Waldo Hosts Nobel Winners!

By Susan Steuer, Head, Special Collections

The University Libraries was fortunate to host, in late 2006, an exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Bertha von Suttner in 1905, and the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations in 1945. The exhibition was on display from October 18 through December 17, 2006, on the first floor of Waldo Library. The substance of the exhibit, which was designed as a tool for researchers and the general public, can be viewed on a website, http://www.indiana.edu/~nobel/index.html, with digitized original documents from the League of Nations Photo Archive and the United Nations Library in Geneva. The Waldo exhibit opened on October 18, 2006 in the Meader Rare Book Room at 3:30 p.m. with presentations from Mr. Jian Liu, Dr. Robert Goehlert and Dr. Kenneth Steuer, who described the conception, rationale and ongoing development of the project. The exhibition accompanied by bookmarks with website information and printed bibliographies about the Nobel Peace Prize for those interested in delving further into the topic.

The exhibition highlights thirty-nine laureates—people and institutions—who have a strong link with the pre-World War I peace movement, the League of Nations, and the United Nations. The exhibit is arranged on forty-five freestanding panels, each six feet tall. Each panel celebrates a laureate and includes a photo, quotation, and short biographical sketch. Among the laureates featured are von Suttner, who, in 1905, became the first woman to receive the prize; U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who led the United States delegation to the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference; Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen, who won the peace prize in 1922 for his humanitarian work with refugees; and current U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001. The display of the laureates’ panels groups the individuals by (1) those affiliated with the early peace movements, (2) individuals connected to the League of Nations, and (3) statesmen involved in the development of the United Nations. The laureate panels in each of the three categories are placed in chronological order according to when the individual or organization was awarded the Peace Prize.

This unique exhibition grew out of an earlier collaborative project between the League of Nations Archives and Indiana University. Although the League of Nations ceased to exist in 1946, its archives and historical collections survive as invaluable resources for historical research. The Archives, created in 1957 in Geneva, include official records as well as portraits, paintings, caricatures, original artworks, and unique objects d’art. While the Archives have been maintained since 1957, funding has been marginal, and many archivists and librarians felt that the collection was underutilized and needed further promotion. In June 2000, Robert Goehlert, a librarian at Indiana University’s Wells Library, led a research team, including fellow librarians Jian Liu and Kris Bell, to the League of Nations Archives. Their goal was to establish a digital library project dedicated to digitizing one of the League of Nations Archives’ photograph collections. In the summer of 2001, Goehlert and Liu returned to Geneva to continue work on the project. This time, they were accompanied by Fenton Martin, Kenneth Steuer, and Sarah Hammill. Over a six-week period, the materials and metadata for the project were compiled. This resulted in the development of the League of Nations Photo Archive, http://www.indiana.edu/~league/intro.htm, which includes photos arranged in the following categories: Personalities, Assemblies, Councils, Delegations, Commissions, Conferences, the Secretariat, the Permanent Court of International Justice, the Bureau International du Travail, and Miscellaneous Photos. The originals of the photos are held with the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) Library, League of Nations Archives Sub-Unit. The photo archive website, maintained through Indiana University, also includes reference tools to help users contextualize the materials, including a bibliography of English-language works about the League, a timeline of events during the interwar period, a research guide to other primary sources about League activities and members, and links to other relevant sites.

The resulting website exceeded the expectations of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and the Geneva archivists were eager to participate in another project with the librarians at Indiana. Blandine Blukacz-Louisfert, Chief of the League of Nations Archives at that time, approached Goehlert, Steuer, and Liu with the idea of commemorating the anniversary of the Peace Prize. As a result, plans were made for another team to go to Geneva. This team included two librarians, a designer, three library school students, and a historian, Ken Steuer, who selected the materials for the exhibit and accompanying website, and provided the metadata for the project. The design and content development for the panels were completed at Indiana University during Fall 2005, after which the material was submitted to the relevant UN agencies for final approval. The final panel production took an additional six weeks. The exhibition was displayed at Wells Library at Indiana University and the Indiana State Library prior to being installed at Western Michigan University in late 2006. A duplicate set of panels was prepared in Geneva and displayed at the United Nations Library there, also in 2006. This significant public viewing will be an unveiling of the exhibition in 2007 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City.

Global exhibitions, such as the Nobel Peace Prize winners, offer the University Libraries the opportunity to enrich the educational experience of students by exposing them to material outside the classroom that enhances their education and complements their studies, regardless of specialization. The exhibits also represent the new technologies and techniques that libraries are using to promote and interpret their collections across disciplines and institutions. The creation of websites that digitize the holdings of international organizations makes unique materials accessible to researchers and students from around the world. Such projects also promote the development of new institutional links between universities and international agencies in innovative ways. During their visit to open the exhibition, Goehlert, Steuer, and Liu met with WMU’s own Digitization Center.
Celebrating Handmade Books, Paper, and Printing: An Exhibition

January 22 — March 16, 2007

Waldo Library

Atrium Entrance and Third Floor

Papers to be presented in conjunction with the exhibition are "Papermaking—Ancient Craft: New Art" by Eve Reid and "How I Made a Medieval Manuscript" by Pamela Rups.

For further information about times and places, call (269) 387-5221.

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staff. They discussed the development and funding of digital projects and best practices in working with research and teaching faculty to develop strong projects. In collaboration with scholars at Western Michigan University, the faculty and staff of the Libraries hope to create new educational and research tools from our own collections to increase awareness and access to the unique items held here, explain their significance, and provide information and inspiration to the public as well as students and academic researchers.

[Special thanks to Robert Goehlert and Kenneth Steuer for additional material.]  

[Susan M.B. Steuer began her service as head of the Special Collections unit in the University Libraries in August, 2006. She holds a B.A., from the University of Missouri-Columbia, a M.L.S. from Indiana University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Sue brings to her faculty position significant experience and research in medieval studies, history, English, and journalism. She can be found in the Rare Book Room area on the third floor of Waldo Library, 387-5221.]