

To: Members of the Divinity School Community
From: Beth Bidlack, Bibliographer for Religion and Philosophy
Date: March 27, 2006
Re: What's new in the Library for Spring 2006

Greetings from the Library! This quarter I'd like to highlight two events in the Library, which will directly affect most members of the Divinity School community: (1) **the rearrangement of the reference collections in the fourth-floor reading room**; and (2) **the re-opening of the Special Collections Research Center in mid to late April**.

First, if you've been in the reading room on the fourth floor of Regenstein Library during the past few weeks, you've probably noticed some changes. Let me provide some background on these changes. In May 2004, the Library's Strategic Planning Group completed a report, which included the following goal: "Users will be able to easily discover, locate, obtain, evaluate and effectively use information resources in their teaching, educational, professional or personal learning goals now and in the future." The same report also recommended that in order to meet this goal, the Library "develop a method to identify reasons why users cannot locate books on the shelf (mis-shelving, lack of instruction for users concerning how to find materials, confusing physical arrangement of materials, and other factors) and to correct these problems."

This charge by the Planning Group led to a user study conducted by several library staff members in April 2005. This study culminated in an August 2005 report, *From Catalog to Shelf: Failure Points Locating Books in the Regenstein Library*, which demonstrated that users in the study were unclear about how to find books in the reading rooms, especially on the fourth floor (RR4). At the time, RR4 consisted of several different collections distributed throughout the reading room: art (on lower shelves to the right); religion (along the back wall); philosophy, psychology, education, and other general reference books (in the shelving down the middle); Judaica (three shelving units in the back left corner); Ancient Near East (on small study tables to the left); and Classics (a separate room to the front left). Some of these separate areas were labeled clearly, but others were not. In addition, study tables and/or chairs often blocked access to the religion collection on the back wall.

In fall 2005, the library staff on the fourth floor agreed that the best way to address the issues that were raised by the user study and report was to combine into one sequence most of the materials in RR4. In early November I sent a letter to the Divinity School in which I passed along this proposal and asked for input. As of mid March, there is now one contiguous sequence of books from A-Z down the center of the room in RR4. There are, of course, a few exceptions, including Judaica Reference, which is a named collection and will remain separate. The ANE and Classics reference collections will also remain separate, but have clear, distinct locations in records found within the online library catalog. In the late spring, improved signage will be added to RR4. As with most changes, the new arrangement may take some getting used to, but I hope it turns out to be more efficient and user-friendly.

The second event I'd like to highlight is the re-opening of the Special Collections Research Center in mid to late April. The SCRC has been closed since the fall for an HVAC construction project to upgrade the environmental control system for the rare book, manuscript, and archival collections. In conjunction with the re-opening, Julia Gardner and David Pavelich, the Reference and Instruction Librarians for SCRC Reader Services, and I would like to invite the Divinity School community to a demonstration of the SCRC's teaching spaces and resources. There will be two opportunities to visit the Center and learn more about the resources and teaching opportunities it provides: **May 8 at 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM**. If you haven't been to the Center lately or met Julia and David, I encourage you to attend one of these demonstrations.

The SCRC has much to offer the Divinity School community not only in terms of providing research materials and teaching opportunities, but also in terms of providing reference assistance. Some collections of interest include the Rosenberger Collection of Judaica and the Goodspeed NT manuscript collection. One of the manuscripts in this collection ("Archaic Mark") was recently digitized and used in Margaret Mitchell's course on Mark. The SCRC also has many interesting archival collections, including the Baptist Union Theological Seminary papers, the diaries and sermon notes of an early 19th-century Methodist circuit rider, as well as the papers of many key figures in the history of the Divinity School and the development of the "Chicago School." Some of these materials (e.g., the papers of Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade) will be used in Christian Wedemeyer's spring course on the History of Religions. For a selected list of manuscript and archival resources in religion and theology, see <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/divtheo.html>. The Center also has several classrooms for teaching, including a state-of-the-art "smart" classroom, complete with a document camera for projecting images onto one or two large-screen monitors within the room.

If you would like to join me for a demonstration, please gather in the exhibit area just outside the entrance to the SCRC on Monday, May 8th at 10:00 AM or 3:00 PM. I look forward to seeing you. If these times are not convenient for you, please let me know, and we can schedule a demonstration for another day.

For further information on how to take advantage of the SCRC in your research and teaching, see <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/rt.html> or contact David Pavelich (pavelich@uchicago.edu 773-834-4338) or Julia Gardner (juliag@uchicago.edu 773-834-0627).

Best wishes for the spring!