The Mortenson Center Turns 25

History

It all began with generous giving from C. Walter and Gerda B. Mortenson in 1986. The couple envisioned a program for the promotion of international education, understanding, and peace through library programs. Their $2 million gift created the Mortenson Distinguished Professorship for International Library Programs at Illinois. It was the first named academic position of its kind in the United States.

An additional $2 million gift from the couple in 1991 expanded the activities of the professorship through a variety of unique programs with the creation of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs. The Mortenson Center and the professorship seek to strengthen international ties among libraries and librarians—regardless of geographic location or access to technology.

Bringing the World to Illinois

Taking the Mortensons’ vision of creating a center for the promotion of international education, understanding, and peace and translating it into concrete actions took little time. Soon after the Mortenson Center was established, visiting librarians arrived from around the world to learn more about libraries in the U.S. Professional development became a niche for the Center and a few years after it was founded, the Mortenson Center Associates Program was established.

The Mortenson Center Associates Program is the signature program of the Center. Originally it was a two-month, on-site, professional development program. Today, it is 3.5 weeks, still offered at the University of Illinois, and typically hosts 14–25 librarians from around the world. It focuses on library trends and technology and has developed a reputation for being an excellent leadership program. More than 1,300 librarians from 90 countries have attended.

Another example, the innovative Russia Small Towns Program, brought Russian officials and public library directors from small towns in Russia to the United States. While in Champaign-Urbana, the group not only visited local libraries, but also interacted with mayors, firefighters, police, and financial directors of both cities. Equally exciting was that a group of U.S. librarians and local officials returned to visit Russian small towns.

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Special Giving Opportunity

The Mortenson Center for International Library Programs has thrived in large part to external support. Realizing the importance of outside giving and its significant impact, Library Friends Bob and Kay Merrick have agreed to match every single dollar given to the Center through 2016—up to $25,000. Bob and Kay have supported the Center by funding visiting librarians from other countries through its Associates Program. Their travels and international experiences have confirmed the value of the Center’s activities and especially the training programs for visiting librarians. They feel that this is a model for “citizen diplomacy.”

To make a gift to the Mortenson Center, and double its impact in celebration of its 25th anniversary, please contact the Library’s Office of Advancement at (217) 333-5682.

John Wilkin
The Juanita J. and Robert E. Simpson Dean of Libraries and University Librarian
jpwilkin@illinois.edu
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Outstanding Lectures

The Mortenson Center Lecture series, which promotes the work of international library and information science professionals, has featured many world-renown leaders, including the former Librarian of Congress James Billington. A memorable lecture, significant due to its timing, was given by Martin Marty, Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, History of Modern Christianity, Divinity School, University of Chicago, on September 20, 2001—nine days after 9/11. The title of the lecture was Religion on the Global Scene: the Killer that Heals, the Healer that Kills. Professor Marty spoke to an overflowing crowd of more than 600 students, faculty, staff, and community members.

Partnerships that Matter

The Mortenson Center has been successful due to its many partnerships with libraries and library organizations around the world.

In the words of our partners:

▶ SVETLANA A. GOROKHOVA, Head, International Cultural Center, Russian State Library for Foreign Literature (Moscow, Russia)

“So many friendships, devotions, professional contacts, cultural bridges, inventions, stereotypes eliminated, have happened during these long, happy years of cooperation that it is very hard to overestimate it. We do believe that it is vital to keep our dialogue going regardless [of the] internal and external pressures of nowadays. Experience and trust we have in each other will help both national communities see the importance of education and culture we all share.”

▶ ELIZABETH PIERRE-LOUIS, Program Director, Fondation Connaissance et Liberté (FOKAL) (Port-au-Prince, Haiti)

“This strong partnership continues since FOKAL regularly consults with the Mortenson team in order to redress a strategy, learn new partnership possibilities and exchange experiences. This is a unique center open to the world and sharing knowledge and wisdom.”

▶ UJALA SATGOOR, Past President, Library and Information Association of South Africa

“The partnership between the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) and the Mortenson Center, which dates back to 1999, contributed to redefining and strengthening a historically disparate library and information services (LIS) sector in South Africa.”

Impact of the Mortenson Center

The Mortenson Center has worked with Arabella Advisors to deepen its understanding of the impact of its library leadership training programs on its participants, their libraries, and their communities. The Center’s goals are for the librarians in its programs to lead and innovate in their libraries, for their libraries to become vibrant hubs serving community needs, and for community members to use the libraries and see them as important to community wellbeing. Results from the Arabella assessment showed:

▶ Over 70% of Mortenson Center alumni introduced a new tool, service, or resource in their library within five years of training;

▶ 79% of Mortenson Center participants believe that their library is more prepared to serve their users’ needs;

▶ 80% of alumni feel better prepared to take on leadership roles or additional responsibility in their libraries; and

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Recognized Library Leaders at the Helm of the Mortenson Center

1991–2003
Marianna Tax Choldin, Director and Distinguished Professor, awarded the Pushkin Gold Medal by the Russian Government

1992–present
Susan Schnuer, Associate Director, awarded the Scroll of Honor by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

2003–2014
Barbara J. Ford, Director and Distinguished Professor, American Library Association President from 1997–1998

2013–2015
Paula T. Kaufman, Interim Director and Distinguished Professor, Dean of University of Illinois Library known for hiring strong staff members and librarians

2015–present
Clara M. Chu, Director and Distinguished Professor, Association for Library and Information Science Education President from 2014-2015
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▶ 1/3 of Mortenson Center participants went on to take leadership roles in their professional networks.

Looking to the Future

The work and achievements of the first 25 years of the Mortenson Center are a legacy to C. Walter and Gerda B. Mortenson. During 2016, the Center will celebrate its 25th anniversary by holding events and activities locally and abroad that underscore its mission, along with a fundraising initiative. Activities will be announced at www.library.illinois.edu/mortenson and will culminate with a celebratory reception at the 2016 Mortenson Distinguished Lecture. Please make plans to attend!

The next 25 years present new opportunities to advance the Mortenson mission with its internationally-experienced staff, a commitment to the role of libraries in support of sustainable development, dialogue with partners to identify needs and appropriate solutions, and technologies to enhance access. The Center will continue to deliver training programs in the United States and abroad, engage in partnerships to enhance library services and skills in other countries and regions, welcome international visitors engaged in library-related activities around the world, and offer the Mortenson Distinguished Lecture and other public forums to promote international understanding.

Future work will be informed by the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the role of libraries as enablers of sustainable development. The Center will enhance its mission to promote peace by advancing the role of libraries in fostering peace. Lastly, to strengthen its work in developing library leaders and the impact of libraries internationally, the Center will initiate a new publication series to address policy issues in its mission area of libraries promoting international education, understanding, and peace.

The Mortenson Center has flourished due to the incredible support of University Library deans and colleagues who have provided not only encouragement, but their time and efforts to make the Center successful. It is also indebted to and thanks all others associated with the Center, and look to the continued support and participation of the library community and stakeholders as it forge ahead to the next 25 years.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Mortenson Center for International Library Programs has received countless gifts from the librarians and friends the staff has met around the globe over the past quarter of a century. These gifts are on display in an exhibit case in the Center. Items can be loaned out to anyone interested in borrowing them. The Center’s office, on the bottom level of the Undergraduate Library, is open to the public and visitors are welcome!
Upcoming Events

Brazilian Studies and the Olympic Movement at Illinois
This exhibit about Brazil and the Olympic movement is by the International and Area Studies Library in collaboration with the University Archives.
• March 1–31
• Main Library North-South Corridor

Brazil and the Rio 2016 Olympics: Playing the BRIC Game
This discussion will introduce a diverse audience to the impact of Brazil’s upcoming Olympics locally and internationally, particularly as a BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) country.
• March 8, 3:00–4:30 p.m.
• International and Area Studies Library
• Call (217) 333-1501 or visit library.illinois.edu/ias

Local Women as Change Agents: Traditions of Philanthropy and Political Action
Join the Student Life and Culture Archives and the Champaign County Historical Archives for this next installment in the Town & Gown Speaker Series focused on how local women have influenced change at Illinois and in the Champaign-Urbana community.
• March 10, 7:00–8:30 p.m.
• Archives Research Center, 1707 S. Orchard Street, Urbana
• Call (217) 333-7841 or visit archives.library.illinois.edu/slc

11th Annual C-U Edible Book Festival
Participants celebrate the book arts and create edible books that are exhibited, documented, and then consumed. This year’s event will feature a new location and new opportunities for community involvement. Check out the website or follow the event page on Facebook for details as they are announced.
• April 2 (time and location forthcoming)
• Visit library.illinois.edu/ediblebooks or facebook.com/CUEdibleBooks

Downtown Champaign History Walking Tours with T.J. Blakeman
The City of Champaign Senior Planner will lead tours of downtown Champaign sharing stories of the structures and the people who have shaped the area’s built environment.
• April 9, 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
• Visit archives.library.illinois.edu/slc/news-events/town-gown (advanced registration required)

Investiture of John Wilkin as the Juanita J. and Robert E. Simpson Dean of Libraries
• April 15, 3:00 p.m.
• Heritage Room, Funk ACES Library, 1101 S. Goodwin Avenue, Urbana

Gift Establishes Professorship
A gift from Illinois alumna and Library Friend Carol A. Berthold has established a professorship at Illinois. William H. Mischo, head of the Grainger Engineering Library Information Center, will be the inaugural holder of The Berthold Family Professorship in Information Access and Discovery.

Mischo joined the U. of I. faculty in 1983. He was selected for the fellowship as he has interest, expertise, and academic abilities in creating, directing, and maintaining accessible and searchable digital data platforms for end users.

“This professorship recognizes the important role that the Library plays in the teaching and research mission of the University. The professorship will provide support for the continued development and implementation of enhanced information discovery and access services that will benefit our students and faculty and the information retrieval community in general,” said Mischo.

Carol has been a longtime supporter of the University Library. In 2008, she created the Berthold Family Endowment Fund. As part of her gift establishing the professorship, that bequest has now been designated to support the position as a permanent Chair in Information Access and Discovery.

“At the University of Illinois at Chicago, I was fortunate to work with Chancellor Donald N. Langenberg, a physicist and a truly articulate visionary, who wrote and spoke about using information technology to make the flood of data available and usable by all, from the scholar to every citizen,” said Carol. “Grainger is already one of this century’s most valuable players in developing cutting-edge, user-friendly search engines for databases and printed and electronic resources. The work done here comes closest to meeting the challenge issued by Langenberg to integrate information technology with the more traditional role of libraries—and Bill Mischo is leading the way. Inspired by Langenberg’s vision, I am establishing this professorship in honor of my family to continue this work in the future.”

“Carol Berthold is a very special friend of the Library,” said University Librarian and Dean of Libraries John Wilkin. “Her inspired support of this professorship is a proud example of the way that she has partnered with our great institution.”
Library Is Looking For

$300 for the Undergraduate Library to purchase noise canceling headphones as part of an accessibility project. As most popular library spaces are also very noisy environments, the use of noise canceling headphones will help students block out the ambient (and oftentimes disruptive) noise of others. The Library hopes to purchase 10 headphones in all.

$350 for the Student Life and Culture Archives to purchase a Zoom H5 digital audio recorder and Zoom XYH-6 microphone. This equipment will be used to record oral histories with students, staff, faculty, and alumni, and allow the Archives to preserve and share stories that tell the history of the University of Illinois through the perspective of those who have experienced it firsthand.

$680 for the Literatures and Languages Library to purchase a luxury facsimile of a collection of letters by Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra, the famous author of Don Quixote. This volume contains in one place 17 letters whose originals are scattered in archives and libraries around the world, making it a valuable research and teaching tool. The letters are prefaced by introductory essays by scholars in the field and would nicely compliment the Library’s extensive holdings of Spanish Golden Age literature.

$900 for the University High School Library to purchase shelving end panels. Recently reenergized by a cosmetic freshening (including the installation of former Grainger Engineering Library shelving), the Uni High Library—a well-loved space that reflects the unique character of the school and its students—is looking for shelving end panels. These funds would cover the cost of both cutting and priming the plywood, as well as painting supplies for Uni students to then transform the panels into works of art, providing a vehicle for students’ creative expression and further enhancing the distinct nature of this vibrant campus library.

$1,500 for the Scholarly Commons to purchase ProQuest Historical Newspaper Data. Enhance access to the wealth of digitized newspapers in the ProQuest database by subsidizing this researcher-requested data purchase. Funds would be used, along with Library funds, to expand the Library’s current ProQuest license to enable “big data” research with large-scale text data mining. Researchers across the humanities and social sciences increasingly employ innovative computational techniques for data mining texts in order to study historical, sociological, and literary trends in unprecedented ways. But at the moment, researchers often are prohibited from carrying out this cutting-edge research by existing licensing agreements. This purchase will allow the Library to facilitate new modes of research across campus.

$2,000 for the Communications Library’s Tech Fund. Gifts to this fund help the Communications Library provide much needed technology support for students. Library users own cell phones, laptops, music players, and more that require regular charging and security. This Fund enables the purchase of equipment like charging stations, cables, and secure lockers that make student’s lives easier.

$3,000 for the Communications Library’s PR/Promotion Internship. This paid internship is for an undergraduate student to put their public relations classroom skills to use while promoting the Communications Library. The student manages the Library’s Twitter and Facebook accounts, creates content for digital signage, and creates handouts and brochures for New Student Week events and library tours in an effort to help students learn about the Communications Library.

The following donors have adopted items previously listed in Friendscript:

Robertta Lynn Hay for Black Europe (Music and Performing Arts Library)
Norma Jenckes for Abkhaziia khristianskaia and Istoria artei Romanesti (International and Area Studies Library)
Catherine Key for Makedonskata borba za sloboda (International and Area Studies Library)
Barbara Kuklewicz for her gift toward the purchase and installation of art prints (Social Sciences, Health, and Education Library)
Walter and Marguerite Maguire for their gift toward the purchase and installation of art prints (Social Sciences, Health, and Education Library)

The Library is Social

For the latest Library news and events, please visit the Main Library’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/universitylibrary.

View photos from in and around the libraries at Illinois on Instagram at www.instagram.com/uillinoislibrary.
Grateful for a Library Friend: Mary Zirin

by Joe Lenkart, Manager, Slavic Reference Service, International Reference Librarian

The Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies community owes Mary Zirin a tremendous debt of gratitude. Students and emerging scholars from around the world instantly recognize Mary’s name through her wonderful bibliography (one of many publications), *Women & gender in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, and Eurasia: a comprehensive bibliography* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2007). National organizations and services recognize Mary’s name through her continued support for women and gender studies. In these uncertain times, her name is a source of strength for all of us.

As a beneficiary of her constant generosity, the Slavic Reference Service (SRS) provides research assistance to Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies students, faculty, government employees, librarians, and independent scholars from around the world. With Mary’s support, we are able to promote this free service and provide assistance year-round. To honor Mary, SRS is in the process of unveiling her bibliography of pre-revolutionary writings by Russian women through Omeka, an open source web-publishing platform (expected to be online this spring).

Library Friends interested in supporting the Slavic Reference Service are encouraged to contact the Library’s Office of Advancement at (217) 333-5682 and give toward the Zirin Fund, which was set up to promote this unique service and its various initiatives. We are very grateful for your support. Thank you!
Library Friends Celebrate the Cinema

by Jason Quackenbush, Associate Director of Advancement for Annual Funds

On November 6, 2015, more than 130 Library Friends gathered at the Main Library to celebrate the Library’s recent acquisition of some 3,000 movies from That’s Rentertainment, a local video rental company that closed its doors last summer. Purchased with a combination of gifts to the Library’s annual fund and a local crowd-funding campaign, the films are a wonderful addition to the substantial media collection located in the Undergraduate Library.

The evening’s program included remarks from Geoff Merritt, the former owner of That’s Rentertainment, and Richard Leskosky, a retired faculty member and local film critic. As an added bonus, faculty and staff from across the Library were on hand to share the latest information about their collections and services with an inquisitive and enthusiastic crowd.

The acquisition of the Rentertainment collection is just the latest example of the impact made by the generous donors who support the University of Illinois Library annual fund. To all of our Library Friends, many thanks for everything you do!

Make your next gift online: go.library.illinois.edu/gift

Library Friends enjoyed a screening of scenes from classic films—most from the That’s Rentertainment collection.

Librarians from many departmental libraries hosted their own show and tell in the Main Library’s Reading Room.