First Love: Fondren Library and Melissa Kean, University Historian

When did you first start collaborating with Fondren Library? How has the relationship developed?

For one thing, I’m not in the chain of command — anywhere. I come as a colleague, universitywide but especially in the library. I started working with Fondren in graduate school; my dissertation was partly about Rice history. I remember John Boles’ taking me in to the archives and showing me where to find the materials I would need. At that time, the Woodson Research Center (WRC) had very few staff and its hours were much shorter. The staff would often be processing materials in the back and I had to rap on the right spot on the wall for them to hear that I wanted to get in. If I did not have the WRC, I could not work. I have free access to the materials and to the technology I need, even a little desk space. I may be the WRC’s heaviest user; I am here every day unless I am traveling. There is a synergy to the work; the staff and I understand one another’s work better for our proximity. We get crazy questions — sometimes it takes all of us to answer them. When I am writing, often from home, I send the hard-to-answer questions I get to the archival staff and they always take care of things. I have such respect for the staff’s meticulousness, sorting, caring for the materials. I could never do that. The reputation of the library is skyrocketing; it is a jewel.

What is the most interesting Rice “find” you’ve made that you can talk about publicly?

This is embarrassing. One day Diane Butler (director, IT and access services) came in to the WRC to show us an amazing owl decanter she had found on E-Bay. I was so jealous! The very next month, I was meeting in one of the Athletics offices. After my pitch about salvaging important artifacts, my eye strayed to a bookshelf. There was a decanter exactly like Diane’s! I asked, “Can I have that?” The athletic director, who was about to move, said I could have anything I wanted. It was quite a haul — ribbons from track meets, etc.

What projects are you working on?

We’ve had a busy summer with new collections coming in. My scholarly focus right now is on the collapse of in loco parentis rules starting in the 1960s. In collaborating, I bounce around like a ping-pong ball. Faculty often want insight into the genesis of issues now being analyzed. Administrators

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3
There’s a Guide for That

Next time you’re looking for useful resources, don’t wander the Web. Instead, go to the list of research guides (http://libguides.rice.edu/index.php) where Fondren’s librarians have an established and growing collection of useful guides to various topics.

Many of Fondren’s LibGuides focus on academic subjects from African–American Studies to women and gender studies. Recently, a Texas studies guide has been added (http://libguides.rice.edu/texas). Each one includes links to the library catalog and links to databases and reference sources as well as information on other materials relevant to the topic. For example, the music LibGuide includes links to online sound recordings and the sociology LibGuide provides information on opinion polls. Many instructors have observed that referring students to the appropriate LibGuide at paper-writing time is a good way to ensure they use high-quality sources.

In addition to creating subject LibGuides, librarians have created LibGuides on types of information (government documents, newspapers, images), the research process (scholarly communications, research A-Z) and many other subjects. The Research A-Z LibGuide is especially useful for undergraduates as it contains suggestions and links relating to every step of the research process from choosing a topic to creating presentations. A LibGuide has been developed on Understanding the Affordable Care Act (http://libguides.rice.edu/affordable_care_act). In response to the recent government shutdown, a database workaround page was created as a tab on the existing Government Information LibGuide at http://bit.ly/1aqWJwV.

Librarians are happy to create custom LibGuides for classes. Interested faculty should contact their subject librarian at http://library.rice.edu/collections/about-fondrens-collections/subject-specialist.

And just for fun, check out the Cats on the Web guide and watch the antics of Maru, Henri, Nora and other feline stars.

Jane Segal  
Social Science/Humanities Librarian
Rice University in Mystery Fiction

Rice University is a small school with a big reputation. When an author sets a story in Houston, Rice usually gets at least a mention or more. Since my area of expertise is with mysteries, I will comment on three authors who have done well in that genre. Two of them are Rice graduates.

Dean James ’85 (Ph.D.) is a Mississippi native who has written many successful novels of the traditional, or “cozy” mystery genre, under both his own name and pseudonyms. His stand-alone novel, “Death by Dissertation” (2004), is set at Rice, with many scenes and a couple of murders taking place in the Fondren Library. The protagonist is Andy Carpenter, a Mississippi native working on his Ph.D. in history from Rice University. Set in 1991, the novel is dedicated to Professor Katherine Drew and was written with the knowledge and assistance of the history department. Of course, James makes the standard disclaimer that all events and persons are fictional.

Jeff Abbott is a Rice graduate, who now writes a series of highly acclaimed thrillers: the latest is “Downfall” (2013). His first series, however, was very different. The protagonist, Jordan Poteet, is the chief librarian in the tiny central Texas town of Mirabeau, which closely resembles Smithville. In “Do Onto Others” (1994) Jordan remarks that his own library experience had been 10 years earlier, as a part-time student worker at Fondren Library at Rice University. Jordy had unexpected skills for solving murders in his little town and a fondness for his alma mater.

David Lindsey’s books are in no way cozy. The crimes investigated by Stuart Haydon, a Houston Police Department homicide detective with an M.A. in English literature, are dark, gritty and violent. The books contain vivid descriptions of Houston neighborhoods, especially the Museum District, West University Place, the Medical Center and Rice University. Often there are minor characters with a Rice connection: a Rice undergrad from Colombia; an organized crime analyst with a doctorate in sociology from Rice; an Asian student in the Rice art history department. In “Body of Truth” (1992), Haydon is asked to find out what happened to Lena Muller, a Rice graduate who disappeared after meeting a friend on campus. Haydon follows her path from the tree-lined campus streets to the underbelly of Guatemala, uncovering a dark and brutal story of intrigue, betrayal and tragedy.

These are but a few examples of how Rice University is portrayed in fiction. Here’s hoping that this article is just the first of several to explore the subject, including two literary giants who are Rice graduates: John Graves ’42, and Larry McMurtry ’60.

Shirley Wetzel
Database Management Coordinator

How did centennial initiatives change the archival landscape at Rice?

All the new materials have made doing Rice history so much harder, really blown the doors open. Now, everyone on campus knows not to throw anything away without checking in with me. I probably visit every building on campus every month. I would say we have doubled or perhaps tripled our university archives over the last 10 years. This summer I worked with the treasurer. From the gym, we got 350–400 boxes. People on campus, including WRC staff, look out for things they think I might like.

An expanded version of Melissa Kean’s interview can be found at http://ow.ly/raUUd.

Melinda Reagor Flannery
Assistant University Librarian for Technical Services

generally want data. Department coordinators are often emptying file cabinets. Right now I am working with telecommunications to make sure we preserve an annual snapshot of the Rice directory, now that the university no longer prints one.
From the University Librarian: MOOCs and Libraries

In late August, I sat with Sara Lowman, vice provost and university librarian, to discuss the role of libraries in the relatively new phenomenon of Massively Open Online Courses or MOOCs, and specifically Fondren’s support of Rice’s MOOC activities.

Lowman began, “The key issue is content, how libraries set guidelines and offer help for faculty, determining what is allowed in a MOOC setting vs. what is allowed in an on-campus class.” She noted that Fondren staff are currently collaborating with Carolyn Levander, vice provost for interdisciplinary initiatives, and her staff, who are working directly with our established commercial partner, Copyright Clearance Center. “We are working more on copyright for content that has already been selected, and there are complexities in tracking down sources and permissions. We would be happy to be involved earlier in the process, as content is chosen, to reduce the amount of detective work required. Perhaps some of our subject liaisons could get involved with that.” She noted some interesting questions. For example, how much do you have to change a graph in order to make it your own work? What about standard graphs that are in every textbook on a subject — do they belong to someone? The library is looking forward to developing guidelines in collaboration with General Counsel.

Lowman noted that the popular Rice MOOC on the programming language Python (https://www.coursera.org/course/interactivepython) relies wholly on the professors’ intellectual content so the library has not been involved. Lowman observed, “The example illustrates the wide variety in needed behind-the-scenes work to create a MOOC, depending on the subject and the pedagogical choices.”

The Fair Use doctrine (http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html) has long permitted using limited portions of works in limited circumstances, Lowman said. Its application is an important question in MOOC development. Publishers want to protect their assets. They are paid in many cases for materials libraries put on reserve for on-campus classes; compensation for materials used in a MOOC constitutes new ground. The length of a music clip allowed under fair use is unclear, as is its status whether embedded or actually on the relevant site. Images are another challenge. Sometimes publishers do not respond to requests. In general, educating about and encouraging compliance with copyright, with its grey areas and limitations, is a huge issue. There is a need to encourage standard citation formats in the MOOC environment. Right now linked Excel spreadsheets are being used to keep track of who has cleared which resources. There is an excellent article on the issues at: http://www.dlib.org/dlib/july13/fowler/07fowler.html.

Lowman remarked that the library generally encourages the creation and use of open access resources (http://openaccess.rice.edu), including within the MOOC context. The library is likely to be involved in any preservation of MOOC content. A number of staff are enrolled in MOOCs in order to better understand the challenges they pose, and future creation of a library-related MOOC is possible.

Melinda Reagor Flannery
Assistant University Librarian for Technical Services
Rice University’s Fondren Library and the libraries of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) have entered into a collaboration to expand access to each other’s collections. Borrowing privileges have been extended to patrons from each institution so that they will have access to items from both systems. Additionally, over the next five years, MFAH will relocate about 6,000 books a year to Fondren’s Library Service Center (LSC), which serves as Fondren’s state-of-the-art facility for less-circulated materials. This relocation of resources will support the museum’s latest building plans, which include a facility for art after 1900.

The purpose of the MFAH collection is to support study of visual arts and, in particular, the collection of the museum. It has been developed to keep current with art scholarship as well as illuminate museum acquisitions and exhibitions. The museum collection has extensive holdings in many areas including European art, American painting and sculpture, modern and contemporary art, photography, prints and drawings, and Latin American art.

The MFAH will select for transfer to the LSC materials that will enhance Fondren’s collection and make every attempt not to select materials Fondren already owns. These MFAH materials will be eligible for request through the library’s classic catalog, with delivery either to Fondren Library or to the MFAH. Items will be delivered twice a day to Fondren Library and once a day to the MFAH. Almost 1 million volumes are currently housed in Fondren’s LSC, and these items will be among those eligible for request online by MFAH curators and staff.

This collaboration opens up a collection of almost 2.4 million Fondren titles to MFAH curators and staff, and an additional 150,000 MFAH titles to members of the Rice community. Jon Evans, the director for Hirsch Library at the MFAH is enthusiastic about the collaboration. “We’re thrilled about this opportunity to leverage the assets that each institution has to offer, whether they are collections, space or staffing expertise. Connecting with our constituents and putting the right resources into their hands in a timely manner are priorities for both Rice and the MFAH.”

Denis Galvin
Integrated Library Systems Supervisor
Asian Catalog Records Now Have Vernacular Characters

When libraries first moved from the old card catalogs to online catalogs in the 1980s, all non-Roman language materials were coded with only romanized texts for the authors, titles and publisher's information, due to then-limited automated system capabilities. However, this transliterated information proves inadequate for users who are not familiar with various Romanization schemes. For some languages, the romanized displays sometimes add to users' confusion. For example, the Chinese author name Liu Xiaobo can be either 刘霞波 or 劉曉波.

With the development and implementation of the Unicode standard (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unicode), more library systems are able to provide vernacular characters alongside romanization. Fondren Library's online catalog was converted successfully to Unicode in December 2011. All new bibliographic records added since that time allow users to view non-Roman language records in vernacular script.

Fondren Library started a project in April 2012 to retrospectively convert to Unicode all its existing non-Roman language records and add vernacular scripts for them. The project began with Chinese-language records, as Fondren's largest non-Roman language collection is in Chinese. As of February 2013, all Chinese-language records met the Unicode standard. By May 2013, Fondren's 1,180 Japanese titles and 120 Korean titles were successfully converted.

Library staff are currently evaluating priorities for converting records for materials in additional non-Roman languages such as Persian, Arabic, Hebrew and Yiddish.

Hweifen Weng
Chinese Catalog Librarian
In 2012–2013, Fondren Library made available a collection of Woodson Research Center born-digital video oral histories through Rice’s institutional repository. This collection of Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation (VAHF) interviews was added to an existing collection of Houston Asian American Archives (HAAA) oral histories created and made available in 2010. Three free video tools were used throughout the process. They are FFmpeg, ffmpeg and HandBrake. Compared to their expensive counterparts such as Episode, these free tools meet project requirements while saving money.

Preserving born-digital videos and making them accessible online requires tasks such as converting files from one form to another; extracting information from files including duration, codec (coder-decoder program), audio sample rate, video bit rate, etc. for the purpose of item description; and project documentation. For some files, file wrappers must be changed, keeping the original codec. FFmpeg, ffmpeg and HandBrake are like Swiss army knives for audio and video manipulation. With FFmpeg, we successfully extracted duration and a thumbnail image out of each video. Using ffmpeg, we converted all MTS files to QuickTime files, which are used as master files for long-term preservation. During the conversion, ffmpeg enabled us to change the audio codec while simply copying the video codec to the new file. Using HandBrake, we generated mp4 files for online streaming. A typical 21-minute mp4 file is 63 MB, a relatively small file which maintains decent quality.

In addition to getting these jobs done, all the three tools allow users to do batch processing. Since FFmpeg and ffmpeg are command line programs, a command can be easily incorporated into a script for batch processing. In contrast, HandBrake includes the batch-processing feature directly in its user-friendly graphic interface. For this oral history project of 423 videos, batch processing sped up the project pace and reduced manual work.

Anyone interested in learning how to use these tools should contact the Digital Media Commons for help (713-348-3635 or dmc-info@rice.edu). To learn more about the project, visit Video Research Pilot Project at http://bit.ly/HmI7GG. Finished oral histories may be accessed at: http://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/36136.

Jane Zhao
Director, Digital Media Commons
Study Area Improvements

The Sarah Lane Lounge on Fondren’s 4th floor is sporting new furniture—armless loveseats and chairs, floor rocker chairs and small, light tables for individual use. Purchased with funds donated by Friends of Fondren Library member Trish Brice, these more versatile pieces replaced beanbag chairs and a larger work table with four chairs.
Fondren Enhances Final Exam Support for Students

During final exam period in December, Fondren Library responded in a new way to student concerns about finding a place to study.

As part of the university’s Vision for the Second Century, Rice’s student population has increased significantly since 2005. To accommodate the growing number of students, the library has added more study rooms, tables and chairs. But the most recent LibQual survey in 2013 showed that students are still having trouble finding study space.

Currently, Fondren Library sees 600–800 visitors per week and intends to continue to welcome and adequately meet the needs of visitors. However, the clear and repeated call for more study space requires the library to rebalance use of its space to better support students during this time.

Staff from the library’s GIS/Data Center are working on a data mapping project to analyze space use patterns, i.e., which spaces are overutilized and which may be underutilized.

This exam period introduced reduced visitor hours, especially during evenings and weekends when students study the most. Details can be found at http://library.rice.edu/about/hours/index/#depts. The total number of desks, tables and chairs available to students was further increased. The Kyle Morrow Room was designated and furnished as a study space during evening and weekend hours, and additional seating also was provided in areas throughout the library.

During finals, plans for student support also included several breaks with refreshments as well as a return of the popular therapy pets events:

- **Snack Breaks** (granola bars and other snacks, Sarah Lane Lounge, fourth floor)
  - Wednesday, Dec. 4, 8:30 p.m.
  - Wednesday, Dec. 11, 8:30 p.m.

- **Study Break** (coffee and popcorn, Circulation Desk)
  - Monday, Dec. 9, 10 p.m. – midnight

- **Pet Therapy** (partner Faithful Paws agency, first floor)
  - Thursday, Dec. 12, 7 p.m. – 9 p.m.
  - Friday, Dec. 13, 2 p.m. – 9 p.m.
  - Saturday, Dec. 14, 2 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Melinda Reagor Flannery
Assistant University Librarian for Technical Services
Diane Butler, director of information technology and access services at Fondren Library, has been selected as one of 26 participants in the 2013–2015 Leadership Fellows Program of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL).

Before coming to Fondren, Butler served in Rice’s IT department for a number of years. She holds a master’s in business administration and was a fellow in the 2006 Frye Leadership Institute. Butler is active in EDUCAUSE and is currently on the faculty for that organization’s management program. She also has served and presented at the national forum of the Library and Information Technology Association of the American Library Association. She serves as Rice’s representative to MetaArchive and the Council on Library and Information Resources.

Sara Lowman, vice provost and university librarian, commented, “I’m very pleased that Diane has been chosen to participate in the ARL Leadership Fellows Program. The knowledge and leadership skills that she gains through this program will be beneficial to Fondren Library and the Rice community and will help us move the library's strategic initiatives forward. This program will also provide Diane with a strong network of emerging library leaders with whom to discuss current trends and issues facing research libraries.”

This highly competitive executive leadership program is being designed and sponsored by six ARL member libraries: University of Guelph Library, North Carolina State University Libraries, Purdue University Libraries, University of Toronto Libraries, Vanderbilt University Library, and University of Waterloo Library. The program began in October 2013 with an orientation at the ARL membership meeting in Washington, D.C.

For more information, visit the ARL Leadership Fellows Program website at http://bit.ly/HuNS4x.

Debra Kolah
User Experience Librarian

Diane Butler Named Leadership Fellow

Nyssa Juneau has been working in Fondren’s Access Services Department as an access services assistant since 2012. She helps library users to find and access materials, procure study carrels, and keeps new books in the Brown Fine Arts area current and well-organized. Juneau enjoys seeing all the interesting books that get circulated and learning about users’ research. If she were shipwrecked on a desert island, Juneau would like to bring one of Lino Tagliapietra's glass boats from the art installation on the first floor of Fondren and take to the open sea.

Hanjun Lee is the library Web application developer at Fondren. He has been employed at the library since June 2013. Lee is currently working on user support systems for common tasks such as reserving a study room or navigating the library website or our many digital resources. He is very interested in creating user-friendly library technologies and introducing new technologies to Fondren users. Looking around his workspace, Lee did not spot anything that would be especially useful to him on a desert island. He would grab his fully charged smartphone and try to connect to Google's Wi-Fi balloon in hopes that he could send an SOS.

Chinh Doan became an access services assistant at Fondren Library in July 2013. Previously, he worked at the University of Houston for 19 years in various library departments such as acquisitions, the music library and the optometry library. He would be sure to take a pencil and paper to a desert island, so that he could write about the whole experience. Doan did a lot of writing while he was in the U.S. Army, spending nine months in the Saudi desert, so he already knows what he needs to bring.

Ima Oduok has been working as an access services assistant at Fondren since April 2013. Before she started working at Rice she was a library assistant with the Fort Bend County libraries. Even though many people think that you can check out only resources such as books or DVDs at the library, Oduok reminds us that Fondren also has a circulating wheelchair. When asked what item from the library she would want to take with her to a desert island, Oduok chose her ergonomic chair, so that she would at least have a decent place to sit.
Nadalia Liu: Familiar Face, Changed Role in the Digital Media Commons

Nadalia Liu started working at the Digital Media Commons (DMC) in 2006 as a part-time night and weekend supervisor. Since 2011, she has served as the DMC supervisor. Her duties include hiring, training and mentoring eight–15 students a year. The DMC training program ensures that student workers can learn and grow; for example, faculty projects are matched to students’ learning interests.

Liu says that a new DMC student worker has an hour of orientation and two weeks to master basic DMC service desk training. Optionally, students can do the semester-long DC core skills assignment. The assignment involves checking out a tripod, camera and wireless mic, then creating, transferring, editing and exporting to DVD and YouTube a three-minute video about anything they choose. Veteran students who are reliable and more expert are scheduled at night with our evening supervisor Marcos.

Students and faculty from many departments receive support from the DMC, including bioengineering, biochemistry & cell biology and architecture, for poster design and plotting. Graduate students from the English department come for training in website design with WordPress. Students from humanities departments and communication classes come in for workshops on digital storytelling. Training on audio equipment and transcribing software is provided for summer interns and students working on the Houston Asian American Association (HAAA) oral history project. A wide range of Rice community members receive training in the research tool Zotero. The DMC supports a broad range of faculty projects.

The Shepherd School of Music also provides a lot of business. Videos are now required in most applications for music schools. After a student agreed to be a case study, the DMC staff was able to improve its service to students who come in wanting to create audition CDs and DVDs, then upload performances to YouTube. DMC staff attended her recital and helped to record and transfer the footage, as well as helping with postproduction audio and video syncing.

Liu notes that equipment purchases must benefit a broad range of users, making specialty and top-of-the-line purchases impractical. The DMC can always use more of the popular high-end recording cameras and DSR still cameras, which already have circulation limits. She believes that the projected move of the DMC back to Fondren will heighten awareness of its services and ease interdepartmental collaboration. Liu also hopes at some point for a studio with a green screen, lighting, etc., which could be used for narration, podcasts, portraits, interviews and performance recordings.

Melinda Reagor Flannery
Assistant University Librarian for Technical Services
Ginny Martin, long-time Fondren access services manager, grew up in Houston. At a library reception, she let drop that she had been present at president John F. Kennedy’s famous speech at Rice Stadium. When I probed further, I learned she had also been at Superbowl VIII at Rice stadium and even at a concert there featuring Elton John and Billy Joel. These three events spanned 33 years of Rice Stadium history.

Martin vividly remembers traveling by bus as a student at F.M. Black Junior High School to the 1962 Kennedy event. The stadium was packed with school children for the daytime speech. Her school sent band members and perhaps also choir members, dressed in their performance uniforms. There were lots of field trips in those days, and the Mercury space program was very visible. Schools showed many space program events on TV in individual classrooms. It was common for Houstonians to drive around Clear Lake to see the astronauts’ homes, as though it were Hollywood. Once Martin got to go parasailing powered by a station wagon driven by Scott Carpenter; John Glenn met her at the end of her descent and helped her remove her harness. Seeing President Kennedy speak about the space program combined the awe of the presidency with a big source of local pride.

As for the 1974 Superbowl, Martin lucked into tickets through her father, an FBI agent. An FBI colleague was a former Minnesota Viking and distributed 20 tickets on the 50-yard line. Martin was living in Austin at the time and her parents gave up their tickets to keep her 5-month-old daughter while she and her husband enjoyed the game and the elaborate tailgating beforehand. Charlie Pride sang the National Anthem. Ed McMahon was sitting six rows behind her, and she got a picture of him.

Martin also recalls that big concerts in the Rice Stadium were not uncommon in years past. In 1995, Rice students, faculty and staff could get $20 tickets to the Elton John/Billy Joel show by presenting their IDs at the stadium box office. She remembers the night was muggy and Elton John was a lot more gracious about that than Billy Joel was. Martin says the concert was fantastic, though it must have been loud for the neighbors.

Melinda Reagor Flannery
Assistant University Librarian, Technical Services
New Fall Exhibits From The Woodson Research Center

**Romance Of Flight**
First Floor Hobby Information Concourse

Selections from the Benjamin Monroe Anderson Collection on the History of Flight.

**Office of International Students & Scholars Children’s Book Collection**
First Floor Hobby Information Concourse

As part of Rice’s Centennial Celebration, the Office of International Students & Scholars set out to collect 100 children’s books to celebrate Rice’s international diversity. 106 books were donated to the collection, representing 38 countries. A selection of these books is currently on display in the Fondren Library. The complete collection is listed at http://bit.ly/1j4ET6v.

**Reading & Writing Children’s Literature**
First Floor Central Hallway

Dr. Julie Fette’s first year writing intensive seminar has created 14 original picture books for children. The exhibit highlights students’ skills in written and visual communication and demonstrates their mastery of literary devices and the power of images.

**The Flying Owls: Rice Institute from the Air**
Inside the Woodson Research Center

In 1921 E.D. Embres and Thomas B. Eaton, class of 1920 and veterans of World War I, flew over the campus and shot twelve iconic images which are included in the booklet, The Flying Owls: Rice Institute from the Air. All twelve photographs shown in the exhibit were dedicated to the memory of men of Rice who died in the war, many of whom were friends of the authors.

**The Great Wars: Selections from Special Collections and the University Archives**
Third Floor Lovett Lounge

This exhibit highlights different aspects of World Wars I & II, including the involvement of women in both wars, soldier life, and post-World War II events such as the occupation of Japan and the arrest of Nazi war criminals. Featured objects include a World War I Red Cross nurse uniform, a mess kit, and photographs and drawings of high ranking Nazi officials.

**Football at Rice**
Sixth Floor Rice Reading Room

Current exhibit focuses on artifacts related to football at Rice.

**Cheerleader Uniforms**
Rice Memorial Center Trophy Case

Photographs and cheerleading uniforms showcasing Rice’s cheerleaders throughout the years.

For current classes and events, please visit http://library.rice.edu.
Houston Composer and Pianist Stars in New Woodson Collection

Admirers of contemporary music will now have the opportunity to rediscover the legacy of Texas-born composer Robert Avalon, who passed away at the height of his career.

Avalon (1955-2004), who lived the last 15 years of his life in Houston, established himself here as both a prolific composer and a concertizing pianist. His compositions represent an important chapter in the development of a thriving modern music scene in Texas, especially in Houston, during the 1980s and 1990s.

Avalon (born Robert White) was the brother of Bill White, the former mayor of Houston. He was not only an accomplished performer and composer but also a mentor to many students, some of whom now have distinguished musical careers. For several years, he also served as artistic director for the locally based Foundation of Modern Music, which continues to promote the works of living composers.

Avalon composed in many different genres and styles of music, from orchestral pieces and chamber works to solo voice and piano compositions, all housed in the newly created archive. Both published and unpublished works are represented; scores as well as music parts are included. In addition to the musical works, there also is an extensive collection of materials related to the composer’s unfinished opera “Carlota,” inspired by the tragic life of the widow of Emperor Maximilian I of Mexico. The collection also contains promotional materials, program notes, and both audio and video recordings of performances now being digitized for long-term preservation.

The collection documents the composer’s collaboration with notable writers and artists such as sculptor James Surls, photographer Rene Sultra and Nobel laureate poet Octavio Paz. Personal correspondence with fellow artists, handwritten notes, musical sketchbooks and other ephemera will offer researchers insight into the composer’s creative process. Additionally, photographs detail various stages of the composer’s musical life from early childhood through his professional career.

The collection was donated to the Woodson Research Center by Gloria White, mother of the late composer. A finding aid for the Robert Avalon Music Collection now is available online at the Woodson Research Center’s website. An online exhibit highlighting the composer’s musical life and work is in development.

Anthony Potoczniak
Former staff member, Woodson Research Center

Art History Mystery Solved at the Library

Read how an enterprising graduate student identified the artist for a medieval music manuscript in the Woodson Research Center at http://bit.ly/1ayXKYh.
Woodson Adds Weber-Staub-Briscoe Collection of Ornamental Ironwork

When most people think of architecture in Houston, they think of modernist or postmodernist work by architects such as Mies van der Rohe, Philip Johnson, Cesar Pelli or I.M. Pei. However, in recent years works from earlier periods have gained considerable attention, creating strong interest in preserving the city’s architectural heritage. In 2010 Fondren’s Woodson Research Center (WRC) was offered a chance to acquire a collection from the heir of a local fabricator of high-quality custom architectural details in metal and other materials.

Founded in the late 1920s by Herman Weber as Weber Iron Works, Weber Iron & Wire Company created original designs and duplications of fine 19th-century ornamental ironwork for the projects of many of Houston’s leading architects of the 20th century. Most notably, the firm produced work for John F. Staub and Birdsall P. Briscoe, known for their homes in River Oaks, Broadacres and other historic Houston neighborhoods. Lee Pecht, university archivist and director of special collections, recognized the significance of the opportunity, “The collection is an architectural and historical treasure worthy of preservation for its scholarly, ornamental/decorative arts and local history research value.”

Acquisition of the materials required the collaboration of several members of the Rice community, Stephen Fox of Rice’s School of Architecture and members of the Houston American Institute of Architects and preservation communities over the period of a year; the purchase was finalized in 2011.

In order to produce the exceptional metalwork exactly as specified by the designs of the architects, scale and full-sized drawings of the designs were created. Most pieces were created by a detailed process including the formation of a replica of the design in clay, which was cast in aluminum and placed on a pattern board used to make the final castings in iron, bronze or aluminum. The WRC is fortunate to have in the archives documentation of the process from the scale drawing to photographs of the installation of the ironwork design. The collection includes extraordinarily beautiful pattern boards (design molds) and metal castings of botanical, geometrical and animal ornaments from the 1930s to the 1990s. Other materials include photographs, architectural drawings, reference books and tools used in the manufacturing process.

A catalog of representative objects from the collection is currently being finalized and will be available both in the WRC and online. Also, Weber ornamental ironwork can still be viewed at Bayou Bend and Glenwood Cemetery. An online archive of digital objects from the collection is available in the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive at [http://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/68494](http://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/68494) and the related finding aid can found at [https://library.rice.edu/collections/WRCfinding-aids/manuscripts/0586](https://library.rice.edu/collections/WRCfinding-aids/manuscripts/0586).

Dara Flinn
Archivist Librarian
New Woodson Collection Highlights Champions Golf Club

When I was growing up on the north side of Houston, we referred to almost everything north of us as “Champions.” Years later, I learned that the Champions name came from a golf club at the center of the residential development, founded by two real golf Hall of Famers, Jimmy Demaret and Jack Burke Jr., both of whom called Houston home.

Demaret won The Masters in 1940, 1947 and 1950, and was the tour’s leading money winner in 1947. Burke won the Vardon Trophy in 1952. In 1956, he won both The Masters and the PGA Championship and was named Player of the Year.

Golf was popular with Hollywood celebrities, and Demaret and Burke became friends with stars such as Bob Hope and Bing Crosby who appeared at and sponsored golf tournaments. Through these connections, Demaret even guest starred on an episode of “I Love Lucy” to give Lucy and Ethel a golf lesson, much to their husbands’ chagrin.

When their days on the tour were over, Burke and Demaret returned to Houston, where they co-founded the best golf club they could imagine. Champions Golf Club hosted premier national golf events: the Ryder Cup in 1967, the U.S. Open in 1969, the U.S. Men’s Amateur in 1993 and the PGA Tour Championship five times between 1990 and 2003.

Burke, who spent a brief time on campus before joining the Marines during World War II, developed a high opinion of Rice. When asked in 1975 what he saw as the future of Champions, he said, “The officials who run Rice University today are very dedicated to the continuance of the school’s original program of excellence. Maybe that’s a high-sounding comparison, but that is what I would hope might happen to Champions.” (“Champions Golf Club, 1957–1975,” by Bob Rule, [Graphics Unlimited, 1976]).

Burke’s generosity toward Rice also includes the endowment of the Jimmy Burke Memorial Scholarship in athletics in memory of Jack’s brother, former head golf professional at Champions. Through tournaments and his extensive connections in the golf world, Burke also raised enough money to endow the Earl Elliott Humanities Scholarship, which honors the memory of a Champions member and USGA Committee member. Each year, up to four fellowships are awarded, filling a critical need for financial support for undergraduate study abroad in the humanities.

The Jack Burke Jr. Papers and Champions Golf Club Records are now a part of Fondren’s Woodson Research Center and can be viewed there.

Susan Alexander
Leisure Reading at Fondren

How do you find a good book to read at Fondren Library? I’m talking about something preliminary, nonspecific and subtle, something to read for pleasure, take with you on vacation, or suggest to your book club for discussion?

One place to start is by browsing the Friends of Fondren Library Contemporary Literature Collection, on the long, low shelf in the Elder Current Periodicals Reading Room to the left of the library’s east entrance. Supported by funds from the Friends of Fondren Library, librarian Jane Segal selects books for this collection. Many of them are winners or finalists from recent literary competitions in the U.S., Canada and Great Britain, such as Jaimy Gordon’s “The Lord of Misrule” (National Book Award for Fiction, 2010), Benjamin Sáenz’s “Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club” (Pen/Faulkner Award, 2013) and Hilary Mantel’s “Wolf Hall” (Man-Booker Prize, 2009). The collection also includes books with major reviews in the New York Times Book Review. Ultimately, books from this collection are shelved in Fondren’s main stacks, but first they are displayed downstairs with their dust jackets to beckon potential readers.

Nearby is Fondren’s leisure reading collection. These books are as familiar and contemporary as those in an airport bookstore: works by Stephen King, Jodi Picoult, James Patterson, Mary Higgins Clark; mysteries by Sue Grafton (her well-known series is up to “U is for Undertow”); and show business memoirs by Steven Tyler and Tina Fey. Segal explains that Fondren rents these books. While they won’t necessarily join the library’s permanent collection, they are available to library borrowers to check out free of charge. An assortment of audio books to ease long car trips also is available.

You can browse these collections from home using guides to specific collections at Fondren’s website (http://libguides.rice.edu). The contemporary literature and leisure collections are listed under both “English Literature” and “Leisure Reading.” The Leisure Reading guide has four sections: Fiction in Fondren, Prize Winners & Best Sellers, E and Free Fiction, and Social Media. These tabs provide links to other sources and discussions of good books.

Susan Alexander
While many of us make personal to-do lists — birds to watch, books to read — few of us follow our bliss with the conviction and imagination of Leonard Lane, a second-term member of the Friends of Fondren Library board.

Since 2009, Lane, who lives and practices architecture in Houston, has devoted weekends and evenings to the Leonard List — a quest that entails travelling to all 254 Texas counties, photographing their courthouses, penning thumbnail histories and posting it all on the Web at http://www.254texascourthouses.net.

Lane’s interest in the state’s courthouses was initially piqued by a display of photographs by Dr. Mavis Kelsey, who in addition to co-founding Houston’s Kelsey-Seybold clinic wrote the classic guidebook “The Courthouses of Texas.” Further inspiration derived from “Historic Texas Courthouses,” a 2008 book by photographer friends Paul Hester, a lecturer in Rice’s visual and dramatic arts department, and Lisa Hardaway ’82. Following a few jaunts with a history-loving uncle, Lane made a conscious decision to visit all the county courthouses in Texas.

In the deadpan blog entries that describe his forays, he makes clear that bagging courthouses can be hard work. Of a recent trip to central Texas, he wrote, “North and east I drove to Hunt County, number 188 on my list. I arrived in Greenville, the county seat, as the temperature reached 102 degrees … I took a deep breath of cool air, opened the car
door and stepped out into the oven, otherwise known as Texas in August.

Four years and 199 courthouses down, Lane has honed his technique. Nineteenth-century authorities decreed that Texas courthouses should be no farther than a day's ride (or 15 miles) from any point in the county; since many counties were drawn as squares with 30-mile sides, visiting several courthouses in a day can rack up considerable mileage. Lane travels solo to speedily cover his selected territory.

Once home from a scouting trip, Lane compiles a webpage for each new courthouse, drawing on sources such as the Texas State Historical Association and the Texas Historical Commission websites. He has learned that late 19th-century developers often built these majestic “castles” as marketing tools to lure new settlers and the all-important railroad to newly established, often struggling towns.

Though Lane hopes that his list might someday become a book, his goal is for the site to serve as an evolving database for those fascinated by Texas courthouses and Texas history. Through repeat visits, he has already refreshed content for many of the courthouse pages and plans to continue even after his basic project is complete.

Polly Morrice
Selected holiday greeting cards from Rice presidents

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