

Minutes of the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Council of
the Friends of the Oberlin College Library, October 31, 2009

President Dan Goulding convened the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Council of the Friends of the Oberlin College Library at 10 a.m. in the Goodrich Room at Mudd Center. The time of the meeting, as he noted, was moved ahead to accommodate other Library-related activities that afternoon.

The following Friends Council members, in addition to Goulding, were present for the meeting: Vice President Jan Zinser, Secretary Nathan (Mike) Haverstock, Ardie Bausenbach (by phone from Chevy Chase, Maryland), David Boe, William Bradford, Ray English (ex officio), Celeste Feather, Scott Fehlan (by phone from Chicago, Illinois), Jessica Grim (ex officio), Ken Grossi (ex officio), Amelea Kim (student representative), Gary Kornblith, Peter McCracken, Ann Sherif (by phone from Kyoto, Japan), Scott Smith (co-chair of the Acquisitions Committee), Ed Vermue (ex officio), and Wendy Wasman.

Highlights of the meeting.

At its nineteenth annual meeting, the Council:

- authorized the expenditure of \$40,000 for new acquisitions to support a wide variety of subjects on the College curricula, as well as the Library's special collections.
- awarded a Friends scholarship, worth \$2,500, to an Oberlin graduate to help defray the cost of attending library school, as she embarks on a library career.
- awarded two Oberlin students prizes of \$500 each for special excellence in their use of the Library's collections in writing research papers.
- awarded two Life memberships (one shared by a couple) in recognition of their generous gifts to the Library.
- elected officers for the 2009-2010 year, reelected one Council member for a second three-year term and three people to first terms of the same length.
- heard a very comprehensive set of ideas from the Council's student representative on ways to increase student membership and enhance the visibility of the Friends program

on the Oberlin campus.

-- discussed ways that the Archives, which formally became a department within the Library in July 2008, can be integrated into the overall Friends program.

-- agreed to allocate \$1,500 to publish a catalog for an extraordinary collection of artists' books to be exhibited in the spring semester at the Library and to be given to Oberlin College in honor of Ruth Hughes, class of 1985.

Financial report.

Following approval of the minutes of the November 1, 2008 meeting, Ray English delivered the financial report. "The Friends had less income last year," he said, "but a substantial balance was carried forward and we were able to maintain our support for new acquisitions, which is, of course, our major expense." He also noted that the drop in contributions was in line with that experienced by other cultural institutions owing to the downturn of the U.S. economy.

Acquisitions Committee.

Scott Smith and Jessica Grim delivered jointly the committee's recommendation that the Friends finance acquisitions worth \$40,000. Calling it "an especially exciting list," Smith called special attention to two items. The first was an 1843 bill of sale for a slave in South Carolina, that "will add nicely to Oberlin's anti-slavery collection," which is heavily used in history and African American courses.

The other was a set of two magic lanterns and slides, which were devised by Ernst Plank in Nürnberg, Germany, from 1890 to 1895. Ed Vermue had one of them on display for the meeting. The devices, including 104 magic-lantern slides from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, will support teaching and research in cinema studies courses.

In answer to questions, Grim noted that generally Friends funding covers only a portion of some of the acquisitions, with the balance coming out of the Library's regular budget. In compiling the list for our consideration the committee seeks to strike a balance among the College's departments. Only one electronic item on this year's list will receive ongoing funding by the Library after the initial period of Friends support, and that is a work by Bernard Grzimek, a famous German zoologist, entitled *Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia*, which was originally published in 1968. The ongoing subscription to the encyclopedia will cost \$995 annually.

Kornblith raised a question as to the high cost of acquiring digital collections of public documents to which he felt there should be open access. Included in this category are digital national security archives (cost \$2,426), Foreign Broadcast Information Systems (\$4,624) and an expanded U.S. Congressional Set (\$6,300) – the latter two purchased from a private purveyor, Readex of Naples, Florida. Grim noted that, while many such materials are available online, they are not easily accessible, whereas the commercial products are very well organized and indexed.

Whereupon the Friends Council approved by acclamation the expenditure of \$40,000 to acquire all of the items recommended by the acquisitions committee.

Program Committee.

Committee chair Goulding supplied Council members with a chronological listing of past and planned Friends-sponsored events. The year just concluded, he noted, was an especially active one, with first-of-a-kind programs like the one connected to the Wooden Synagogues exhibit, which was still on display on the Library's main level, and the symposium on the future of the book in the spring. Several Friends-sponsored talks drew capacity crowds to the sixty-seat Moffett Auditorium at Mudd Center.

Upcoming events included:

-- two after the meeting -- “A Conversation on Cinema and Creativity” by James McBride and Jonathan Demme and McBride's appearance as our featured speaker at the annual Friends banquet.

-- an illustrated talk on November 17 by Mary Garvin, Donald Longman Professor of Natural Sciences, on *Living in the Vermilion River Watershed*, a collection of essays she co-edited with Jan Cooper, John Charles Reid Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Composition.

-- a panel discussion on “Wooden Synagogues” on November 22.

Goulding reiterated the program committee's openness to suggestions on future speakers or events. One idea, offered by Bausenbach, was that the Friends seek to work book-related events into gatherings of Oberlin alumni in major cities. She noted that the Washington, D.C. group, for example, meets almost monthly.

Membership Committee.

Committee chair Kornblith noted a drop in Friends membership, but also summarized a variety of actions that the membership committee is planning to reverse the situation in the current year. These include email and US mail reminders, emails from committee members to those who have not renewed, and possibly phone calls. Bausenbach noted she had had difficulty finding the Library's online giving page and that it wasn't linked from the Friends of the Library webpage.

English acknowledged that "there is still work to do" to straighten out the situation with the College's Development Office. It is possible that renewal solicitations were not received by all Friends members who should have gotten them.

On a brighter note, a special letter recently sent by the secretary to all non-member residents of Kendal at Oberlin had good result, yielding more than 20 new members.

Nominating Committee.

Goulding delivered the committee's recommendations. In accord with them, Ann Sherif was nominated to a second, three-year term on the Council and Eric Carpenter, Maxine Houck '58, and Robert Longworth to first terms of similar lengths.

He also reported that the Committee had nominated the following officers for the 2009-2010 academic year: Jan Zinser, president; Ann Sherif, vice president; and Mike Haverstock, secretary.

Following approval of all of the above nominations by acclamation, the Council vigorously applauded the exceptional service of the three retiring members: Daniel Goulding, William Roe, and Wendy Wasman.

Life memberships.

The Council similarly approved Life memberships for the following individuals:

-- Ellen '58 and Thomas O'Flaherty of Boston, Massachusetts, who have made a very generous three-year pledge to establish a new endowed fund for the Library. Income from the fund will be used to digitize books and other library materials in the special collections and in all subject areas, making them much more accessible to Oberlin faculty and students as well as to scholars around the world.

-- Conrad Bahlke '80, who has also created a generous endowed fund for the Library. Income from the fund is being used to purchase books and other library materials related to Africa. These will complement his own African collection, accumulated over a lifetime, which he intends to give to the Library. He recently gave the Library the original manuscript of a speech delivered in London in 1840 by Prince Albert in his role as chairman of the first public meeting of the Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade. Another donation is a fine manuscript letter written in 1848 by abolitionist and Oberlin benefactor Lewis Tappan. This letter is written on letterhead that memorialized Elijah Lovejoy, an abolitionist Presbyterian minister and newspaper editor, who was murdered by a mob in 1837.

Student Friends.

Amelea Kim provided Council members with an ambitious outline of proposed student Friends activities for the spring of 2010. She stressed the need for an aggressive campaign to advertise Friends programs, about which she had “no idea” previously as a student and all the “cool things” that are in our Library. Kim, who has undertaken her work as a “student job” in line with our decision last year to defray this modest expense out of Friends funds, sketched out a broad spectrum of activities for the coming year.

These will kick off with a spring informational meeting at the beginning of the semester. Among the activities already in the pipeline, she said, are monthly visits to the Library's special collections to see materials as follows: Medieval Manuscripts on February 18th; Anti-Slavery Collection March 18th; Museum Objects Pertaining to “The History of the Book” April 15th; and Book Arts May 13th.

Other activities targeting students under consideration include: a monthly film series at the Library concentrating on showings of movies adapted from books; scavenger hunts to encourage students to explore the *terra incognita* reaches of the upper levels of the Library; readings by student authors of their works in progress at Azariah's cafe; an evening playing Banagrams (a Scrabble-like game), and book collecting contests.

At the moment Kim is considering various other ways to reach students, among them an on-line or print newsletter or posters in a neon green. Council members had several ideas. One suggested making use of the display space at Azariah's to publicize such events. Another encouraged her, by way of a possibly useful model, to attend one of the regular readings of portions of works in progress by authors at the Oberlin Public Library, which draw sizable crowds.

Friends of the Library Scholarship.

English reported that Tabia Gaston '08 was awarded a \$2,500 scholarship from the Friends to pursue her studies in the library and information science program at the University of Pittsburgh. While at Oberlin, Gaston was an undergraduate intern in the Mellon Librarian Recruitment Program. As a student representative on the Friends Council she helped plan and execute one of the most lucrative biennial book sales in more than a decade.

English called attention to an e-mail he received recently from Council member Bill Roe, who was unable to attend our meeting, asking if it were not time to consider possibly increasing the size of the Friends Library Scholarship. Following discussion, there was a consensus that this was a good idea to consider for next year.

Student Library Research Award.

Ann Sherif reported that two students were awarded Friends of the Library 2009 Research Awards, each in the amount of \$500:

-- Dylan Messina, class of 2011, for a paper entitled "Where Will It End? Or a 21st Century Guide to the Cello's Extended Techniques." In her nomination, Seung-Ah Oh, visiting assistant professor of composition, said: "What is unique about his paper are the many examples of these techniques applied in 21st century scores/music, creating a tangible sense of newness and relevance to the young composers of today."

-- Stephen Williams, class of 2012, for a paper entitled "A Review of the Life History and Ecology of the Eastern Newt (*Notophthalmus viridescens*)." In his nomination, Roger Laushman, associate professor of biology, said he had "never known a first-year student so skilled and polished as Stephen, nor one who so consistently out-performed juniors and seniors."

In announcing the awards, Sherif noted that there were only three nominations in all. Her remark triggered discussion of ways to increase awareness of this Friends program within the College community and to improve upon the Friends own website.

Oberlin College Archives.

There was a round of applause for Ken Grossi, Oberlin College's archivist, who has been on the job for more than a year. At our meeting, he said he was in the process of a mail solicitation of support for two funds. The first is the Hunt Endowed Fund for

Preservation and Digital Access, which during the past year and a half has helped create three new digital online collections (Oberlin College Campus views, Oberlin buildings, and volunteer relief work by Oberlinians in Turkey following World War I). The second is the Archivist Gift Fund, which is used to preserve for posterity rare items in the College archives. With a grant from the Richard C. Hallock Foundation, the Archives is presently involved in converting 131 reel-to-reel sound recordings into CD-ROMs. These will include talks by prominent individuals, commencement events, and conferences at Oberlin, spanning the period 1961-1983.

One Council member suggested that there are so many tie-ins between the Friends and the Archives that it might be useful to explore them in a future meeting. Another lamented that the Council had narrowly defeated a proposal some years ago to improve upon the furniture of the Goodrich Room where we met.

Ruth Hughes – Artists' Books Collection.

English described an exhibit of artists' books that will be mounted in the early spring with the help of someone well-known to the Council: Ruth Hughes, Oberlin class of 1985, who works as a catalog librarian at the Library Company of Philadelphia. Hughes was a member of the Council from 1992 to 1998, its vice president for the last three years of that period, and has served on the acquisitions committee since its inception.

When she heard recently that Hughes was quite seriously ill, her friend, Alice Austin, a well-known book artist herself, encouraged her peers in the Philadelphia area, and beyond, to donate artists' books to a collection in honor of Hughes. More than 60 works already figure in this collection, which is to be given to Oberlin College where they will complement the already extensive collection in the art library.

Austin has suggested the desirability of a printed catalog and advised that Lynn Farrington, rare book librarian at the University of Pennsylvania, has committed to writing an essay for the catalog. The artists will provide images and information on their works for the catalog, which will be sold at cost by the Free Library and Library Company of Philadelphia, as well as by Oberlin College.

The Friends Council voted to allocate \$1,500 toward the production of the catalog, which will acknowledge that support.

Collection digitization – progress report.

English reported that none of the \$10,000 the Friends authorized to spend annually for a three-year period to support digitization of “Oberlin-related materials that have the potential to support student learning and research” has been spent, but that the Library is finalizing vendor agreements for two projects involving the complete run of the *Oberlin Evangelist* (1832-1862) and early years of the *Oberlin Review* (1874 to present). Future funding from the Friends for digitization may not be needed, since the Library is part of a major consortial grant proposal from the Five Colleges of Ohio in the amount of \$600,000 for two years. The purpose of the grant, which is expected to be awarded in December and may possibly be renewed for an additional two years, is to integrate new digital collections into courses.

Book studies developments.

English reported on a meeting of faculty October 12 called by Wendy Hyman and Laura Baudot of Oberlin's English Department, where ideas were exchanged on developing book studies as a curricular area at the College. The faculty group, which included representatives of the departments of art, anthropology, classics, creative writing, English, history, religion, rhetoric and composition, is at the point of deciding how best to pursue this interest, whether to work toward developing a formal curriculum versus promoting activities like lectures and conferences.

The group expressed the desirability of improving facilities to support teaching in this field. This might include improvements to the Goodrich Room to facilitate its use as a teaching space, or the possible creation of a book arts lab equipped with letterpress printing capabilities.

Adjournment.

The Council having completed its business, President Goulding adjourned the meeting at twelve noon. Before doing so he especially thanked Sherif for participating from Kyoto where at that moment it was on 1 a.m. on the following day.

Respectfully submitted by Nathan Haverstock, Secretary
December 3, 2009