It has been my honor and privilege to serve as University of Houston Dean of Libraries, and alongside so many amazing individuals. The University of Houston has been an extraordinary place to be. It is my greatest pleasure every day to work in such an environment. You all have given me so many great memories to cherish as I step down from this role and reflect on what an extraordinary ride it’s been!

Over the past 18 years, we have accomplished big things together, including creating new partnerships, resources, programs and services; strengthening our national recognition through the expertise and leadership of our incredibly talented team of professionals; and building a beautiful campus space that gives students a home base to achieve academic, professional and personal success.

Most importantly, we’ve worked together to attain a research library culture that exemplifies excellence, the driving quality that each of our librarians and staff embrace and personify every day. Without this, the Libraries could not be what it is today.

To the librarians and staff of the UH Libraries, thank you. You are the catalysts of change on the campus, and within our profession.

To my colleagues and friends, thank you for your support, encouragement and the many laughs we’ve shared.

To our loyal supporters of the Libraries, I deeply appreciate your generosity and enthusiasm for helping us grow. Your gifts are an investment that will yield outstanding returns for generations.

To our collaborators and cohorts in libraries of all kinds, thank you for your partnership. We have achieved so much in our endeavors to shape library services, and there is still so much more to do!

To the students and scholars of the University of Houston, thank you for making my time at UH memorable and significant.

As I pass the torch to my successor, I have the utmost confidence that the Libraries will flourish even further, and our team is poised to continue our momentum. With your support, the next University of Houston Dean of Libraries will lead the Libraries to even greater success.

In my 45 years as a librarian, I’ve learned a lot of lessons and gained a lot of insight. I didn’t know how much fun it would be, and what joy it would bring to my life. I achieved my dream, and it was so much more than I ever could have expected.

Thank you, and farewell.

Dana C. Rooks
Dean of Libraries and
Elizabeth D. Rockwell Chair
By Gregory Yerke

The University of Houston Libraries recently launched a true one-of-a-kind collaboration between the Liaison Services and Special Collections departments entitled Unique Holdings, highlighting the research potential tucked away right here on campus in the rare books, manuscripts, and archival items housed in Special Collections. This brown bag lecture series debuted in the fall of 2014 with "The Last Untapped Resource in Houston," a discussion of unique works of literature housed in Special Collections, curated by library specialist Kristine Greive and English librarian Jesse Sharpe.

As Greive and Sharpe explained from the outset, the ease of access to an abundance of quality databases has allowed research libraries around the country to provide scholars with unprecedented resources for research -- regardless of their location. As a result, more and more research libraries begin to resemble one another and stand on equal footing in terms of their collections. In this new environment, however, the holdings of Special Collections distinguish one library from another and help to define the unique character and research potential at each institution.

This reality of the digital age, coupled with the preservation needs that require Special Collections holdings to be housed in secure, climate-controlled facilities, begged for a high-profile venue in which to shine a light on these invaluable resources that might otherwise remain undiscovered. The Unique Holdings series fills this need as an opportunity to directly engage students, faculty, and the community at large with the library’s large and varied rare book collection.

Spurred by the success of this first event, Greive now works with liaison librarians across all disciplines to curate a series that promises to shed new light on old treasures. The spring 2015 installment of this series, “The Human Side of Science,” featured biology and biochemistry librarian Porcia Vaughn along with Greive and Sharpe in a discussion of rare scientific works spanning approximately seven centuries. Faculty, students, and others in attendance were able to view the many ways in which science has been approached and taught over the centuries, as well as the ways in which science and the humanities intersect.

All Unique Holdings events are free and open to the public. Scheduled future events for the fall of 2015 and beyond include discussions of historic maps housed in Special Collections and rare items available for study related to pseudoscience and the occult. Grab a lunch and join us as the Unique Holdings series moves forward. There is sure to be a little something for everyone.

To learn more about future Unique Holdings events, visit UH Libraries News and Events at info.lib.uh.edu/p/news-events.

Common Blue Jay. From John Bigland’s A Natural History of Birds, Fishes, Reptiles, and Insects (1845). Available at UH Special Collections.

John Lehner, Associate Dean of Personnel, Planning and Systems

John Lehner, associate dean of personnel, planning, and systems, has been selected as the inaugural recipient of the Ambassador Kenneth Franzheim II Endowed Library Professorship, effective April 1, 2015.

“John Lehner’s appointment reflects his exceptional performance as a leader and a scholar in the field of librarianship,” said Dean of Libraries and Elizabeth D. Rockwell Chair Dana Rooks. “The majority of his library career has been focused on the critical area of human resource management and administration. He has achieved strong national recognition in this field through his leadership in the development of new practices and policies reflecting the rapid changes in employer expectations, legal requirements, and transformational organization needs which permeate today’s human resource arena.”

Kenneth Franzheim II was a Houston oilman and philanthropist. He served as ambassador to New Zealand, Western Samoa, Tonga and Fiji from 1969 to 1972. Franzheim was also a friend and supporter of the UH Libraries, with a strong belief in education and lifelong learning.
Dana Rooks led the University of Houston Libraries through nearly two decades of transformation, having first risen through the ranks of librarianship.

After holding positions at the University of Oklahoma and the University of Missouri – St. Louis, she joined the University of Houston. At UH, she fulfilled the roles of business/economics reference librarian, coordinator of library instruction, library personnel coordinator, assistant director for administration, assistant director for public services and administration, and acting director. This year, Rooks will retire after 18 years as Dean of Libraries and Elizabeth D. Rockwell Chair.

During Rooks’ career, the Libraries became a well-regarded campus institution. She is candid as she recalls that, when she first arrived in 1979, “the library was a failed organization. It had a massive uncataloged backlog which was growing each year. The library was not a service oriented organization in any respect. Technology was emerging for database searching and technical processing functions, but the library was not engaged in adopting the technology.”

Things began to improve when Robin Downes, Rooks’ predecessor, was hired as library director in 1980. True pride and admiration shines through in Rooks’ characterization of the Libraries as it exists today. “The University of Houston Libraries is accurately perceived by the students, faculty, and administration as highly successful,” she said. “The librarians and staff are dedicated to meeting the needs of all our constituents, we are innovative in the application of technology, and we focus on assessment and outcomes of all our programs and services. This transformation and positive spirit will only get stronger under new and fresh leadership as I step down from my role as dean.”

When Rooks became dean in January 1997, her first priority was to address the declining levels of funding from the state, as needs within the Libraries increased. To mitigate the effects of a shrinking budget, Rooks’ focus grew outward. “I knew before being named dean that the State of Texas could no longer provide the level of funding that universities had relied on in the past,” she said. “The library could never be more than adequate unless we could successfully attract external funding to allow us to achieve the excellence our students, faculty and community deserved.”
With little experience in development and no donors to call upon, Rooks was determined to master the art of fundraising. She launched a comprehensive development effort, which included hiring a skilled development director who coached her on strategy. She penned a column appearing in Journal of Academic Librarianship from 2006-2008, “Library Fundraising: Random Ramblings,” which chronicled her experiences in library development and served as part guide, part reality check to others in the field.

Some of Rooks’ many accomplishments in development include initiating and implementing the University’s first incubator endowment program, the Acorn Endowment; increasing the library endowment by $7 million; securing three endowed chairs for the Libraries, including the dean’s position; and increasing Annual Fund giving from $5,700 in 1997 to over $200,000 annually. This series of boldly successful fundraising gains culminated in her most notable achievement: raising $20 million in less than three years for the MD Anderson Library building addition.

“The library building campaign was my most intimidating challenge,” Rooks said. She enlisted the support of University Advancement professionals, a group she sees as “invincible allies and unwavering advocates for the Libraries.” Faculty and staff became supporters, and “remarkable volunteer leadership from the community stepped forward in the persons of Belle and Richard J. V. Johnson and Beth Robertson to lead our efforts to achieve what seemed to be an overwhelming goal.”

Through the campaign’s duration and construction phase, Rooks saw unyielding dedication from the librarians and staff. “They worked through the dust, the noise, and the wildly fluctuating temperatures,” she said. “They never complained, and they provided the highest levels of service at all times, under all conditions.” The library never veered from our normal hours of operation. The librarians and staff didn’t just maintain, they moved forward with new services, new programs, and new operating efficiencies.

Today, the MD Anderson Library is noted as a gorgeous facility that Rooks (and the community) have regarded as a jewel of the University and city, and was created through a unified team effort. As a leader, Rooks has a distinctive combination of collaborative and decisive ability. She meets all situations with savvy aplomb, but that’s not what is most fascinating about Rooks. It is her tendency to advance herself and her team by seeking and conquering unfamiliar territory.

“I have learned that one’s most significant accomplishments are those which were not in one’s comfort zone,” she said. “Leaders challenge themselves, they challenge those around them, and they seek opportunities that are outside their comfort range.”

One of the less visible but equally challenging demands of her tenure as dean was transforming organizational culture to embody the values of service, diversity, lifelong learning, engagement and excellence. Incrementally, the Libraries grew to the highest levels of service at all times, under all conditions. The library never veered from our normal hours of operation. The librarians and staff didn’t just maintain, they moved forward with new services, new programs, and new operating efficiencies.

Over the course of her career, Rooks has had several influential mentors. “My mother was a librarian, very prominent and nationally recognized in public libraries, so she was my first and foremost mentor,” she said. “I had the opportunity to work for some outstanding library directors and deans, and learned different things from each one. I’ve worked hard to mentor other people that I come across in my career. I always tell them they have to be more successful than me.”

It’s true that Rooks is known as a mentor to many, including her team of UH librarians. She has a simple message for this special group of “innovative, creative, dynamic individuals: ‘Keep your passion, be a leader in all you do, don’t be afraid to take a risk, and enjoy the ride.’”

UH students also know Rooks as a friend and supporter in their academic and professional development. Her message to students is practical and very librarian. “Regardless of the path you choose on your future life, or your career, learn how to effectively find and use information. Information literacy skills will make lifelong learning possible. Whether starting and sustaining your own business, keeping current in your chosen field, moving to a new line of work, or dealing with personal issues in life, success is dependent on finding and utilizing valid information to make knowledgeable and informed decisions.”

All libraries have the potential to empower individuals and communities, and Rooks has held to this belief as she has led numerous collaborative efforts to strengthen independent and state-supported libraries. Rooks founded and served as president of the Texas Council of Academic Librarians (TCAL), and is one of the founders of TexShare, an innovative model for statewide library resource sharing. More recently, she was a co-founder and president of the Texas Digital Library.

UH Libraries is a member of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), an organization of 125 distinguished research libraries in North America. Rooks affirms the power of ARL libraries to enact positive transformation in librarianship. Again, Rooks assumed a leadership role on a national level as a member of the ARL Board of Directors.

“We strongly believe that ARL libraries have an obligation to the greater library community,” Rooks said. “In a city like Houston, we are the library that has the resources, expertise and capacity to be able to not only participate, but to take a lead in collaborative statewide, regional, and citywide efforts.”

Rooks has a simple formula for success in career and life: always be learning. “I knew in graduate school I wanted to be an ARL library dean,” she said. “You start by figuring out what you need to do, to do that, both from a credential standpoint and from what skills you need. Like all people, you learn from the good and the bad. You evolve by increasing your knowledge, being curious, doing research, using your network, anything you can find just to be better.”

Always focusing on excellence, Rooks has recruited talented librarians who are experts in various areas from across the nation to join the University of Houston, and has surrounded herself with top performers. She has relied on her associate deans, Linda Thompson, Marilyn Myers and John Lehner, as trusted and knowledgeable advisers who serve as connectors to the departments that keep the Libraries going. Her leadership team helps to communicate and execute the values, goals and culture she has shaped over time.

Sharing knowledge and resources, and inspiring others to improve, academically, professionally and personally, is at the heart of what the University of Houston Libraries is, and will continue to be. “I don’t care whether they are high school debate team students or public citizens who are doing research for a better opportunity to advance themselves, their families, or community,” Rooks said. “We have the expertise and the service attitude regardless of who the person is. Whatever the purpose, when they need that, we’re here. That’s us, that’s what we do. That’s how we win.”

Dana Rooks, leader, mentor and friend, has shown unflinching dedication and stellar leadership in her 45 years as a librarian and dean. UH Libraries donors Tom and Becky Jay have generously made a lead gift to establish an Acorn Endowment in honor of Dana’s career. This endowment will provide funds to address the University of Houston Libraries’ greatest needs.

Our goal is to have the endowment fully funded before Dana’s upcoming retirement. In addition to the funds, more than a dozen additional donors have contributed to this fund.

For more information on contributing to the Dana Rooks Acorn Endowment, contact Todd Marrs, Director of Development at 713.743.9747 or dmarrs@uh.edu

Dana C. Rooks
Dean of Libraries and Elizabeth D. Rockwell Chair

SPRiNg 2015

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Kickey Brett presented 'Don’t Take Paws: Start a Therapy Dog Program at Your Library' at the Texas Library Association (TLA) District 8 Fall Conference.


Brett co-authored 'Tabs and Tabulations: Results of a Transaction Log Analysis of a Tabled Search Interface,' with Elizabeth German and Frederick Young, which appeared in Journal of Web Librarianship.

Melody Condron serves as vice-chair of the Library and Information Technology Association Membership Development Committee through June 2015. Her appointment as chair begins in July.

Condon also serves as chair of the Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies Conference Programming Committee.

Condon's poster session, "Digitalization and Curational of Personal Photo Collections: Recommendations, Methods and Tools from a Recent Project," was accepted to the Personal Digital Archiving Conference.

Lisa Cruse presented "The Challenges and Value of Preserving and Integrating 19th-Century Spanish-Language Periodicals into Archival Instruction and the Recovery of the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project Conference."

Cruse was a panelist in a talk titled "Pleading Back: Chicana, Latina, Hispanic Women Historians: Our Narratives" at the University of Houston.

Cruse was a panelist on a talk titled "Whose History Is It? Community Archives and the 'Spirit of Memory' at the University of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Rare Books and Manuscripts (RBMS) Section 2015 Pre-conference.

Nora Dethloff served as co-chair of the Programs Committee for the TLA TDL Texas Leadership Development Institute.

Dethloff co-presented "Focus on the Learner:Exemplars of Student Engagement as a Library "at the University of Houston Libraries" at Using Library Resources in the Library of the Future Conference.

Dethloff was a panelist for "Essential Skills and Competencies for the 21st Century Librarian" at the TCDL with Cherie Turner and Frederick Young at the Charleston Conference.

Porcia Vaughn and Cherie Turner presented a poster, "Decoding via Coding: Analyzing Qualitative Data," at the ACRL Conference.

Loretta Wallace co-presented "Craddle to Grave: A Team Approach to Managing Database Lifestyles" with Jack Bronicki and Kelli Getz at the ER&L Conference.

Wallace is a member of the ACRL, University Libraries Section Nominating Committee, and member of the TLA Nominating Committee.

Andi Weidner presented "Practical Project Management with Basecamp" at the SMRT Summit via Skype, and co-launched "Launching Metawebz" with Jenn Riley, as part of the panel "Experimental Scholarly Publishing: Building New Models with Distributed Communities of Practice" at the DLF Forum.

Weidner co-presented "Hitting the Road Together: Resources for Evaluating and Testing DAMS at the University of Texas Libraries" at the Conference on Digital Libraries, with Santo Thompson.


Vacek presented "Library Websites of the Future" in London, UK with Mike Thompson.


Vacek was interviewed at the Code-Lib conference on experiences with library technology and struggles with gender roles. The interview appeared in "Circulating Ideas" (Steve Thomas, Episode 58: Lisa Rabey @ code4lib4).

Shawn Vaillancourt co-chaired the panel "Creating a Better Model of Digital Scholarly Infrastructure" at the Texas Conference on Digital Libraries (TCDL) with Mike Thompson.

Vaillancourt co-presented "Taming the Wild: Collaborating with experts for faster, better, smarter collection analysis" with Jackie Bronicki, Cherie Turner and Frederick Young at the Charleston Conference.

Annie Wu and Andy Weidner co-presented "Maintaining Legacy Metadata in CONTENTdm: The Metadata Upgrade Project at the University of Houston Libraries," at the DLF Forum.

Wu was a panelist for "Essential Skills and Qualities of Cataloger/Metadata Librarians in the Digital Era" at the TLA Conference.

Wu is a member of the DLF Conference Program Committee, the ACRL Programs Committee and the TDL Digital Curating Working Group.
Long-time friend and supporter of the University of Houston Libraries, Wendy Adair, recently established an endowment to support the acquisition of new technologies at the Libraries.

“I believe that the library is the soul of the University, touching every area, every discipline, every student and faculty member,” Adair said. “Recent technological advancements make access to the MD Anderson Library available from anywhere in the world. It is my hope that this endowment can, in a small way, help to ensure that the MD Anderson Library continues to lead the way in providing access and content to all.”

In addition to establishing the Wendy H. Adair Endowment for Library Technology, Adair has also included the UH Libraries in her estate plans.

To learn more about giving to the Libraries, or for information on estate planning, please contact Todd Marrs, Director of Development at 713.743.9741 or dtmarrs@uh.edu.