Grad Students Sit Down With Rare Books Online and In Person. Sparks Fly.

Discovered: A Key Medieval Babylonian Talmudic Text, Hiding in Plain Sight.

ISAW Opens a Wider Window on The Ancient World, From Egypt To Northern China.
A PhD candidate in music has gathered a vast amount of experimental data in a search for the most effective method of teaching tone-deaf students. A graduate student in English wants to digitize the work of Hart Crane and create an online exhibition. A PhD candidate in sociology wants to extract data from the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System. Throughout NYU, scholars are integrating data and digital tools into their research, teaching, and publishing. They find the expertise they need from one of several groups within the Libraries’ Specialized Research Services. One entry point is the Digital Scholarship Services (DSS) team led by Jennifer Vinopal, librarian for digital scholarship initiatives.

The request DSS hears most often is: How do I build a website? In fact, says Vinopal, DSS was established in 2013 expressly to assist the growing number of scholars seeking to publish online. Some need a no-frills site; others, such as the faculty member planning a digital exhibition on the history of film in Niger, need more. “The subject is very complex,” says team member Zach Coble, digital scholarship specialist, “and the site needs to present it in a non-linear, non-logocentric way.”

DSS is also helping to create a digital platform for a long term study of street food vendors sponsored by food studies scholars at Steinhardt with faculty from New York, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai, and the University of Toronto. DSS will help design innovative ways to publish data on migrations, urban culture, policy, and other issues, with an eye toward inspiring other cities to join the study.

The music scholar and the sociology student above will be referred to the Data Services team for help in organizing and visualizing big data. The team also helps researchers use geographic information systems (GIS). Recent projects mapped historical mortgage lending practices in Brooklyn, relationships between neighborhood schools and various socioeconomic factors, and childhood obesity.

Digital space is the second most frequent DSS client request. DSS supports the Faculty Digital Archive, used to share and preserve articles, white papers, and research data, and provides access to a variety of other library-supported repositories as well. For scholars preparing to publish, DSS team member April Hathcock, a lawyer with expertise in intellectual property, will advise on issues of fair use and copyright.

DSS is at the center of a growing constellation of cutting-edge digital services supporting the full range of research at NYU—a world-changing enterprise.
Recently, Professor Juliet Fleming sat amid the graduate students in her English and American Literature course and watched them pore over rare books as others peered at lap-tops. Periodically, the students were signaled to switch places. Before long, everyone had had a five minute encounter with such volumes as the Kelmscott Chaucer (1896) in their original and digital form. What did they notice? “The Chaucer is huge!” someone observed. “I would never have known that from the digital version.” Someone else mentioned the interesting marginalia in the Wollstonecraft—but only in the “real” one.

The Rare Books Speed Dating session, held in Fales Library, was designed (and enticingly named) by Charlotte Priddle, librarian for printed books, and Amanda Watson, librarian for English and comparative literature. “Students become aware that when they pull up a book online, they’re looking at a mediated object,” says Watson. “The electronic version has many uses, but it can’t tell the whole story.” Professor Fleming, who directs the MA program in English, sees another advantage to the encounter. “When they begin, students often have foreshortened literary ambitions,” she says. “They want to be modernists. Then they see the old books and find them very alluring. They begin to realize that they can apply their ideas and methods to historical material as well.” Above: Students with the Kelmscott Chaucer.

A Message from the Dean

Among the many pleasures of being part of NYU Libraries is to be in the midst of rapidly evolving modes of scholarly and creative work. In this issue, we feature the developing suite of Digital Scholarship Services that are enabling NYU faculty and graduate students to explore new avenues of research, teaching, and sharing their work. DSS comprises a wide spectrum of expertise. Among our New Faces, for example, are two librarians with very different backgrounds—humanities and computer science—in new positions designed to support researchers working with digital data.

Bobst Library is evolving, too. We are in the intense design stage for our digital age Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media, the heart of next summer’s seventh floor renovation. Based on the newest technology, the AFC will have an immersion room designed to enable listeners to fully appreciate contemporary music composed for multi-channel, surround-sound systems.

As we plan the next enhancement of our extraordinary Bobst Library, we remember with deepest gratitude our longtime, generous supporter, Mamdouha Bobst, who passed away in September. Our most fitting tribute to Mrs. Bobst, unwavering champion of our work, is to ensure that Bobst Library will continue to be beautiful, inspiring, and well used in every way.
About 1605, in Nuremberg, a bookbinder used pasteboard to fashion covers for a set of eighteen songbooks to be sent to a chapel in Prague. He then covered the pasteboard, front and back, with old leaves of parchment he had on hand. The scrap bore writing from long ago—the Middle Ages, in fact. Nonetheless it was still sturdy—parchment is virtually indestructible—and ideal to repurpose as covers for a workaday set of books. Bookbinders did it all the time. No one would care about the ancient writing on it. Until four centuries later, when it caused something of a sensation.

Today the songbooks, known as the Sabbateni Collection, belong to Fales Library and support study in music history. Recently, a musicologist noticed that the text on three of the books was Hebrew, not Latin like the others. He brought them to the attention of scholars in Judaic studies, who excitedly informed Marvin Taylor, head of Fales Library, that the “scrap” book covers were in fact fragments of Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Temurah. The scholars asked Taylor to have the covers removed from the three bindings so they could be thoroughly studied. “We were being asked to reveal historical evidence by destroying other historical evidence,” says Taylor. “It was a difficult decision.”

But the scholars’ argument was compelling. Lawrence H. Schiffman, Judge Abraham Lieberman Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, explains, “These fragments display unique readings and will contribute to the ongoing scholarly effort to explain the special character of this tractate and to establish its correct text. Among the cataloged fragments of this text in other collections are four that were removed from book bindings like ours, and our first task will be to see if any of these are from the same manuscript.”

The German bookbinder was very much on the minds of conservators Laura McCann and Anne Hillam this fall when they set the three songbooks on their workbench and contemplated undoing his work. Normally, they mend rare books. Hillam cautiously began disbinding one of the books, delaminating the parchment leaf from the board using a solution of ethanol and deionized water. She had already tested the solution under a microscope to confirm that it would not destabilize the ink, which was iron gall, derived from a complex natural process involving iron salts and growths formed on oak trees in response to gall-wasp larva. “Iron gall ink etches the parchment,” Hillam says. “It replaced carbon ink, which sits on the surface and can be erased.”

Hillam was soon able to see that the verso—the reverse side—also bore Hebrew writing. Working with infinite patience, she needed about 22 hours per volume. Once removed, the precious parchment leaves were photographed for study by Professor Schiffman and others, and the results will soon be published. The leaves now rest in custom built boxes. The songbooks themselves will be left as is, out of respect for work honorably done 400 years ago.

Above: Conservation photographs of a 17th century songbook with detail from its medieval, Hebrew-lettered binding.
With *Triple Canopy*, Fales Remembers the Future

“With its extensive collection of downtown ephemera, Fales protects the collective memory of New York’s experimentalist past—by partnering with *Triple Canopy*, it remembers the future.” The quote is from Andrea Scott, writing in the September 15, 2015 issue of *The New Yorker* about Fales Library acquiring the archive of *Triple Canopy*, a highly regarded digital magazine of arts and culture founded in 2007. Adding to its born digital collections, Fales Library will make the archive available for research and exhibition, and Digital Library Technology Services will collaborate with *Triple Canopy* to develop open-source tools and improved standards for born digital preservation.

Tamiment is the Clear Choice for *The Nation*

Tamiment Library has acquired the modern records of *The Nation*, the oldest continuously published magazine in the United States and a standard bearer for the intellectual left. Dating largely from 1978, the archive also includes some Cold War-era papers from the 1950s. “As the epicenter of scholarly materials relating to American progressive politics, Tamiment Library was a wonderfully clear choice for housing *The Nation*’s archives,” said Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor and publisher of the magazine.

Punk + Reggae = Vivien Goldman’s Collection

In London in the early 1970’s, a surprising cross-pollination occurred between two disparate musical cultures: punk and reggae. Vivien Goldman documented the scene for *Melody Maker* and other papers, then went on to make her own post-punk music and write five books, two of them on her friend Bob Marley, the reggae legend. Along the way she collected 2,000 recordings, most of them vinyl 45’s.

The Vivien Goldman Punk and Reggae Collection is now at Fales Library, along with Goldman’s papers. They document the crossover genre that Marley called Punky Reggae Party. “That mashup marks the dawn of the multicultural influence so fundamental to pop and rock today,” says Goldman, an instructor in the Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music at NYU Tisch. “It is a virtually unexplored area of American scholarship. By placing my papers at NYU, I hope to help develop an awareness and understanding of the genre’s message of unity and community.” The Goldman Collection also includes other contemporary genres, including disco, Afrobeat, funk, soul, jazz, and salsa.

Tote An Ode to Bobst

“A lot of students spend nearly all their non-classroom time in Bobst Library,” says Larissa Horn, SPS ’15. “I got to thinking how nice it would be to have a memento of it after we graduated.” One May evening in 2014, as a junior in the Hotel and Tourism program with a concentration in marketing, she was studying in the library when inspiration struck. Later that month, Horn launched *Ode to Elmer*: a tote bag sporting Bobst Library’s distinctive atrium floor pattern. Now it is selling briskly for about $17 at ode-to.com and the NYU bookstore.

Requested: Martin Wong

Martin Wong: Human Instamatic at the Bronx Museum of the Arts (through February 14) is the first retrospective of the work of this American artist who died at 53 in 1999. The show, which has drawn major media attention, reflects a trend in museums to display not just the work of artists, but also archival materials relating to them. For Human Instamatic, the Bronx Museum borrowed 23 items from Fales Library’s Downtown Collection, which holds Martin Wong’s papers. Participant, Inc. in the East Village borrowed 122 items for a companion show. Fales Library lends scores of items every year to museums around the world. Skyline photo collage from the Martin Wong Papers.
New Faces

VICKY STEEVES
LIBRARIAN FOR RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT AND REPRODUCIBILITY

Formerly: National Digital Stewardship Resident, American Museum of Natural History, NYC
Education: MLIS and BS, Computer Science & Information Technology, Simmons College, Boston

Working jointly with Data Services and the Center for Data Science, I help integrate data management into the research workflow to create easily reproducible and shareable data and experiments. By building a culture of data stewardship, NYU scientists can make more efficient use of both their data and others.

RACHEL SEARCY
ACCESSIONING ARCHIVIST, ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

Formerly: Archivist, Archives of Irish America, Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives
Education: MA, History, and MLIS, Archives Management Concentration, Simmons College, Boston; BA, English and History, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

I develop and oversee our accessioning program. The initial work we do when we take in archival collections sets the tone for how the collection will be cared for and stewarded going forward. We experiment with emerging tools, implement new systems, and integrate born-digital materials into our workflows, aiming to better manage our holdings and make them fully accessible.

NICHOLAS WOLF
RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT LIBRARIAN

Formerly: Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow, FAS
Education: PhD, History, University of Wisconsin-Madison; MA and BA, History, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA

We need to develop best practices in order to meet the growing need among researchers for data collection, analysis, preservation, and publication. To that end, I’m fostering collaboration among faculty, students, and librarians. I also help researchers devise detailed, long term data curation plans, not only to sustain their projects, but also because, increasingly, they are required in federal grant applications.

WEATHERLY STEPHAN
LIBRARIAN FOR ARCHIVAL ARRANGEMENT & DESCRIPTION

Formerly: Manuscripts Specialist, New York Public Library
Education: MLIS, Rutgers; MA, Literature, and BA, English and History, University of Louisiana.

As part of the new Archival Collections Management unit, I’m working to establish a more unified arrangement and description program for the extremely varied content, in all formats, of our special collections. When we’re done, documents such as a contemporary artist’s digital video files will be just as discoverable with our online search tools as a handwritten letter from George Washington.
David Ratzan, head librarian of the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW), has announced a redesign and expansion of the Ancient World Digital Library (AWDL) online portal. The new site offers improved presentation, searching, and downloading of a growing collection of scholarship. AWDL is a collaboration between ISAW and the Libraries’ Digital Library Technology Services, begun in 2010. Its mission is to develop, curate, and sustain a digital collection of important research materials for the use of NYU and the general scholarly community, with a special focus on the interdisciplinary research from the Mediterranean to Northern China pursued at ISAW.

dlib.nyu.edu/ancientworld/

**Positive/Negative**

The response to the AIDS epidemic in its early years ranged from callous to compassionate. The Fales Library exhibition positive/negative: HIV/AIDS, on view through January 15, examines both faces of that response in politics, education, religion, and the arts. The show includes a 1994 work by Hunter Reynolds, Patina Du Prey’s Memorial Dress, a ball gown printed with 25,000 names of AIDS victims and worn by Reynolds as he called “a transgendered figure of witness and hope.”

**Go Ask Alice**

*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Macmillan, 1865) was published 150 years ago, and Fales Library is celebrating with an exhibition drawn from its Lewis Carroll collections, among the largest in the world. Fun and fanciful items from the Jon Lindseth Collection of Alice in Popular Culture show how deeply embedded in our imaginations Alice truly is. Remember Mad Hatter tea sets? Queen of Hearts playing cards? Be reminded at Go Ask Alice, on view in the main floor gallery of Bobst Library through January.

**GIOIA STEVENS**

**PROJECT AND PRODUCTION CATALOGER, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

Formerly: Metadata Librarian, CUNY Graduate Center  
Education: MLIS, Pratt Institute; BA, Comparative Literature, Brown University

My role is to help incorporate print materials into our special collections and make them discoverable, and to improve communications among the various departments involved—which span Bobst Library and the globe. I am working on a collection of cookbooks that belong to Fales Library and have just been treated in our conservation department; several Kurdish translations of Shakespeare from the NYU Abu Dhabi library; and a 19th century anarchist serial from Tamiment Library.

**MELISSA BEUOY**

**LIBRARIAN FOR EDUCATION, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT & FOOD STUDIES**

Formerly: Reference and Instructional Technology Librarian, Long Island University, Brooklyn  
Education: MA, International Educational Development, Teachers College, Columbia University; MLIS, School of Library & Information Science, San Jose State University; BA, English, UC Berkeley

I support student and faculty research and collection development in the very wide range of specializations within two major fields at NYU, food studies and education. Research here is having a huge impact on education, from preschool through college; and on food studies, from nutrition to food systems. I’m excited to be helping faculty and graduate students do globally important, cutting edge work.
Until 1973, NYU did not have a central library. A major gift from Elmer Holmes Bobst and his wife, Mamdouha, helped enable the university to bring its various collections together in a new Philip Johnson building on Washington Square. Mrs. Bobst, who passed away in September, was passionate about giving NYU a beautiful, elegant space to inspire creativity and insight. She remained dedicated to the Elmer Holmes Bobst Library all her life, generously supporting renovations that are transforming its spaces to enhance today’s research and study modes. As Honorary Curator, Mrs. Bobst helped the library build collections and also present them to the public in the Mamdouha S. Bobst Gallery, which she endowed. Mrs. Bobst was a specialist in public health and a member of the Lebanese delegation to the United Nations, among a host of other distinctions. The Libraries and NYU are among the many who mourn her passing. Above: Mr. and Mrs. Bobst at the Bobst Library construction site circa 1972.