International Honor for the Benson

Mexico City Mayor Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon presented the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection with the Medalla 1808 at a ceremony in Mexico City on July 19.

The Benson was cited as “honorably representing Mexico’s history through its highly recognized achievements in the field of academic and research development,” by the History Awards Committee composed of directors of the Mexican Academy of History, El Colegio de México and the Institute of Historical Research at UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico).

The Benson is the first foreign institutional recipient of the award.

The Medalla 1808 is presented for contributions to the study and development of Mexican history and culture. It was established in 2008 by Mexico City officials as a memorial to Mexico City councilman and protomartyr of Mexican Independence Francisco Primo de Verdad y Ramos, and in honor of the dual celebration of the bicentennial of Mexico’s Independence and centenary of the Mexican Revolution, both occurring in 2010.

Libraries’ Director Dr. Fred Heath, along with Benson Latin American Studies bibliographer David Block, received the award at Old City Hall (Antiguo Palacio del Ayuntamiento) in the Zócalo in Mexico’s capitol. Members of the Mexico City chapter of the Texas Exes were also in attendance, and took part in a celebratory luncheon with Dr. Heath and Benson staff following the ceremony. Previous award recipients include such notable writers and historians as Carlos Fuentes, José Emilio
Wishes Come True

Making a wish is easy, but getting it fulfilled takes...well it takes you! The University of Texas Libraries invites you to help us build our library collection! You can do that by selecting an item from our online wish list.

Many people feel libraries are very important, but they never think to put their money where their passion is. And when they do they feel that their $150, $400 or $1,000 is not really enough to make a difference in the lives of our students and faculty.

The truth is that $150 does make a difference. In the next year, the University of Texas Libraries will add more than 100,000 books to its collection, which will support the learning, research and knowledge of our 50,000 students and more than 3,000 faculty and researchers.

Your $150, $400 or $1,000 to purchase a book or online database from our wish list will help improve the academic experience for our students; provide needed resources for our faculty; and impact research that will change the world.

Our wish list includes items identified by our librarians and faculty as important resources needed for instruction and research. The list is by no means everything that faculty have requested.

We hope you take a few moments to review the list and find an item that excites you or one that you feel UT should have. You may find something that a friend or family member is interested in...buy it in their name as a gift or memorial.

You can make a difference in the lives of our students by building the intellectual resources needed for success.

Visit the Wish List at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/development/wishlist.php

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Blogging Heads

In early February, the Libraries launched Tex Libris (http://blogs.lib.utexas.edu/textlibris), a blog from the office of Libraries Director Dr. Fred Heath, with the goal of developing a broader audience by expanding the reach of Libraries communications.

Along with Dr. Heath, the blog features contributors from the Advancement team: Assistant Director for Development Gregory Perrin; Head of Constituent and Donor Relations Linda Abbey; Dr. Heath’s Chief of Staff, Doug Barnett; and Communications Officer Travis Willmann. Since its launch, Associate Director for Digital Initiatives and Texas Digital Library co-founder Mark McFarland has provided news and views on digital repositories.

Tex Libris casts a broad net with regard to topics – in part because experience at libraries can involve such a variety of subject matter, but also because there is no hard and fast rule for the relatively recent development of blogging. Much of the content at Tex Libris focuses on news or events, but contributors provide decidedly professional perspectives on their respective roles in the modern library.

Tex Libris will serve as a platform for opening a forum with people who are interested in the University of Texas Libraries, or libraries in general, and, hopefully, begin a conversation that will be informative to both readers and library professionals alike.
Dancing in the Library?!

Flaunting preconceived notions about libraries, the Benson Latin American Collection celebrated the eighth annual ¡A Viva Voz! on Thursday, April 8, by replacing the periodicals with Austin-born psychedelic Afro-Latin funk band Ococe Soul Sounds and a dance floor.

The self-professed “coconut rockers” wowed the crowd of 200+ with an evening of music and dance, with Salvadoran fare provided by Elsi’s Restaurant.

Featuring the bandleaders of Grupo Fantasma and Antibalas – Adrian Quesada and Martin Perna, respectively – Ococe Soul Sounds has been described as “sounding like a sun kissed Brazilian soundtrack from the ’70s.”

¡A Viva Voz! was developed by former Benson Director Ann Hartness to highlight the library’s broad Mexican American/U.S. Latino resources, engage the local community and to celebrate U.S. Latino culture.

Past events have featured an array of guests, such as renowned Latina artist Carmen Lomas Garza, author David Rice, actor Luis Avalos, and comic artists Los Bros Hernandez.

PCL Maps Make Reference Top 30

The Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection gets a lot of use.

With its more than 25,000 maps digitized to date, this makes the collection the largest in the public domain, and it also means that the PCL Map Collection website gets a lot of visits...about 20 million pageviews in the last year alone.

In the past we’ve been alerted to high-profile users such as the United Nations (in the prosecution of Khmer Rouge) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, as well as regional and national news agencies, accessing the collections.

Now, the American Library Association has taken notice.

The Reference and User Services Association division of ALA has named the PCL Maps website as one of its 30 Best Free Reference Web Sites for 2010.

Libraries Provides Mise En Scène

Being a stone’s throw from some of the region’s most notable cultural institutions, we are presented myriad opportunities to experience the value of them through their public programs.

This spring, we were also able to make a contribution to one of their cultural exports.

As part of its ongoing series of installations by acclaimed contemporary artists called WorkSpace, the University’s Blanton Museum of Art featured Brooklyn-based artist Anna Craycroft’s first in a series – The Union of Initiatives for Educational Assembly – exploring the nexus of art and pedagogy.

The work, entitled Subject of Learning/Object of Study, utilized over 500 books from the Libraries collections related to art education as support for the two-room installation featuring objects meaning to recall tools developed by renowned pedagogues Maria Montessori and Friedrich Fröbel.

The exhibit, which ran through June 20, attracted scores of elementary-age groups and curious educators.

Pacheco, Carlos Monsivais, Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, Miguel Leon-Porrua, Ernesto de la Torre Villar, David Brading, Friedrich Katz, Francois Chevaller and Horst Pietschmann.

The Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection is a specialized research library focusing on materials from and about Latin America and on materials relating to Latinos in the United States. The collection contains nearly 900,000 books, periodicals and pamphlets, 2,300 linear feet of manuscripts, 19,000 maps, 21,000 microforms, 11,500 broadsides, 93,500 photographs and 38,000 items in a variety of other media.
Library Celebrates Mexico 2010 with Maya Exhibition

In recognition of the dual celebration of the bicentennial of Mexico’s Independence and centenary of the Mexican Revolution – both occurring in 2010 – the Architecture and Planning Library at The University of Texas at Austin is hosting “Maya Architecture: Selections from the George F. and Geraldine Andrews Collection.”

The exhibition highlights materials from an extensive and fully documented visual record of architecture of the lowland Maya area that is part of the Library’s collection.

In the late 1950s, University of Oregon architecture professor George Andrews and his wife Geraldine visited the Yucatán for the first time, and for the next forty years they devoted their professional lives to the study and documentation of Maya architecture.

The couple’s extended research produced a remarkable collection that includes an architectural data bank representing 850 buildings at 240 archaeological sites in the lowland Maya area.

The Andrews Collection was donated to the university by the couple in 2000.

The exhibition captures a small portion of George and Geraldine Andrews’ effort to document and reconstruct the art and architecture of the ancient lowland Maya. Samples from the collection reveal aspects of Andrews’ scholarship, collecting and creative talents by featuring a selection of buildings, monuments, graffiti and the resulting work conducted in the archives.

Meghan Rubenstein, an art history Ph.D. student, assisted Donna Coates and Beth Dodd of the Alexander Architectural Archive in the curation of the Andrews exhibition.

The exhibit will be on display in the Architecture and Planning Library reading room in Battle Hall through September 2010.

We ♥ UT Libraries
Libraries Launch Social Media-Based Campaign

Most everyone loves libraries. Many for obvious reasons…books, resources, access to information; and others for very personal reasons…mother or father were a librarian, met spouse in the library, first job.

No matter what the reason, folks will always love libraries. It is with this spirit that UT Libraries has launched a social networking initiative to encourage alumni and friends to share their library stories and support the libraries in a way that is affordable yet significant.

UT students depend on their libraries. UT Libraries depends on you.

Did you know that the UT community has over 400,000 alumni and thousands more friends? We think there is enough Longhorn pride to get 100,000 of our alumni and friends to join the “We ♥ UT Libraries” community of support.

All it takes is you!

Visit WeLoveUTLibraries.org:
1) Click on the Share Your Story icon and tell us why you love libraries!
2) Make your $40 annual contribution to UT Libraries.
3) Share what you have done with other alumni and friends encouraging them to join the community.

Together this community of supporters will increase our margin of excellence. It’s about people, not large dollars.

This is a very critical time in the history of our libraries. Budget cuts have the potential to erode our ability to provide the needed scholarly resources for our faculty, students and researchers. However, your gift can make the difference between excellence and mediocrity.

Show your support for excellence — and encourage others to do the same. Go to WeLoveUTLibraries.org today!
Fine Arts Library Features Exhibit on Explorer Roberts

This spring, the Fine Arts Library hosted an exhibition tracking the life and work of Colonel Leo Bond Roberts.

Roberts, an Army civil engineer, traveled extensively in his capacity for the military, taking photographs and collecting ephemera and artifacts from his travels throughout Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

The exhibit includes materials from all phases of Roberts’ life: childhood, college years, officer during World War I, topographer and explorer during the 1920s and 30s, civil engineer, military engineer and planner during World War II and chief engineer of the Jones Beach Marine Theater on Long Island, NY.

Items include photographs, publications, military awards, lantern slides of travels in the Gobi Desert and Ethiopia, as well as African masks.

Items in the exhibition were generously donated to the Fine Arts Library by Roberts’s daughter-in-law, Jan J. Roberts.

An opening reception took place Friday, March 7, in the Roberts Reading Room of the Fine Arts Library with many of Roberts’ relatives in attendance.

The full exhibit is on display through July, with a selection of items to be added to a permanent display of Roberts’ ephemera in the Fine Arts Library.

Use this QR code to view a short video from the exhibition on your smartphone with one of the many QR code reader apps available.

Staff Highlighter: Kristin Walker

Position: Lending Supervisor-Interlibrary Services- LALIII  
Age: 43

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA  
Years of service: 13

Job Description: I manage all aspects of interlibrary loan regarding requests from other libraries to borrow materials from the UT Libraries. This can include sending books, maps, cd-roms or articles that we send electronically.

Biggest surprise (at the Libraries): That some people have never heard of interlibrary loan.

Favorite book: The Thought Gang by Tibor Fischer  
PR 6056 I772 T48 1994  PCL stacks

Any good war stories from ILS?: Upon receiving an overdue notice for a book we loaned to a small town public library, we were informed that the library would be sending the town sheriff over to the patron’s house to retrieve the book. That was kind of awesome and scary at the same time.

Other hobbies: Cooking, making jewelry, painting, digital photography, helping homeless kitties.

Your path leads where? To an intersection between technology and sci-fi realism.
Scholar in the Stacks: Mary Weatherspoon Bowden

Mary Bowden received her Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Texas at Austin, and taught in the Department of English at UT for 16 years. After her retirement from teaching, she has continued her independent scholarship. She has so far written three books: Philip Fcauc (1972), Washington Irving (1981), and On the Road with Washington Irving: Chiefly in 1832 (2009).

Tell us a little bit about the project you’re currently working on.

Mary Bowden: Right now I’m working on this book that will be on the subject of second generation Americans, that is, those born after the Constitution—when they go abroad, how they react to the world abroad. It dates from about 1810-1830, a relatively small period of time.

I became interested in this collection because a lot of people don’t realize that they not only contained the local news, but also news from all over the world. And how did they get that news? Through letters from citizen correspondents in their travels abroad.

You see the exciting thing about this sort of research is that, back then, publishers exchanged newspapers. Unlike England, which taxed their newspapers, the United States did not, and postage was very low on newspapers. And it unified the U.S. in a marvelous way. There would be competitions as to how fast the President’s message could get from Washington D.C. to Louisiana, or Texas, or points beyond.

What an interesting way to proliferate information. I would assume that in the case of these exchanges, information would, say, be exchanged from, perhaps, New Orleans to Richmond, and then Richmond might exchange with another paper in another city and that story that originally appeared in the New Orleans paper would wind up removed by several degrees from its original publication. Have you found any cases where you might have recognized more that two or three degrees of separation?

MB: Oh, yes. I have picked up articles from newspapers that don’t exist anymore, but they have been reprinted by other surviving newspapers. I’ve frequently found a newspaper called the Red River Herald referenced, but I have no idea where the Red River Herald was located.

So how did you get into this “sleuthing”? Was it just a by-product of writing books?

MB: Yes. Well, I have sort of a weird sense of humor, but I find some of this stuff absolutely fascinating. Well, what I’m really trying to do now is also to save these newspapers and get them into a climate-controlled storage place, and hopefully, make known to enough people how extremely rare they are, and how we should save them for future generations by scanning them. That’s the next step.

So which medium do you find the most useful?

MB: Well, this—by far—is the easiest, reading the physical newspaper...far easier than reading online or on microfilm.

I get the impression that a lot of times, people don’t realize that asking these sorts of questions can broaden your perspective. When you go to a library and you don’t ask anyone for help, and you just find the materials yourself, you find what you can to look for, but you might miss those things that people “in the know” would be able to tell you about.

MB: My research for the last Irving book was done at Boston, Philadelphia libraries. I’ve found librarians all over the United States extremely helpful. I can cite a librarian at University of Virginia who knew that I was working on Irving, and I said, “Well, do you have these letters?”, which I knew of and wanted to review, and she said, “Yes, but we also have this letter.” That letter turned out to be full of just delightful information.

At South Carolina, there’s a South Carolina library, with extremely helpful staff. And there again, I was very narrow in my focus; I was writing about Irving’s return to the United States in 1832 after he had been abroad for 17 years. And he toured the United States. And this is where the newspapers come in so handy. I can basically follow him around by where the newspapers say he is. When he arrived in Montgomery, Alabama, for instance. And when he left. And that he was in Charleston, South Carolina. And nobody knew that he’d gone to Charleston, but he was there.

So I guess at times you find you may be the first person coming across this information?

MB: Exactly. I ran across a couple of letters from a guy from Pennsylvania who went to Russia in 1814 because his brother was a merchant there and his brother wanted someone to learn Russian because he didn’t have time to do it. And he wrote back two letters about Moscow and life there after Napoleon had burned it, and St. Petersburg, and a general description of society in Russia. Well, although this becomes part of the book I’m working on about Americans abroad, I thought someone should know about these. So I wrote to the publication of a historical society in Pennsylvania, and the editor wrote back and said, “We’re not terribly interested, but why don’t you write the history listserv?”, because there’s one for Russia and one for Pennsylvania, and you can get through to a lot more people that way. So, yesterday, my notation of these two letters was put on the Russian listserv, so now I can go and put the information about where to find Stephen F. Austin’s Fourth of July oration.

How do you feel about the merging of this technology and the analog?

MB: (Picks up her iPad and smiles) I just think it’s wonderful.

Use this QR code to read the entire interview on your smartphone with one of the many QR code reader apps available, or read it online at: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/about/news/interviews_with_mary_bowden.html
Alison O’Balle Recommends

Alison O’Balle is Information Systems Librarian for the University of Texas Libraries.

I’m a pretty voracious reader by nature, I read anything that interests me, both nonfiction and fiction. I have a few basic rules for choosing a book: the subject has to capture my attention, the writing has to hold my attention and move along smoothly and the quality can’t be so trashy or stupid that I put it down in disgust, though I have read some pretty silly stuff that was not at all edifying. I’ve picked a few of the books I’ve read recently and really enjoyed to write about here.

The Elegance of the Hedgehog (2008)  
by Muriel Barbery (translated from French)

This little gem was awarded several French literary prizes in 2007. The narrative alternates between two points of view: that of the concierge in a Paris apartment building for the very wealthy, and that of a 12-year old daughter of a couple inhabiting one of the apartments. The concierge, raised in rural poverty, is surprisingly intelligent and cultured behind her mask of behavior that conforms to “what social prejudice has collectively construed to be a typical French concierge”. The young girl, having come to the conclusion that life is pointless, without meaning and absurd, plans to commit suicide on her thirteenth birthday. In the meantime she has resolved to spend the rest of her school year having “the greatest number possible of profound thoughts” and writing them down in haiku form. Their journey toward discovery of each other’s true nature is delightfully entertaining, filled with sarcastic observations on human behavior, musings on Art, and some memorably profound thoughts.

Bonk : The Curious Coupling of Science and Sex (2008)  
by Mary Roach

Ms. Roach takes a humorous approach to a condensation of scientific studies of sex and orgasms among humans and animals. Sometimes the studies she describes are just way-out-there weird, sometimes they are surprisingly interesting and informative. The descriptions of the research are frank and detailed, and may make you squirm, but the author’s way with words definitely had me laughing out loud.

Fragment: A Novel (2009)  
by Warren Paby

Darwinian evolution has taken a definite turn toward viciousness in the race for survival among the fauna on a remote and previously unexplored island in the vastness of the South Pacific Ocean. Isolated for millennia, the wildlife have evolved in strange but logical fashion to be highly adapted to their environment, taking every opportunity to consume any food source available—either each other or a hapless intruder. Add a boatload of varied characters filming a cable reality show, anxious to broadcast “exclusive” coverage, a flotilla of Navy ships intent on preventing any wildlife from travelling to other parts of the world to create ecological havoc, and a team of NASA scientists enclosed in supposedly secure research pods (remember that line from Jurassic Park? – “life will find a way”) on the island, stir well, and imagine the results. This story will have you on the edge of your seat for the whole ride, but it’s not for the faint-of-heart. If you are afraid of things that go bump in the night, you might want to indulge in some lighter fare right before bedtime.

Canyon (1992)  
by Michael P. Ghiglieri

The author has packed a full suitcase of canyon lore into this one volume. Mr. Ghiglieri takes the occasion of his 200th trip down the Colorado as a whitewater guide to provide a fascinating journey not just through the rapids but through the geology, history, ecology, topology and tales of adventure that are associated with the canyon. Scenes of nearly indescribable beauty are interspersed with lessons about this unique national treasure and how vital it is to preserve what is left of the original canyon and the wild river running through it. Details from this book will stick with you long after you finish. For an entertaining fictional ride down the rapids of the Colorado, you might want to pick up a copy of In the Heart of the Canyon, a recent novel by Elizabeth Hyde. This tale alternates points of view between the river guide and his mixed cast of adventure tourists on a 10-day whitewater trip. All of them are dealing with issues in their private lives, and more than one of them is hiding a secret that could result in a tragedy. Each of them is changed in some way by the challenges of navigating the rapids, their interactions with nature, and with the other members of the party. The fun is in the journey and the surprise that awaits them at the end.

Before I sign off, I have to admit that I’m a fiction junkie, and I can’t resist leaving you with a list of a few of my favorite authors. My taste ranges from crime novels to science fiction to stories of the heart, so this is a mixed list: Patricia Cornwell, Linda Fairstein, Kathy Reichs, Sarah Bird, John Grisham, Annie Proulx, Michael Crichton, C. J. Cherryh, Arthur C. Clarke, Ray Bradbury, Sarah Addison Allen, Barbara Kingsolver, Donald Westlake, Janet Evanovich, Christopher Buckley, Carl Hiaasen, Dave Barry, Elmore Leonard, Randy Wayne White, Tim Dorsey, Robert B. Parker, Nevada Barr, C. J. Box, J. D. Robb, Nora Roberts, Jonathan Kellerman, Jimmy Buffet, J. A. Jance, James Patterson, Rita Mae Brown, Lisa See, Donna Leone, Dick Francis, Sara Paretsky, Rebecca Wells, and James Lee Burke.
From the Director

News reports the past few months have all too often featured the decline in state revenue and the projected effect of the lagging economy on the University going forward. The Libraries are by no means immune to such factors, and, in fact, may be uniquely impacted since we have no dedicated faculty to defend us or an alumni base to ballast us.

In response to state mandates, we have made significant adjustments in our ongoing expenses by scaling back on staff positions through attrition and by selectively trimming operational costs. As state revenues decline, we will necessarily take an ever more spartan approach to curbing costs. But even during hard times, the University community is busily exchanging information and the Libraries are no exception. If anything, we are working even harder to find new and interesting strategies for serving the University’s intellectual mission.

The spring semester was so packed with events that in this issue we’ve had no choice but to give our efforts short shrift with regard to column inches. You’ve read here about the ¡Viva Voz! dance party at the Benson, the L.B. Roberts exhibition at Fine Arts, and the Andrews collection exhibition at Architecture & Planning, but we also hosted the fifth annual Nilsson lecture featuring Austin Chronicle Arts editor and Libraries Advisory Council member Robert Faires in an outstanding reprise of his one-man take on Henry V, and a pair of conferences—the national Electronic Resources in Libraries (ERL) conference in March, and the international Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) conference in May.

We brought back our now-annual Libraries Fair for its second year as part of the University’s Research Week, opened our doors wide to the visiting public for Explore UT and provided materials and support for an exhibit by Anna Craycroft at the Blanton Museum. In between, we found time to launch a blog from my office (Tex Libri), as well as a branch libraries’ development wish list and a social media campaign, all while doing the essential work of reaching out to students, faculty and researchers in the tireless ways that we do every day at the Libraries.

And planning for the future continues despite (and to some degree due to) unpleasant economic forecasts. Already we have a growing slate of conferences to produce, including a significant Pan American FORO gathering to discuss trans-border library issues. The Fine Arts Library will shortly play host to an exhibition of material related to Broadway mainstay “The Fantasticks” in collaboration with the Ransom Center and the Department of Theater and Dance as part of a 50th anniversary of the production. We’ll be opening an exhibition celebrating the dual anniversaries of Mexico’s Independence (bicentennial) and Revolution (centenary) with an exhibit at the Benson in September and we have a few other public events in their formative stages, as well. Of course our annual programs will continue to be part of the Libraries calendar, and we’ll adapt to other opportunities as they arise.

Now, more than ever, we will also depend on your commitment and support to the great work of the University of Texas Libraries. National and state revenue forecasts indicate plainly that we face 4-5 years of flat or even declining budget allocations. Yet the demand for higher education in support of the state’s growing population only increases, making this a time when the Libraries need private gifts more than ever. They are gifts born of love for what libraries do, and our social networking initiative is designed to make the process of giving as fun and easy as possible.

With the novel ways we are approaching philanthropy in support of the Libraries, I hope you’ll take the time to consider the work that we do and the space we fill, and support your Libraries for yourselves and the future leaders that emerge from the university. For while it is true that the Libraries exist to buttress the mission of the University, our existence is equally dependent on you.