

Minutes of the 16th Annual Meeting of the Council
of the Friends of the Oberlin College Library, November 4th, 2006

At 1:32 p.m. President Scott Bennett convened the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Oberlin College Library Council in the Goodrich Room at Mudd Center by expressing the group's pride in the designation of Ray English as the 2006 Librarian of the Year by the Association of College and Research Libraries.

There followed a period of sustained applause.

The following members were present for the meeting: Vice President Daniel Goulding, Secretary Nathan (Mike) Haverstock, Ardie Bausenbach, David Boe, Bill Bradford, Eric Carpenter (ex officio), Ray English (ex officio), Zoe Fisher, Gary Kornblith, Lucy Marks, Scott Smith (ex officio), Ed Vermue (ex officio), Wendy Wasman, and Janice Zinser. Scott Fehlan participated in the discussions from Chicago via a telephone conference call.

1. Highlights of the meeting.

At its 16th annual meeting the Council:

- approved the expenditure of \$40,000 for new acquisitions.
- increased the additional allocation for acquisitions for special collections in the 2006-2007 year to \$10,000.
- applauded the generosity of former Council member Scott Smith in endowing a book fund for the acquisition of German-language materials.
- heard a report on membership recruitment efforts, including the results of recent surveys of Friends members and a special solicitation of alumni history majors.
- acknowledged gratefully a challenge grant for the coming year by Council member William Roe, which will match and in some instances double the value of contributions to the Friends by those who have recently joined.
- heard a report on wide-ranging Friends-sponsored events, including talks by faculty members, specially invited guests in collaboration with other organizations, exhibits of materials from the Main and Art Library special collections, and participation in a national dialogue on "Open Government and Secrecy," broadcast live on satellite TV.
- approved life memberships in the Friends for Scott A. Smith '79 and Reid Wood '70.
- heard reports on the winners of graduate library school scholarships and student research awards.
- heard a report on the progress of implementing the \$3,000 Committee's recommendations to encourage integration of special collections into the curriculum.

- praised the increased instructional use of the library's special collections thanks to their dynamic management, and applauded the Library participation in a project (whose details are still being worked out) to digitize Oberlin's antislavery collection in cooperation with Cornell University, which has a complementary collection.
- heard a report on and discussed the creation of an "Academic Commons" in Mudd Center, which is being planned jointly by the Library, the Center for Information Technology, and several learning support units on campus.

2. Financial Report.

Following approval of the minutes of the November 5, 2005 meeting, English delivered the financial report. The Friends, he said, received donations of more than \$48,000 during the year and had expenditures of \$44,000. "This gets us a little closer to achieving the desired balance between income and expenses," bearing in mind that Friends funds do not earn interest, and therefore there is no particular point in carrying forward a large surplus.

3. Acquisitions Committee.

Scott Smith reported that the Acquisitions Committee was recommending approximately \$40,000 to acquire materials for the Library this year. To stay within budgetary constraints, this involved, as in previous years, paring down an original list of recommended purchases valued at \$64,841. Eric Carpenter, the Library's chief of collection development, expressed special gratitude to the Friends for helping to purchase such items as Dan Essig's In Spirit, an artist's book that combines ancient binding styles and distressed finishes with found and treasured objects from other times and cultures -- "the kind of thing that not many libraries can afford to buy."

This year, he also noted, the Friends are participating through the OhioLINK system in licensing and purchasing Smithsonian Global Sound -- a virtual encyclopedia of the world's musical and oral traditions. This work will be downloaded into OhioLINK at a total cost of \$300,000. Oberlin College, in view of the special needs of the Conservatory, will pay \$25,000 of this total, of which the Friends contribution will amount to \$7,500.

Council member David Boe, professor at the Conservatory, predicted that Global Sound will find widespread use throughout the College. Moreover, projections illustrated, he said, "that it's cheaper in the long run to own the rights to the collection than to pay for access to it on a per-use basis." Once Global Sound is on line, library users will be able to click on to more than 35,000 individual tracks of music, spoken word and natural and human-made sounds, and listen to them over the Internet through headphones or speakers.

Several other Friends acquisitions responded to specific faculty requests. "Access to the Digital Edition of Early American Imprints Series I," said Professor Gary Kornblith in making such a request, "has made an enormous difference in my teaching. Most notably, in my Revolutionary America course, it allows students to develop independent research projects on topics that would have been inconceivable 10-20 years ago." In light of his warm recommendation the Council approved an additional contribution of \$7,500 toward acquiring Series II in this digital edition. Similar action was taken on recommendations by Professor Meredith Gadsby and Professor John Harwood for their respective departments.

In response to a question, Carpenter noted that in the case of some reference works the Library still acquires on occasions both print and electronic formats, but that there was a major shift in recent years toward licensing the electronic versions of works. English observed that OhioLINK "is playing

an increasing role in driving down costs by bargaining state-wide to get the lowest prices for libraries belonging to the system.”

He also noted that Carpenter will be retiring from the library in June 2007. “For 16 years he has coordinated the work of the acquisitions committee, which involves a tremendous amount of work and back and forth discussions preliminary to our meetings,” English said, “and done it marvelously!”

The remark elicited applause and some valedictory comments by Carpenter. In sum, he said, the Friends action a couple of years ago in increasing its acquisitions budget from \$30,000 to \$40,000 had simplified the process of decision-making -- an opinion that was seconded by committee chair Smith.

Moreover, Carpenter recommended that in the future the allocation for special collections (which receives only \$8,500 from the Library's regular budget) be increased. There followed an extended discussion of Ed Vermue's success in forging stronger faculty links with the Library's special collections. “He has made them a tremendous resource,” said Council member Zinser, who is a Professor of French.

Vermue himself, who stressed the importance of working with primary source materials for students contemplating graduate school, cited several instances in which the collections have been drawn upon recently by faculty members. Recently, for example, special collections acquired the papers of Major John Charles Edward Bowen (1909-1989), an army officer and member of the British Foreign Service, who belonged to the third generation of an expatriate family living in the Malabar Hill district of Bombay, India. “I think I can say that it was the common sense of Ibn Yamin, the wit of Omar Khayyam, and the clarity of both of them which first induced me to try my hand at translating the Persian poets,” Bowen said of his experience in 1943 while serving in Iran.

Council member Fehlan encouraged the Council to send e-mails to potential donors, whenever acquisitions like this were contemplated. These would outline specific linkages between the desired materials and the curricula, as a means of enlisting additional financial support for such purchases. Bennett volunteered to draft a message regarding recent acquisitions.

Following this discussion the Council approved by consensus the list of materials to be purchased with Friends funds and set the regular budget for acquisitions in the coming year at \$40,000. Continuing the trend of recent years, the Council also again increased the additional amount of money set aside for special collections acquisitions from \$5,000 to \$10,000 in the coming year.

4. Program Committee.

Program Committee chair Goulding supplied Council members with a chronological listing of past and planned Friends-sponsored events – representing in all what he described what as an “unusually varied and exciting” schedule. Lectures by Oberlin faculty, primarily authors of recent books, including Assistant Professor of Religion Anna Gade, Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Composition Laurie Hovell McMillin, Professor of Politics Chris Howell, and Associate Professor of Anthropology Linda Grimm.

In a collaborative effort with the German and Art departments, the Friends co-sponsored a lecture by William H. Gerdtz, Professor Emeritus of Art History, Graduate School of the City University of New York, on “American Luminism” -- techniques by which U.S. artists achieved special effects through the use of light in paintings of the natural world.

In collaboration with Community Peace-Builders of Oberlin, the Friends also sponsored a talk by Dr. Steven H. Miles, the author of Oath Betrayed: Torture, Medical Complicity, and the War on Terror (Random House, 2006). In his library talk Dr. Miles spoke to a capacity crowd in the Moffett Auditorium about his difficulty in using declassified government documents to establish the culpability of doctors in the Abu Ghraib prison atrocities in Iraq. That evening at First Church in Oberlin, he discussed America's role in torture in contravention of the Geneva accords on the treatment of

prisoners.

On another topical matter of great national interest, the Friends joined the Oberlin Public Library, Oberlin Area League of Women Voters, and the North Central Ohio Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union in sponsoring "Are We Safer in the Dark? A National Dialogue on Open Government and Secrecy." This event involved those in attendance at the Mudd Center, together with students on other campuses, in a live satellite broadcast with national experts on this subject.

The Library and the Friends sponsored several exhibitions which showcased materials from the Library. "Unbinding Books: Breaking Free from Book-making Traditions" featured artists' books from the Art Library, purchased with Friends funds. Ken Leslie, a visiting book artist, gave a talk at the opening of the exhibit, which also marked the unveiling of the Art Library's "Artists' Books Imagebase."

There was an exhibit in the spring of 2006 of monotypes by Joellyn Duesberry and poems by Patiann Rogers in the Mudd main level, entitled "A Covenant of Seasons," which explored the progression of the year and its seasons. The same display area was used in the fall for "Journey Towards Hope: A Pictorial History of Oberlin, Abolition, and the Underground Railroad" with photos selected by Coriana Close '06.

At Commencement the Friends hosted a reception for former Library students assistants and alumni librarians in the Goodrich Room on the fourth level in conjunction with a special exhibit featuring "Treasures from the Library's Special Collections."

Following his presentation Goulding solicited suggestions from members for future programs. There was extended discussion of possibilities for next year's annual Friends banquet and the suggestion that special attention should be paid to finding speakers who would appeal to the Conservatory.

5. Membership Committee.

"The very good news," committee chair Bennett said, is that "the Friends have sustained a steady increase in income in recent years going back to the year 2000." "The not-so-good news is that there has been an attrition in the number of our regular members" – from 548 (2003-2004) to 519 (2005-2006).

To achieve a better understanding of the composition of Friends membership, Bennett noted, beginning about two years ago the committee drew upon the institutional sources of Oberlin College to develop data correlating alumni members and their interests while on the campus.

This past summer Bennett and English jointly prepared surveys that were sent to various categories of Friends members. Responses to the surveys confirmed that alumni giving to the library does not compete with their giving to the College – an important finding where possible future use of College resources may be involved in Friends membership campaigns.

The special mailing to alumni history majors, which included a story illustrating the importance of resources purchased by the Friends in supporting student research, has produced a number of new Friends members. At the moment a second mailing is planned to English majors.

English noted that to date the Friends have been making only one solicitation in the fall to encourage membership renewals. "Maybe there should be follow-up mailings to those who don't respond?" He also suggested incorporating stories involving the varied uses of the Library in Friends appeals. Bennett noted that the Roe challenge grant should provide a recruitment tool.

6. Student Friends recruitment.

Friends-sponsored book sales have proved useful in recruiting student members, English noted. By paying \$2, students make themselves eligible for the special pre-sale event. Still, he added, much

remains to be done, especially in engaging the faculty in recruiting student Friends.

According to Zoe Fisher, Council student rep, the coffee mugs with the Friends logo “are a hot item with students.” English displayed a new bag with the Friends logo, which is given out at the circulation desk to carry off books. Gary Kornblith suggested ways in which the mugs might be used as an incentive for student membership.

In response to a question from Fehlan, English noted that the Library has never been able to create a student Friends organization. Fisher noted that Friends membership information is included in packets new students receive as part of their orientation.

7. Nominating Committee.

On behalf of the committee, chair Jan Zinser reported that Ann Sherif, Associate Professor of East Asian Studies, has been nominated to a three-year term (2006-2009) in replacement of Anne Trubek, whose service was applauded. Three other Council members were nominated for second terms: Dan Goulding, Bill Roe, and Wendy Wasman.

By acclamation the Friends Council approved the above nominations and the following slate of officers for the 2007-2008 year: Dan Goulding, president; Scott Bennett, vice president; and Mike Haverstock, secretary.

8. Life memberships.

Following a presentation by Zinser the Council approved by acclamation the award of two life memberships in the Friends of the Library. Scott A. Smith '79, a former Council member, is honored for his generosity in establishing an endowed book fund in honor of Sidney Rosenfeld, PhD, Emeritus Professor of German at Oberlin College. The proceeds of the fund will be used to purchase German language materials in all fields.

The other recipient of a life membership is Reid Wood '70, Emeritus Professor of Art at Lorain Community College. During his career as artist and teacher, Wood has assembled an extraordinary collection of mail art, comprising more than ten thousand items, which he has donated to the Art Library. This art form, using the postal system as a medium, includes illustrated letters, decorated or illustrated envelopes or postcards, and so-called “artistamps.”

9. Friends of the Library Scholarship.

English reported that Friends library scholarships were awarded to two Oberlin graduates pursuing degrees in library science. Lizzie Ehrenhalt '05 is using her scholarship to attend the University of Michigan's School of Information. One of her eventual ambitions is to create an archive devoted to little-known women musicians.

Fumiko Osada '06 is using her Friends scholarship to attend the School of Library and Information Sciences at the University of Wisconsin. Osada was also the winner of one of four \$5,000 library school scholarships awarded to graduates of schools participating in the Mellon Library Recruitment Program, which involves Oberlin, Mount Holyoke, Occidental, Swarthmore, and Wellesley Colleges and the Woodruff Library at the Atlanta University Center. She hopes eventually to work in children's services in a small rural library, like the one where she grew up in Japan.

10. Student Library Research Awards.

Zinser reported on student library research awards, which encourage and honor students for their excellence in the use of the Library's collections. The committee, she noted, is chaired by Megan

Mitchell, Reference Librarian and Electronic Services Coordinator, and also includes Kathy Abromeit (Public Services Librarian in the Conservatory Library), Alison Ricker (Science Librarian), and Janice Zinser (Professor of French). Jessica Grim (Reference Librarian and Instruction Coordinator) provides administrative support and ensures that submissions are complete and the names kept confidential as the committee reviews them.

Before reviewing this year's submissions, Zinser said, the committee devoted time to thinking about the criteria – creativity, thoroughness, accuracy, and the use of a broad range of sources – and developed a scale for evaluating each submission. This facilitated the final decision-making.

The three winners of awards this year, each in the amount of \$500, were as follows:

- Peter Nowogrodzki, for “Understanding What We Cannot See: An Investigation of Research on Signals and Ultraviolet Plumage Reflectance” (Biology 215) – nominated by Assistant Professor of Biology Keith Tarvin.
- Claire Cheney, for a set of poems written as part of an independent project (Creative Writing 470) – nominated by Associate Professor of Creative Writing Pam Alexander.
- Janine Heiser, for “President Johnson's War on Poverty: A Threadbare Quilt for the Poor” (Politics 305 Seminar) – nominated by Professor of Politics Paul Dawson.

11. \$3,000 Committee.

English reported that the Library received three proposals from faculty to integrated special collections materials into their courses, as recommended by the \$3,000 Committee and approved by Council. All of the proposals are interesting and appear to be quite viable.

12. Discussion of trend toward digitizing library special collections.

There was extended discussion of advances in the technology of digitizing materials as a means of providing universal access to them. In sum the consensus was that the process for accomplishing this has undergone marked improvement. This extends even to digitizing of works of art. At the same time, digitized works offer several advantages over old microfiche cards, for example, which do not permit research by word or subject.

Still, there was substantial feeling that no amount of digitizing can substitute for the experience of handling the printed records of past eras. A good example is the marvelous set of bound periodicals that the Main Library maintains on the second floor.

Carpenter expressed the opinion that the Main Library so far had done a good job of integrating its print and electronic resources. “But this is a growing problem,” he noted, citing the fear that eventually through digitization everybody's library will be the same.

Accentuating the positive, Kornblith offered the view that librarians now recognize that “knowledge can be presented in a different way, with the positive result that we are moving toward the universal access to knowledge.” Progress is so fast that Zinser said one of the most important tasks confronting professors is “keeping abreast of all the new technology.”

English outlined contacts with Cornell University regarding digitization of Oberlin's antislavery collection, which is complemented by Cornell's collection. There was a consensus that such a move would greatly improve access. The Council endorsed English's suggestion that Library staff work out the financial details of such a project, which is still in a very formative stage, with the intention of submitting the project for partial funding support by the Friends. Such a project, he said, would break new ground in making Oberlin collections of special excellence universally available.

13. Managing the Library's print collections.

English reported on various Library activities involving the management of the Library's print collection, especially lesser-used materials. These remote storage and deaccessioning (or "weeding") materials are available electronically or readily accessible through multiple copies in the OhioLINK system.

14. Plan for proposed creation of "Academic Commons."

English unveiled a plan for the creation of an "Academic Commons" on the ground floor of the Main Library. The project, which would cost about \$1.3 million to realize, he said, has been enthusiastically endorsed by the administration, faculty, and users of the Library. One of its most attractive features, according to the scheme he showed at the meeting, is a coffee shop, located adjacent to the current periodicals section. The proposal sparked a spirited, though inconclusive, debate.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Nathan Haverstock, Secretary, November 14, 2006