As far as life experiences go, moving to a new house or apartment has to be somewhere between dental surgery and poison ivy. It’s that much worse if you’re like me and fancy yourself something of a book collector. Now imagine that you have over 450,000 books and they must be shelved in precisely the same order in which you first found them.

That was the task facing us here at Polk Library over the summer. As part of the library’s goals of better utilizing the library space and making the collection more accessible, library staff and student workers moved over 50,000 ft worth of books, starting in May and ending just before the Fall semester. In addition to being physically demanding and just a little bit repetitive, the move also required a lot of logistical planning to make sure that all the books would fit in their new location with enough room for us to remove shelves and to grow our study spaces.

When we weren’t loading or unloading books on carts, library staff were cleaning the shelves, redistributing bookends, and, of course, waiting for the elevator. However, before any of the actual moving could happen, members of Polk Library’s Collections and Technical Services (CTS) department had to make sure that the books and journals would fit in their new locations. CTS head Ron Hardy used his trusty yardstick to measure just about every shelf in the library to figure out how much space our journals and books take up on the shelves.

Once those measurements were taken, they had to be added up and organized by different call number headings to see how much space each heading took up. One goal of the move was to use no more than five shelves per shelving unit wherever possible. Such an approach allows users to avoid straining to get to the top shelves or stooping to get something from the bottom. We also wanted to leave room on each shelf for new materials to be added. After this long and lengthy process Ron produced a master spreadsheet that laid out not only how many shelves and units each call number required, but also the number of units we would have to shelve per day if we wanted to finish this move before students returned to campus in September. That target number was 45 units a day, or as we learned about four hours of work with a full-sized crew.

As I helped Ron with these measurements, alternating between recording the numbers and taking the
measurements, I started thinking that there had to be an easier way for libraries to plan for a collection move to use information they already have about their collection to estimate its physical size and develop a planning document.

Of course, libraries have a great deal of information about books in their collection, typically taking the form of MARC records held within the library catalog. However, the critical piece of information needed to move a collection is never found in a bibliographic record: the width of the book. As a metadata librarian, I refused to let that stop me.

Most records for a book include the number of pages it contains. And while a book is more than just its pages, it makes intuitive sense that a book with 500 pages is probably going to be wider on the shelf than one with 50. If I could get a decent dataset of books along with their shelf measurements, I figured it would be possible to create a function which would take the number of pages in a book and estimate its width.

One of the first challenges in doing this was dealing with the MARC record itself. While page numbers are typically recorded in a field (field 300 for you catalogers at home) many books contain prefatory material that is not included in the official page count. These pages are often numbered using Roman numerals, but in other records could be given using the Arabic numerals but followed by “unnumbered pages.” There are also plates and other illustrations that may not be numbered at all, but which necessarily contribute to the width of the book.

It’s one thing for a person to look at a MARC record, add up the numbered and unnumbered pages, and then produce a total. But for this to be scalable, this interpretive process would have to be translated into steps a computer could understand. Making this more difficult is the diversity of approaches librarians have taken in recording all of the pagination. What we needed was a statistical approach—that over a full library of books-- produced a predictable width based on the available information.

While I had some experience with this kind of work, I thought it best to consult an expert. Prof. Marianne Johnson of UW Oshkosh’s Department of Economics recommended one of her statistics students to the task and we are currently working on gathering a dataset of randomly selected books that we can use to calculate a function describing the relationship between the pages of a book and its size on the shelf.

In the end, we hope this project will make it easier for libraries anywhere to plan out collection moves like the one undertaken here at Polk Library. Further refinements to the dataset may be able to include predictions based on age, genre, publisher and other factors that may influence just how much room a book takes up. As more and more libraries consider moving collections to higher density or off site storage environments, tools like the one we are creating here can aid in planning and purchasing equipment and spaces.
LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

by Sarah Neises

The UW Oshkosh restructuring project is a multi-faceted endeavor that touches most parts of our three campuses. Libraries are no exception. Wisconsin library staff are busy across the state making transition year changes and looking forward into the next fiscal year. At the UW System level, library staff from across the state are serving on committees that are solving complex resource sharing and interlibrary loan issues. There is a tremendous amount of expertise in the UW System with our integrated library system, Alma. We are fortunate to have a local expert on our staff, Crystal Buss, Head of Access Services. Crystal is serving with others in the state to test resource sharing configurations, and to evaluate new interlibrary loan procedures.

At Polk Library, staff on all three campuses will be working on a variety of plans to establish procedures and services for the combined libraries of UW Oshkosh, UW Fond du Lac and UW Fox Valley. Polk has developed a new Strategic Priority for our 2017 - 2019 Strategic Plan to map out the work staff will undertake in the upcoming months. One of the goals is ensuring collections access and delivery options. Polk’s web developer, David Hietpas, will be creating a website iteration that serves all 3 campuses. Archivist Joshua Ranger will be consulting with access campuses staff and evaluating the archival materials at the access campuses. Ron Hardy, Head of Collections & Technical services will be collaborating with the access campuses to establish collection development procedures and review collection needs.

Communication is one of the biggest challenges an organization faces during a monumental change like the restructuring. One of the goals in the strategic priority is to improve communication both to and from the access campuses and establish new communications procedures. Public Services staff will be working on goals to better assist faculty, staff and students. Ted Mulvey will be assisting with the introduction of our chat service to the access campuses staff.

Although there is much work to be done over the transition year and beyond, I am optimistic that our shared commitment to faculty, staff and students will enable us to work together to provide important collections and services.

Sarah Neises

Quest 1 peer mentors are assisting Polk Library’s information literacy coordinator, Marisa Finkey, develop a new “photo hunt” orientation to help first year students learn their way around the library. Designed to be fully self-directed, the activity is checked out by peer mentors when visiting with their Quest 1 class. Students must break up into small teams and follow a prescribed route through the building, completing ten small tasks at different stops. Each task is documented through phone snapshots or scans sent back to the mentor. The goal of the orientation to make students more comfortable and aware of different parts of the library building, something formal instruction sessions rarely have time to fit in.

Finkey, along with other public services staff, developed the materials in consultation with mentors this past summer. This semester, several mentors agreed to bring their classes in to field test the project. Once finalized, it will be ready for Quest 1 courses to use in the fall. Quest 1 faculty are encouraged to recommend to their mentors this simple and fun (well, we think so anyway) activity.
Urban farming in Milwaukee, immigrants building new traditions in Jefferson County, Native Americans returning to farming on the Oneida reservation, and the state of a venerable family farm in Winnebago county, these and others are the stories of *The Lands We Share*. The traveling exhibit, which took root at Polk in October, explores unique farming communities around the state. The study space across from the circulation desk proved a perfect location for the compact exhibit, providing both the necessary room but also a busy thoroughfare to entice visits to the modern and colorful exhibit.

*The Lands We Share* is one of the products of the Wisconsin Farms Oral History Project, a collaborative multi-campus program in which undergraduates—including UW Oshkosh Quest III students—recorded interviews with hundreds of farmers statewide. For *The Lands We Share*, additional research by faculty and students at UW Whitewater, UW Oshkosh, UW Milwaukee and UW Madison, focused on six culturally and regionally distinct sites and communities and their relationships with the land and the food grown there.

One of the lead student researchers for the Allenville and Oneida community sections was Polk Library’s own Jennifer DePew, a student worker in the UW Oshkosh Archives and Area Research Center. Jenni and others worked with Dr. Stephen Kercher, of UW Oshkosh’s Department of History and made much use of Polk’s collections and services.

Through interpretive text, maps, contemporary and historical images and sound recordings, *The Lands We Share* exhibit takes visitors into intersection of farming, land, ethnic culture and history in Wisconsin. The highlight of the exhibit are the interviews and soundscapes produced when the researchers visited the communities. Long after the exhibit is through, these and all of the recordings of the Wisconsin Farm Oral History project, will remain as an important resource for future researchers studying agriculture, geography, sociology, history and beyond.

In addition to the exhibit, six “community conversations” have been organized to bring members of the different communities together to talk about their relationships with the land they live and work on and with farming over time.

If you missed the exhibit at Polk, please consult [https://landsweshare.org/schedule/](https://landsweshare.org/schedule/) for a full schedule of where it will be through April 19, 2019.
Polk’s original resident, “The Guardian”, returned last month to his right and, watchful post on the Library’s front porch. It has been in storage since 2017 when its deteriorating and weakened stone base collapsed after being struck by a vehicle accidently.

Originally installed in the summer of 1962 as construction neared completion on the original, north wing of the library, “The Guardian” bemused many visitors at first. Even members of the Oshkosh State College’s Department of Art, who were more familiar with modern and abstract sculpture, criticized the piece. Over time, however, “The Guardian” became a familiar—and from our perspective, irreplaceable--part of the UW Oshkosh landscape. It is certainly one of the oldest pieces of public art on campus.

The Guardian was a commissioned piece by Leo Steppat, an early pioneer of welded metal sculpture. Born in Vienna in 1910 and educated at Austrian State Academy of Fine Arts, Steppat faced persecution under Nazi rule. Fleeing to the United States in 1940, Steppat found quick success as an artist and professor. He taught at American University, Indiana University and the University of Mississippi before he joined the faculty of the University of Wisconsin in 1955. In addition to teaching, he exhibited regularly throughout the country, often with his wife, Annelise, a celebrated weaver. Tragically, Steppat’s life was cut short at the age of 55 when he died of a heart attack.

Steppat’s work’s can be found in major museums across the country. Polk’s 11 foot sculpture features welded steel plates with bronze brazing, a molten bronze coating Steppat “painted” on to the metal segments of the figure. During the accident with the base, the sculpture itself was damaged only slightly after it hit an exterior wall. UW Oshkosh art curator, Leslie Walfish who consulted on The Guardian’s return, will treat the abrasions with a special protective wax to help ensure the preservation of this storied piece.
Colleges’ Openings Feature Historical Perspective

Joshua Ranger, University Archivist at Polk Library gave twin presentations at the opening day activities at UW Fox Valley and UW Fond du Lac on the parallel histories of the schools as well as that of the Oshkosh Campus.

The late August talks were part of two half-day activities designed to celebrate the restructuring of the three campus University.

In his comments, Ranger argued that the three schools were part of similar historical missions to democratize education across the country. The Normal movement, upon which UW Oshkosh was founded, sought to educate generations of teachers and to standardize instruction in all primary/secondary schools urban and rural in the state. And out of UW Madison’s federally gifted Land Grant mission, UW Extension was born, and from it, the Centers and later Colleges; schools developed to ensure that access to higher education was never far from reach of all Wisconsinites. Together, the Normals (and their successors) and the Colleges transformed the state’s economy, growth and intellectual life.

Through images and stories, Ranger demonstrated that many of the same events shaped the growth--and sometime retraction--of all three campuses as well as their sister schools statewide. The Great Depression, wartime and peace as well as the Baby Boom all required substantial reactions from the schools. In addition, he recounted the decades-long ongoing conversation among state leaders about the best administrative model for providing higher education in Wisconsin. Of particular note was the frequently-made suggestion of attaching two-year campuses to nearby four-year institutions. This, of course, was how the present UW Fond du Lac was first administered, as a branch campus of WSU Oshkosh. Similarly, Fox Valley (then UW Menasha)--along with campuses at Marinette and Manitowoc-- were for several years branches of UW Green Bay. Since the 1950s, restructuring the schools into groups was often seen as a logical development to ensure the health of public higher education in Wisconsin.

The University Archives is dedicated to the collection, preservation, access and interpretation of records and stories from the three campuses of UW Oshkosh. Exploring and interpreting the unique--as well as common--histories of the new additions to the University will be a priority for the program in the years to come.

UW Fox Valley Library News

We’ve had a busy start to the academic year here in Menasha.

While we were in the midst of welcoming new and returning students to our campus, the library was also in the midst of some much needed TLC. Construction began over the summer to install new energy efficient windows throughout our space. The stucco on the exterior of the library, long a favorite of nesting birds, was also replaced. Construction on the “bird wall” and our new windows is now complete and we can already feel the difference. The library’s temperature fluctuates less and, thanks to the coating on the windows, we don’t have the mid-afternoon glare anymore! In addition to the exterior improvement, additional power was added into the center of the library for students using personal devices.

The library also hosted its used book sale in September with proceeds returning to the library to be spent on items based on student feedback. Previous years’ funds went for pub seating, new single study tables, lab chairs and lots of fun movies and reading materials added to the collection. We’ll be buying some student “favorites” from our Trick or Treat list next.

If you stop by our campus library be sure to check out the white board question of the week and put a piece or two into the “Study Break Puzzle!”
The library was busy this semester preparing for the UW-FDL Campus 50th Anniversary Celebration, which took place November 2. Library staff had a fun time going through the campus’s archival resources to find interesting stories and pictures from our 50-year history. For instance, while some people may know that the UW-FDL mascot was originally a centaur, we learned that the mascot decision came about through a very intricate election process in English classes the first semester the campus was open. In the fall of 1968, all students were required to take an English class, so it was decided that electing the mascot would fall on the whole of the student body in these English classes. The Athletic Director Ed Dorey and Basketball Coach Dick Knar had wanted the mascot to be the Lakers (due to our proximity to Lake Winnebago, as well as the two small lakes on our campus), but alas, the student body chose Centaurs. The mascot was changed from Centaurs to Falcons in the late-1990s. ‘The Laker’ would go on to be the name of the student newspaper from 1968-1986.

The Library Staff definitely found some gems while searching through our small archives of student newspapers, yearbooks, and photographs. This work culminated in display posters for the event, which are now available to view in the library.

NewspaperArchive IS BACK!

Returning from a brief summer vacation, the NewspaperArchive database has returned to Polk Library. And although it looks a bit slimmer, it still offers a deep dive into Wisconsin historical newspapers from the 19th and 20th centuries. Previously, NewspaperArchive, a source for digitized newspapers nationwide, was provided by BadgerLink, the Department of Public Instruction’s digital library service. After a rebidding process, BadgerLink replaced NewspaperArchive with another service, Newspapers.com which offers far fewer Wisconsin titles. Several UW libraries have since worked to reinstate, to their own campuses, access to the more complete NewspaperArchive. The new costs required us to subscribe to the Wisconsin titles only, which include back files of the Oshkosh Northwestern, Wisconsin State Journal and many other small and mid-sized state newspapers, including UW Oshkosh’s own Advance Titan and its predecessor publication. Researchers can find NewspaperArchive (Wisconsin edition) and Newspapers.com, as well as other important historical newspaper collections via Polk’s A-Z list of databases.
While working in Covington, Kentucky, Matthew Reinhardt—like library staff everywhere—helped people connect to the world beyond their everyday lives. For many of his unique patrons, however, this meant everything, for they were all home bound and unable to access books and media directly themselves. It was Matthew’s responsibility at the Kenton County Public Library system to bring this material directly to their homes. Often, he would sit and chat so as to learn more about the patron’s reading and intellectual interests. He did this, of course, to better serve their needs but also because it was clear many just enjoyed and needed a visitor. Talk would often move from books and discs to family and kids and to the loneliness of isolated living. They simply enjoyed Matthew’s company and we are not surprised about that in the least.

Prior to Polk Library, Matthew worked as the Program Coordinator for the LGBTQ Resource Center. He, along with the center’s director, Liz Cannon, developed and implemented educational programming and events for the campus, helping grow a supportive environment for LGBTQIA+ individuals and inclusive community for all. Matthew continues to be active on campus to “pull as he climbs,” to help mentor and support others as he had been once been himself.

But it’s not ALL about work. Coming to Oshkosh from the big cities of Cincinnati and Chicago with his husband, Matthew has found much to love in northeast Wisconsin. Armed with a growing collection of power tools, he is actively developing his DIY skills as a homeowner and recently rebuilt a vintage bicycle to better enjoy the nature and outdoor spaces he values in this area...because even the best helpers need a little time for themselves.