Mayo Appointed Director of the Rensselaer Libraries

Bob Mayo has been named Director of the Rensselaer Libraries. John Kolb ‘79, Vice President for Information Services and Technology and Chief Information Officer, commented, “In an acting capacity over the past four years, Bob has truly been an ‘agent of change’ for the libraries at Rensselaer. He has ably managed budget challenges while maintaining a high level of user services by evolving and adapting the Rensselaer Libraries to meet academic needs in a digital information age. Under Bob’s leadership, the Rensselaer Libraries today are vibrant environments that serve the diverse needs of our students and faculty.”

Mayo has been at Rensselaer since 2001, having begun his career in the Folsom Library as Administration Librarian and taking on the duties of Acting Director after the departure of Loretta Ebert in 2006.


RPI’S ARCHITECTS: DESIGNERS OF TODAY’S CAMPUS BUILDINGS

Plan to join us on Tuesday, May 18th, at noon in the Russell Sage Dining Hall banquet room for a special luncheon program focusing on architectural structures created by Rensselaer graduates. David Haviland ‘64, Professor Emeritus of Architecture, will be the featured speaker. This is the third in a series on the history of the Institute being explored by former Alumni Director and Rensselaer Historian Carl Westerdahl and Assistant Institute Archivist Amy Rupert.

The buffet lunch will include antipasto and mixed green salad, three-cheese baked penne, green beans, bread sticks, dessert, and beverages. The price is $5 for Friends and $10 for non-members. Rensselaer students can attend for free, although reservations are necessary. Checks should be made out to Friends of the Folsom Library and sent to Adrienne Birchler, Folsom Library, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 110 8th Street, Troy, NY 12180 by May 12th. Cash is also acceptable.
Friends and others were treated to a special Lunch & Learn program held at Pat’s Barn at the Rensselaer Technology Park in North Greenbush on February 12. Michael Wacholder, director of the Tech Park, narrated a slide presentation that told the story of the reconstruction of the circa 1730s Dutch H-frame structure that had resided on the Phillip DeFreest Homestead before the land and buildings were purchased by Rensselaer. Several years in the planning and rebuilding, Pat’s Barn was completed last summer and is a sizable and handsome multipurpose building that serves as a meeting place for seminars, training sessions, retreats, and other special events.

A great percentage of the interior of Pat’s Barn was constructed with material salvaged from the original structure, including beams, pegs, and timber. A few nails were also recovered, and Wacholder will eventually find a way to incorporate them into the scheme as he did with the fieldstones used in the original barn. Those found a new function as a quaint seating area outside the entrance to the new structure.

The original barn had some windows, but the new structure has many more, including an impressive three-panel, two-story picture window that supplies lots of natural light. The outside of Pat’s Barn consists of new materials that are relatively maintenance free. Insulation was also added in order for the building to be conducive for gatherings.

What impressed many attendees was a magnificent conference table, which dominates the upstairs seminar room. At almost three inches thick, the table is constructed of original barn timbers that were sanded and then layered with many coats of varnish to give it a polished, durable finish. In addition to the seminar room, there are also four smaller meeting areas. Wacholder noted that although these areas are open, the building’s acoustic properties are such that people meeting in one area are barely aware of verbal exchanges in the other meeting areas.

The reconstruction of the old barn was the dream of Patricia Roberts, wife of Trustee C. Sheldon Roberts ‘48. Although she had a lot of input into its reconstruction, it was unfortunate that Pat passed away a few months before the project was completed. The structure was named in tribute to her.

After the presentation and a lunch of sandwiches, salads, and dessert that was generously provided by Wacholder and the Friends, attendees were free to tour the building. For more about Pat’s Barn and its availability, contact April Rounds at 518-283-7102 or rounda@rpi.edu.
Dr. Leo Beranek, a legendary pioneer in acoustical research who is particularly known for his work with music hall acoustics, generously donated his historic collection of acoustic books to the Rensselaer Libraries. A reception was held on April 1st in Folsom Library’s Fischbach Room following the donation and book-signing ceremony. The event was part of Beranek’s two-day visit to Rensselaer, which was hosted by the Graduate Program in Architectural Acoustics under the leadership of Dr. Ning Xiang, professor in the School of Architecture. During his stay, Beranek presented two lectures on campus: “Some Important Contributions to Acoustics” and “History of Music and Concert Halls.”

If you’ve had the opportunity to enjoy the likes of Aretha Franklin belting out “Respect” at EMPAC or Judy Collins’ haunting performance of “Amazing Grace” at the Troy Music Hall, then you understand the impact of architectural acoustics. If you ever experienced the perfect acoustics in the Koussevitzky Music Shed at Tanglewood, you have Dr. Leo Beranek to thank.

In his introduction of Beranek to those assembled at the ceremony, Bob Mayo, Director of the Rensselaer Libraries, noted that, “Here at Rensselaer, with EMPAC and the Laboratory of Noise and Vibration Control Research, we have world-class platforms for acoustic research. We have the electrical and mechanical engineering, physics, architecture and cognitive science programs that provide a unique intersection of disciplines to drive forward acoustic research. So we are indeed fortunate in being the recipient of this world-class acoustics book collection.”

Beranek graduated from Cornell University in 1936 and received a Master’s in engineering from Harvard University the following year. He later earned the Doctor of Science degree in Communication Engineering from Harvard.

From 1940 to 1945, Beranek was in charge of important wartime projects at Harvard. He later taught at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was Technical Director of MIT’s Acoustics Laboratory before becoming an executive of the consulting firm BBN (Bolt, Beranek and Newman). Under a Department of Defense contract, the firm created a team that developed e-mail and the ARPANET (predecessor to the Internet). In 2002, he received the National Medal of Science from President George W. Bush for his “leadership, dedication and contribution to the art and science of acoustics, for co-founding one of the world’s foremost acoustical research and consulting firms, and for sustained contribution to scientific societies and civic organizations.”

Two of Baranek’s many books are still in print: Concert Hall and Opera Houses: Music, Acoustics and Architecture and his memoirs, Riding the Waves: A Life in Sound, Science, and Industry.
March Lunch & Learn Held at ACCR

About 20 members of the Rensselaer Retirees Forum, Friends, and others from the Rensselaer community met in the conference room of the Arts Center of the Capital Region (ACCR) in downtown Troy for the March Lunch & Learn program. Amy Williams, president of ACCR, was the featured speaker.

The Center has been around for 50 years, but located at 265 River Street for only the last ten. Prior to the Center’s occupancy, the space was actually five brownstone buildings that housed the old Standard Furniture Store. Much work went into taking out support walls and fortifying the floors in order to interconnect the individual buildings. The result is a huge dwelling that houses galleries, exhibit areas, a “black box” theatre, classrooms, studios, offices, and an artists’ supply store. The newest room to open is a studio that artists can rent by the hour to take high-quality photos of their creations.

After her talk, Williams took the group on a tour of the Center. Most attendees were amazed at the number of studios and classrooms, as well as the number of courses. Classes are offered in culinary arts; dance; drawing and painting; eco art and design; fashion design; fiber arts; frame making; home and folk art; jewelry; mind and body; photography and film; pottery; printmaking; stained glass; theatre arts; wood working; and writing. One of the more popular classes is “Writing What You Know,” which Friends’ Board member Marion Roach Smith has taught for several years.

Although most of the classes are for adults, there are some available to youngsters and teenagers, such as “Cupcake Clinic!” and “Drawing and Painting for Teens.” Classes for parents and children, such as “Re-Craft,” and week-long camps for those under 18 are also offered. Most instruction takes place over several weeks, but there are a few one-time classes, such as “Pysanky: The Art of Ukranian Egg Painting.”

If you weren’t able to attend the Lunch & Learn program and are interested in learning more about the ACCR, you can visit their website at http://www.artscenteronline.org/. Or better still, why not plan to check out the Center during a Troy Night Out and enjoy an evening of arts and culture? Along with numerous other venues in the city, from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. the last Friday of every month, the ACCR welcomes visitors to stop in and investigate the exhibits, explore the studios, learn what classes are offered, and discover what artists’ supplies are available for purchase in the shop that’s situated on the first floor. The Troy Trolley travels around the city, providing free transportation to all event attendees, and stops at major destinations, including the Center. Free parking is available on-street and in several city garages. For more information on Troy Night Out, go to http://www.troynightout.org/.

Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.

Pablo Picasso
Spotlight on Library Operations: Technical Services
Contributed by Patricia Hults, Manager of Technical Services

It used to be that Technical Services were the faces you didn’t see—people working in the bowels of the library, bent over catalog cards. We did the behind-the-scenes work of ordering, receiving, and making available the materials the library users wanted. We still do a lot of work not obvious to the library patron, but now we have expanded our role. You’ll see us helping patrons at the reference desk; serving on library committees such as exhibits and events, the library website committee, and our digital repository committee; doing usability testing to help improve our services; and providing technical support to other library staff and projects.

Of course we still order and process library materials, including print journals and books, electronic journals and books, rare books, popular DVDs, travel books, computer games, CDs, and digital music. Our staff also works on adding theses into our electronic theses collection, designing the library website, creating library instructional tutorials, helping the library go mobile, and troubleshooting when a user has trouble getting one of our electronic journals or books.

I’d like to introduce our staff:

Matt Benzing, Information Technology Librarian, has responsibilities in library technology. He provides website maintenance, keeps an eye on emerging technology, and provides training and support for new technology. He’s currently working on making our library website mobile-friendly.

Elizabeth Buckley, Library Specialist, is our cataloger par excellence. She is also our Government Documents specialist and is the Libraries’ manager of Concerto, the software system that displays campus information.

Katie Dunn is our Technology and Metadata Librarian. She supervises the cataloging of library material in both the Libraries’ catalog and in the digital repository. She chairs the Libraries’ Technology Committee and adds her expertise to many projects requiring technological savvy and experience.

Mary Earl, Library Associate, handles the ordering of books through our selection software, GOBI. She receives and tracks those orders, and manages the claiming of missing journals. She is also our statistics expert and helps us keep track of what we do.

Patricia Hults, Manager of Technical Services, gets to bask in the glow of all the great work the rest of the staff does. Well, she does do some work of her own, such as budget projections, co-chairing the library website committee, and getting involved in special projects, such as the ConnectNY e-book trial now in progress.

(continued on page 7)
PC Lab Renewal

The PC Lab in the library will undergo a renewal soon. It will consist of installing new Versteel tables, an overhead projector (similar to what was recently installed in the Conference Room), and associated network cabling and power wiring. For now, the existing chairs will be retained, given the library’s budget restrictions and the acceptable condition of the chairs we currently have. The individual tables will have connectors where users can connect their laptops for both power and networking. These tables will be able to utilize the current PCs and support systems, which are only a year old.

The work is slated to begin during the summer, following the completion of the spring semester.

Map of the Manor

Newly installed on the third floor of the Folsom Library, opposite the Fixman Archives, is a framed digital reproduction of a published 1767 map of “Manor Renselaerwick.” This was the colonial estate that was owned by the Van Rensselaer family for several generations. The large tract of land was originally deeded by the Dutch West India Company in 1630 to Killian Van Rensselaer, a Dutch diamond and pearl merchant and one of the company’s original directors. Until the land was sold in the 1840s, it operated as a patroonship whereby tenant farmers rented the land from the patroon or landholder. The land lay on both sides of the Hudson River near present-day Albany and included parts of what today are Albany, Columbia, Greene, and Rensselaer counties. Stephen Van Rensselaer, who founded the Institute with Amos Eaton, was the seventh patroon of the manor.
The next time you have an opportunity to visit the Folsom Library, be sure to make your way down to the first floor to have a look at the attractive assembly of framed photographs depicting the various buildings Rensselaer’s library has resided in throughout the years. Irving Stephens, Manager of Public Services, along with assistance from Institute Archivist John Dojka and Assistant Institute Archivist Amy Rupert, selected photographs from the collections and had them scanned and enlarged. Ray Clement, owner of Clement Frame & Art Shop in downtown Troy, consulted on the project and handled the framing and installation of the photos.

For a wealth of information on the library and the Institute’s history, check out the Archives’ website at http://www.lib.rpi.edu/dept/library/html/Archives/. There you will also find the link to subscribe to Rupert’s RPI History Revealed blog.

Tanis Kreiger knows it all. She has worked in Technical Services a long time and has worn most of the hats of the department. Her title, Acquisitions and Electronic Resources Librarian, encompasses a lot of duties, including supervising the ordering and receiving of all library materials, in whatever format.

Walter Ryan, Library Associate, really dives into the nuts and bolts of maintaining the Libraries’ collections. He checks in materials and makes sure they’re properly shelved, repairs damaged books, prepares material for the bindery, and gets printed theses ready to go to the bindery and the theses indexing service.

Kathy Stebbins, Operations Specialist, handles many of the accounting functions. She also orders library materials, including those fun DVDs, handles the invoices of all orders, and does a lot of the maintenance of the acquisitions system. You can also spot her doing cataloging and withdrawal and processing the Reading Room material.

So stop in and see us sometime! Yes, we are in the basement of the library.
Masks by Heidi Story

Artist Heidi Story, who has exhibited her work in Europe, China, and the United States, will have several of her latest creations—masks in terra cotta—on display on the second floor of Folsom Library until the end of October.

Born in Vienna and raised in Salzburg, Austria, Story works mainly with clay, iron, and bronze, but she also experiments in watercolors and mixed techniques. She just finished a multimedia project, “God’s Trombones,” which will premiere at the Chapel and Cultural Center, 2125 Burdett Avenue, Troy, on Monday, April 26th at 12:30 p.m. The artist’s husband, Dr. Jonathan Story, also known as “The Singing Professor,” will sing as part of the production. Dr. Story holds the Marusi Chair of Global Business in the Lally School of Management.

An artist’s reception is scheduled for 3:00 p.m. on Monday, May 3rd on the main floor of the library. After a few words from the artist, Dr. Story will entertain us with two a cappella songs from “God’s Trombones.” Light refreshments will be served. The reception is free and open to the public.