FALL 2010 UPDATE

FALL PROGRAM

Thursday, October 21, at 4:30 p.m.
Neilson Library Browsing Room

Author Sue Miller will speak about her writing life and respond to questions and comments from the audience

Miller, who is familiar to most for her nine novels and her short stories, is known also, at Smith, for the two years she recently spent teaching advanced-level creative writing courses as Elizabeth Drew Professor of English Language and Literature. Her works of fiction have been described as “elegant and sharply realistic accounts of the contemporary family.” She has also written a memoir about her father and his illness and death from Alzheimer’s disease. Her first novel, *The Good Mother*, was published in 1988 and her most recent, *The Lake Shore Limited*, came out this year. Many have been bestsellers and/or Book-of-the-Month Club main selections. *While I Was Gone* was an Oprah’s Book Club selection. She has had Guggenheim and Bunting Fellowships, taught at Tufts, MIT, Boston University and Amherst College, among others, and been a board member of PEN-American Center, a branch of the oldest international literary and human rights organization.

Cabinet of Culinary Curiosities: Books & Manuscripts from the Mortimer Rare Book Room

Morgan Gallery and the Book Arts Gallery, Neilson Library

A cabinet of curiosities is a private collection of esoteric objects from the realms of natural history, geology and archaeology as well as religious relics and works of art. The classic style of these cabinets emerged in the 16th century as one or more rooms overflowing with fascinating objects. An array of culinary oddities from books and manuscripts in the Mortimer Rare Book Room, featuring images and descriptions of food and eating from the 15th through the 21st centuries, is on display in Neilson Library exhibition through January 20, 2011. Some of the offerings include: recipes for puff pastry from 1669 to 1970; dining with gladiatorial entertainment; a tribute to Julia Child and her fellow Smith classmate, cooking teacher and writer, Charlotte Turgeon; cooking and dining for kings, queens, and mice. The exhibition is a component of “Table for Ten: The Art, History, and Science of Food,” a series of exhibitions and events organized by Museums 10, a group of museum and historical sites in the Pioneer Valley.

A big *Thank You* to all who supported us this past year. The 2009-2010 annual report of library donors can now be viewed at www.smith.edu/library/info/friends.

New Gifts Policy

The Libraries recently changed its policy for gifts of books and other materials. The Libraries will continue to add donated materials that meet the curricular and research needs of the college. However, only books and materials that have been approved in advance will be accepted. So if you are thinking of a donation, please see www.smith.edu/libraries/info/giving for guidelines or call the Friends’ Office.

Would You Rather be an eFriend?

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter (with live links), membership renewal letters and other correspondence via email, please contact Mary Irwin, mirwin@smith.edu.

Friends
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NOTEWORTHY ACQUISITIONS

The Mortimer Rare Book Room (MRBR) recently received a new cache of Sylvia Plath letters written to Clarissa Roche. Clarissa Tanner Roche (whose sister and aunt attended Smith) and her husband, the poet and translator Paul Roche met Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes at Smith in 1957, when Sylvia and Paul were instructors in the English department. Sylvia and Clarissa developed a close and enduring friendship. Plath's letters, written in the last year of her life, describe her “amateur novel” (The Bell Jar), the joys of motherhood, the challenges of living in the country, and, finally, the breakdown of her marriage to Ted Hughes. The letters are the gift of Roche’s daughter, Pandora Roche Smith.

The MRBR has also received a collection of thirteen early medical books, including Pechey’s Store-house of Physical Practice (1695), from Vana Carmona in honor of her daughter, Lonicera Lyttle ’10. Ann Mandel ’53 has presented another wonderful gift of English literature, including a proof copy of the 2nd edition of Woolf’s Common Reader (1925) and Clive Bell’s Legend of Monte della Sibilla, published by the Hogarth Press in 1923, with illustrations by Duncan Grant and inscribed by Bell to Mina Kirstein Curtiss ’18. Helen Scott Townsend Reed ’60 donated a little gem for the Landscape Studies students: Gilpin’s Dialogue Upon the Gardens of Viscount Cobham (1751), with forty engraved views of Stowe and the surrounding grounds and temples by George Vertue.

FSCL News
by Ann Shanahan ’59, Chair

Usually, in the space allotted to me, I address just one topic. But this time there is so much news, I’m going to spread myself thinner.

First, and most generously, we report an anonymous gift of $50,000 received this past spring. (It followed a gift in the same amount that arrived the previous semester.) In addition, the Smith Club of Darien, New Canaan, Norwalk and Wilton made an extraordinary contribution of $10,000 to the Libraries, marking the grand finale of the club’s annual book sale after fifty years. Competing with the Internet, eBay and e-readers has, unfortunately, reduced the worth and public consumption of the good old-fashioned (used) book. The club decided that a book sale was no longer a successful way to raise money for its scholarship fund, though its members will certainly continue to raise funds for Smith. This exceptional gift from the club will enable the new reading room, just inside the main entrance to Neilson, to add custom bookcases to house the Harvey and Myrtle Finison Book Collection, which features gold-stamped bindings and multi-colored onlays and is representative of the heyday of book binding in the U.S. (1885-1915).

Speaking of the reading room, I have had several opportunities to check on its progress. The transformation is moving along nicely, and when completed in November, the room will be an elegant and welcoming addition to Neilson and a tribute to all of you who have contributed to its realization.

On an entirely different note, we hope that you are looking, from time to time, at our website, particularly our page of faculty book recommendations: www.smith.edu/libraries/info/friends/events/facultybooks/index.html. We are inviting faculty members to give us their “short lists” of interesting books in their fields, books that have influenced their lives and/or books they are presently reading. Among those who have responded so far are Marjorie Senechal, Alice Hearst, Carol Zaleski and Andrew Zimbalist. We add a list or two each month, so keep coming back!

We also invite you to visit and post on the Friends of the Libraries Facebook site www.facebook.com/FSCLib

2010-2011
FSCL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ann E. Shanahan ’59, Chair; Elisabeth Doucett ’80; Jenny Frost ’78; Julie Jatron ’97; Kate Kelly ’73; Susan Novick ’81; Bethanne Patrick ’85; Lizanne Payne ’74; Elisabeth Morgan Pendleton ’62; Ex-Officio: Carol Christ, President, Honorary Chair; Christopher B. Loring, Director of Libraries; Carrie Cadwell Brown, Ed.M ’82, Executive Director, Alumnae Association; Sherrill Redmon, Coordinator of Library Special Collections; Mary Irwin, Executive Secretary.
A New Hat for Librarians: Trend-Spotting  
by Elisabeth Doucett ’80, Director of the Curtis Memorial Library, Brunswick, Maine, and a member of the Friends’ executive committee

Today’s public library directors spend a great deal of time considering what their libraries can do to stay relevant and useful to their communities. In this process they have started to use tools developed by businesses to understand what consumers want and need. One such tool is trend-spotting—identifying trends evolving in today’s world and determining if there are implications in that trend for their libraries.

To do trend-spotting, librarians review sources of trend information such as trendwatching.com, coolbusinessideas.com and coolhunting.com. They then brainstorm about how the trends identified on those sites might be made into new services for their library users. Those ideas that have the greatest potential promise are implemented.

As an example, at my library we zeroed in on the obvious trend of the ever-increasing number of new electronic gadgets going to market. We decided to build a library “technology petting zoo,” buying one of each major new technology developed (digital camera, e-reader, MP3 player, etc.). Staff members train themselves on each gadget, becoming sources of information for our patrons who want to understand how these gadgets might be useful to them. Finding a way for the library to take advantage of this trend helped the library stay relevant and provide better service—a good example of why trend-spotting is becoming a tool for today’s public librarians.

Academic libraries do much the same thing. I know that at Smith, the Friends have funded some iPads and iPod touches for staff and Kindles for student use to encourage exploration of mobile technology. Students can also check out a laptop or a Netbook at the circulation desk.

House Libraries by Ann Shanahan ’59

As if Bruce Sajdak, information literacy coordinator and fabled reference librarian, doesn’t have enough to do, he also is responsible for the care and feeding of house libraries, that is to say, the annual solicitation of lists and purchasing of books that students wish to add to libraries in their houses. The executive committee of the Friends of the Libraries invited Sajdak to luncheon during our most recent meeting to tell us about the house library system.

In the early years, having no college library, students used Northampton’s public library and the private Clarke Library. Over time, a number of house libraries were established. Each spring, Sajdak, receives lists from house presidents of about eight new books for each house library. “They can order just about anything they want,” he says, except for textbooks or non-print items like films.

At our luncheon, Sajdak circulated the 2009 book order list to the group. Committee members quickly abandoned a delicious dessert to pore over the lists. Many looked first at the list from the house they had lived in. (Among choices for Park, my house, were Commencement by J. Courtney Sullivan ’03—also chosen by many other houses—Power of Compassion by the Dalai Lama and Your Favorite Seuss, A Baker’s Dozen.) Interestingly, a number of houses asked, as usual, for at least one childhood favorite. Among them, a boxed set of Harry Potter; The Pigeon Wants a Puppy; Where the Wild Things Are; and The Baby Sitters Club.

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FALL EXHIBITIONS

*Cabinet of Culinary Curiosities: Books & Manuscripts from the Mortimer Rare Book Room*
Neilson Library: Morgan Gallery, Level 1 and the Book Arts Gallery, Level 3

September – October 2010
*Helen Gurley Brown: A Liberated Life*
Alumnae Gymnasium, Level 1

Through October 2010
*Illuminating the World: Facsimiles from the Hillyer Art Library Collection*
Hillyer Art Library foyer

House Libraries  *Continued from page 3:*

Books chosen by other houses (and sometimes several houses) were: *I am Charlotte Simmons, Speak Memory, Vasistha’s Yoga, Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Complete Grimm’s Fairy Tales, Dorm Room Feng Shui, To the Lighthouse, Witches of Eastwick, Oxford Illustrated Jane Austen* and *The Bell Jar.*

And, each year, there is a “required” book chosen by Sajdak. In 2009, it was the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, which has been “adapted by many disciplines and offers sound guidance for writing with simplicity, power and concision.”

Sylvia Plath fans will be interested to learn that the poet will be inducted into The Poet’s Corner at The Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York this fall. A celebration of her life and work will take place on Thursday, November 4 at 7:30 p.m. More information at www.stjohndivine.org.

The FRIENDS NEWS UPDATE is published twice yearly, in the fall and in the spring. Comments and suggestions may be addressed to Mary Irwin, Gifts & Development Officer, Neilson Library, Smith College, Northampton, MA 01063, Telephone: (413) 585-2903 or email: mirwin@smith.edu. Visit us online at www.smith.edu/libraries/info/friends or on Facebook www.facebook.com/FSCLib

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Please make your check payable to the Friends of the Smith College Libraries and mail to the FSCL Office, Neilson Library, Smith College, Northampton, MA 01063 or, if you prefer, enroll on-line at www.smith.edu/friends.