I also appreciate the memories that so many of you shared about Davis Library, from its earliest days right up to the present. You’ll find a few of those reminiscences, along with photos from the celebration, fun facts and much more in this issue.

With Davis Library turning 40 and the centennial of Wilson Library just five years away, I am thinking a lot about library spaces. While these buildings are beloved icons, they are also showing their age. Our campus and the world we live in are evolving so quickly. The time is now to think about what our libraries ought to be, so that we can continue to meet the needs of campus today and for years to come.

We have just begun the work of space master planning for Carolina’s libraries in partnership with the University’s facilities experts. This process will gather input from across our community. It will be a chance to imagine the future of our libraries and plan for the capital improvements and investments that will get us there.

It’s an incredibly exciting prospect to think about unlocking the potential that exists in all our buildings and services. I invite you to accompany us on this journey into the future as we imagine and shape what comes next for Carolina’s libraries.

Thank you for your support and for being a Friend of the Library.

Warmly,

Dear Friends,

One of the best things about Carolina’s libraries is the honored place we have at the very heart of campus. Wilson Library anchors Polk Place. Davis and the Undergraduate libraries sit at the edge of the Pit. The Health Sciences Library is just steps from the hospitals and health affairs schools.

Library spaces are an integral part of every Tar Heel’s daily experience. From these locations, we add to the energy, productivity and creativity of the University. That was especially true on February 7, when we came together to throw a 40th birthday celebration for Davis Library. I loved chatting with students during the event and hearing how important Davis Library is to them as a study space, a home for collections that inspire and challenge, a place to collaborate with friends and a refuge for deep focus and concentration.

I also appreciate the memories that so many of you shared about Davis Library, from its earliest days right up to the present. You’ll find a few of those reminiscences, along with photos from the celebration, fun facts and much more in this issue.

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Warmly,

María R. Estorino
Vice Provost for University Libraries and University Librarian
Wilson Library Construction Timeline Extended

A major project to bring much-needed upgrades to Wilson Library has a new timeline, the University announced March 1. The Wilson Library Improvement Project would have extended sprinkler coverage in the building, created emergency egress stairs and upgraded the alarm system. To protect people and collections during construction, Wilson Library was preparing to close for two to three years beginning in 2025. That timeline has now been extended. An update from the University’s Office of Finance and Operations explained, “As Facilities Services staff worked through the project’s design and planning stages, it was determined that the cost estimates surpassed the allocated budget.”

The University will step back to take a more strategic and comprehensive approach beginning with a library space master planning effort in 2024, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations Nate Knuffman said in the update.

Knuffman also said that the University will make the Wilson Library improvement project a top priority — hopefully extended to three years beginning in 2025.

“While the timeline has been extended, we remain committed to designing a bright future for this Carolina icon and center for research,” said Vice Provost for University Libraries and University Librarian María R. Estorino. “I look forward to working with campus to develop a more comprehensive and holistic approach that will unlock the full potential of Wilson Library.”

Library announces 2023 staff awards recipients

Four members of the University Libraries staff were honored in January as the latest recipients of the University Librarian’s Award for Meritorious Service and Annual Excellence Awards. This was the first year that the entire University community had an opportunity to submit nominations that recognize exemplary work.

MEET THE 2023 AWARD WINNERS:
go.unc.edu/EmployeeAwards23

Aleah Howell, creative lead for library communications, received the University Librarian’s Award for Meritorious Service.

The award is the Libraries’ highest honor. “It’s nearly impossible to step into a library building on campus — and it is entirely impossible to visit the Library’s online space — without experiencing the impact of Aleah’s work,” wrote nominators from the Library Communications team. As creative lead for communications since 2017, Howell has led the University Libraries in building a professional visual presence (including Windows magazine) and meeting visual communications needs of clients across the organization. The award additionally cited Howell’s outstanding customer service and drive to elevate the work of her colleagues, along with her commitment to accessible design and her ready volunteer leadership.

Rebecca Carlson, Health Sciences Library librarian and liaison to the School of Pharmacy, received the Annual Excellence Award for Leadership.

“Rebecca’s strength as a leader is demonstrated across multiple fronts, including her willingness to mentor her colleagues, direct reports and graduate assistants,” wrote interim Associate University Librarian Michele Cawley and Head of Clinical and Statewide Engagement Sarah Wright. “As a liaison, Rebecca is skilled, enthusiastic and has a strong love for learning, and these traits are evident in her leadership style,” said Karen Grigg, health sciences librarian for collections and instruction. (See go.unc.edu/hsl-carlson for a 2020 Windows profile of Carlson’s work.)

Jackie Dean, head of archival processing, received the Annual Excellence Award for Customer Service.

Her nominator was Elliott Kuecker, teaching assistant professor at the School of Information and Library Science. “I started working at UNC SILS in August 2022 and was nervous about how I would build partnerships with the Libraries. So much of this anxiety vanished because of Jackie,” he wrote. Kuecker described Dean’s early outreach to him and the collaborations that have created powerful learning and pre-professional experiences for his students.

Wendy Isicson, metadata projects coordinator, was recognized with an Annual Excellence Award in the categories of Inclusive Excellence and Problem Solving.

Nominators from two library departments highlighted Isicson’s efforts to accurately catalog LGBTQIA+ materials. Isicson created a computer script that draws headings from the “Homosaurus Thesaurus,” an international set of terms used to identify LGBTQIA+ materials more precisely and make them easier to locate. Isicson’s script is now available for libraries worldwide to use.
In November, the University Libraries welcomed back more than one dozen of its former Southern Studies Doctoral Fellows as presenters for New Scholarship on the U.S. South: A Wilson Library Symposium. Since 2019, the Southern Studies Doctoral Fellowship has brought 57 scholars from more than 30 universities to Carolina. The fellows received support to spend one to three months engaging with materials in the Wilson Special Collections Library.

“These and all our fellowships are investments in the success of emerging scholars ... and other researchers seeking to make meaningful use of the collections we steward,” said Vice Provost for University Libraries and University Librarian María R. Estorino.

The event was divided into sessions based on common themes, approaches or challenges across fellows’ research. Matt Turi, special collections manuscripts research and instruction librarian, said the event was an opportunity to talk about "things that are painful and that are important when we think about who we are and who we might become.”

Recordings from the entire symposium are available for viewing at go.unc.edu/WilsonFellowsRecordings

When you make a gift in support of research and teaching fellowships at the Wilson Special Collections Library, you enable groundbreaking scholarship and transformative teaching with special collections. Give today:

go.unc.edu/WilsonFellows
Helping students become voters

Young adults have historically voted, and registered to vote, at lower rates than older populations. That’s often because they lack key information, according to the nonpartisan Campus Vote Project. The University Libraries helps to fill that gap in election years by serving as a trusted source of information and guidance. This year, the Libraries’ Civic Engagement Workshops have taught more than two dozen students how to research candidates, write to their representatives and explore truth and credibility in social media. The Libraries also developed an online voter Q&A and offered voter registration forms and stamps at every service point.

“I see a core aspect of my role as helping people find and use information to make the best decisions they can,” said Student Success and Engagement Librarian Criss Guy. He said it’s important not to assume students know information that older voters take for granted. “Getting to see a sample ballot, knowing which district you’re in and who your rep is, what measure will be on your ballot — that’s all huge when you’re new to that. I see that consistently in the feedback we get and the questions students ask.”

Send us your N.C. campaign mailers!

Those campaign fliers and postcards filling your mailbox this election year could tell an important story for historians of the future. “Campaign literature from North Carolina elections,” a collection at Wilson Library, holds nearly 10,000 fliers, pamphlets, brochures, posters and similar items from the state’s elections dating to the 19th century. Now the North Carolina Collection at Wilson Library is asking for help documenting 2024 races in your city or town.

The NCC’s Alison Barnett says that materials from local and statewide elections are in scope. “We usually get good coverage from the Triangle, Charlotte and Fayetteville, but that gets spottier from elsewhere in the state,” she said. The NCC would especially like greater representation from mountain and coastal counties.

Wikipedians contribute to international Art + Feminism Edit-a-thon

Students and community members gathered at the Sloane Art Library for the Art + Feminism Wikipedia edit-a-thon during Women’s History Month in March. This year marked the seventh time since 2015 that the Library has participated in the global event, which seeks to increase contributions by and representation of women and nonbinary people in Wikipedia.

Participants learned how to use reliable reference sources to edit, update and add new entries to Wikipedia. Wikipedia is “one of the 10 most used websites in the world, so edit-a-thons like this enhance the quality of articles to benefit everyone,” Veronica McGurrin, librarian for art and art history at Sloane Art Library told The Daily Tar Heel student newspaper.

The University Libraries provided access to scholarly resources and created a guide to help participants find entries in need of attention. “It’s really empowering for students to know that anybody can improve the accuracy of Wikipedia, and they can be part of the scholarly production and open access source,” McGurrin said.

Staff to present at international conference

Nine University Libraries employees will be panelists and poster presenters at the Association for Research Libraries’ IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility in Libraries & Archives) conference in July. Lisa Gregory, Dawne Lucas, Morgan McKeehan and Chaithra Powell will talk about efforts to manage DEI initiatives within special collections. Monica Figueroa and Kristan Shavgo will talk about creating sustainable learning opportunities at a large research library. Meaghan Alston, Biff Hollingsworth and Brianna McGruder will present about their efforts to navigate differing expectations as part of their work with community-driven archives.

Create your legacy at the University Libraries

In Carolina’s early decades, students of the Dialectic and Philanthropic debating societies understood the power of the written word and began the collections that became the core of the University’s library. Subsequent generations of students, faculty, alumni, citizens of North Carolina and other benefactors have built on that wise and far-sighted foundation, realizing that the library is the chief means for accessing and preserving human knowledge, especially as that body of knowledge expands and changes form.

Because I would like to be a small part of this noble Carolina tradition, I have included the University Libraries in my estate planning.

Connie Eble
Professor Emerita, Department of English and Comparative Literature

Learn how to create your legacy at the University Libraries by visiting unclegacy.org. Or contact Jess Aylor, executive director of library development, at jessica.aylor@unc.edu or 919-962-4207.
Historic printing press finds home at Davis Library

The gift from Eric and Chris Peterson, with support from John A. Powell ’77, will give students a hands-on learning experience.

BY KAITLYN RIEPER, UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

In November, a 19th-century printing press arrived at its new home in Davis Library, where it will offer students an experiential learning opportunity.

“We’re interested in creating spaces where students can engage with learning as a hands-on activity and do some of the things that they’re learning about, theoretically, in classes. Davis Library provided the best location for being able to put the press to use for students in a variety of different educational opportunities beginning this spring semester,” says Elizabeth Ott, interim associate University librarian for special collections and director of Wilson Library.

The short-term plan is to use it as a demo press to teach students about the history of printing. While the press will be available for students to observe and learn from, they will need training to operate it safely. Its long-term use is still being explored.

“Students could come as part of a class, and a library staff member would teach them about the press, about its operation and then they would be able to print something on the press and take it home with them,” Ott says.

The press was part of a donation from the Peterson family. In fall 2019, the Petersons began conversations with the University Libraries and UNC Press about donating two historic printing presses and 140 cases of movable metal type. The older printing press, an 1847 R. Hoe Washington press known for its relative light weight, is on display at UNC Press. The one housed in Davis is an 1884 Luigi Ghisi Albion press, popular in commercial book printing.

Iron presses, like the two donated, were considered revolutionary for their easier use due to the toggle mechanism for pulling the press and portability compared to their large wooden predecessors. The Davis press was manufactured in Italy, and later purchased by letterpress pioneer Richard-Gabriel Rummonds, author of the book “Printing on the Iron Handpress.” Rummonds moved the press with him to Cottondale, Alabama, where he founded the book arts program at the nearby University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa. When Gregor G. Peterson (1932-2001) acquired the press in the 1990s, he moved it to Lake Tahoe, Nevada, where he established the Huckleberry Press imprint to print fine press books. Thanks to Peterson’s sons Eric and Chris, and with the support of a gift from John A. Powell ’77, the press now finds a permanent home at Carolina.

“One of the things that students can learn from it, even if they never use it, is the fact that every book that you encounter, including the ones that were printed just yesterday, are things that were manufactured by real people,” Ott says. “It can teach us a lot about how humans communicate. Printing was a major way that people were able to communicate across distance in the past, and machines like these printing presses drove that communication.”

▲ Detail of the 1884 Luigi Ghisi Albion press that arrived in Davis Library in November. It will offer students a hands-on opportunity to learn about the history of printing.
A partnership between UNC-Chapel Hill’s University Libraries and the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) is creating an online public depository of roughly 4 million internal documents from the state of North Carolina’s $47.8 million settlement with electronic cigarette maker Juul Labs.

In 2021, North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein reached a settlement with Juul Labs over its alleged marketing to teens, which fueled a surge in teen vaping. The two-year lawsuit uncovered internal documents from Juul Labs that offer insight into the company’s strategy and practices.

The documents date from 2015 through 2019 and contain a wide range of records including business correspondence, reports, marketing plans, advertisements, sales data, internal research and multimedia files. As part of the settlement, Juul Labs is required to make many of these documents public. They will explain how Juul Labs marketed its products and will help make sure that other companies cannot use the same playbook.

“The release of millions of previously private internal Juul Labs documents will be a treasure trove to tobacco control researchers, public health practitioners and the news media,” said Kurt M. Ribisl, Jo Anne Earp Distinguished Professor and chair of health behavior at UNC-Chapel Hill’s Gillings School of Public Health.

Ribisl was an expert witness in North Carolina’s case against Juul Labs and other lawsuits against the company brought by other states.

More than one million documents are now available online as part of the UCSF Industry Documents Library (see go.unc.edu/JuulCollection). The universities will publish the remaining documents monthly, concluding in 2025.

In February, reporter Nicholas Florko, with the online health and medical media company STAT, reported two stories that demonstrate the power of the growing repository.

“Juul spent big to court Black leaders to promote its e-cigarettes, new documents show” exposes Juul Labs’ efforts to win the support of influential Black leaders as a marketing strategy.

“Juul’s internal playbook opens a rare window into influence in Washington” describes how Juul Labs “tried everything from orchestrating untraceable political donations to paying think tanks for favorable research,” in efforts to advance the company’s interests.

Read both stories at statnews.com.

The online depository was one condition of the agreement between North Carolina and Juul Labs. UNC-Chapel Hill was chosen to oversee the $1 million project. Carolina’s libraries in turn partnered with the UCSF Industry Documents Library, which has extensive experience managing the massive number of records involved in the Truth Tobacco Industry Documents and other collections.

“Libraries have deep expertise in managing complex information, along with a strong professional ethos of collaboration,” said María R. Estorino, vice provost for University libraries and University librarian at UNC-Chapel Hill. “This partnership between UNC-Chapel Hill and UCSF is a perfect example of libraries working together to bring vitally important information directly to the public.”

The University Libraries is taking additional steps to enhance the usability of the Juul Labs archive. The Library will hire two graduate assistants to create guides that will help researchers and instructors use these materials. One guide will focus on teaching with the collection; the other will describe ways to use text-mining techniques to analyze the compilation.

**IMMEDIATE IMPACT**
The University Libraries’ new development coordinator brings passions for fundraising and libraries to her job.

BY JUDY PANITCH

Meet Maddie Conley

The first thing that surprised Maddie Conley when she arrived in Chapel Hill was the lack of a ferry to the beach. The Netflix hit “Outer Banks” had inspired the Ohio native to apply to Carolina’s School of Information and Library Science. Only later did she realize that the show had taken some big liberties with Tar Heel State geography.

The second surprise was finding herself working in the Library Development Office as a graduate assistant. While studying English and history at The Ohio State University, Conley had worked in the University Archives there and wanted to train as an archivist. But when the development position came open, she thought about internships she had done with nonprofits and said to herself, “This is perfect.” Conley loved the work so much that she applied for the position of development coordinator and joined the team full-time in January. “I see this as less of a pivot than a marriage,” says Conley about the job that allows her to combine her development background with a practical knowledge of libraries and a records-management mindset.

As development coordinator, Conley keeps donor records updated and ready for use. “Ninety percent of our mailings to Friends of the Library come through me,” she says. Conley also processes and records gifts and lends a hand with events, communications and other activities of a busy development office.

The thing that has struck her most is the passion so many people have for Carolina and its libraries. “I’m always re-reminded of the dedication that donors have for our programs, our buildings and our faculty, students, staff and materials,” she says.

In May, she will graduate with her Master of Science in library science degree and is looking forward to fully embracing her role at the University Libraries. “I’ve loved getting to know the board and donors and to meet people on campus,” she says. “I’m excited to dive deeper.”

Reach Maddie Conley in the Library Development Office at LibraryDevelopment@unc.edu.

Library develops all-digital Watergate exhibit

The online collection preserves and shares historic “national treasures” drawn from papers donated by three Tar Heels.

BY SUSAN HUDSON, UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

Old enough to remember daytime TV being pre-empted for the Senate Watergate Committee hearings? Or young enough to wonder why every scandal seems to end in “-gate”?

The University Libraries’ new digital-only exhibition, “A Southern View of Watergate: Tar Heels’ Impact on a Nationwide Scandal,” appeals to both. It provides a valuable record of events from the 1970s and a resource for today’s discussion about presidential immunity.

Over the years, UNC-Chapel Hill acquired what archivist Biff Hollingsworth calls several “national treasures” related to the scandal. They were among the papers donated by Tar Heels who were also key Watergate investigation figures, Sen. Sam Ervin ’17, chair of the Watergate Committee, and Rufus Edmisten ’63, Ervin’s deputy chief counsel. The archive also includes the personal diary of the hearings and other papers from journalist and author Jim Reston ’63, whose book “The Conviction of Richard Nixon” was the basis of the play and movie “Frost/Nixon.” “They are nationally important primary sources that really are central and pivotal to the Watergate story. We felt like this was a way for us to not just digitize them and store those digital files away, but to digitize, synthesize, analyze and present them through this project,” Hollingsworth says. “This is the way that we hope folks will approach them. We have made them more accessible while we’re preserving them.”

Explore the exhibit: go.unc.edu/Watergate

Above: “Image of the Watergate Hotel Sign, circa 1971” by Roland L. Freeman, Roland L. Freeman Photograph Collection, Wilson Library

Give UNC

You did it, Tar Heels! March 26 was GiveUNC, Carolina’s annual day of giving. Thank you for helping to make it so successful for the University Libraries.

262 gifts made
244 donors
29 first-time donors
5 challenges unlocked
42 former student employee donors
Davis Library has been a central part of Carolina’s campus and of the University’s rich academic life since its doors first opened in 1984. It is a place full of memories—those bound in the more than two million books on its shelves, and those made by the Tar Heels who have studied, learned, wondered and gathered here.

As Davis Library celebrates four decades at the center of campus life, we take a look at its history and its future. What will the next forty years bring?

Stories and reporting by Claire Cusick
On the afternoon of February 7, 2024, the central atrium of Davis Library was bright, bustling with activity and unusually loud. A deejay played hits from the ‘80s, and a line snaked out the door to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Walter Royal Davis Library. To commemorate the occasion, staff helped student guests make buttons and neon-colored, screen-printed t-shirts. Cupcakes and lemonade disappeared quickly. All 100 limited-edition souvenir plushie Rameses dolls were claimed within minutes.

María R. Estorino, vice provost for University libraries and University librarian, walked around the middle of the festivities, grinning. Her team had succeeded in creating a community celebration to mark the milestone and honor the millions of people who had walked through that special space over four decades.

Because Davis Library opened just on the cusp of the digital revolution, the story of its 40th birthday is, in part, a story of how much and how quickly libraries have changed. "Davis is not just a witness to but a participant in that change," Estorino said.

Davis’s iconic card catalog is no longer there; now there is space for more people to gather and for students to work in groups. Food is in, fines are out. Print magazines have gone digital, making space for flexible seating, tables and study rooms that enable all levels of collaboration.

Davis is vital to our campus community. From the moment you walk in, you see the students.

With all that has changed inside Davis, what hasn’t changed is its importance as a gathering and study space. "Davis is still vital to our campus community," Estorino said. "I’m always amazed by just how well used it is. From the moment you walk in, you see the students, and the energy goes up and down during the day. There are certain times where it’s more than others, but there are always people here.”

Just as she invited everyone to Davis’s 40th birthday party, Estorino wants everyone in the campus community to have a voice in imagining and providing for Davis Library’s future. "At Carolina, we are at an important moment of thinking about our buildings, our spaces, and what they mean to our campus today, and that goes for the libraries as well,” she said.

Wilson Library, completed in 1929, represented the final point in a previous period of expansion at UNC-Chapel Hill. "Wilson punctuates that ambitious period with its grand building meant to inspire, and also to represent the aspirations of the campus as a modern research university," she said.

In 1968, the Robert B. House Undergraduate Library was built at the heart of campus. "It’s an acknowledgment of the importance of having libraries right where students are during their day. That remains true," said Estorino.

In keeping with its history so far, what’s coming next for Davis will likely be more change. To get there, Estorino wants to tap into the energies, ambitions and aspirations of the entire University community.

"We must try to project and plan for what the campus libraries will need to be in the future," said Estorino. "We need everyone who cares about Davis, who comes to Davis, to get excited about what might come next."
We asked for your Davis Library memories and dozens of you answered. Here is a selection of your stories, lightly edited for length and clarity. All submissions will be preserved as part of the University Archives in Wilson Library.

David Stephenson ’84
I lived in Lewis Dorm across from the library and watched the construction of the library. When it was nearing completion, I was walking past one day as workers dismantled and lowered one of the cranes. Thirty minutes later while sitting in the lounge of Lewis, we heard an enormous crash. We ran outside and saw a cloud of dust at the library. Part of the crane they had been lowering broke free and fell, hitting the library. Fortunately, as I recall, no one was injured.

Simon Palmore ’23
When I arrived at UNC, I had various interests but little ability to channel them into sustained academic exploration. I didn’t know how to explore what I could not yet see. But spending hours in Davis Library doing schoolwork and researching, I felt my horizons expand, and the feeling of discovery without limits became something worth chasing.

Eric Bolash ’92
One spring afternoon, after taking the elevator to find a quiet corner for some focused study, I scoped out a third-floor study carrel that had a bird’s-eye view of the Pit. As I absent-mindedly observed the activity below, I moved to sit down and split my chin open on the corner edge of the carrel. After some persuading from my now-wife (then girlfriend) I went to Student Health and received seven stitches. The blood and tears shed by Carolina students pursuing academic achievement in Davis Library have not all been figurative.

“\nI felt my horizons expand, and the feeling of discovery without limits became something worth chasing.\n”
My job was to search the stacks for lost library books a few hours a week between classes. The satisfaction of finding one was intoxicating! :)
Melissa Pappas Katibah ’84
I worked as a student library employee all four years at Carolina. I was one of those who actually walked carts of books from Wilson to the new Davis Library as construction was being completed. It was a thrill to go into a brand-new building and arrange the books on the shelves. My sections were PR and PS-PT (I still remember!).

Michael Claxton ’03
My dissertation included a chapter analyzing content from Punch, England’s satirical publication that lasted 150 years. Davis Library has a complete bound file, and I spent many happy hours looking through every page. I got to know that row of shelves very well. I also loved that when I needed a volume of French diplomatic documents from 1892, Davis had them in storage, and the staff gladly retrieved them for me.

Claire Kirch M.A. ’91
When we were grad students, everyone I knew stole toilet paper from Davis Library as an act of rebellion and as a money-saving act.

Emily Spunaugle M.S.L.S. ’15, former student library worker
The annual corralling and shampooing of all the staff’s chairs was positively charming. The old guard of reference librarians: Tommy Nixon, Rita Moss, Robert Dalton, Libby Chenault, Beth Rowe. Walking encyclopedias. Kirill Tolpygo introduced me to the Cyrillic alphabet and brought me a book from the stacks that formed the basis of my master’s paper, which I’ve since published as a chapter.

DID YOU KNOW...
In preparation for Davis Library’s opening, movers transferred 50 miles of books from Wilson Library by cart and van.

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My girlfriend worked there and I talked her into helping me get a job there! Six years later, I talked her into marrying me :). 32 years of marital bliss tomorrow — thank you Davis Library!

Dan Whalen ’86

DID YOU KNOW...
976,069 people visited Davis Library between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. That would fill the Dean E. Smith Center nearly 45 times.
I was a high school senior in 1986. Having outgrown our school library and the Chapel Hill Public Library, my friends and I decided to check out the new big library on campus—Davis. The enormous building had endless resources and endless spaces to gather and study. We felt so grown-up there, surrounded by studious (mostly) college students that gave a window to what our lives would soon be like. I still think back on it as the place I started to feel like the next chapter in my life was beginning.

Laura Tomokiyo, community member

Most of the time I have spent in Davis has been on the least-populated and often unknown floor—the basement. My favorite memories have been as a student assistant for microforms and government documents, digging into the hidden treasures of the basement like historical maps, Braille publications, pamphlets on bear-encounter safety, and many other unique items.

Abby Oldt ’24

Remember microfilm and microfiche? You can still access more than one million microforms on the lower level of Davis Library, along with the Library’s collection of government documents.

DID YOU KNOW...
The total cost of designing, building and furnishing Davis Library was $43,409,475. That would be nearly $130 million in today’s dollars.
NOTES FROM THE FRONT DESK

What’s changed, what hasn’t, and a truly wild mystery, from two employees with a close-up view of Davis Library.

The main service desk at Davis Library is the building’s nerve center. The circulation department employees who work there know every inch of the building and provide a warm welcome for newcomers and regulars alike.

We spoke with two longtime department members about what they’ve seen over the years. Michael Hanson is an evening and weekend supervisor who has worked at Davis since 1992. Joe Mitchem has worked at Davis since 2002; he became head of circulation in February 2020.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Joe Mitchem: Circulation is the public-facing department at the Libraries, and Davis is the hub. We help people find and borrow materials. We handle facilities and security. We assign study carrels and other study spaces. We issue borrower’s cards. There aren’t many fines anymore, but when there are, we deal with them.

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Students Allen Ashcraft and Scott Jones camped out all night to be the first two patrons when Davis Library opened on February 7, 1984. They checked out a copy of "1984" by George Orwell.

DID YOU KNOW...

Left: Davis Library circulation desk, 2021
Top and right: Scott Jones checking out George Orwell’s 1984 and then posing with Allen Ashcraft, 1984. Yackety Yack yearbook
Below: Davis Library circulation desk, 2001

Photo by Johnny Andrews/UNC-Chapel Hill

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33 WINDOWS
EVERYONE HAS SEEN SOME WEIRD STUFF

Michael Hanson: One night in the ’90s, at eight or nine o’clock at night, someone came up to the desk and told me there was a dead animal upstairs. And I said, okay, can you tell me what it is or where it is? She said she didn’t know what it was, but it was on the seventh floor on one of the study tables. So, I went up, and there was a dead beaver. Huge. This thing, it took up the whole table. And there was not a mark on it. It took five public safety officers to haul that thing out of here. And all I could think was, how did they get it in here, whoever brought it, without any of us noticing? It had to have come in the front door, right in front of our desk. I have no idea to this day.

WHAT HAS NOT CHANGED

JM: Since COVID, being inside the space seems to have become even more important to those who come here. The sense of community especially here in Davis seems better than ever. It seems like people are staying here longer.

More and more, we are aware that Davis is a space for the Carolina community, where people want to gather. I can only see that expanding. Davis will have to grow in many ways and have renovations to accommodate this. Because when it opened in 1984, the student population was not what it is now. The building had a lot more book stacks, and now we have more people. We’re facing challenges such as restrooms, plumbing, electrical outlets, things like that.

MH: For as long as I have worked here, this department, the circulation department, and Davis Library have been just an absolute joy to be in. We’ve kept a great, generous spirit in this department. We’re here because we enjoy being here. And we all work to create an environment that is pleasant to be in.

This place has been very good to me. I’m a novelist, and I needed a place to work that would not take too much of my energy away from the work that I did. And I have found, especially as I have aged, that I love being around young people. At this point, I’ve worked with thousands of college students. They remind me not to be so sure of myself, among many other things.

What hasn’t changed is the level of enthusiasm that young people have about the world and life. When you talk to a 20-year-old, they’re so excited, and they’re not put off by what a lot of others see as a crumbling world around them. Young people still have the freshness of a vision to be able to say, “Well, I don’t care, I’ve got my hopes and dreams, and I’m going after them.” That’s great to be around.
You can read more about Davis Library, but you’ll have to visit Wilson Library, where its history is documented in the North Carolina Collection and the University Archives.
Four decades have brought many changes to the largest library on campus. From space to services to technology, here are some of the ways Davis Library has evolved over the years.

1984
Doors open on February 7.

1986
Settling on the east side of Davis is stabilized after causing cracks in the marble flooring.

1985
Davis Library receives the Louis I. Kahn Citation for outstanding design.

1992
Davis Library opens 20 stations for searching CD-ROM databases.

1993
Two reference departments (one for humanities and the other for business and social sciences) merge.

1994
Electronic Information Services opens with 4 public stations offering World Wide Web access.

1997
The Information Commons opens on the first floor with 30 Internet stations.

2004
The University installs internet wiring and ports throughout Davis.

2006
The card catalog is removed, making way for additional computer stations and more seating.

2007
After compact shelving is installed in the basement, the maps collection moves from Wilson to Davis.

2013
The Odum Institute for Research in Social Science moves from Manning Hall to the second floor of Davis.

2014
The Research Hub (now operating as Library Data Services) opens on the second floor of Davis Library.

2015
A quarter-acre garden is planted directly behind Davis as part of the University’s Edible Campus initiative.

2016
A modern service desk replaces the original fixture near the Davis entrance and the reference desk.

2020
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Davis begins a drive-thru service so borrowers can pick up and return items from their cars.

2024
Davis Library marks its 40th birthday with an ‘80s-themed campus celebration.
“A responsibility to give back”

Andrew Herman (’91, MAC ’92) has made supporting Carolina’s libraries a priority since his undergraduate years.

BY MICHELE LYNN

His gratitude for the key role that the University Libraries played in his own education has motivated Herman’s support. He served nearly a decade on the Friends of the Libraries Board of Directors and has consistently prioritized giving to the Libraries, most recently to help fund improvements at Davis Library.

Davis Library holds a special place in Herman’s memories. Describing it as inviting and welcoming to students, Herman recalls spending hours there during his school days, meeting friends to work on projects together and finding small rooms in the stacks to study quietly on his own. “Davis sits at the epicenter of campus life — next to the Student Union with The Pit and dining hall nearby — so every student passes it,” he says. “It is a significant hub of Carolina’s student life.”

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Herman’s connection to the Libraries originated through a part-time job as a student employee in the Undergraduate Library, where he worked for one and a half years shelving books and checking them in and out. Michele Fletcher, who was then development director for the Libraries, invited Herman to become more involved.

“Every student at Carolina has had to walk through a campus library at some point, whether that’s to study or to do research,” says Herman. “UNC’s libraries also support staff and professors in their research and work. Libraries are critically important to the outstanding education provided at UNC-Chapel Hill.”

Although Herman has lived outside the Tar Heel state for more than 30 years — first for law school at Columbia University and then to work in Washington, D.C., where he practices corporate law, specializing in mergers and acquisitions as a partner at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP — he prioritizes staying connected to Carolina. The Raleigh native says that his UNC-Chapel Hill education led to many opportunities for him.

“I’ve decided to continue to support the University because I received tremendous value from my world-class education,” he says. “Giving to the Libraries allows my gifts to impact more than one single program, and instead benefit the entire University community, including undergraduates, graduate students and faculty.”

“From an educational and social perspective, Carolina taught me a lot,” Herman says. “I think it’s a responsibility to give back to the school.”

Private support for the University Libraries connects all Tar Heels with what they need to thrive at Carolina.

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This year, your gift can have an even bigger impact. Donors who give $1,000 or more will join the new University Librarian’s Circle.
I was hired in 1990 to help create a systems department. My first project was to assist in implementing a vendor system for library acquisitions. It was a stand-alone DEC minicomputer with dumb terminals attached to it. Today, I am part of a team managing 87 virtual servers that provide access to our online catalog, website, digital content and other library resources.

When you work in IT in the Library, your goal is to make material available to help people discover and produce knowledge. The job is new every day, and you always have to learn new skills.

David Romani is the lead Linux system administrator in the Library & Information Technology department.
OLD TIME JAM

Musician Rhiannon Giddens conducted research at Wilson Library as a Carolina Performing Arts artist-in-residence. On April 10, she and her Carolina Chocolate Drops collaborator Justin Robinson held a pop-up concert in front of Wilson to mark the end of her residency. Photo by Taylor Alaska Barrett/Carolina Performing Arts