explains Schafer. He further notes that the Bianchis have done more than offer financial support. “Their infectious enthusiasm for the Libraries has encouraged not only giving from other donors, but it has also given the staff and me the support we need as we continue to build a world-class library,” says Schafer.

Thank you to donors of the Falcons of the Du Bois Library. To date we received 122 donations totaling $3,127. Join us next spring to watch the falcons at library.umass.edu/falcons.
National Arts Policy Archives & Library

The National Arts Policy Archive and Library is a collaborative project initiated by the Libraries, UMass Amherst Arts Extension Service, and several partners in arts agencies, with the intention to document the history of arts administration in America. Collecting the records of state-level and national arts agencies, NAPAAL will provide a foundation for research into the evolution of arts policy, strategies for supporting the arts, and the economic and cultural impact of the arts on our communities. “This new archive speaks to the National Endowment for the Arts’ commitment to transparency and access to the arts,” said Patrice Walker Powell, NEA Deputy Chairman for Programs and Partnerships. “This repository promises to be an invaluable tool to understand the scope and effects of decades of arts policymaking in the United States.”

NAPAAL has been eight years in the making and will seek materials in all media, including paper documents, electronic records, oral histories, and audio and video recordings. Donations of materials in arts policy are welcome, including but not limited to visual arts, design, literature, theater, dance, and music, as well as arts research and arts administration. “Archives are not about the past, but about the future,” said Rob Cox, head of Special Collections and University Archives. “Preserving a record of the past is one of the nearest ways we have of preparing for moving forward with clarity and confidence.”

“This repository promises to be an invaluable tool to understand the scope and effects of decades of arts policymaking in the United States.”

Patrice Walker Powell

The launch of NAPAAL was celebrated at a symposium, “Arts Policy on the Ground: The Impact of National Endowment for the Arts,” in September. The American Revolution Documentary Archive is a vast set of largely crowdfunded audio/visual material focusing on underground media in the Boston area and its impact on the profound social, political and cultural changes that took place during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The American Revolution, due out next year for theatrical and public television release, looks at the underground radio station WBCN-FM during that time. The film explores a period of dramatic social change in America and the means by which change was effectuated. Bill Lichtenstein, who worked at WBCN starting while in junior high school in 1970 when he was just 14 years old, said “We are thrilled about working with UMass Amherst Libraries’ Special Collections to create, preserve and make available to the public this unprecedented collection of materials from this amazing and tumultuous era.”

The archive makes accessible to scholars and the community hundreds of hours of rare audio and video recordings and films; tens of thousands of photographs; letters, diaries, memoirs, and oral histories; posters; memorabilia; artwork; and other materials gathered from the public and then digitized and cataloged by the Peabody Award-winning Lichtenstein Creative Media with UMass Amherst Libraries.

CREDO UPGRADES

- Nearly 2,000 university photos from individual faculty and staff are now in Credo. To see them go to: credo.library.umass.edu and select ‘university photos’
- Credo has surpassed 100,000 digital objects, made up of almost 270,000 individual images, videos, and audio files, from 20 different collections.
- With the help of Library Systems, there is now a hierarchical browse function, allowing users to discover archival material in contextual chunks and read more about the collections as they browse digital objects.
- The Horace Mann Bond Digitization Project is complete. The collection is now online with 98,000 pages digitized.
Jodi Picoult is the bestselling author of 21 novels. Her last seven novels, including The Storyteller, her most recent, have debuted at number one on The New York Times bestseller list.

Picoult is the recipient of numerous awards, including the New England Bookseller Award for Fiction. She wrote five issues of the Wonder Woman comic book series for DC Comics. Her books are translated into 34 languages in 35 countries. The Pact, Plain Truth, The Tenth Circle, and Salem Falls have been made into television movies. My Sister’s Keeper, a big screen release from New Line Cinema, featuring Nick Cassavetes directing and starring Cameron Diaz, is now available in DVD. She received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Dartmouth College in 2010 and another from the University of New Haven in 2012.

Born in 1966, Picoult graduated from Princeton, where she majored in creative writing, and Harvard, where she earned her M.Ed. She and her husband have three grown children and live in Hanover, New Hampshire, with two Springer Spaniels, two rescue puppies, two donkeys, two geese, eight chickens, and the occasional Holstein. Jodi Picoult recently donated her papers to the UMass Amherst Libraries.

Novelist Jodi Picoult is known for taking on compelling social and ethical issues and weaving them into the works of fiction that have won her a devoted readership. From her first novel, Songs of the Humpback Whale (1992), to her recent bestseller, The Storyteller (2013), Picoult has grappled with a range of topics: fractured families, eugenics, school violence, teen suicide, spouse abuse, a child’s legal rights, childhood cancer, gay rights, the death penalty, war criminals, vengeance, justice, faith, and the value of life. To Picoult, a passionate researcher, no issue is simple. Through her characters and her stories she engages the complications, considering provocative questions from different angles.
SO WE HEAD OVER TO THE STUDENT UNION, where we take a booth and for the next two hours, it’s just the two of us. I mean, [basketball legend] William F. Russell and me: a nobody from Hempstead, Long Island. Russell is here for our Distinguished Lecturer series. On our walk over to the student center, he had been admiring our campus. I tell him that this campus is why I came here. I love it. I love the whole college experience.

“And there are so many new buildings,” I tell him. He nods, sips his coffee. “What’s the most important building on campus?” he asks.


He tells me that what is being given to me here in college is more than the opportunity to play ball. It’s also access to the knowledge in that library. “What is in that building, the books that are now at your disposal, will impact you for the rest of your life.”

From the new autobiography of Julius Erving ’86, ’86HON