What is a book to you?
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About the cover:
“Peanut Butter and Jelly,” a student artist book by M. Linz and A. Willis, on display at the 50/20 Artist Book exhibit, a supplement to the American Institute for Graphic Arts’ “50 Books/50 Covers” exhibit. The exhibits were open in fall of 2012 at the Ohio University Art Gallery in Seigfred Hall.
This issue focuses on the new additions to the Gilbert and Ursula Farfel Collection of Incunabula and Manuscript Leaves. This extraordinary collection spans the 8th through the 20th centuries. Incunables are books printed before Gutenberg’s invention of the moveable-type press, and leaves from such books make up the largest part of this colorful and captivating collection.

The leaves are from religious texts such as Bibles, breviaries and prayer books, or scientific tomes relating to plants, insects and astronomy. Many include hand-drawn illuminations, wood block prints or engravings. The early manuscript leaves are written on parchment with the majority having been lettered in European cities such as Nuremberg, Lyon, Basel, Antwerp, Milan, Strasbourg and London.

Dr. Gilbert Farfel, who earned his medical degree from Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia, and Ursula Farfel, a 1956 Ohio University Arts and Sciences graduate, made a donation of 500 pieces to Alden Library in 1999. This year, the couple added approximately 200 pieces to the original donation. The collection is complemented by Dr. Gilbert Farfel’s extensive notebooks recording the provenance, date, information about the printer, subject, references to bibliographies and a wealth of other information about each leaf.

The Vernon R. Alden Library’s stewardship and preservation of these unique treasures are enduring contributions for major research libraries. But the Gilbert and Ursula Farfel Collection of Incunabula and Manuscript Leaves is not just for academic specialists. As with so many of our unique collections, it is used regularly by undergraduate students for honors tutorial projects, undergraduate theses and research papers.

Many of our special collections were the generous gifts of donors, and Ohio University Libraries is honored to be the steward of such distinctive collections. The Farfels’ donation has diversified the scope of the collections in OHIO’s Alden Library, and it expands the wealth of knowledge and resources that students and faculty may now use every day.

Scott Seaman, Dean of Ohio University Libraries
Elaborately illuminated manuscript leaves, most often created for religious purposes, were not only meant to be read, but also admired for their beauty, their design and their execution.
The early manuscript leaves, written by scribes in great religious monasteries, were produced on a membrane called parchment, a thin sheath fashioned from the skins of calf, sheep, or goat, which made book making not only expensive, but also rare. In fact, creating a single copy of a complete Bible could require several hundred animal skins.

Fortunately for today’s collectors, like Gilbert and Ursula Farfel, parchment is an extremely durable substance that survives the centuries well.

“I first became interested and began collecting in 1975, after my wife received several medieval MSS [manuscripts] from her mother, who acquired them while she was working at the Cleveland Museum of Art in the 1920s,” said Gilbert Farfel.

The Farfel Collection consists not only of manuscript leaves but also incunabula leaves, book pages from movable type before 1501 A.D. Many of these leaves are from religious texts such as Bibles and prayer books, scientific volumes, literary works as well as many other subjects.
“Over the years, I purchased leaves from many different dealers, visited many U.S. and European libraries, and attended the yearly California Book Fair,” said Farfel.

Each artifact is meticulously documented with a short description along with letters acknowledging the provenance, and each contains a wealth of other information of interest to students and faculty, and to researchers around the world.

Gilbert and Ursula Farfel’s lifetime passion for collecting eventually led to their donation to the permanent collections at the Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections in Alden Library.

A musical manuscript from late 17th century Russia.
The “Dala’il Al-Khayrat,” a famous set of Arabic prayers from Morocco, 1791.
“I chose to donate the collection to Ohio University not only because my wife is a graduate [of OHIO], but also because I was impressed with the faculty in the departments of modern languages & classics,” said Farfel, “as well as the head of special collections at the Libraries.”

Thanks to donors like Gilbert and Ursula Farfel, Ohio University Libraries’ special collections contain an impressive depth of unique treasures, which were acquired and cultivated for almost 200 years. Making those collections available to students, faculty and scholars enriches the scholarly world and supports OHIO’s academic excellence.
Keana Robinson sits at a table in the Fine Arts Library surrounded by six or eight large format books full of glossy scenes from Disney movies. She hopes to find information about what made Walt Disney's work so “magical” and important.

“We only had one book in our library, and it was only this thick,” she says, holding her thumb and forefinger about the width of a pencil apart. “Here, it is easy.”

After more discussion with a librarian, Keana is ready to go back to the Ohio University Libraries’ databases and dig a little deeper to uncover the kind of commentary she’s after.

(Above photo) Keana Robinson, Meigs High School senior, 18, peruses a book about Walt Disney in the Fine Arts Library during her school’s visit on October 17, 2012.
“The whole world is here, 20 minutes from home, and these students need to experience it,” says Denise Arnold, librarian at Meigs High School. “We have a lot of information online through INFOhio, but our books are limited.”

“They get off the elevator in the Alden stacks and go, ‘Oh, my goodness!’” adds Amy Perrin, their English teacher. “They don’t realize these resources are available.”

Arnold and Perrin teach in Meigs County, a place sandwiched between Athens County and the Ohio River, and have been bringing their seniors in college-prep English to Alden for about 10 years.

“We want them to experience the college library,” they say. It gives students a chance to work on their research papers.

Meigs’ seniors can stay only for a few hours, so they must quickly learn the basics from a librarian about how to search Ohio University Libraries’ databases. They do some searches and then head off for the stacks. Before noon, they are off to get lunch in town – another fun part of this day’s adventure.
When the high school students get ready to go, they have backpacks full of books, and articles waiting in their e-mails to use for this paper. By 1:30 p.m., they are back on the bus to return to school.

Lorraine Wochna, like many other librarians over the years, enjoys working with these motivated students.

“I like that these students come in excited about their topics, excited about their field trip, excited to find information in our Libraries. I also enjoy working with Denise and Amy. I know the students will return to their school and continue working on the things we started today.”

High school students are not a large percentage of those doing research here in Alden, but they do come. Some live in Athens, and coming to Alden is just as natural as going to the public library. But for most of these Meigs County students, it is their first time in a large academic library; for some, this is their first experience of college. And for others, their day at Alden will open a door they hadn’t even considered – becoming a Bobcat themselves someday.

Sherri Saines, instructional librarian (center) shares a laugh with the Meigs High School seniors: (from left) Shawnella Patterson, Alyssa Cremeans, Sharon Wright, Danelle Runyon, Haley English (sitting) and Makenzie Greene (far right) during their visit to Alden Library on October 17, 2012.
It is true that maintaining a library requires knowledgeable librarians, systematic organization, and accessibility for students, faculty and scholars. But what about caring for the materials themselves? The answer for Ohio University Libraries is Head of Preservation Miriam Nelson.
The Ohio University Libraries is home to a nearly 200-year-old collection, which has been methodically acquired to be appreciated and used, but also, to be preserved. Sometimes, however, caring for these materials just is not enough. According to Nelson, use is the primary reason for any damage inflicted on special collections.

“If you are looking into getting something to last hundreds of years into the future, of course having it stored away in a climate-controlled room where nobody uses it, that’s how that can happen,” Nelson said. “But that is counter to the Libraries’ mission.”

For the Libraries and for Nelson, preservation is stewardship of a three-million-volume collection. It ensures that students and researchers will continue to have access to materials that the Libraries have invested in and that preservationists take care to maintain what is specifically important to the University’s research programs.

Nelson first began working on the Libraries’ research materials in February 2012. Since then she has been involved in preserving the archive of Lynn Johnson, Ohio University alumna and world-renowned photographer. Johnson’s work is inspired by and reflective of human suffering and accomplishment.

“It’s just a really amazing collection of contact sheets and negatives and prints in all different formats,” Nelson said. “So we’re working with the archives to figure out how we can best store this material so that it can be actively used, but still preserved, and that’s been a really fun challenge.”
For the most part, Nelson attends to each item needing repair in a systematic way. She first assesses the condition of the item, and then decides whether or not it needs major or minor repair. Fragile, often brittle items in special collections usually receive protective hand-made boxes or coverings.

With some of the pieces, Nelson will use Japanese tissue made of kozo or gampi fibers to fix cracks in pages. Nelson explains that she often has to take into consideration the tensile strength, thickness, and expansion and contraction of the paper because the Japanese tissue absorbs moisture from the wheat paste she uses and then dries.

In addition to working in preservation, Nelson also manages the Southeast Ohio Regional Library Depository, where overflow materials from six Ohio universities are sent. This auxiliary storage facility has a capacity of nearly 750,000 volumes. With the combined collections housed at Alden Library, as well as the Music and Dance Library, Nelson and her colleagues are constantly kept busy.

“[The preservation department] works to protect and stabilize the condition of our rare and irreplaceable materials, but also to ensure that the new books and journals we are collecting today, whether they are print or electronic, will still be here for scholars far into the future,” said Jan Maxwell, assistant dean for collections and access.

Nelson recently assisted Elizabeth Collins, professor of classics and world religions, and Katie Bruhn, graduate student in Southeast Asian studies, to preserve Bruhn’s project that involved the exhibit of political art posters from Indonesia for the Libraries’ Southeast Asia Collection. To protect these posters, Nelson used Mylar, a polyester film.

“The posters will become part of an online exhibit,” Collins said. “They are unique -- no other university in the United States has such a collection.”

Nelson’s goal for the future is to better integrate preservation and the annex with the research needs of students, faculty and scholars. The Libraries’ preservation department upholds the Libraries’ mission to connect those researchers to information for discovery, intellectual growth and advancement of knowledge, not only for today, but also for the scholars of tomorrow.
Library Associate Jeff Fulk retrieves material inside the Libraries Southeast Ohio Regional Library Depository.
Patrick Traylor

Home: Franklin, TN by way of Birmingham, AL; Jackson, TN; Nashville, TN; Athens, OH; North Canton, OH; Niles, OH; and Indianapolis, IN (origin).

Profession: Being retired from trying to figure out what I wanted to be when I grew up! I am now grown and savoring every minute of life.


Hobbies: Reading, singing, dirt therapy in my flower beds, church and community volunteering and fiber working.

Why I Support Alden Library: I grew up in the library; I studied in the library, and as a music major in the old music building, I watched the Alden Library arise from out of the ground. My senior year, I spent hours of research and study time there. It was home! I believe that going to the library is like going to the gym; it exercises my mind and strengthens my thinking. I want my alma mater to have the best library possible.

Profile: An open, engaged and compassionate woman who values diversity and meaning in life.

Memorable Movie: “Lincoln.”

Current Project: Developing my annual 9-square life view with my 2013 “Living a More Meaningful Life” project.

Favorite Place on Campus: I was a music therapy major and specialized in pipe organ. My hours in Galbreath Chapel and in Memorial Auditorium at the pipe organ were where I found peace and meaning.

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Lynne McCalla

Home: Franklin, TN

Profession: Counselor, Community Mental Health (4 yrs.); Management, BellSouth Corporation (27 yrs.).


Hobbies: Woodworking, choral music, travel, antique tool collecting, and Habitat for Humanity.

Why I Support Alden Library: Ohio Fellows gave me such lasting gifts during my college years — it is time to give back.

Profile: “A scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean & reverent.” OK, I know that’s 12 words, but I’m not very good at “obedient” and “brave.”

Memorable Movie: Recently saw “Lincoln” — powerful.

Current Project: Volunteer construction supervisor with our local Habitat chapter; singing with Nashville in Harmony chorus; active at church; and I’m building a sculpted rocking chair after years of building furniture with square corners.

Favorite Place on Campus: Main Green, where I first fell in love with the Ohio University campus; it holds many memories. I walked its peaceful paths daily in all kinds of weather. It is also where we congregated the day after Martin Luther King was assassinated and the day after the Kent State shootings.

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“Recall,” artist book designed by Caitlin Feller, on display at the Artist Book exhibit in the Ohio University Art Gallery, Seigfred Hall during fall semester 2012.

PRESERVING THE

By Krithika Rajaraman

TWENTY-FOUR POINT FIVE MILLION.

TWENTY-EIGHT MILLION.

THIRTY-ONE POINT FIVE MILLION.

Objectively, these words simply represent a numerical value. For Caitlin Feller, senior in graphic design, the deeper meaning is exposed in the book she designed from an egg carton.

For the past two decades, Ohio University’s graphic design students have been designing unconventional books, popularly known as student artist books. And in these years, the Ohio University Libraries has preserved those books in the same manner as its 200-year-old collection. Preserving special items comes as second nature to the Libraries staff, which is why they are so eager to take on this endeavor each term.
Every item that the Libraries houses has a finite life span, which explains the great care given to artist books to preserve them for as long as possible. The student projects, stored in Alden Library’s Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, are protected in a climate-controlled vault to help reduce degradation. For most materials, chemical disturbance is what causes deterioration, so the Mahn Center houses books in chemical-free Hollinger boxes with metal edges for added strength, the same type used in the Library of Congress and in the National Archives.

“What is a book to you?” Don Adleta, professor and chair of the graphic design program, asks his students. Most often students shout out its qualities, saying books are a series of pages with words that tell a story or convey information. Others say that books are bound together to give form. By presenting examples of his own artist books to students, Adleta inspires students to see beyond the traditional parchment and twine.

“[Adleta] kind of left it open-ended,” Feller said. “The project was to make a book, but to push the boundaries of the concept of what a book is.”

Initially, the toughest part of the assignment is selecting an innovative yet practical idea. The Libraries’ staff
Caroline Walp, a senior in printmaking, looks at a book on display at the Artist Book exhibit in the Ohio University Art Gallery, Seigfred Hall in fall semester 2012.
helps graphic design faculty, like Visiting Assistant Professor Molly Schoenhoff, preview artist books from its special collections. Schoenhoff not only references previous student artist books, but also samples books of professional printers and artists as well.

The students are able to touch the materials, inspect the way the books are put together, and gather enough inspiration to take off and soar with their own unique ideas.

“It’s cool to see all of the different kinds of books that people have made, and what the range is for what you can do,” Elijah Maher, graphic design senior, said.

To pay tribute to student work, this past fall the Ohio University Art Gallery hosted the “50/20” exhibit showcasing 50 of these projects from the past 20 years. Today, there are nearly one thousand student artist books preserved in Alden Library awaiting use by researchers.

Krithika Rajaraman, graduate student in journalism, looks at “Northern Circumpolar Constellations,” a book designed by Elijah Maher, senior in graphic design, at the Artist Book Exhibit in fall 2012.
For Sandy Elsass, Ohio University has always represented opportunity. Elsass came to the University as a freshman majoring in education from Wapakoneta, Ohio in 1966. Taking advantage of student employment at OHIO, Elsass worked as a member of the president’s household staff.

“I first worked for President Alden and then Dr. Sowle. I learned a lot from that job,” said Elsass. “I learned to work with people from all walks of life.”

After graduation, he became involved in the Massachusetts chapter of the Alumni Association promoting Ohio University throughout New England. He later served on and chaired the Alumni Board of Trustees and for nine years served on the University’s Foundation Board of Trustees.

“Being on the alumni and foundation boards was a gratifying personal growth experience for me. Just to get involved with the University at that level was very rewarding. It was a very dynamic environment,” said Elsass. In addition, Elsass served on the steering committee of the Third Century Campaign.

In the late 1990s, Jack Ellis and President Ping knew where to turn for help when they approached Elsass to co-chair the University Libraries’ Bicentennial Campaign Committee with Vernon Alden.
“I have to admit that I wasn’t aware of what a wonderful Library we have, but I found out very quickly what a tremendous resource it is. I learned that the Library really influences the life of the whole University,” said Elsass. “The Library influences students, faculty, everyone.”

It is with that spirit of service and understanding of the importance of the teaching, learning and research mission of the University that Elsass agreed to co-chair the Libraries’ current Promise Lives Campaign.

“Support for Alden Library is more important than ever before. It stands firmly at the core of future growth for the University. A strong library is essential for the University to stay competitive in attracting the best and brightest students and faculty,” said Elsass.
(From left) Jordyn Frindley, junior in accounting, Zach Robbins, sophomore in accounting, Eric Adelsberger, junior in accounting, Chenxi Xie, senior in accounting, and Sarah Stark, junior in accounting, study together before a final on the third floor of Alden Library on December 5, 2012.
“It’s important that all of us who have benefited from our education and association with Ohio University give back in whatever way we can,” Elsass continued. “We can never give as much as we have received. If you are going to be involved in the University and have a leadership role you have to invest your own resources in what you believe in.”

Elsass has always lived up to that philosophy and has committed gifts to support a number of areas at the University. Most recently, he pledged $100,000 to enhance the Samuel and Susan Crowl Library Endowment for the Teaching of the Humanities. He established the endowment with an original gift of $500,000 in 1998.

Thank you, Sandy Elsass for all that you do for the University Libraries and Ohio University.
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at 740-593-2683 or partusch@ohio.edu or visit http://www.library.ohio.edu/about/giving-to-the-libraries/
(From left) Ashley Bribble and Kenzie Purtell, freshmen in pre-nursing, prepare for an exam on the third floor of Alden Library on December 6, 2012.

Contact Information
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