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A Banner Year

Brinley Franklin
Director, University of Connecticut Libraries

This has been a banner year for UConn’s basketball program, being the first time in the history of college basketball that the men’s and women’s teams from the same institution have won the national championships. It has also been a banner year for the University Libraries; despite budgetary challenges and staff shortages, the Libraries accomplished a great deal in academic year 2003-2004. We made major improvements in our physical facilities and their accessibility, enhanced user services, enriched our digital library collections, and presented an extensive line-up of significant public programs and exciting exhibits.

The university’s new Waterbury Campus was dedicated in October, and the campus library now serves as the focal point for the downtown campus. With space for 50,000 volumes, this networked facility offers group study opportunities, individual study carrels and comfortable seating, providing Waterbury students and faculty with a first-rate library environment.

On the Storrs campus, in response to student requests, Babbidge Library service hours were extended, closing at 2 AM instead of midnight Sunday through Thursday and opening earlier on the weekends. Thanks in large part to the generosity of the UConn Class of 1953, a second video theater was renovated, enabling many instructors to incorporate video materials into their curricula. The public computers in the popular Bookworms Café were replaced, as were most of the public computers in the Information Cafes. Photocopy and print services were adapted to accept Husky Bucks, using UConn’s new “smart” campus identification card.

Complementing these physical improvements, the library continued to develop its digital library services. Our new Quest software enables users to

E-Books, Why Bother?

Scott E. Kennedy, Director, Research & Information Services

It is hard to feel comfortable about a scenario where, as evening approaches, our protagonist enters the sitting room, crosses the oriental carpet, stops and stares a moment out the window at the falling snow, then settles down by the crackling fire, a cup of tea in one hand and the latest e-book in the other. And yet, as homes and campuses go increasingly wireless, laptops and PDAs grow even more flexible, one cannot deny that a significant e-niche is developing.

The University Libraries’ catalog now has records for (and direct links to) thousands of e-texts, and there will be thousands more in the near future. Why add e-books to the library collections? Basically, one chooses an e-book as one chooses anything else: when it seems the best solution for addressing the need at hand. The rationale for selecting an e-book for the library generally falls into one of four categories.

1) It will be used for 24/7 reference consultation system wide. Three types of work predominate in this category:
   - Online versions of tried and true reference works, such as the Oxford English Dictionary and the Encyclopædia Britannica.
   - The latest, most up-to-date technical manuals, such as computer software manuals, which are heavily consulted by users for short periods at a time. In this regard, the library now provides access to the most recent editions of over two hundred first class technical manuals through the Safari e-book program.
   - Scholarly classics, foundation texts for our society, culture, and thought and which are frequently consulted. In this category fall not only the vast number of works in the public domain digitized through cooperative partnerships, such as Project Gutenberg or the Wright American Fiction 1851-1875 project, but also works such as those in the American Council of Learned Societies’ History E-Book project, which provides networked access to over 800 titles considered to be of major importance to historical studies because they are so frequently cited in the literature.

2) The e-format is more pragmatic or more economical than other alternatives. This category refers particularly to those exhaustive collections of research texts that heretofore were available only via microcard, microfiche, or microfilm. The new Evans Early American Imprints digital edition and the Eighteenth Century Collections online are two prominent examples. No longer need one suffer the throes and woes of microphobia; with one click, one can now retrieve facsimiles of pages from hundreds of thousands of pre-nineteenth century primary resource texts—images that are easily copied, emailed, or printed. Also in this category are the thousands of public documents of record, government-sponsored reports, and government-funded statistical compendia published each year. By modifying our federal and state depository profiles to favor e-versions whenever appropriate, we facilitate access for students and researchers to these primary documents of our political, social, and cultural history.

3) The e-text can more effectively contribute to, support, or highlight university research. In this category we include products such as the...
John W. Kluge and the Dodd Research Center

One of the highlights of the university’s academic year was the presentation of the first Thomas J. Dodd Prize in International Justice and Human Rights on September 24, 2003 to British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Irish counterpart, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern. Created by the Dodd Research Center, the prize and the event generated wide press coverage as a major new component of the university’s human rights program.

The Dodd Prize would not have been possible without the generous support of philanthropist and businessman John W. Kluge. Born in Germany in 1914, Kluge immigrated to the United States in 1922 and grew up in Detroit, Michigan. He graduated from Columbia University and served in U.S. Army Intelligence during World War II. Kluge developed his business empire initially by investing in the food business, and later by purchasing the radio and television stations that ultimately became Metromedia Incorporated, one of the world’s largest communications conglomerates, with interests in radio, television, motion pictures, cellular telephones and the travel industry.

Kluge’s philanthropic interests range from an endowment to support university programs at the University of Virginia to the New York Philharmonic Orchestra to a gift of more than $60 million to the Library of Congress to establish a John W. Kluge Center and support a Kluge Prize in Human Sciences. He has donated land and his estate to the University of Virginia.

Senator Thomas J. Dodd and John Kluge came to know each other well through their common interest in the media, and his support for the Dodd Research Center precedes the completion of the building in 1995. His initial gift, made during the capital campaign for the center, established an endowment for the Dodd Prize, and his subsequent additions to that fund allowed the center and the university to award the first Dodd Prize in 2003. The prize reflects Senator Thomas Dodd’s deep convictions regarding the primacy of the rule of law, the dignity of every human being, and the responsibility to assist those who have been denied equal opportunity. 

First Aerial Survey of a State is Now First on the Web

Historic Survey Shows Connecticut as It Was in 1934

Patrick McGlamery, Map Librarian, and Jane F. Cullinane, Preservation Librarian, Connecticut State Library

Connecticut was the first state to complete a statewide aerial survey. In 1934, "Two men in a cabin plane circled around in a cloudless sky. They flew, at 100 miles an hour, up the state. Every 25 seconds the photographer took a picture of three and one quarter miles." The surveys produced 10,484 photographs that show the shape of the shoreline and the location of houses, roads, industrial buildings, and farms as they existed seventy years ago. The images have been available to researchers since 1935 at the Connecticut State Library. (See http://www.cslib.org/arcrules.htm for access to this collection.)

Governor Wilbur Cross recommended the 1934 aerial survey to the State Planning Board. Dr. Charles G. Chakerian, director of the board, said, “The Water, Tax, Health, Highway and other departments had wanted one for years.” In 1935 at the Connecticut State Library. (See http://www.cslib.org/arcrules.htm for access to this collection.)

In recognition of his support for the Dodd Research Center and the University of Connecticut, John W. Kluge (center) was the recipient of an honorary degree from the university and was honored at a luncheon in May 2003. Also pictured (left to right) are: Senator Christopher Dodd’s sister, Carolyn Dodd, Senator Dodd, the Senator’s wife, Jackie Clegg; and Thomas Willsted, Director of the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.

Connecticut History Online: Phase Two

New Partners, Expanded Content, Improved Technology

During the past year, the Dodd Center and its project partners have been developing and expanding the popular Connecticut History Online website (www.chistoryonline.org), supported by a second grant of $498,000 from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Two new partners—the Connecticut State Library and the New Haven Colony Historical Society—have joined the initial project group, which included the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, Mystic Seaport, and the Connecticut Historical Society.

The second phase of Connecticut History Online (CHO) aims not only to add new content to the site but also to expand the types of material that can be found online. Initially, CHO focused on photographs and graphic images; the second phase will include maps, brochures, old histories, diaries, manuscripts, blueprints, and periodicals. In addition, phase two will greatly expand the time period represented on the site and will include historic materials from the 17th through the 20th centuries.

Another goal of the current project is to incorporate new technologies for use on the site. During the first phase of CHO, GeoLocator software enabled users to view a map of Connecticut to find materials in the database and to pinpoint their search on smaller and smaller areas, even down to a town or city street corner if necessary. In phase two, a new scanning standard, JPEG 2000, will allow researchers to view images in great detail with no loss of definition. This will be particularly valuable when using maps and large format materials that contain images and text in a variety of scales.

The CHO project will also take advantage of the Libraries’ ENCompass for Digital Collections software, which facilitates the creation and management of digital collections that combine images and their metadata and supports a wide range of search strategies.

CHO is strongly collaborative, with each of the five partners participating not only by adding collections but also by having their staff actively involved. The program operates through a series of teams that focus on selection, cataloging, technology, teacher education, and management. The teams communicate via e-mail, listservs, and meetings, and Melissa Watterworth serves as CHO Project Manager.

The CHO management team is currently investigating ways for the project to become self-supporting and has explored various organizational structures and income strategies that may provide potential solutions. Some alternatives include the establishment of a non-profit organization with a membership base and additional income deriving from grants, programs, and services.

Teachers and students have been the primary audience for CHO. The project continues to develop strong relationships with teachers and has established a Teachers’ Advisory Group to seek advice on ways to improve the website and its teaching content. It is also working with UConn’s Neag School of Education to find ways to encourage teachers to use the site in the classroom. The Capital Region Educational Council has invited CHO participation in a federal grant proposal to investigate ways for the project to become self-supporting, and which will involve teacher training.
A large and aged hardback lies open on one edge of Billie Levy’s dining table, revealing the illustration of a rolling countryside set around a small castle perched on a distant fairy tale hill. The illustration, rendered in pastel pink and greenish-yellow watercolors, flows flush to the edge of the 14-inch long pages. Leaning in close to one page, Levy moves her index finger to rest above the crimson cheek of a knave crouched in the foreground: “[If this is an original illustration], the ink will show up smooth under the microscope,” she says, “but if the dots show up, you know it’s a reproduction.”

The book is a 1920s edition of *The Story of Naughty Kildeen*, a children’s tale published in Romania and illustrated by Job, an important 20th century European artist whom Levy admires. “I have lots of European illustrators. This fills in some of the gaps in my collection,” she says. Nearby on the table, a similarly aged large-edition copy of *The Travels of Babar*, also illustrated by Job, awaits the same fate as *Naughty Kildeen*. Levy is cautiously optimistic about the prospect of discovering original hand-colored art in this oversized and slightly frayed hardcover she pores over. The possibility has launched her on a quest for a high-power microscope that will distinguish original hand-colored pictures from reproductions.

Coupled with the book lover’s knack for being in the right place at the right time, Levy is blessed with the book lover’s good judgment, which persuaded her to purchase this outwardly unremarkable book from a Massachusetts book dealer last summer for only a few dollars. The discovery of hand-colored illustrations would raise the book’s value significantly. However, it is the intrinsic benefit—the chance to fill out her collection of European illustrators to complement her more extensive collection of American illustrators—that is important to Levy.

In the meantime, she inspects the condition of the book, recording details about its soiled seaweed green binding, gray-edged pages, tears, cracks, discolorations and other signs of wear. In fact, Levy spends many hours of her retirement days recording in a computer database the condition of thousands of children’s books she has collected. It is a labor of love that also reveals how the art and science of book collecting intersect in the bibliophile’s life.

Since about 1997, she has been making her laudable labors of collecting permanently available to others by transferring the astounding 8,000 volumes of children’s fiction, fairy tales and folklore she has collected to the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut. Levy’s donation, along with the donations from other collectors, helped to establish the Northeast Children’s Literature Collection at the university, one of only several similar research collections in the country.

“I had a basement full of books. My husband, a law professor at UConn, kept building me shelves,” she said. Eventually, her books were over taking space, and the idea of a children’s collection at UConn was a perfect solution. “Norman Stevens was the UConn librarian at the time; he put them on loan. When I saw the appreciation [that people had for the collection], I gave them to the university.”

Levy, a retired children’s librarian, has been rescuing orphaned children’s books from used bookstores and garage sales for more than two decades. Generations of American schoolchildren have grown up reading some of the classics on her shelves, such as the adventures of the lovable pachyderms, *The Travels of Babar* (1925); the trials of *The First Chinese Brothers* (1938); the puckish confidence of *Mike Mulligan and his Steam Shovel* (1939); the madcap antics adapted from a folk tale, *Caps for Sale* (1940); the high-spirited heroine, *Madeline* (1940); and the footloose freedom paraded in the story *Make Way for Ducklings* (1941). Another perennial favorite she collected is *Millions of Cats* (1928): “It’s the perfect children’s book. The text was hand-lettered. It set the standards for illustrated books — wonderful pictures [of cats] flowed over the pages. Pictures have to be totally integrated to work at all,” she says.

Everything about Billie Levy seems to be generous and substantial, except her petite 5-foot-tall frame, which moves quickly through the rooms of her artistically appointed West Hartford home. Her collection reflects her boundless enthusiasm for some of the great American artists, among them the renowned painter Howard Pyle and wood engraver Alexander Anderson. “My goal is to have one edition of every illustrator in America. I’m over 1,500 now,” she says. **G2 Copyright Hartford Courant, reprinted with permission, 2004**

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**The Campaign for the Northeast Children’s Literature Collection Endowment**

Children’s book collectors Billie Levy and Susan Aller, are co-chairing the current campaign to raise $500,000 to enhance the Northeast Children’s Literature Collection Endowment. As noted in February 29, 2004 Hartford Courant article on Billie Levy (above), the Northeast Children’s Literature Collection (NCLC) is one of the preeminent collections of children’s books and primary research materials for children’s literature in the United States. Housed in the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, the collection consists of more than 50,000 volumes and includes individual collections of artwork and manuscripts from more than 50 authors and illustrators. As the NCLC has grown, so has the requirement for strengthening financial support. Future needs include: offering travel grants to scholars who need to use the collection; funding exhibits, conferences, publications, public programs and other activities that bring the collection to the attention of scholars and other users; organizing and cataloging papers donated by authors and illustrators; preserving items that require conservation treatment; acquiring additional volumes to fill gaps in donated collections; making the collections more broadly available through the internet, and supporting professional activities and training for staff.

Over $155,000 towards our goal has already been raised in cash, pledges, and gifts in-kind. If you would like to contribute to this important initiative, please contact Linda Perrone, Director of External Relations, University Libraries, N60-486-0451 or Linda.Perrone@uconn.edu. **G7**
Admired for their beauty and grace, birds are also looked to as harbingers of the changing seasons. More recently, their responses to changes in the ecosystem have provided important clues about the health of our environment. In these exhibits and events, the library celebrates the return of our feathered friends and showcases stunning examples of avian aesthetics in bird books from its Special Collections & Archives, sculptures by two local artists, and taxidermy examples from the Connecticut Museum of Natural History collections.

The Allen Collection of Mounted Birds
Connecticut State Museum of Natural History
Continues Through May 28

F. Eugene Allen, an accountant by profession, was also a self-taught taxidermist from Winchester, New Hampshire. He collected and mounted specimens, most brought to him by hunters and some he shot himself, between 1935 and 1946. Allen kept meticulous records, including data on the birds themselves and all expenses he incurred to mount the birds and build his glass and wood display cases. His handwritten field records will be displayed with some of the birds.

In 1984, Allen’s niece, a resident of Connecticut, attended a talk by Dr. Carl Rettigmeyer on the fledgling Museum of Natural History; she suggested that he contact her uncle. Rettigmeyer drove to New Hampshire to meet Allen and discovered that he had converted his home into a museum of natural history, with the birds, as well as minerals, fossils, and mollusk shells on display. Local school groups toured the Allen Museum, as it was called, several times a year.

Mr. Allen sold his entire collection to the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History, insisting that the price consist solely of the amount he had spent for materials and maintenance, which was a fraction of their actual value. This collection was the first exhibit by the newly formed Museum of Natural History, opened on Commencement weekend in May 1985.

Babbidge Library, Gallery on the Plaza

Imagined Birds
Mythic Species Sculpted by John Revill
Continues Through May 28

A source of endless fascination to humans, birds have figured prominently in art and mythology since Paleolithic times; a recognizable bird image is depicted in the caves at Lascaux, dating roughly from 30,000 BC. Their feathers have evolved in form and color to include almost every hue and iridescence to be seen in nature, and even today, bird imagery is powerfully symbolic in many areas of human endeavor.

John Revill says of his work, “My interest in birds began with egg collecting, now thankfully illegal; I found their colors and camouflage captivating. Later, I took up bird photography while working in the conservation field. This eventually led me to depict birds in sculptural form. My aim these days, rather than attempting bird portraiture—do accurate attention to feather detail and so on, is to invent ‘new species’ of birds that I place in complex and ornate surroundings, ‘stage sets’ that often represent more hours of work than do the mythic birds they enclose.

“I create no preliminary drawings but merely use simple concepts such as ‘temple,’ ‘palisade,’ or ‘grove’ to set my imagination in motion. The setting comes first, inspiring the bird image that is tailored to fit the scale of the scenery into which it is finally inserted. I use the hand saw as a freehand drawing implement capable of cutting almost any shape. The basic pieces are roughed out, assembled, glued, pegged, and sanded. Thus, the finished piece is a kind of three-dimensional jigsaw whose likeness is impossible to replicate.”

John Revill earned undergraduate degrees in art and wildlife management at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California, and an MFA from the University of Texas at Austin. His work has been shown widely in Connecticut, and he is the recipient of awards from the Connecticut Commission on the Arts and the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts. He lives and works in Eastford.

Babbidge Library, Stevens Gallery

Fine Bird Books
From Archives & Special Collections
Continues Through July 30

The period from 1700 to 1900 is generally considered the golden age of the natural history book. Within this genre of exquisitely crafted volumes, bird books were lavishly produced and voraciously collected for their beautiful illustrations of birds and their habitats.

In 1953, Sir Sacheverell Sitwell published Fine Bird Books, a beautifully printed and designed book that included a typically erudite essay beginning: “To most human beings, and all persons of sensibility, something of mystery and of magic attaches to the tribes and nations of the birds. It is because, to the mystery of so many schools of flight performing in so many differing styles, there are added the magic and beauty of birth from the egg-shell.”

This exhibition of fine bird books has been selected from the collections in Archives & Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center and is partially based on the Sitwell bibliography, a list of books from the 18th and 19th centuries compiled for collectors. Interspersed among the books are extensive quotations from the Sitwell essay, which, although the work of an amateur in the best sense of the word, reveal a comprehensive understanding and full acquaintance with the world of ornithology. In addition, significant books published after 1900 are also displayed.

Sitwell ends his essay with the words: “So the past closes its pages; and we are left with many shelves full of huge volumes which, beginning in fantasy, continue in accuracy, attain to an extraordinary degree of truth and reality during the long nineteenth-century, and now may either expire altogether, or take the path of poetry. Whether this happens in our lifetimes we may never know; but, in the meantime, take pleasure in what is old and true.”

Dodd Research Center Gallery

Edwin Way Teale
Connecticut Naturalist
Continues Through July 30

Although he was born in Joliet, Illinois in 1899, Edwin Way Teale was considered Connecticut’s premier naturalist by the time he died in 1980. Teale was a prodigious writer, publishing not only 32 books but also keeping detailed diaries and journals from his early boyhood until his death. Archives & Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center is the home of his papers and his extensive library. This exhibition celebrates Teale’s life and work.

Teale received his first camera as a young boy and began to document the natural world around him. A number of his cameras, as well as numerous photographic images from his entire career, are displayed along with the books he illustrated. Teale first recorded his observations of the natural world in his diaries and field notes. A selection of his journals may be seen as works in progress for his published works.

In 1939, Edwin and his wife Nellie moved to a seventy-nine acre property in Hampton, Connecticut, which they named Trail Wood. Their daily observations of this beautiful Connecticut retreat, now maintained by the Connecticut Audubon Society, were documented with words and photographs. One of Teale’s activities, while writing books, was to create what he called the biography of a book. This exhibit traces the creation of one of his books through all its phases, from field notes to journals to manuscript, including the photography required to illustrate his often inspiring words.

Awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1966 for his book Wandering Through Winter, Edwin Way Teale remains today a writer and photographer of stature. The exhibit hopes to capture the intensity and scope of this fascinating man.

Dodd Research Center Gallery, West Corridor

Continued on page 7
University Senate Resolution on Scholarly Communication

At the February 9 meeting of the University Senate, the Senate Budget Committee presented a report on the current cost of scholarly communication and the impact this is having on university resources. Noting that “scholarly literature is the foundation on which new advances in research and scholarship are built,” and that “broad access to that literature is essential to the health of the world’s academic community,” the report underscored the exponential rise in the cost of serial publications over the past 15 years and the consequences for academic and research communities worldwide. After presenting its report, the Budget Committee proposed a motion on the issue, which was discussed and amended from the floor. The Senate then passed the following resolution:

Access to the scholarly literature is vital to all members of the academic community. Scholars and their professional associations share a common interest in the broadest possible dissemination of peer-reviewed contributions. Unfortunately, the business practices of some journals and journal publishers are inimical to these interests and threaten the promise of increased access inherent in digital technologies. Development of library collections is more and more constrained by the rising costs of journals and databases. Faculty, staff, students, and university administrators must all take greater responsibility for the scholarly communication system.

Therefore, the University Senate calls on all faculty, staff, and students of the University of Connecticut to become familiar with the business practices of journals and journal publishers in their specialty. It especially encourages senior tenured faculty to reduce their support of journals or publishers whose practices are inconsistent with the health of scholarly communication by submitting fewer papers to such journals, by refereeing fewer papers submitted to such journals, or by resigning from editorial posts associated with such journals. It encourages them to increase their support of existing journals and publishers whose practices are consistent with the health of scholarly communication.

The Senate also calls on university administrators and departmental, school, college and university committees to reward efforts by faculty, staff, and students to start or support more sustainable models for scholarly communication. It calls on them to provide financial and material support to faculty, staff, and students whose work helps to ensure broad access to the scholarly literature. It also calls on professional associations and the university to invest in the infrastructure necessary to support new venues for peer-reviewed publication.

Finally, the Senate calls on the University Libraries to provide resources that help faculty, staff, and students understand the business practices of different journals and journal publishers and their impact on the health of scholarly communication.

For further information on scholarly communication issues visit:

- www.library.uchicago.edu/about/publications/scholarlycommunication.html
- www.arl.org/scomm/

Who Stole Your Published Research?

A Forum on Scholarly Communication

April 25, 10 AM - Noon • Konover Auditorium, Dodd Research Center

With the University Libraries moving to online access only for many journal subscriptions (see above), and the recent Senate resolution on this issue (see left column), the impact of the “scholarly communication crisis” has hit home at UConn as never before. What are the economic issues driving this crisis? How are libraries addressing the spiraling cost of books and journals? What alternative publishing ventures are underway? How can faculty and students get involved?

Three distinguished panelists will provide perspective on these and related questions: Stuart Schieber, a computer scientist at Harvard University; Phil Davis, a librarian from Cornell University; and Jolla Bixbdd, representing SPARC, a research library coalition creating a new model for negotiating the commercial prices of academic journals by creating new alternatives to the current, failing system.

An extended Q&A period will follow their presentations. All members of the UConn community are encouraged to attend this free event.
stamping or security tagging, and they never have to undergo restoration in the conservation lab. So, while we may not look forward to curling up by the fire with the latest e-book, we can be happy and comforted to know that these e-texts can’t be stolen, and they never have to be re-shelved and to never get mis-shelved. They require no marking or labeling or property stamping or security tagging, and they never have to undergo restoration in the conservation lab. However, while the online connection gets broken or the server goes down, all we have to do is wait—perhaps an hour, sometimes two—and all will be safely back in its proper e-place. What better time perhaps for a cup of tea and the latest classic work, such as Moby Dick.

The Bible was sufficient justification for the application of the death penalty in 17th century Colonial Connecticut. The Bible was sufficient justification for the application of the death penalty in 17th century Colonial Connecticut. The Bible was sufficient justification for the application of the death penalty in 17th century Colonial Connecticut. The Bible was sufficient justification for the application of the death penalty in 17th century Colonial Connecticut. The Bible was sufficient justification for the application of the death penalty in 17th century Colonial Connecticut.

Source: Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut www.colonialct.uconn.edu/
Online Reference: Comparing Two Services

David McChesney, Reference Librarian/ Liaison for Business, Economics, and Agricultural & Resource Economics

The library currently offers the UConn community two online reference services. Our locally developed askHomer Live chat service and the Boston Library Consortium’s ASK 24/7 service, which is provided through Metropolitan Cooperative Library System (MCLS), an association of libraries in southern California. These services were described in a February 2003 UConn Advance article, “Library Now Offers Live Online Reference Help Around the Clock” (www.advance.uconn.edu/2003/03/02/03/03/02/03/article.html).

ASK 24/7 is offered as a two-year pilot project. Four to seven specially trained librarians from each of ten participating BLC institutions staff a four-hour daytime slot in return for round-the-clock reference service. MCLS librarians cover the hours not staffed by BLC. With almost two years of experience on our belt, we’ve reached some tentative conclusions about these services—local versus remote—and the future of this new brand of reference assistance.

Patrons welcome the 24/7 availability of reference assistance via the Internet. Students do their research when it suits their schedule and are not dependent on library hours. The askHomer Live service is accessible anywhere and with any computer/software combination. The BLC ASK 24/7 service, however, requires users to have a specific level and type of software.

When UConn patrons click on askHomer Live, they are being assisted by local UConn librarians. Patrons who click on the BLC ASK 24/7 icon also assume that their local librarians are helping them because the icon is located on their home library’s web page. But this is not always the case. Since the BLC service is provided by consortium librarians, a student at Boston University, for example, is consulting a UConn librarian, (or for that matter, a librarian in California), if a particular journal is on the shelf in Boston. The patron must then be referred back to the Boston University staff for site-specific information.

At UConn, we are questioning the quality of our service to users not affiliated with UConn and who are outside the BLC community. Our lack of detailed, site-based knowledge when answering online questions for patrons outside the consortium is a concern. Such knowledge, for example, would include knowing how the patron can connect remotely to his library databases or why a database is not working at her institution.

Users of BLC ASK 24/7 are able to evaluate the service after each inquiry. To verify our concerns about quality, we checked our statistics during April 2003. In contrast, ASK 24/7 transactions were incomplete 21% of the time, and 57% of the transactions were incomplete during April 2003. In contrast, askHomer Live rarely has technical problems, and transactions are not lost. The brief nature of the chat and web page pushing functions seems not to lend itself well to long co-browsing sessions. Patrons prefer to chat with a librarian to see how best to search a database or locate library information and then get the relevant page pushed to them.

At UConn, librarians offer 31 hours per week of askHomer Live as a local service and cover four hours weekly for BLC ASK 24/7—two hours responding to other BLC patrons and two hours answering questions for the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System’s U. S. and Canadian customers. We are confident of the quality service we offer UConn patrons but are concerned about the quality of service offered by librarians outside of the BLC system. We have concluded that the required coverage of hours for other library consortia in the U. S. and Canada, in return for access to 24/7 service, is not advantageous for UConn and BLC patrons.

In October, the UConn Libraries will choose the chat reference service that best serves the UConn community. The following recommendations have been discussed and proposed to the BLC ASK 24/7 user group for consideration:

• Hire a half-time administrator for the service to oversee transaction quality, evaluate user data, maintain chat statistics, and update training materials.
• Members, set up training opportunities, work on software improvements with the vendor, and promote the service through targeted marketing.
• In the transition from reference service at a local desk to online reference, chat reference technology should be given to flexible staffing and an email default function. In Babbidge Library, from September 2003 to February 2004, there were a total of 401 reference chat questions and 129 directional chat questions. These represented 4% and 2% respectively of total reference and directional transactions handled at the service desk. Dedicating staff to the chat reference service without their ability to act as backup for the service desk compromises the dominant on-site service. An email default function would enable librarians to act as backup for the desk during busy times.
• BLC librarians should cover the hours of 10 AM to 10 PM for consortium patrons without calling on librarians from other, more remote consortia. This would satisfy the majority of inquiries. Statistics show that 87% of questions are asked between 10 AM and midnight. Beyond those hours, a commercial vendor could cover questions for a fee. The difficulty of servicing patrons from libraries in Utah, Florida, California, Canada, and elsewhere is the lack of detailed knowledge and for those libraries, without which the librarian cannot satisfy the patron’s need and leaves them with a negative impression of the service.
• Libraries need to put the chat icon on as many library web pages as possible to make help available on the page where the patron encounters problems and to increase use. A recent study at Case Western Reserve University found that three out of four library users asked for help. Of those questions asked: the home page generated 38%, the catalog page generated 22%, and database pages generated 18%.

Birds of a Feather

Continued from page 4

Bird Carvings by Bill Card

When one views Bill Card’s woodcarvings, his great love and appreciation for the outdoors and its creatures is most evident. Growing up in Northeastern Connecticut, fishing in its streams and hunting in its fields, he has now traded his fishing rod and shotgun for carving tools and a paintbrush.

Mr. Card’s interest in carving began about 12 years ago, stimulated by his contact with an old-time carver friend from Maine. Even though his work has won numerous prizes, he carves primarily for the love of creating sculptures of wildlife in naturalistic settings and for the joy that his work brings to people.

Mr. Card’s carvings are mostly of fish and birds, with an occasional reptile for the sake of variety. His birds of prey include a peregrine falcon, a merlin, and a golden eagle, among others. And his carved ducks and songbirds include a black duck, an old squaw, as well as a cardinal and a black-capped chickadee. Card has also carved many fish, such as the brown trout, the rainbow trout, the brook trout and the striped bass. When asked for his favorite subject, he says, “Reptiles, for their distinctive appearance and the way they congregate and rest on a rock.”

Bill Card lives in South Windham for about six months of the year and spends the second half in Maine, where he indulges in his other passion, flying airplanes and gliders.

Library Staff News

Eva Boldovak, a member of the Collections Services Area, will become the Libraries’ first Metadata Librarian in May.

Brinley Franklin, Director of University Libraries, has been elected to the Management Council of the Boston Library Consortium.

Pete Murray, formerly Head of Information Technology Services, has been appointed to a new position, Assistant Director of Information Technology Initiatives.

Melissa Wisner, a member of the Information Technology Services Area, is now the Libraries’ Digital Systems Librarian.
SUMMER EXHIBITS
JUNE 7 - JULY 30, 2004

Surreal Mindscapes
Paintings by Clinton Deckert

Contemporary Surrealist, Clinton Deckert is renowned for his ongoing series of oil paintings entitled “Surreal Mindscapes.” This body of work liberates the imagination, drawing the viewer into enigmatic scenarios contradicting the usual. His canvas is where abstract thoughts and surreal imagery collide. Critic Steve Sarger, in Art New England, (1997) says of his work, “Deckert’s riotous conjurings are dazzling, ingenious, provocative and injected with a sense of fun.”

Deckert is past president of Artworks Gallery in Hartford and currently serves on the Board of Directors. He has twice been awarded an Individual Artist Fellowship Grant from the Greater Hartford Arts Council. He created an assemblage for the gala Salvador Dali event at the Wadsworth Atheneum, painted works for the “CowParade New York” and “CowParade West Hartford” events, and has shown in The Monique Goldstrom Gallery in New York City. He also Deckert exhibited in the “Brave Destiny” International Surrealist Exhibition at the Williamsburg Art and Historical Center in Brooklyn, NY. His work has been featured on the cover of Art Calendar Magazine (February 2002) and in Hartford Magazine (September 2005), and is represented in numerous collections throughout the U.S.

Babbidge Library, Stevens Gallery

Continuing (See page 4)

Edwin Way Teale
Connecticut Naturalist
Fine Bird Books
From Archives & Special Collections