

# INSIGHT

THE NEWSLETTER FOR MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES | FALL 2023

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REIMAGINING  
MSU LIBRARIES

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Libraries  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

## A Message from the Interim Dean of Libraries

Dear Friends,

The past several years at the MSU Libraries have seen a tremendous amount of transformation. If you've visited recently, you might have observed some of this movement at work in the construction going on throughout our physical spaces; however, we are also constantly adapting behind the scenes to ensure we remain at the forefront of the teaching and learning landscape. I'm excited to share some of the initiatives the Libraries is undertaking in our work toward advancing the vision set forth by our strategic plan to promote equal access to information and spaces for all in this issue of the Insight.

A key objective in our recent work has been the reimagining of the Libraries services and spaces. As part of this project, the Libraries engaged with planning organization brightspot strategy to help assess the needs of our students, faculty and greater MSU community. We conducted various forms of information-gathering to learn how we can be more responsive to those needs. The data collected will be used to inform our space planning strategy in partnership with brightspot, including larger initiatives related to accessibility at main entry points as well as in wayfinding. The Libraries has also moved forward with plans for reimagining spaces outside of our work with brightspot, including the renovation of 3-East to accommodate the relocation of our Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong Special Collections and the reconfiguration of 2-West to welcome the Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation. I think many will also be excited to learn about the new Starbucks in the Main Library, which replaces the previous Sparty's Café. The area around Starbucks has also been renovated with new seating that is already quite popular with our students.

Our digital spaces have also undergone some recent transformations, as our main website and public catalog both received updates in the last few months. Our new website launched in August and offers a sleeker and more modern interface along with improved site infrastructure that allows for easier navigation, increased functionality to support discovery of library materials and improved visibility of highly used library services and other library information. The VuFind public catalog project, which was launched in May 2023, complements the increased functionality of the new website by providing a more comprehensive and intuitive search interface. Accessibility was a primary factor in considering these new technological upgrades as our staff worked to identify and address accessibility barriers and implement techniques to ensure that the Libraries' digital services are accessible to a diverse group of users.

As my appointment as Interim Dean of MSU Libraries comes to a close, I would like to thank you for your partnership. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome MSU Libraries Dean Neil Romanosky, who began his appointment with the Libraries on Sept. 11. Neil brings with him a wealth of experience from his previous roles, most recently as Dean of University Libraries at Ohio University. We are thrilled to have him here and look forward to seeing where his leadership takes us!

Sincerely,

Terri Miller  
Interim Dean of Libraries



## INSIGHT

The newsletter for MSU Libraries

Insight is published to inform the MSU community about the collections, services and activities in the MSU Libraries. If you are interested in giving to the Libraries, please contact Director of Development Caitlyn Perry Dial at 517-432-0032 or the Office of Development at 517-884-6446, or visit <http://lib.msu.edu/support>. For general information about the Libraries, please contact 517-353-8700.

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# New library faculty bring creative expertise to music & digital services leadership roles

*This past year MSU Libraries welcomed Laura Thompson as Head of the Music Library and Justin Wadland as Head of Digital Scholarship Services. Communications Manager Elise Jajuga asked each of these new faculty members five questions.*





## Laura Thompson

### Music Librarian and Head of the Music Library

Laura Thompson joined the MSU Libraries in February 2023 as Music Librarian and Head of the Music Library. In this role, she manages the operations of the Music Library and works with the faculty, staff and students of the MSU College of Music, providing support for research and learning through in-depth reference and library instruction services, as well as developing library music collections in a variety of formats. Previously, she held the position of Music Librarian and Cataloger at Central Michigan University where she provided reference, library instruction and

collection development services in music and cataloged materials from the special collections of the Clarke Historical Library. She received her MA in Musicology and MLS with a specialization in Music Librarianship from Indiana University, Bloomington. She held several positions in the Indiana University Libraries including at the Lilly Library, the Cook Music Library and the Archives of Traditional Music, where she worked extensively with historical sound recordings. She is active in the Music Library Association, where she is the current chair of the Reference and Access Services Subcommittee (of the Public Services Committee). She has published articles on early career music librarianship and information literacy in fashion studies.

**EJ: As the Music Librarian, much of your job seems to focus on work related to subject areas that might fall outside of the scope of more traditional forms of librarianship. Can you give me an overview of your role, and what you think sets the arts-based subject areas like music librarianship apart from the more traditional types of librarianship?**

LT: In my position, I primarily help support the learning and research of the MSU College of Music faculty, students and staff. This includes answering research questions, and sometimes meeting with people one-on-one to talk about their research needs, or to help them navigate the library website, library resources, or resources outside the library. Library instruction is also part of my job, which includes going to music courses and providing information about using the music library and our resources. The kind of instruction I provide depends on the course and what the instructor needs their students to learn; for example, I would teach a different set of research skills to an upper-level music history class than I would to a studio of first-year violin performers. I also manage and develop the music collections.

I think the nature of how research happens in the arts can be different. In music librarianship, there are, for example, music history and music theory courses where students are doing what might be considered more traditional types of research that have, let's say, a paper as the project end goal, where students would more naturally think of the library as a resource. There are also students and faculty who are primarily performers,

however, whose research goal may not be that traditional style of research paper. They may be putting on a recital and researching different styles of performance, for example, or looking for a variety of works to program. This means they are also engaging with the library in different ways, which you have to think about as a music librarian or performing arts librarian.

**EJ: The performance piece seems integral to your role here at the Libraries. Is there a difference between how you might engage with students in the performing arts and students in the more traditional tracks?**

LT: Many of the students I engage with are often looking for music that they can use in a performance setting. So they are not necessarily looking for journal articles or books on Brahms, for example, but maybe a musical score that they want to use for a recital or audition. The question can come in different ways. Sometimes they're looking for a very specific type of musical work; like if it's for a solo recital, then the request would be for a solo instrument, maybe with piano accompaniment, but sometimes it might be for a chamber ensemble that requires a specific instrumental arrangement, like string quartets. I can help them locate scores that would be appropriate for those various instrumental arrangements within the styles of music that they might want to perform or study. We want to make sure they know we have a whole section in the library of just string quartets that you can come and look at any time you want.



## New Support Staff

Support staff are vital to our work in the Libraries. New hires since January 2023 include:

- Lydia Allen, Reference & Discovery Services Library Assistant
- Winde Gehringer, Exhibits and Engagement Coordinator
- Andrew Lathrop, Project/Event Coordinator
- Sami Luke, Circulation Librarian Assistant
- Casey Schneider, Facilities Operations Coordinator

So that's probably the most basic example, but students may also be looking for examples of performances. If they're performing a work, students will sometimes want to know how that work has been performed in the past, which leads us to sound recordings. They also might want references to video recordings if the work is visual, like opera. Many performance students also put on recitals and other similar events that include programs. In that case, they might have to write program notes to accompany their recitals, which sometimes requires research in the more traditional sense to gather background information about the work.

### **EJ: What are some of the challenges that music librarians are facing with the abundance of streaming resources that are readily available to students today?**

LT: That's a question that we talk about a lot as music librarians. I think it's a really interesting time to be involved, especially as a newer librarian just coming into the field. As a music librarian, you have to think about how to reach students who are used to relying on more commercial platforms and might not consider additional options outside of Spotify or YouTube to access sound recordings, for example. Or in the case of something like IMSLP, a public domain online source many students turn to for scores, it's important for students to understand that the library is an option for them when they may be looking for a more recent edition of a score that won't be available in a resource like IMSLP. We have scores available, both in print and online, that they can utilize without paying for them. So a challenge for music librarians is thinking more creatively about reaching out to students and making sure they are aware that the library has resources that aren't just Mozart's biography.

One of the primary arguments you'll hear about streaming platforms like Spotify, which will likely never offer institutional subscriptions, or even Naxos, which is specifically geared toward institutions of higher learning, is that we don't have control over the content. A recording might be available today, but there's no guarantee that it will still be there six months or a year from now. This is something that music librarians have been talking about for decades; we see professors using recordings for their classes one year, and then a year passes by, they are teaching that course again, and suddenly the recording is no longer available. A point that I usually try to make when this comes up is yes, those platforms are available, but as a library, what is our mission? To me, it's providing equitable access to the resources that our institution is funding. In many cases where instructors are relying on platforms like Spotify or YouTube for their courses, students don't necessarily have equitable access to those resources. The issue of equity comes up too in utilizing these kinds of "free" resources. It might not bother a lot of people, but if you don't pay for Spotify, for example, you can still use it, but your experience is much more

limited. You have to listen to ads, for example. When you're in the middle of listening to a long-form work like a symphony and an ad plays in between the second and third movements, it kind of hinders the experience, right? Maybe that seems small in the grand scheme of things, but think about the study of music and the focus that can be required to take in a long-form work like a symphony or opera, or even an entire rock album. Having that attention interrupted by an ad that's trying to sell you something doesn't seem to be in the best interest of education and learning.

There are additional caveats as well. To continue with our example of using the free version of Spotify, you can only listen in shuffle mode, meaning you wouldn't be able to listen to a work in its intended order. These platforms also degrade the quality of the audio file for the free version, which can make a significant difference when trying to hear the nuance of different performances, for example. So it's not as simple as having the same content in a different format and choosing one over another. When you study music, the listening experience is as much a part of learning as having access to the same content. So as convenient and popular as these platforms can be, they can hinder someone's ability to have that experience, and that's something we have to think about.

### **EJ: You have a dual degree in musicology, but do you have an earlier background with music that might have inspired you to pursue it as part of your career, and in that same vein, do you think formal training with an instrument is necessary to work as a music librarian?**

LT: I have a musical family. My dad played guitar, my grandfather played guitar, and I grew up listening to them play all the time. I'm from a small town in Tennessee, and I was surrounded by bluegrass and rockabilly like Elvis. My grandfather was more into rockabilly and my dad was more into country and bluegrass. My dad used to take my siblings and me to local bluegrass jamboree events where people would get together and play, and sometimes they would just kind of jam

— *story continues*, p. 6





## Justin Wadland

### Head of Digital Scholarship Services

Justin Wadland joined the MSU Libraries as Head of Digital Scholarship Services in April 2023. In this role, he leads the Digital Scholarship Lab, including coordinating and guiding the development of public-facing data and digital scholarship services and programs that happen in and through the lab. He received an MLIS from the University of Washington and an MFA in Creative Writing from Pacific Lutheran University. He was previously Head of Digital Scholarship at University of Washington Tacoma Library, where he led a digital scholarship program that

leveraged the resources of the UW Libraries and aligned with the community-engaged values of the campus. He is author of the book “Trying Home: The Rise and Fall of an Anarchist Utopia on Puget Sound” (Oregon State University Press), which was winner of the 2015 Washington State Book Award for History/General Nonfiction.

**EJ: I’m interested in the fact that you graduated with an MFA in addition to your MLIS degree. Can you tell me how these creative writing skills translate to your work in digital scholarship, and if you have any future writing project pursuits?**

JW: I have an MLIS from the University of Washington and an MFA in creative writing from Pacific Lutheran University. I was essentially a media librarian when I started my career in 2003, which meant I was the person in the library who got the questions about non-book materials like visual resources. Working with visual resources led to working with digital collections, and working with digital collections led to working with institutional repositories. The work I did in institutional repositories led to really thinking about digital scholarship; in a lot of ways, I sort of walked into digital scholarship backward by responding to needs that were happening on the campus. And then I looked around and realized, oh, I guess this is called digital scholarship. Then I started to see, oh, there’s a community of people who are doing this and they come to it from a variety of different paths. The creative writing part of it has been woven into how I approach things. I try to bring a creative lens to work; one of the questions that I consider bringing to any group of people that I’m working with is, how can we work together better creatively? Specifically, how can we leverage everyone’s gifts to come up with something that is better than we could do individually? Writing, on the other hand, is a very individual pursuit.

In 2014 I published a book of history called “Trying Home: The Rise and Fall of an Anarchist Utopia on Puget Sound.” It’s a narrative history of an anarchist utopian experiment. Right

now I’m really focusing on learning my role at the Libraries and responding to what’s coming up, but I see a lot of potential to integrate writing into my work here. I just don’t know what that’s going to look like quite yet. I’d like whatever scholarly outputs I might create to come out of the work that I’m doing in the lab rather than something I do additionally. For example, I have a lightning talk that was accepted to the Digital Library Federation Forum for the fall. It’s an evaluation of the Virtual Reality (VR) Room, and I’ll be talking to a small number of faculty who are heavy users of that space and using an appreciative inquiry approach to get their feedback on it. Longer term, I really want to do some work to get the story about the 360 room out there. As I enter into that project, I want to be mindful of recognizing that while I’m currently head of digital scholarship services, these spaces were created by many hands. I’d need to make sure that I invite the right people to tell that story, because I do think there would be interest in the wider professional community about what’s been learned from offering that space. But ask me in another year. I’ll probably have some more ideas.

**EJ: It sounds like your background in creative writing and digital scholarship previously allowed for collaboration across smaller communities. Are you finding opportunities for this kind of collaboration across the Libraries or the larger campus?**

JW: There are some projects coming out of the Digital Scholarship Lab that really excited me when I was interviewing for this job. The first one is the DSL Graduate Arts Fellowship. The fellow receives funding from the College of Arts and Letters



to work on a project that leverages the technology of the lab. The artist working this summer is Adeline Newmann. She's primarily a visual artist, and she's working on a project that will display her artwork in the 360 room. I'm excited that the lab is sponsoring creative projects like that, and I think there's a lot of possibility for growth there. The other collaboration that I'm looking forward to is the DSL Project Incubator that the lab hosts. It's a year-long opportunity for faculty and graduate students to work on a project and receive support from the lab. I think my background with the digital scholarship collective at UW and in really thinking about how to support scholars as they do some transformative work with their research and teaching will help support this collaboration. For example, I saw you interviewed Environmental Sciences Librarian Eric Tans about his online exhibit "Close Beside the Winding Cedar: The Red Cedar River at Michigan State University." That work came out of this project incubator.

Another larger initiative I'm working on with Data Librarian Jonathan Barber is really trying to understand how we in the lab can position ourselves to coordinate data services for the libraries to best meet the needs of the larger MSU campus. It's a big undertaking. The U.S. Office of Science and Technology Policy released a communication recently called the Nelson Memo, which basically says that if researchers are receiving federal funding, they're required to make their data available openly. Libraries really position themselves to provide consultation services to help researchers develop a plan for sharing the data that they collect in an open way. There's a lot of good work that's been happening up to this point, but Jonathan and I are thinking about how we can better coordinate these efforts and connect researchers to our Libraries colleagues who have expertise to help them. It's not a highly visible project, but it's really important. The Digital Scholarship Lab is highly visible, and it's very dynamic. Data services happens more behind the scenes, but what I really love is that these two kinds of services can happen in the same place.

**EJ: You were in a similar role at your previous institution where you led the digital scholarship program for a number of years. First, given your background, what are some of the benefits you see with the digital scholarship program here at the MSU Libraries, and second, what are some of the challenges a digital scholarship program might face, especially in respect to accessibility?**

JW: The MSU Libraries' DSL is very strong in immersive technologies. Bringing together the 360 room and the computer lab with technology that enables the creation of content to go in the 360 room and the VR Room enables the development of immersive technologies. Another thing that is unique about the lab is that MSU has a well-known and respected digital

humanities community. The College of Arts and Letters was involved in putting together the proposal for the Digital Scholarship Lab, and that activity and partnership continues to inform some of the work that's happening in the lab. For instance, we host the Digital Humanities ThatCamp, which is a humanities and technology unconference. There's also the Global Digital Humanities Symposium, which happens in the spring. These are collaborative efforts that involve folks from the Libraries and from the wider digital humanities community at MSU. These kinds of events wouldn't happen without an engaged community and the wonderful and generous spaces of the lab.

There are a lot of issues around accessibility in digital scholarship. The immersive technologies that the lab is really strong in also are not easily accessible to people who are, say, sight-impaired or hearing-impaired because of the way the immersive technologies themselves are designed. For example, I have glasses, and the first time I put on a VR headset, I couldn't even fit it over them. The digital platforms that we use to make work available often have accessibility issues, especially if they were designed without accessibility in mind from the beginning. It's something that I think is important to integrate early on; for example, in designing the project incubator that I previously mentioned, which I'm going to be co-leading with MSU Digital Humanities Archivist Kate Topham, we'll be prioritizing discussing accessibility with the participants. I think bringing in some of those best practices to people working on projects is one way to address accessibility challenges in digital scholarship. Another way to mitigate these issues is by evaluating systems to incorporate accessibility into the review of the product and really advocating for changes to systems to make them more accessible.

**EJ: There's a lot of buzz about AI at the moment. Is there work being done around AI in the DSL right now, and, in your experience, do you think AI would help or hinder digital scholarship efforts?**

JW: Right now, I'm learning about AI. Like many other people, my learning curve started when ChatGPT was announced and the buzz around large language models started. I do think AI probably benefits digital scholarship work more than it hinders it; having these powerful tools to evaluate, organize and synthesize data can be incredibly useful. I do have larger questions about the role of AI in our society and culture. I haven't incorporated AI into any of my regular work. I'm a writer, so I'm very reluctant to bring AI into my writing process and have it speak for me. The lab has a subscription to GPT-4, which is the newest OpenAI language model, so library staff have an opportunity to get some experience with it. The lab hosted an AI "Teatime and Jam Sessions" workshop series this



summer for Libraries staff, which involved article discussions and experimenting with different AI tools. As a part of it, I presented on Bard and Bing. Bard is Google's large language model and Bing is Microsoft's attempt to get into the AI game. The new Bing is basically the Bing search engine combined with ChatGPT. What's interesting about it is that it's an attempt to really link together the generative AI with a search engine. I feel like it's worth looking at because I think we're in one of those moments where there are shifts happening, and these shifts might extend to the ways that people search for and digest information.

These AI search tools act as a kind of entry point for general searching. If you're trying to get an overview of a topic, you can ask for information in a way that retrieves a mix of text and links to follow. If the information is accurate, it seems beneficial to have it synthesized. What I found problematic, however, is that Bing and Bard, just like all of these AI models, hallucinate results. When I started a search, it took me about three queries into the conversation with the AI tool to realize it was making stuff up. The articles it was retrieving sounded great, but when I followed the links, I found they did not exist. This also highlights the importance of information literacy in using these large language models. What happens if you have users who aren't very sophisticated in their information literacy and don't know to take the next step in following the AI-generated links? For me, there's the larger question of how people are generally going to be using the information produced via AI, and then the question of how that information then starts influencing the information landscape.

**EJ: What have you prioritized as you've been settling into your role here, and do you have any overarching goals for your unit?**

JW: I have been focusing on really connecting with the staff in the lab and colleagues across the Libraries. I've been developing relationships, familiarizing myself with the lab, learning the technologies and tools myself so that I can become conversant in all the different resources that we offer. I'm getting to know the regular users of the lab to really understand what they are doing and where they would like to see us grow. My two main goals for the summer were to post a position description for the digital scholarship librarian that we're recruiting this fall and to migrate the Digital Scholarship Lab website into the new website. Our website was previously standalone because it was developed when the lab was created in 2018. When I saw that the main Libraries website was migrating to a new website, I felt like it would be a good time to properly integrate into the Libraries' main digital space.

I've gone through a shift in my understanding of what digital scholarship is while I've been in this position, and in my understanding of what the role of the lab is as well. Outside the university and even at the university level, people don't necessarily know what digital scholarship is. It's one of those things that has to be defined; when folks ask me about it, I say, no, it's not giving money to students. It's using digital tools and platforms. This is my standard definition of digital scholarship:

it's using digital tools and platforms to transform teaching, scholarly research and publishing. A key part of that definition is the transformative aspect of it. The shift that I've seen in the lab is in how we're trying to change the way people see the world and themselves.

You know, the lab doesn't have a formal mission statement right now. What I hope to do in maybe year two here, once I have established strong relationships, is to initiate a process of co-creating mission and vision statements with our user communities, and then revisit the values for the lab to really guide us in the next phase of the lab's evolution. In the meantime, I have my own working mission statement. I really see the lab as a place that changes how people see the world and themselves. And we do that by offering technologies that can transform teaching and research. 🌟

## Laura Thompson

*continued from p. 3*

around. My mom was a singer and played piano as well, and my dad used to joke about us starting a family band. We didn't go that route, but we did end up learning music through our school programs. So as soon as my siblings and I got the chance, we picked up the instruments that were available to us through our middle school music program, and I started playing clarinet. And I just kind of became obsessed with music and really started getting into classical music. I feel like classical music, in studying and playing it in school, gave me the opportunity to think outside of that small town sort of box, and opened up the world to me in a way that other things hadn't been able to. So that's when I started taking it more seriously and really just threw myself into it.

To answer the second part of your question, my instinct is to say formal training in music, and being able to read music in particular, as a music librarian is very important, but I think it depends on the area of music librarianship you go into and the collections you work with. In a position like this I'd say very much yes. Someone with formal training or an educational background in music is generally more equipped to effectively support the faculty and students of a college or university-level music program in the same capacity. I do think, though, when it comes to a DEI sort of perspective, that people are increasingly starting to look at the equity issues around formal versus informal training, especially in an area like ethnomusicology, where you don't necessarily have to have formal musical training if you can demonstrate that you have musical expertise. I think people are increasingly trying to focus on that type of experience versus formal training like having a bachelor's degree in music. Generally having expertise in music is the most important thing about working in this field, but what that looks like can differ depending on the position and the collections involved.



An MSU Libraries student employee utilizes the Digital Scholarship Lab 360 Room.



**EJ: The Libraries prioritizes both inclusivity and partnership as core values within our strategic plan. In the time you've been here since February, have you been part of any initiatives or projects that emphasize these values?**

LT: One of the projects I'm currently working on with a student here in the music library is focused on bringing in more materials from underrepresented composers. A conversation that music librarians are continuously having is about finding ways to make sure your collection is representative of more than the white male Western art music canon. One of the resources that often comes up is called the Composer Diversity Database, which is basically a database where you can search for composers based on different demographics. We are currently working through a list we exported from the database that includes music by LGBTQ+ composers, including researching where their music is available to purchase. While not a perfect solution, this project is exciting because it gives us the chance to address representation in our score collections, while also potentially tackling interesting format and acquisition challenges for digital scores. Many of these contemporary composers either self-publish or do not publish via traditional music vendors and publishers, and that's part of the challenge.

I was also pretty excited when University Carillonneur Jonathan Lehrer reached out and offered to give me a tour of the Beaumont Tower. I can see it from my office window here, and I get to hear the carillon all the time. Jon talked to me about a collection that he has of carillon music and other related materials at Beaumont Tower, and I'd love to be able to help figure out how to organize, maintain and promote the collection. In addition to the carillon collection housed in the tower, I hope to add more recent works for carillon to the Music Library's circulating collection, which will also require exploring less traditional music vendors and publishers. I'm still relatively new, but the carillon and Beaumont Tower seem to be pretty significant to the university's history, and being able to help the carillonists share it in some capacity is an exciting thought. 🙌



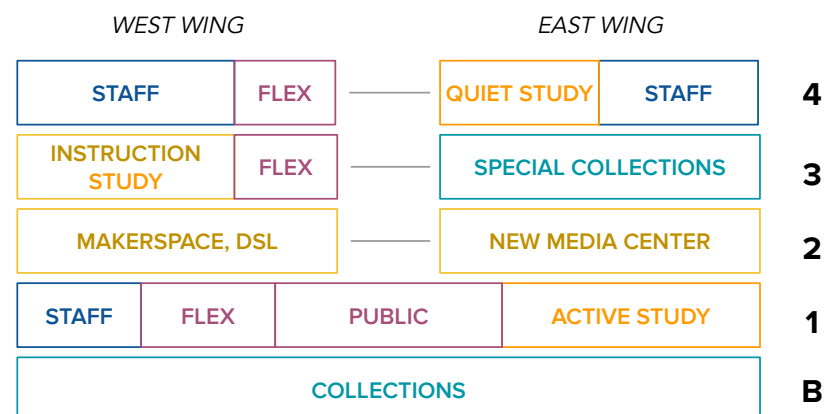


# REIMAGINING THE MSU LIBRARIES

## Transforming our spaces to suit community needs

The MSU Libraries have always been the center for academic life at MSU, which includes a responsibility toward ensuring that our facilities and services are consistently meeting, if not exceeding, the needs of our campus community. Beginning in August 2022, the Libraries began working in partnership with brightspot strategy to reimagine our spaces and services to be more responsive to current and future needs of our faculty, staff and students. The Libraries and brightspot engaged with university stakeholders on multiple levels throughout September and October to assess current perceptions of the library and identify common themes and objectives across campus in order to begin meaningfully developing an actionable plan to transform our spaces and services. At the same time, the Libraries began planning for additional upgrades to our spaces and services outside of the brightspot strategy, including the renovation of 3-East to relocate our Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong Special Collections and the renovation of 2-West to welcome the MSU Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation.

“We wanted to fully understand how people are using the Libraries and where their pain points are before moving into a solution phase. We really wanted to hear everyone’s voices — students, faculty, staff and administration from across campus and disciplines — to be as comprehensive as possible.”



This blocking and stacking diagram courtesy of brightspot strategy illustrates a high-level scenario for how MSU Libraries spaces could be arranged in the future.



## Assessment & initiatives

Surveys sent out during the fall of 2022 had over 3,000 respondents, while other engagement efforts heard from over 100 voices across campus including more than 28 hours of face-to-face discussion. Additional methods of information-gathering included interviews with Libraries' leadership, staff and partners; community stakeholder workshops; and workplace focus groups. These assessments aided the Libraries and brightspot in developing eight forward-thinking initiatives along with specific implementation strategies to begin moving forward with our space transformation.

- Activate the North Plaza
- Reimagine the Main Library entrance and navigation pathways
- Connect new media scholarship and hands-on learning
- Centralize student, partner and community services
- Expand multi-purpose flex spaces
- Improve staff spaces and workflows
- Integrate or vacate satellite locations
- Implement an enjoyable, safe and secure collections strategy

Project Manager for MSU Libraries Strategic Initiatives Kelly Sattler emphasized the importance of conducting a comprehensive information-gathering phase in the Libraries reimagination strategy. "We wanted to fully understand how people are using the Libraries and where their pain points are before moving into a solution phase," Sattler said. "We really wanted to hear everyone's voices — students, faculty, staff and administration from across campus and disciplines — to be as comprehensive as possible."

If you've visited the Libraries in the last several months, you might have already seen the beginnings of this plan being put into action. Read on for more specifics about the reimagination of the MSU Libraries, including details about the renovation of 3-East for our Special Collections, the redesign of 2-West to house the Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation and the installation of the new Starbucks in the former Sparty's Café location on the main floor.

## The North Plaza

An important goal for the MSU Libraries in the reimagination campaign with brightspot was to ensure our building is as accessible as possible. The North Plaza is a natural starting point for this work as it precedes the Main Library front entrance. In strategizing ways to make this space more accessible, we had the additional objective to help elevate the Arts MSU strategy on campus by making this space available for arts-related programming. To this end, plans being considered for activating the North Plaza include renovating the exterior entrance to create a more accessible approach to the Main Library; designing around the Main Library landscaping to better direct pedestrian traffic between the Spartan Stadium, Beal Botanical Gardens and other campus walkways; developing indoor-outdoor gathering spaces for seasonal programs and community-building events; and collaborating with Arts MSU and the larger university to further develop the public realm on North campus.

## Main Library entrance & navigation pathways

Accessibility continued to be a large consideration as the Libraries looked at the Main Library entrance and navigation pathways. A common point of feedback from the surveys concerned difficulties with wayfinding within the Libraries, often with patrons being confused between the East and West Wings of the Main Library. The reimagination of these wayfinding avenues potentially includes constructing pathways between the two towers holding the East and West Wings to improve connectivity. This project would be a significant undertaking, as it would create an atrium between the East and West Wing towers in addition to ramps connecting the floors of the two towers. The Libraries is also planning to make main points of service including the circulation and reference desks more visible, with more space for collections and exhibits allotted to the entranceway as well.

## New media scholarship & hands-on learning

The reimagination strategies around new media scholarship and hands-on learning came out of conversations on centralizing the numerous digital resources available at the Libraries. This would not only consolidate our new media offerings for ease of navigation, but would also allow faculty and staff who work in these spaces to be more readily available to assist students and other patrons. Proposed initiatives include expanding the Selma D. & Stanley C. Hollander Makerspace to meet high demand and making select media processing operations visible to showcase collections and create teaching opportunities.





## Student, partner & community services

Survey feedback on navigating our points of service suggested the need to centralize our student, partner and community services. Reimagining the Libraries to address this issue simultaneously allowed us to consider how to better align ourselves with services offered across campus. Potential plans being considered include creating dual-purpose active study and touchdown office spaces for tutoring and support services; creating a new service point for public and partner services; relocating Publishing Services and Passport services; and developing a dedicated wellness suite for students to recharge and learn about resources.

## Multi-purpose flex spaces

The best-known multi-purpose flex space in the Libraries is our Digital Scholarship Lab, a heavily used space that features a 360-degree immersive visualization room and a Virtual Reality room along with spaces for study, consultation and teaching. The Libraries was encouraged by brightspot to expand on the popularity of this space by creating more of them. Strategies for this initiative include designing distributed multipurpose spaces for Libraries and partner programs; equipping flex spaces with moveable furniture and hybrid events technology; and potentially expanding existing conference space on 4-West.

## Staff spaces & workflows

The information-gathering phase of the reimagination project included staff workspace analyses that provided data on how some of the Libraries more challenging workspaces are being utilized by staff versus how staff feel these spaces should be utilized. Solutions here could include renovating staff spaces to align with hybrid work and purposeful in-person collaboration; improving staff environments for health and wellness (e.g., ergonomic furniture, natural light, acoustic privacy, air ventilation); relocating staff spaces near

relevant resources to optimize workflows and minimize distance; designating some individual partner workspace for incoming co-located partners.

## Satellite locations

Many of the Libraries' satellite locations that hold our materials are not as ideal as they once were, leaving materials subject to unfavorable conditions that could lead to damage. Establishing new relationships and/or vacating certain premises are the main strategies being considered in thinking about ways to better preserve our materials, specifically in promoting William C. Gast Business Library as a satellite destination for librarian expertise and study resources; evaluating MSU Press and University Archives & Historical Collections spaces across campus and considering how they can be further aligned with the Main Library; and vacating satellite storage facilities and centralizing collections to our most secure and environmentally stable storage.

## Collections strategy

Collections strategy is a priority within this reimagination project as it relates to our core value of stewardship at the Libraries. It is necessary that we be intentional with our collections strategy in order for our materials to successfully impact our students, faculty and greater MSU community. Strategies around implementing an enjoyable, safe and secure collections strategy include integrating collections with study spaces, e.g., active study spaces with featured collections and quiet study spaces embedded in the general stacks; creating a Special Collections front-of-house by relocating an expanded reading room near the 3-East renovation; leveraging branch libraries like the Maps Library and the Music Library in the Main Library as public-facing, distributed service points; and expanding Remote Storage capacity and capabilities with more high-density shelving, centralized processing and improved fire suppression.



Students in the William C. Gast Business Library.



This conceptual drawing of the SPC space demonstrates the fully renovated third floor, equaling approximately 26,000 sq. feet. Some areas will undergo demolition of walls to open spaces for additional storage and workspaces.

**1 Collections Vault**

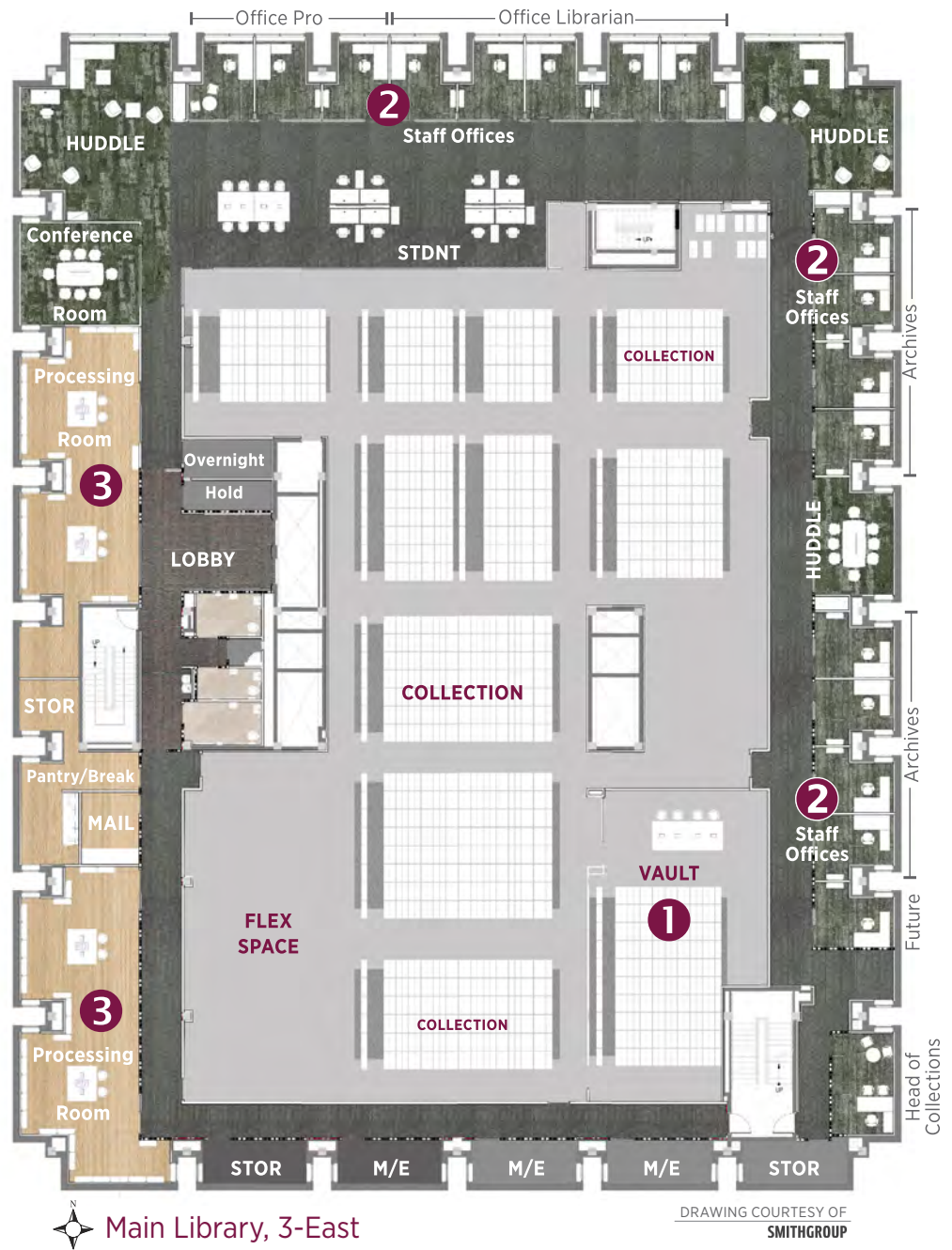
This space is planned to hold 1,500 sq. feet of SPC’s most valuable collections, which is 50% larger than the size of the basement vault.

**2 Staff Offices**

Walls of former faculty carrels on the north end of the floor will be removed to create larger offices for librarians, archivists and support staff.

**3 Processing Rooms**

Two rooms are planned with a viewing window for new collections to be processed and readied for care.



## Special Collections renovation & relocation

The largest Libraries reimagining project on the docket by far is the renovation of 3-East. The Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong Special Collections (SPC) was formally established in 1962 and is currently housed in the basement of the Main Library. The SPC holds over 500,000 printed works, numerous manuscript and archival collections and an extensive collection of ephemera. The future home of the Libraries’ SPC is a \$13.8M project that began in July 2023 with plans to be complete by 2025. A total of 26,000 sq. feet will be renovated, including

12,100 linear feet of storage space for SPC’s most valuable collections. It will also increase the size of the Libraries’ existing rare materials vault by about 50 percent from just under 1,000 sq. feet to approximately 1,500 sq. feet; provide two large processing rooms that will serve to centralize the processing of rare books and other SPC materials; replace the cinderblock on the north wall along the faculty carrels with glass-walled offices that will look out onto Beaumont Tower; and install additional conference rooms and informal touchdown office spaces.

Head of Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong Special Collections Leslie McRoberts noted the significance of the new collections space for both Libraries’ materials and staff. “I am very excited about the renovation project,” she said. “It prioritizes physical care and security of the collection while simultaneously creating a synergy among the staff who support the research engagement of our students and scholars.”





## Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation at the Libraries

The reconfiguration of our 2-West floor to welcome the Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation (CTLI) also began in May 2023 with an expected completion date of October. The CTLI space will be approximately 3,000 sq. feet and include training classrooms and meeting spaces to facilitate CTLI support of MSU faculty and staff. While the CTLI is not under the MSU Libraries umbrella, the implementation of this space to host the center aligns with the university's goal of supporting excellence in teaching and learning across the curriculum. The Office of Faculty and Academic Staff Development will also be located in the space and hold professional development sessions there as well. The CTLI provides professional development and training opportunities for MSU educators to improve and innovate in the classroom, and the location of the CTLI space near the Digital Scholarship Lab and the Makerspace is ideal as both Libraries services further the goal of integrating innovative technology into the classroom experience.

CTLI Chief Academic Digital Officer Brendan Guenther expressed enthusiasm about the relocation of the center. "The Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation and the Office of Faculty and Academic Staff Development will share this office, and this is the first time both units will be in the same place," he noted. "This brings together a wealth of people and resources that support MSU's faculty and academic staff in their professional development and career progression so they align to MSU's mission in teaching, scholarship and service."

Members of the construction crew working on the new CTLI space on 2-West.



## Starbucks at the Libraries

Construction on the new Starbucks in the former Sparty's Café area began in May 2023 with plans to open the space in early October. The footprint of the café will remain the same as Sparty's at 24,000 sq. feet, although patrons will find that in addition to a completely remodeled café space, Starbucks at the Libraries offers mobile ordering. In addition, MSU has installed a Farmer's Fridge alongside our current vending options to supplement healthy food offerings, while folks can continue to use the microwaves and vending machines in the surrounding café area. This open space will also be receiving a facelift; the Libraries will be upgrading the 3,400 sq.

feet surrounding the café areas outside of tables, which will be provided by Starbucks. The Children's Nook area to the east of the café has also recently received new carpeting, with future updates to come.

MSU Libraries Interim Dean Terri Miller has been instrumental in the reimagining of the Libraries even before her time at the Libraries' helm. "Our strategic space planning project with brightspot was a crucial part of the Libraries' overall strategic plan," Miller said. "Our spaces are an integral part of what we do as an organization and how we interact with the wider MSU

community. This work gave us the opportunity to gather great feedback and to use that feedback to craft a vision of how we want to improve our spaces in the years ahead. What was most exciting about the process was seeing how many people feel connected and engaged with the Libraries on multiple levels. The enthusiastic response that we got from many of our partners in the campus community gave us some truly transformational ideas about how the Libraries should look in the future, and I'm excited to move forward to work on the initiatives we've prioritized." 🍷



A patron reading in the Main Library north lobby with a view of the North Plaza in the background.



# SUPPORTING STUDENTS

## MSU Alumni Kim and Jude Swanson Give Back to Libraries and Honors College

Like many incoming first-year Michigan State University students, Kim and Jude Swanson met at the summer orientation program. This was in 1963, and it was the second time Kim had left the Upper Peninsula, where he'd grown up in Ishpeming. The first time he'd crossed over the Mackinac Bridge had actually been to complete a test for a scholarship that he won, which would bring him downstate to attend MSU. Judith Ann McPherson was at orientation as an incoming freshman from the village of Millington. The day after they met saw them canoeing down the Red Cedar River with a friend that had also come down from the UP with Kim to attend MSU, and a good portion of the remaining orientation week was spent together as well.

They reconnected in the fall over Coca-Colas and french fries at the MSU Union, where Kim recalls bumping into his all-time favorite football player at MSU, Charles Aaron "Bubba" Smith.

Kim and Jude's friendship grew stronger through the first half of the academic year, and by the second half they had started officially dating.

By the end of their first year, Kim had secured a position as a resident's assistant in the dorms, and Judith was hired into

the Science Library at MSU Libraries, eventually becoming a periodical specialist. According to Kim, during the time they were students, they both had to work to support themselves. They did, however, make a point of saving money every semester so they could treat themselves to a meal at the high-end dining establishment Schuler's Restaurant & Pub in Marshall, Michigan, about an hour's drive from East Lansing. At that time, Kim said, their bills usually came out to around \$20. He added that more often than not, Jude had more money to bring to the table than Kim since she was receiving checks from her work at the Libraries and Kim was being paid as a resident's assistant in room and board. Luckily, dining out became a pastime the couple still enjoys today, which meant Kim had ample opportunity to treat Jude in exchange for paying for him as undergrads. By their senior year, Kim had moved out of the

dorms and into Cedar Village Apartments with three other roommates, and he was working as an undergraduate assistant for the American Thought and Language department while also doing work "washing pots and pans" in the Abbot Hall cafeteria.



Photo courtesy of Kim and Jude Swanson, pictured here.

"While both Jude and I had to work to defray the expenses of our education, we were both fortunate enough to obtain jobs that were of benefit to us throughout our later lives," Kim said. "As a resident assistant at East Shaw Hall, I had an opportunity to become involved in the most basic level of university administration, enforcing the rules and regulations of the dorm system in real time with the students, many of whom were away from home for the first time. The experiences

I had and the opportunity to work with young people from varying backgrounds in dealing with all the issues that arise in a communal living situation prepared me well for a career of dealing with clients during my years of practicing law. Jude's experience working at the library also provided her with the

opportunity to explore areas of study she might not have known existed, learning organizational skills and dealing with

many people with differing backgrounds and interests. Our on-the-job education was just as valuable as our formal class work and helped both of us to mature and become ready for life after MSU, which is why we want to make sure today's students have that same opportunity while earning some money to help finance their education."

Kim and Jude both graduated from MSU's Honors College in 1967. After graduation, Kim, who received a bachelor's degree in political science from the College of Social Science, went on to the University of Michigan Law School, while Jude took her bachelor's in advertising from the College of Communication Arts and Sciences to work in Detroit. There she encountered a lack of open positions due to the effects of the newspaper and automobile strikes. Jude eventually found herself at the

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From their steadfast support of student employees to improving the physical spaces of the Main Library, the Swansons have left an indelible mark through their philanthropy.

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University of Michigan Library in Ann Arbor, where she had been encouraged to apply because of her background at the MSU Libraries. She spent several years as an alphabetizing specialist, which consisted of sorting catalog cards in preparation for the typist. Jude said that she later found out that her father's first job out of college also involved indexing for the Social Security Administration, and that the profession "might have been genetic."

The couple married in May of 1968 after Kim's first year of law school. He recalls that "on the 13th of October that year, we received two pieces of mail. One of which was our tickets for the fifth game of the World Series, Detroit against St. Louis, and the other of which was my invitation to join the United States Army." Kim was able to complete his first semester of his second year of law school before he was inducted into the U.S. Army in January of 1969. The couple spent the next two years in Louisville, Kentucky, before Kim was able to return to law school. He graduated in 1972, at which point the couple moved to Columbus after Kim took a job with a law firm that seemed to have progressive politics that aligned with his own. This impression, he said, was due to the fact that it was one of the few firms with whom he'd interviewed that had a woman in a reasonably senior position. He practiced law for more than 30 years, mainly in the financial sector, which had its high points including a time working on a golf course project for American professional golfer Jack Nicklaus. In 2005, however, Kim had decided to move into the private investment sector, and he joined one of his clients at RockBridge Capital, where he worked until retiring in 2010.

Jude also went on, after graduating MSU, to receive her law degree through the Moritz College of Law at Ohio State University in 1976. She worked as an attorney for several years at various firms dealing mainly with securities law, including a case that had a connection with one of the biggest securities fraud cases in Columbus at the time and another that saw her working for the former Commissioner of Securities for the State of Ohio. Kim noted that he was also working primarily as a securities lawyer during this time, so "we had the opportunity to explore together our mutual love for the securities law practice." After two years with the former securities commissioner, Jude became involved with the Columbus Symphony's education programs, where she was active as both a volunteer and an employee. She first volunteered to help with a project at the Columbus Public Schools after learning they had dismissed their staff of music instructors. The Columbus Symphony decided in response to give a series of six concerts a year to the elementary schools, with an additional workbook tape. The symphony had developed the system that used the workbook tape, and training for the support staff was required.



Student employees examine a laser cutter in the Hollander Makerspace, one of the areas supported by the Swanson MSU Endowment for Library Student Employees.

She worked to coordinate volunteer training presentations at the schools involved, which led to the symphony's education director asking Jude to work for her in a permanent paid position. Jude said she took the job despite some initial reservations.

"I didn't think I really would like it because I'd have to go to work every day," she said. "But it turned out what I liked about it was that I had to go to work every day. I ended up working there eleven and a half years, until I left and became an internet writer."

It was after Jude left her formal role with the Columbus Symphony and Kim retired from his position at RockBridge Capital that the couple were able to give larger amounts of support to the MSU community than they had previously. As Kim notes, at that point they had been giving to both the university and the Libraries specifically "since Magic Johnson won the national championship" in 1979. This support generally went directly to funding student positions; as of 2022, the couple had given more than \$500 thousand in support to MSU, including through the establishment of the Kim L. and Judith A. Swanson MSU Endowment for Library Student Employees in 2007. In 2023, the Swansons committed to two more generous gifts, this time to both the MSU Libraries and the MSU Honors College. The couple has pledged \$250 thousand to help fund the Libraries' renovations to the 3-East Wing of the Main Library that will allow Special Collections to relocate their materials to ensure better conservation and preservation efforts. They have also made a \$50 thousand pledge to the Honors College in the form of an endowment named the Swansons' Honors College Summer Programs Fund, which will be used to support summer programs offered and/or sponsored by the Honors College, with a focus on supporting payroll costs of students employed within one of the summer programs.

— story continues, p. 20





## MSU Libraries features exhibits rich in botany, bees & Red Cedar history

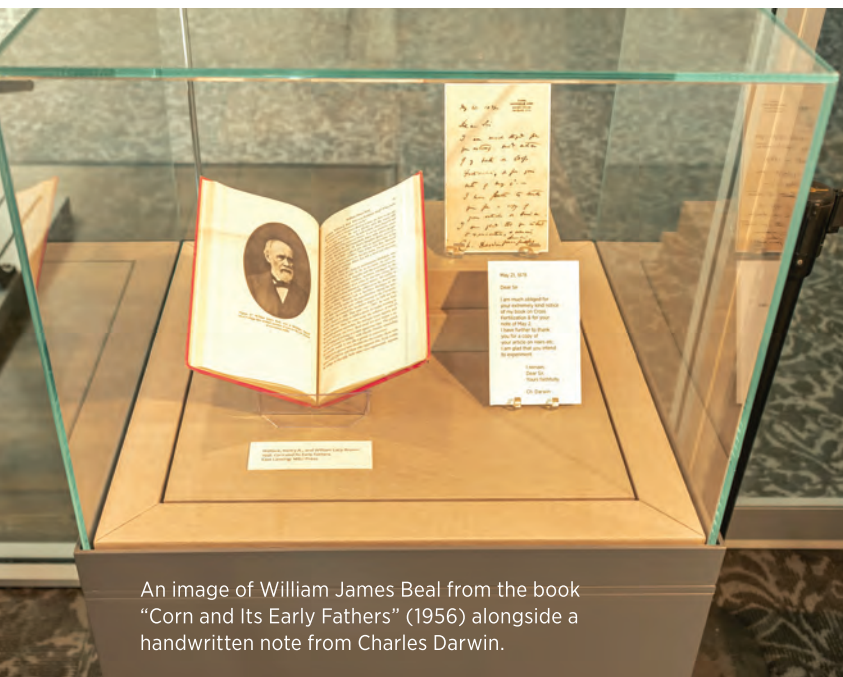
The MSU Libraries is well known for our extensive collection of over 7 million materials including books, journals and digital resources, but visitors to our Main Library will also be delighted to find exhibits showcasing some of these materials throughout the Libraries. Patrons can discover some of our larger exhibits on the first floor of the Main Library, where our librarians look to curate displays that highlight some of our more renowned collections. Our Main Gallery most recently held exhibits commemorating the Beal Botanical Garden's sesquicentennial anniversary and exploring the history of beekeeping in the United States. Those looking to explore the Libraries' resources from a digital perspective will also be pleased to learn that a new online exhibit that looks at the unique relationship between the iconic Red Cedar River and the university was also made available earlier this summer. Read on for a closer look at these insightful and fascinating exhibits.

### Celebrating Beal Botanical Garden's sesquicentennial anniversary

The "Beal Botanical Garden Sesquicentennial: 150 Years of Research and Accomplishments" exhibit was curated by a team of MSU Libraries faculty including Forestry and Botany Librarian Suzanne Teghtmeyer, Digital Projects Librarian Andrew Lundeen and University Archives & Historical Collections Archivist Jennie Rankin. The exhibit, which was on display between June and September, celebrated the history of the oldest continuously operated university garden in the United States, located right here on the banks of the Red Cedar River at MSU. It featured a bountiful collection of materials honoring pioneer botanist William James Beal's

vision of a botanical garden, including examples of the learning, enjoyment and accomplishments that have grown from it since 1873. Two of the more exceptional items on display were seed vitality study bottles on loan from W. J. Beal Botanical Garden & Campus Arboretum. The seed vitality study was initiated by Beal in 1879, which he implemented with the goal of measuring how long certain common seeds could remain dormant in the soil prior to germination. Twenty seed bottles were buried on campus grounds and a bottle was excavated every five years through 1920, at which point the benchmark began progressively shifting to longer intervals in order to extend the study. A 15th bottle was unearthed in 2000 with the 16th planned for 2020 but delayed to 2021 due to the pandemic; the vial from 2000 is on display as well as a 13th bottle excavated in 1970.

Teghtmeyer expressed admiration for Beal's efforts, especially those that went into planning the projects that would not bear results until much farther into the future. "W. J. Beal was an energetic man, perfectly placed in time and location," Teghtmeyer said. "His desire for discovery was endless, as was his enthusiasm for the natural world and how it all fit together. He knew when he was planning the botanical garden, seed viability trial and endless arboretum plantings that he would not be around to see the long-term discoveries they would provide. He planned for future research and studies by students and faculty, and the Beal Botanical Garden has done just that. This library exhibit provides just a small snapshot of the scholarly contributions of Beal Botanical Garden and arboreta to the plant and ecological sciences."



An image of William James Beal from the book "Corn and Its Early Fathers" (1956) alongside a handwritten note from Charles Darwin.



## Creating buzz about beekeeping in the US

The current exhibit “Building a Buzz: A History of Beekeeping in the United States” stems from the recent donation of Roger A. Hoopingartner’s bee book collection. The former MSU Department of Entomology Professor Emeritus was also a world-renowned apiary expert, and the donation of his materials has expanded the already impressive Bee Book Collection in our Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong Special Collections. Curated by Life Sciences Librarian Jodi Coalter, the exhibit is on display through the end of the semester and explores the reciprocal relationship between beekeeping and bee culture in the United States, including valuable contributions made by Hoopingartner and other MSU apiaries. Notable items outside of the Hoopingartner collection include two editions of Charles Butler’s work “The Feminine Monarchie” (1623 and 1634) and Lorenzo Langstroth’s “Langstroth

on the Hive and the Honey Bee” (1853). Butler’s seminal work was one of the first books to clearly state that beehives were led by female bees (queens) and also introduced the term “drones” for male bees. Langstroth’s book is one of the best known in beekeeping and brought forth the idea of “bee space,” or, the amount of space bees prefer between comb.



Coalter noted the significance of the Hoopingartner collection and other materials in the exhibit to the world of beekeeping and pollination in the U.S. “This exhibit shows how essential bees were to early colonists, how the science of beekeeping evolved over the centuries and how important beekeeping is to the university and the United States today,” she said. “As I was studying the history of beekeeping and a history of the apiaries here at MSU through the Hoopingartner collection, I realized how similar these two stories were, and



how local history ties directly to national history. History is still being written — bees are just as important today as they were to early colonists in 1776.

Beekeeping materials on exhibit in the Main Library including “Episodes of insect life” by L. M. Budgen (1851); “British bee-keeper’s guide book to the management of bees” by Thomas William Cowan (1907); “Tuskegee & its people: their ideals and achievements” by Booker T. Washington (1905); and “The management of bees: with a description of the ‘Ladies’ safety hive” by Samuel Bagster (1838).







## Foregrounding the role of the Red Cedar River at MSU

The Red Cedar River and Michigan State University share a historical bond, with the iconic river playing a huge role in the founding and growth of the State Agricultural School known as MSU today. MSU Libraries Science Coordinator and Environmental Sciences Librarian Eric Tans has created a new online exhibit that provides an in-depth look at the unique relationship between the river and the university. “Close Beside the Winding Cedar: The Red Cedar River at Michigan State University” is available at <https://bit.ly/Winding-Cedar>. Tans calls attention

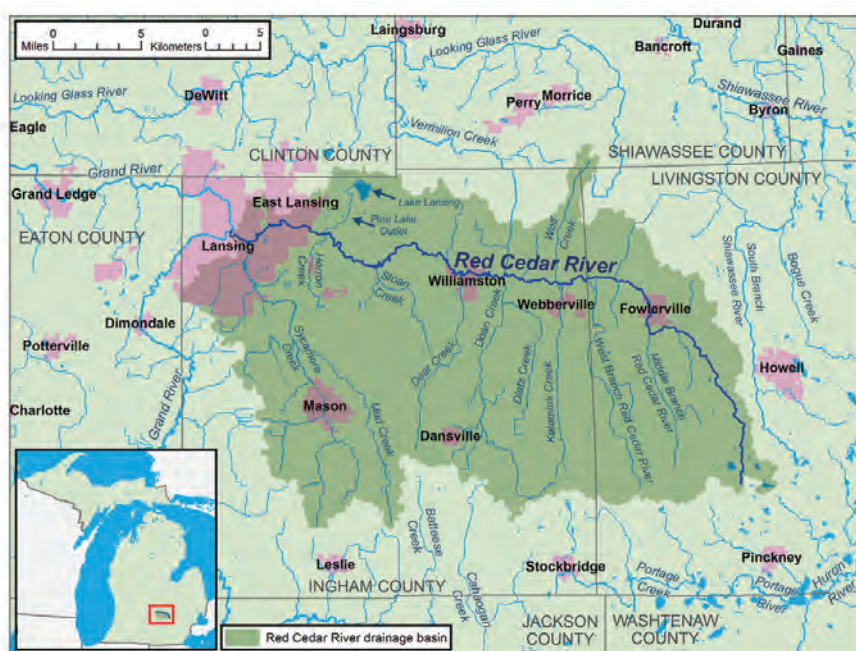
River’s recovery from its industrial era beginning in the early years of campus, which is illustrated by historic photos detailing the timeline of the river’s journey from polluted waterfront to healthy ecosystem.

Tans emphasized the importance of recognizing the river as a site of recovery. “MSU has a complex relationship with the Red Cedar River,” Tans said. “It is a beloved icon of the school and the focus of many campus traditions, but it’s also considered by many to be polluted and unhealthy. The history of MSU

University Archives and Historical Collections (A010358)



University Archives and Historical Collections (A010363)



Red Cedar River watershed. (Tim Kiser (TimK MSI), CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Common).

to a significant piece of MSU’s history that has been largely excluded from both the early and historical accounts of the school and campus, using archival images, historical documents, audio recordings and newspaper clippings to give a thorough overview of the cultural history of the Red Cedar River from its formation to the present day. Included in the exhibit is a facsimile of Article 5 of the Treaty of Saginaw, which guaranteed the Ottawa, Ojibway and Potawatomi peoples hunting and fishing rights on the six million acres of land that their tribal chiefs ceded to the U.S. government in hopes of peacefully coexisting with white settlers after the prolonged War of 1812. A major takeaway from the exhibit is an emphasis on the Red Cedar

and the Red Cedar is a story of a river transformed from a healthy aquatic ecosystem into an industrial waterfront and back again, allowing the university to grow into what it is today.”



While the “Beal Botanical Garden Sesquicentennial” exhibit is now closed, the public may visit the “Building a Buzz” exhibit through the end of the semester at the Main Library and the “Close Beside the Winding River” online exhibit any time. Exhibits in the Main Gallery rotate regularly, and the Libraries invites you to come take a closer look at some of the captivating materials we have on display. 🌿



# AD Steve Sowards retires after 27 years of dedicated service at MSU Libraries

When Steve Sowards started at MSU Libraries over 25 years ago, libraries worldwide were at a pivot point. Sowards, who retired in July from his position as Associate Dean for Collection Strategies and Preservation, recalls media claims that librarianship was on its way out the door due to two reasons: the World Wide Web and former bookstore powerhouse chain Borders. While the internet has proven to be both an asset and a challenge to librarians since its inception, librarianship itself continues to evolve alongside changes in technology and culture. Sowards himself is an excellent example of this staying power, as his tenure at the Libraries outlasted Borders by 12 years. He attributes the endurance of libraries to librarians' skills in adaptation; in the '90s, he said, librarians were able to recognize that to succeed, they needed to adjust their more traditional models to be responsive to the needs of their patrons, which included, for example, making room for cafes and more comfortable seating. According to Sowards, libraries were able to persevere because "librarians remembered that they were in the content business — not the printed book business — and followed the preferences of the readers."

Sowards initially earned a doctoral degree from Indiana University–Bloomington in history, but had taken a staff position in the university library's Serials Department while working toward his degree. He found himself enjoying the work he was doing as Supervisor of Microforms Services and decided to enroll in the MLS program at IU–B after earning his doctorate. His first two jobs as a reference librarian were in smaller libraries at liberal arts schools Hanover College and Swarthmore College; however, after

his experience working at the IU–B library, he was eager to return to a larger library system as well as to the Big Ten consortium. He applied for jobs at three of the Big Ten libraries, and was hired into the MSU Libraries in 1996 as head of one of several smaller reference units called the Social Science and Humanities Reference Desk. These individual reference desks were eventually combined in 1998, with Sowards taking the helm as Head of Reference until his promotion to Assistant Director of Collections in 2005.

The assistant directorship position eventually became Associate Dean for Collection Strategies and Preservation when the Libraries underwent an internal reorganization in 2019. Throughout the duration of his work in collections, Sowards said, he took particular pride in allocating the materials budget to allow MSU librarians to build up aspects of the collection that deserved to grow. At the time he started in collections, the MSU Libraries collections budget was one of the smallest in the Big Ten. Sowards was grateful for the support from the Office of the Provost in increasing the Libraries' materials budget, which he said was paramount in building the well-regarded collection the Libraries holds today. He highlighted four areas in particular that accomplished notable growth in the years he oversaw them as associate dean. The first, the Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong Special Collections, was given a strong enough budget to buy significant research materials on a larger scale including those in the Borges collection, the Brass Sisters collection and the Bodnar collection, as well as rare radicalism posters. The second area of significant growth was in streaming video; when



Former Associate Dean Steve Sowards poses by "Doorway for the Blues," one of two sculptures by John T. Scott on display in the Main Library.

the campus had to pivot to online classes during the pandemic, the Libraries had nearly 100,000 films available for students to watch online. Third was in digitized historical newspapers, which, in addition to the big-name newspapers from the Boston-Washington corridor and California, included newspapers from cities across the Midwest, the South and the inland West (e.g., Detroit, New Orleans, Denver, etc.), providing a much more representative set of primary sources. The fourth area to see strong growth through the support of his unit was in the open access work done by Reveal Digital (now part of Ithaka), which provided free online access to copies of underground newspapers from the 1960s, prison newspapers and a significant amount of other previously rare alternative content.

In looking back over his 27 years of dedicated service at MSU Libraries, Sowards said that the part of his work that he will miss the most is the people. "I'm proud of having been part of a team — and library work is all about teamwork — that can offer something to everyone. Libraries have survived not just the last



thirty years, but the last two thousand years, because we offer a valuable service to our communities. And in an age of so-called late capitalism, where everything has a price tag, libraries push the other way: so far as we can, we offer our services and collections to readers for free, with as few barriers as possible. That sharing aspect of library work is a great match for the land grant mission at a university like MSU, and for today's open access movement in publishing."

MSU Libraries Interim Dean Terri Miller expressed a sincere appreciation for both the work and personality that Sowards has brought to the Libraries over the past several decades. "Steve and I have worked together in the Libraries for more than 20 years, and he has always been a model to me of thoughtful, steadfast leadership," Miller said. "Steve has a wonderful ability to break down problems into manageable

pieces, and to be both a thought partner and devil's advocate in any challenging situation. Steve's understanding of the changing landscape of collections in research libraries was ahead of his time, and he moved the Libraries forward in thinking about collection strategy and collaborative collection development in ways that put MSU Libraries ahead of our peers in how we consider stewardship of print collections, handle licensing challenges and interrogate open access agreements. Steve has also curated one of the most outstanding digital collections of historical newspapers in the country. From a personal standpoint, I consider Steve to be one of my favorite mentors, and I could always count on his sound advice and dry wit to pull me through any circumstance."

Outside of his academic work, Sowards has a lively resume of positions including time spent as a short-order cook in a

Greek restaurant, a subway passenger counter for the California Department of Transportation, a teacher's aide in a middle school, a hospital orderly and a keypunch operator "Kelly Girl" assigned to an insurance company in California. In his spare time, he enjoys exploring new varieties of red wine, assorted cats and hiking.

When asked what his retirement plans were, it might not come as a surprise that outside of unpacking boxes from his MSU Libraries office, Sowards plans to catch up on his reading. The MSU Libraries wishes Steve the very best in this next chapter, with much gratitude for the work he's done to elevate both the Libraries and the greater university community. 📖

## Supporting Students

*continued from p. 15*

MSU Libraries Director of Development Caitlyn Perry Dial was enthusiastic about the recent support the Swansons provided toward the Libraries' 3-East renovations. "Kim and Jude's support has made a profound impact on MSU Libraries," Dial said. "From their steadfast support of student employees to improving the physical spaces of the Main Library, the Swansons have left an indelible mark through their philanthropy, which is a reflection of the incredible people that they are."

This sentiment of gratitude for the Swansons' support was shared by MSU Honors College Assistant Dean Bess German. "The Swansons' generosity means that the Honors College can serve even more students in our new and innovative programs that broaden inclusivity," German said. "Initiatives like the Academic Scholars Program and the Honors College IMPACT Mentor Program, both of which were supported by the Swansons this past summer,

are two examples of how we expand opportunity and foster student success. Their sponsorship of stipends for our student staff through an endowment, and therefore in perpetuity, adds valuable and necessary support for new students transitioning to MSU."

When asked about the theme of supporting student employees, Kim again cited his and Jude's own experiences in working as undergraduates. "Initially, we started giving because we wanted to have money available for people like Jude when she was in school," Kim said. "Jude ended up working summers at the library through a student program, and we wanted to make sure that program was available to students in the future."

Jude also emphasized how much she enjoyed those summers working at the library. She specifically remembers one summer where she spent a lot of time using the Libraries' bindery to preserve materials, including magazines. She recalled having to reach out to publishers if an issue they were looking

to bind happened to be missing from the collection in order to try to get a replacement copy. Coming from the science library, she said, many of the magazines were from all over the world, and often in foreign languages, which meant it was especially difficult to find publisher addresses if you weren't familiar with their language. Once you did make contact, she explained, it was then left up to the librarian to determine just how much they were willing to pay for a replacement issue.

"I loved working there," Jude said. "I loved the people I worked with. And interesting things happen during the summers at Michigan State." 📖





## Recently acquired collection details student horticulture activity on campus

By Sarah Roberts, University Archives & Historical Collections Archivist

The MSU Student Horticulture Association was founded in 1901 as the Horticulture Club and is one of the oldest student groups on campus still in existence. Early club meetings were held every other week with lectures given by the faculty or people in the horticulture industry. At many of the early meetings, fruit was studied and eaten. The students also organized or participated in a horticulture show on campus every year. Meetings were held in the Horticultural Laboratory, currently Eustace Hall. The club held end-of-the year banquets honoring senior club members.

Early records of the club are scarce in the University Archives & Historical Collections. But some documentation can be found in the Holcad, an early student publication, which describes the meetings and lectures. The early MSU yearbooks also contain a group photograph and list of the members. Other items in the UAHC include several photographs and banquet programs from the 1910s.

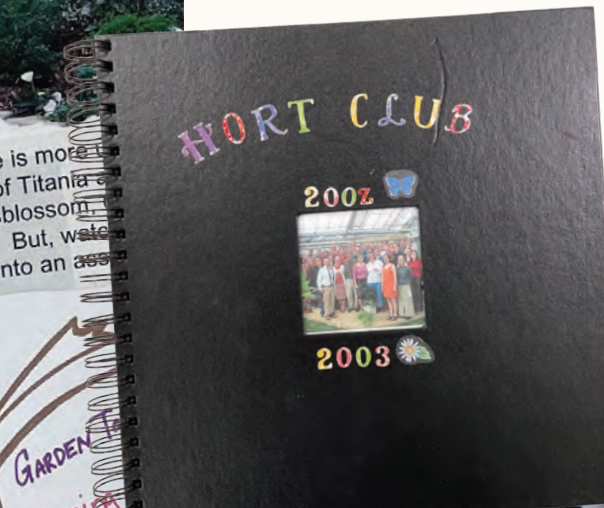
In 2020 the Student Horticulture Association contacted the UAHC to donate thirty years' worth of scrapbooks and photographs. The materials illustrate the members and their activities over the course of the school year. They document club trips, campus horticulture shows, fundraising sales and social events. Some scrapbooks include newsletters, clippings, flyers, portraits and names of officers as well as descriptions of the various activities.



The UAHC is privileged to have the opportunity to collect and care for these materials and to make them available to researchers. Student organization records are difficult to collect since many students have historically adhered to the traditional four-year curriculum; this student turnover rate means records and other materials can be fragmented, incomplete or otherwise lost. However, it is important to document the student experience at MSU, which is an integral part of MSU's history. We are fortunate to have had this collection of important student activities donated to the University Archives & Historical Collections.

View the collection inventory at <https://findingaids.lib.msu.edu/repositories/2/resources/1815>.

The Michigan State University Archives & Historical Collections comprehensively collects and documents the history of our institution. If you have materials related to your time on campus, and are interested in donating them, please reach out to the University Archives & Historical Collections via email at [archives@msu.edu](mailto:archives@msu.edu) or telephone at 517-355-2330. 🌱





Julie Taylor, Publishing Services.



Kristen Lee, Reference and Discovery Services.

D. Ryan (left), Gast Business Library.



Stephanie Bour, Systems.



# Honoring the 2022-2023 Staff Award Recipients

## SPECIAL PROJECT VuFind (Public Catalog) Team

The Special Project Award acknowledges the achievement of an individual or team outside their regular position requirements that exemplifies the Libraries' strategic plan, values or mission.

VuFind Project Team Members:

- Jenny Brandon
- Nathan Collins
- Damien Guillaume
- Devin Higgins
- Megan Schanz
- The Catalog Development Advisory Working Group Team
- Lucas Mak (Consultant)

## OUTSTANDING EVENT AND/OR EXHIBIT Special Collections Pop-up Exhibits — Dayna Topalian, SPC

The Outstanding Event and/or Exhibit Award recognizes the individuals involved in planning Library Events and/or Exhibits that advance the Libraries strategic plan, values or mission.

## OUTSTANDING COLLABORATOR Jamie Moriarty, Makerspace

The Outstanding Collaborator Award recognizes an individual who is engaged, collaborative, helpful and encouraging.

## OUTSTANDING LEADER Laura Walesby, Assistant Dean for Faculty Engagement

The Outstanding Leader Award recognizes an individual who is a supervisor or who is the chair of a committee, board, or task force who advanced the Libraries strategic plan, values or mission.

## OUTSTANDING MENTOR D. Ryan, Business Library

The Outstanding Mentor Award recognizes an individual who has provided one-on-one coaching or mentorship within the Libraries. One faculty and one support staff may be awarded each year.





Staff award recipients from left: Caitlin Benallack, Emilia Marcyk-Taylor, Dayna Topalian, Pearl Wong, Suzi Teghtmeyer, Jamie Moriarty, Kristen Lee (front).

### OUTSTANDING NEW HIRES

**Jodi Coalter**, Sciences Librarian and **Pearl Wong**, Catalog Maintenance

The Outstanding New Hire Award recognizes a newly hired individual with at least six months worked before the awards ceremony but no more than two years in their current position while advancing the Libraries strategic plan, values or mission. One faculty and one support staff may be awarded each year.

### OUTSTANDING INNOVATOR

**Devin Higgins**, Digital Development and Strategies

The Outstanding Innovator Award recognizes an individual who has implemented new technology, skills, programming or partnerships to advance the Libraries strategic plan, values or mission.

### OUTSTANDING BEHIND-THE-SCENES

**Stephanie Bour**, Systems

The Outstanding Behind-the-Scenes Award recognizes an individual who does not have a front-facing customer service position and who has excelled in their work to advance the Libraries strategic plan, values or mission.

### OUTSTANDING UNIT

**Reference and Discovery Services**

The Outstanding Unit Award recognizes a unit or department that has implemented new skills, provided solutions or advanced the Libraries strategic plan, values or mission.

Reference and Discovery Services Team Members:

- |                      |                         |                        |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| • Lydia Allen        | • Chana Kraus-Friedberg | • Stephanie Perentesis |
| • Caitlin Benallack  | • Sharon Ladenson       | • John Takis           |
| • Jenny Brandon      | • Kristen Lee           | • Suzi Teghtmeyer      |
| • Sheila Bryant      | • Stacy Lektzian        | • Xian Wu              |
| • Jodi Coalter       | • Lisa Lorenzo          |                        |
| • Shannon Cunningham | • Emilia Marcyk-Taylor  | Student Assistants:    |
| • Alex Dion          | • Deborah Margolis      | • Zack Myers           |
| • Holly Flynn        | • Sara Miller           | • Luke Bridges         |
| • Carin Graves       | • Leah Morin            | • Arianna Troia        |
| • Cameron Johnson    | • Ben Oberdick          |                        |



# MSU Press supports African Studies with robust journals publishing program

By Nicole Utter, MSU Press Marketing & Sales Manager, and Natalie Eidenier, MSU Press Journals Manager

The journals program at Michigan State University Press represents a diverse range of fields and includes three African studies-focused journals: Alliance for African Partnership Perspectives (AAP Perspectives), Journal of West African History (JWAH) and Northeast African Studies (NEAS).

Each peer-reviewed journal is the product of international collaborations and partnerships between various institutions, including Michigan State University. The journals program builds networks among universities, governments and the private sector to elevate discourse in African studies.

Founded in 2020, AAP Perspectives is the newest addition to MSU Press's African studies journals list. It is an annual publication from the Alliance for African Partnership, whose mission is to mobilize and support partnerships that will positively transform institutions and livelihoods in Africa. The next AAP Perspectives issue, "Race, Ethnicity, and Higher Education in the African Diaspora," will be published in October 2023. It features a prologue by MSU Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer Jabbar R. Bennett, who issued an important message imploring colleges and universities to share knowledge about racist systems, both historic and current, with the goal of empowering communities to disrupt those systems and create an engaged citizenry.

He states, "Institutions of higher education have the responsibility and opportunity to impact the lives of college students, the broader populace, and the world through generating and sharing knowledge that is clear, factual, and objective, which is critical to our lives and well-being. Without adequate education and accountability, past atrocities and contemporary absurdities will propagate and seek to delegitimize and derail progress made to nurture a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive global society."

This journal is available open access through Project MUSE. To access this issue or others visit: <https://msupress.org/journals/alliance-for-african-partnership-perspectives>.

JWAH is another newer journal, launched in 2015. It is a biannual interdisciplinary research journal that publishes the highest quality articles on West African history. JWAH founder and Editor-in-Chief and MSU Jack and

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In founding and editing JWAH, I dare to envision the role that open and fair inquiry from both sides of the Atlantic can play in the dissemination of Africanist knowledge.

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Margaret Sweet Endowed Professor of History Nwando Achebe said of the journal, "At JWAH, we challenge the geographies of knowledge production. We envision JWAH as a platform for the facilitation of open communication, knowledge dissemination and questioning of so-called scholarly authority."



NWANDO ACHEBE  
JWAH Founder and Editor-in-Chief

JWAH is at the cutting edge of new scholarship on the social, cultural, economic and political history of West Africa and fills a representational gap by providing a forum for serious scholarship and debate on women and gender, sexuality, slavery, oral history, popular and public culture, and religion.

Achebe emphasized the significance of the platform provided by JWAH. "Having MSU Press publish the Journal

of West African History is monumental in the field of African studies," she said. "JWAH is the only peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the systematic study of the West African World. In founding and editing JWAH, I dare to envision the role that open and fair inquiry from both sides of the Atlantic can play in the dissemination of Africanist knowledge."





At JWAH, we are working to traverse, journey through, this rapidly evolving, political, and polarized academic landscape, as we reconsider what we as a field define as and determine to be new knowledge.”

The longest running African studies journal at MSU Press is Northeast African Studies, a biannual interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal that publishes high-quality original research in the social sciences and the humanities on the Horn of Africa and its neighbors. NEAS also publishes scholarly reviews of current books in the field. Two special issues that have launched recently are “Labor in the Horn of Africa: Historical and Social Dynamics” and “The Past of Ethiopia’s Present: Unfolding Crises, Cyclical Violence, and Competing Nationalism.”

The importance of giving a voice to African scholars cannot be overstated, as Bennett pointed out in his prologue in AAP Perspectives: “This is the moment for colleges and universities to stand boldly by their missions, and bravely with partners around the world to drive out darkness and illuminate the path toward a brighter and more just future. A day when words are used to empower people and communities, rather than divide them. A time when institutions of higher education unite and leverage their diverse and collective voices to champion race and ethnicity, disrupt systems that perpetuate racism, and move reconciliation beyond simple ideation. Today, this is the assignment.” 🌱



**Alliance for African Partnership**

Perspectives  
ISSN: 2770-3622  
eISSN: 2770-3614  
Frequency: 1 issue/year  
Available on: Project MUSE  
Open Access



**Journal of West African History**

ISSN: 2327-1868  
eISSN: 2327-1876  
Frequency: 2 issues/year  
Available on: Project MUSE,  
Scholarly Publishing Collective  
2024 Subscription Rates:  
Individual Electronic: \$40  
Institutional Electronic: \$141\*  
\*via Scholarly Publishing Collective



**Northeast African Studies**

ISSN: 0740-9133  
eISSN: 1535-6574  
Frequency: 2 issues/year  
Available on: Project MUSE, Scholarly  
Publishing Collective  
2024 Subscription Rates:  
Individual Electronic: \$57  
Institutional Electronic: \$184\*  
\*via Scholarly Publishing Collective








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Curated by  
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Life Sciences Librarian,  
in conjunction with the  
Department of Entomology

Celebrating Roger Hoopingarner  
and "Team Honey bee"

