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Lewis J. Ort Library

Special Collections/Archives 2024 Annual Newsletter

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Words From Special Collections Librarian/Archivist

2024 was an active year for the David M. Gillespie Special Collections and J. Glenn Beall Archives when it came to fostering primary research and experiential learning projects for FSU and local high school students. This year, we were able to host Dr. Amy Armiento's ENG 490 Literature of the American South class in the Special Collections for a Library Profile project. The students were asked to summarize a piece of literature related to the American south in terms of its physical preservation and content. The students were very engaged with the primary sources and interested in learning about materials found in a Special Collections environment. They learned about book and paper preservation through a hands-on project. In addition, we also worked with the Allegany High School Historic Research Methods class as they researched the Cumber-



land Downtown Mall to plan for their exhibit at the Allegany Museum. They were able to publish their research in the 2024 issue of *Journal of the Alleghenies*. Finally, we worked with Dr. Eleanor McConnell's History 433 Public History students to curate their own exhibits, utilizing archival collections, throughout the Library.

FSU Digital Repository News

It has been a year since we launched our new Digital Repository, which we named the [FSU Digital Repository](#). Our staff has been busy increasing its visibility and continuously adding assets and collections. One major project this year was importing campus publications from our Institutional Repository, MD-SOAR. Researchers worldwide are able to

access titles such as *State-to-Date* and *Nemacolin* yearbooks. In addition to FSU-related images and media, we added the [TCI/Potomac Valley TV Collection](#), a collaboration with local historian Al Feldstein and the late Bob Hidey. The PTV collection primarily features 1970s-1980s photographs of Western Maryland businesses and industries.



Long John Silver's in LaVale, 1976. Restaurant still exists in this location today.



Jason is an English Major graduating in December, 2025. He is considering going into teaching after graduation. He is a big fan of Russian literature, appreciating its qualities of exploring deep questions and the psyche. One of his favorite writers is Fyodor Dostoyevsky. His favorite book is *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, written by Nobel laureate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who exposed the Soviet Gulag System. Jason has been working at UPMC for the last ten years. He also enjoys video games and fishing.



Reflection from an ENG 490 Student

In February, Dr. Amy Armiento's ENG 490 class were given a "Special Collections Profile" assignment, where they chose a book or object from the Special Collections related to Southern Literature. Students were expected to write a reflective piece on its contents as well as have

a conversation with the Special Collections Librarian/Archivist on its preservation qualities. Most artifacts were created in the mid-19th century. Below, one student, Jason Rakaczewski reflects on his chosen piece:

Foxing Couldn't Kill This Story: *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Volume One* by Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin: Volume One, was written in response to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 which required the Federal Government to return escaped slaves living in free states back to their owners. Upon initial inspection, I noted that the cover was blank with the only indication of the title and author of the work being located on the spine of the book. The book is bound by an orange hardcover that felt grainy to the touch, giving it a unique texture. With only this information to go on, I perceived the book as being in good shape. Once I opened the cover, the first thing that jumped out at me was the book's age. John P. Jewett and Company published *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Volume One*

by Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1852, making this copy over 171 years old. Learning this fact seemed to add to the suspense to see if any of the work's inner content had been lost through time. The pages felt thicker than normal and emitted a strong smell of wood and must that I wouldn't describe as unpleasant, but rather peculiar and distinguishing. Going into the assignment I imagined pages and lines of text would be missing. However, contrary to my belief, the book's entire contents were still present and legible regardless of how thoroughly I skimmed. I was surprised to see brown-colored splotches on the different pages that varied in hue, size, and abundance.

Liza's Take on the Item

The first thing Liza pointed out to me was that the book was rebound in the 1970s to increase its strength. She explained that while this decreases the overall value of the book, it helps to preserve its contents for years to come. When I asked about the splotches on the pages Liza told me this is something called foxing which occurs to most, if not all, books through time. I learned there are trace metals in the paper that become exposed to oxygen through normal use and essentially

rust, causing the brown spots to appear. Something else Liza informed me about was that the pages appear slightly wavy due to exposure to moisture. The book was purchased by Frostburg State in 1973 to expand its collection of original copies of Southern literature. Overall, Liza considered the work to be in good condition and was a wealth of knowledge for someone like me, who knew little about this copy's history.

Reflection from a HIST 433 Student: The Artmor Plastics Corp. Exhibit

In Fall 2024, Dr. Eleanor McConnel's HIST 433: Public History class were recruited to curate their own exhibits in an experiential learning project. During the process, students were able to learn elements of exhibit curation such as visual layout, local and regional history education, and writing. Three exhibits were created out of this project: The Western Maryland Central Labor Council, Local Glassware, and Artmor Plastics Corp. These exhibits are on display in the Lewis J. Ort Library for the remainder of the academic year.

Wesley Mason, Project Leader of the Artmor group, was asked to reflect on his experiences during this assignment.

1. *Tell us a little bit about yourself.*

I am a Senior here at Frostburg State. My major is Social Sciences while obtaining my secondary education teaching certificate. I will be graduating in the spring of 2025. My favorite hobby is bowling. I bowled for Allegany High School for three years and still bowl to this day on a league during Friday nights. Outside of school you can almost always see me listening to Elvis Presley. Right now, I am student teaching at Mount Savage for 7th grade social studies. When I graduate I hope to become a secondary education teacher teaching History/Government.

2. *Your leadership skills were very appreciated by your team members and instructors for this project. Can you describe how you developed your leadership skills and what benefit they were to you in this project?*

I have always been great at speaking in front of people. I think this goes hand in hand with the development of leadership skills. Teaching is a profession



Artmor Plastics Corp. exhibit curators Trent Harris (left) and Wesley Mason (right)

where you have to take the lead in your classroom. Throughout my student career I have also been in leadership with clubs and organizations. At Allegany College I was President of the honors society. Being able to keep everyone on task allowed us to get the project done on time and in an orderly fashion.

3. *When you learned about the projects your class would be working on for display in the library, what made you want to join the Artmor team?*

One member of our team, Trent Harris, was very enthusiastic when learning that Artmor was going to be one of the projects. He has been to the building many times even after the fires. I also knew some information about the building from living in the area for a while now and was eager to learn more about it. The discussion he and I had cemented that our group was going to do this project.

4. *What did you learn about Art Morgan and the Artmor Plastics Corporation on Will's Mountain? Is there anything you found surprising while researching for the exhibit?*

Art Morgan cared a lot about Cum-

berland. This was the main reason he wanted to build the resort and cable car system on top of Wills Mountain. While he got the vision while on vacation, he really wanted to bring business and tourism to the area. He knew that doing so would benefit not only Cumberland but also Allegany County. Art also seemed to be a pleasant person to be around and others called him a gentlemen. He seemed to want to talk to anyone he came across. While this may be surprising to people who never got to know him, it wasn't surprising to those who did.

5. *Is there any advice you would give to students who may be curating their own exhibits in the future?*

I would recommend that people do as much research on the topic as possible. This will start you with a very broad base and as you continue narrow the subject to what you will present in your display. Another recommendation would be to make sure you are having fun with the project. While you should stay on task, you should always look forward to working on it. Lastly, make sure you always consider who is going to be looking at your display. What would make the display appealing and informative to them?

Collection Highlight: The Western Maryland Central Labor Council Collection

The Western Maryland Central Labor Council Collection was donated by Jody Oliver, Secretary of the Western Maryland Labor Council and coordinated by local historian Dan Whetzel in 2023. Dr. Mary Anne Lutz, Library Services Specialist – J. Glenn Beall Archives, processed this collection in 2024. Currently, artifacts from the collection are on display on the 3rd floor of the library.

The collection contains in part records of the Western Maryland Industrial Union Council (1950-1957), later the Western Maryland Central Labor Council (1957-2016). The Council coordinated membership and activities of local unions in Allegany and Garrett counties. Their mission has been to represent the interests of workers in the state and the region, and they have formed partnerships with community organizations as well as promoted legis-

lation and candidates. The Western Maryland Central Labor Council (WMCLC) represents a wide array of employees in the region, in addition to those in the railroad and transportation industry. At the time these documents were produced, Council members included: public servants, such as teachers and firemen; tradesmen in such industries as rubber, glass-ceramic, chemical, electrical, and bricklaying; and food preparation workers in breweries and bakeries. Included are administrative records, such as meeting minutes and financial records. The WMCLC also retained some records of two specific unions/union locals: the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (1907-2006) and the United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America/United Rubber Workers, Local 26 (1943-1994). Local 26 represented Kelly Springfield workers in Cumberland. The collec-



Possibly members of UA Local 489: Plumbers and Steamfitters circa 1990



Local Postal carriers were represented by the WMCLC

tion addresses unique information, through the Union's perspective, about its closure in 1986. Materials of the collection include documents, ledgers, and ephemera.

Cooley-Price Fund Purchases

The Cooley-Price Fund, sponsored by Bernadene Hannah Range Cooley, mother of former Special Collections Librarian MaryJo Price, enables the Special Collections to purchase books and media related to Western Maryland and Appalachia. Local history books are added to both the Special Collections and circulating library collections. Topics can include biographies, industry, history, poetry and geography. The following books were purchased this year:

- *Secrets of Deep Creek Lake*, Jim Rada
- *Youghiogheny, Appalachian River. Revised edition*, Tim Palmer
- *Where's That Bastard Owen... and other years*, Jon Ketzner
- *Fairgo Forever! 100 years of the Allegany County Fairgrounds*
- *The Baltimore and Ohio in the Civil War*, Festus Summers
- *The Potomac Canal: George Washington and the Waterway West*, Robert Kapsch

- *The Underground Railroad in Bedford County Pennsylvania*, Kevin Mearkle
- *The Tale Untwisted: General George B. McClellan, the Maryland Campaign, and the Discovery of Lee's Lost Orders*, Gene Thorp
- *With George Washington in the Wilderness: The Frontier Life of Christopher Gist*, Paul & Sally Misencik
- *Civil War in Maryland Reconsidered*, Charles W. Mitchell, ed.
- *Handbook to Appalachia: An Introduction to the Region*, Grace Toney Edwards
- *A Day in September: The Battle of Antietam and the World it Left Behind*, Stephen Budiansky
- *Calamity at Frederick: Robert E. Lee, Special Orders No. 191, and Confederate Misfortune on the Road to Antietam*, Alexander Rossino
- *The Stewards of West River: A Maryland Family During the American Revolution*, Lyman Hall



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New Accessions for 2024

Thank you to our donors, without whom we would not continue to grow and develop into the future.

- 3 autobiographies, documents, photos and clippings added to FSU collection, Ken Stewart
- Kelly-Springfield papers to be added to Labor Council Collection, Jody Oliver
- Trout Family biography, Diane Kelly Weintraub

- Margaret Barkman photographs, scrapbooks, Sandra Roeder
- Political memorabilia, Andy Duncan
- Maryland Department of Environment – Mining Program, Mike Garner
- Political Posters, Harry Sachs
- Photos, clippings, documents, plaques, AV materials integrated into John Bambacus Collection, John Bambacus

Upcoming Exhibits and Events



In addition to the HIST 490 student exhibits, which will be on exhibit for the remainder of the 2024-2025 Academic Year, Special Collections Student Assistant Sydney Smolenski is curating an exhibit for Irish-American Heritage Month which will focus on local Irish American history. The exhibit will be live in March, 2025 and on display for the remainder of the academic year.



Tim Wheeler, editor of *Daily World* and *People's World* and close friend and colleague of George A. Meyers, will be doing a reading in the Lewis J. Ort Library on Wednesday April 9, 2025 of his new book: *No Power Greater: The Life and Times of George A. Meyers*. Copies of the book will be available for sale.