Harvesting the Fruits of Knowledge

Window celebrates education throughout generations

He calls it a “safe harbor” that offered a haven for study in his days as an undergraduate. Now that special space bears his permanent thanks via a printers’ mark window plaque commemorating his time there.

Russell Ewers ’69 ENG had just $4 in his savings account when he graduated from the University of Illinois, but he began supporting his Alma Mater just as soon as he landed a job. In addition to the College of Engineering, which trained him in his lifelong career, Ewers also has long given back to the University Library.

“It was just a safe harbor,” Ewers recalled of the many hours he spent in the Main Library’s Reading Room. “It was a place I could always rely on to do the work I knew I had to do.”

To Ewers, giving back has always seemed the right thing to do. And when he came across another opportunity—to dedicate a printers’ mark window in the very room that had nurtured him throughout his college years—he believed he had found “the perfect entée” for making a significant donation.

And then, he came across the perfect window. Printers’ Mark window No. 23 shows two boys striking fruit from a tree, with a third lad picking up the fallen crop. “That [window] speaks to me,” Ewers said, “because it included three boys. Yes, I have three grandsons.”

The 27 stunning windows that line the walls of the Reading Room and stairway leading up to it form one of the most remarkably beautiful spaces on campus. Each stately window showcases the insignia of an early printer in Europe—a mark to guard against forgeries as books became more widespread in the 15th and 16th
Mix and Match

**Illinois Legacy Challenge increases value of new planned gifts**

Paul Garcy worked his way through college, earning three undergraduate degrees and one master’s from the University of Illinois. That sweat and toil caused him to truly value his education and strongly believe in paying it forward.

So when he found out that a recently launched endeavor could multiply his donations to the university, that was all the sweeter.

“It’s all about how to best [maximize] your impact,” said Paul ’81 ENG, ’81 LAS, ’81 LAS, MS ’85 ENG, who received undergraduate degrees in general engineering, Spanish, and genetics and development, as well as a master’s degree in general engineering.

Initiated in fall 2021 as part of the With Illinois fundraising campaign, the Illinois Legacy Challenge provides an unusual opportunity. With $1 million in matching funds donated by a generous alumnus, any new planned gift or increased gift (for any Illinois purpose) documented with the University of Illinois Foundation can tap into that pool. That advantage directs 10 percent of the new donation (up to $10,000) to immediately benefit one of five funds, including a UIUC college unrestricted fund of one’s choice. The challenge ends when the $1 million is completely used or June 30, 2022, whichever comes first.

It was an opportunity Paul couldn’t pass up. The software engineer at Accenture has worked all over the world—including Saudi Arabia, France, Indonesia, and the Philippines—but never forgotten his beginnings as a young undergraduate at Illinois.

For Paul, the Map Library (then located in the Natural History Building) and the Main Library served as islands of respite during his busy days on both sides of Green Street (engineering on the north, liberal arts and sciences on the south). Searching for a quiet place to

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centuries. Window 23 references Reginald Wolfe, a Dutch bookseller and printer who later worked in London and became Royal Printer in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew under King Edward VI.

Fittingly, a banner on the design depicts the Latin word for charity. Ewers added a dedication of his own on the sill below, reading, “The fruits of Learning and Wisdom are to be harvested and shared for generations . . . through Knowledge.”

As a young man, Ewers felt an immediate affinity for the University of Illinois. Having endured a slew of visits to other campuses, he stepped out of his parents’ car, took one look at the Illini Union and Green Street, and declared, “This is it!” He formed close friendships with his fellow residence hall mates, and upon graduation, pursued a career in construction management. In Chicago, Nebraska, and Arizona, he helped build everything from water treatment plants to hospitals to golf courses. He and his wife, a librarian, currently reside in Davis, California, to be close to their children and grandchildren.

As a proud first-generation college graduate, Ewers’ educational experience holds great significance. “I feel a debt of gratitude,” he said, “both to the university and to those who helped me get there and helped me afterwards.”

Ewers hopes the dedication plaques below the printers’ mark windows make students more aware of the beauty, art, and significance that envelop them in the Reading Room.

“If one person . . . reads my dedication, even without knowing the back story,” he said, “I think that would be wonderful.”

Building Project Reaches Milestones

At press time, the first phase of the building project (transforming the existing Undergraduate Library into an archives and special collections building dedicated for rare and archival collections) was on the agenda for the January 20, 2022 meeting of the University of Illinois’ Board of Trustees for approval. This comes after the project met several important milestones: the architect/engineering firms submitted the final schematic design documents on December 10, 2021, and the Library successfully secured funding for Phase One construction. Read more and view the latest conceptual drawings on the Campaign to Transform the University Library website at library.illinois.edu/specialcollectionsbuilding.
As a young girl growing up in Bloomington, Illinois, Sybil Stern Mervis ’57 COM was gifted a typewriter from her parents to better record news for the neighborhood paper. Her enthusiasm for Girl Scouts taught her to be goal-oriented, her love of the Nancy Drew mystery series instilled a sense of independence, and her participation in IFJY (Illinois Federation of Jewish Youth) connected her to people who shared her culture.

It’s no wonder that at the age of 86, Mervis, a longtime resident of Danville, Illinois, could channel that kind of energy and determination into a project she created from the ground up—the Central Illinois Jewish Communities Archives/Mervis Archives, a collection that chronicles the history of ordinary Jewish life in the region. The project will be housed in the Main Library’s Illinois History and Lincoln Collections and is expected to open to the public by late spring.

“The establishment of these archives provides a critical contribution to future research and engagement with the stories and contributions of Jewish communities in central Illinois,” said Krista Gray, archives program officer for IHLC. “We are grateful to have the opportunity to preserve and make these materials more broadly accessible at the University of Illinois Library.”

A longtime historian of Jewish life in the area, Mervis has written numerous books and articles on the topic throughout the decades. But it was the closing of Danville’s Congregation Anshe Knesset Israel synagogue in 2012, due to a dwindling population, that sparked the glimmerings of the archival project.

“So, I gave away the kosher china and brisket pans, the prayerbooks and prayer shawls,” Mervis said in a public lecture, recalling the heartbreaking dismantling process. But after dispersing myriad items—from Torahs to ark drapes—records and papers remained. These she stored in a warehouse.

Deciding she could not write the more recent history of Jews in Danville without appearing biased (she and her late husband, Lou, had been prominent members of that community), Mervis turned to Erez Cohen, hoping he might know of an impartial person to help. Executive director of Illini Hillel on campus, Cohen strongly believed the synagogue records should stay in central Illinois; he eventually connected the materials with Dara Goldman, head of the UI Program in Jewish Culture & Society, who then established the link to the University Library.

To additionally bolster the project, the Jewish community raised more than $75,000 in four months’ time to support the cataloguing of the collection and future programs and exhibitions.
We encourage you to visit the Library’s online calendar at go.library.illinois.edu/calendar for the most up-to-date information about events.

**Upcoming Events**

**In Search of Lost Time: The study of Earth history and chronology from the 18th to the 21st century**

This exhibit is presented by The Rare Book & Manuscript Library in collaboration with the Geology Department. The related concepts of time, chronology, and history form the lens through which Earth scientists view, understand, and interpret a dynamic planet. This exhibit will explore how the chronology of the Earth was established, with a focus on six themes that gradually led to the consensus view that the Earth is roughly 4.55 billion years of age.

- January 24–July 22, 9:00–5:00 (Monday through Friday)
- Visit library.illinois.edu/rbx for more information

**Jai Chakrabarti Event**

A reading and discussion of Author Jai Chakrabarti’s book *A Play for the End of the World*.

- March 3, 4:00–6:00
- Asian American Cultural Center, 1210 W. Nevada Street, Urbana
- Visit go.library.illinois.edu/calendar for more information

**Player Piano Virtual Demonstration**

Join the Music & Performing Arts Library for a virtual lunch hour demonstration featuring the Library’s Steinway Duo-Art reproducing piano and collection of piano rolls.

- March 25, 12:00–1:00
- Visit library.illinois.edu/mpal for more information

Note: The Illinois History and Lincoln Collections welcomes inquiries from individuals or other small congregations across central Illinois interested in contributing their records to this archival collection. For more information about the donation process and what might be a good fit, visit go.library.illinois.edu/ihlc-cijca or email ihlc@library.illinois.edu.
Library Is Looking For

Any print issues of Pack-o-Fun magazines. First published in 1951, this scrapcrafting publication served as a springboard for youth clubs and troops to engage children (and adults!) in craft projects, made all the more fun and easy by repurposing common household items. The Social Sciences, Health, and Education Library currently holds no copies of the magazine and would love some to complement its children’s and young adult literature collection. Vintage issues (1950s to 1970s) are of particular interest—check your book shelves and attics! For more information, contact Nancy O’Brien at npobrien@illinois.edu.

$350 for the Zoom H6 Pro, the ultimate portable recorder. Touted as “the recorder that does it all,” the device will help the Music & Performing Arts Library develop new services and collections to support recording audio both inside and outside the library.

$395 for the Oxford Encyclopedia of Inclusive and Special Education, 2021. By addressing these inextricably linked topics in a single collection, this expansive compilation proves particularly useful, with lessons learned in one area having significant implications for the other. This item is sought by the Social Sciences, Health, and Education Library.

$595 for the Oxford Encyclopedia of Educational Administration, 2021, benefitting users of the Social Sciences, Health, and Education Library by offering a global view of research in educational administration and leadership. To effectively guide schools, leaders must consider topics such as government mandates, community members, educators, unions, students, and others.

$1,065 for the Auralex Project 2 Roominator Kit, an all-in-one sound control solution. Sought by the Music & Performing Arts Library to convert an existing room into a reservable space for digital music creation, this new and developing service will support the School of Music's music technology program and a growing interest across campus in making beats.

$2,500 for an albumen print showing Abraham Lincoln’s funeral procession. As the slain president’s funeral train made its way to Springfield, Illinois, it stopped in 10 cities; reportedly, up to 500,000 people attended the event pictured here in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This carte de visite, sought by the Illinois History and Lincoln Collections, shows Lincoln’s horse-drawn hearse carrying the catafalque and casket on a Philadelphia street on April 22, 1865.

$3,662 for a facsimile of one of the earliest illuminated manuscripts of Dante’s Divine Comedy (Medicea Laurenziana Library of Florence, Strozzi 152). While the original manuscript of Dante’s seminal work has been lost, the Literatures and Languages Library seeks this richly adorned facsimile to enhance the study of Dante, Italy, the Middle Ages, and the history of the book. The item, produced in Florence, Italy, between 1335 and 1345, is a—well—simply divine opportunity and contains beautifully detailed, colored illustrations on every page.

An up-to-date, comprehensive list of items—including many more maps in need for the Map Library—is located at library.illinois.edu/friends/library-is-looking-for
Thank You

The following donors have adopted these items previously featured in Friendscript:

- **Sandra Lee Braber-Grove** for Saussine Pictorial Broadside Game Board Map of World War I in memory of Wayne E. Grove (Map Library)
- **Jonathan Buchbinder** for an e-DaVinci Book Covering Machine (Social Sciences, Health, and Education Library)
- **Christine and Ralph Burgess** for Prevailing Religions of the World and Progress of Evangelization (Map Library)
- **Lila Jeanne Eichelberger** for The Guide to Toyland (Map Library)
- **John Galvin** for Miras—nasledie, Tatarstan—Krym: gorod Bolgar i izuchenie tatarskoi kul'tury v Tatarstane i Krymu v 1923-1929 godakh (International and Area Studies Library)
- **Paul Garcy** for Chicago To San Francisco Via The Burlington Route (Map Library)
- **Pamela and Christopher Horn** for their gift toward chairs in memory of Ted Peterson (Communication Library)
- **Uriel Kitron** for A Map Exhibiting the Dark Shadow of the Moon over England and Other Parts of Europe (Map Library)
- **Philip H. Martin** for The Great East Asia Battle Result Learning Map and Map of the Russo Japanese War (Map Library)
- **Mardell J. O’Brien** for his gift in support of the Image of Research competitions (Scholarly Commons)
- **Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait** for her gift toward rotating exhibits in memory of Eugene and Esther Woodruff (Library Exhibitions Committee)
- **Elizabeth Van Jacob** for Buenos Aires: Vision Fotográfica in memory of Scott Van Jacob (Ricker Library of Architecture and Art)

Annual gifts strengthen the Library and ensure its standing as one of the world’s preeminent public university collections. We invite you to join this tradition of private support, which makes a critical difference in the quality of the Library’s collections, programs, and services.

Please mail this form with your gift to:
University of Illinois Foundation
P.O. Box 734500
Chicago, IL 60673-4500

**Questions?** Please call
(217) 333-5682 or e-mail friends@library.illinois.edu.

Yes! I want to help ensure the Library’s excellence with my gift to the:

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To make a gift with your credit card, please visit go.library.illinois.edu/gift
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study and park his heavy textbooks, he discovered the Reading Room, then chanced upon a pamphlet advertising the benefits of being a Library Friend—including access to a study carrel in the stacks. “This kept my sanity,” Paul recalled, as he juggled full-time work with the pressures of academics. “This was a gift from heaven.”

The two libraries hold a soft spot in Paul’s heart, whose contributions have supported a negatives restoration project at the Archives as well as the purchase of railroad maps. He urges people interested in giving to contact members of the advancement team, who have been “particularly creative,” he said, in listening to donors’ interests as well as opening eyes to previously unknown avenues.

“I want to be fully supportive,” Paul said of his ongoing enthusiasm for Library projects. When donating to the Library, “if we can connect passion, intent, and need, that’s always the better.”

Note: To learn more about how you can participate in the Illinois Legacy Challenge, contact Assistant Dean for Advancement Kathryn Risor-Heise (217-333-5682 or krh19@illinois.edu) or UIF Director of Gift Planning Jason James Shuba, JD (312-585-9038 or shuba@uif.uillinois.edu), or visit with.illinois.edu/ways-to-give/legacy-challenge/.