



NEWSLETTER OF THE
DREW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
ISSUE NO. 25, SPRING 2009

WWW.DREW.EDU/LIBRARY

Visions

Listen in the Library DODGE POETRY FESTIVAL ARCHIVE

Would you like to listen to Jorie Graham, Billie Collins, and Mark Doty reading their poems? You can hear them and dozens of others who participated in the 2004 and 2006 Dodge Poetry Festival by coming to the Library. A computer station in the reference area is dedicated to these invaluable files and is an early step in the processing of the entire archival history of the biennial Festival that began in 1986 and grew to be the largest poetry event in North America.

"Consisting of over 2,500 hours of audio and video recordings, recorded by

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BELA KORNITZER AWARDS PRESENTED AT LIBRARY GALA

He is no stranger to prizes. ... The volume that brings him accolades tonight has already won honorable mention in the competition for the Modern Language Association's Prize for a First Book, a path-breaking exploration of the relations between information technology and Anglo-Saxon studies."

"She does not desiccate the lives of the women she studies by stuffing them into arid academic categories. By allowing them to tell their own stories, she brings to light the stories of 45 North African women living in France. ... Reviewers have called the author theoretically sophisticated and powerful with language."

So began Dean of Libraries Andrew Scrimgeour as he led up to the traditional surprise announcements of the Bela Kornitzer Book Prize winners at the biennial Library Gala on January 31. Mrs. Alicia Kornitzer Karpati travelled



Kornitzer Prize Winners—Dr. Caitlin Killian, Associate Professor of Sociology, and Dr. Martin Foys, Class of 1990, received the Bela Kornitzer Book Awards at the Library Gala, January 31.

from St. Louis with her family to attend the Gala and personally present the awards established in her brother's memory. Dr. Caitlin Killian, Associate Professor of Sociology, and Dr. Martin Foys, Class of 1990, and Visiting Associate Professor of English, received the faculty and alumni/ae awards in recognition of their recent outstanding

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VALE RECIPROCAL BORROWING OPTION FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

The New Jersey academic library consortium, VALE, offers reciprocal borrowing privileges to graduate students at several of its member institutions. Drew graduate students and faculty interested in going to a participating library to borrow materials will first need an authorization form from the Drew Library Circulation Department and should inquire in advance about the option. Graduate students and faculty whose Drew library accounts are in good standing for 6 months qualify for onsite reciprocal borrowing privileges. To view a list of participating VALE institutions, go to <http://www.valenj.org/> and click on Reciprocal Borrowing.

THE DEAN'S CORNER

CHANGING EXPECTATIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Very rarely do I meet people who wish that their library would abandon the wizardry of the computer and return to the era of the stationary mini-drawer cabinets with the three-by-five cards offering books and journals in two basic flavors, print and micrographic. While that was certainly a digital world of sorts, the “fingers did all the walking”—picking their way through the tidy cards-on-a-rod and thumbing the pages of the hefty annual volumes that indexed the periodical literature. Now the library, ever the heart of the university, pumps out an abounding array of byte-sized intellectual nutrients through the electronic arteries that interconnect our desks.



Shelley Kuznetz

Drew Students and faculty love the fact that from their networked computers, they are only a few keystrokes away from an enormous range of electronic resources, including full-text of both books and journal articles and access to more than 35,000 periodical titles by way of 130 electronic database subscriptions. Google is digitizing millions of books and making the texts searchable online (with a fee structure not far behind).

And the unique treasures of libraries around the world—the rare volumes and manuscripts that usually require the use of white gloves in restricted reading rooms—are finding their way to our screens. Harvard's Open Collection Program is digitizing public domain material from its special collections and “has already made hundreds of thousands of pages freely available on-line,” according to Robert Darnton, Director of the Harvard University Library. The University of Virginia has created a digital archive, The Valley of the Shadow, that details two communities, one Northern and one Southern, through the Civil War and Reconstruction. In that database “you may explore thousands of original letters and diaries, newspapers and speeches, census and church records.”

Drew has taken modest steps in making items from its considerable special collections available electronically. Digital facsimiles of letters of John Wesley and his family now reside in the Cooperative Digital Resources Initiative of the American

Theological Library Association. Transcripts of our Willa Cather letters appear in the online Calendar of the Letters of Willa Cather in the Willa Cather Archive at the University of Nebraska.

Even as I write, Chris Anderson, Methodist Librarian and Coordinator of Special Collections, is working with the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester on a grant application to the National Endowment of the Humanities and its English counterpart that would digitize documents in the two libraries that bring to life the early decades of Methodism on both sides of the Atlantic.

The curious thing about these digital developments is that they have become the new expectation of libraries. It is the height of irony that it is no longer sufficient to collect, catalog, preserve, and make accessible the rare and unusual. Even putting Finding Aids on the library Web site is insufficient. Now the library must publish the material electronically and thereby democratize it. Even as library budgets and staffs shrink, that demand persists, and digital projects are increasingly the work that brings distinction to a university.

Fortunately, many foundations are giving priority to these initiatives.

One of the temptations in digitizing rare material is to put tighter restrictions on the ability of students and scholars to then use the original documents. The digital image

thereby becomes the substitute for the real, even when one visits the library owning the originals. That approach is tantamount to putting the chains back on the books and harkens to a time when librarians guarded their collections rather than promoted their use. The care of special material is an essential trust, but it should not preclude the singular delight that only comes in working with the special volume—seeing its size, feeling its heft, turning the pages, smelling its aroma, inspecting the watermarks, reveling in the binding, illustrations, and illuminations, and enjoying the perfection of ink on paper. That experience should remain the hallmark of special collections and the glory of the university.

“It is the height of irony that it is no longer sufficient to collect, catalog, preserve, and make accessible the rare and unusual.”

Alan C. Livingston

RECENT GIFTS

The Library gratefully acknowledges the following gifts.

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Visions

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<http://www.drew.edu/library/visions>

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A RETIREMENT TRIBUTE: LINDA E. CONNORS

Head of Acquisitions and Collections, and Senior Librarian, Dr. Linda Connors, will retire in June after devoting more than 40 years to Drew, beginning with student employment in 1961, and a staff job following graduation. After further studies, she returned to Drew in 1971 with a Rutgers library degree and began her professional career. A member of the College Class of 1964, Linda has had a major impact in the Library and beyond. Her service to Drew is legendary. This page of excerpts from personal tributes is a round of applause for a superb professional, valued colleague, and admired friend.

Like works of art, superior academic libraries are shaped neither by chance nor by dilettantes. They are the cumulative triumph of careful choices, title by title, discipline by discipline, week after week, year after year, requiring the skills of a scholar-librarian-bibliographer-diplomat-economist-alchemist. The Drew Library stacks—physical and virtual—are eloquent testimony to Linda Connors' persistent artistry over thirty-five years. Working with the faculty, she doubled the size of the collections, supported the evolution of the curricula, integrated electronic resources, and enlarged the role of special collections. We look forward to the publication of her book on the role of periodicals and newspapers in shaping the national identity of Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century, the product of two decades of research. While we salute with joy and pride her career-long commitment to Drew, we come to her retirement dragging our feet.

—**Andrew D. Scrimgeour**, *Dean of Libraries*

From the beginning, Linda flourished as a librarian. I recall her eagerness to learn in a setting which was informed by Art Jones's so well respected leadership and the expertise of experienced professionals. Linda was ideally suited to a position which entailed curriculum awareness, subject knowledge, and, yes, the integrity to be able to say "No." She brought to her work an ability to relate easily and creatively with staff and students alike.

—**Lawrence McIntosh**, *Chief Librarian, Emeritus,*
Adelaide College of Arts and Education, South Australia

Over a 33-year association in Acquisitions, Linda and I have tackled self studies, committees, Teams, re-organizations, and new assignments along the way. Of the countless life and library events we've shared—more with laughter than with tears—one that stands out was the demolition and rebuilding of our office space during the construction of the Learning Center. Separated from the swinging wrecking ball by a mere temporary wall and a sheet of plastic, and later with hods of wet mortar falling on our desks, we carried on. I have learned



much, not only from Linda's professionalism, but from her love for books as well. Under her able guidance, the Drew Library collection has been wisely grown.

—**Ginny Palmieri**, *Acquisitions Associate*

Linda and I met when Caroline Coughlin asked Linda, Sara Henry, and myself to undertake a case study of the publication policies of Harry N. Abrams' Art Publishing House. This collaborative endeavor proved very rewarding. Best of all, a friendship was forged. Our article was published in *Book Research Quarterly* in 1986 and subsequently in *The Structure of*

International Publishing in the 1990s, [ed. Luey and Kobrak, 1992]. During the project, I learned a great deal from Linda. She knows how to frame a complex set of issues as a topic suitable for empirical investigation. Her meticulous collection and analysis of multiple sources of evidence gave new meaning to the word, 'painstaking'. Linda is a model colleague: thoughtful, sympathetic, funny, and gracious. Her respect, trust, and affection are valued by her friends, because Linda has a rare capacity for understanding and an enviable sense of loyalty.

—**Jonathan Reader**, *Baker Family Professor of Sociology*

Linda brought to our venture a depth of knowledge on all sides, research materials, and gracious insight that helped make for a great collaboration. Linda has been similarly thoughtful, curious, and genteel during all my other interactions with her, from department book ordering to plotting alum art events. It is ultimately this grace and intelligence that make for such creative results.

—**Sara Lynn Henry**, *Professor of Art History, Emerita*

I have known Linda Connors for 40 years. I have seen what she has meant to the library's acquisitions of books and periodicals in history. With a very small budget, she purchased wisely and thoughtfully, balancing the needs of graduate and undergraduate programs as well as the personal research interests of faculty. I also worked with Linda on the committee that created the Alumni/ae College Program. Her leadership—passion, organization, and determination—were crucial. She spoke with authority in many voices: as an alumna, a historian, a member of the library faculty, and a lover of the university; and you always knew that when she spoke, she was trying to advance the interests of the university as a whole. Linda's leadership led to better programs for Drew alumni/ae.

—**Perry Leavell**, *William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of History, Emeritus*

Few Drew graduates have supported the College Alumni/ae Association as faithfully and influenced the entire University so greatly. As chair of the nominating committee,

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“KAIROS,” SCHOLARSHIP AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY: LIVING WITH WILLA CATHER

By Dr. Merrill Maguire Skaggs (1937–2008) Baldwin Professor of Humanities, Emerita, Written for the 2009 Friends of the Library Gala. Introduced and read on that occasion by Dr. Marilyn Callander, Kirby Theatre, January 31, 2009.

Introductory Remarks

By Dr. Marilyn Callander

Preceding her reading of Merrill Skaggs' address written for the 2009 Friends Gala, January 31, 2009

Last July, in the year 2008, Merrill Skaggs sent me the draft of the paper she had prepared for tonight, January 31, 2009. I can't resist telling a story on Merrill—tattle-tale. In the first class I took from her in 1978, when she was about Sylvia's age and I was a few years older—mere girls—she went over the syllabus with the class, and when it came to the required essay she said, "The only excuse for a late paper is your death." We laughed, of course, but also squirmed. Most of us would have chosen to risk death rather than turn in a paper late. I teased her about this over the years, and she tried to wiggle out of it, but I had witnesses. Some of them are here tonight.

How very ironic that even her own death couldn't keep Merrill from getting her paper in on time. She would have loved that story, bookends on either end of her scholarly life.

We sat under a tree one hot July day last year and went over this paper. She made some changes. She was going to write a new, shorter first paragraph, because she thought what she had written sounded a little "egghead." She also was going to omit some sentences and a paragraph in the body. I urged her to write another final paragraph about her Faustian self as a draw to Cather.

I've made some of those changes here, the ones I knew she wanted. For those of you who knew Merrill, you will hear her unmistakable voice, firm and clear.

Last June I went to Madison's Chatham Bookseller to ask that he haul away all the books that after retirement I no longer had room to shelve at home. He agreed promptly and added, "I don't recall your name but I know to think Willa Cather." That flattered me, especially since I had agreed to write a speech on Scholarship as Autobiography which connected books with life work. I had decided to fit my speech under the general topic of *kairos*, a Greek word meaning "the right moment." Apparently there's a right moment in the nature of things, though it is always surprising when a human recognizes or uses it. The Chatham Bookseller helped me think I'd met *kairos* somewhere.

The Greeks differentiated *kairos* from *kronos*, which is merely chronological or sequential time. *Kairos*, conversely, is a different, more momentous rightness, an "ah! ha!" moment, an awareness of the opportune conjunction of all the factors that set up a crucial action. My plan was to relate my lifetime of scholarship to my own autobiography, aware of the extent to which both *kairos* and Willa Cather were crucial...but also to *kairos*.

The thing that initially struck me about *kairos*, in my first mullings over the term, was its different implications from the familiar American phrase, "the turning point." When representative American Mark Twain was asked to write about the

turning point of his life, he first analyzed the request with sharp sophistication, and then concocted a cock-and-bull story that his biographers are still stuck with. He said he once found a fifty dollar bill in the street, placed an advertisement for its owner and left town the same day, bound for New Orleans in order to find a ship for Pará, in northern Brazil, so that he could start smuggling coca to the planet. Finding no ship, he ran out of money before he could transition to brigand, and learned how to pilot steamboats instead. Turning points invite such flamboyant fictions because they imply a single improbable cause and effect sequence that rationalizes linear—or at least V-shaped—progressions toward a personally defining single activity. *Kairos* is something else. You only find it if you're lucky enough to be open to it—Twain would say, "have the temperament for it"—though it can be there for you if your eyes focus.

Further, *kairos* leaves you your own resolve to act. If one is considering a life shaped by crucial moves, *kairos* sounds less reductionist and more miraculous than a turning point. Undoubtedly and by the ample evidence at hand, Twain would have been up to it had he been given the metaphor. But the term definitely provided me more elbow room.

Looking back through remembered time (already a narrower gothic window,



you notice), my first instance of *kairos* in my scholarly life came one summer in the 70s when my friend Virginia Barber, who was starting her own literary agency, asked me to consider writing a biography of Willa Cather, because she wanted to sell one to a publisher. A quick check established that the novelist in question was born in Virginia and set her last novel in her home state. I even recognized her title, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, and knew that Cather set that book in the southwest. So stretching institutional conventions in order to do what I wanted, I shoehorned those two books into my upcoming 1978 Fall Seminar on Southern Women Writers.

That's my first experience of *kairos*. Its consequences affected me, my students, and Drew University. A loudly chuckling colleague or two pointed out to me that Cather was a Nebraska writer—hardly Southern—but I ploughed on, ostensibly to help a friend. Out of that seminar that

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FRIENDS OF THE DREW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: GALA 2009

Photographs by Judi Whiting

In true Library tradition, the 2009 Friends of the Library Benefit Dinner celebrated “what warms us at the core—books, authors, scholarship, and a library that values them.” During the pre-dinner program, Dr. Andrew Scrimgeour, Dean of Libraries, went on to share with the audience in Kirby Theatre the words of James Russell Lowell, that “Books are bees which carry the quickening pollen from one mind to another.” The program celebrated the work of colleagues, “who have crafted some of our favorite works and pollinated our thought worlds.” The evening address, “*Kairos*, Scholarship and Autobiography: Living with Willa Cather,” written by the late Professor Merrill Maguire Skaggs, was introduced and read by Dr. Marilyn Callander, and is reproduced in its entirety in this newsletter.

Following the program, dinner guests moved to historic Mead Hall for a reception and dinner which included welcoming words from University President Robert Weisbuch, a fiftieth wedding anniversary, and the presentation of the Bela Kornitzer Book awards by Dean Scrimgeour and Mrs. Alicia Kornitzer Karpati.



Honoring Bela Kornitzer... Mrs. Alicia Kornitzer Karpati, donor of the book prize that bears her brother's name, gathers with family, including Mrs. Klara Kornitzer, Dr. Ben Kornitzer, Dr. George Kornitzer, Mrs. Noëmi Neidorff and Mr. Michael Neidorff.



A light moment...
Professor Johannes Morsink
with Eliot and Millicent Knight.



Cather Scholars... Dr. David Porter, Dr. Marilyn Callander, Dr. Laura Winters, Dr. Jo Ann Middleton, and Ph.D. candidate, Jeevan Gurung, all share a deep interest as scholars of Willa Cather and former friends, students, and colleagues of Professor Merrill Skaggs.



International Friends... Drs. Paul and Yasuko Grosjean enjoy the company of Drew graduate students, Jeevan Gurung and Kumar Bhattacharya, representing their native countries of America, Japan, Nepal, and India.

Dinner Hosts...
Dr. Marilyn and
Robert J. Callander,
with University
President Robert
Weisbuch.





Family portrait... Dr. Sylvia Skaggs McTague and Dr. Robert McTague attended the Gala with their daughters Tara and Emma. Sylvia McTague is the daughter of Merrill Maguire Skaggs, who was honored posthumously at the Gala. Both the McTagues are graduates of Drew's Caspersen School of Graduate Studies.

BELA KORNIETZER AWARDS

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non-fiction books: *Women in France: Gender, Culture, and Identity* (Stanford University Press, 2006) and *Virtually Anglo-Saxon: Old Media, New Media, and Early Medieval Studies in the Late Age of Print* (University Press of Florida, 2007.) The Kornitzer Prize was established sixteen years ago at Drew by Mrs. Karpati and her late husband, George Karpati, to honor the achievements of Bela Kornitzer as an author and journalist in Hungary and the United States. Non-fiction books published in 2006, 2007, and 2008 were eligible for the 2008 competition. Each author received a prize of \$1,000.



Address for the evening... Dr. Marilyn Callander introduced and read the address written by Merrill Skaggs for the Gala program.



Library Supporters... Mrs. Noémi Neidorff poses with her mother, Mrs. Alicia Kornitzer Karpati. The family travelled from St. Louis and joined other family members from New England to attend the Gala and present the Bela Kornitzer Book Awards.



Friends of the Library Advisory Board attending the Gala were Dr. Andrew D. Scrimgeour, Dean of Libraries; Dr. Epsey Farrell Weatherbee, Mrs. Bertha Thompson, and Professor of History Jonathan Rose. Not pictured is President of the Friends, Dr. Lynn Harris Heft, who shared in the planning.



Fiftieth Anniversary... Drew University President Robert Weisbuch turns the spotlight to Drs. Robert and Vivian Bull, who celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary at the Gala.



Enjoying Good Company... Ginny and Tom Campion with Susan Barba.

LIVING WITH WILLA CATHER *continued from page 5*

included both graduate and undergraduate students, three hardcover books on Cather were written, none of them biographies, from among the thirteen participants. Further, a supportive Drew Cather Community was born. We had fun, so the next year I spent a whole semester's seminar on Cather alone. That second seminar, in turn, produced three more dissertations and another book. Before it was all over as it is now, Drew would be able to claim ten hard cover Cather books and note that a Drew undergrad, Jessica Rabin, eventually produced another one for an Emory dissertation. To my eye, we fortuitously bullseyed into the right moment for our place. I'd like to explore why.

First of all, nobody around Drew was paying the least attention to Willa Cather, so we had her to ourselves. That's because she was then considered academically déclassé, non-modernist and therefore old-fashioned, too popular to be anything but counterrevolutionary. In the Northeast, she had no cachet—and please notice my elitist French words. We all considered the Northeast the culture world's center, and we eschewed anything that could be labeled regionalist. That meant outback. It didn't really matter whether Cather was Virginian or Nebraskan because both were regions that produced regionalist writers. Whether Southern or Midwestern, any writers who were not urban, fractured, and difficult enough to sustain heroic explications, did not seem desirably competitive. We made exceptions for "humorists," those who had won lots of prizes, and those who were read admiringly in Europe. Humorists were a lower class of writer like Ring Lardner or Dorothy Parker, but were acceptable if they published in high places.

Faulkner, for example, could write low humor, but he had won the Nobel Prize and French approbation. Robert Penn Warren had won three Pulitzers for both fiction and poetry, and also every other prize in the nation. And Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor could publish in the *New Yorker*. But Cather had won only one measly Pulitzer for a novel people still don't like to advocate because Hemingway cleverly trashed it. So nobody here was teaching her. She was ours.



A few Southerners soon began a tug-of-war with Nebraska to claim Cather for Southern literature, but they lost. And in the interests of full disclosure, Virginia Barber and I were both Southerners who had met at Duke before moving North towards Home. But most northeast scholars shrugged and left Cather, if not to heaven, at least to the Great Plains. We Drewids felt that we could proceed to do new work in a new place from new points of view if we could think them up. She was a writer the titanic Ivies and large urban New York universities were not contesting. We were working out of sight in Madison, New Jersey! Nobody was watching.

Our location was everything, and we used it. As soon as we began to think of Cather from the Northeast, we thought of Cather in the Northeast. In then-ignored matter of fact, Cather had chosen to live in New York City for the last forty years of her life. As soon as we acknowledged that fact, we saw Cather in a new way. At the least, she was an exile by choice; hence, Drew's Laura Winters wrote *Willa Cather: Landscape and Exile* (1993).

But one of the first Drew books on Cather, in press by 1989, was Jo Ann Middleton's *Willa Cather's Modernism*. It happens that the first international seminar dedicated to "Cather, Chicago, and Modernism" and sponsored by the Cather project of Nebraska has been announced for June, 2009. It can take scholarly folks twenty years to reassess and catch up! Yet our own regional focus opened up new cultural worlds within which to place Willa Cather-worlds of medieval icons from the Cloisters, opera from the Met, visual arts from Greenwich Village galleries, theater from Broadway that covered Shakespeare to Janáček.

We could now consider as background information Harvard philosophers, psychologists and historians, especially the philosopher and psychologist William James, and all events covered amply in the New York papers, like the sinking of the Titanic, for example, or the 1913 Armory show, or the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. References to all of those suddenly jump out of her short stories. Cather wasn't just an attentive reader any more, she was a sophisticated and knowledgeable woman of the

world with informed and catholic taste, who kept up with things. And what she wanted to know all these things for was to use them in her work.

Cather had famously said, "Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there—that, one might say, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel or the drama, as well as to poetry itself." By stressing that Cather lived in closest proximity to all New York's galleries and theaters and concert halls, we could plausibly suggest that she was deliberately weaving all those items and artifacts into those texts she was polishing so carefully. She was anything but a provincial regionalist, unless Manhattan itself was defined as a region.

The very first Drew Cather book to appear in print, significantly, was Marilyn Callander's 1989 *Willa Cather and the Fairy Tale*. It studies fairy tale allusions in Cather's texts, and fairy tales are universal, that is, found globally. In short, we gained the whole world as ballast for our Cather studies. The last art form to be recognized as relevant to Cather studies was the dance. Drew Ph. D. Wendy Perriman now has a book on that subject in press. Documenting the productions Cather could have seen or known about through newspaper reviews, Perriman demonstrates that Cather incorporated allusions to classical ballet or folk dance in every work she wrote. From a Drew-in-New Jersey point of view, Cather studies leads to everything.

We felt *kairos* a second time, then, with our new focus on Cather's Northeast home. That focus invited associating her creative brain with all the high culture, as well as the street life, cultural gossip, trendiness, of Manhattan. This new focus and expanding literary terrain contained endless possibilities for an expanding Drew School of Cather scholars. For us, Cather was no longer an easy-to-read traditionalist, but one of the most ambitious and complex writers the twentieth century produced. Harold Bloom, the famous Yale critic, took more than two decades to come to the same conclusion. Our mantra became, "She's always clear but never simple." She was not just offering us more to study; she was guaranteeing us original material while she cautioned us that we would need a

great deal of new information if we were to “get it.” We were going to have to dig harder in unplowed ground. Eventually Finn and Barbara Caspersen dedicated and built up the Drew Cather Collection to help future Drew students continue digging, to the third or fourth generation.

My topic, however, concerns my personal autobiography. Why, I had to ask, was Cather always feeling like the right author for me? I had always admitted to a short scholarly attention span. I liked being at Drew because I didn’t get painted into a scholarly corner here. I was even encouraged to try and cover all of American literature, and not specialize. Further, I normally didn’t like to teach the same thing very often, and was glad that at Drew we never ran out of uncovered topics. I liked Drew because I was allowed to keep trying out new literary fields—like autobiography, once also déclassé.

My only published book at this time was *The Folk of Southern Fiction*—a long way from Willa Cather. It traced a “plain folk tradition” through nineteenth century Southern regional literature. It showed that an ample tradition of Southern fiction went unacknowledged by anyone who believed the stereotypical nineteenth-century assertion that the South was comprised of three classes—aristocrats, slaves, and white trash. You can surely see now, as historians were repeatedly pointing out then, that this simplistic formula significantly omits the vast majority of Southern people in the economic middle. The whole lot of those

called in urban centers the “middle class” seem to graduate whole scale into the aristocracy. I merely pointed out that Southern fiction writers had always depicted such a middle group, and that the great twentieth century writers such as Faulkner, Welty, and O’Connor, had continued to do so. Only Yankees and politicians ever trusted that stereotype, though many a Southern writer exploited it, tongue in cheek. Incidentally, when my book about Southern plain folk reached Hungary, a reviewer declared, “This writer knows nothing about the South!” That American literature expert obviously preferred his established reading habits that trusted familiar stereotypes. His confident negativism, however, apparently traced to my admitted home in New Jersey.

In any case, my first book brought me serendipitously up to William Faulkner. I too had learned by experience to expect certain things when I read Southern fiction, and I had learned them from the source who most effectively dramatized and reinforced them—William Faulkner. I therefore became aware of another moment of good luck, even *kairos*, when I first glimpsed a Southern woman writer who dared to challenge him. After all, Eudora Welty once said that commending Faulkner was like pinning a medal on Mount Rushmore. Yet Willa Cather, in her



Southern novel, had dared to contradict every expectation about Southern plots that Yoknapatawpha County had ever trained the reading world to rely on. And New York critics didn’t like anybody messing

up “typically Southern” outcomes, so they hated that novel. I saw that for doing what she did, she was pilloried as a head-in-the-sand romantic, too far removed from her birthplace and distracted first by Nebraska and then by New York, to get her facts straight. After about thirty years, I finally saw that Faulkner was actually flattered. I wrote it all up in my fifth Cather book called *Axes: Willa Cather and William Faulkner*. Even in the 1970s, however, what she’d dared and done made her more interesting to me, and more valiant. But it took me nearly forever to gather the guts to rub my eyes first and then say out loud, “Cather’s *Sapphira and the Slave Girl* deliberately reverses Faulkner’s very great *Absalom, Absalom!* And it has taken a lot of us at least twenty-five years, if not twice that many, to begin to appreciate the audacious—now called “post modern”—experimentalism of Cather’s Southern novel.

My autobiographical point, however, is that I had to be, as a young woman, already familiar with a Southern literary tradition, in order to find Cather’s deliber-

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LIVING WITH WILLA CATHER *continued from page 9*

ate deviations from it riveting. In the meantime, while just inching along, I got to applaud Joyce McDonald's Drew book, *The Stuff of Our Forebears: Willa Cather's Southern Heritage*. Joyce's book concentrated on the pastoral form—not my topic. I think that I, more inclined to see deviations and resistances, did so partially because I had the luck to move to New Jersey. It obviously felt safer from here for me to watch Cather upsetting perceptual applecarts, whether they were national, cultural, regional, or literary. While I accepted the optimistic truism that scholarship should be original and that originality was by definition new, still safe is better than not-safe. In any case, all I felt that I had to do from Jersey was to point out what Cather was doing to be original. That felt safe and also good.

So I began teaching and writing essays on Willa Cather. But I retained my first conviction that any subject I stuck with would have to stay fresh for me, and that meant, not predictable. At first, her characters seemed real to me because they were inconsistent in a familiarly human way. I slowly realized that Cather built the same way for every part of her works, so that nothing could be neatly explained. Joseph Urgo suggests it's a "dock-burr principle": like one of her memorable Southern characters, Cather likes sewing dock-burs in the pants of lazy readers, to make them uncomfortable when they get too relaxed and complacent. She wants them more awake when they sit down with her "real" motivations, behaviors, discrepancies. You can't ever nail down what she "thinks" because she inserts an inconsistency somewhere to prevent your resting in comfortable platitudes or easy conclusions. I would even say that she loathes your easy platitudes, and allows herself the pleasure of subverting any that might predictably spring to your mind.

In my first phase I began to trace and teach and write that Cather built every component of her fictions on reversals or oppositions, what she calls in *A Lost Lady*, "the magic of contradictions." I took a lot of years just testing and clarifying that fact for myself. And I still believe that all her plots, characters, and themes contain deliberate contradictions and are constructed on the tensions provided by contrary pulls, opposites. For example, her best loved heroine *Ántonia Shimerda* not only is like the heroic "founders of early races" (353), but also is a braggart. When she is forced to work out-

doors in the fields and grows muscled and tan, because she must help her family to survive, she asserts, "I can work like mans now" (123). She is also not above malice; she taunts her adversaries. After Mr. Burden's hired man Jake hits her brother Ambrosch for misusing a Burden horse-collar he has borrowed, Jake pays a fine for assault. But *Ántonia* chants in his face maliciously, "Jake-y, Jake-y, sell the pig and pay the slap" (131). We shrug because we love her anyway. She's our *Ántonia*.

When a Cather scholar locates all the contradictions in all the vivid characters or situations within one of her works, then she can find more games to play between the books. That's because Cather sets her books up to challenge and contradict each other. In some major way, each book reverses, or at least supports an opposite conclusion, from its predecessor. *My Ántonia* became Nebraska's "Book of the Year," read systematically in schools and book clubs across the state in 2005, because Nebraskans especially love the way it makes the pioneering immigrant groups who settled that state so colorfully heroic and fascinating. Cather's subsequent novel, *One of Ours*, also set in Nebraska, suggests that Nebraska farm life is killing, and that a typical Nebraska farm boy would a lot rather die in the First World War than stay down on his farm. To that Nebraska farm boy, it's not war that's hell, it's Nebraska. That's what I mean by deliberate reversal.

Cather's reversals between books can also jump volumes. *Alexander's Bridge*, Cather's first novel, published in 1912, develops the theme that a middle-aged man's first love is his own youth, not his first sweetheart. She returns to that theme in her eighth novel, *The Professor's House*, published in 1925. But there she has a young man represent the male professor's youth. That looks a lot less conventional. When Cather boasted early, "She will never repeat herself," she made good by exploring the same situations from different points of view, opposite directions that would support opposite conclusions. She also explores what difference the change of one variable can make.

Somewhere in the *kronos* time of my professional life, my sister-in-law asked me why I was so fixed on Willa Cather. I took her question seriously, for I've never believed in scholarly objectivity, only in the judiciousness of posturing it. So I looked for a kind of Catherian personal magnetism that

could hold my attention. What, I was willing to ask, did she initially represent for me that continued to draw me, once I'd read all her works and thought I understood them? What's in it for you, once you've gotten the plot and all the subplots? I didn't really think she represented a part of me, because I didn't believe I was that complicated. As a personal mirror, she didn't seem to work. And even opposites and contraries get predictable or stale, eventually.

So who or what was she to me? I found one answer that felt true immediately: She's the little girl who got herself out of the sticks with nothing but her own brains to rely on. She had no good models, no community supports, no networks, no contacts. She had nothing but her own ambitions to drive her. As her autobiographical character Vickie, in "Old Mrs. Harris," says when asked why she wants what she wants—in this case, to get an education: "I just want it." Really, that didn't sound like me at all. I never felt I was in the sticks to start with, or was friendless at any point, or was inconveniently driven.

So then, why was this description of Cather so moving to me, and who did it sound like? My mother! Another ah! ha! moment! And who is often the most centrally intriguing person one hopes eventually to understand? Mother! This answer felt so happy that I tried it out on my brother, to see how he or it would hold up. He just bobbed his chin without blinking. He nodded! *As kairos*, that may be all the encouragement one needs. Cather's last published sentence of fiction concerns a frog-toad whose hop toward a better pond covers all time: "Well anyhow, when that first amphibious frog-toad found its water-hole dried up behind him and started out to find another, well he sure started on a long hop!" Finding my mother's shadow lying on my preferred professional subject was reassuring and amusing, like that frog-toad, and it covered all the time I needed, since it implied forever.

By happy coincidence that sentence, besides being Cather's compression of the largest possible action into the shortest possible space, is also her challenge to William Faulkner, who said he wanted to get it all between one cap and one period. His best known attempt at such a feat took him six pages. Hers took four lines. For me, this astonishingly "complete and absolute" declaration reminded me of my mother. She

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Inviting Space... First year student, Sarah Mohrman, finds a convenient spot for working near the Library entrance. During the winter, tables and chairs that were outside of the Learning Center and the Methodist Archives building were brought into the Library Lobby to create a café-style space for food, study, and quiet conversation—an especially welcome environment during exam periods and long night-time study sessions. The popular outdoor perches will also be replaced with additional tables and chairs this spring.



A. Magnell

LIVING WITH WILLA CATHER *continued from page 10*

also enjoyed competitive challenges: making up acrostics, clever word games, composing crossword puzzles. So that's what I was up to, I thought. But alas, even frog-toads and mothers, sooner or later, grow old. What then?

I heard myself saying in Nebraska last June that the Cather I knew I loved was Faustian. She not only wanted everything she saw or imagined. She wanted all that all the others imagined. I realized slowly that my view of her had expanded. First, I saw her learning, then assimilating, great literature. Then I realized that she could probably read, besides English, also French, Latin, Greek, Italian, German, and Czech. Then, as I reviewed her, she assimilated the

other arts-theater, visual arts, dance, music, and architecture. Then she pursued philosophy, history, and science. What she wanted all this for was her work. She folded into that great and carefully constructed work her subtle allusions to all she knew. That effort, in turn, gave me a Sisyphean subject: to find out as much as I could of what Cather knew, then show how she knew it, and write how she used it. Happily, I could never finish, so I'd never run out of something to do. As Cather said, "The end is nothing, the road is all." That felt like "a life sentence" and also a moment of *kairos*. This Faust, *c'est moi!* It was a consummation devoutly to be wished. All it really took was an ah! ha! moment and permission to go for it.

Graphic elements from the dust jackets of *The Old Beauty and Others* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948); *Not Under Forty* (1936); *On Writing* (1949), Designed by W. A. Dwiggins (1880-1956), Drew University Library Special Collections.

LINDA E. CONNORS *continued from page 4*

Linda played a key role in CAA leadership. Over the past 12 years Alumni/ae College has been a driving force of change, and Linda has been its champion. As chair, she mobilized an ongoing committee of alumni/ae, faculty, and staff to enrich the life-long relationship between alumni/ae and their alma mater through Drew based educational programs. Lectures at College Reunion, Alumni/ae College events at regional alumni/ae clubs, and Alumni/ae College travel programs, have transformed how our graduates think about Drew. Linda can also take great pride in the stewardship of a number of gifts to Drew. Her success as a fundraiser is based in her own generous spirit. I wish Linda all the best in her retirement and now expect to see her, perhaps even more, at Drew's many programs and events.
Ron Ross, Dean of Continuing Education and Career Services



Alumni/ae session with Professors McGuinn, Leavell, and Mundo.

POETRY ARCHIVE

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industry professionals to the highest broadcast standards, the Archive is already one of the most extraordinary records of contemporary poetry and poets in the world," stated David Grant, President and CEO of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. The Archive project is a collaboration of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation with Drew University.

...the Archive is already one of the most extraordinary records of contemporary poetry and poets in the world.

— David Grant,
Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation

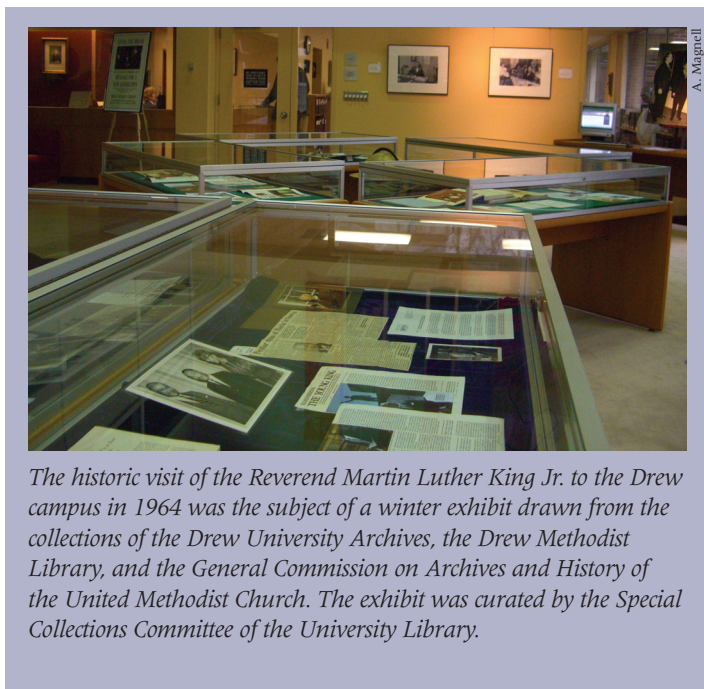
LIBRARY EXHIBITS **Recent Faculty Publications**

A rotating exhibit in the permanent display cases in the Library lobby showcases recent faculty work.

Living the Dream

A Drew Library exhibit displayed this winter in the Methodist Archives Center celebrated the work and legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and commemorated social justice activities of the Drew community from the 1960s to the present.

Dr. King spoke at Drew on February 5, 1964, as the guest of Dr. George Kelsey, Drew seminary professor and King's former undergraduate mentor at Morehouse College. Information about King's visit and a transcript of his Drew speech can be found at: <http://depts.drew.edu/lib/KingExhibit>.



The historic visit of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. to the Drew campus in 1964 was the subject of a winter exhibit drawn from the collections of the Drew University Archives, the Drew Methodist Library, and the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church. The exhibit was curated by the Special Collections Committee of the University Library.

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