

Minutes of the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Council of  
the Friends of the Oberlin College Library, September 25, 2010

President Janice Zinser convened the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Council of the Friends of Oberlin College Library at 1:37 p.m. in the Goodrich Room at Mudd Center.

The following Friends Council members were present: Vice President Ann Sherif, Secretary Nathan (Mike) Haverstock, Ardie Bausenbach, David Boe, William Bradford, Eric Carpenter, Ray English (ex officio), Celeste Feather, Jessica Grim (ex officio), Maxine Houck, Amelea Kim (student representative), Robert Longsworth, Peter McCracken (by phone), Scott Smith (chair of the Acquisitions Committee), and Ed Vermue (ex officio).

Highlights of the meeting.

At the meeting, the Council:

- learned that membership levels and total contributions to the Friends recovered in large part from the lower levels that resulted from the 2008 financial crisis,
- received the most impressive report on Student Friends activities in our group's history,
- approved acquisitions for the Library, worth \$40,000, in response to recommendations from the Acquisitions Committee that were based in large part on the recommendations of Oberlin College faculty,
- heard about the creation by Special Collections of a "Letterpress Studio" on the second floor of Mudd Center, where students can receive hands-on instruction in printing techniques thanks to generous donations of equipment,
- admired the handsome catalog of 100 artists' books in the Ruth Hughes collection, partially funded by our organization,
- awarded a Friends scholarship, worth \$2,500, to Oberlin graduate Louis Trizna to help

defray his cost of attending library school en route to a career in library work,

-- approved the award of three life memberships, one to Scott Bennett '60 for an unmatched record of service to the Friends as well as generous donations to the Library, and two to Anne and Charles McFarland, who have been making generous contributions to the Library for three decades,

-- approved the award of an honorary membership to Patricia Selch, who donated her late husband's extraordinarily-rich collection of musical instruments, rare books and primary source material to the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and

-- elected officers for the 2010-2011 year and three people to their first Council terms, and a fourth person to his seventh.

### Financial report.

Following approval of the minutes of our last meeting on October 31, 2009, Ray English delivered the financial report. He noted that the end-of-the year fund balance had again declined as planned. "Expenditures seems to be normal," he said, though printing costs were "running a little high this year." This was due to the reprinting of the address delivered by Michael Dirda of *The Washington Post* at the 2002 annual banquet (which is sent to all new Friends members) and our contribution to the cost of publishing a catalog of the Ruth Hughes Collection of Artists' Books.

He also noted that, since expenditures have been exceeding revenues and the overall fund balance has been reduced, it may be necessary to reconsider the overall level of acquisitions spending in the future.

English also raised the question of the cost of the annual dinner. If the price stays at \$22, where it has been for many years, "that means," English said, "we are looking at chicken as far as the eye can see" -- a memorable line that elicited a roar of laughter. It was agreed that the matter of cost and menu options would be considered in light of the budget available for next year.

### Acquisitions Committee.

The Acquisitions Committee, chaired by Scott Smith, had supplied Council members with a listing of the committee's recommendations on acquisitions for the fall of 2010. In explaining which materials were chosen for funding, Smith noted the committee had recommended that the Friends not acquire a digital file of *The Plain Dealer*, Cleveland's major newspaper, spanning the period 1845-1991, because it seemed "overpriced" at \$8,400. "We may wish to revisit this issue next year," he

suggested in the hope the asking price may be more reasonable.

Smith also said the committee had made an effort to reduce the number of items that are partially funded by the Friends -- "with a couple of exceptions." Partial funding places a greater burden on the Library's general fund.

The revised list of acquisitions totaling \$40,000 was approved by acclamation. Shortly thereafter, a Council member praised the committee "for all the time and energy that went into a great list this year." A committee member responded by saying that the work, though demanding, was "fun."

### Program Committee.

Chair Ann Sherif had supplied Council members with a chronological listing of the past year's and upcoming Friends events. She noted that one recent event the Friends co-sponsored drew a standing-room-only crowd to Oberlin's First Church and considerable coverage in the local press. This was the talk on *Framing Innocence: A Mother's Photographs, a Prosecutor's Zeal, and a Small town's Response*, a book by Lynn Powell, visiting assistant professor of creative writing. Powell described how an Oberlin mother, with the support of the local community and the American Civil Liberties Union, defeated an over-zealous Lorain County attorney's attempt to prosecute her for taking nude photos of her very young daughter.

The balance of the Friends programs this year offer a rich mix of faculty talks on recent works. It elicited the comment that Oberlin faculty members themselves are often unaware of what their peers are doing and the suggestion that perhaps this December might be a good time for another faculty publication reception. This is a triennial event in the Friends calendar, and always proves popular.

For the first time this year, the featured attraction at our annual banquet is a musical attraction, a performance by Jeannette Sorrell '90 and members of Apollo's Fire. Members of this Cleveland-based baroque orchestra play 17th- and 18th-century music on period instruments. The timing of the Friends meeting was advanced by one month to accommodate the group's schedule.

### Membership committee.

In the absence of Gary Kornblith, committee chair, English delivered the report and "the good news" that our membership seemed to have rebounded and currently stands at 769. As our meeting was a month early this year, he noted that figures on renewals won't be available until the notices go out over the next couple of weeks.

He noted that a special mailing to residents of Kendal who were not yet Friends members had produced very good results. The committee's report also suggested that it might be worthwhile to target recent Oberlin alumni who graduated Phi Beta Kappa or were Commencement prize-winners.

In a follow-up to a suggestion at our previous meeting that we might offer access to the Library's databases as a carrot for Friends membership, Peter McCracken said he "felt the costs [in payments to vendors] would probably outweigh the benefits [in new members]." There were several reasons for this, he noted, among them that "people often already have access through their public libraries to many of these databases."

There followed an inconclusive discussion of the desirability of using such trendy tools as "Facebook" to reach out to the younger generation of possible Friends. While the results from this year were still unknown, it was suggested we continue using e-mail in soliciting renewals of Friends memberships.

#### Nomination Committee.

The Nomination Committee recommended four people for their first, three-year Council terms: John Elder '54, Herb Henke, Nick Jones, and Thelma Morris '53; and Mike Haverstock for his seventh term.

The committee also recommended officers as follows for the 1910-1911 academic year: Maxine Houck, president; Ann Sherif, vice president; and Mike Haverstock, secretary.

Following approval of the above nominations by acclamation, the Council applauded the exceptional service rendered by four retiring Council members: David Boe, Bill Bradford, Scott Fehlan, and Jan Zinser.

#### Life memberships.

The Nomination Committee also recommended that three individuals be awarded life memberships in the Friends, as follows:

-- Scott Bennett '60, Yale University Librarian Emeritus, a generous donor to the Library with an unequalled record of service to our organization over two decades. Bennett was the first president of the Friends (1991-92) and served a second term (2006-07). He also served two three-year terms on the Council (2002-08), where he made important contributions towards increasing the growth of the Friends as chair of the membership committee. He was the featured speaker at our 1999 annual Friends banquet, held in conjunction with a memorable conference attended by more than 70

Oberlin alumni librarians. In recent years Bennett has donated to the Library a valuable book collection on the history of printing. Finally, he has made generous financial contributions to the Class of 1960 Library Support Fund and also to the Thomas and Ellen O'Flaherty Collection Digitization Fund.

-- Anne and Charles McFarland, generous and loyal donors to the Library since the early 1980s. Their generosity has included gifts-in-kind as well as monetary gifts to the Science Library Special Book Fund, the Library's general endowment, the Library Mini Campaign, and the Friends of the Library. The McFarlands recently completed a generous, multi-year pledge to the Academic Commons, which was instrumental in reaching the project's fundraising goal.

### Honorary membership.

The nominating committee also recommended an honorary membership be awarded one individual:

-- Patricia Selch of New York City, widow of noted collector and music scholar Frederick R. Selch. Ms. Selch has donated her husband's extraordinary collection of musical instruments, books, and primary source material to the Oberlin Conservatory. The collection is the centerpiece of the Frederick R. Selch Center for American Music at the Conservatory. It includes more than 6,000 books as well as manuscripts, printed music, prints, drawings, and photographs depicting the history, design, and use of musical instruments. The book collection features exceptionally rare early printed books about musical instruments and music theory and is exceptionally strong in illustrating the development of music and musical instruments in America. The book, manuscript, and printed music collection is one of the most valuable collections ever donated to the Library.

### Student Friends.

Amelea Kim '12 described the activities of the Student Friends of the Library (SFOL). "In getting started," she said, "rather than soliciting the \$2 contribution from students," her goal "was to make SFOL a more visible and prominent organization in student life" and generate support from students "by showing them what the Library had to offer."

Drawing on her experience as a Mellon Intern in 2008, which had exposed her to the different departments of the Library, Kim and Ed Vermue devised a series of three Special Collections talks that focused on Medieval Manuscripts, Book Arts, and Oberlin's Anti-Slavery Collection. Attendance ranged from 10 to 30 people.

The movie showings that Kim arranged in Moffett Auditorium were well attended. There were 30 to 40 students for *Sense and Sensibility* and a 50+ standing-room-only crowd for the new *Sherlock Holmes*. Another plus of the movies was that they stimulated interest on the part of the students in learning more about the Friends.

This helped Kim to organize book sales drawing on books that were surplus to the Library's needs, which proved very popular. The sales were held in front of the library when the weather was nice, starting in April.

The SFOL received 18 entries for the Student Book Collection Competition that is sponsored by the Friends every other year. That was the largest number of entries on record.

Kim attributed the increasing success of all of the above activities to advertising around campus through “hundreds of posters and flyers.” At year's end, she said, there were “about 40 students who have subscribed to the SFOL mailing list.”

Kim's presentation was followed by a round of applause for what Council members thought to be the most lively record of Student Friends activities in our organization's history.

#### Library school scholarship.

English reported that Louis Trizna '10 was chosen to receive the Friends scholarship of \$2,500 for 2010. As an undergraduate Trizna worked seven semesters at the Main Library Circulation Desk, quickly rising to the level of student supervisor. He also worked during the summer of 2010 in the library stacks, following graduation with a major in mathematics. He is enrolled in the School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College in Boston.

There was a suggestion that we revisit the issue of possibly increasing the value of our Friend's library scholarship at our meeting next year. Meanwhile, it was suggested that we might try to involve alumni groups around the country in encouraging applications for this scholarship, putting them in touch with students from their areas who are contemplating careers in this field.

#### Collection digitization report.

English reported that the \$10,000 allocated annually by the Friends for a three-year period to digitize Oberlin-related materials to support student learning and research had not yet been expended. During the past year, he explained, “planning and preparation work on the Mellon Next Generation Library Digitization Grant has delayed

our two Friends-supported projects, but we are now in a position to move forward.”

It was agreed that the Friends will support digitization of *The Oberlin Evangelist* (1832-1862), which was the College's official publication in its early years. This will require scanning from the original print version. Given the current lower fund balance, selected years of the *Oberlin Review* (our complete holdings are 1874 to the present) will not be done at this time. Meanwhile, the Library and College Archives have worked to improve the presentation of other digital collections, which can be found at: <http://www.oberlin.edu/library/digital/>.

#### Ruth Hughes Collection catalog.

At this point in the proceedings, Council members examined their copies of *Show and Bestow; the Ruth Hughes Collection of Artists' Books*. The publication of this handsome catalog, listing 100 books by 79 individual book artists, was supported by a \$1,500 contribution from the Friends. The collection, which was exhibited in the spring of 2010 at Mudd Center, is also exhibited online at: [http://www.oberlin.edu/library/exhibits/ruth\\_hughes/index.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/library/exhibits/ruth_hughes/index.html).

#### Special Collections -- “Letterpress Studio.”

Ed Vermue, head of Special Collections, described efforts during the last summer to get up and running the “Letterpress Studio,” which he invited Council members to visit in Room 212 following the meeting. A work still in progress, this facility will afford hands-on, class-based instruction in printing techniques.

“There is a great deal of interest in the project,” he continued, “from faculty in several departments, including history, fine arts, literature, and creative writing.” The studio “will fill a vacuum of knowledge on the part of the current generation of students about printing – and provide a place for them to get their fingers dirty in finding out how books used to be made.”

The studio presently has two iron clamshell presses and a guillotine paper cutter thanks to the generosity of Gus Brunsman of Dayton, Ohio; ancillary cabinets and type donated by Dewey and Carol Ganzel; and a Vandercook printing press purchased from a separate fund. In setting it all up, Vermue said “we are navigating without a map and there are many questions to be answered, like should we provide ancillary instruction in such areas as editing and marketing books.”

#### Adjournment.

Following his presentation, Council President Zinser adjourned the meeting at 4

p.m. amid a burst of applause for her stellar service.

Several Council members stayed on at Vermue's invitation to inspect the pages of a 19<sup>th</sup> century "commonplace book," like two purchased with Friends funds this past year. These are essentially scrapbooks filled with such items of everyday life as letters, poems, recipes, pictures, and prayers, which provide a window into the minds of people in England for roughly the period 1825 to 1840. Several Council members also went to the main level of Mudd Center to meet Patricia Selch and hear Conservatory Librarian Deborah Campana and Barbara Lambert, Curator of the Eric Selch Collection, describe the exhibition of materials from the Selch Collection.

Respectfully submitted by Nathan Haverstock, Secretary  
November 1, 2010