
Friends of the Smith College Libraries

February 2025 News



Students visit the Special Collections Reading Room on Valentine's Day
Photo by Samm Smith

Dear Friends,

Can you imagine Smith without a library? Unlike most colleges of its size, Smith has three libraries, each of which contributes to the intellectual life of the college, inspiring loyalty among its users, and supporting research and learning across the liberal arts. However, when Smith was founded 150 years ago, it was so new that it didn't even have a library.

Initially, a small library room in College Hall held the nucleus of a library collection while students had free use of Northampton's private Clarke Library on Main Street. Over time, more space was allocated in College Hall as the reference collection grew, and in 1900, a bright and airy library space opened in the new Seelye Hall. It wasn't until 1909 that the college broke ground on a library building that was later named for President William Allen Neilson. To learn more about the history of the Libraries, click [here](#).

Within Neilson today, Smith's Special Collections preserve and disseminate the college's history as part of the broad history of women and gender. Throughout Smith's sesquicentennial celebration, material from Special Collections will remind us of the history we all share. Our shared commitment to the values of women's education and history has never been more important.

Smithies! Celebrating 150 Years of Student Life



Members of the Smith College Flying Club stand in front of the club's Bird of Paradise monoplane in which 30 students earned their pilot wings in 1942. Photo by Fred. G. Chase. Courtesy of the Smith College Archives.

[This exhibit](#) provides glimpses of students at work and at play from 1880 to 2018. Selected from thousands of photos in the College Archives, it is on display on the ground floor of Neilson Library throughout 2025.

Valentine's Day in the Libraries



Special Collections button-making and swag table. Photo by Samm Smith.

While students once again enjoyed crafting handmade valentines in Neilson, Hillyer, and Josten Libraries, the big attraction on February 14 was the “Special Connections in Special Collections” event, which drew almost 600 students and community members to Neilson’s third floor. Love, sex, and romance were the themes of exhibits drawn from the College Archives, the Sophia Smith Collection of Women’s History, and the Mortimer Rare Book Collection, all selected by student assistants. Attendees also enjoyed music provided by WOZQ, button-making, Polaroid photos with friends, and of course, valentine-themed swag. More photos can be seen [here](#).

Basketball is in the Blood



Class of 1895 Basketball Team in 1893, photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Smith College Archives

With Smith's basketball team ranked #1 in the 2025 NEWMAC Women's Basketball Championship, College Archivist Nanci Young takes a look back and writes about [the origin of women's basketball](#) in our historic Alumnae Gym. Her article includes a link to the award-winning 2010 documentary, "Basketball: The New Woman, A New Game" by filmmaker Kate Lee. *Go Pioneers!*

Spring Program



April 17, 2025 at 7:00 p.m., Seelye Hall, Smith College

Join us for a screening of the documentary, “[Banned Together: The Fight against Censorship](#).” This film traces the experiences of three high school students who get drawn into a debate about banning books from their school libraries. A Q&A will follow with director [Kate Way](#) and banned book activist [Julia Garnett '28](#). Julia has worked with the National Coalition Against Censorship to educate her peers on the importance of speaking out against censorship. Registration details to follow.

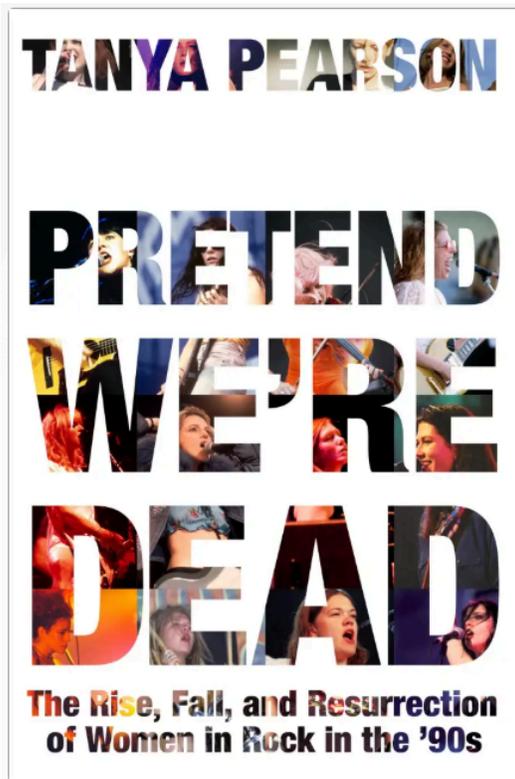
Co-sponsored by the Friends of the Smith College Libraries and the Smith College Human Rights Initiative.

Open Education Resources

Scholarly Communications Librarian Jessica Ryan routinely spotlights interesting additions to Smith ScholarWorks. This month, the open-access book [Medieval Art, Modern Politics](#), edited by Art Professor Brigitte Buettner and William J. Diebold caught her attention. This collection of essays explores how medieval art has been appropriated throughout history to serve political agendas, and “manufacture historical continuity.”

All [Smith ScholarWorks](#) articles, books and other materials are free and available for all to read.

Preserving the Stories of Women of Rock



As a student assistant in Neilson, Tanya Pearson AC '16, decided to research a topic that was close to her heart: why did all the girl bands that she used to listen to in the 1990s disappear from the airwaves? She took Kelly Anderson's SWGS class on oral history methodology, and benefitted from a Rebecca Samay Rosenthal summer fellowship to start interviewing the musicians she revered. As the number of completed interviews grew and were transcribed, her project came to form the foundation of the [Women of Rock Oral History Collection](#) in Special Collections.

Pearson has now released a book, *Pretend We're Dead: The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of Women in Rock in the '90s*. She discusses the origin of both projects in [this conversation with The Boston Globe](#).

Library Exhibits



Avery Maltz '25 beside the Botanical Ink Making exhibit. Photo by Anna Helgeson.

[Botanical Ink Making](#), Hillyer Art Library, until March 14.

Smith's unique and majestic Dawn Redwood tree stands behind Neilson Library. In this exhibition, Avery Maltz '25, a Biological Science major and Studio Art minor, showcases the process of creating inks from the cones of the Dawn Redwood tree, alongside a striking painting made using this ink.

Fado Portugal, Josten Library through March. Reception, February 28 at 4:00 p.m. Fado is an expressive style of Portuguese music known for deeply melancholic themes.

Smithies! Celebrating 150 Years of Student Life

Neilson Library, Ground Floor Gallery, through December 2025.

Two Wintery Exhibits: winter pastimes, events, sports, and campus traditions, and, select items from the Ann M. Martin Papers. Compiled by Moby Yang '28, College Archives. Neilson, Level 3, until March 14.

Queer Clergy Trading Cards, a series meant to bring visibility and humor around queer Christian clergy by Reverend Dr. Chris Davies '08, Sophia Smith Collection. Neilson, Level 3, until March 14.



Today, the Alumnae Gym provides a comfortable 24-hour study space for students. Photo by Mary Irwin.

A Note to All our Friends

2024 ended with some wonderful gifts that will be put to good use later this year. We are very grateful for the support you have provided and continue to provide to the Friends, to Special Collections, library endowments and other special funds.

As we celebrate Smith's 150th anniversary, remember that the Friends was established over 80 years ago so that Smith alumnae could support the college as "a place of learning." While learning has evolved and expanded throughout the Friends' history with the college, our commitment to helping Smith's libraries remain the intellectual heart of the Smith community continues. We appreciate your interest and [welcome donations](#) of any amount. \$10 per month makes a big difference to students using any or all of Smith's libraries for research, study, community or simply seeking a quiet place.

Thank you for being a Friend - you are part of a long and storied Smith tradition!

Best wishes,
Ann Alpers '84
Chair, Executive Committee
Friends of the Smith College Libraries

[ONLINE GIVING FORM](#)

[FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARIES](#)

[OCULUS SOCIETY](#)

 [FSCL Logo](#)



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 support of the Smith College Libraries including the new Neilson Library.

To unsubscribe from all emails or to update your preferences, visit the link below.

[update subscription preferences](#)

