From the Friends President

As Friends, this group is dedicated to presenting to the community this great urban resource. Our particular interest is in the Special Collections, now in newly remodeled space on the third floor of the Rhodes Tower. Materials in this area are of particular interest to area researchers and are widely used.

Membership in the Friends is one good way to establish a connection here. The cost-effective price is still $15 and that includes a Community Borrower Card.

Gifts of books to the perpetual book sale are a good way to escalate your interest. We have received collections as large as 600 to 1,000 volumes, but are also glad for the one’s and two’s.

More to the point, we seek important gifts of substantive material for use here by the community. In addition, cash gifts are needed to maintain these collections and prepare them for public use. We have had gifts in the $25,000-$30,000 range and some much higher.

All gifts to the Friends are handled through the University Foundation.

— H. Baird Tennyen, President of the Friends

Celebrating Creativity

The Scholars and Artist reception XI was held October 15, again sponsored by the Friends. Some 120 submissions were on display. In his remarks, Provost Harold L. Allen said of this display, occupying as it did most of the Special Collections room, “I am proud of all these submissions! He went on to pay tribute to creativity by saying, “The diverse materials displayed here represent the imagination, the innovation, the creativity, and the scholarly pursuits of the University faculty, students, staff, and emeriti.

I have always felt that a feature unique to the academy has been our collective ability to create new knowledge, new information, and new application in a variety of disciplines and fields. In a very real sense, the books, journal articles, the creative products represented here not only distinguish individuals among peers, but the process of creating these materials—the research, trial and error, the investigative approach, the comparative approach, the analytical approach, and the interdisciplinary approach—all of these activities enrich the learning process for our students—and they enrich the life of the University as a place that recognizes and values intellectual inquiry and personal achievement. On a larger scale, various material displayed here today will enhance the quality of life for all citizens. As an urban University, much of the research and creative activity that is conducted here helps to solve problems of our city, of our state, and of our country.”

Next, the reception turned to the photo display of Cleveland Sacred Landmarks, honoring its creator, the late Dr. Thomas L. Lewis of the University faculty. Guest speaker Professor Michael Tevesz of the Department of Biological, Geological and Environmental Sciences described the efforts of Dr. Lewis to record and preserve the remarkable diversity of sacred architecture in the Cleveland area. Large images from the collection cover much of the Special Collections area in a display executed by Ilka Gordon of Kent State University.

Library Director Glenda A. Thornton was Master of Ceremonies and welcomed the crowd that nearly filled the hall.

Preserving Historic Plat Books

The Friends of the Cleveland State University Library are directing their efforts to support the Library’s Special Collections. The first project will be raising funds to restore the Library’s collection of “plat books.” These local urban atlases are highly-detailed sets of maps showing the streets, blocks, parcels, utilities, traction tracks, and building outlines for all or most of Cuyahoga County. They were produced between 1874 and the 1940’s by several companies, including the G.M. Hopkins Co. (Philadelphia), and sold to companies and businesses needing accurate, detailed maps for commercial purposes, such as land title companies.

They are a priceless view of the metropolitan area in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century and are used by urban researchers, “house hunters,” neighborhood preservationists, environmental engineers, and other students of local history.

Due to their large size, the acidic nature of the paper, and their heavy use, the volumes are falling apart and the pages have become quite brittle. Conservation treatment will consist of removing the pages from the volumes, repairing the major tears and storing them as individual maps in folders and map cabinets. The Friends will contribute to the preservation process but more funds are needed, up to a total of about $10,000.

— Bill Barrow, Special Collections Librarian
Message from the University Library Director: 
How You Can Help Build The Cleveland Digital Library

If you have not yet visited the Cleveland Digital Library, please take a minute to direct your Internet browser to http://web.ulib.csuohio.edu/SpecColl/coll/ for a virtual trip back in time. Explore “Yesterday’s Lakewood,” or the history of the Ohio & Erie Canal, or follow the construction of the Cleveland Union Terminal Tower. The CDL site also has the full text of some unique historical works about the Cleveland area. Perhaps as you view this material, you will be reminded of some historical documents or artifacts that you own which would enhance this website. Although you may not be willing to part with your treasure permanently, perhaps you are willing to allow it to be copied digitally and displayed so that it can be viewed by others. I urge you to think about supporting the Cleveland State University Library by discussing this possibility with us.
— Glenda Thornton, Director, University Library

Adult Literacy Training: 
An Extreme Effort

A packed house in Room 503 of the Rhodes Tower heard about the pains and problems of literacy at a Friends meeting last spring. The pain of illiteracy is personal and therefore hidden from view. The obvious problem is that people with reduced literacy frequently have trouble getting a job or keeping up with its requirements. And that can hold back the individual and area economic progress.

Richard A. Peterson, Executive Director of Project: LEARN— the Cleveland area arm of a national literacy organization, believes we as a nation could double our effort. And we still could not reach all those who want to improve their reading and writing skills. He believes the total support for adult literacy training nationwide is around $750 million. But the target audience is the 20% of the adult population that read at the fifth grade level or below.

Peterson, his staff and a corps of volunteers assist low level readers in intensive one-on-one sessions. It is tough work on both sides but can be exhilarating.

Note: Adult literacy training volunteers are always in short supply. If interested, call (216) 621-9483.

Ben Shouse on The Arts

Ben Shouse is one of the most ardent supporters of the arts in this town. Fortunately he considers our group of Friends worthy of close attention and strong support. You’ll find Ben at most of our meetings.

Back in 1995 Ben presented a paper on the arts and philanthropy at a Case Western Reserve symposium. In it Ben sounded his voice as an arts advocate and lifetime union member and officer. The paper traces many threads, finally denying “...that philanthropy is just the carefully-controlled giving away of money to avoid social chaos. Philanthropy must be practical, and wise, but ultimately, there is no true philanthropy without ‘love of humanity.’"