Reviewing the Library Collections

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Librarians

The Library is about to begin an important new project . . . weeding its collection. This means we’ll be reviewing the collection critically to decide what remains and what is removed.

The idea that a library should get rid of anything makes some people cringe. But weeding actually improves the collection. Just as weeding a garden helps those fruits, vegetables, and flowers flourish, weeding a library collection makes the library more productive.

Libraries are wonderful places of discovery, but an overgrown collection can obscure the most useful information. By weeding (or “de-selecting”) certain items, the library makes doing research more fruitful. Types of materials that may be pulled include obsolete, outdated, or inaccurate items, as well as those that are unused due to limited interest in their subject matter. Unneeded duplicate copies and previous editions are also considered for weeding, as are damaged items.

A vigorous weeding leaves behind a well-groomed library: a facility that is pleasant to use and where useful resources are easier to find. Weeding also identifies areas of the collection that could use more growth, which helps the Library use its materials budget wisely.

As the Library’s weeding project progresses throughout the collection, we will be seeking faculty input about the items marked for de-selection. The goal of the Loras College Library is to cultivate the best collection possible, and that includes consulting with subject experts—you!
Distracted While Studying: Impairing A Student’s Ability to Learn

Miriam Fox, Associate, Lynch Office of Disability Services

It’s a familiar image at the Academic Resource Center (ARC) on Sunday nights... a sea of students float over their laptops, earphones in ears, downloading music, communicating with friends near and far on Facebook while simultaneously surfing the internet and cramming for an upcoming exam. And while it appears that they’re being efficient, you can’t help but wonder just how all this multitasking is affecting their ability to learn.

It’s the same question UCLA psychology professor Russell Poldrack posed in a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation and his conclusion confirms those parental suspicions. According to the study’s findings published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, all those distractions made it much harder for individuals to learn new things – and to retain that knowledge later.

Here’s how. According to Poldrack, the brain acquires information in two ways – one is declarative learning which deals with how we learn facts and actively retain and use them later. The other method is habit learning – learning by repeating information without committing it to memory – and is less useful than memorization – a form of declarative learning.

His research confirmed that when an individual is distracted, the two methods of learning compete with each other. And the less useful form, habit learning, wins.

Molecular Biologist John Medina in his book Brain Rules, puts it even more bluntly. “Multitasking, when it comes to paying attention, is a myth.”

In the Lynch Office of Disability Services, located on the first floor of the ARC, our professionals meet with a variety of students – including those who have the diagnoses of ADHD and who find it difficult to focus with the myriad of distractions college life presents. Through our Enhanced Program, our staff works directly with students to help them minimize distractions and maximize learning potential. Students who are not in the Enhanced Program, however, can also benefit from the multiple resources available to learn how to deal with distractions.

Here at the ARC, quiet areas have been identified on each of the floors (see map on ARC portal page at [http://inside.loras.edu/Academics/Library/Pages/Home.aspx](http://inside.loras.edu/Academics/Library/Pages/Home.aspx)) to accommodate those students who want a distraction-reduced setting for studying. These study carrels and seating areas are reserved for those who prefer to keep multitasking to a minimum – and quite possibly, study even more effectively.
As it is Written…So Shall it be Done

Heidi Pettitt,
Technical Services Librarian

One of the many collections in the Special Collections Room is three file drawers of handwritten parchment documents. The documents, donated by the Rev. J. Kenneth Downing, Professor of Latin and Greek from 1937 to 1982, represent 300 years of the British legal system. These documents are wills, indentures, court summons, and other documents that represent many of the ways the common man interacted with the courts.

The documents in this collection are generated principally from a form of law called Common Law. Common Law, unlike Legislative Law, was not voted on and instituted by a central government, but was instead developed over time based on customs of the country and judicial precedent. These laws were an unwritten guide for the judicial system in England from the time of the Norman Conquest through the 13th century when they were finally written down and formalized. Common law forms the basis of many of the laws and regulations still in effect in most English speaking countries.

One way these laws have been transmitted through time is through the writings of Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634) and Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780). Sir Edward Coke published Coke’s Reports from 1600-1616. Produced at a time when printed reports discussing substantive law were almost non-existent, the Reports set down for the first time many of the fundamental principles of the common law. His seminal work, The Institutes of the Lawes of England, is a four volume survey of much of the common law as it stood in the early seventeenth century. Sir William Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England was the first attempt to state the entire body of the common law that had been created by the English courts. Blackstone’s work constituted a major source of law for the first 50 years of the United States. They were the only legal treatises readily available during that period of U.S. history. These tomes were primary reference tool for lawyers and judges into the nineteenth century.

Currently, we have a number of these documents on display outside of Special Collections. The documents in the case are the final results of the judgments that created the common law system and were chosen to illustrate the range of documents produced. The oldest document, written in 1590, has a simple indenture and dark, ox gall ink that has barely faded over time. The newest document, written in 1890, is a form that could be filled with the necessary names and details. In between we have multipage documents with complicated indentures and multiple seals and stamps and simple documents such as the one calling people to a jury. The final document in the case, an indenture from 1776, was scanned and typed up by Andrew Border as part of a student project.

The display case is changed each semester and we are always looking for ideas for items to display and faculty and staff to partner with for presentations. If you have an idea, please share it with Heidi Pettitt. If you have never been to Special Collections contact her to arrange a tour.
Rare Book of the Day: The Code Napoleon

Robert Klein,
Special Collections Volunteer

“Every Frenchman shall enjoy civil rights.”

In 18th century France, radical social and political upheaval had been building for years, culminating in the storming of the Bastille, and the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789. After a decade of political maneuverings, Napoleon Bonaparte rose to power bringing with him a more conservative and authoritarian form of government.

Today, he is remembered as one of the greatest military commanders in history, but there was another side to him. In 1804, Napoleon became Emperor of the French People in which role he helped form constitutions, abolished feudalism, and advanced the cause of education, science, literature and the arts. He also worked for the codification of laws.

In 1801, he initiated a comprehensive reformation and codification of the French civil laws. This was published in 1804 in a book titled the Code Civil des Français, and later became known simply as the Code Napoleon.

Among its provisions, and perhaps its principal tenet, was the concept that every French person held equality before the law. It also granted freedom of religion, abolished feudalism, provided for property rights, and reinforced the notion of patriarchy by making the husband the ruler of the household. While the Code was still very paternalistic it did, nevertheless, provide that married persons owe to each other fidelity, succor, and assistance, a concept frequently lacking in today’s societies.

Also called the Code Civil, it has served as the model for the codes of law of more than twenty nations throughout the world. Towards the end of his life, Napoleon considered the Code his greatest achievement. It is held in high regard as one of the few documents that has influenced the entire world.

The Loras College Library contains in its Special Collections Room (302), the 1804 first edition of the Code. In this volume, as some of the laws were replaced or repealed, a previous owner has cancelled them in the book by using an early version of “white out”, and hand written in the terms of the new law.

The Code Napoleon, and all the books in the Special Collections Room of the Loras Library are intended for student and faculty use. The Room is open regularly from 1:30 – 4:00 every Tuesday, and at other times by appointment. Contact Heidi Pettitt, Technical Services Librarian, for an appointment.

The 27th annual Friends of the Loras College Library Used Book Sale will be held December 5th through 7th in the ballroom of the Alumni Campus Center. This fundraiser is a chance to pick up quality books at rock bottom prices. Hardcover books sell for $1.00, paperbacks only 50 cents. Certain special titles are priced separately and can be found in their own section.

Thousands of titles are available in all subject areas including fiction, literature, history, biography, self-help, hobbies, travel, art, science, sociology, education, business, math, computers, romance, and cookbooks. Browse the carefully displayed tables full of treasures, or ask a volunteer on hand for help to find what you need.

A preview sale for members of the Friends of the Library will begin at 6 p.m. on Sunday, December 5th and end at 8 p.m. Membership applications will be available on site, the cost is $35.00. All proceeds from membership dues and book sales benefit the Loras College Library. Members also enjoy a 10% discount on all purchases Sunday through Tuesday.

The sale opens to the public on Monday at noon, closing at 8 p.m. Tuesday's hours are 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. All books, including specially priced books, will be half-price on Tuesday! Contact Mike Gibson at 588-7163 for details about how you can get some wonderful new-to-you books and support your Library in the bargain.

The Library has recently added a unique resource for its users. It is ARTstor, a non-profit digital image library for education and scholarship, with over a million images in the arts, architecture, humanities, and social sciences.

Available by license to nonprofit institutions, ARTstor was founded to create a shared, noncommercial repository of teaching and research images needed by scholars, curators, librarians, students, and educators. Students taking classes in the fields of art, architecture, music, religion, anthropology, literature, world history, American studies, Asian studies, Classical studies, medieval studies, renaissance studies, will benefit.

ARTstor collections comprise contributions from museums, libraries, photo archives, photographers, scholars, artists, and artists’ estates. ARTstor’s online environment provides many features that enhance the discovery and use of images in the collections. ARTstor registered users can save and organize image groups, download images to power-point, share images and groups as URL links.

For more information on ARTstor, contact Kristen Smith, Information Services Librarian.
Thursdays @ the Library

Joyce Meldrem
Director, Academic Resource Center

Thursdays @ the Library started 5 years ago in September 2005. We thought we’d serve a little coffee on Thursday to draw people in to check out our new books, popular reading books, current periodicals and newspapers on 3rd floor.

Things have really changed since those first couple of years when we served about 30 cups of coffee each Thursday morning and cold drinks in the afternoons.

In 2006, we added treats on the first and 3rd Thursdays of the month. In 2007, we began a display of “staff picks” – recommended books and DVDs. In 2008, we moved the Thursdays event to 2nd floor; we added “student picks” to the display; and we served beverages straight through from 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

About 3 years ago, a community member started donating the treats that we serve – things like cupcakes, cookies, muffins, and croissants. A couple of years ago, after the students asked for some healthy options, we started providing treats like raisins, fruit and grain bars, and oatmeal.

During 2008-2009, we transferred most of the reference collection and moved a lot of shelving out of the 2nd floor area which created a more defined space for Thursdays. What remains in the area are audiobooks, popular reading and our DVD collections. We also added more seating to the area – both comfortable chairs and tables and chairs.

In fall 2009, we changed many things! We decided to “go green” with our event because the students suggested we try that. We have “green” cups, lids, stirrers, sleeves, and spoons. We also offer a free travel mug for anyone who brings in 3 magazines, DVDs, audiobooks, or popular reading books. In addition, we have a stamp club card for people who bring in their own mug. A drawing is held each semester for a $25 gift card to the campus bookstore.

In the spring of 2010, a student on campus received a Fair Trade coffee grant and donates coffee to Thursdays.

In spring and fall of 2010, we also conducted door counts and compared the numbers of people entering the building on Tuesday with the numbers entering on Thursday. The Thursdays event brings anywhere from 50-100 extra people in each week.

We’ve gone from serving 1,318 cups of beverages in 2005-06 to serving 9,424 cups of beverages in 2009-10.

Come join us on Thursdays so you can see why the students say things like:

- “This is a regular campus thing now!”
- “I don’t dare miss class on Thursday – then I’d miss all of this!”
- “Best day of the week”
- “This is so nice – thank you!”
- “I think I’m in heaven.”