Exit Interview with Duke Librarian Deborah Jakubs
2020–2021 Annual Report

Lilly’s Transformation
Utility Players

Universities like Duke depend on student labor, and lots of it. From office work to cleaning lab equipment and re-shelving library books, students perform many important jobs around campus as a way of earning a little cash. One job you don’t see them doing, however, is construction work—for obvious liability reasons. But that wasn’t always the case.

John Jankoski of Milwaukee, Wisconsin (this page), and Vernie “Monk” Okle Jones of Weaverville, North Carolina (opposite), were both Duke students hired to work on the building site of West Campus, which was under construction in 1928, the year these photos were taken. You can see the railroad tracks that hauled Duke’s signature stone from the university’s private quarry in Hillsborough. Jones and Jankoski both played football for Duke. As athletes, they
had strong backs, which the university was more than happy to put to use.

In fact, a research team of Duke students exploring historical payroll ledgers in the University Archives uncovered the names of at least fourteen students hired to do manual labor on the West Campus construction site from 1927 to 1930, while they were also attending classes. Many were athletes, like Jones and Jankoski. They’re listed as everything from carpenters to painters to general laborers, and they typically earned around 30 cents per hour.

While the upcoming renovation of Lilly Library has many students excited, we can safely say they won’t be part of the construction crew! But we’ll definitely need their help in other ways once the project is finished.

Discover more about the individual laborers who built Duke’s campus: stonebystone.wixsite.com/duke.
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On the cover: Detail from the original blueprint for Lilly Library (1925). Duke University Archives. See p. 12 for more.
“To Stand by the Side of Freedom”: Abraham Lincoln and Nineteenth-Century America

Selections from the David M. Rubenstein Americana Collection

THROUGH MAY 14, 2022

Mary Duke Biddle Room

Abraham Lincoln led the United States through its greatest trial and through the end of American slavery. In doing so, he sought to protect “a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Lincoln helped reshape and reform notions of citizenship, identity, and service and made important contributions to conversations that continue today.

Throughout his political career, Lincoln was in dialogue with others, and his views and positions evolved over time. This exhibit explores the people and parties that influenced him and the ideas he advanced or opposed.

Looking back in 1876, abolitionist Frederick Douglass noted that “Our faith in [Lincoln] was often taxed and strained to the uttermost, but it never failed.” Lincoln’s struggles and choices challenge us to consider what unites us as a nation and which values are worth the ultimate sacrifices.

The Duke University Libraries are grateful to David M. Rubenstein for his loan of the print materials in this exhibition and for his generous support of the exhibition and accompanying programs. The items loaned are part of the David M. Rubenstein Americana Collection.
The Pretend Villages: Photographs by Christopher Sims
THROUGH FEBRUARY 27, 2022
Rubenstein Library Photograph Gallery

This exhibit documents the inhabitants and structures of imagined, fabricated Iraqi and Afghan villages on the training grounds of U.S. military bases. Situated in the deep forests of North Carolina and Louisiana and in a great expanse of desert near Death Valley in California, these villages serve as strange and poignant way stations for soldiers headed off to war, and for those who have fled from it. American troops encounter actors, often recent immigrants from Iraq and Afghanistan, who are paid to be “cultural role players.” Christopher Sims photographed in these surprising and fantastical realms from 2005 to 2018 as U.S. wars abroad fluctuated in intensity. Sims is an Associate Professor of the Practice in the Sanford School of Public Policy and the Undergraduate Education Director at the Center for Documentary Studies.

Celebrating Thirty Years of East Asian Collections
THROUGH APRIL 14, 2022
Michael and Karen Stone Family Gallery

The East Asian Collection at Duke University Libraries is a regional resource for students and researchers, containing over 200,000 volumes in Japanese, Chinese, and Korean languages across the humanities and social sciences. This exhibit celebrates the history and diversity of the collection, as well as related materials held by the Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library from the seventeenth century to the present that illuminate the culture and society of East Asia. Some materials shed light on westerners’ understanding of East Asian culture, while more recent acquisitions have been produced by East Asians for East Asians.

THROUGH MAY 29, 2022

Jerry and Bruce Chappell Family Gallery

Drawing on materials from the University Archives and oral histories, this exhibit traces the history of Latinx students, faculty, and staff at Duke University from the early 1900s to the present. Students in Professor Cecilia Márquez’s “Latinx Social Movements” course and Professor Joan Munné’s “Spanish for Heritage Learners” course conducted archival research and oral histories in the spring of 2021 to create an exhibition that communicates the multifaceted history of the Latinx experience at Duke, including challenges, inequities, and prejudices, as well as human stories and accomplishments worth celebrating.

**Witness to Guantanamo**

THROUGH FEBRUARY 27, 2022

Power Plant Gallery, American Tobacco Campus

On January 11, 2002, the first prisoners in America’s War on Terror arrived at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base. Some 780 detainees have been housed at the prison since then. Most of them were never charged with a crime, yet many were imprisoned for more than a decade. Over the past twenty years, many other lives have been drawn into Guantanamo: families of the detained, defense lawyers, prosecutors, doctors, interrogators, military personnel, journalists, diplomats, and others. Drawing on the Witness to Guantanamo Video Collection at Duke’s Rubenstein Library, this exhibit foregrounds the voices of the individuals whose lives were forever changed by their experience at “Gitmo.” Their first-hand testimonies reveal the physical, emotional, and political scars they bear and underscore how the extra-legal procedures deployed at Guantanamo hobbled rather than enabled the rule of law and the quest for truth and justice.

**Early Studies in Parapsychology at Duke**

THROUGH APRIL 14, 2022

Josiah Charles Trent History of Medicine Room

The Duke Parapsychology Laboratory was established in 1930 in an attempt to empirically study psychical and paranormal experiences. In its thirty-five-year history, lab members conducted experiments to investigate such paranormal phenomena as extrasensory perception (ESP), telepathy, psychokinesis, pre-cognition, and clairvoyance. Although the laboratory is no longer at Duke, the research continues at the Rhine Research Center in Durham. This exhibit shows a glimpse of the old laboratory: its people, its research, its progress, and its legacy.
Hodges Selected as ARL Leadership Fellow

Dracine Hodges, Associate University Librarian for Technical Services, has been selected by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) as a 2021-22 Leadership Fellow.

The ARL Leadership Fellows program develops and prepares the next generation of senior library and archival leaders “to meet present and future challenges.” Selection is highly competitive. Past Leadership Fellows have emerged as successful leaders in a wide array of roles and settings, including as deans and directors of research libraries and archives and as leaders at all levels in various organizations.

Hodges is a member of the Duke University Libraries senior leadership team. She provides administrative leadership for technical services, which supports the collections lifecycle and includes oversight of Conservation Services, Continuing Resource Acquisitions, Metadata & Discovery Strategy, Monograph Acquisitions, and Resource Description. She regularly represents and manages aspects of Duke’s engagement with the Triangle Research Library Network and the Ivy Plus Libraries Confederation. She is also an elected member of the international FOLIO Project’s Community Council and was recently appointed to HathiTrust’s Program Steering Committee.

“I am delighted and grateful for this wonderful opportunity,” said Hodges. “I look forward to engaging with the rich curriculum, collaborating with the community of fellows, and learning from knowledgeable experts across higher education. My hope is that this experience will help me to be a better, braver leader with core values that keep me self-aware and deserving of organizational trust.”

He’s Got News for You

Every October, we look for a parent of a Duke student who has an interesting job and invite them to share their experiences with other Duke moms and dads during Duke Family Weekend. This year, we were proud to welcome Sam Feist, Washington bureau chief and senior vice president of CNN.

The recipient of three Emmy Awards, Feist oversees operations of the D.C. bureau which includes CNN’s largest newsgathering operation, the production of CNN’s Washington-based programming, and major political events including election nights, conventions, inaugurations, town halls, and debates. He has produced interviews with such world leaders as Barack Obama, Donald Trump, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George H. W. Bush, Margaret Thatcher, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Yitzhak Rabin. Needless to say, he filled the room.

Feist and his wife, Danielle, are the parents of daughters Haylee, a first-year student at Duke, and Morgan, a junior in the Pratt School of Engineering.

Fun fact: On election night, Feist is the person at CNN responsible for projecting the winners.
Duke Grad Places in National Book Collectors Contest

Every other year, the Libraries present the Andrew T. Nadell Book Collectors Contest to recognize and encourage student bibliophiles at Duke. This year’s graduate-level winner was Joseph E. Hiller, a Ph.D. candidate in Cultural Anthropology, for his collection on small press, experimental, and untranslated Latin American literature. As the first-place winner, Hiller was eligible to enter the National Collegiate Book Collecting Contest in Washington, D.C.—where he also won the essay award! Hiller’s collection began while he was a graduate student in Latin American Studies at Tulane, when he first realized how difficult it can be to find Spanish-language literature in the United States, except for the works of certain major authors like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jorge Luis Borges. At Duke, the biennial book collectors contest is named for Dr. Andrew T. Nadell M’74, who began collecting rare books when he was a student here. He now collects early books and manuscripts on the learned professions and skilled trades, an expansion of his earlier interest in medicine as a profession.

Project Vox Celebrates 100,000 Visitors

Seven years ago, a team of Duke library staff worked with Andrew Janiak, Creed C. Black Professor and Chair of the Department of Philosophy, to launch Project Vox (projectvox.org)—an open-source, peer-reviewed resource hosted by the Libraries that aims to highlight “philosophical works from marginalized individuals traditionally excluded from the philosophical canon,” especially women. This fall, the website passed a significant milestone—100,000 unique visitors. That’s a big reach for a relatively small team of faculty, librarians, staff, graduate students, and undergraduates. And it demonstrates the importance and potential of open-access scholarship.

Visitors to Project Vox can find profiles on women philosophers whose contributions have often gone overlooked, such as Margaret Cavendish, Émilie Du Châtelet, and Damaris Masham. Their lives and work are represented through a rich array of primary texts (many difficult to find otherwise), secondary sources, and bibliographic materials. The site is intended for teachers and students of philosophy and includes sample syllabi, timelines, and other pedagogical resources.

25 Years of Preserving “Black Lives in Archives”

This academic year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History & Culture. The Franklin Research Center, which is based in the Rubenstein Library, is named in honor of the pioneering historian John Hope Franklin, who served as the James B. Duke Professor of History at Duke from 1982 to 1992. After he retired, Franklin donated his personal archive to Duke and the Libraries founded the Franklin Research Center in his honor, as a designated collecting area specializing in rare book and primary sources documenting people of African descent. Since then, the center has grown into a premiere destination for researchers near and far interested in the history and culture of Africa and people of the African Diaspora in the Americas. To celebrate its anniversary, the center has been hosting a slate of virtual talks this semester around the theme “Black Lives in Archives,” featuring scholars who have used the center’s collections in their research. Additional programs are planned for the spring semester.
**Libraries Launch William Styron Writing Prize**

Before he became a literary icon, William Styron was an undergraduate student at Duke (Class of 1947), where he spent countless hours in the library. Today, Styron’s personal papers are part of that library, where they continue to offer a rich resource for exhibitions, class sessions, and the scholarly exploration of the writer’s process and influence. In order to recognize Styron’s contributions to American letters, and also encourage the next generation of budding writers at Duke, the Duke University Libraries are seeking to establish a new award—the William Styron Writing Prize. Once it’s fully funded, the prize will be presented to one Duke undergraduate student each year in recognition of an outstanding work of creative writing. To date, the Libraries have raised almost $175,000 toward a goal of $300,000, which will fully fund a restricted endowment. Interested in supporting this lasting recognition of a brilliant man and encouraging the next generation of writers at Duke? Gifts and pledges of any amount are welcome and may be directed to our Development Office at (919) 660-5856 or library.duke.edu/support.

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**Chapman Wins Florence Blakely Award**

The Academy has the Oscars. Sweden has the Nobel Prize. Here in the Libraries, we have the Florence Blakely Award. It’s the highest staff honor conferred by the Duke University Libraries, recognizing extraordinary performance that far exceeds individual goals or expectations. The award is presented annually to a library staff member who is innovative, benefits the Duke community, and effectively promotes access to information. This year’s award was presented to Joyce Chapman, Assessment Analyst and Consultant in the Libraries’ Assessment and User Experience department. Although much of her work might be considered behind the scenes, Chapman has been at the forefront of numerous efforts to assess and improve the experiences of both students and library staff.

For example, in the early days of the pandemic she designed a weekly “PULSE” survey to help the library administration understand how best to support staff working under difficult circumstances, and to allow staff to self-report how they were faring. She was also instrumental in designing our 2019 Black Student Study, which sought to understand the experiences of Black students at Duke. The report garnered widespread interest from university administrators, faculty, and staff and has led to numerous presentations and discussions at Duke and across the country. Congratulations, Joyce!
$10M Grant Brings Lilly Library Transformation Closer

For first-year students living on Duke University’s East Campus, Lilly Library may be their first foray into academic research. The library and its staff help them understand how to make their way through the resources available to them and prepare them for the rest of their time at Duke. But, as a vital piece of Duke for almost a century, it’s beginning to show its age.

Now, in support of the first significant renovation of the library since it was built, the Duke University Libraries have received a $10 million grant from The Duke Endowment, a private foundation based in Charlotte, N.C. "This much-needed renovation, which is currently in the design phase, will allow us to improve the student experience at Duke for generations, while preserving the charm and character that so many Blue Devils have always loved about Lilly Library," said Duke University President Vincent E. Price. "We are so grateful for this generous award." Construction on the project was originally slated to begin in summer 2020 but was delayed by the spread of COVID-19. Library staff had already begun relocating materials, services and personnel when the pandemic forced Duke to close campus and move classes online in spring 2020.

Now that in-person classes have resumed, the need to renovate the aging structure remains as pressing as before. "Lilly Library has been remarkably well-preserved since the Great Depression, and that’s part of the problem" said Deborah Jakubs, the Rita DiGiallonardo Holloway University Librarian and Vice Provost for Library Affairs. "Lilly lacks most of the elements of a modern research library. Many of the library services and spaces today’s students need to succeed are available in Perkins, Bostock and Rubenstein Libraries on West Campus, but not on East."

Lilly Library opened in 1927 as Duke University’s first library on East Campus while West Campus was being constructed. For more than four decades it served as the Woman’s College Library, but, when the Woman’s College merged with Trinity
College of Arts & Sciences in 1972, the library was renamed the East Campus Library.

In 1993, a partial renovation upgraded computing facilities and increased the book stacks capacity, and the building was renamed Lilly Library in recognition of a gift from Ruth Lilly, the philanthropist and great-grandchild of pharmaceutical magnate Eli Lilly. Since then, Lilly has served as the primary library for first-year students at Duke and as their gateway to the full range of library collections and services.

The proposed renovation and expansion will increase the building’s footprint. It will have significantly more seating and offer more collaborative study spaces, an assembly space for events, a makerspace, a writing studio where students can work with tutors on their assignments, an outdoor terrace, and a warmly furnished Booklover’s Room—a modern take on a much-loved part of the historical Woman’s College Library.

The planned renovation will also update facility needs—including the heating and cooling systems, lighting, technology infrastructure, and furnishings—to meet today’s standards of safety, accessibility, usability and service.

Proposed updates will also extend to the elegant Thomas, Few, and Carpenter reading rooms. The charm and character of these iconic spaces will be preserved, but their finishes, furnishings, lighting, and technology infrastructure will be enhanced.

The Duke Endowment award brings the total funds raised to date to $27.4 million. This includes a prior $10 million combined gift from Ruth Lilly’s nieces and their families—Virginia “Ginny” Lilly Nicholas and Peter Nicholas and Irene “Renie” Lilly McCutchen and William McCutchen—as well as the Lilly Endowment, a private philanthropic foundation based in Indianapolis. Additional fundraising is required before the project can be approved for construction.

“Through his early philanthropy, we know our founder believed that libraries held a vital role in enriching campus life and helping students flourish,” said Minor Shaw, Chair of The Duke Endowment’s Board of Trustees. “Supporting this project continues an important aspect of James B. Duke’s legacy and we are proud to be part of Lilly Library’s transformation.”

For more information about the Lilly Library expansion and renovation, visit library.duke.edu/lillyproject.
Rooting for Lilly?

That’s the Ticket

The next time you attend a Duke sporting event, check the back of your ticket. For every ticket sold to regular season home games, Duke Athletics donates one dollar to the Duke University Libraries. It’s an arrangement that has raised over $2.1 million in unrestricted revenue over the last ten years, which we’ve used to support teaching and research across the university.

Now, thanks to the leadership of Nina King, Duke’s newest Vice President and Director of Athletics, the next $1 million in ticket sale donations will be directed toward the renovation and expansion of Lilly Library.

When you show your support for the Blue Devils, you’re not just rooting for the young men and women on the field. You’re helping us make a big play for the entire Duke community and enhancing the student experience for years to come.

“The Duke Athletics Library Fund is a perfect example of the kind of innovative thinking that makes Duke a top-ranked academic institution,” said Deborah Jakubs, the Rita DiGiallonardo Holloway University Librarian and Vice Provost for Library Affairs. “We’re deeply gratified and honored that the Lilly Project has the support of Duke Athletics. It’s truly a gift to the entire Duke community.”
What Was It Like When Lilly Was Built?

To understand why Lilly Library needs renovating, it helps to consider how old the building actually is. So let’s look back at 1927, the year the library opened its doors.

The President of the United States was Calvin Coolidge, known as “Silent Cal” for being a man of few words. (When was the last time one of those got elected?) Speaking of presidents, work had just begun on George Washington’s face, the first to be carved on Mount Rushmore.

It was the year the first transatlantic phone call was made, as well as the first transatlantic flight piloted by Charles Lindbergh in his single-engine Spirit of St. Louis. Novelist Virginia Woolf had just published her masterpiece To the Lighthouse—parts of which were possibly written at the very desk you can see today in Duke’s Rubenstein Library. Meanwhile, moviegoers flocked to see The Jazz Singer, featuring Al Jolsen in blackface, the picture that marked the end of the silent film era.

In 1927 the world was home to just over two billion people. Some 45,000 of them lived in Durham, North Carolina—compared with 320,000 today. About 8,000 registered cars made up all the traffic there was on Durham’s streets. A pound of bread cost nine cents.

Undergraduate tuition at the fledgling Duke University was $90 per year, not including room and board. That was much cheaper than the $227 charged by Vanderbilt, not to mention the Ivy League schools in the Northeast that Duke aspired to emulate, which were in the $300-400 range. It was even a bargain compared to that other university down the road in Chapel Hill ($111).

Higher education back then was not the big business it is today. In 1927, only 12 percent of 18-21 year-olds in America were matriculating towards an undergraduate or graduate degree—just over a million young men and women nationwide. They were overwhelmingly men, to be sure, but 1927 was also the year Duke Law School admitted its first woman, Miriam Cox.

Duke’s libraries were different, too. Or library, rather, because there was only one, and it would eventually be named Lilly. The Gothic West Campus was still being built. When it officially opened to students on March 14, 1927, the Chronicle student newspaper marveled that the new library on East Campus had the capacity to store 140,000 volumes. That was plenty of room to grow, since the total collection at that time was only 89,000 books and 2,000 volumes of newspapers—each of which was carried into the new building on the backs of “more than a score of negro workmen who were outfitted with specially constructed wooden crates.” According to University Treasury ledgers, those men earned an average of 26 cents per hour.

Needless to say, the world has changed immeasurably since 1927. But Lilly Library has not. On the whole, the aging edifice is still the same building the great-great-grandparents of today’s Duke students would recognize, only leakier and more neglected. That’s why this renovation is long overdue.
Total volumes in our collection: 

8,571,491

Number of times all those books would wrap around the East Campus walking track, if you lined them up: 

79.5

Find out more interesting facts and figures in the Duke University Libraries Annual Report.
Earlier this fall, Deborah Jakubs, the Rita DiGiallonardo Holloway University Librarian and Vice Provost for Library Affairs, announced that she will retire in May 2022, following nearly four decades of service at Duke University.

Jakubs, whose career at Duke began in 1983, was named University Librarian in 2005. During the last seventeen years, she has led Duke University Libraries through significant changes in the scholarly publishing environment, new trends in teaching and research, Duke’s increased emphasis on global engagement, and a broadening of the Libraries’ roles and partnerships across campus.

“The Duke Libraries are first and foremost a community of dedicated people committed to teaching, learning, and research,” said Jakubs. “I chose to spend my career at Duke thanks to the excellence of our staff, the collaborative partnerships we enjoy with the faculty, the students who come to regard our libraries as a second home, and the strong support of alumni who recall their time here with gratitude and fondness.”

The Libraries’ physical presence on campus has changed significantly during Jakubs’ tenure, including the dedication of Bostock Library and the von der Heyden Pavilion, the renovation of Perkins and Rubenstein Libraries, the construction of The Link and The Edge, and the expansion of the Library Service Center. Planning is now underway for the renovation and expansion of Lilly Library on East Campus.

“All of us at Duke are grateful for Deborah’s extraordinary service,” said Duke President Vincent E. Price. “In her time as University Librarian, she has overseen a transformation of Duke Libraries to make them more inclusive, innovative, and responsive to the needs of our students, faculty, staff, and neighbors. We can truly be proud of the Duke Libraries she leaves behind, which are more vibrant and vital than ever.”

Under Jakubs’ leadership, the Duke University Libraries have emerged as one of the top ten private research library systems in the country, recognized nationally for addressing pressing issues in scholarly communication, new forms of publications, collaborative collection building, assessment and user experience, and diversity and equity in services and recruitment.

“Deborah has led Duke Libraries through a period of remarkable growth and evolution in the role and function of university library systems,” Provost Sally Kornbluth said. “From her early efforts to expand services and resources supporting international scholarship, and throughout her tenure as University Librarian, she has ensured that Duke’s library resources and services are responsive to both user needs and new developments in the technologies and best practices for delivering scholarly support.”

“Deborah has led Duke Libraries through a period of remarkable growth and evolution in the role and function of university library systems.”

Sally Kornbluth, Provost
During her tenure, the Libraries have prioritized cultivating an inclusive community as one of the organization’s five guiding principles and have established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council (DivE-In) to provide leadership and engage staff to advance this work.

Jakubs has been a visible and active member of the Duke community in her work with various university councils and committees, including the President’s Campaign Cabinet; the Steering Committee for the Center for Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation; the Provost’s Committee on Rethinking Doctoral Education; the Humanities Writ Large Steering Committee; and numerous others.

Beyond Duke, Jakubs has also taken leading roles in organizations and consortia that have benefited researchers locally, regionally, nationally, and worldwide. She has chaired and served on the board of directors of the Association of Research Libraries, the Center for Research Libraries, the Open Library Foundation, and the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries. In her role as chair of the Open Library Environment (OLE) Board of Directors, she has contributed to the development of FOLIO, an open-source, community-based library services platform in collaboration with research libraries in the United States, Europe, and China. She has also served on numerous external review committees at other universities.

“Deborah has been the perfect leader for a library system in a rapidly changing world,” said Ann Q. Curry, Chairman and Chief Client Strategist at Coxe Curry and Associates and chair of the Duke Library Advisory Board. “She is both nimble and thoughtful; a builder of beautiful library spaces and a change agent for the space the library occupies in the university. She has constructed a strong, diverse staff, raising the library’s reputation nationally. And, along with all these scholarly accomplishments, she is, speaking as someone who traveled to Colombia with her, just plain fun.”

Jakubs earned her B.A. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1973; her M.A. from Stanford University in 1975; her M.L.I.S. from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1981; and her Ph.D. in Latin American History from Stanford in 1986.

Her first position at Duke in 1983 was as a General Bibliographer. She was named Librarian for Latin America and Iberia in 1986 and Head of Collection Development in 1990. In 1991, in response to an international turn in teaching and research at Duke, Jakubs created the Libraries’ International and Area Studies Department. She served as head of that department for eight years before being promoted to Associate University Librarian for Collections Services in 1998, then University Librarian and Vice Provost for Library Affairs in 2005.

As her retirement approaches, the Office of the Provost and a faculty-led search committee are overseeing the search for a new University Librarian. In the meantime, Jakubs is focusing her energies on finalizing plans and fundraising for the Lilly Project, which will cap off a long chapter of expansion and renewal in the history of the Duke University Libraries for which she will be remembered.
When you were planning for retirement, you probably didn’t expect your last couple of years would coincide with a global pandemic, a nationwide racial reckoning, and a fundamental shift in the way we work. What have been some of the toughest challenges you’ve had to deal with these last two years? What about some of the bright spots?

One of the toughest challenges has been striking a balance between maintaining continuity in library services and making sure that our people don’t burn out. Our staff is so incredibly dedicated, and the campus depends on us so much. You have to balance the need to continue our operations with being sensitive and empathetic, making sure that everyone’s level of dedication to their work is healthy, so that they also keep themselves, their families, and their kids healthy.

On top of that came an intense time of reckoning around racial and social justice. In the summer of 2020, there was a sense of urgency to do something. But what could we do when we were working from home and our buildings were closed? Life wasn’t exactly normal, and it still isn’t. But we found many ways to press on and make ourselves better, to engage in community reflection, to become more welcoming and inclusive, to create an Antiracism Roadmap, all of which I’m proud of.

One of the very brightest spots was opening the buildings to the students again and seeing how they flocked back in to what I think of as their spaces. It was a reminder of how much we’re appreciated, and how central the Libraries are to teaching and learning at Duke. Another bright spot was when our Library Takeout video went viral, a great example of how we tried to keep our senses of humor through it all. Over 900,000 views on YouTube!

You started working at Duke in 1983. Surely in the last 38 years you’ve had opportunities or offers to go elsewhere. What are some of the reasons why you’ve stayed at Duke for so long?

Despite having spent most of my career at a single institution, my work and responsibilities have been quite varied over the years. I started out as a General Bibliographer, then I became the Librarian for Latin America and Iberia, then I became the Head of Collection Development. Then I created our International and Area Studies department and became head, while continuing to be responsible for Latin America and Iberia. Then I became Associate University Librarian for Collections. And while in that role I had a six-year stint splitting my time here and as a Visiting Program Officer at the Association of Research Libraries. So I really had many different jobs and different challenges along the way.

Another reason I stayed is that the Duke Libraries, and the people who work here, are so highly regarded. We’re seen as partners and collaborators who bring to the table an incredible set of skills that complement what faculty themselves have. There’s a sense of being truly valued as a group of smart and dedicated people, not just a service. And it’s not that way other places, believe me. What we have at Duke is something very special, and it has kept me here.
Thirty-eight years is a long time, but it’s not uncommon to hear of library co-workers retiring after 25, 30, 40 years or more. Right now, the average Duke library staff member has 13 years of service. Why do you think so many people stay for so long? What makes working here so satisfying?

This is the kind of place where you can have ideas and see them implemented. I often think about a conversation I had years ago with Bob Keohane. I’ve known Bob and Nan Keohane (former Duke University President, 1993-2004) since I was a grad student at Stanford, where they were teaching at the time. When David Ferriero announced he was leaving Duke to head up the New York Public Library, I had to make a choice. I could either accept a job I had been offered leading the University of Chicago Library, or throw my hat into the ring here. While I was trying to decide what to do, Bob told me something that I’ve remembered often: that institutions have personalities. Duke’s personality is very different from Chicago’s. We’re a younger institution, but also more experimental and entrepreneurial. That same personality also pervades the Duke Libraries. We have very strong traditional collections and services, but we also like to try new things and we are encouraged to do just that. So I think there’s a sense among our library staff that they can make a difference with their ideas. Not just do a job but really contribute and be appreciated for their creativity and innovation. In the end I decided I would be more comfortable at Duke.

How do you think your academic background as a Latin Americanist influenced your perspective on the work and mission of a research library?

I think it’s more the fact that I have a strong background in research that has influenced my perspective. So I understand the value of deep and broad collections that are curated by people with the knowledge to anticipate scholarly trends, but who can also be responsive to the needs of scholars for what might seem like obscure materials.

When I was a Ph.D. student at Stanford, I remember walking through the stacks and coming across a city directory for Buenos Aires from 1880. And I thought, this book has information that is so important to my work! Who bought this? Who had the forethought to put this here for me? Obviously, we can’t be a big warehouse of books “just in case.” But we do have a serious responsibility as a major research library to assemble and curate collections in areas of strength that people will come to use—not only our own students and faculty, but researchers from around the world. We are known for our collecting in certain fields, and it’s our responsibility to continue to build those deep and broad distinctive collections, for present and future scholars and students.
As a library leader, not just at Duke but in the profession as a whole, you’ve had an influence on many people over the years. When you think about your own career path, who were some of the most influential or inspiring people you met along the way?

One of them would be David Ferriero, who served as Duke’s University Librarian prior to me, and with whom I had the great pleasure of working. Another would be David Stam, who used to lead the New York Public Library and went on to lead the libraries at Syracuse University. Then there’s Nan Keohane, whom I mentioned earlier. She was a role model for me, and I have great admiration for her. I keep a quote from Nan near my desk in my office, and it sums up a significant part of my philosophy on leadership: “I learned the importance of having good people around you, because there’s never a job that you do all by yourself. Knowing how to pick the right people, knowing how to work with them, inspire them, be inspired by them, help them, criticize them, encourage them to criticize you in the right thoughtful ways is an invaluable part of being a leader.”

Compassion and empathy are really central to my view of leadership, and they’re central to the people I admire the most. You also learn a lot from watching people you don’t admire for their leadership style. Understanding what not to do can be an important part of forming who you are as a leader.

Looking back on your time as University Librarian, what are some of the things you’re most proud of?

I’m really proud of having overseen the Perkins Project, the physical renovation of the Libraries on Duke’s West Campus, and watching them become the academic and social center of the university. The renovation of the Rubenstein Library meant that, at last, Duke had a library facility on a par with our remarkable special collections. And I’m proud that the Perkins Project was very inclusive of students, faculty, and staff. That’s one of the great lessons I learned from the architects we’ve worked with, especially Geoff Freeman and Tom Kearns. I used to think that renovating a building was simple and straightforward. You just fix it up. But no, I learned that the first thing you do is sit down with a group of stakeholders and ask, “What’s going to happen here? What are the functions of this space?” And you build up from there.

Along with the renovations, I’m also proud of our record of fundraising over the years. I will be very pleased to see the Lilly Library renovated and expanded. That’s the final piece we’re trying to finish now, to bring that charming library up to modern standards. I look forward to being at that rededication event in a few years.

One of the few constants about working in a library is change. Few parts of Duke have changed so much as the Libraries. Looking back over almost four decades, it would take a long time to describe all the changes you’ve seen. But is there anything about this place or the work we do that has essentially stayed the same?

I think one aspect that has stayed the same is our service mentality. We provide the essential intellectual scaffolding or infrastructure that supports the teaching and research enterprise of the entire university, across all disciplines. The scope of what we do has greatly broadened over time. But that basic service philosophy plays out in all of our operations and in many different forms, from special collections to research data management and more, across all interactions that our expert staff have with library users, every day.
“I’m really proud of having overseen the Perkins Project, the physical renovation of the Libraries on Duke’s West Campus, and watching them become the academic and social center of the university.”
What are some of your hopes for the Duke University Libraries as you pass the torch to someone else?

Obviously I have high hopes for the completion of the Lilly Project. Another thing I hope for is budget stability. Because we support everyone on campus and are an essential player in intellectual life, we need budget stability and predictability to keep up with the demand for our collections and services—and the talented staff who provide those services. And as Duke prepares for a new capital campaign, I hope that the Libraries have a seat up close to the table, that the university recognizes the centrality of the Libraries to all of its campaign priorities.

But deep down, because I’ve been in the Libraries so long and feel that we’re a kind of family, a close-knit community, what I really want is for the next person to also feel that way, and to take good care of our people.

One of the great things about working in a world-class library is getting to see and touch priceless literary and historical treasures. If retiring University Librarians got to take one thing from our special collections and keep it for themselves, what would you choose?

Ha! Maybe one of the double elephant folio Audubons. (Duke has a complete set of the *Birds of America*.) I’d settle for one volume, but then I would be breaking up the set. I’d be happy if I could just borrow it from time to time.

After you officially step down, you’ve said you’ll be on a six-month sabbatical to pursue two of your own research projects. Tell us a little more about what you’re going to be doing.

Three years ago I traveled to the Falkland Islands or, to the Argentines, the Islas Malvinas, and I interviewed a number of people who live there. The Anglo-Argentine community has been an interest of mine since I was a graduate student. Of all the immigrant groups in Argentina, it was among the smallest in size but had a disproportionately large impact. I ended my dissertation with an epilogue about the Falklands/Malvinas War, which was happening at the time I was writing. I’m interested in following up on some of those conversations and maybe exploring that identity a bit more.

I’m also going to be helping to organize and process Ariel Dorfman’s papers. The last trip that I made anywhere before the pandemic was to Chile to box up his books and papers there and bring them here to Duke. I’ve known Ariel for many years, he’s been a close family friend. I would like to make a contribution by helping future researchers gain access to his materials. So in a way, both of these projects are a return to my roots as a researcher and a librarian.
"Because I’ve been in the Libraries so long and feel that we’re a kind of family, a close-knit community, what I really want is for the next person to also feel that way, and to take good care of our people."
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The Genuine Article

On display now in the Rubenstein Library’s Mary Duke Biddle Room is this rare “authorized edition” of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln himself. It was printed in 1864 and sold at the Philadelphia Great Central Sanitary Fair to raise funds for the aid and care of Union troops. Out of forty-eight copies originally issued, only twenty-six survive. As momentous as it was, the Emancipation Proclamation was also a complicated and limited step toward extending rights and freedoms to Black Americans. Enslaved people in Confederate areas had been “set free” but not yet “made free.” The Proclamation’s implementation depended on Union victories, and the freedoms and rights it promised would not be permanent until they were written into the Constitution as amendments. The first of those amendments to become law, the Thirteenth Amendment, is also on display in a rare manuscript copy, also signed by Lincoln. Both documents are part of the exhibit “To Stand by the Side of Freedom: Abraham Lincoln and 19th-Century America,” featuring rare and unique materials from David M. Rubenstein’s personal collection. The exhibit marks the reopening of the Mary Duke Biddle Room, which has been closed to visitors since March 2020.
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