



GLS Alumni News

Editor: Eric Halvorson, AM'75

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Welcome Back Update

Welcome to this issue of GLS Alumni News. I apologize for the long lapse since our last issue, but there has been a change in my life. After three looong years of searching, I have finally found a new job. I am working at Praxair, Inc., in Burr Ridge, IL, an industrial gases firm. I am also pleased to report that the department I work in is called Library Services, rather than some permutation of "information" or "knowledge."

In the last newsletter, you will recall I asked you to send in your thoughts about the future of reference services in libraries. We have two contributions from the Class of '87 on the subject. Make sure you check them out on pages two and three.

Shortly after the last newsletter, I had a chance to partake in the 2007 UC Alumni Weekend activities. I hope my brief report opposite will entice you to follow suit this summer.

And don't forget to keep sending in your news. We look forward to hearing from you!

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2007 UC Alumni Weekend

More than 3,500 UC alumni and friends came back to campus for Alumni Weekend 2007, June 1 – 3. I had a chance to participate in some of the festivities and I just want to say I had a blast!

On Friday, I took a tour out to Argonne. We were shown some of the subjects the lab is pursuing. I was fascinated: I had no idea the lab was involved with such a wide variety of projects. We were first taken to the Synchrotron lab, where extremely small beam X-ray analysis explores the structures of materials as varied as mineral crystals or viruses. Then we had a presentation at a portion of the lab devoted to atmospheric research and climatology. During lunch, the Director spoke with us about the history of the lab and the future of nuclear power research in this country and abroad. Finally, we had another demonstration by medical researchers developing super-cooling techniques for use during surgery.

Saturday morning, I was honored to carry the GLS banner in the procession across campus to the Alumni Convocation. It was kinda lonely, though; ours was the last banner in the procession and there wasn't anybody following me. The convocation featured an inspiring keynote talk by James Dewey Watson, UC grad and Nobel laureate for co-discovering the structure of DNA. I lunched at the Alumni Picnic, then ducked out to the 57th Street Art Fair.

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Bulletin Board

Permeable Walls: The Evolving Library Environment

GLS Alumni Reception and Panel/Discussion

More information to follow

June 8, 2008

The University of Chicago
Joseph Regenstein Library

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Future of Reference Work in Public Libraries

Suzanne Arist, AM'87

With new technology and expanded community involvement, public libraries are now becoming *libraries without walls*. I work part-time at the Wilmette Public Library, WPL, near Chicago, where reference librarians do a variety of work beyond traditional reference work. We are among public libraries at the forefront of providing these services.

Technology

Our web manager is also a reference librarian. Like web managers at other public libraries, he has created links to our site, which make it easy for patrons and staff to access a lot of information. Without leaving home, a patron can find a currency conversion table, conversion tables for weight, 800 phone numbers for airlines and much more. The web manager has reference staff's and patrons' needs in mind and will continue to make the site more useful.

Patrons will often use the Internet for research at home, but still will turn to the library for help in researching its databases and the Internet.

Reference staff will continue to teach various levels of Internet classes and database classes for community members.

Wikipedia, although not necessarily credible, often has useful links and subcategories for staff and patrons to find information. Reference staff and patrons will use this resource.

Google Book Search and other digitization projects will no doubt affect library use. Google provides links to libraries which own books in its collection. This might affect Interlibrary-Loan.

WPL and other libraries will continue to provide live online reference service.

Community Outreach

Per my supervisor, programming outside of the library and at the library will increase as patrons learn that libraries are not solely warehouses for books. WPL has had a Head of Community Services for a long time.

This year, a librarian at WPL received a grant for a program on China. This was used to reach out to the village's large Chinese-American community and to educate the rest of the community. The grant included funding for books in Chinese and about China. As with other programs, local businesses were involved. The program included a speech by a local congressman. These types of initiatives will be continuing so the community is aware of its library and involved with its library; since library staff help patrons with genealogy research, the library will have a series of genealogists speak in the fall in conjunction with Family History Month.

Community outreach and availability of excellent online resources are enabling reference librarians, like those at WPL, transition to the future.

The Handwriting on the Wall

Mark Huppert, AM'87

The arguments for paying staff with graduate degrees to help library users find stuff get weaker and weaker relative to the arguments for not bothering.

I saw the handwriting on the wall in 1987 in a Washington DC government office (through a 'beltway bandit' contractor). Most queries were very simple database searches. The main reason for MLS librarians doing them was the high cost of Lexis/Nexis and DIALOG - and our skill and efficiency. But when the cost and difficulty of searching drops low enough, it overcomes the need to pay for the efficiency of an MLS librarian.

I was there four years and saw more and more readers questioning this -- intuitively seeing the equation. It was fertile ground for the Internet and for the library shakeup we now see. I'm hoping I can stay employed long enough to afford my retirement.

Where I work, the Library has been absorbed into a "Division of Information" and competes for staff dollars with IT support. There's a lot of that going on -- nothing special about my university.

You can put a high school graduate on a combine circ/info desk. You can train a new person in a week or so -- no need for library experience as long as they're computer literate. Readers can cope.

But if a router goes offline, if a SAN crashes, if the UPS in the machine room fails during a power outage, then you've got a show-stopper. You need hard technical skills to resolve the situation -- expensive skills.

In a science library with a subscription to Web of Knowledge and 40,000 e-journals -- why do you need somebody with a Master's degree sitting at desk in the reading room? Why do you need a reading room? Why do you need stacks?

2007 UC Alumni Weekend continued from p. 1

*Sunday, I was back at Alumni House for the GLS "Brunch with Books" celebration of the Klowden Family Library of faculty and alumni publications. GLS alums **Debra Hammond**, AM'90, **Susan Bayer**, AM'67, and **Suzanne Arist**, AM'87, helped organize the collection. UC Professor **Martin Marty** gave an entertaining and thought-provoking talk on books as friends with whom we converse. After the sumptuous brunch, I walked back to Regenstein with fellow GLS alum **Linnea Sodergren**, AM'72, for a reception for a group of GLS alums hosted by Library Director **Judi Nadler**. Judi gave an informative presentation on plans for the Regenstein addition, including architectural renderings and schematics of the automated retrieval system.*

There you have it: fascinating, inspiring, thought provoking, entertaining and informative. Did I say it already? I had a blast!

Eric Halvorson, AM'75



News from You

Debbie (Morrow) Vaughan, AM'73, left Leo Burnett Co. in June of 2000 "as it became apparent that the library's status was changing." After that, she spent time at Northwestern – interim head of interlibrary loan and, very briefly, head of reference. She spent some time unemployed and then part-time at the Skokie Public Library. She then moved to her present position at the Chicago History Museum. "This chance at the Chicago History Museum came up and I thought that all those years at Municipal Reference [Library] would stand me in good stead. I married Jim Vaughan (who works at the U of C Library) and we have a son, William, who will be starting as a freshman at the U of C in [the fall of 2007]. So, I still have ties with the U of C."

Congratulations to **Victor Dyer**, AM'75, the director of the Ipswich (MA) Public Library. His library won the Massachusetts Library Association Public Relations Award for a postcard promotion of its newly designed Internet Web page and services. Victor says that the award is proof that "local libraries can do things in a professional manner."

Robb Murray, AM'77, gave a presentation in August on his trip around the world at the Lincoln Belmont Branch of the Chicago Public Library.

Sem Sutter, AM'85, Assistant Director for Collections at the UC Library, was honored with third prize in a haiku contest sponsored by the University of Chicago magazine. When I got in touch to ask if I could reprint his work below, he said: "I...wrote it on impulse when I saw the contest...having penned a lot of them in college in the sixties. I'd actually forgotten having entered, so winning was a sweet surprise."

Rustling gold ginkgo,
Languid koi circling below
in Botany Pond.

Tom Walker, AM'86, is a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee School of Information Studies. Upon graduation from GLS, he worked as the Coordinator of Public Services at the Library of the National Association of Realtors in Chicago, went to Champaign-Urbana to get a PhD in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science of the University of Illinois, and worked at the Champaign Public Library and the Army Corps of Engineers. In 1992, he relocated for a faculty job at UW-Milwaukee, left to become Director of the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Southern Mississippi, returned to UW-Milwaukee as Interim Dean and Associate Dean, and has recently stepped back into a full-time schedule of research and teaching. His sabbatical next year will take him to Vienna to continue a book project and edition related to the library travels of an Austrian librarian in the 1770s and 1780s. This individual, in 1600 manuscript pages (preserved now by the Austrian National Library), described about 2400 European libraries, almost 400 of which he visited in person. Tom currently lives in Glendale, WI, where he is renovating his mid-century modern home.

Suzanne Arist, AM'87, who has been working with pastels and collage, had a show last fall at the Frame Warehouse in Evanston. Suzanne also wrote an article published in the journal of the Illinois Library Association in October titled "Success in Diversity: How 3 Illinois Libraries Embrace Multiculturalism". To read the article, go to: www.ila.org. Click on "publications" at the top of the page, then click on "ILA Reporter" and open the October 2007 issue.

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Ed. Note: Thanks to Suzanne and Mark for their contributions to this issue. - EHH