November 2014

Integrating Support Services

Reflecting the vital importance for our many users of a coordinated system of services, the University Library has welcomed a partnership with the Office of Information Technology in establishing Integrated Support Services. Two central service desks, one for Library Information and another for Technology Support, will be located in the forefront of the Main Library’s renovated first floor. These new and parallel service points represent a complementary unit of academic and technical support for all researchers, information seekers, knowledge creators, and project developers. The outcome provides, along with academic partners on the Library’s second floor, a “first stop … one stop” dimension for academic success.
Lincoln arrived this Fall at the RWU Library in thirteen rolling crates—the long awaited result of a grant proposal submitted in 2011 for Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War. The exhibition stood over eight feet tall in five, three-dimensional, sections focusing on Lincoln as President, secession, slavery, civil liberties and finally, his legacy. It was based on the original exhibition on display at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. Subsequently, the American Library Association and the National Endowment for the Humanities digitally reproduced the images from the exhibition and mounted them on panels that travelled to over 200 libraries across the country in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. At RWU, a complementary exhibition was mounted with local Civil War artifacts from the University Library’s archival collection.
The Grand Opening took place on September 23rd with The Honorable Frank J. Williams, retired Rhode Island Supreme Court judge and nationally recognized Lincoln scholar, delivering the keynote address. This marked the beginning of a stimulating six weeks of programming, featuring faculty lectures, films, a Socrates Café, a Student Showcase, Civil War re-enactors, and performing arts events. The RWU Chorus and Prism of Praise provided a rousing sendoff to the exhibition with the GOSPELFEST on November 2nd. The exhibition was significantly enhanced by all of these programs and the student and community engagement that resulted.

Programming was organized by the Lincoln Exhibition Planning Committee, composed of faculty and administrators from across campus. The RWU Library is deeply grateful for the multi-disciplinary support received in producing this unique educational opportunity for the RWU and nearby local communities.

https://www.flickr.com/photos/rwu-photos/sets/72157647658475698/

Recent Collaborations: Digitizing World War II Posters

by Heidi Benedict, University Archivist

In celebration of Veterans Day, RWU Libraries collaborated with the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society (BHPS) on a digital project to make the Society’s collections of World War II posters more readily available.
The Historical Society’s collection includes about 100 posters, the majority emphasizing the importance of rationing, conservation, and safety; and many are uniquely Rhode Island themed. War posters like these were issued by the U.S. Government, and as such are in the public domain. Still, many posters have not been digitized and are only available at the holding repositories. With the completion of this project, World War II posters previously restricted to visitors to the BHPS can now be freely accessed online at http://bhps.omeka.net. The actual posters themselves remain at the Society.

Thanks to the University Archivist, Heidi Benedict for managing this project, Digital Imaging Technologist, Megan Lessard for content creation and digitization, and former Archives and Metadata Specialist, Molly Jencks, for technical development and metadata creation.

RWU Teaching Online Short Course

by Linda Beith, Director of Instructional Design

The Department of Instructional Design, in collaboration with the School of Continuing Studies and the Library, developed a fully online, six-lesson preparatory course for faculty interested in transitioning to teaching in an online environment.

This course was developed based on best practices drawn from Quality Matters (a national benchmark for online course design), the Sloan Online Learning Consortium, Teaching with Sakai Innovation Program, Blackboard Exemplary Course Program and Educause research and data.

The course weaves in the principles of andragogy with the use of instructional technology tools to foster development of online and hybrid courses that address three main interactions: student-to-content, student-to-student and student-to-instructor. Faculty participants experience the online learning experience from the student perspective while applying what they learn from each lesson in building their own online courses.

This course is facilitated by the ID team and the Fall 2014 Teaching Online course is the sixth offering since its launch in the of Summer 2013. To date, 48 faculty participants have received a certificate of completion. A new section will be offered in January 2015.

Group Study Spaces

As a result of the fall 2013 LibQual+ Survey of RWU students, faculty and staff, we learned that students are eagerly seeking collaborative study spaces in the Library. With the move of the School of Education to the Law School, we were able to repurpose two faculty offices to new study rooms providing small groups (between 2 and 4 people) collaborative work space. The rooms are equipped with Samsung IWB (Interactive White Board) technology and a Windows PC positioned on a 65-inch Samsung display. Students can book these rooms through an online booking system linked to the library’s homepage, or in-person at the Library Information Desk. Since the opening of the rooms, students have been successfully utilizing the space for group work, and we look forward to more students taking advantage of these new opportunities available in the library in the future.
Announcing Talking in the Library Speakers Spring 2015

February 24, 2015        Maria Flook         4:30 p.m.  An RWU Alumna Returns to Celebrate Her Ninth Book
March 23, 2015              Jewher Ilham     4:00 p.m.  A Uighur Daughter Fights for Her Father’s Freedom
April 13, 2015                  Paul Harding     4:00 p.m.  2010 Pulitzer Winner for Tinkers and the 3rd Annual Bermont Distinguished Visitor

Library Instruction Goes BYOD

By Lindsey Gumb, Instructional Technology Librarian

The Library Instruction Lab, or more affectionately referred to as the LIL by library staff, not only has a new home on the third floor of the Learning Commons, but it also is chock full of new equipment for interactive learning.

So what exactly has changed? For one, we’ve transitioned from the traditional classroom model of forward-facing rows and hardwired computers to a wireless laptop and tablet-based environment that also allows for BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) access. The tables are now on wheels, which creates opportunities for more individualized instruction and group work depending on class size and needs.

If you’ve attended a research instruction session this semester, perhaps your librarian utilized the projector to lead you through the library’s resources, or, maybe your class was presented using the new IWB (interactive white board). The 65 inch Samsung IWB is a Windows-based touch-screen computer that has the ability for the instructor to annotate and capture still image and video files during instruction. The librarians are still testing the waters with the IWB to determine how the technology might best be incorporated into their pedagogy with research instruction. Stay tuned for more LIL updates and developments as the semester progresses!
So what exactly has changed? For one, we’ve transitioned from the traditional classroom model of forward-facing rows and hardwired computers to a wireless laptop and tablet-based environment that also allows for BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) access. The tables are now on wheels, which creates opportunities for more individualized instruction and group work depending on class size and needs.

What is OneSearch?

By Susan McMullen, Research Services and User Engagement Librarian

OneSearch is a user-friendly method of searching across the HELIN Library Catalog AND the full-text of much of RWU Library’s electronic holdings. OneSearch streamlines your research process by giving you just one place to search for topics instead of hunting out specific research databases. Use OneSearch to discover millions of books, eBooks, scholarly articles, newspapers, sound recordings, DVDs, government documents and online videos. You can limit your search to find exactly what you need.

What’s included in OneSearch?

- All the materials in the HELIN Library Catalog, such as books, government documents, and DVDs.
- Scholarly journal articles, newspaper and magazine articles from the library’s research databases, such as Academic Search Complete, JSTOR, and Science Direct.
- E-books from collections such as eBrary, eBook Academic Collection from EBSCOhost, Project Muse, Oxford University Press, and others.
- Resources from the Library’s digital collections, such as DOCS@RWU.

Search features:

- Facets in the left column allow you to limit your search by format, location, date, content provider and more.
- Limit your search results to the HELIN Catalog only OR to scholarly “peer-reviewed” articles only.
- Export citations directly to RefWorks.
- Link to the full bibliographic record by clicking on the item’s title in the results list.
- Open full text articles by selecting PDF or Full Text at RWU

Off Campus Access:

- Make sure you log in to see all of your results. The Log in link is found in the top right corner. Just enter your name and library barcode. Your barcode is found on the back of your student ID.
- OneSearch is mobile phone friendly.

How to Search:

Enter your search terms in the search box located on the Library home page, then limit your results to meet your research needs. Facets for limiting your search are in the left hand column and can be selected and deselected as desired.

You may wish to limit to

- the HELIN Catalog only
- Articles and more (online resources including ebooks)
- RWU
- Online videos or another material format
- By date range
- By content provider (database)
Behind the Book: The Rebel Wife by Taylor Polites

By Abby Deveau

Recently, I met with Taylor Polites, author of the historical fiction novel The Rebel Wife, and author of stories appearing in Knitting Yarns: Writers on Knitting and Providence Noir. Originally from Alabama, Taylor has lived in places such as New York City and Provincetown, before recently settling in Rhode Island. He teaches in the Wilkes University Creative Writing MFA Program, at the Rhode Island School of Design, and occasionally teaches creative writing courses at Roger Williams University. I wanted to learn more about him and his inspiration for writing and creating art. On November 18, 2014, as part of the Talking in the Library Series, Taylor will be part of a discussion panel with RWU history professor Jeffrey Meriwether titled “From the Stacks to the Pages: How Research Tells the Stories from History.”

From the start, Taylor was gregarious and animated as we sat down to talk at the Seven Stars Bakery in Providence. He was happy to discuss his work with me and share his inspiration for writing and creating.

“I am interested in place, and I find that wherever I am, I’m naturally tuning into the setting and my surroundings,” Taylor said, as we talked over coffee and cookies in the warm bakery in Providence, on what was on otherwise chilly fall day. Providence, where he currently calls home, provides a wealth of creative inspiration for both literature and other forms of art for Taylor. He is interested in both the history of the city and the current vibrant, intellectual city life surrounding him. That atmosphere was evident all around us as we chatted inside the busy coffee shop. We were surrounded by people talking animatedly, just like us, or sitting quietly to read and work even in din of conversation. The place had a unique, artistic vibe that lent itself to our conversation about Taylor’s creativity.

History and place have inspired Taylor’s sense of creativity throughout his life even before he lived in Providence. When asked about the inspiration for his first novel, The Rebel Wife, he said his hometown of Huntsville, Alabama was his greatest influence.

“Growing up and seeing these antebellum homes and the way people talked about the war, even though it was 150 years ago, had a real effect on me and I was fascinated by this period of history from a very young age. So I began creating my own towns and drawing maps of the towns,” said Taylor.

Because he was so interested in creating houses and towns, he decided to try architecture in college. However, he soon realized “it wasn’t really the houses that were as interesting to me as the people who lived in the houses. So these imaginary towns, these houses, all of this became a place for me to create stories.”

He told me that The Rebel Wife is the result of his urge to tell stories about the people in the towns he created, using his hometown in Alabama as a historical source. This novel features a strong female protagonist, as Taylor was also influenced by strong heroines in the books he read while growing up. Set in 1875 at end of Reconstruction, the novel tells the story of woman from a family that was ruined by the Civil War, whose husband has just died, and who believes she will inherit money and be in control of her own life. But that all comes crashing down.

“She begins to think about the stories that she’s been told and the things that she’s been told to believe and compare that to her lived experience and the experiences of the people in the house with her, who are former slaves seeking agency in their own ways,” explains Taylor.

By setting up the novel this way, Taylor explains that he wants to examine the tension between myths, stories, and the way people remember something versus the academic perspective of historians trying to tell an objective version of history. He says that the atmospheric backdrop of the end of Reconstruction gives him the opportunity to explore themes of conflict, upheaval, racism, and the devastation of the war through one woman’s very personal story.

Taylor is currently working on a second novel, this one set in 1860 during the eve of the Civil War, which was another period of upheaval and tension. He wants to continue to explore these provocative themes in multiple novels featuring turning points in history.

Since Taylor is well into his career as a successful writer, I asked him how he got to this point and what inspired him to become a writer. He was clearly happy with his choice, as he talked excitedly about his path to doing what makes him happy.
"The impulse to create stories was always in me. In the 5th grade I was writing plays for my English class," Taylor said. But when he went to college he felt pressure to get a job and thought pursuing writing would be crazy. Since he also loves history, he majored in history as a way to tell stories.

However, he ended up moving to New York City and working in the financial industry — but he said that the impulse to write was always there and it did not go away.

"At a certain point I said, 'This urge to tell stories, and these places down in Alabama and the stories, are still alive inside me.' And I thought, 'I have to take a chance now, I have to put some effort toward making this a reality.'"

We discussed the fear that keeps people from pursuing their dreams and his careful planning to be able to have a career that makes him happy. He says that he went into it with a sense that it might not work, but he had to try: "Now, because of taking that risk and acting upon his urge to write, he gets to write, teach creative writing, and live in a community of writers. Looking around the Seven Stars Bakery and the surrounding area, I could see why living in such a community would be so enriching.

"Everything I do has a relationship to writing and making and crafting," said Taylor. Taylor is much more than a writer; he is an all-around artistic and expressive person. He explains, "I can look at myself as a maker, and writing is just one component of that."

When I asked him about how he is a maker, he told me about how the incredible arts community in Providence helped enrich his life. His neighbor is a screen printer who taught him how to screen print and make his personal book plates. Taylor explained, "There’s a satisfaction to making something with your hands, and learning this craft opened up a new world of creating and making and having fun."

In addition to screen printing, Taylor also knits, does antique photography, and letterpress printing. He said that these other crafts find their way into his writing, as well as an adorable inspiration of his own: "I love my dog, Clovis, and I love knitting sweaters for Clovis, and that became the subject of an essay." The essay about knitting sweaters for his Chihuahua appears in an anthology called Knitting Yarns: Writers on Knitting.

Clovis is featured in Taylor’s other artistic endeavors as well; Taylor hands out Clovis t-shirts and Clovis cards as a personal touch at events or to send thank you notes. Taylor’s career, doing what makes him happy, seems to combine all of his passions: making, writing, history, and Clovis. I was a little disappointed that Clovis couldn’t join us in the coffee shop.

When asked for tips for aspiring writers, he gave advice that reaches beyond just writing: "Being a writer is a form of play... that’s true for life. Anything that you do can have that spirit of wonder and play in it, and if you bring that attitude to the thing you’re doing, it’ll enrich your life so much more and open you up to the wonders around you. Then you can take advantage of what life has to offer and relish in living it."

Come see Taylor as part of the Fall Talking in the Library Series.

Topic: "From the Stacks to the Pages: How Research Tells the Stories from History." RWU history professor Jeffrey Meriwether and author Taylor Polites will discuss how research has informed and shaped their works in fiction and in scholarship.

When: Tuesday, November 18, 2014 (4:30 PM) in the Mary Tefft White Cultural Center in the University Library

Behind the Book takes an in depth look at the world of the book through articles and interviews about the creative process, issues in publishing, and the writing life.