Information literacy and developing students’ critical thinking skills are a high priority at Monmouth University. The Monmouth University Library established Library Research Awards in 2008 to recognize students who demonstrate skill and creativity in the application of library and information resources to research papers completed in fulfillment of a course requirement.

Graduate student Kiera Doherty and undergraduate student Cynthia Coffey have been selected to receive the 2013 awards. Both award winners made extensive use of library resources and services, identified authoritative websites, demonstrated the ability to select, evaluate and synthesize the information collected, and demonstrated personal learning and development of research skills as they completed their projects.

Kiera’s research paper, “Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese’s Uncertainty Reduction Theory: An Examination of Theory and Application to Paul Schrader’s Film The Comfort of Strangers” was written for her fall 2012 Communication Theory class. The project was nominated for the award by Communication faculty member Dr. Marina Vujnovic. Kiera’s paper reviews and evaluates the Uncertainty Reduction Theory (1975), an expansion of the theory, and an application of the theory to relationships in the movie The Comfort of Strangers. In her award application essay Kiera explained her research process including the use of a wide variety of resources, such as microfilm, books, multiple research databases, and media, as well as an evaluation of the materials collected to select the best resources to incorporate into her paper.

Cynthia’s research paper, “Visuals of the Vietnam War: Impact of Television on Public Support”, was written for her Research Seminar in History in the fall of 2012. It was nominated by Dr. Maureen Dorment, Department of History and Anthropology. Cynthia’s paper examines how televised coverage of the war had caused public support to drop dramatically by the time troops were withdrawn from Vietnam. In her essay, Cynthia explains that “research is an ever-evolving process that allows for continual learning. Each search brings challenges including finding the best source for the particular evidence, the precise keywords which will locate the most appropriate sources, especially online, and the decisions in synthesizing the information for the support of the thesis.”

The $250 awards, sponsored by the Monmouth University Library Association, will be presented at the May 3, 2013 Student Award Ceremony. Past winners of the award include Alison Dooley and Katelyn Orr (2008), Neva Pontoriero and Nicole Stevens (2009), Alexis Anderson and Suzanne Anastasio (2010), Kimberly Morté and Kathleen Cook (2011), and Kristina Tipps and Danielle Darpino (2012).
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Library Dean Bids Farewell

Ravindra N. Sharma is current dean of Monmouth University Library. An active professional, he has won numerous awards, grants, and honors, including the Academic/Research 2005 Librarian of the Year Award from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)/ALA. Known as the “Hall of Fame,” this award is considered the highest honor that the profession can bestow. Earlier, in 1997, he had received the Humphry/OCLC/Forest Press Award from the American Library Association (ALA), for his significant achievements and contributions to international librarianship. He was also honored by the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association in 2010 for his outstanding service to and promotion of Asian/Pacific American Communities and recognized also by the Asian/African and Middle Eastern Section (AAMES) of ACRL for his distinguished service to the Section (2011).

He is the author/editor of 13 books and over 260 articles, book chapters, editorials, interviews, conference reports, and book reviews in various Asian, European, Latin American and American journals. Most recently, he published Libraries in the Early 21st Century: An International Perspective (2012). He was editor of Library Times International from 1984 to 2010 and has served on the editorial boards of several books and journals. He has guided the dissertations of doctoral candidates and has served as an external examiner for Ph.D. dissertations for various universities.

Dean Sharma has served on over 35 committees of the American Library Association, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), and the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA). He has chaired many committees, including the International Relations Committee, the Asian, African, and Middle Eastern Section (AAMES) of ACRL, the Humphry/OCLC/Forest Press Award Committee, and the Near East and South Asia Committee, both Subcommittees of the International Relations Committee of ALA. Sharma served as President of the Asian/Pacific American Librarian Association (APALA), has organized many conferences, and has presented over 35 papers, including keynote addresses at national and international conferences, including ALA, ACRL, and IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations).


Sharma was director of the library at West Virginia State University, director of the library at the University of Evansville, Indiana, head librarian at Penn State University-Beaver Campus, assistant director of Public Services and Collection Development at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, and reference librarian at Colgate University. He has a bachelor’s degree (Honors) and MA in history from the University of Delhi, India, a Master’s degree in Library and Information Science from the University of North Texas, and a Ph.D from the State University of New York, Buffalo. He has visited Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East on speaking and library assignments.

Dr. Sharma will end his seven-plus years of service as dean of the Monmouth University Library on June 30, 2013. During his tenure, despite tight budgets and a shrinking pool of librarians, the library made consistent progress in a number of areas. For example, the library has added soft seating and more computers, as well as group study and faculty research rooms. The library now offers smart phone access; a new web site was designed and implemented. Superior student research is recognized by way of the library’s student research awards. A special collection, including a rare books collection, and a media collection are now available to the University community. Dean Sharma believes that these and several other improvements, in conjunction with his lengthy service, will help attract high-caliber candidates for the deanship of the library.
Library Website Update

On January 14, 2013 the Monmouth University Library launched the newest version of its website for the Spring 2013 semester. The new site is the result of several beta versions that underwent rigorous testing over the past several months and incorporate feedback from both faculty and students.

Some of the highlights include incorporated chat reference, improved information architecture, and a fully responsive design.

Chat reference is in a pilot period and is available on:

- Monday 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM and 2:00 – 5:00 PM
- Tuesday 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
- Wednesday 3:00 – 9:00 PM
- Thursday 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Students and faculty will now be able to direct their questions to a librarian right from their browser by using the Ask Us a Question button in the bottom right corner of the site.

The information architecture, the organization of links on the site, is arranged in four basic categories. The first, FIND, is for locating materials. Here students and faculty will find links to the catalog, e reserves, library databases, journals, archives, special collections, etc. The next category is GET HELP, where students and faculty can find resources for assistance with locating and using library materials. The SERVICES category contains information on the various services offered by the library. Lastly, the ABOUT category includes important information about the library—its staff, location, hours, news and history.

One of the most exciting features of the site is its use of responsive design. Responsive design adapts to various screen sites for fully optimized viewing on any device, regardless of size. This feature creates one overall experience across all platforms, as opposed to a fragmented and less than fully functional mobile version. To view the responsive layout in action, resize your browser window or open the page up in a tablet or mobile phone. You will see a fluid layout that adjusts to the window in which it is viewed.

Feedback collected this semester will be applied to the overall design and user experience over the coming months to ensure we provide a positive overall experience. Feedback collected thus far indicates that students find the new design and information architecture intuitive and easier to use. Please share your thoughts with us; email your feedback to mdoyle@monmouth.edu.

Bridging Cultures Bookshelf: Muslim Journeys

The Monmouth University Library has been selected to receive the Bridging Cultures Bookshelf: Muslim Journeys from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the American Library Association (ALA). The program aims to familiarize public audiences in the United States with the people, places, history, faith and cultures of Muslims in the United States and around the world.

The resources comprising the Bookshelf were recommended, reviewed, and selected by distinguished scholars in the fields of anthropology, world history, religious studies, interfaith dialogue, the history of art and architecture, and world literature, as well as interdisciplinary fields such as Middle East studies, Southeast Asian studies, African studies, and Islamic studies.

The collection of 25 books and 3 films is built on 5 major theme areas: American Stories, Connected Histories, Literary Reflections, Pathways of Faith, and Points of View. Monmouth offers several courses in western civilization, literature, religion, and art, for which books from this collection could be utilized for research papers. All materials are part of the library’s circulating collection. Additional information on the collection is highlighted in a special research guide at: http://guides.monmouth.edu/muslim
Librarian and Staff Happenings

Susan Bucks, Matthew Doyle, Eleonora Dubicki, George Germek, MaryBeth Meszaros, and Beatrice Priestly attended the 14th annual VALE Users Conference, January 4, 2013, Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ.

Mathew Doyle attended the Computers in Libraries Conference, April 8th through April 11, 2013, Washington, DC.

Associate Librarian, Eleonora Dubicki participated in a panel discussion, “Using Faculty Perspectives on Information Literacy to Build Students’ Research Skills,” at the Virtual Academic Library Environment (VALE) Conference, January 4, 2013, in Piscataway, NJ.

2014 MU Library Research Awards:

Submission Deadline: Friday, March 3, 2014

Eligibility: Papers written during the spring, summer or fall 2013 semesters

Award Categories: Undergraduate and Graduate, $250 each.

Funding for the awards is generously provided by the Monmouth University Library Association.

For further information, contact Eleonora Dubicki: edubicki@monmouth.edu

EXTENDED LIBRARY HOURS
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