Dear Friends,

The new year is generally a time for reflection, remembrance and resolutions. We turn the page on one year and welcome the next, full of promise and potential.

2020 may not fade away quite so easily. It was a year that challenged us in every conceivable way—a pandemic, killings of unarmed Black people, a summer of protest, a contentious election and its equally contentious aftermath. 2021 will be another year that asks much of us.

But this moment has also brought incredible gifts of clarity and community. We learned, for example, that we can be more resilient and adaptable than we had ever imagined. In this issue of Windows, you will read about the ways staff of the University Libraries provided outstanding services during a public health emergency. Their creativity and dedication made it possible for students to keep learning and instructors to keep teaching, even far from campus.

This year, we also learned about the power that we wield individually and collectively. In the months to come, you will hear more about the University Libraries’ initiative to reckon with legacies of racism and racial inequality as a means to making the Library a more inclusive and welcoming space for all.

More than anything, we were reminded over the last year that good and caring work is everywhere. Your notes of concern and your inquiries about using the Library demonstrated just how valuable and trusted libraries are in times of uncertainty. You showed us that we were not alone. Your support and gifts of books and documents helped us to think differently about the past and its enduring impact, as well as the unique contributions of libraries and archives in promoting justice and inclusion.

We turn the page on one year and welcome the next, full of promise and potential.

With gratitude and warmest wishes for the new year,

Elaine L. Westbrooks
Vice Provost for University Libraries and University Librarian
Briefs

News

Windows magazine wins national award

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Join Friends of Library today and never miss an issue of Windows magazine: go.unc.edu/GiveLibrary.

Society of American Archivists honors Wilson Library leader

Maria R. Estorino, associate University librarian for special collections and director of the Wilson Special Collections Library, has been honored with a 2020 Society of American Archivists Council resolution.

The resolution recognizes Estorino and four other members of the SAA Diversity Committee’s Mosaic Program Task Force for their long-standing commitment to diversity in the archives and special collections profession, especially through the vision of expanding the Mosaic Scholarship and support of the Association of Research Libraries/SAA Mosaic Program.

Established in 2013, the Mosaic Program has produced 34 fellows and has increased the diversity of SAA leadership.

North Carolina Digital Heritage Center marks first decade with half-million-dollar grant

The North Carolina Digital Heritage Center at the University Libraries received a $526,573 grant to extend its operations. The award is from the State Library of North Carolina with funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The grant came as the NCDHC celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2020 and as it closes in on working with organizations in all 100 of North Carolina’s counties.

Established as a partnership between the University Libraries and the State Library of North Carolina, the NCDHC promotes learning by increasing open access to North Carolina’s historical and cultural heritage. Special collections from a wide variety of institutions are scanned and shared on DigitalNC.org, the center’s website.

To date, the center has partnered with 277 libraries, museums, alumni associations, archives and historic sites in 97 counties to digitize materials from local and family history collections and make them freely accessible online. DigitalNC.org currently includes more than four million images and files.

A series of posts on the NCDHC website titled “10 for 10” shares reflections on the center’s first decade by partners, participants and users. Visit go.unc.edu/10for10 to read their perspectives.

GIS librarian recognized for service to undergraduates

Philip McDaniel, GIS librarian, is a recipient of the University’s 2020 Student Undergraduate Staff Award for contributions to the undergraduate experience at Carolina. McDaniel “has taught me more about GIS than any other person in my undergraduate experience,” wrote the student who nominated him. “Not only does he assist patrons to the best of his ability, but he displays genuine interest in the success and happiness of the people he interacts with.”

This is McDaniel’s second honor in two years recognizing his service to students. In April 2019, he was inducted into the Frank Porter Graham Honor Society, which recognizes significant contributions to graduate and professional education by faculty and staff.

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University Diversity Award goes to inclusive excellence leader

Monica Figueroa, music cataloging librarian and interim librarian for inclusive excellence, is a recipient of the University’s 2020 Diversity Award. The award recognizes significant contributions made by members of the University community toward advancing an inclusive climate for excellence in teaching, research, public service and academic endeavor.

Figueroa joined the University Libraries in 2016 as a music cataloging librarian and has taken a leadership role in steering equity and inclusion initiatives in the Library. Her achievements include transforming the work of the Library’s Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Council; bringing learning opportunities to the Library; and presenting about descriptions of Indigenous populations in library catalog records.

In nominating Figueroa, social sciences librarian Kristan Shawgo wrote, “Her enthusiasm, advocacy and ambition are infectious and have moved the Library forward as we develop a more inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible environment for all University affiliates and the community.”

Meet Tim Edelen, assistant director for annual giving and donor relations

Story by Michele Lynn

Growing up in southeast Raleigh, Tim Edelen spent many hours in Wake County public libraries developing his love of books. He brings that passion to his role as assistant director for annual giving and donor relations for the University Libraries, which he began on August 31. Edelen focuses on the Library’s annual fund, securing unrestricted dollars that support areas of greatest need.

“The annual fund is especially important during the pandemic when we need funding to bulk up the digital learning platforms, which are helping students during this time,” says Edelen. “Donors provide the foundation for the annual fund which is the building block for development. I want to make sure that foundation is treated well.”

“I speak for the University Libraries development team when I say we are fortunate to have Tim join us,” says L. Blue Dean, executive director of Library development. “He jumped right in and brings excitement and enthusiasm to his work and to our team.”

The pillars of the Library resonate with Edelen, especially the tenet that the Library provides spaces and opportunities for teaching and learning, both in support of and alongside the curriculum. “The Library offers so many things that aren’t taught in the classroom which are important for students to be successful,” he says.

School success hits close to home for Edelen, father to a first-grader. “I always emphasize to my son the importance of reading and that learning is cool,” he says. “Having my son when I was a sophomore in college helped me get a new level of focus and gave me something else to work hard for.”

To that end, Edelen is pursuing a doctoral degree in education, focusing on organizational leadership. He is a graduate of North Carolina Central University where he received a master of public administration degree in 2019 and a bachelor of science in mass communications in 2017.

Edelen became interested in development work during a summer 2018 internship with the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), a global non-profit association dedicated to educational advancement. “As one of only three Black men in that internship cohort, I am aware of how important representation is,” says Edelen.

“With the world right now facing issues of social injustice and the pandemic, I think it’s important that we lean in towards each other and reckon with some of the problems in our past. My generation is trying to make this a better world for my son and the generations who come after.”

“I’m happy to be at UNC and ready to work hard,” he says. “I want donors and colleagues to know that I’m always listening and available.”

Four students receive 2020 appreciation awards

Four undergraduate students have received the University Libraries’ Student Employee Appreciation Awards for their exemplary work and contributions.

Each year, the University Libraries and the Student Library Advisory Board present the awards to recognize excellent customer service, leadership in the workplace, integrity, attitude, work ethic, initiative or passion. Nominees must be currently enrolled undergraduate students and must have been working for the University Libraries for at least four semesters. Winners receive $500 from a SLAB endowment. Congratulations to:

- Joseph Holmes ’20
  - Sloane Art Library
- Hannah Lawrence ’20
  - Music Library
- Kim Nguyen ’21
  - Preservation department
- Scarlett Vandyke ’20
  - Davis Library Circulation department

You can hear about future Well Read talks and other great University Libraries events by becoming a Friend of the Library today. With your gift, you will receive special invitations to programs and exhibitions and a complimentary subscription to Windows magazine. We look forward to your friendship.

Learn more: library.unc.edu/give or (919) 962-4207

Well Read

More than 600 viewers tuned in to Well Read this summer. The new University Libraries series brings authors with Tar Heel ties directly to you online.

Well Read 2020 programs are now archived and available to you. Visit go.unc.edu/WellRead to experience:

- Jill McCorricle ‘80 in conversation with Daniel Wallace ‘08
- David Zucchino ‘73 in conversation with William Sturkey
- Freddie Kiger ’74, ’77 remembering Charles Kuralt
- Story by Michele Lynn

Learn more: library.unc.edu/give or (919) 962-4207
When the pandemic disrupted every aspect of campus and daily life, the University Libraries responded with innovation and ingenuity.

By Judy Panitch

Carolina’s libraries normally welcome more than 2.6 million people each year. Picture Kenan Stadium filled 45 times over with caffeine-fueled students, world-class scholars and visitors from around the state and the globe.

What happens when some of the most bustling locations on campus meet a pandemic? That’s easy. They stay open virtually, transforming nearly overnight the way they do business.

In 2020, COVID-19 upended every aspect of campus operations, causing Carolina to send students home abruptly in March, resume on-campus teaching in August and then pivot almost entirely back to remote instruction just days into the semester.

In the face of so much disruption, the staff of the University Libraries responded with innovation and ingenuity to help Tar Heels keep teaching, learning and researching.

Quick shifts

Even before the campus went fully remote, the University Libraries was preparing to meet the needs of students and faculty who would soon be dispersed around the world.

“We started very quickly to think about how we would maintain access for students. How were we going to get them what they needed?” recalls Nerea Llamas, associate University librarian for collections strategy and services.

The concern for students was acute because of the way they tend to use the libraries, often hunting for sources right up until a project is due or settling down in the Undergraduate Library with a stack of reserve reading.

Library staff went to work with faculty to figure out what students would most need in order to complete assignments, and then they integrated those items into course websites. On the way out the door, staff scanned and added hundreds of pages to electronic reserve readings. They also sought out e-books and streaming media to take the place of items that would otherwise require an in-person visit.

A parallel shift took place in library instruction. During a typical semester, librarians visit classes to teach research techniques—introductory overviews for first-year students, and subject-specific deep dives for advanced classes and graduate students. Like almost everyone else, librarians turned to Zoom, honing techniques for online teaching and developing meaningful exercises for the virtual environment.

“There has been a lot of acceptance of virtual instruction,” says Llamas. In some cases, it has even been more effective than in-person encounters. “For some students who may be hesitant to talk to the librarian or to follow up, there’s evidence that the virtual environment breaks down barriers. They will contact the librarian more readily because they can do it virtually and have already interacted that way.”

The digital sessions have been so successful, says Llamas, “that I don’t imagine we’ll ever fully go back to
“When times are hard, libraries get used a lot more.”

in-person instruction or consultations.

Increasing access to online resources also helped faculty and research personnel with their ongoing work as the campus closure wore on.

During the spring, many publishers temporarily lifted paywalls on e-books and journals. The largest infusion of electronic content came from the HathiTrust Digital Library, a shared repository to which many libraries, including UNC-Chapel Hill, contribute books they have digitized. The University Libraries opted into Hathi’s Emergency Temporary Access Service. This step gave Carolina students and faculty access to more than 1.1 million books from other member libraries—the digital versions of books that were otherwise locked up in Chapel Hill’s closed library buildings.

“We heard from a number of faculty who were thrilled to have the Hathi content available to them and have written to us saying, ‘this is an amazing service,’” says Llamas.

At the same time, the University Libraries has expanded its purchases of electronic books and streaming media, adding several thousand titles over just a few months and subscribing to services such as OverDrive, which package many e-books and audiobooks together for libraries.

For researchers and readers who need or prefer a physical book, the Library stood up a no-contact pickup program. Library staff members pull books from the shelves and have them ready for pickup at Davis Library or the Health Sciences Library, the two library facilities open to the public.

Students study in Davis Library, November 19, 2020.

During the first months of the pandemic, Tomberlin and his colleagues pointed people to the web, where they could consult hundreds of thousands of items that the University Libraries had digitized and shared online over more than two decades. Still, this represents just a fraction of what is available to in-person visitors.

Since June, scanning staff have been back at work, making copies of everything their equipment will allow in order to help researchers and support instructors who teach with special collections materials. This includes “books, documents, photographs, negatives, maps, VHS tapes. Just about anything that we have in the building,” says Tomberlin.

Taylor de Klerk, Wilson Library’s research room manager, has helped to organize the incoming requests and make sure that researchers get what they need.

“We’ve been calling it a virtual research room,” says de Klerk, “but we’ve had to reframe what it actually means for us to do reference work.”

Usually, says de Klerk, reading room staff largely retrieve and deliver requested items to people. “Now, it’s more hands-on,” she says. “Sometimes we need to do the research for people” by looking at how collections are described to see what the researcher really wants, or paging through folders for just the right document. “We have to put ourselves in their shoes a little more.”

During the pandemic, Wilson Library draws inquiries not only from Carolina researchers, but from around the country. “In the last week alone, I’ve had inquiries from the University of Wyoming, from Yale and one from somewhere in Alabama,” says Tomberlin.

Not everything translates to the digital environment, says Tomberlin. “Special collections are still very tactile. What does that book look like? What does it feel like? Looking at the book, examining it—it’s just hard to do online.”

For de Klerk, it’s the personal element that is missing. “Just being able to see people and interact with them as they do their research, see them discover things and have their questions answered, is really rewarding,” she says.

The future is “digital first”

Even after the University returns to normal operations at some time in the future, the pandemic has likely changed library services forever. It has also illustrated their value.

2020 was a rough year, and we have a responsibility to become a stronger organization,” says Vice Provost for University Libraries and University Librarian Elaine Westbrooks. “Libraries become critical infrastructure for people to survive—not just thrive but survive.”

To prepare for this future, the University Libraries has begun referring to an emerging “digital first” strategy—a way to deliver library resources and assistance to people efficiently and regardless of their location.

Tomberlin and his colleagues across the library system have been talking about creating videos or online teaching modules to provide the library introductions and overviews that normally take place in-person dozens of times a semester.

“Liaison librarians can’t always be in the classroom to give that 5-minute or 10-minute or 30-minute talk,” says Westbrooks. “Libraries become critical infrastructure for people to survive—not just thrive but survive.”

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“Liaison librarians can’t always be in the classroom to give that 5-minute or 10-minute or 30-minute talk,” says Westbrooks. “Libraries become critical infrastructure for people to survive—not just thrive but survive.”
During a pandemic, reliable health information is more important than ever. In 2020, the staff of the Health Sciences Library had many opportunities to put their unique expertise to work.

For example, when the School of Medicine developed a month-long COVID-19 curriculum in the spring for more than 400 medical and physician assistant students who couldn’t report for clinical duties, Sarah Wright stepped in.

Wright, head of clinical and statewide engagement and School of Medicine liaison librarian, created a 30-minute video module. It explained how to search for digitizing special collections materials.

The ramifications will cascade. More electronic content will require more specialists who can negotiate licenses and integrate digital publications into the Library’s online environment. The shift to online teaching will call for new expertise in digital pedagogy and peer-to-peer training, as well as an intensified emphasis on digitizing special collections materials.

Whatever the future may hold, one other lesson that will endure is the knowledge that, when it mattered most, employees stepped up to continue providing services under the most challenging conditions.

Front-desk staff “have not for one second hesitated to come into the building and do the work that needs to be done,” says Llamas. “They have given of their time in a way that has never been asked of them.” In fact, across the organization, says Llamas, employees “have stepped up and volunteered. They have dedicated themselves to transforming the way we did things in March and then again as we reentered in July and August. I don’t think I’m surprised, but I will say that this experience has reaffirmed how very dedicated and able our staff is.”

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By Judy Panitch

On March 5, as the University Libraries was preparing to send employees home for an unknown length of time, María Estorino, associate University librarian for special collections, wrote a quick message: “Julie, just so I don’t forget, I’m thinking about metadata as a work-from-home project. Let’s discuss.” “Julie” was Julie Rudder, the Library’s head of repository services. She, too, had been wondering whether a backlog of work in her unit—some of it involving metadata, or the text that describes digital files—could be the key to keeping employees engaged and productive during challenging times.

“We had so much work that would require people, but we’ve never had the resources before to do it,” recalls Rudder. Within a few weeks, the vague ideas had become six projects, each with a dedicated manager. Any Library employee who could not perform their regular duties from home could sign up. Some transcribed handwritten documents and audio files from the Library’s vast digital collections or from the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, which it operates. Others added notes called alternative text to images so that users with visual impairments would know what they depict. Enhancing metadata was another option, as was auditing the Library’s repository databases to see if they met accessibility standards. “Fundamentally, this was about making our collections usable for a wider audience,” says Estorino.

The University Libraries has been digitizing items it owns for nearly 25 years. During that time, she says, research has changed, especially in the humanities. “We can no longer just present digital surrogate for people to read like they would in the reading room,” says Estorino. Today’s researchers expect transcriptions that they can use for text mining. They need informative metadata to explore collections or to use with mapping and other analytic software.

Adding this kind of information also helps community researchers—journalists, genealogists, amateur historians—who tend to search first online.

At their height, the projects kept more than 140 people working. But just how many of them? The projects grew in the fall when Carolina’s Work-Study office sought placements for 50 students. The students would have lost their financial aid without a campus job, even though campus had largely closed.

Rudder credits the project managers with creating a positive experience by seizing the work, creating documentation and providing thorough training. The Library’s administration helped by delivering temporary laptops and wi-fi hotspots to employees in need of technology.

“We moved fast. We moved really fast,” says Rudder, “and yet people are being successful on these projects. They are not struggling, even though they have never done the work before.”

Lucas Darden, supervisor for general collections conservation, usually repairs damaged books in the Library’s preservation lab. Since the spring, he has spent part of every work week determining the copyright status of items the Library had digitized—an important piece of information for both the Library and for researchers.

Darden says that in his first days out of the office, “it was hard for me to avoid feeling demotivated and guilty. It’s been a real consolation to have productive work where I can tell that I’m making contributions toward a goal.”

He has found the work so engaging that he signed up for an online class about copyright law. “I’m hoping it will give me the foundation to contribute to future projects at the intersection of copyright law and library work,” he says.

Because the Library has millions of digital items that need attention or enhancement, Rudder says the impact is hard to measure. “I joke that we could keep the whole Library employed for years and years, we have that much stuff. It’s not a huge dent...but it’s a great start.”

In many ways, the work remains exploratory. It offers a chance to find out what is successful and where to put resources, she says. “We have learned that we can keep the whole Library employed for years and years, we have that much stuff. It’s not a huge dent...but it’s a great start.”

In many ways, the work remains exploratory. It offers a chance to find out what is successful and where to put resources, says Estorino, as well as to help employees build skills for the future. Behind it all, she says, is the same guiding philosophy: “We are preparing ourselves to meet the needs of our users now and tomorrow with our digital and digitized collections.”
Even when library buildings were closed, library staff were busy.

**Covers April 1 through September 30, 2020**

### Special projects

- **68 hours of audio interviews transcribed**
- **3,838 articles identified for deposit in the Carolina Digital Repository**
- **12,281 pages transcribed or edited**

### Preparing staff and spaces

- **100+ technology items delivered to staff**
- **1,000+ signs installed in Davis Library and HSL**
- **1,500 furniture items moved or stored**

### Helping library users

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Spreading coronavirus research

As the world’s virologists race for answers to COVID-19, the Carolina Digital Repository makes the research of the University’s top coronavirus experts openly accessible online.

By Susan Hudson, University Communications

Working remotely from their home offices, the University’s librarians are helping the world’s virologists fight coronavirus by making faculty research more accessible online through the Carolina Digital Repository (cdl.lib.unc.edu).

Launched in 2009 to digitally curate specialty collections, the repository was enhanced in 2016 to be able to share Carolina faculty members’ scholarly writing under the University’s Open Access Policy. It now is home to more than 10,500 articles and 28,000 dissertations, theses and other scholarly work.

Anyone in the world can access the articles for free, allowing researchers to connect and collaborate on solving a common problem, like coronavirus.

“I’m glad the University invested in this resource when they did,” says Anne Gilliland, scholarly communications officer at the University Libraries. “It’s not like someone said in 2016, ‘This will be really useful if we have a pandemic one day.’

But, as the world is discovering, being prepared for the worst is helpful when a pandemic strikes.

Putting coronavirus first

The ability to share Carolina’s pandemic-related research with the world so quickly is the latest result of the University’s ongoing efforts to wrest control of its researchers’ work away from publishers and open it to the public.

For example, during the current pandemic, “Eligible” articles, Gilliland explains, are those authored by Carolina faculty after the University’s Open Access Policy went into effect in 2016 and any previous articles no longer exclusive to the original publisher.

Kati also contacted Baric by email with her plans. “He replied right away and was very positive,” Kati says. Right away, she found 63 eligible articles by Baric, 30 of them related to coronavirus. All of them, and more, are now available online.

Kati expanded her search to include articles by other epidemiologists at Carolina, including Gillings School of Global Public Health faculty members Lisa Gralinski, Rachel Graham and Timothy Sheahan, as well as researchers at the School of Medicine. Kati continues to follow news stories in order to identify other Carolina scientists for her to-do list.

During the current pandemic, some subscription journals have lowered paywalls temporarily to help researchers who are shut out of libraries, Gilliland says.

“A lot of publishers right now are making this research available,” Gilliland says. “But ours will still be in force beyond the current crisis. We’ll be able to keep that research open.”

A longer version of this article first appeared in The Well on April 13, 2020: go.unc.edu/CDRCoronavirus. CDR statistics have been updated.

How has your work changed since the springtime?

One of the things I love about my job is that it changes with the seasons. The pandemic hit the second half of spring semester, so there was an immediate scramble for electronic resources, for translating assignments and research over to new or digital mediums.

Over the summer I was able to consult with faculty more individually, planning assignments and resources for their courses and practicing new ways of teaching. Since fall began it’s been a teaching and consultation marathon, which I love most. A happy surprise is that this kind of seasonal workflow translates over, even when working remotely.

Have you developed new habits, practices or skills?

I’ve thought a lot more about accessibility than I used to— the pandemic has shown us that we can’t assume that everyone can access our materials in the same way! Some students may not have consistent wi-fi, or may be in a different country, or may need accommodations for web-based content. Thinking about these things has impacted the kinds of resources I design, the kinds of materials I purchase.

With all that has happened, I am thinner-skinned and more grateful for connection. So, in meetings with students I do try to connect with them personally, give them a little space to tell me about their day or their class or show me their cat. I’m more open to a little meandering than I used to be, and I think it makes me a better librarian, certainly a happier one!

What is it like to teach a class by Zoom?

At first, I really didn’t like it; it felt like talking to a void box of names. But my colleagues have shared some great tips and I’ve come to really like it! I try to make a simultaneous notespace that we can all write in at the same time, so that even if students aren’t talking, they can be interacting. I also use lots of break-out rooms and try to incorporate as much group work and problem-based work as possible. Anything to minimize the time I’m yammering on and maximize their critical thinking. Our students are so smart and are willing to engage if there’s space to do so.

Are people coming to you with different needs or different types of questions than in a typical year?

I work with the humanities, so in a beautiful way, many questions are variants of the same ones people have been asking for a long time. Meaningfully, I’ve had more questions related to technology and our lives. I’ve worked with some health humanities students who are interested in the impact of COVID-19 on the arts, on balance to isolation and depression, on the value and limitations of virtual reality. Some of my honors thesis students are interested in collective grief and virtual mourning spaces for victims of racial violence. I watch the questions people live melt into the questions of their classes, and I get to help them think through these things that affect all of us.

Is there anything that you’ve learned or started doing during this time that you will continue post-pandemic?

I will always make remote consultations an option! Students seem less intimidated to schedule a Zoom appointment than appear in my office, and we can do the same work this way. I also try to take a midday walk every day and look forward to doing that in the beautiful aboretum when it’s safe again.

“It all translates”

Sarah Morris, humanities research librarian

Since the campus first closed, humanities research librarian Sarah Morris has been connecting with faculty and students remotely. In May, campus publication The Well asked Morris about her transition to working at home (go.unc.edu/MorrisProfile). We asked Morris for an update.

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University Libraries project uses machine learning to identify racist language in state laws

By Courtney Mitchell

Two years ago, a high school social studies teacher in Caldwell County, North Carolina, approached Sarah Carrier, North Carolina research and instruction librarian at the University Libraries, in search of a resource for teaching about the era of Jim Crow. Had anyone produced a comprehensive list of all the Jim Crow laws passed in the state of North Carolina?

Carrier’s short answer to his question was no. The closest source would be Pauli Murray’s “States’ Laws on Race and Color,” published in 1951.

Though volumes of public and private North Carolina session laws have been digitized, their pages exist as online pictures, with no way to analyze the text they contain.

“Helping teachers is a big part of what I do, and I try to do it as fast and efficiently as possible. But downloading and searching through files to find race-based legislation was incredibly time consuming. It wasn’t feasible,” explains Carrier.

“I was taking a workshop to learn more about text analysis,” she recalls, “and I brought this to Matt Jansen, our data analysis librarian. Was this something we could do?”

With an interdisciplinary group of librarians with expertise in special collections, data analysis, digital research and data visualization, plus subject matter experts in African American history and African American studies, the answer to this question was yes. The result is On the Books: Jim Crow and Algorithms of Resistance, a project that uses text mining and machine learning to identify racist language in legal documents.

The first iteration of On the Books (onthebooks.lib.unc.edu) went live in August 2020. Viewers can read or search through all the Jim Crow laws that the project identified. The site also includes a downloadable text file of the laws; a separate file of all North Carolina statutes from 1866 to 1967; the computer programs written for the project; a white paper describing the project’s methods; and resources for educators and researchers that contextualize North Carolina segregation laws.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation supported the first phase of On the Books through the Collections as Data—Part to Whole initiative, based at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the University of Iowa. The project continues thanks to a grant from the Association of Research Libraries.

Project lead and co-principal investigator Amanda Henley, head of the University Libraries’ Digital Research Services, says projects such as On the Books treat library collections as rich data sources. It’s one way that libraries can lead in the emerging field of data science.

“For the first phase, we were putting together the best corpus we could. This took everyone,” says Henley.

““These laws were pervasive, inconvenient, and unconstitutional, and they were the result of intricate, detailed planning to build the system of Jim Crow.”

“We had to collect all the images from more than 100 years of laws, prepare them to be read, removing blank pages and marginalia on the page edges, smoothing and brightening the images to get the best optical character recognition and dividing text into individual laws,” she explains.

An important step was engaging with scholars to analyze the laws. William Sturkey, associate professor of history at Carolina and an expert on the history of race in the American South, and Kimber Thomas, CLIR postdoctoral fellow in data curation for African American collections at the University Libraries, provided the analysis that the project team relied on.

Sturkey and Thomas went through a large sample of laws and categorized them as “Jim Crow” or “not Jim Crow.” The classified laws served as a training set to teach the computer program to identify additional laws on its own.

“In many of the laws, there’s no question about the intent—the law segregating schools is clearly a Jim Crow law. Other laws might be up for interpretation. We were looking for anything that required racial segregation or stratification in any way,” says Sturkey.

The machine learning model eventually uncovered more than 900 laws that could be classified as Jim Crow. Being able to see and study them as a single body clarifies the extensive scope of Jim Crow in the American South and can help people to understand the history of race in America.

“This wasn’t just a couple of laws from the 1860s,” says Sturkey. “These laws were pervasive, inconvenient and unconstitutional, and they were the result of intricate, detailed planning to build the system of Jim Crow. These laws intended to maintain white supremacy, and they went on for decades and decades.”

Jansen, co-principal investigator and technical lead of the project, says that by publishing the team’s process and scripts, they can help others tackle similar text analysis projects focusing on laws elsewhere.

“Reading and understanding someone else’s code or adapting someone else’s code can be harder than writing your own,” he says. “We have provided explanations and examples to go along with our scripts to make them as easy to understand as possible. We continue to improve the corpus and identify additional laws, as the project is funded into 2021. This makes our outcomes better and helps support future users.”

“The library is the lab for liberal arts scholars,” Henley says. “We have unique collections, and through this project, we’ve gained the expertise to make them available for computational use. Now that we have this corpus, what other kinds of research questions can be asked of it to dig deeper?”

ALGORITHMS OF RESISTANCE

reveal extent of North Carolina’s Jim Crow laws
“Whose experiences are we privileging, what stories are we elevating and what voices are we ignoring?”

“We can no longer imagine that transcending racial slurs or using the subject heading ‘illegal aliens’ are inclusive or responsible practices,” says Estorino. “Our goal is to be more intentional about the words we use, more aware of their impact and to become a more accessible and welcoming library as a result.”

The archival staff started this process in 2017, joining a trend in libraries nationwide. The cataloging staff is just beginning their work, researching standards set forth by the American Library Association and the Library of Congress and discussing how to apply them to Wilson Library’s materials.

The librarians aren’t working in a vacuum. Staff of other library units can make a request for remediation. And last year, a library-wide steering committee came together to guide the work. The original descriptions will be kept. “People do find value in looking at the old versions,” Dean said. They will be available on request or as part of the collection.

Chaira Powell, African American collections and outreach archivist, says that the work of her colleagues can have a real impact on researchers.

“So many people of color are trying to access our collections,” she says. “If they are able to talk to a librarian, they’ll learn techniques to navigate the collection and find information about people of color.” If they are at home or on their own, though, these researchers might assume that Wilson Library had nothing for them.

“We can take this step now to give a better representation of these folks that have been marginalized in the collections for so long,” says Powell. “It feels like part of our responsibility.” ▲
Distinguished Alumna Florence Fearrington donates rare book collection

Florence Fearrington ’58, one of the preeminent female rare book collectors of our time and a longtime supporter of UNC-Chapel Hill, has donated nearly 4,000 books and objects valued at $6.2 million to the University Libraries. They will become part of the Wilson Special Collections Library.

“Florence Fearrington’s legacy of generosity and commitment to Carolina has been instrumental to our University Libraries,” says Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz. “This collection of rare books, with the love and dedication that went into its curation, will enhance our special collections and will draw future generations of students, researchers and experts from around the world. We are grateful that Florence has trusted Carolina as a home for her invaluable collection.”

The collection includes 1,900 rare books, most on the subject of natural history, including beautifully illustrated books on malacology—the study of shells and mollusks—and books, catalogs and prints on Wunderkammers, or “cabinets of curiosity.” The collection also includes a number of pre-1915 children’s books, 13 color-plate costume books and thousands of reference books that complement the subject matter of the rare books.

“Florence has established a meaningful legacy based on her passion for our natural world, the book arts and Carolina’s libraries,” says Elaine Westbrooks, vice provost for University Libraries and University librarian. “I firmly believe that an education at Carolina is qualitatively different thanks to the amazing collections that we build here and the inspiring generosity of donors like Florence Fearrington, who make that work possible.”

All of these books will be available to patrons—students, faculty, researchers and the general public. Once cataloged, the collection will also be available online.

Wilson Library is planning an exhibition of the malacology books in the future—but this won’t be the first time Carolina will see books and ephemera from this intriguing collection. In 2012, Fearrington curated an exhibition, “Rooms of Wonder: From Wunderkammer to Cabinet of Curiosities,” mostly drawn from her collection of books about Wunderkammers, at the G rolte r Club in New York City. A version of this exhibition was displayed at Wilson Library in 2014.

Fearrington’s previous contributions to Carolina include gifts to the University Libraries’ Rare Book Collection, and she established the Joseph Peyton Fearrington and James Cornelius Pass Fearrington Fund at the Health Sciences Library.

In 2016, she gave $5 million in support of the Wilson Special Collections Library, earmarking $1 million to help update the grand reading room and adjacent exhibition areas in Wilson Library. The remaining $4 million created the Fearrington Special Collections Library Fund. The University librarian and the director of the Wilson Special Collections Library use income from this endowment to meet emerging needs and pursue opportunities that benefit Carolina students and enhance the work of researchers. In recognition of this substantial gift, the grand reading room in Wilson Library was renamed the Fearrington Reading Room.

Fearrington grew up in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and received a degree in mathematics from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1958. Unable to attend business school at Carolina because the program did not yet admit women, she earned a certificate from the Harvard-Radcliffe Program in Business Administration in 1961. She moved to New York City, where she made her name in the male-dominated world of finance, establishing Florence Fearrington Inc., a highly successful money management firm. She sold the firm to U.S. Trust in 1997—dominated world of finance, establishing Florence Fearrington Inc., a highly successful money management firm. She sold the firm to U.S. Trust in 1997—

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Fearrington was honored as a distinguished alumna at University Day in 2016 for her pioneering career in finance and achievements as a collector of rare books. She currently lives in New Orleans, Louisiana. Her most recent gift counts toward the University’s most ambitious fundraising campaign in history, For All Kind: the Campaign for Carolina, launched in October 2017. ▲
The bust of Walter Royal Davis models Carolina's community standards for face coverings in Davis Library. Photo by Jon Gardiner, University Communications