From Page to Pixel:
The Evolution of the Academic Library
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Letters to the Editor

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Superscript is published twice annually by the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences and the GSAS Alumni Association.

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Since its creation in the late 1990s, the GSAS Teaching Center has served as a central resource to help doctoral students enter the classroom with confidence, and to encourage pedagogical development for their careers as members of the academic profession. GSAS alumni may be interested to know that two years ago, the Teaching Center moved to a larger space in Butler Library, where its activities and functions are complemented by other new scholarly centers in the library, including the Center for Digital Research and Scholarship and the Digital Humanities Center, and that they share the use of a renovated space now known as Studio@Butler. The Studio has become a vibrant center for innovative pedagogies; a hub for testing new ideas and forging collaborations among graduate students, faculty, and library staff; and home of the “Teacher’s Lounge,” a supportive, informal space for graduate students to address collectively their challenges in the classroom.

Graduate schools have become increasingly aware that a progressively larger number of our graduates, however, do not plan to pursue an academic career, or revisit their initial plans to join the professoriate while in graduate school. This range of career outcomes is not a new phenomenon, of course, but the realities of the academic job market have made an expansion of horizons both more pressing and vital. Responding to the need for more varied professional development, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences created a program of Internships in Academic Administration two years ago, in order to give advanced graduate students the opportunity to spend a semester or a year embedded in administrative offices throughout the university, such as the Office of the President, Columbia College, or Columbia University Press, working closely with senior administrators on meaningful projects, sharing their prodigious research and communications talents while mastering leadership and project management skills.

Our mission to engage the professional landscape has also motivated our rethinking of the role of the GSAS Teaching Center in the practical training of our students. While developing further its function of helping graduate students manage the classroom environment writ large, the center has also begun a number of initiatives to help students cultivate skills related to self-presentation and leadership among peers and faculty that should help them in a broader employment context. The center’s current mission might be described as having an emphasis on communication and collaboration. To this end, the center has developed pioneering workshops, institutes, and certificate programs that complement more traditional pedagogical training. Principally among these was the creation last year of a program of Lead Teaching Fellows for all departments in the Arts and Sciences at Columbia. The LTFs are graduate students, trained at the Teaching Center and seasoned teachers themselves, who are subsequently chosen through an intense competition to be designated as their department’s liaison with the center. LTFs work with the Teaching Center to design programs and activities for students in their home departments intended to provide an ongoing forum to discuss and improve teaching methods, but also to mentor other students as they develop a professional persona. Being an LTF will allow some of our graduate students to hone organizational skills that will be beneficial to them in any professional destiny. Through programs such as this one, GSAS is acknowledging the many futures that our students wish to pursue, and helping them prepare for their manifold careers with utmost confidence and pride.

From the Dean

Carlos J. Alonso
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From Page to Pixel:
The Evolution of the Academic Library

By Alexander Gelfand

If you want to get a good sense of what Ground Zero looks like in the ongoing transformation of academic research libraries, just walk down to the second floor of Lehman Social Sciences Library, in the basement of the International Affairs Building.

There, amid the oversized atlases of the Map Room and the hushed stacks of the Business Collection, you will find an unassuming wooden door leading to the Center for Digital Research and Scholarship (CDRS). This is where Rebecca Kennison, director of CDRS, and her team—a diverse set of professionals with expertise in everything from information science and multimedia production to nonprofit communications and fundraising—develop and deploy a host of technological tools to help faculty and graduate students across the University manage and share their research.

If that sounds like a broad mandate, it is. Among other things, the staff of CDRS show researchers how to deposit their materials in the Academic Commons, Columbia’s online repository of scholarly work; offer guidance on developing the digital data-management plans now required by major grant agencies like the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health; and build full-blown digital platforms like the Women Film Pioneers Project, a collaborative online database that contains information on hundreds of women who worked in the silent film industry. (The project was initially conceived as a multivolume print reference by Jane Gaines, a professor of film here at Columbia.)

You can almost feel all of that activity buzzing away in the background of the windowless, warren-like confines of CDRS. Step back out into the lower level of Lehman, however, and the buzz is gone. The business
example, is filled to capacity, but you won’t hear many
M. Rosencrans Reading Room in Butler Library, for
of students at work.
smell of coffee and people—the characteristic aroma
conversation. Unlike the stacks below, the study rooms
occupied, and the group study rooms hum with lively
in the sprawling Digital Social Science Center is
maintenance. But every available workstation
microfilm reader is a technician doing routine
seated at the building’s sole remaining analog
glowing screens of their laptops and tablets.

Things look very different upstairs. The lone figure
seated at the building’s sole remaining analog
microfilm reader is a technician doing routine
maintenance. But every available workstation
in the sprawling Digital Social Science Center is
occupied, and the group study rooms hum with lively
conversation. Unlike the stacks below, the study rooms
smell of coffee and people—the characteristic aroma
of students at work.

Similar scenes play out across campus. The Robert
M. Rosencrens Reading Room in Butler Library, for
example, is filled to capacity, but you won’t hear many
pages being turned, rather, the silence is broken only
by the staccato clicking of fingers on keys and the
occasional startup chime of an Apple laptop. Much
the same is true in the third floor Reference Room, whose
wirelessly connected inhabitants seem as oblivious to
the print volumes surrounding them as they are to the
omately worked gilt ceiling and triple-tiered electric
chandeliers that loom over their heads.

Just around the corner, however, the hardware at
the Digital Humanities Center (DHC) is getting a
workout, as a student uses a digital microfilm scanner
to scroll at high speed through images displayed
directly on a computer monitor. And downstairs in the
Studio(Butler, a “collaboratory” for educators,
scholars, and librarians that is funded by Columbia
University Libraries and the Graduate School of Arts
and Sciences, an intense discussion about good
researchers—have proliferated.

As Elliott Shore, executive director of the Association
of Research Libraries, likes to point out, the structure
and organization of the research library are deeply rooted
in 19th-century ways of thinking; specifically, in the
idea that complex problems can be solved by breaking
them down into discrete tasks and handing them to
people with special expertise (i.e., certified librarians
trained in cataloging, preservation, and the like), and in
a production-economy mindset that frames libraries as
knowledge factories that acquire, process, and make
available discrete products for consumers (i.e., scholars
and researchers).

That system worked well for all concerned as long
as those products remained relatively fixed and
well-defined, and as long as the research library
itself held a monopoly on physical access to them.
Needless to say, those conditions no longer apply.
The rise of networked data and the World Wide Web
effectively destroyed the research library’s monopoly
on information, placing vast amounts of material in
the hands of anyone with Internet access. And the
sources and repositories of that information (wikis and
blogs, video files and e-books, sensor data and cloud
storage systems) have become far more diverse and
ephemeral than traditional print volumes and journals,
just as the questions surrounding their control and
use—who owns them and where they are located, how
they should be preserved and made accessible to
researchers—have proliferated.

As a result, libraries and librarians have arrived at
a rather strange place: one characterized by great
uncertainty, yet also by great opportunity. On the
one hand, many librarians have come to question
everything from their training to their relevance;
to ask what, exactly, they are supposed to do, and
how they are supposed to do it, in an age when
researchers are far less likely to set foot inside libraries
at all, and when traditional printed matter—indeed,
textual data in general—occupies an ever-diminishing
proportion of the information they are expected to
tame. On the other hand, they are perhaps more vital
to the enterprise of scholarship than ever before. As
information becomes richer and more mutable, harder
to capture and easier to miss, librarians—who are, after
all, experts in information management—are poised
to become the researcher’s best friend. Who better
to help you drink from a fire hose than a professional
fireman? Just don’t expect today’s librarians to come
packing the same gear, much less the same skills, as
their predecessors.

Jeffrey Lancaster, Ph.D. ’11, Chemistry, sits at his desk
on the ground floor of the Northwest Corner Building,
rummaging through a small cardboard box.

“This is a fragment of a Roman urn from the Rare Book
& Manuscript Library,” he says, pulling out a smallish
piece of white plastic bearing a human figure in bas-
relief. “And this is a self-assembled DNA nanocapsule,”
he notes, holding up a pair of delicate, nested cylinders
made from the same material.

Lancaster, who is emerging technology coordinator for
the Digital Science Center (DSC), a unit of the Science
and Engineering Library, printed both objects using the
MakerBot Replicator 2 3-D printer that sits in a corner
of his office. Anyone in the Columbia community can
submit a 3-D printing request, and over the past year,
Lancaster has generated everything from a model of a
Even those collections, however, are being reshaped by the digital tsunami, either because the print materials they contain are slowly being scanned and digitized, or because they are home to more and more material that was digital from the start.

Barbara Rockenbach, director of the Humanities and History Libraries, views the scanning and optical character recognition capabilities of the DHC in much the same way. A researcher might come in to scan a manuscript and convert it to digital form. But a staffer can use that as an opportunity to simply to scan a manuscript and convert it to digital much the same way. A researcher might come in and use the DHC’s character recognition software that can mine texts for interesting motifs—something that Gil recently helped a faculty member do with Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor’s autobiography. It bears noting that not everything worth mentioning about Columbia’s version of a 21st-century academic research library is digital in nature. Jim Neal, M.A. ’73, History, the outgoing Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian, notes that Columbia has undertaken unusually close partnerships with institutions such as Cornell and NVU to develop shared collections that will further expand the University’s already vast print holdings and make it easier for scholars to access information. RECAP (Research Collections and Preservation Consortium), the massive print repository that Columbia shares with Princeton University and the New York Public Library in Forestal, New Jersey, is now the largest in the world—the temperature-and-humidity controlled facility contains 11 million items and fills more than 250,000 requests each year from libraries around the world. (Columbia’s own library system, officially known as Columbia University Libraries/Information Systems, ranks among the five top academic libraries in North America; its 21 individual libraries hold more than 12 million volumes, 12 miles of manuscripts, and 800,000 rare books.) And Rockenbach emphasizes that the DHC is only able to work its technological magic because it sits on top of “an amazing print collection that continues to grow”—namely, the two million volumes housed in Butler’s stacks. “There are still moments when the print book matters,” she says. And moments, too, when nothing matters more than an experienced librarian with knowledge of your particular research area (medieval history, Chinese politics, global climate change) who must, as a consequence, now know something about metadata and database design, interface usability, and digital preservation. Toward that end, Neal, who earned his own degree in library science at a time when punch cards were considered cutting edge, has long advocated hiring personnel who have the skills and experience that a contemporary librarian needs, regardless of whether they hold an M.L.S. or equivalent professional credential. Hence staffers like Lancaster, who as a grad student built an app to help his lab mates search the digital versions of science journals. Or Gil, who holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Virginia and was among the first to participate in the latter’s Praxis Program, which gives graduate students hands-on training in the digital humanities. Or Kennison, who spent most of her career prior to joining CDRS in science publishing and was employee number one at the nonprofit open-access publisher Public Library of Science (PLOS). None have degrees in library science—“I always used libraries, but this is the only time I’ve ever worked in one,” Kennison says—but all possess some combination of subject matter expertise, research experience, and technical skill, attributes that characterize the hybrid professionals, or “hybrarians,” who comprise a growing percentage of those who now find work as research librarians.

supermassive black hole to a pair of chopsticks. Yet he sees the printer simply as a tool for engaging faculty and students of all stripes (scientists, journalists, art historians) in conversations about how technology can offer them new ways of doing their work. Could a mathematician, for example, render her equations as 3-D models using the licensed software packages available through the Center and print them for her students to see and touch? Could an archaeologist use computer-aided design software to print examples of ancient Greek pottery? Barbara Rockenbach, director of the Humanities and History Libraries, views the scanning and optical character recognition capabilities of the DHC in much the same way. A researcher might come in simply to scan a manuscript and convert it to digital form. But a staffer can use that as an opportunity to introduce more sophisticated applications, like pattern recognition software that can mine texts for interesting motifs—something that Gil recently helped a faculty member do with Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor’s autobiography. It bears noting that not everything worth mentioning about Columbia’s version of a 21st-century academic research library is digital in nature. Jim Neal, M.A. ’73, History, the outgoing Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian, notes that Columbia has undertaken unusually close partnerships with institutions such as Cornell and NVU to develop shared collections that will further expand the University’s already vast print holdings and make it easier for scholars to access information. RECAP (Research Collections and Preservation Consortium), the massive print repository that Columbia shares with Princeton University and the New York Public Library in Forestal, New Jersey, is now the largest in the world—the temperature-and-humidity controlled facility contains 11 million items and fills more than 250,000 requests each year from libraries around the world. (Columbia’s own library system, officially known as Columbia University Libraries/Information Systems, ranks among the five top academic libraries in North America; its 21 individual libraries hold more than 12 million volumes, 12 miles of manuscripts, and 800,000 rare books.) And Rockenbach emphasizes that the DHC is only able to work its technological magic because it sits on top of “an amazing print collection that continues to grow”—namely, the two million volumes housed in Butler’s stacks. “There are still moments when the print book matters,” she says. And moments, too, when nothing matters more than an experienced librarian with knowledge of your particular research area (medieval history, Chinese politics, global climate change) who must, as a consequence, now know something about metadata and database design, interface usability, and digital preservation. Toward that end, Neal, who earned his own degree in library science at a time when punch cards were considered cutting edge, has long advocated hiring personnel who have the skills and experience that a contemporary librarian needs, regardless of whether they hold an M.L.S. or equivalent professional credential. Hence staffers like Lancaster, who as a grad student built an app to help his lab mates search the digital versions of science journals. Or Gil, who holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Virginia and was among the first to participate in the latter’s Praxis Program, which gives graduate students hands-on training in the digital humanities. Or Kennison, who spent most of her career prior to joining CDRS in science publishing and was employee number one at the nonprofit open-access publisher Public Library of Science (PLOS). None have degrees in library science—“I always used libraries, but this is the only time I’ve ever worked in one,” Kennison says—but all possess some combination of subject matter expertise, research experience, and technical skill, attributes that characterize the hybrid professionals, or “hybrarians,” who comprise a growing percentage of those who now find work as research librarians.
To be fair, however, those same attributes can be found among those who hold traditional credentials as well. Mark Phillipson earned his Ph.D. in English from the University of California, Berkeley; worked for the search portal Excite during the dot-com boom; and picked up his Master of Library and Information Science while teaching full time at Bowdoin College, where he garnered national attention for his pioneering use of wikis, before joining CCNMTL as a senior developer and eventually leading the Teaching Center. (As a 19-year-old Columbia undergraduate on federal internship at the Digital Social Science Center (DSSC) working together on a project-based training program, the Developing Librarian Project. (The first cohort is currently building an online history of Morningside Heights, unveiled in January 2015.)

These new-model librarians see themselves—and wish to be seen—not as service providers who are confined to storing, finding, and retrieving things on demand, but as research partners who can help faculty and students navigate an increasingly complex information environment. That trend is reflected in many ways: in the outreach that Gil does to various humanities departments in order to get a sense of the kinds of research questions they’re asking already, and to offer suggestions on how technology might help them ask new ones; in the letters that Kennison writes in support of grant applicants who must demonstrate that they have the infrastructure and support necessary to make their digital research data accessible yet secure; and in the Digital Center internship program, which gives graduate students the opportunity to work with librarians and technologists on projects of their own choosing.

Those projects are themselves indicative of just how much times have changed. José Tomás Atria, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology whose dissertation research involves mining a massive collection of digitized criminal transcripts from the historic Old Bailey Court in England, is using his internship at the Digital Social Science Center (DSSC) to develop online interfaces that will make it easier to share his work with other researchers and the general public. And Buck Wanner, a Ph.D. student in Theatre, is using his year as a DHC fellow to build a database of the rehearsal and performance spaces used by theatrical choreographers in New York City from 1970 to the present, along with their private residences—information he plans to render visually with the help of the librarians at the DSSC, who have particular expertise with mapping software. It’s the kind of project, Wanner says, that could probably be done using analog tools and published as a print monograph rather than as an online resource. But it would also probably take five years to complete instead of one, and the end product—a single, specially bound copy stored under restricted access in a physical archive—probably wouldn’t be seen by more than a handful of people.

Not surprisingly, Rockenbach sees the digital capabilities and technological guidance offered by the Columbia libraries as tools for attracting and retaining faculty and graduate students. They certainly helped sway Emily Clark, a Ph.D. student in ethnomusicology, who decided to come to Columbia after earning a Master’s in Information Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. Ethnomusicologists have been quick to use technology to give communities access to the sound recordings that researchers make of their music; and before she ever arrived on campus, Clark had already corresponded with Aaron Fox, a professor of music who has been repatriating recordings from the University’s archives to an indigenous Alaskan group through a password-protected website. Fox, in turn, put Clark in touch with Rockenbach and Kennison, who pointed her toward other innovative uses of digital technology in her field. One day, they may even help her package and present her dissertation, which like much contemporary research might well include forms of data (video, audio, interactive multimedia) that are not easily captured in print—a challenge that was directly addressed by a recent event titled “What Is a Dissertation?” New Models, New Methods, New Media” that was jointly organized by the Studio@Butler and CUNY and live-streamed over the Web.

All of this speaks to the way in which the library has become a place where faculty and students can mingle and collaborate: a place where they can think, as Phillipson says, about new projects and new scholarship that can be built around library materials. Free from the disciplinary constraints of any one department or the agenda of any particular institute, the library today represents a rare neutral space for scholarly activity, one where researchers of all kinds can come together to engage with their subjects, with technology, and with one another in fresh and provocative ways.

As the custodians of that space, librarians are now, more than ever, stewards of the shared scholarly endeavor that lies at the heart of any great research institution. Part information management consultants, part research advisers, and part technology gurus, they are the bridge between the library’s past and its future, and perhaps the University’s as well.
The Age of Fear
Ira Katznelson Re-examines the Foundations of the New Deal

By Raphael Pope-Sussman

Ira Katznelson does not do one thing at a time. As the Ruggles Professor of Political Science and History, a position he has held since 1994, Katznelson maintains appointments in both political science and history, teaching undergraduate and graduate courses and advising doctoral candidates. For the past two years, Katznelson has also served as the president of the Social Science Research Council, an independent multidisciplinary organization that fosters social science scholarship both nationally and internationally. At the same time, he has maintained a robust research and publication slate, including his landmark 2013 book *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time*.

A 700-page tour de force that was awarded the 2014 Bancroft Prize, *Fear Itself* peels back the veneer of nostalgia and treats the New Deal from a novel, expansive perspective, considering its domestic reforms in light of global diplomacy and examines the extent to which it relied upon a series of Faustian bargains, including an alliance of necessity with Stalin’s Soviet Union during the Second World War and a more durable dependence on the Jim Crow South in Congress, whose legislative skill, leadership, and votes shaped the full range of New Deal programs, often in ways that reinforced racial segregation. Eric Foner, the DeWitt Clinton Professor of History, praises the scope and depth of *Fear Itself*, noting that it is both a “deeply researched and strongly interpretive” work that serves to “complicate our picture of the New Deal by detailing the compromises FDR had to make … to get legislation passed.”

Although Katznelson clearly admires many of the goals and achievements of the New Deal, writing that it “proved to be a rejuvenating triumph,” which “organized political life at home … [and created] an assertive state that crusaded almost without limit for American power and values,” *Fear Itself* is no hagiography. Instead, Katznelson provides a clear-eyed, textured analysis of the political program that...
crested the modern American welfare state as we know it, that brought electricity and jobs to the most desperately poor swathes of the rural South, that defeated fascism, that gave hope to the hopeless, yet excluded Southern blacks from much of the region’s economic gains, segregated the U.S. armed forces, and ensured that reforms would effectively not extend to black Americans in the South or threaten the reign of Jim Crow.

Fear Itself, which took Katznelson some three years to write (he notes that he has “been reflecting on the New Deal for some time”), provided an opportunity to delve into the nature of the phenomenon during a signal moment in American democracy but does not mark the end of his engagement with the period or its political tactics. “One is never done with the New Deal,” Katznelson said. “The New Deal is one of these protean moments.”

His forthcoming book, Southern Nation, which he is writing with John Lapinski (Ph.D. ’03, Political Science) of the University of Pennsylvania and David Bateman of Cornell University, will explore the notion that the American South functioned for almost a century as a quasi-autonomous state. “Between 1877 and 1965, the South was left to its own devices to define racial order,” Katznelson said. “We are asking for this period: After the South had come back into the Union and before the civil rights revolution … when and with respect to which issues did Southerners of congress have preferences sufficiently distinctive that they were still acting as if they were a separate nation?” These distinctive preferences, expressed in a solid voting bloc in Congress, have helped to shape the political direction of the United States, which adds another inflection to the book’s title—Southern Nation,” Katznelson emphasizes.

Both Fear Itself and Southern Nation pick up a common thread in Katznelson’s scholarship, the relationship between “liberal democracy and liberty on the one hand and systems of exclusion on the other,” he notes. He is further exploring these themes in a third book, currently in the early stages of research, about the treatment of Jewish minorities in the United States and England. The book, he says, will examine models of liberty, as well as minority rights and representation in two countries with long histories of liberalism and religious tolerance. Jews as a minority group are a particularly fertile area of study, he explains, because they are “the longest-running minority in the Western world.” In its current formulation, the book will begin with a look at 18th-century England and America, then jump back to 13th-century England, and then pick back up with 18th-century going forward. It’s a lot of ground to cover, both chronologically and conceptually, and will require the sort of interdisciplinary inquiry that characterizes his work.

Fear Itself was informed by Katznelson’s discussions of the project with colleagues in the Departments of Political Science and History, which he notes is marked by an “uncommon intellectual curiosity and unusual degree of collaboration,” and in the workshop on American politics and society that he has led for nearly two decades with Alan Brinkley, Provost Emeritus and Allan Nevins Professor of American History. The statistical analysis and research into legislative history that underpin the book were conducted through the American Institutions Project of Columbia’s Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy.

While Katznelson has long been working in an interdisciplinary vein in his own scholarship, he began serving as president of the Social Sciences Research Council (SSRC) in 2012, which has given him a new platform to advance the broader cause of cutting-edge research in the social sciences. Since its founding in 1923, Katznelson says, the Brooklyn-based SSRC has been dedicated to a four-point mission: to deepen scholarship across disciplinary lines; galvanize social scientists to work on big public issues; help build capacity, especially of young scholars through fellowships, internships, and communicate to the public the nature and purpose of the social sciences. Because it is an independent organization, rather than a unit of a larger institution, the SSRC can move nimbly, constantly adapting to developments in the social sciences and in the world at large by shifting the direction of its programs or adding new voices or minds to its intellectual community. And it is uniquely positioned to draw upon a global network of scholars—to whom it can offer a flexible space within which to work and collaborate—transcending “not only the boundaries of any university or sets of universities … but different kinds of institutions … and countries.” The global outlook of the SSRC runs all the way back to its inception, Katznelson says, and indeed, a majority of the organization’s work today has an international focus.

Katznelson, then, is in an incredible place for a social scientist: he can draw upon the resources of both Columbia and the SSRC. At Columbia, he has access to world-class departments and a great library in the heart of New York City. He also has the chance to work with a student body that he describes as “diverse in every possible dimension, from which one can learn an enormous amount.”

His students, for their part, express tremendous admiration for Katznelson, as both a scholar and a teacher. Suzanne Kahn, a doctoral student in history for whom Katznelson has served as thesis adviser, speaks glowingly of his teaching and mentorship. Kahn says her work with Katznelson has been a highlight of her time at Columbia. “He is the most generous and creative commenter on other people’s work,” she notes. “His comments engage with your work on its own terms while pushing you in new, and always productive, directions.”

What Katznelson also offers his students, of course, and what continues to distinguish him as a teacher and a scholar, is his deep grounding in both political science and history. “He is one of a kind. His strength is that he is so knowledgeable about history and all political science,” says Lapinski, his collaborator on Southern Nation. “He is able to work across disciplines, and has such a nimble mind. This type of scholar has always been rare, but is near extinction in political science.”

The good news, though, is that Katznelson has mentored so many in the next generation of political scientists, people like Kahn and Lapinski (another advisee). They carry with them that crucial emphasis on interdisciplinary work. The field, and Columbia, are the better for it.
Craig Steven Wilder did not set out to write a bombshell. His latest book began with the attempt to answer a relatively discrete question: how were black abolitionists able to enter the professions in the mid-19th century, when they had largely been excluded from higher education?

The scope of the project soon expanded, however, as his initial inquiry morphed into something larger and broader. “There wasn’t a strict racial barrier to college access,” says Wilder, M.A. ’89, M.Phil. ’93, Ph.D. ’94, History, and currently head of the history faculty at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. “Native Americans had been students at colleges for 175 years. Colleges played a role in deciding who was educable and who wasn’t, and in maintaining the justifications and arguments for slavery and the dispossession of native peoples.”
The final result, Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities, is a far-reaching account, spanning centuries, of the various ways in which American colleges and universities, including Columbia, relied upon and benefited from the institution of slavery. Slave merchants provided capital to fledgling colleges, while colleges adopted curricular changes to make their graduates more suitable for employment in professions related to the slave trade, and helped to enshrine discrimination by conferring an academic patina on racist ideology.

The book’s publication in fall 2013 addressed a significant lacuna in the historiography of American colleges and universities. While the issue of access to higher education is amply represented, the depiction of slavery’s ties to elite educational institutions in the Northeast in Ebony and Ivy was often treated as a revelation; a New York Times article about the book featured the headline “Dirty Antebellum Secrets in Ivory Towers.”

“Most people recognize that there was this troubled relationship between race and higher education that goes back before the Civil War, but this is the first book I know of that explores it,” according to Kenneth T. Jackson, Jacques Barzun Professor in History and the Social Sciences and Wilder’s dissertation adviser. Although some scholars have explored the relationship between slavery and higher education, their efforts—such as, most notably, the Brown University inquiry into the school’s connections to the slave trade, spearheaded by then-President Ruth Simmons—have often been institution specific, without the comprehensive overview that Wilder provides in Ebony and Ivy. In return, the lectures that Wilder has given to accompany the publication of the book have provided a forum to highlight the various ways in which American colleges and universities, including Columbia, relied upon and benefited from the institution of slavery. Slave merchants provided capital to fledgling colleges, while colleges adopted curricular changes to make their graduates more suitable for employment in professions related to the slave trade, and helped to enshrine discrimination by conferring an academic patina on racist ideology.

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A similar sense of moral responsibility and commitment to intellectual honesty infuses Wilder’s academic life as a teacher and mentor, due in no small part to his own educational trajectory. After growing up in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, Wilder attended Fordham University and then worked as a community organizer in the Bronx before attending the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

“I ended up working a lot with first-generation college students, and one of the things I’ve realized is that in the past I’ve flattened out my story a bit and taken out the rough parts so that it seems more inevitable than it actually was,” Wilder says. “Going from Bed Stuy to Fordham was a big jump. My high school was a great school in a lot of ways, and a real learning experience for me, but the curriculum didn’t prepare us for college. I had been a good high school student but had to play catch-up in my classes.”
The transition to Columbia was not that difficult intellectually, but emotionally the stakes were higher. When you go to college, you commit to a school. When you go to grad school, you commit to a profession, and emotionally that was much harder. These questions about if I could succeed as a historian were more immediate than real, but one of the things I’ve learned is that we—faculty, administrators, staff—have to be a lot more honest about how difficult those transitions can be. It gives our students freedom to be vulnerable about where they are intellectually, personally, where their families are, and what they need from us to help them succeed.”

In fact, it was the year away from academia he spent as a community organizer that helped to solidify his decision to pursue a career as a historian.

“The central frustration of community organizing is [that] the information that communities need in order to organize effectively is often housed at colleges and universities, and there’s a barrier to accessing that information from the outside,” Wilder notes. “One of the things that made me finally commit to grad school was the goal of being an academic who talked to real people, which gives a purpose to what we do beyond ourselves and our career.

‘And one of the great things about being a graduate student at Columbia was the feeling of entering a community of scholars. There was a sense that you were part of a much broader intellectual network that seemed to extend forever. I had a kind of familiarity with people I had never met, such as one of my early role models, Ira Katznelson. I didn’t actually meet him until my graduation, when he gave the Ph.D. address, but I had followed his work closely for years and envied his ability to apply his research to profound and pressing social questions.’

Wilder’s career after Columbia exemplifies his dedication to expanding access to knowledge and applying academic research to social questions, perhaps most notably via his work teaching at Eastern NY Correctional Facility in upstate New York through the Bard Prison Initiative, which allows incarcerated men and women to earn a bachelor’s degree under the auspices of Bard College. Kenneth Jackson notes, “There is not a lot of mileage in the academic world in speaking to prisoners, and Craig has given more than a little amount of time to that—when he’s committed to something, he’s committed.”

“One of the things that really attracted me is that the men and women are getting the same curriculum that they would get at Bard, and the same degree.”

Wilder says, “I teach the same exact course I teach at MIT. Men and women who are released before completing their studies can go to Bard and finish, and school officials also come and do the Bard graduation in the prison. The thoroughness of that commitment, the integrity of that kind of college program, just impressed me from the very beginning. That’s the kind of thing that academics need to support—especially once we’re tenured.”

Wilder has also participated in a number of projects that engage an audience outside academia. He has served as an adviser for a number of museum exhibits, including the New-York Historical Society’s Slavery in New York. He has also consulted for, and appeared in, documentary films, such as the PBS series New York: A Documentary Film, directed by Ric Burns ’78CC, M.Phil. ’83, English and Comparative Literature, and The Central Park Five, by Ken Burns, Sarah Burns, and David McMahon, Comparative Literature, and appeared in, documentary films, such as the PBS series New York: A Documentary Film, directed by Ric Burns ’78CC, M.Phil. ’83, English and Comparative Literature, and The Central Park Five, by Ken Burns, Sarah Burns, and David McMahon. The latter film, which describes the arrest and wrongful conviction of the “Central Park Five” in the late 1980s and early 1990s, posed a particular challenge.

“Historians joke about the security of writing about people who are long gone,” Wilder says. “The risk of working on historical periods in which you’ve been alive is that participation can distort your memory. But, in the context of the documentary and Sarah’s book [also titled The Central Park Five], one of the things they needed was for us to remember that time period—how divided the city was, how tense it was, and how separate and unique our experiences seemed even as they were intimately connected and interdependent. The chorus of memories is part of why the film has so much emotional power. It was a difficult process of remembering a period that was also difficult in my life, but these are the kinds of experiences that made me want to become an academic.”

After spending a decade on Ebony and Ivy, Wilder is still exploring subjects for his next immersive project. In the meantime, he is returning to the initial inspiration for the book—the African American abolitionists of the 1830s and 1840s—and remains open to influence. He notes that the examination in Ebony and Ivy of the early colleges designed to educate indigenous peoples stems from his interactions with Dartmouth’s Native American Studies program as a member of the faculty, while the book’s discussion of the need for engineers to work in cotton manufacturing and sugar refineries owes a debt to his time at MIT.

“If you had asked me in 2001, I never would have told you that my next book would be on the history of higher education,” Wilder adds. “The fun of being a historian is that you get to prove yourself wrong over time and work on things you thought you had no real attraction to. When we get absolutely tired of what we’re working on, you can wake up the next day and do something else. Wherever you teach, you have the opportunity to turn yourself into a student. At Dartmouth, I became a student of Native American Studies; at MIT, I became a student of the history of engineering, manufacturing, and industry. That’s the luxury of being an academic: you can transform yourself by walking down the hall.”
When Catherine Pomposi found out this April that she’d been awarded a fellowship to conduct research in Senegal through the United States Agency for International Development, she immediately logged on to her computer and started cataloguing places to go and things to see. “I was very thrilled and excited,” she says. “And probably did a little ‘woohoo!’ while at my computer.”

A doctoral student in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Pomposi studies the West African monsoon, a wind system that blows southwesterly across sub-Saharan Africa between June and September, bringing the region the majority of its annual rainfall. Through the research she conducts through her academic department at GSAS and her research affiliations at the International Research Institute for Climate Society (IRI) and the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, Pomposi seeks to better understand the dynamics and variability of the monsoon and to synthesize her research to provide useful, actionable information to farmers in the region, whose livelihoods depend on the rains of the monsoon.

Pomposi’s interest in atmospheric and climate science arose from a class on global physical climatology, which she took as an undergraduate at the University of Connecticut. “I just found the intricacies of the climate system really compelling,” she says, “as well as the applications the climate system can have on various societies through the world.”

She then began to focus on the phenomenon of monsoon systems, doing preliminary work on a study examining the variability of the Indian monsoon. “The monsoons of the world seemed really fascinating to me,” she says. “The idea that regions of the world really get the majority of their rainfall only during a single season was of course very different from the northeast United States, where I grew up.”

In 2011, Pomposi was awarded a Graduate Research Fellowship through the National Science Foundation before enrolling at GSAS, where she has had the opportunity to work closely with climate researchers such as her adviser Alessandra Giannini, who studies tropical climate dynamics. And, through a new initiative open exclusively to NSF Graduate Research...
researching West African monsoon dynamics for Information for Better Food Security,” with the aim of examining the seasonal forecast of the monsoon. Both an scientist in Senegal, Ousmane Ndiaye, M.Phil.’07, Ph.D. ’10, Earth and Environmental Sciences. Both an alumnus of the department and a research affiliate of the IR, Ndiaye, who works out of Dakar for Senegal’s national meteorological agency, had put together a project for the USAID Research and Innovation Fellowship Catalog, “Producing and Delivering Climate Information for Better Food Security,” with the aim of examining the seasonal forecast of the monsoon and using the findings to help farmers with their crop management.

“I saw Ousmane’s project, and since I had been researching West African monsoon dynamics for a number of months by that point, it seemed like a really great opportunity to actually travel to the region and see how seasonal forecasting is done in real time, and in the actual region where the information is being used,” Pomposi explains.

She immediately brought the project to her advisers, Giannini and Yochanan Kushnir, who said it aligned perfectly with her current research and encouraged her to apply. Because the GROW-USAID fellowship requires applicants to arrange a potential match as part of their application, Pomposi had to connect with Ndiaye to discuss the project and whether it would be a good fit. “It was originally described by one of the USAID staff members as being sort of like online dating,” Pomposi says of the process. “In our case, Ousmane and I spoke a few times over Skype about my background and interests in the project, as well as his work in Senegal and on seasonal forecasting and food security.” They ultimately agreed that Pomposi’s research was a good fit, and Ndiaye provided her a formal letter of invitation for the project.

With the invitation in hand, Pomposi submitted her formal application to the NSF. Her proposal was approved by the NSF, and then by USAID; that was when Pomposi found out she was headed to Senegal.

Leading up to her planned departure for Senegal in June, the beginning of the monsoon season, Pomposi looked at seasonal monsoon variability—the extent to which precipitation levels and patterns vary within a given season—as well as variability across decades. Senegal resides within a region of Africa known as the Sahel, a band of semiarid grassland just below the Sahara desert that runs across the continent. The summer monsoon brings about three quarters of the Sahel’s annual precipitation. In wet years, total precipitation can be as much as 700 millimeters (28 inches); in dry years, it can be as little as 300 millimeters (12 inches). The goal of examining variability, Pomposi explains, is to try to understand why some monsoon years are particularly dry while others are particularly wet, and to identify indicators that can help predict the intensity of a given monsoon. When Pomposi arrived in Senegal, she joined Ndiaye and his research colleagues as they met with farmers in the Fatick and Kaffrine regions of the country to discuss the monsoon. Through these meetings, or workshops, Pomposi explains, the scientists collect information from the farmers about traditional methods for developing a monsoon forecast. The farmers use indicators like the phases of the moon and changes in local flora and fauna to predict the starting date and intensity of the coming monsoon.

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of the monsoon. The season ultimately turned out to be closer to the scientific forecast—it was a relatively dry year—though the month of August was slightly wetter than average in some parts of the country. But the purpose of the workshops, Pomposi emphasizes, is not to measure the predictions against each other. Rather, it is to add to the toolbox from which the farmers can draw, while helping the scientists better understand the nature of the monsoon. The workshops, then, also serve to build a lasting partnership between researchers and farmers. Collecting rainfall data in situ, for example, can be very difficult for the scientists, so they distribute rain gauges to the farmers. Pomposi explains that this collaboration allows the farmers “to feel more involved in the process and have some kind of ownership over the data,” which they report back to the scientists for analysis.

Ndiaye stressed the importance of Pomposi’s work with the farmers, explaining, “For a useful climate product, it is always important to maintain a close eye on demand from users.” He also said that Pomposi’s work helped build a relationship between the meteorological agency and Columbia, which also helped further the cause of research on the monsoon.

Pomposi is hoping she can continue that relationship by returning to Senegal this coming summer. Currently, Ndiaye is collecting information about crop growth in the region where the seasonal forecast was used, which they will be able to compare to growth in the areas where it wasn’t. Pomposi says she’s looking forward to spending more time with Ndiaye and studying some of the more complex scientific and technical elements of seasonal forecasting, a major area of his expertise. If all goes according to plan, she will again be able to visit at the beginning of the monsoon season, to write up the findings of this year’s research, and to meet with the same farmers to discuss the next year’s forecast.

It will be a fitting conclusion to the work she has conducted under the GROW with USAID Fellowship, both the capstone of her research into the monsoon system and the beginning of a stronger working relationship between scientists and farmers—an imbrication of science, international collaboration, and sustainable development practices that reflects the highest ideals of the fellowship’s creators.
Disruption, according to Jim Neal, is not a bad thing.

Neal is talking about the kind of disruption that new media and networked resources have wrought on research libraries and the people who run them. And he has reason to be sanguine: as Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian since 2001, Neal, who retired at the end of 2014, has positioned Columbia’s library system at the forefront of the digital revolution (digitizing large swaths of its holdings, creating new units like the various Digital Centers to engage faculty and students with cutting-edge technology) while continuing to build on its traditional strengths of print academic monographs and global publications (pooling its print collections with those of its peer institutions, expanding its unique archives and special collections).

Yet Neal could just as well be articulating his personal credo. For while some fear change, Neal has spent most of his career embracing it.

Neal initially planned to pursue a career in the professoriate and got as far as completing his course work in the Russian history doctoral program at Columbia. But the prospect of doing archival research in the Soviet Union with one child at home and no financial support led him to accept a stampede. As director of University Libraries at Hopkins, Neal not only developed new digital collections; he also became involved in a variety of innovative electronic publishing and academic computing initiatives. All of that made him the ideal person to take over, in 2001, from Elaine Sloan, who in the course of her own 13-year tenure as Columbia’s top librarian attended to brick-and-mortar projects like renovating Butler Library while simultaneously initiating the University’s first digital library projects. Thanks to Neal’s subsequent efforts, Columbia now represents a case study in how a large academic research library system can adapt to—and benefit from—seismic technological upheaval.

The digital revolution also prompted Neal’s first forays into copyright law. While Neal jokingly derides forays into copyright law. While Neal jokingly derides the digital revolution also prompted Neal’s first forays into copyright law. While Neal jokingly derides the digital revolution as a MEGO topic (for “My Eyes Glaze Over”), it is of vital interest to libraries, which have a responsibility to provide barrier-free and open access to information. That sometimes places them in conflict with publishers, who have a financial interest in restricting it in order to make a profit. (Neal notes with some irony that universities like Columbia must pay large sums of money to buy access to research that their own scholars have published in prestigious journals.) But the advent of networked data and online content has complicated matters considerably, prompting high-profile legal battles over the rights granted to copyright holders, and the exemptions granted to libraries under the U.S. Copyright Act, and spurring the open access movement, which seeks to provide unrestricted access to scholarly research through online repositories like Columbia’s own Academic Commons.

As a result, Neal has spent a lot of time testifying before Congress and advising the U.S. Copyright Office and the Library of Congress on how copyright legislation should or should not be amended so that libraries can do what they need to in a wired world (digitizing print materials, duplicating digital content for preservation purposes) without running afoul of the law. He also helped found the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), an international alliance of academic and research libraries that promotes open access, and established a Copyright Advisory Office here at Columbia to help scholars understand how the intricacies of copyright law affect their ability to use, share, and disseminate their own work.

For Neal, all of those efforts constitute part of a much larger fight over who ought to control information and who should have access to it: producers or consumers, private corporations or public-facing institutions. “We’re not doing this for libraries,” Neal says of the work he and his fellow librarians do to promote copyright reform and open access. “We’re doing it for the people who rely on us: the students and faculty at Columbia, the people in our communities.”

Soon, Neal will have slightly more time to spend on his own personal interests—namely, producing the kind of scholarly papers that his inner academic heart yearns to write again. One article on his to-do list will consider transfers of leadership within North American research libraries since 1947, another will address Thomas Edison’s seminal role in establishing the “special library,” which marshals information for internal use by businesses and corporations; and a third will explore the historical ties between East Asian and American libraries.

“I feel a writing frenzy coming,” Neal says. Sometimes, change is good.
What were your interests in college and graduate school?
I received a B.A. in English at Northwestern University. I loved literature and wanted more after college, so I entered Columbia’s English Ph.D. Program, where I had a dual focus on modern English literature and Renaissance and Restoration literature. I focused on Henry James, as well as Shakespeare and Milton, with an interest in issues concerning time, memory, and justice. I received my M.A. at Columbia and was a President’s Fellow in Columbia’s Ph.D. program for two more years, before going to the University of Chicago Law School and receiving my J.D.

What was your experience at Columbia like?
I loved my time at Columbia. I had the opportunity to study with amazing scholars, whose work I admired before arriving at Columbia. It was an exciting place—the atmosphere was collegial among students, and my professors were engaging, inspiring, and supportive. I found a refreshing absence of bureaucracy—I was able to ask one of my professors in my second year if I could teach a voluntary discussion section in his undergraduate Shakespeare course, and the next semester, I was teaching. In my third year, while teaching a freshman writing course, I received wonderful support with regard to teaching skills. I felt nurtured both in my scholarship and teaching.

What was your career path after law school?
I joined a global law firm in Chicago, where I became a partner and worked in the trial department, representing businesses in litigation involving commercial disputes, securities, antitrust, and class actions. Now I am a mediator at the federal appeals court in Chicago.

What do you do as a mediator?
I mediate civil cases in federal court in a number of substantive legal areas, including corporate and securities, environmental, bankruptcy, employment discrimination, civil rights, intellectual property, and other types of cases. In my work, I need to listen actively to parties and also be pragmatic and creative in helping them negotiate and resolve their legal disputes outside court.

Has your Columbia education come into play in your profession?
It comes into play daily. At Columbia, I honed my skills as a careful reader of literary texts—skills I now apply to legal texts. I gained teaching experience at Columbia, which served me well in providing compelling narratives to judges and juries as a trial lawyer. Those teaching skills also help in conducting a mediation, and speaking about the law and other issues with lawyers and parties. I’m a lifelong student of the human condition; at Columbia, I applied my readings in psychology to literary texts; those principles are also of great importance to me now in understanding how individuals react to conflict in the legal context. My Columbia education helped me develop the analytical and communication skills, and also the emotional sensitivity, that are all a huge part of my current work.

How have you stayed connected to Columbia since your graduation?
Soon after I started my law career, I heard that Jean Howard, professor of English at Columbia, was giving a talk in Chicago. I attended her talk and loved it; that inspired me to attend more alumni events, both in Chicago and New York. I also deeply appreciated the support I received while at Columbia and wanted to give back. Eventually, I was nominated to the Board of the GSAS Alumni Association.

What inspired you to take on the role of president of the GSAS Alumni Association Board?
I stepped up my involvement both because it feels wonderful to be doing something of substance to improve the experience of GSAS students, and because I was inspired by Dean Alonso’s leadership and the concrete actions he has taken to support GSAS students.

What are some initiatives you are planning to work on as president?
I am interested in encouraging newer GSAS alumni to become involved in all aspects of alumni life and leadership and in providing support to GSAS students in their professional pursuits, both inside and outside academia. I would also like to focus on diversity and multiculturalism at the board level.

What is the one thing you would like to tell alumni about GSAS?
Just remember that whatever professional direction you take after Columbia—whether inside or outside academia—the passion and skills of being a scholar, and the analytically rigorous study in which all GSAS students engage, will always be a part of who you are.
Karen Green

M.A. ’94, M.Phil. ’97, History

Interview by Alexander Gelfand

Karen Green is Librarian for Ancient & Medieval History and Graphic Novels Librarian at Butler Library. A lifelong comics fan, Green first began collecting comic books and graphic novels for Columbia in 2005 and has been instrumental in helping the Rare Book & Manuscript Library, where she is adjunct curator for comics, acquire the archives of several important figures and institutions, including Mad magazine cartoonist Al Jaffee, Wendy and Richard Pini, creators of the long-running fantasy comic Elfquest; the influential underground comics publisher Kitchen Sink Press; and writer Chris Claremont, whose “Days of Future Past” story arc for Marvel Comics’ Uncanny X-Men was made into a major motion picture. Recently, Green selected more than 150 items for an exhibition, Comics at Columbia: Past, Present, and Future, that ran through January 23 in the Kempner Gallery in Butler Library’s Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Bartending looms large on your resume. How did you go from being a professional bartender to being a professional librarian?

I say that bartending was my primary preparation for librarianship, because it instilled in me a strong sense of customer service, taught me how to deal with people of all kinds, and forced me to concentrate on both the macro and micro view. I wanted to study biblical archaeology, so I went to Rutgers for a semester but dropped out and moved to Manhattan in 1978 to tend bar. In the mid-’80s, I went back to school at NYU for a certificate in computer programming, got a job at IBM, transferred to an associate’s degree in business—and kept bartending the whole time at the Grand Hyatt New York. I studied massage therapy at the Swedish Institute, went back to NYU in 1990 at the age of 31 to pursue a premedical curriculum in preparation for medical school—but within three or four weeks discovered that I wanted to study medieval history instead. I got a full fellowship to Columbia for the Ph.D. program in 1993, which was when I quit tending bar.

You did a lot of interesting stuff as a doctoral candidate, including working as a research assistant to Simon Schama, University Professor of Art History and Archaeology, for the BBC television series A History of Britain. Why did you leave the medieval history program to become a librarian?

In the end, I realized that I was more of a generalist than a specialist, and I liked always learning about new things. I also realized that I didn’t want to live like a graduate student when I was 50. A supervisory-level job opened up in the Butler Reserves Department, and I had an epiphany: Everything I liked about academia was library related. I got a fellowship to library school at Rutgers, and after I graduated in 2002, I became Librarian for Ancient & Medieval History.

How do comics and graphic novels fit into all of this?

I had always been a fan of comics. I started out with newspaper comics, discovered Doonesbury right around the Watergate era and [illustrator and writer] Edward Gorey and [underground cartoonist] Robert Crumb in high school, and had subscriptions to National Lampoon and [the science-fiction and fantasy magazine] Heavy Metal.

But during those 12 years from 1990 to 2002, when I was at NYU, Columbia, and Rutgers, I really didn’t do a lot of leisure reading. So when I got this job, I thought, well, what’s happening with comics these days? After reacquainting myself with the field, in 2005 I proposed that we begin buying systematically for the collection, and the rest is history.

Who has access to the collection? Can anyone just walk in and peruse these materials?

The general collection is open to anyone in the Columbia community. The archives in the Rare Book & Manuscript Library, which focus on comics creators from the New York City area and on the history of comics publishing, are open to the world: anyone can create a research account and ask for anything that they want. When we got the Chris Claremont papers in 2011, that was the most requested collection in the entire Rare Book & Manuscript Library; and it wasn’t all scholars, it was people who just wanted to come in to see the script for “Days of Future Past” or the Claremont notebooks.

What did the exhibition cover?

The first case, “On the Fringes,” featured illustrated books that have been grandfathered into the medium of comics, like Edward Gorey’s works, or early prototypes like Wilhelm Busch’s Max und Moritz, which was the inspiration for The Katzenjammer Kids. The next one, “Beyond Comics,” contained things that have been done by cartoonists that aren’t comics book illustrations, magazine covers, fine art.

Then came “History of Comics and in Comics,” which had things like political cartoons and documents from the Siegel and Shuster lawsuit. [Superman creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster and their heirs spent years in court trying to collect more of the profits generated by the character.] “Columbia” featured comics specifically associated with the University, like a 1776 comic strip by undergraduates at King’s College that made fun of a professor whom they hated. “Writing” is about things that show the writing process, like a letter that Denis Kitchen, the founder of Kitchen Sink Press, wrote to Stan Lee asking for permission to do an unauthorized underground parody of Spider-Man—and Stan Lee’s response: “The Art” contained things that show the art process, like the various steps in Al Jaffee’s process for creating a Mad magazine fold-in. “Fan Culture” detailed fan mail and fanzines and fan art.

And there’s a case I just call “Coda,” which contained the original art from a six-page story by Wendy Pini that is a meditation on the relationship between creators, characters, and fans.

Any favorites?

I can’t answer that! You can’t ask someone who her favorite child is.

In the end, I realized that I was more of a generalist than a specialist, and I liked always learning about new things. I also realized that I didn’t want to live like a graduate student when I was 50. A supervisory-level job opened up in the Butler Reserves Department, and I had an epiphany: Everything I liked about academia was library related. I got a fellowship to library school at Rutgers, and after I graduated in 2002, I became Librarian for Ancient & Medieval History.

How do comics and graphic novels fit into all of this?

I had always been a fan of comics. I started out with newspaper comics, discovered Doonesbury right around the Watergate era and [illustrator and writer] Edward Gorey and [underground cartoonist] Robert Crumb in high school, and had subscriptions to National Lampoon and [the science-fiction and fantasy magazine] Heavy Metal.

But during those 12 years from 1990 to 2002, when I was at NYU, Columbia, and Rutgers, I really didn’t do a lot of leisure reading. So when I got this job, I thought, well, what’s happening with comics these days? After reacquainting myself with the field, in 2005 I proposed that we begin buying systematically for the collection, and the rest is history.

Who has access to the collection? Can anyone just walk in and peruse these materials?

The general collection is open to anyone in the Columbia community. The archives in the Rare Book & Manuscript Library, which focus on comics creators from the New York City area and on the history of comics publishing, are open to the world: anyone can create a research account and ask for anything that they want. When we got the Chris Claremont papers in 2011, that was the most requested collection in the entire Rare Book & Manuscript Library; and it wasn’t all scholars, it was people who just wanted to come in to see the script for “Days of Future Past” or the Claremont notebooks.

What did the exhibition cover?

The first case, “On the Fringes,” featured illustrated books that have been grandfathered into the medium of comics, like Edward Gorey’s works, or early prototypes like Wilhelm Busch’s Max und Moritz, which was the inspiration for The Katzenjammer Kids. The next one, “Beyond Comics,” contained things that have been done by cartoonists that aren’t comics book illustrations, magazine covers, fine art.

Then came “History of Comics and in Comics,” which had things like political cartoons and documents from the Siegel and Shuster lawsuit. [Superman creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster and their heirs spent years in court trying to collect more of the profits generated by the character.] “Columbia” featured comics specifically associated with the University, like a 1776 comic strip by undergraduates at King’s College that made fun of a professor whom they hated. “Writing” is about things that show the writing process, like a letter that Denis Kitchen, the founder of Kitchen Sink Press, wrote to Stan Lee asking for permission to do an unauthorized underground parody of Spider-Man—and Stan Lee’s response: “The Art” contained things that show the art process, like the various steps in Al Jaffee’s process for creating a Mad magazine fold-in. “Fan Culture” detailed fan mail and fanzines and fan art.

And there’s a case I just call “Coda,” which contained the original art from a six-page story by Wendy Pini that is a meditation on the relationship between creators, characters, and fans.

Any favorites?

I can’t answer that! You can’t ask someone who her favorite child is.
On the Shelf

Faculty Publications

Mediatrix: Women, Politics & Literary Production in Early Modern England
Julie Crawford, English and Comparative Literature
Julie Crawford examines the role women played as literary patrons, dedicatees, readers, and writers in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and how these roles put women at the center of political activism.

Ancestral Encounters in Highland Madagascar: Material Signs and Traces of the Dead
Zoe Crossland, Anthropology
Zoe Crossland considers the archaeology, landscape, oral history, and textual sources of 19th-century Madagascar to examine the role of the dead in writing and creating history.

The New Moon: Water, Exploration, and Future Habitation
Arlin Crotts, Astronomy
Arlin Crotts examines the complex history of lunar exploration and answers questions about how the moon could be made habitable for humans.

The Big Ratchet: How Humanity Thrives in the Face of Natural Crisis
Ruth DeFries, Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology
Pointing to a complex cycle of ecological crisis and human growth, Ruth DeFries examines the sustainability of the human population alongside environmentally destructive habits.

The Invention of Private Life
Sudipta Kaviraj, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies
Sudipta Kaviraj locates serious reflections on modernity’s complexities in the vibrant currents of modern Indian literature, particularly in fiction, poetry, and autobiography.

Life after Faith: The Case for Secular Humanism
Philip Kitcher, Philosophy
Philip Kitcher provides a persuasive case for a life full of meaning without traditional religious values.

The Marshmallow Test: Mastering Self-Control
Walter Mischel, Psychology
Decades after his famed experiments testing self-control in preschoolers, Walter Mischel tells the story of that research for a general audience.

The Big Ratchet: How Humanity Thrives in the Face of Natural Crisis
Ruth DeFries, Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology
Pointing to a complex cycle of ecological crisis and human growth, Ruth DeFries examines the sustainability of the human population alongside environmentally destructive habits.

Speculation, Trading, and Bubbles
José A. Scheinkman, Economics
In a discussion with leading economists, José A. Scheinkman explores the mystery of financial bubbles and offers a model to explain potential underlying causes.

Reading The Tale of Genji: Sources from the First Millennium
Haruo Shirane, East Asian Languages and Cultures
Edited by Thomas Harper and Haruo Shirane, this sourcebook presents a range of landmark texts relating to The Tale of Genji, almost all of which are translated into English for the first time.

Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States
Audra Simpson, Anthropology
Audra Simpson combines political theory with ethnographic research among the Mohawks of Kahnawá:ke in southwestern Quebec to examine their struggle to maintain political sovereignty through centuries of colonialism.
On the Shelf

Speed Limits: Where Time Went and Why We Have So Little Left
Mark C. Taylor, Religion
Mark C. Taylor examines a modern-day paradox—how the forces and technologies meant to free us by saving time and labor now trap us in a race we can never win—and encourages us to work toward a more deliberative life.

Nora Webster
Colm Tóibín, English and Comparative Literature
Colm Tóibín’s latest novel depicts a young, strong-willed mother of four as she navigates life in a small Irish town after the death of her beloved husband.

The Practices of the Enlightenment: Aesthetics, Authorship, and the Public
Dorothea E. von Mücke, Germanic Languages
Dorothea E. von Mücke maps the exchange between the religious and aesthetic writings of the Enlightenment period and recenters concerns of authorship and audience.

Alumni Publications

The Tale of Genji: Translation, Canonization, and World Literature
Michael Emmerich, Ph.D. ’07, East Asian Languages and Cultures
Michael Emmerich explores iterations of The Tale of Genji from the 1830s to the 1950s, demonstrating how translations and the discourse they inspired turned it into a widely read classic.

Metaphor and Shakespearean Drama: Unchaste Signification
Maria Franziska Fahey, M.A. ’95, English and Comparative Literature
Using a selection of Shakespearean plays, Maria Fahey examines the various aspects of metaphorical utterances, particularly their ability to generate unruly meanings that have the power to transform a community.

The Cosmic Cocktail: Three Parts Dark Matter
Katherine Freese, M.A. ’81, Physics
One of the leading scientists in the study of dark matter, Katherine Freese tells the inside story of the quest to answer the question: “What is the universe made of?”

Astronomy: A Self-Teaching Guide
Dinah L. Moché, Ph.D. ’76, Physics
With this beginner’s guide, Dinah L. Moché introduces readers to the night sky and includes the latest discoveries.
Announcements

Wm. Theodore de Bary, Ph.D. '53, East Asian Languages and Cultures, was recently presented with a National Humanities Medal from President Barack Obama for his lifetime’s work in fostering “a global conversation ... centered on the common values and experiences shared by Eastern and Western cultures.”

Paul M. McNeil, Ph.D. ’11, English and Comparative Literature, was named the new dean of the extension program of the University of California, Davis.

Ursula K. Le Guin, M.A. ’52, French and Romance Philology, received the National Book Foundation’s Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. Photo by Eileen Gunn

Felix V. Matos Rodriguez, Ph.D. ’94, History, was appointed president of Queens College, of the City University of New York.

Andrew Byrne, D.M.A. ’99, Music, was named artistic director of Symphony Space, a performing arts center in Manhattan.

Paul M. McNeil, Ph.D. ’11, English and Comparative Literature, was named the new dean of the extension program of the University of California, Davis.

Elizabeth Margulis, Ph.D. ’03, Music, received the Wallace Berry Award from the Society for Music Theory for her book On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind.

Valerie Purdie-Vaughns, associate professor of psychology, and Brent Stockwell, professor of biological sciences and chemistry, were named National Academies Education Fellows in the Sciences for the 2014–15 academic year.

Pamela Smith, professor of history, was elected vice president (2014-15) and president (2016-18) of the Renaissance Society of America.

Sean Solomon, director of the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and principal investigator of NASA’s mission to Mercury, was awarded the National Medal of Science, the nation’s top scientific honor.

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Dissertations Deposited Recently

**Anthropology**

APAM: Applied Mathematics


APAM: Applied Physics

**Architecture**


**Art History and Archaeology**


**Astronomy**
Idris A. Abdennour. FIREBall, AGN feedback in cool-core galaxy clusters. Sponsor: Greg Bryan.

Erika Tobiason Hamden. FIREBall, AGN feedback in massive galaxy evolution. Sponsor: Greg Bryan.


**Biological Sciences**

Jong Hwan Lee. A small animal optofluidic imaging system with omnidirectional, noncontact, angular-resolved fluorescence measurement capabilities. Sponsor: Ian W. McKeague.

**Biomedical Engineering**


**Biostatistics**


**Business**

**Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics**
Holly Noelie Wolcott. Structural and biophysics studies clustered phototolithins. Sponsor: Lawrence Shapiro.

**Biology**

**Chemistry**

**Economics**

**Geology**

**History**

**Music**

**Physics**
Jong Hwan Lee. A small animal optofluidic imaging system with omnidirectional, noncontact, angular-resolved fluorescence measurement capabilities. Sponsor: Ian W. McKeague.

**Psychology**

**Sociology**

**Statistics**

**Theological Studies**

**Theater**
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Chemistry
Jeffrey Bandar. The design of reaction, catalysts, and materials with ionic and metallic bonds. Sponsor: Tristan H. Lemberg.
Neena Tischa Chakrabarti. A journey across the periodic table. The synthesis and characterization of main group metals supported by nitrogen and sulfur-rich ligands. Sponsor: Gerard Parkin.
Maria Inna Chirac. Regioslective installation of dihydrolfuran units in the resinol family of natural products. Sponsor: Scott A. Snyder.
Deven Estes. Transition metal hydrides that mediate catalytic hydrogen atom transfers. Sponsor: Jack R. Norton.
Wei Ning. The role of ribosome and RNA dynamics in the regulation of translation elongation. Sponsor: Ruben L. Gonzalez Jr.

Civil Engineering and Engineering Mechanics

Civil Engineering and Environmental Mechanics

Classics

Communications

Computer Science
Jingyue Wu. Sound and precise analysis of parallel programs through schedule specialization. Sponsor: Jundeng Yang.

Earth and Environmental Engineering
Ayse Selin Kocaman. Essays on infrastructure design and planning for clean energy systems. Sponsor: Vijay Mulav.
Mengqian Lu. From diagnosis to water management. The role of atmospheric dynamics and climate variability on hydrological extremes. Sponsor: Urmil M. Matter.

Economics

Engineering

Eurasian Studies

Economics

Engineering

Economics

Engineering

Economics
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