
Friends of the Smith College Libraries

February 2024 News

Dear Friends,

It's shivery cold in Northampton at this time of year but it's always warm inside Smith's libraries. We're delighted to announce that Professor Kiki Smith '71 will be our guest speaker in April at an event sponsored by the Oculus Society. Professor Smith will discuss her work with the College's extraordinary collection of historic costumes. Details are below as are stories about knitting in Josten and Hillyer, expanding the use of technology in Smith's classrooms, and the Friends' own Executive Committee member Liisa Rogers '82's search for information about her Class of 1920 grandmother who became a staff librarian in Neilson in 1943. And did you know that the hardworking staff in Special Collections retrieved almost 9,000 items for use on campus last year? Read on to learn about exhibits, programs and events at the Libraries, and discover the intellectual heart of the Smith campus.

More snowy scenes around Neilson - and this [video](#), captured by Samm Smith

Rally Day

Left to right from top: Medalists, Cheryl Brown Wattley '75, Brenda Ekwurzel '85, Tomi-Ann Roberts '85 and Sarah Belal '01; Susan Fliss greets medalists in Neilson; and Rally Day joy 2024. Photos by Shana Sureck & Samm Smith..

Congratulations to this year's Smith Medalists, Cheryl Brown Wattley '75, Brenda Ekwurzel '85, Tomi-Ann Roberts '85 and Sarah Belal '01. Read all about [Rally Day traditions](#) and enjoy a photo gallery documenting over 100 years of celebrations, courtesy of the Smith College Archives.

Maya Angelou speaks after receiving an Honorary Degree at Rally Day in 1975; photo courtesy of Smith College Archives.

Spring Events - Note these Dates

Kiki Smith '71 and her book, "Real Clothes, Real Lives: 200 Years of What Women Wore."

 Kiki Smith and her book, *Real Clothes, Real People*

Behind the Seams: Noticing Lives in the Details of Old Clothes

Wednesday, April 3, Neilson Browsing Room, 4:30 p.m. and online.

Professor of Theatre [Kiki Smith](#) '71 will discuss the work of preserving and teaching with primary source materials that happen to be items of clothing. She established, and has curated, the Smith College Historic Clothing Collection, which includes over 4,000 items of clothing from the early 1800s to the present day. Her recent groundbreaking book, *Real Clothes, Real Lives: 200 Years of What Women Wore*, provides fascinating insights into women's lives and their evolving roles at home and in the workplace. This event is presented by the Friends of the Libraries Oculus Society.

Draft Notation, courtesy of Jen Bervin

2024 Enid Mark Lecture in Contemporary Book Arts and Poetry: Draft Notations

Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 4:30pm, Neilson Browsing Room.

Visual artist and poet [Jen Bervin](#) discusses her research-driven, multidisciplinary practice—weaving together art and poetry in situated poetics and entangled relationships between text and textiles. She will share a range of projects, including: *Silk Poems*, a poem written nanoscale in the form of a silk biosensor with Tufts University's Silklab; *River*, a 230-foot curvilinear hand sewn scale model of the Mississippi; and a constellation of ongoing works related to Emily Dickinson's manuscripts and material histories. Hosted by Smith College Special Collections in collaboration with the English Department and the Poetry Center. A reception will follow in the Boutelle-Day Poetry Center, Wright Hall.

Digital Pedagogy Showcase

Photo of the Digital Pedagogy Showcase by Mary Irwin

On February 2, faculty and staff gathered in the Browsing Room, eager to learn about the experiences of this year's Digital Pedagogy Fellows. The program provides a professional learning experience for faculty seeking to incorporate technology into their teaching and create innovative digital scholarship with their students.

The 2023 fellows, Darcy Buerkle, History; Susanne Fuchs, German and Italian; Simone Gugliotta, Education & Child Study/Spanish & Portuguese; Mary Pena, Anthropology; Christiane Métral, French; and Irhe Sohn, East Asian Languages & Culture, spoke of their learning collaborations with Learning Research and Technology (LRT) staff during the fall semester. Attendees moved from table to table to see samples of student work and hear in more detail about the podcasts, digital narratives, interactive maps, and course-specific websites that were produced. Associate Director of LRT Travis Grandy played host and fielded questions. This ongoing program is funded by the Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) with support from LRT.

A Legacy of Librarianship in Neilson Library

Left: Virginia Thompson Rogers 1920, and above: Liisa Honkalehto Rogers with Jean Ferguson in the Gloria Steinem '56 Special Collections Reading Room.

By Liisa Honkalehto Rogers, AB '82, MSW '85

My grandmother, Virginia Thompson Rogers 1920 was, like many Smithies, ahead of her time. During the Great Depression, she pursued a Masters in Library Science degree and moved her family to Northampton to become Head of Circulation in Neilson in 1943. In 1951 she was promoted to Assistant Librarian, and she retired in 1965. She was a smart, funny, and hard working woman who supported her husband and two daughters, and instilled in all of us a love of lifelong learning.

To honor Virginia and my mother, Corinne Rogers Honkalehto '50 (also a librarian), I began directing my Smith donations to the Friends of the Smith College Libraries in 2015, and later to the Oculus Society. I became curious to know if there was any trace of my grandmother's work in today's Neilson Library. [Read about Liisa's quest.](#)

Special Collections News

Valentine's Day photos in Special Collections by Samm Smith

Special Connections in Special Collections

More than 450 Smithies celebrated Valentine's Day with Special Collections at an event featuring student-curated exhibits of sweet, romantic and sexy materials, button-making, crafts and photography. A selection of popular items remains on display on the 3rd floor of Neilson through March. More photos of the event can be found on [Facebook](#).

A Growing Demand for Service

2023 proved to be another busy year for Special Collections. The following statistics provide a snapshot of activities for remote and in-person support.

New Acquisitions

Special Collections made 337 new acquisitions in 2023. Among these collections are:

- Works by noted bookbinder and artist [Claudia Cohen](#) dating from 2002 to 2019. This includes 35 books bound by Cohen and a collection of decorated and handmade paper; a sizeable addition to works by Cohen in the Mortimer Rare Book Collection.
 - Creative Adaptations for Learning (CAL) records, 1980-2020. CAL's mission was "to make pictures in books 'visible' to people who are blind the way printed words have been made 'readable' through braille." Materials include product design ideas, catalogs, photographs, publications, children's books and games. ([MRBC-MS-00456](#))
 - Workers Empowering Workers in Northampton (WE WIN) records covering the 1993 campaign to unionize Smith administrative and office staff. ([CA-MS-01229](#))
 - Achebe Betty Powell papers document Powell's work as an activist, as well as her anti-racism consulting work with Betty Powell Associates. ([SSC-MS-00834](#))
-

Knit 'n Listen in Josten and Hillyer

Josten Performing Arts Library and Hillyer Art Library have collaborated on a monthly Knit 'n Listen event, alternating between the libraries. Open to all members of the campus community, it's a time to gather, craft in a peaceful setting, have some snacks and discover some new music, played on a record player.

Josten hosted the inaugural event on Dec. 15th and Hillyer followed up after winter break on February 2nd. Both Hillyer and Josten look forward to creating community and to welcoming Smith students into our spaces who might not otherwise use them.

A New Look for the Libraries Website

The Libraries launched a major upgrade to its website in time for the spring semester. In addition to updated software, the site has a fresh look that mirrors the visual aesthetic of the college's new website. The redesign gives prominence to heavily used resources with Quick Links making them easier to find. The Libraries website is the largest sub-domain on campus, and altogether 465 web pages were migrated, including 260 course Libguides.

Library Exhibits

Amplify Public Art Projects

Gallery Wall, Neilson Library Ground Floor, March 4 - May 28

The Amplify Competition provides current Smith students with an opportunity to share their knowledge, stories, and perspectives in a public forum. The Public Art competition was inspired by last fall's Radical Posters exhibit in the same space. It is sponsored by the Wurtele Center for Leadership.

Sylvia Plath's Life as a Student at Smith

3rd Floor, Neilson Library, February 26 - April 19

STRIDE students Emilia Neyer '26 and Gabie Dondes '26 curated this exhibit as a complement to the current Botanic Garden exhibit, "The Bell Jars: Lyman Conservatory and Sylvia Plath's Botanical Imagination." Using archival materials and Plath's literary work as a guide, these two exhibits invite visitors to inhabit the Smith College campus as Plath once did.

Smith Club of China honors Julia Chang Lin '51

3rd Floor, Neilson Library, March-May

Another student-curated exhibit, this one led by the Smith Club of China, will focus on the personal history of Julia Chang Lin '51 who went on to become a renowned scholar of Chinese poetry and mother to Maya Lin, the designer of Neilson Library.

Thank you for your terrific year-end support. We [welcome new members](#), and appreciate the ongoing support of those of you who renew each year. I encourage you to share this newsletters with friends and classmates who may be interested in the work of the Libraries. We are grateful and happy to start 2024 with our community of Friends and Oculus Society members.

Sincerely,

Ann Alpers '84

Chair, Executive Committee

Friends of the Smith College Libraries

[SUPPORT THE LIBRARIES](#)

[FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARIES](#)

[ALUMNAE RELATIONS](#)



Copyright © 2026, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

Friends of the Smith College Libraries
Alumnae Gymnasium, 83 Green Street
Northampton, MA 01063

You are receiving this email because of your interest in and support for the Smith College Libraries.

To unsubscribe from all emails or to update your preferences, [update subscription preferences](#)

