Inaugural Carl A. Westerdahl Forum Set for October 16th

At last year’s October meeting of the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Folsom Library, the Board unanimously voted to establish The Carl A. Westerdahl Forum in honor of longtime Friend Carl Westerdahl, who passed away last year. As many of you may know, Carl served the Institute starting in 1969 as Dean of Students, subsequently as Director of Alumni and Community Relations, and later as Director of Constituent Programs. Upon retirement in 1998, he volunteered as Institute Historian and as a Board member of the Friends. Carl was passionate about history in general and Rensselaer’s history in particular. He shared his interest in Rensselaer’s history on numerous occasions, predominantly at Friends’ luncheons.

Per the mission statement, “The Carl A. Westerdahl Forum memorializes the creative contributions made by Carl A. Westerdahl (1937-2013) through programs that explore education, history, art, architecture, engineering, and science as they relate to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. In collaboration with community organizations and Rensselaer alumni, the forum presents experts who share their insights on these topics as speakers or panel members.”

According to Board member Ruth Gallagher, “In keeping with Carl’s passion for history and particularly the history of RPI, I think a focus on the history of bridges and their connection to Rensselaer is a good way to pick up from the history series that Carl orchestrated for the Friends in 2009 and 2010 (‘The Phantom Rensselaer of Yesterday,’ ‘Prominent Past Presidents’ and ‘Rensselaer’s Architects’).”

The inaugural program, which will be held on Thursday, October 16, 2014, is two-part:

From noon to 1:00 p.m., Dr. Frank Griggs ‘56, engineer, bridge restorer, historian, and authority on bridges, will be the featured speaker at a luncheon to be held in the Russell Sage Dining Hall. He, along with a panel of experts, will highlight the role Rensselaer alumni played in the growth of bridge design locally and nationwide in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Reservations will be accepted for just the talk or the talk and lunch.

An evening presentation will take place in the Center for Biotechnology and Interdisciplinary Studies Auditorium from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Dr. Griggs will address “Crossing the Hudson: Capital Region Bridges.” A reception will follow. More information regarding the noontime program and the evening presentation will be announced once the details have been finalized.

The committee planning the forum consists of Co-Chairs Meg Gallien and Rick Hartt, along with Matthew Bender, Adrienne Birchler, P. Thomas Carroll, Susan Clarke, John Dojka, Stacy Draper, Ruth Gallagher, and Peter Pedone.
Lunch & Learn Programs

The Rensselaer Retirees Forum and Friends continue to collaborate to provide a diverse program of Lunch & Learn talks. Here’s what attendees were treated to recently:

- Last September, Historian and Pittstown Historical Society trustee, retired Rensselaer professor of chemistry, and Friend Kenneth Miller spoke on “Factors Leading to the American Civil War.”

- In October, we heard Rensselaer Undergraduate Admissions staff member Janice Naylor talk about “Going the Self-Publishing Route: One Woman’s Journey.”

- November’s program brought researcher Paul Stewart to campus to enlighten us about "People of Courage, People of Hope, Seekers of Justice: The Underground Railroad Revisited."

- December saw the return of local historian and author Steve Muller, who disclosed additional findings about “Troy Iron and the USS Monitor.” Steve discovered original documents at the New York State Archives that identified the actual iron components that were made in Troy and shipped to Brooklyn to build the USS Monitor, the first ironclad warship commissioned by the US Navy during the Civil War.

- February’s program, “The Replica Ship Half Moon: Science, Commerce and Culture in 17th Century Exploration,” was to be presented by William “Chip” Reynolds, Director of the New Netherland Museum and Captain of the Replica Ship Half Moon. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the talk because of a snow storm. We hope to reschedule with Chip for later this year.

- March’s talk, “Case Studies in Acoustic Architecture,” was presented by Rensselaer alumna and Visiting Researcher in EMPAC (Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center) Zachery Belanger. This was a follow-up to the lecture he gave at EMPAC entitled “The Next Acoustic Architecture.”


- May’s program, “Photographing Trains at Night,” was presented by Rensselaer Senior Web Producer William Gill, B.S. ‘03, M.S. ‘11. Who could imagine all the considerations that go into capturing images of speeding trains in the dark?

Lunch & Learn is held the second Friday of every month (with the exception of January, June, July and August) at noon in Folsom’s Fischbach Room. Everyone is welcome. You can either bring a bagged lunch or purchase food and beverages in the Library Café. Dessert is provided. If you have any suggestions for potential speakers, please contact Adrienne Birchler (bircha@rpi.edu or 518-276-8329). We are always looking for prospective presenters.
In 1973, George F. Mahe, Jr. ‘42 established the Pauline C. and George F. Mahe Memorial Fund in honor of his deceased parents. The money was designated to be used by the Rensselaer Libraries (Folsom and Architecture) to assist them in purchasing library materials. When he died in 2010, Mahe bequeathed almost $19.5 million to continue to fund the endowment.

Mahe, who graduated from Rensselaer with a degree in chemical engineering, was employed for most of his career as a project engineer with Sandoz Pharmaceuticals in East Hanover, NJ. He died at the age of 88 leaving no spouse or children, but is survived by his niece, Elizabeth Wilson, and her husband, Kenneth, and their children. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson came to campus last October to meet with Director of the Rensselaer Libraries Bob Mayo for a tour of Folsom Library, a visit to the Archives, and a luncheon with Bob, Vice President and Chief Information Officer John Kolb, and Advancement Officer Nina Moser. The couple was also given a tour of campus and dined with President Shirley Ann Jackson at her home that evening, where a plaque in George Mahe’s honor was unveiled. The handsome plaque has been placed in a prominent spot on the second floor of Folsom Library in recognition and great appreciation of George Mahe’s generous philanthropy. A portion of the inscription reads, “Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute gratefully acknowledges his foresight and vision to ensure continued support of one of the most important resources of the Institute.”

There is also a bronze plaque on the third floor honoring Mahe’s parents. It was placed there many years ago in response to the initial endowment in their memory back in 1973.
Amazing Images of Trains at Night

This past May's Lunch & Learn presenter, William Gill B.S. '03, M.S. '11, has hung eight stunning photographs that he's taken of trains at night. They're on Folsom Library's second floor "gallery wall" and will be on display for the summer.

Many of his scenes were taken along the Delaware and Hudson Railway, which is the railroad that Will's great-grandfather worked on. It was also the first freight railroad where Will was able to get an up-close view of trains as they rolled on by.

Will uses strobe photography to capture his images of trains at night. It usually takes him an hour or more to position the lights. He takes great care in setting them up because he gets only one chance to take the perfect picture of a traveling train.

Two of the images displayed were taken in Benson Landing and West Rutland, VT. The others were captured in Troy, Cohoes, Fort Edward, Hadley, and Thurman, NY. The 16" X 20" framed and matted photos can be purchased for $160 each.

Above is a particularly great shot, which shows a colorful string of cars rolling past Grabowski's Farm in West Rutland, VT. The line is owned by the Clarendon and Pittsford Railway and runs from Whitehall, NY, to Rutland. The barns and cars really stand out against the black of night.

To view more of Will's exceptional work, see ihearttrains.us or check out his postings at https://www.facebook.com/TrainsAtNight.
**Board Update**

We say good-bye to Board member Cynthia Smith and thank her for her many years of service, which included a two-year term as Chair. Cynthia is Assistant Dean of Students, Pipeline Initiatives and Partnerships, and is credited with conceiving many well-attended programs for the Friends.

Additionally, the Board unanimously voted the appointment of two gentlemen who are familiar faces in the Library—Professor Emeritus Kenneth J. Miller (Chemistry) and former Rensselaer librarian and Manager of Public Services Irving Stephens. They will serve as members of the Board until April 2016. Ken presented two Lunch & Learn programs in the past, and we’re looking forward to another one of his interesting talks in the coming months.

**Loss of a Friend**

Dr. Sydney Ross, longtime Friend and a previous Director on the Board of Friends of the Folsom Library, passed away last December. Dr. Ross, a former Professor of Colloid Science at Rensselaer, began teaching chemistry at the Institute in 1948 and retired as an Emeritus Professor of Physical Chemistry in 1994 after a long and distinguished career. Dr. Ross was a true lover of books—his house in Troy was filled with them. There is a plaque in Folsom Library that the Friends erected in his honor. It reads: “Professor Sydney Ross, scholar, scientist, teacher, bibliophile extraordinaire and generous benefactor. April 1997.”

**Open House Preparations Under Way**

The Rensselaer Libraries is gearing up for an open house in Folsom Library to welcome incoming and new students to the Institute. On Friday, August 22, from noon to 12:00 p.m., students are invited to come in for a tour and an opportunity to meet staff and ask questions. They’ll also have a chance to enter a raffle to win some exciting prizes.

The Exhibits and Events Committee has been seeking gift cards and items from local merchants. They’ve also been soliciting items from companies with whom the libraries do business for the goodie bags given to each student who stops in.

As we’ve done for the past several years, we’ll have a make-your-own sundae bar available on the first floor, with Rensselaer Libraries Director Bob Mayo acting as chief scooper. We’re hoping many of the nearly 1,400 new students will check us out. They may be surprised to find out all we have to offer!

**Knowledge Imaging Center**

With the addition of a new scanner behind the Service Desk used for interlibrary loan purposes, the replaced scanner has found a new home in the Library. It’s been repurposed to provide scanning for anyone on campus in the Knowledge Imaging Center (KIC), which is located in the room at the northwest end of the second (main) floor, adjacent to the DVD area.

The KIC scanner can be used to scan pages from books, journals, or magazines, and the produced files can be emailed or saved on a USB drive. A continuously running video provides a brief description of how to use the scanner, and every function is performed using a touch screen. The system is convenient, easy to use, and produces clear color or black and white images quickly. And best of all—it’s a free service!
A university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library.

— Shelby Foote, American historian and novelist, 1916-2005