The Denison Dispatch

An E-Newsletter from the Ella Strong Denison Library, Scripps College

Back On Campus and Open!

Denison Library reopened to patron use in August, after seventeen months of closure due to COVID-19 precautions. Our smiles may be hidden under our masks, but we are excited to be back among the library’s collections with our energetic cohort of Scripps student employees!

Denison Library now operates under a reservation system to help monitor and regulate the capacity of its seating areas, and patrons may make appointments for rare materials research, study space use, or exhibition viewing. To learn more about using the library or to make a reservation, please visit our website: www.scrippscollege.edu/denison.

The library’s first major event was the college’s matriculation ceremony in August, when we welcomed both the Classes of 2024 and 2025 shortly following their arrival on campus. They were greeted by bright umbrellas designed by Scripps alumna Elizabeth Turk (’83) as part of her Look Up event held on campus in mid-September, and the library installed a related exhibition about Look Up and the resiliency of the Scripps community. The exhibit includes original prints and conceptual notes from Turk, along with documents, photographs and ephemera from the Scripps College archives.

Students and faculty are excited to be back at Denison, and we’ve even hosted some classes outside in the library’s Valencia Courtyard as we adjust to new protocols for providing safe access to the library’s collections.
Three Scripps students were some of the first to return to campus this summer thanks to Denison Library’s Arthur Vining Davis Foundations Summer Internship and the Getty Marrow Undergraduate Internships Program.

Ishta Nabakka ('23) split her time between Denison Library and the Williamson Gallery as a Getty Marrow intern. At Denison, she arranged a previously unprocessed archival collection related to a member of the first graduating class at Scripps College, Elizabeth Paull Bunge ('31). This included scanning 160 photographs and creating descriptions in ContentDM. As part of her work, she learned and used the principles of professional archival processing, preservation and scanning standards.

Isabel Evans ('23), whose Summer Arthur Vining Davis Foundations 2020 internship was postponed until this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, immersed herself in the library’s children’s book collection while working on her project, “Reading as Resistance: Representations of Indigeneity in Twentieth Century American Children’s Literature.” Isabel’s internship provided her with an opportunity to expand her previous research for a class taught by Professor Julia Liss in Fall 2019 which she explored the interrogation of white supremacy and patriarchy in children’s literature from the 1960s. Isabel’s internship not only explored existing collections at Denison Library, but she also made recommendations for future acquisitions to strengthen the library’s holdings.

Helen Anderson’s ('22) research for her project, "Activism and Exploitation of Domestic Laborers During the Depression," provided her with the opportunity to conduct foundational research on women and employment in anticipation of writing her senior thesis this year. The papers of former Scripps faculty member and administrator Virginia Judy Esterly (1882-1946) were the cornerstone of her study, but she also explored the library’s photography books, former Scripps student theses, and other publications. In the course of her work, Helen noted similar issues for domestic laborers today in the COVID-19 era and during the Great Depression, and was excited to be back on campus, observing that "the internship would not have been as valuable of an experience if it had taken place remotely."

Applications for next year’s internships will be accepted during the Spring 2022 semester.
Twisted Tales & Spooky Spines: Denison Library's Annual Halloween Event Returns!

Make your reservation today to grab one of our exclusive spots to view a curated selection of some of the library's spine-chilling books in Denison Library’s Rare Book Room after the sun sets on Wednesday, October 27th.

Reservations can be made on the library’s website in thirty minute intervals for up to eight people at a time using our standard appointment system (www.scrippscollege.edu/denison). Be sure to select the option for Twisted Tales & Spooky Spines, and then choose your time slot. You don’t want to miss this once a year, spooktacular event!

Concurrently, we will also offer opportunities for Halloween-inspired creativity. Participate in an exquisite corpse collaboration or craft some bookish ghosts you can use to decorate your dorm room.

ON THE LIBRARY’S BOOKSHELVES

Rolls and Tubes: A History of Photography
Christy McDonald, Colleen Mullins, Jenny Sampson and Nicole White (2021)

A recent addition to the library’s collections is a boxed set of forty 5x7 photographic prints by four California Bay Area women examining the history of photography in the context of the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic when toilet tissue was a universally scarce resource. Produced in a limited edition of 100, this title further enhances the library’s holdings on photography by women while also documenting a unique time in our recent history. One of the artists, Jenny Sampson, is a Pitzer alumna.

Then and Now: The Scripps Student Investment Fund

In early 1973, the Scripps Student Investment Fund (SIF) began with a financial gift from alumna Mary Wig Johnson ('35), who at the time stated that her hope was “that students working with this fund will become sufficiently intrigued with its operation to be inspired to learn more about the economics and activities of the financial world.” At the time of its founding, this program was the first of its kind at a women’s college.

Nearly fifty years later, students still manage the fund’s portfolio and learn about investing. The composition of the group has grown from a cap of nine to fifteen students, technology has changed how they access information about the stock market, and today they distribute a percentage of their funds to Scripps student clubs and organizations. Inspired by some of the legacy images in the Scripps College Archives, they took a few photos at a recent meeting to update our collection.
From the Archives: Pass/Fail vs. Letter Grading at Scripps

Scripps College implements a Pass/Fail grading system at the start of the 1969-70 academic year and returned to letter grades in 1976-77. The new system had three levels: Distinction, Pass, Fail -- as well as Incomplete and Withdrawn -- and included extensive explanatory comments from faculty. Designed to provide students with clearer feedback and guidance about their academic work, what was initially a two-year grading experiment lasted for eight years. The adjacent image shows text from the 1969-70 Scripps College Catalog describing the aims of the grading system at that time.

However, this was not the first use of a non-letter grading system at Scripps. In 1930, during the Great Depression, the grading system was a set of terms: "Excellent, Good, Passable, Conditioned, and Failed," but by 1931 the system was changed to the simpler "Passed and Not Passed." During World War II, the Revised Faculty Digest from 1943 outlined a system of grading reported as "passed, conditioned, not passed or incomplete," yet for the purposes of the transcript an alphabetical letter grade could be included.

Recently, in Spring of 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the college to move to a Zoom-based remote instruction model, students formed a mutual aid society named Nobody Fails at Scripps. They proposed a universal pass grading policy to support students during the global health crisis and its associated economic and societal impacts. Scripps Faculty voted on and approved an adjusted grading system for Spring 2020 which included the full range of letter grades as well as I (Incomplete), PP (Pass Pandemic), and NRP (No Record Pandemic).

2021 Slocum Award Presented to Rose Gelfland Last May

Denison Library’s annual book collecting competition for Scripps Seniors took place virtually in Spring 2021. This year’s recipient of the award was Rose Gelfland, a sociology major whose collection was titled “The Revolution Will Be Embodied: A Queer Fat Poet’s Liberation Lit.” Gelfand described her book collection as “a mirror of myself, my community, and the world of deep liberatory connection I want to build,” demonstrating her passion for the book, the zine, and other versions of the printed word as sentinels along a journey towards liberation and self-love via movement and dance, radical critical theory, and creative nonfiction and poetry.

Of the many titles in her bibliography, Gelfland described Sonya Renee Taylor’s The Body is Not an Apology (2018, revised 2021) as a life-changing book in which “we ground all conversation about systems of oppression in the lived experience of our bodies.” Based on Gelfland’s recommendation, Denison Library acquired copies of Taylor’s book for inclusion in each of the browsing rooms in the residence halls on campus. Information about participating in the 2022 Slocum competition will be distributed to current Scripps seniors in December.