



## Oviatt's Treasures on Display

What do a signed portfolio of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, illustrated by Salvador Dali, a 19th century composition by Spanish guitarist Jose Fernando Marcario Sur, and a 13th century Latin Vulgate Bible have in common? Give up? All three are components of the Oviatt Library's Special Collection and until March 31 are on display in the C.K. and Teresa Tseng Gallery.

Many other equally intriguing items can be found among the glass cases of the "Treasures of the Oviatt Library" exhibition. One surprising treasure is a semi-acoustic guitar, circa 1955, previously owned by Randy Rhoads, lead guitarist for Ozzy Osborne. Photos of Rhoads accompany the guitar and documentation indicates that, though attracted to the instrument in elementary school, Rhoads' path to a career as a rock guitarist was set when he attended his first rock concert in 1971.

Also represented in the exhibition is the Library's large and unique "Old China Hands Archive." A large map of China dating from the late 1920's, the country's outline emblazoned with stylistic drawings evocative of a bygone age, adorns one wall. In a nearby case sits a 1938 painting of the Pei-Yu-Shan Lighthouse, a familiar landmark on the China coast, painted by Nina Demiakin Shestakoff, a resident of the lighthouse when her Russian parents were keepers in the early 20th century. Close by among the memorabilia is a Boy Scout shirt, complete with merit badges and other awards, worn by Richard Wyatt of the 7th Shanghai Rovers.

The "Treasures" exhibition was inaugurated on November 10 with a reception for Library supporters. While perusing the display, hors d'oeuvres in hand, attendees were treated to chamber music by a four-person string ensemble provided by the Latin American Repertoire Orchestra Association. In her introductory talk at the gala event Sue Curzon, Library Dean noted that, among many other things, the Oviatt Library Special Collection contains



Randy Rhoads' guitar

"...a Cuneiform cone...created by the Sumerians. This single piece creates a link between our Library today and the ancient Sumerians who, along the banks of the Euphrates River, in the 3rd millennium BC developed some of the earliest libraries."

The reception was hosted jointly by the Friends of the Library and by long-time Library patrons Gus and Erika Manders. The Manders family's support for the Library is "...just a little payback for all the University has given me and my family," says Gus, whose association with the University began in the early 1960s when he helped set up computer labs. Since then, nearly all of the Manders' children have attended and received degrees from the University. Gus himself still

attends classes and is involved in the SAGE Society, a learning-in-retirement organization for retired and semi-retired seniors interested in intellectual and cultural stimulation.

According to its website, the Special Collections assemblage includes "...a marvelous array of manuscripts, rare books, maps, and selected sound and video recordings." Among the Collections' archives, all of them cataloged and open for research, are documents and memorabilia related to such diverse topics as human sexuality, Japanese-American internment from 1942 through 1945, radio and television scripts, music, and California studies. The entire collection consists of donated items entrusted to the University for safekeeping.

Also on display at the "Treasures" exhibition are two classic books from the Bullough's Collection on Sex & Gender, a component of the University's Center for Sex Research and its Institute for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Studies. One tome, an 1857 edition of William Action's *Prostitution*, once was the property of Charles Dickens. The second, a 1774 English translation of *De mortis venereis* by the French physician, Jean Astruc, is the

## Ethel Bliven Honored for University Service

On November 19, the University's Alumni Association honored the contributions of more than 20 volunteers at its Third Annual Volunteer Service luncheon.

Among those singled out for recognition was Friends of the Oviatt Library's own Ethel Bliven, who received the Association's highest Voluntary Service Award.

Bliven, a long-time member of the University community, is no stranger to hard work and commitment to service. A member of the Friends of the Oviatt Library board of directors for many years, she has served multiple stints as that body's secretary and as historian. In addition, Bliven has worked regularly in the Friends' fundraising bookstore and special book sales conducted in the Oviatt Library lobby.

Bliven began working at the University in 1970 as secretary to the Dean of Letters and Sciences, then the Dean of Humanities when the school was divided. After retiring in 1986 she began volunteer service at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), and continued for 15 years. About ten years ago she joined the CSUN Arts Council as a volunteer. It was there that she met Bernice Haber, a member of the Friends of the Oviatt Library, who encouraged her to join that organization's volunteer team as well. In addition to her service to the Arts Council and to Friends of the Library, Bliven has volunteered at the Granada Hills Library, the San Fernando Iris Association and the El Cariso Women's Golf Club.

The Alumni awards were bestowed by President Jolene Koester. Accompanied on stage by Library Dean Susan Curzon, Bliven was presented a plaque commemorating her contributions. Among the honorees was former Los Angeles City Councilwoman, Joy Picus, who was recognized for her services to the com-



## Treasures (Cont'd)

first systematic examination of venereal diseases. Dr. Vern Bullough, founding director of the Center for Sex Research, now retired, attended the opening reception.

Ending her introductory comments, Dean Curzon quoted the

## Bliven (Cont'd)

munity and to CSUN's Colleges of Social and Behavioral Sciences and Arts, Media and Communication.

Bliven grew up on her family's farm in Crookston, Minnesota, near Grand Forks, North Dakota, where she and her siblings helped raise grain, hay, sugar beets, corn and potatoes. They also tended cattle, horses and other farm animals. Says Bliven, "Depression circumstances required many young people to contribute their labor to the farming economy during the growing season. Consequently, some high school students in the area attended school just six months of the year in a program provided through the University of Minnesota.

After graduation from a business program, Bliven worked four and a half years as a secretary for the Polk County Agricultural Agency. It was during this period that she met and married

poet Jose Luis Borges, who once said, "I have always dreamt that paradise would be a kind of library." For a glimpse of an intellectual paradise not usually available to the public, a visit to the Special Collection exhibit is definitely in order!

Donald Bliven, who moved to California to take a job in drafting at Lockheed in Burbank. Later he became a civil engineer in street design for the city of Los Angeles, where he spent 28 years.

Joining her husband in southern California, Bliven did secretarial work for an insurance company before becoming mother to her two sons, Richard and Robert. While they were young she performed volunteer work with the Parent-Teachers Association and her local church. When her sons reached junior high school age, she returned to full-time work, first in the aerospace industry, and eventually at what was then San Fernando Valley State College, but soon to become California State University, Northridge.

## Circulation Services: The ins and outs of book borrowing

Circulation? Checking books out and in? Simple! Piece of cake! Or so I thought when first asked to write an article about "Circulation Services," the arm of the Library responsible for tracking loaned books. But conversations with a couple of key players—Joe Dabbour, Head of Circulation Services, and Associate Library Dean Susan Parker—punctuated by a revealing behind-the-scenes view of the book-handling process, quickly disavowed me of any notion of simplicity. Indeed, as I quickly discovered, the operation is anything but simple!

Just a few minutes with Parker and it was abundantly clear that this wasn't going to be a short article after all. Circulation today is far more than stamping a date inside a book's cover and recording its exit from the library in a log. Indeed, such "dated" technology (pun intended), the standard in my youth, has long since gone the way of the dodo. Today it's barcodes, scanners, computer databases and, at the Oviatt, a monstrous computerized and automated storage unit. Plus lots of people-power, currently five full-time staff members and as many as 40 part-time student workers, according to Parker. After all, this Library serves CSUN's 33,000 students and the thousands of faculty and staff charged with educating them.

But staggering though those numbers may seem, the University community is only the tip of the iceberg that floats through Circulation. Anyone who walks through the door—1.6 million of them during the last academic year according to exit counts—is a Library patron whether or not he or she is officially affiliated with the University. The Library, after all, is a public institution and as such serves, well, the "public." And much of the non-university-affiliated public has borrowing privileges, among them, says

Dabbour, CSUN alumni, members of Friends of the Library, and the faculty at all other regional colleges and universities. Even some high school students, those enrolled at magnet schools or taking Advanced Placement courses can check out books. But even a casual browser of the Library stacks who never borrows a book affects circulation. More about that later.

In addition to the obvious check-in-check-out process, circulation has its hands full with many ancillary activities, principal among them maintaining the stacks and the storage facilities. Indeed, Circulation is such a large and complex unit that it is subdivided into three subunits—Front desk, Stacks, Storage—each with its own full-time staff supervisor or supervisors (three share the desk and storage) and a large cadre of student workers. For simplicity, I'll deal with each of the subunits one by one.

**Front desk.** This is the subunit

most obvious to the casual Library user, the one with which even a novice Library patron is familiar. It is here that a book is taken for checkout and to which it is returned. The job of the people at the front desk is to record and maintain a chain-of-custody trail for each borrowed item, recording when it left, who took it and when it is returned.

But in today's world tracking Library borrowers and their books requires the maintenance of a database of Library patrons, a prodigious job as it turns out. (If you don't believe this, see the earlier list of potential borrowers, a constantly changing entity that must be regularly updated!) But even this is not the whole story. Their role of monitoring book borrowing also necessitates that the front desk folks perform a variety of other tasks, for example, conducting "search/hold" requests, notifying patrons of over-



due books and collecting fines when such books are returned.

With books constantly going in and out, it's not surprising that the front desk is a busy place. In an effort to facilitate the process and better serve its clientele, the Library recently installed a self-checkout machine at the front desk. This machine, similar to those now in common use at high volume retail stores such as Home Depot, permits a patron to independently register books he or she is borrowing. Scanning the barcodes of the patron's Library card and of the books to be borrowed simultaneously records the data and demagnetizes the book's electronic sensor, thus allowing the patron to exit without triggering an alarm. And, says Dabbour, "The machine is smart enough to recognize the presence of more than one book, thus minimizing the possibility that a patron will exit without registering every book."

**Stacks.** Most patrons give little thought to the second of Circulation's principal responsibilities, maintaining the stacks, or shelves, where the books are stored. In the Oviatt, that means the stacks on the second and third levels, those on the other two floors being the obligation of other units. After a book's return is recorded at the front desk the book passes to the "stack group" to be returned to its proper place on a shelf. This is also where casual browsers and non-borrowers affect circulation, for books used in the Library but left on chairs or tables also must be reshelfed.

The number of reshelfings is enormous, the process never-ending. Says Dabbour, "Last year more than 320,000 books were physically returned to their proper sites in the stacks. Of these, roughly 170,000 were borrowed books, the other 150,000 books that were left unshelved by browsers."

Though it might seem that thoughtful patrons could minimize Circulation's reshelfing labors by merely replacing books after perusing them, that's not always the case. Commonly such misplaced largess results in additional work, for in their haste many patrons put books back in a wrong location. Misfiled books then necessitate additional Circulation responsibilities: The conduct of searches for misplaced books and the periodic "reading" of stacks to assure the inventory is in proper order, both time-consuming endeavors.

Moreover, a library's collection is never static with new books being added all the time. The constant expansion occasionally triggers still another of Circulation's activities, the relocation of entire stacks and their contents, always an enormous and time-consuming effort.

**Storage.** I was surprised to discover that only a bit less than half the Library's physical holdings are on open stacks. The rest, roughly 700,000 items, are in the Library's Automated Storage and Retrieval System (AS/RS), the third of Circulation's responsibilities. The Oviatt Library's AS/RS, the first such unit installed for Library storage, consists of six tracks of stacked bins extending from the first floor downward about four stories into the bowels of the Library's east wing. It is here that low-use items—microforms, pre-1990 periodicals, about half the Library's approximately 1.2 million books, art prints, some archival and special collection materials—are housed.

Unlike books on open stacks, the AS/RS's contents are assigned their place in random order. Indeed, to maximize the use of storage space, it is an item's size, not its call number that determines into which bin it is placed. Once situated, each item's number and that of its bin are linked in a computer database, thus permitting relocation of the item when again needed.

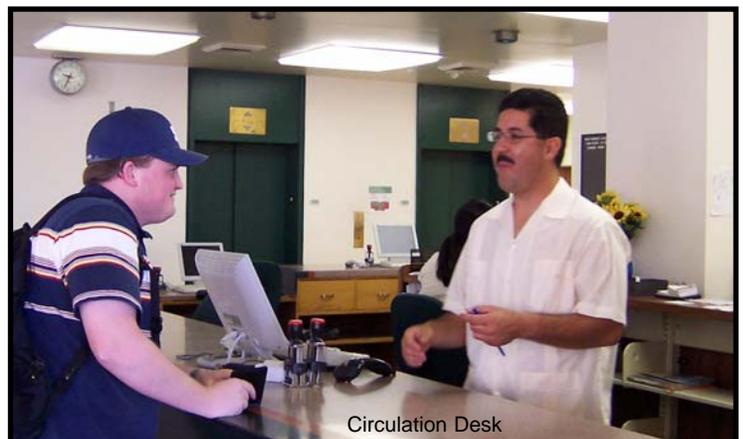
At a patron's request for a stored item, placed at a catalog terminal, the shuttling of an automated tram through the cavernous unit is initiated and the targeted bin retrieved. A short walk and the item is delivered to the front desk and the patron. "Delivery from AS/RS is guaranteed within ten minutes, but commonly we do it much more rapidly," says

Dabbour. Patrons are not permitted to enter the AS/RS, but the facility can be viewed through observation windows on the Library's first floor. If you haven't seen it, it deserves a look!

It's worth noting here that the Library considers the AS/RS to be part of the stacks, hence open to use by all patrons. This is another case, then, where the general public, the casual browser impacts Circulation, for anyone, whether university affiliated or not, can request the retrieval of a stored item.

But even the three aforementioned subunits don't identify all of Circulation's responsibilities. Not by a long shot! The unit's assigned obligations go well beyond the monitoring of borrowable items. Circulation also is responsible for "...maintaining order in the Library building, for example, by assuring that patrons obey rules regarding noise, food use, and smoking," according to Parker. The front desk also maintains the Library's lost and found and is charged with opening and closing the Library. "The last person out the door at closing is from Circulation," says Dabbour. With so many responsibilities, it is no wonder that Circulation requires so many hands.

Discovery of Circulation's plethora of activities proved reason enough for me, and I hope for you, to develop a new appreciation of what the operation entails. Indeed, researching this article has been an eye-opening experience. Never again will I view Circulation as a "simple" operation. Clearly, things aren't always as they seem!



## *Associate Dean Parker Moves to UCLA*

**O**n January 25, Susan Parker, Associate Dean of the Oviatt Library for the past seven years, announced that she had accepted a position as Deputy University Librarian and Chief Financial Officer at UCLA's libraries. She begins her duties at that institution on March 28 but will remain at CSUN until March 18.

In her new position, Susan will be responsible for library strategic planning, planning and fiscal oversight of a \$35 million annual budget, statistics and assessment, library buildings and facilities, and building projects. "Yes," she says, "if there is mold or disaster at the UCLA libraries, I will be responsible for

dealing with it."

In a missive to her colleagues announcing the move, Susan acknowledged that she would miss the Oviatt's warm and collegial atmosphere. "This was a difficult decision to make....CSUN welcomed me warmly...and provided me with generous and professional colleagues and a work setting in which I was able to accomplish and learn a great deal." Says Library Dean, Sue Curzon, "Susan will be missed very much. She has made an outstanding and long-lasting contribution to the Oviatt Library. We wish her all the best in her new position."



Associate Dean Susan Parker

### *FRIENDS OF THE OVIATT LIBRARY*

## *Oviatt Friends*

Oviatt Library  
California State University, Northridge  
18111 Nordhoff Street  
Northridge, CA 91330-8326

We are on the web:  
<http://library.csun.edu/friends/>

California State University  
**Northridge**