



UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

University
Libraries

DAVID W.
MULLIN'S
LIBRARY

2024-2025
ANNUAL REPORT



The 2024-2025 academic year was a time for innovation and celebration at the University of Arkansas Libraries. As Dean, I am delighted to tell all students, faculty, and staff about our library system, and I invite you to explore everything we have to offer online and across our five campus libraries — Mullins Library, the Fine Arts Library, the Chemistry and Biochemistry Library, the Physics Library, and the Young Law Library.

We are especially excited to share the recently renovated spaces in Mullins Library. These enhancements were designed with the needs of our campus community in mind, and I hope you'll take advantage of the many new opportunities they provide. In addition to our traditional collections and study areas, Mullins now features a makerspace, podcast production booths, a visualization lab, augmented and virtual reality offerings, a video recording studio, and a music recording studio. We have also added convenient self-checkout machines and pick-up lockers to make accessing physical materials easier than ever.

The improvements don't stop there — we've expanded and enhanced the spaces for Special Collections to enable better access to rare and historical materials, opened a new exhibit gallery, and added Fowler's Nook Café so you can enjoy refreshments while you study or collaborate with classmates. Additionally, the recent restoration of the Fine Arts Center includes an expanded Fine Arts Library that has added both stack space for growing our physical collections and extra room for students.

Beyond the improvements to our facilities and collections, we're proud to share in this report some of the programming we've offered, accomplishments we've celebrated, and initiatives we've undertaken to provide access to information that supports and fosters creativity, study, teaching, and research.

Across all of our libraries, our goal remains the same: to support your teaching, learning, and research. Whether you're visiting Mullins to explore one of our state-of-the-art creative spaces, conducting discipline-specific research in the Fine Arts, Chemistry and Biochemistry, Physics, or Young Law libraries, or simply looking for a quiet space to study, our dedicated staff is here to support you.

I encourage you to stop by, explore our renovated facilities, and discover the full range of resources available to you. We look forward to welcoming you into our spaces and supporting your success throughout the year.

Jason J. Battles
Dean of Libraries
University of Arkansas



Jason J. Battles



→ PROMOTIONS



Amber Cooper
Preservation and
Binding Specialist



Cody Hackett
Director of Continuing
Electronic Resources
and Licensing



Aileen Polanski
Folk Arts and Engagement
Specialist



Robin Roggio
Director of Resource Sharing
and Interlibrary Loan



Joshua Youngblood
Associate Dean for
Special Collections

→ NEW HIRES



Linde Brocato
Metadata Librarian



Kayci Kruhmin
International Education
Project Archivist



Kelsey Molseed
Health Sciences
Librarian

ADMIN TEAM

- Jessica Morales** / Associate Dean for Collections and Open Initiatives
- Jason Battles** / Dean of Libraries
- Kelsey Lovewell** / Director of Public Relations
- Joshua Youngblood** / Associate Dean for Special Collections
- Hannah Lee** / Director of Development
- Adriana Gonzalez** / Senior Associate Dean for Research and Learning
- Marco De Prosperis** / Assistant Dean for Finance and Administration
- Martha Guirl-Phillips** / Executive Assistant to the Dean

A New Chapter for the Libraries

The reopening of Mullins Library and the Fine Arts Library in FY25 marked more than the completion of construction projects. It represented a turning point for the University of Arkansas—an achievement years in the making, built on planning, investment, and the collaboration of countless individuals across campus. The result is not just two renovated facilities, but two transformed learning environments designed to serve the needs of today’s students and tomorrow’s scholars.

Reimagining Mullins Library

For decades, Mullins Library has stood at the heart of campus, a place where generations of students came to study, explore, and connect with knowledge. Yet the expectations of students and researchers have shifted dramatically in recent years. A modern research university requires spaces that are flexible, technologically advanced, and welcoming. The latest renovation of Mullins set out to meet those needs—and the outcome has exceeded expectations.

One of the most striking changes can be seen on Level 1, where natural light now streams in for the first time in the building’s history. What was once a dim, utilitarian space has been reborn as an open, inviting hub filled with places to gather, collaborate, and learn. Expanded study areas accommodate both quiet reflection and group projects. Comfortable seating and modern furniture make it easier than ever for students to spend long, productive hours in the library.

But the changes go far beyond atmosphere. The renovation added tools and resources that bring learning to life in new ways. Students can now check out their own books using self-checkout stations, pick up materials at their convenience from book lockers, or step into one of several new creative labs. These spaces—the Makerspace, Audio Recording Studio, Visualization Lab, Podcast Studio, Augmented Reality Studio, and Virtual Reality Studio—offer opportunities for hands-on learning that stretch beyond traditional coursework. They allow students to design prototypes, record professional-quality audio, visualize complex data, or experiment with immersive technologies that are shaping industries worldwide.

The addition of Fowler’s Nook Café has quickly become one of the most talked-about upgrades. Students no longer have to leave the building in search of food or coffee; instead, they can fuel long study sessions without losing momentum. The café has become a natural gathering spot and a welcome convenience in a building that already serves as a second home to so many.

Special Collections and Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts

The Special Collections Division—long recognized as one of the University’s crown jewels—also benefited from major enhancements. A new exhibit gallery now provides a public showcase for rare and unique materials, inviting students, faculty, and visitors to engage directly with history. Behind the scenes, expanded processing and storage areas have improved the care and accessibility of these collections, while a dedicated classroom creates new opportunities for faculty to incorporate primary source learning into their courses.

The University’s commitment to Arkansas heritage is further reflected in the upgrades for Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts (AFTA), which now has its first dedicated office suite. Equipped with an Oral History Recording Lab, the suite enables staff and community partners to capture, preserve, and share the voices and traditions that define the region. These facilities strengthen AFTA’s role as a bridge between the University and the state’s diverse communities.



A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE LIBRARIES

A Commitment Realized

The scale of these improvements required more than construction crews and design plans. It took years of careful coordination, significant financial stewardship, and unwavering vision. The reopening of Mullins and the Fine Arts Library demonstrates the University Libraries’ steadfast commitment to supporting scholarship, fostering creativity, and empowering student success.

By integrating traditional resources with cutting-edge tools, the Libraries have redefined what it means to be a 21st-century academic library. They are no longer just repositories of books and journals—they are dynamic centers for discovery, innovation, and collaboration.

A Celebration of Renewal

To honor the significance of these achievements, the Libraries hosted a Grand Reopening event on April 4, welcoming administrators, donors, and members of the campus community to tour the new spaces. Guests saw firsthand the transformation: light-filled study areas, vibrant collaboration zones, and technology-rich labs that signal the University’s commitment to staying ahead of the curve in research and education.

For many in attendance, the event was more than a tour. It was a moment to reflect on the Libraries’ central role in the academic life of the University of Arkansas and to celebrate the partnerships that made such transformation possible.

Looking Ahead

As students, faculty, and researchers return to Mullins and the Fine Arts Library, the true impact of these renovations is only beginning to emerge. Already, students are lining up at Fowler’s Nook Café, booking time in the Podcast Studio, and making use of self-checkout and lockers for faster service. Faculty are planning new ways to integrate primary sources into their teaching with the help of Special Collections, while community partners are collaborating with Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts to document oral histories that might otherwise be lost.

The reopening of these libraries is not an ending but a beginning—a launchpad for innovation, creativity, and scholarship at the University of Arkansas. It ensures that the Libraries remain at the center of academic life while also adapting to the evolving needs of the campus community.

In short, FY25 was a year of renewal, and the reopening of Mullins and the Fine Arts Library stands as a symbol of what is possible when vision meets collaboration. The Libraries’ future has never been brighter, and with these forward-looking spaces, they are ready to inspire the next generation of thinkers, creators, and leaders.

The reopening of Mullins and the Fine Arts Library demonstrates the University Libraries’ steadfast commitment to supporting scholarship, fostering creativity, and empowering student success.

RENOVATED
FINE ARTS
LIBRARY



FOWLER’S
NOOK CAFÉ





FAMILY
STUDY
SPACE

Schmieding Foundation Gift
Supports Family Study Space

Written by Kori Witt

A \$150,000 gift from the Schmieding Foundation to the University Libraries at the University of Arkansas bolstered a multifaceted family study space designed for parents and caregivers on the U of A campus. In addition, it supports teacher education in the University’s elementary and secondary education programs by expanding the Curriculum Materials Collections and Children’s Literature Collections.

The Schmieding Foundation Family Study Space in the Mullins Library supports campus parents and caregivers by providing a dedicated space where they can study effectively while their children learn and play in a safe, engaging environment. It also promotes early literacy and learning by providing resources that encourage play-based learning for children. The space was created in 2022 with funding from the Women’s Giving Circle. The Schmieding Foundation gift has outfitted the space with furniture, interactive play items, and supplies and created an

adjacent mother’s room and calming room. Additions to the Curriculum Materials and Children’s Literature Collections provided by the gift will continue to enhance the resources available for students and faculty in the elementary and secondary education programs.

“The Schmieding Foundation has a long and meaningful history of supporting education and well-being in Arkansas,” said Chancellor Charles Robinson. “With this gift, they are once again demonstrating their deep commitment to helping Arkansans thrive. We are grateful for their generosity and honored to have them as a partner in supporting our students and their families.”

Across the country, there is a growing need for family-friendly spaces on university campuses. At the U of A, more than 1,000 current students are parents or caregivers who strike the balance between academic responsibilities and family obligations. The Schmieding Foundation Family Study Space helps address critical challenges faced by these students, reducing barriers to academic success. Faculty and staff are also invited to utilize the space with their children.

“The Schmieding Foundation has long been committed to supporting children and education,” said Lance Taylor, president of the Schmieding Foundation. “We are excited to partner with the University of Arkansas on this important resource that will help students achieve their educational goals and foster early learning and literacy skills among their children.”

The Schmieding Foundation Family Study Space is located on the second floor of the renovated Mullins Library, which offers a quieter, less stimulating environment for children while ensuring proximity to key academic resources and study areas. Thoughtful design ensures that the space feels separate from high traffic areas, minimizing distractions and creating a calmer atmosphere conducive to study and exploration. The space supplies a range of interactive items to encourage safe, engaging play, including toys, games, crayons and coloring supplies. Family backpack kits with books, toys, puzzles and other items are also available to check out.

The gift from the Schmieding Foundation funded the creation of the private mother’s room – complete with a glider, sink and refrigerator – and the calming room that provides sensory items and soothing devices. The gift also augmented the space’s child-sized furniture, interactive play items, technology and other resources for family engagement. Programming is led by the University Libraries’ Education Librarian, Megan York, who continues to add to the varied selection of books, educational resources and play-based learning tools available.

“The University Libraries are thrilled the Schmieding Foundation selected this wonderful space that supports family study and teacher education in Mullins Library,” said Jason Battles, dean of University Libraries. “Their generous gift will enable us to fully outfit new locations and expand our collection of materials supporting teaching education and the instruction of the next generation of Razorbacks.”

By enhancing the Schmieding Foundation Family Study Space, the University expects increased retention and academic success rates for student parents and caregivers, greater access to early literacy and learning resources for children and an increased utilization of the Curriculum Materials and Children’s Literature collections. By addressing both academic and family needs, the space fosters a welcoming and supportive environment for the campus community.

“For decades, and once again, the Schmieding Foundation stands as a strong and enduring partner of the University of Arkansas committed to student success and helping students who have young children balance their academic lives with their responsibilities as parents,” said Scott Varady, vice chancellor for advancement. “The Schmieding Foundation Family Study Space will make a profound impact by providing critical support for student parents and caregivers while also enriching the lives of their children through early learning experiences. The University is honored by the Schmieding Foundation’s longstanding support and dedication to transforming lives. This gift speaks to the heart of what community and philanthropy can achieve together.”

The Schmieding Foundation is based in Springdale and supports numerous nonprofits and initiatives in the region, with a primary focus on health care and education for children and seniors. The foundation has supported the University for nearly 30 years, giving more than \$1 million to scholarships, research internships and departmental support. Lawrence Schmieding, benefactor of the Schmieding Foundation, was a member of the University’s Campaign for the Twenty-First Century steering committee, Towers of Old Main and the Arkansas Alumni Association.



Expanding Access

U of A Libraries Broaden Publishing Support in FY25

In FY25, the University of Arkansas Libraries accelerated a major shift in scholarly publishing, moving from a safety-net model of individual author subsidies to a system that removes cost barriers through transformative agreements with major publishers. These new agreements mark a turning point: instead of solely covering fees on a case-by-case basis, the Libraries now embed open access directly into publishing contracts, ensuring that faculty can share their work freely with readers around the world.

One of the most significant new developments is a transformative agreement with Elsevier. Announced in April 2025, the agreement allows U of A corresponding authors to publish in a wide range of Elsevier hybrid journals without paying article processing charges (APCs), provided the work is made open access under a Creative Commons license. The deal, which spans multiple campuses in the University of Arkansas System, strengthens the Libraries’ commitment to broad, equitable access to research.

Prior to FY25, the Libraries had already begun building a foundation for this model with a 2024 read-and-publish agreement with Wiley. That earlier partnership enabled U of A authors to publish open access in Wiley journals without incurring APCs, laying the groundwork for additional agreements and establishing the workflows necessary to support them.

The Libraries have also expanded their reach into key disciplinary publishing networks. Through an ongoing agreement with the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC), U of A authors can publish open access in RSC journals at no cost to themselves. This program has proven especially valuable for faculty in chemistry, materials science, and related fields, where publication charges often serve as a barrier to dissemination.

Similarly, the Libraries’ agreement with the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) ensures that U of A faculty in computer science and engineering can make their peer-reviewed research openly available without paying APCs. For researchers in fast-moving, collaborative disciplines like computing, the ability to share results freely is essential to sustaining innovation.

Together, these agreements with Elsevier, Wiley, RSC, and ACM represent a strategic reimagining of the Libraries’ publishing support. The focus has shifted from isolated assistance to structural solutions—leveraging subscription reallocations and collective bargaining to make open access a built-in part of the publication process.

These transformative deals complement a strong suite of existing programs. The Open Access Publishing Fund continued to provide up to \$2,000 for eligible authors whose journals were not covered by an agreement during FY25, and that amount will increase to \$2,500 in FY26. The Libraries also maintain the Open Education, Data, and Publishing Services (OEDPS) department, which offers consultations on copyright, author rights, and open-textbook publishing through ScholarWorks@UARK and Pressbooks.

Taken together, these initiatives demonstrate the Libraries’ commitment to building a sustainable, equitable publishing ecosystem. By embedding open access into publisher contracts, the U of A Libraries reduce financial burdens on faculty, expand the global reach of University of Arkansas research, and ensure that knowledge produced on campus is available to all.



Agreements with Elsevier, Wiley, RSC, and ACM represent a strategic reimagining of the Libraries’ publishing support.



PUBLISHING SUPPORT

Knowledge for All

Advancing Open Education

The University of Arkansas Libraries continue to lead the charge in textbook affordability and open learning. Through the Open Educational Resources (OER) Course Materials Conversion program, the Libraries empower faculty to replace costly commercial textbooks with free, openly licensed materials that students can access from day one. Now in its eighth year, the program has grown into one of the most significant affordability and teaching innovation efforts on campus.

The program provides funding to faculty who adopt, adapt, or create open course materials. The Libraries offer \$4,500 to adapt existing OER and \$7,500 to author new materials, supporting the substantial time and expertise required to produce classroom-ready resources. During FY25, the Libraries committed \$68,500 to OER projects, with \$46,500 paid out to participating faculty over the year.

That investment continues to yield impressive results. In FY25, open materials were used in 50 courses, reaching 11,328 students who collectively saved an estimated \$900,678 in textbook costs. The number of course sections adopting OER also rose significantly—from 72% of sections using open textbooks in the previous year to 81% in FY25. Since the program’s launch, U of A students have saved well over \$2 million through open and no-cost course materials.

The Libraries’ OER efforts are supported by the Open Education, Data, and Publishing Services (OEDPS) department, which provides faculty with hands-on guidance in copyright, licensing, accessibility, and publishing. Librarians help instructors use Pressbooks, an open-source platform for authoring and sharing professional-quality digital textbooks. As of FY25, the U of A Pressbooks catalog includes 30 open textbooks, with six new titles added during the year.

The reach of these resources extends far beyond campus. In FY25 alone, the Pressbooks catalog received 643,066 visitors, generating 1,195,453 pageviews and 60,674 downloads. These numbers reflect both the quality and the global utility of the open textbooks developed by U of A faculty.

Faculty participants frequently note that OER development not only reduces costs but also enhances teaching flexibility. Open materials can be customized to include local examples, student feedback, and the latest research, allowing instructors to tailor content more precisely to their courses and disciplines. Students benefit from immediate access to required materials, reducing equity gaps caused by high textbook prices or delayed purchases.

The Libraries also collaborate with the Global Campus and other University partners to promote the use of open and no-cost materials. Together, they maintain a searchable list of “no textbook cost” courses, helping students identify affordable options each semester. Ongoing workshops, consultations, and faculty showcases continue to grow the community of instructors engaged in open education.

The FY25 numbers tell a clear story of momentum. More courses, more students, and more savings—paired with a thriving publishing ecosystem through Pressbooks and ScholarWorks@UARK—demonstrate how the U of A Libraries are turning open education from a pilot initiative into a lasting part of academic culture. By investing in faculty creativity and removing barriers to learning, the Libraries are ensuring that open knowledge continues to open doors for every student on campus and beyond.



In FY25, open materials were used in 50 courses, reaching 11,328 students who collectively saved an estimated \$900,678 in textbook costs.



OPEN EDUCATION



ARCHIVES TO THE FIELD



ARCHIVES TO THE FIELD

From the Archives to the Field

Libraries Help Honors Students Explore Fayetteville's Black History

Over the summer, the University Libraries Special Collections Division helped facilitate the Honors College's Humanities Research Scholars Program, introducing undergraduates to the fundamentals of humanities research. This iteration of the program focused on the Black community in south Fayetteville, encouraging students to uncover and interpret local histories through fieldwork, archival study, and community engagement.

Students learned to conduct oral histories, analyze primary sources, and interpret material culture with guidance from librarians and archivists in Special Collections. The program was facilitated by Lauren Willette, folk arts fieldwork coordinator, and Virginia Siegel, Arkansas folk arts professor of practice and Special Collections oral historian, from the University of Arkansas Libraries. They were joined by Louise Hancox, senior director of career innovation, and Chelsea Hodge, director of grants and research innovation, from the Honors College.

"Community engagement has been key to this process," Siegel said. "It has been an honor to work with such phenomenal community leaders who have given their time and expertise to this experience. Every day one of our incredible students would tell me, 'look at this cool thing I've learned,' and I'd be learning something new, too."

Throughout the summer, students met with local historians, artists, and preservationists and visited key cultural and historical sites, including the Fayetteville Public Library, the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, and multiple cemeteries that reflect the city's segregated past. These experiences deepened their understanding of how Black residents built and sustained community through institutions such as churches, schools, and local organizations.

Special Collections played a central role in the students' research. There, participants uncovered archival materials ranging from historic photographs and personal letters to newspapers like Black Americans for Democracy (BAD) Times, a publication produced by Black U of A students in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By studying these records, students were able to reconstruct stories that had long been overlooked in official histories.

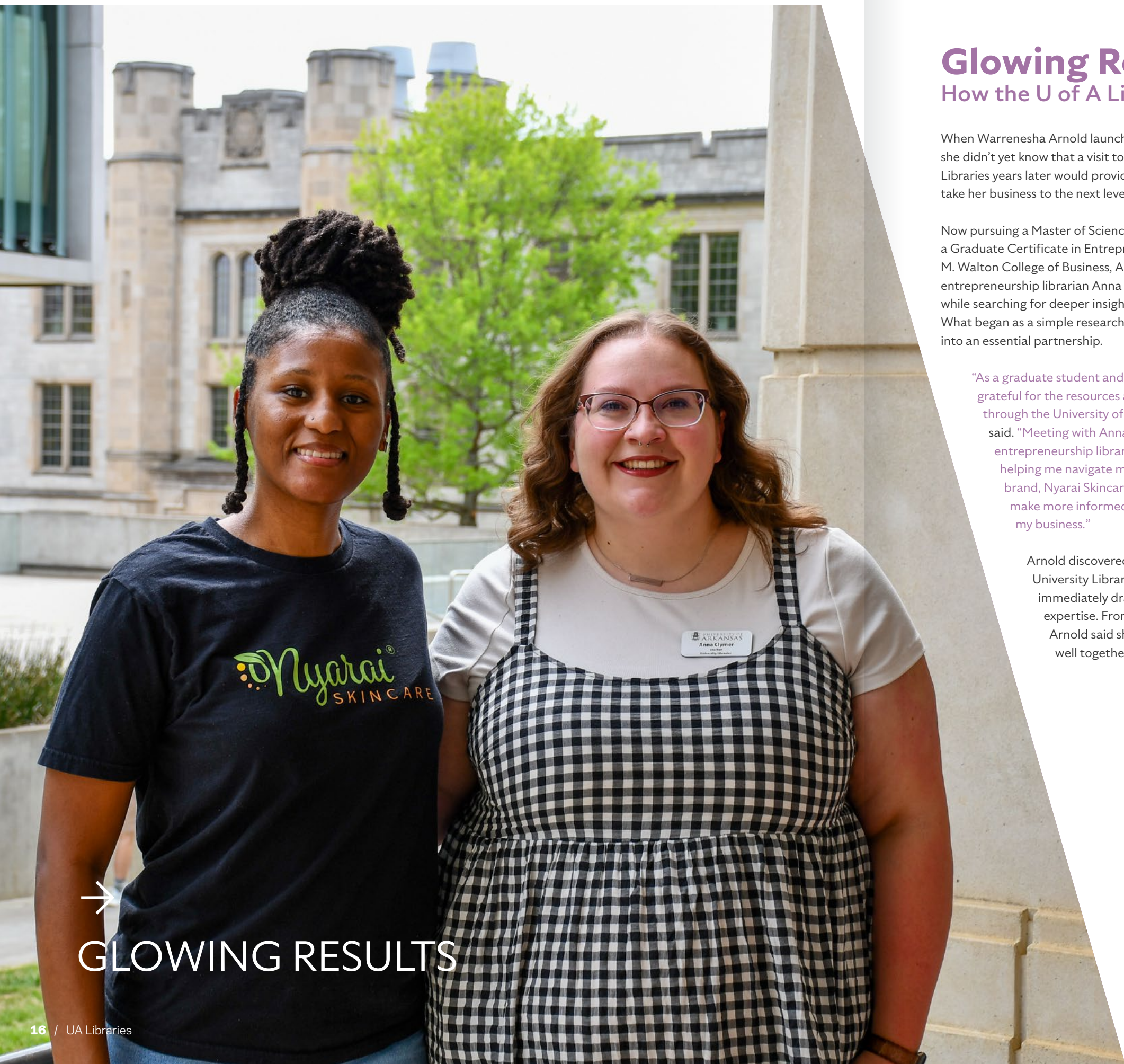
Lauren Willette, folk arts fieldwork coordinator with the Libraries, said the program demonstrates the lasting value of connecting archival study to lived experience.

"It was an honor to learn from our community members who are actively working to preserve local history," Willette said.

Students presented their final projects in a community showcase, which included exhibitions on Black educators in Fayetteville Public Schools, the history of Saint James United Methodist Church, and the creative contributions of Black artists in Northwest Arkansas.

Through this partnership, the University of Arkansas Libraries helped a new generation of researchers see how archival work can illuminate the past and strengthen community understanding in the present.





Glowing Results

How the U of A Libraries Helped a Student Skincare Brand Shine

When Warrensha Arnold launched Nyarai Skincare in 2020, she didn't yet know that a visit to the University of Arkansas Libraries years later would provide the spark she needed to take her business to the next level.

Now pursuing a Master of Science in product innovation and a Graduate Certificate in Entrepreneurship from the Sam M. Walton College of Business, Arnold met business and entrepreneurship librarian Anna Clymer five months ago while searching for deeper insights to expand her brand. What began as a simple research appointment has grown into an essential partnership.

"As a graduate student and entrepreneur, I'm incredibly grateful for the resources and support available through the University of Arkansas Libraries," Arnold said. "Meeting with Anna, our amazing business and entrepreneurship librarian, has been instrumental in helping me navigate market research for my skincare brand, Nyarai Skincare. Her guidance is helping me make more informed, strategic decisions as I grow my business."

Arnold discovered Clymer through the University Libraries website and was immediately drawn to her specialized expertise. From their first meeting, Arnold said she knew they would work well together.

Since then, Clymer has provided consistent support — identifying reliable sources, guiding business research, and offering feedback as Arnold refines her business plan and prepares for graduation in May 2025.

"Supporting student entrepreneurs like Warrensha, who are doing real, hands-on work, is one of the most rewarding parts of my job," Clymer said. "Good data and credible information are critical to building a strong business plan, and it's exciting to help students use those tools to bring their ideas to life."

Clymer said she is inspired by the passion and innovation she sees in students across campus.

"Entrepreneurs on campus are taking their learning beyond the classroom and building businesses with real impact on our communities," she said. "Warrensha's enthusiasm and dedication to Nyarai Skincare are truly inspiring, and it's an honor to be a small part of her journey."

Nyarai Skincare, which Arnold describes as rooted in wellness and self-confidence, continues to grow with the help of the University of Arkansas Libraries' business resources and Clymer's personalized support.



"As a graduate student and entrepreneur, I'm incredibly grateful for the resources and support available through the University of Arkansas Libraries,"

— Warrensha Arnold

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GLOWING RESULTS

Turning the Page

Faculty Honored at 2024 Promotion and Tenure Reception

In November 2024, the Libraries hosted the annual reception to honor faculty members who reached one of the most meaningful milestones in an academic career: promotion and tenure. Dean Jason Battles and Provost Terry Martin gave remarks at what was both a formal celebration and a personal reflection on the many paths that lead to this success.

At the heart of the reception was the Faculty Tenure and Promotion Books exhibit, a tradition that asks each honoree to select a book that has influenced their life or career. Any books not already held in the Libraries’ collections were purchased for the occasion with the goal of inspiring future generations. Each book offers a glimpse into the values, questions, and passions that guided these scholars.

For David Andree, Associate Professor of Art, that book was *Warrior Nation: A History of the Red Lake Ojibwe* by Anton Treuer. Andree explained that it deepened his understanding of land, history, and the preservation of culture, themes that continue to resonate in his creative practice. His choice underscored the way scholarship often intertwines with personal history and cultural identity.

Emily Baker, Associate Professor of Architecture, selected *The Craftsman* by Richard Sennett. In reflecting on her choice, she emphasized how important it is to remain rooted in the material act of making, even in an era increasingly dominated

by digital tools. For Baker, the book affirms that craftsmanship connects creative work to human experience in ways that technology alone cannot replicate.

Each book, whether a childhood favorite, a scholarly cornerstone, or a personal touchstone, revealed how faculty arrive at moments of achievement through years of reading, research, and discovery. By curating these choices, the Libraries provided more than a backdrop for the celebration. They created a space where individual journeys could be shared, reminding the campus community that scholarship is built not only on research and teaching, but also on inspiration.

The reception was as much about the future as it was about the present. By recognizing promotion and tenure, the University celebrated not only what these faculty members have accomplished, but also what they will continue to contribute in classrooms, studios, laboratories, and communities.

In honoring its faculty this way, the University of Arkansas reaffirmed its commitment to scholarship as both an intellectual pursuit and a human story. The 2024 Promotion and Tenure Reception was more than a ceremony. It was a moment of connection, reflection, and shared pride in the accomplishments that shape the University’s future.



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CELEBRATING FACULTY
SUCCESS

A Gift for Truth

Bill Russell and Mary Ryan’s Endowments Strengthen the University of Arkansas Libraries

Two lifelong Razorback supporters are making sure the University of Arkansas Libraries remain a place where truth is preserved and history is explored in full. Bill Russell and Mary Ryan, both deeply connected to the University and the state of Arkansas, have established endowments that will enrich library collections for generations to come—each reflecting their personal passions and professional journeys.

Mary Ryan grew up in Walnut Ridge, Ark., the third of nine children. College was always an expectation, but it would have to be achieved through her own hard work. After a year and a half at Arkansas State University, chosen for affordability, Mary and her twin sister visited Fayetteville for the first time, and knew she had found her place.

“It was beautiful up here, and we just liked the vibe,” she recalled. “We thought we had died and gone to heaven.” She fondly remembers studying in the old library’s reading room with its tall Palladian windows open to the sounds of crickets in the spring. For her work-study program, Mary worked in the one-room Lawrence County Public Library during the summers.

Mary’s career would take her far from Fayetteville, including positions at Tulane University’s medical library and 17 and a half years as director of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Library, where she supported the Historical Research Center. She built collections, expanded access to information, and championed the preservation of history, from rare anatomical texts to state medical archives.

Today, her focus has come full circle to the Fayetteville campus she once called home. Her endowment supports the Special Collections Division of the University of Arkansas Libraries, enabling the acquisition of materials specifically related to medical history, ensuring these vital resources are preserved and accessible to future generations.

Bill Russell’s connection to the University of Arkansas runs deep. The son of a career military officer – an Arkansan who earned

eight Purple Hearts in World War II – Bill knew from junior high that he wanted to attend the U of A. After earning his undergraduate degree in speech and serving in the military during the Vietnam era, he returned for graduate school in the early 1970s.

It was then that he discovered the library as more than just a study space. “I enjoyed being in the library. It was peaceful, and I liked being surrounded by books,” he said. The library also sparked his interest in genealogy, giving him a new appreciation for research and archival collections.

Over time, Bill came to see libraries as vital defenders of factual, well-documented history. “You may not find all the truth in libraries, but that’s the place to go for truth, if you’ll just dig for it,” he said.

Bill’s endowment supports the University Libraries’ Special Collections, specifically materials related to social justice in Arkansas. His hope is to create a resource that will help students and researchers confront complex historical realities and develop a deeper understanding of the state’s past.

Although Mary and Bill were on campus at the same time as undergraduates, and their names are carved near each other on Senior Walk, they didn’t meet until many years later. Their shared love for the University, its libraries, and its students eventually brought them together, both personally and in their philanthropic vision.

For both Mary and Bill, libraries are much more than buildings filled with books; they are spaces where critical thinking is nurtured, history is preserved, and communities are enriched. Their gifts reflect a shared belief in the enduring power of libraries to inform, challenge, and inspire.

“I just think libraries are great,” Mary said simply. Bill added, “In a world where truth can be hard to find, the library is where it still lives. We want to make sure it always will.”

“In a world where truth can be hard to find, the library is where it still lives. We want to make sure it always will.”

– Bill Russell



DEVELOPMENT



PRESERVING THE PAST,
INSPIRING THE FUTURE

Special Collections

The University of Arkansas Libraries' Special Collections Division had a remarkable year of growth and activity in FY25, expanding access to Arkansas history and culture through new acquisitions, processing projects, and public engagement.

During FY25, Special Collections accessioned:

- ▶ 49 new manuscript acquisitions
- ▶ 579 linear feet
- ▶ 77.7 gigabytes

These included significant additions to existing holdings as well as 17 entirely new collections. Meanwhile, the Processing Unit completed:

- ▶ 53 projects
- ▶ 285 linear feet
- ▶ 2.12 terabytes

Of these, 30 were new collections and 23 incorporated new materials into existing archives.

Public services also thrived despite temporary relocations throughout the year. The reading room fulfilled more than 1,700 requests and welcomed 423 in-person researchers, while providing an impressive 25,678 digital copies for remote users. The instruction and outreach unit reached more than 1,100 students through nearly 50 class sessions and engaged over 4,700 students and community members through 13 outreach events, evidence of a vibrant and expanding connection between Special Collections and the broader community.

Several notable collections processed this year are now open for research. The Frank and Sara Sharp Papers (MC 2101) document the couple's civic and business work in Fayetteville, including Frank Sharp's role in the Ozark Mountain Smoke House and the early years of the Walton Arts Center. The Ozark Organic Growers Association Records (MC 2528) preserve the history of a cooperative of organic farmers in the Ozarks region. The James R. Bennett Papers (MC 2017) highlight the life and work of the University of Arkansas professor, activist, and cofounder of the OMNI Center for Peace, Justice, and Ecology.

Digital Collections

The University of Arkansas Libraries expanded public access to Arkansas history in FY25 with the release of three new digital collections, each offering fresh insight into the state's cultural, environmental, and educational heritage. Together, these collections contribute nearly 500 digital objects and more than 21,000 individual scans to the Libraries' growing online archives.

Published in September 2024, *Flooding and Flood Control* in Arkansas explores the state's extensive river systems, which include more than 87,000 miles of waterways that have shaped Arkansas communities for generations. The collection documents both the economic and environmental importance of rivers such as the Buffalo, Arkansas, and Mississippi, while highlighting the devastating impacts of periodic flooding. Events such as the Great Flood of 1927, which displaced more than 143,000 residents, prompted major federal investments, including the Flood Control Acts of 1928 and 1938. Through reports, maps, and historical texts, the collection traces how flood control efforts transformed the state.

The *Flashback* digital collection, released February 14, 2025, preserves decades of research published by the Washington County Historical Society. Since its founding in 1951, the Society has used its quarterly journal, *Flashback*, to document local genealogy, Indigenous history, architecture, literature, and Civil War scholarship. Originally established by Walter J. Lemke as a newsletter, the publication grew into a professional historical journal under the guidance of editors such as Jean and Keith Newhouse. The new digital collection includes 316 issues containing more than 15,000 scanned pages, now available through the Internet Archive.

The *University of Arkansas Commencement Programs* collection, released April 18, 2025, offers a record of graduation ceremonies that date back to 1875, just three years after the University opened. Early ceremonies lasted for several days and awarded teaching certificates rather than bachelor's degrees. The first bachelor's degrees were granted in 1876. Today, the University awards more than 6,000 degrees each year. The digital collection includes 179 programs totaling nearly 12.4 gigabytes of content.

Together, these collections enhance discovery and preserve Arkansas history for scholars, students, and the public.



Southern Tenant Farmers Museum

AFTA Community Scholars

The Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts (AFTA) program continued to expand its reach and impact through a series of Community Scholars Programs held throughout fiscal year 2025, each designed to equip Arkansans with the tools to document, share, and celebrate their communities' cultural traditions.

The Summer 2024 Community Scholars Program was a special iteration designed for K-12 educators and held at the University of Arkansas from July 17–19. Teachers explored ways to integrate folklore and traditional arts into classroom learning, resulting in a collection of creative lesson plans now available through the U of A Pressbooks catalog.

In the Fall 2024 program, AFTA partnered with the Mississippi Arts Commission to offer an online version of the training, making it accessible to participants across state lines. The virtual format allowed a diverse group of learners to explore methods for documenting local heritage while connecting with others who share a passion for preserving regional traditions.

The Spring 2025 Community Scholars Program, offered in collaboration with McElroy House, the River Valley Adult Learning Alliance, and the Arkansas River Valley Library System, was held in Dardanelle from February through April. Participants focused on gathering oral histories and folk traditions from the River Valley region, strengthening connections between local culture and community engagement.

AFTA closed out the fiscal year with its first weekend-intensive model, introduced through the Summer 2025 Community Scholars Program in partnership with Arkansas State University Heritage Sites, including the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum and the Historic Dyess Colony: Johnny Cash Boyhood Home Museum. The first session was held June 7–8 in Dyess, followed by a second in July, offering a condensed, immersive format that continues to broaden access to cultural documentation training across Arkansas.

AFTA Apprenticeship Program

Eight mentor artists participated in the Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts (AFTA) statewide apprenticeship program during its fifth year, which supported teams of mentor artists and apprentices committed to sustaining Arkansas's diverse artistic traditions and cultural heritage. Each team developed a yearlong work plan, met regularly to practice their craft, and shared their experiences with their communities at the conclusion of the program.

The 2024–2025 mentor artists were Jerry Fisk, Georgia Hudson, Michael Louis LeBlanc, Maria Cristina Moroles, Troy Odom, Ed Pennebaker, Alejandra Reyes, and Cory Winters, each passing down a distinctive traditional art form to a new generation of practitioners.

Jerry Fisk of Nashville, a 1999 Arkansas Living Treasure and internationally recognized bladesmith, mentored John Lindsey in the art of engraving. Georgia Hudson of Little Rock taught apprentice Agnolia Johnson the African American gospel tradition, including hymns, spirituals, and Dr. Watts songs. Michael Louis LeBlanc of Bentonville, owner of Licorne Foundry and an accomplished metal sculptor, guided Piper Hart in the traditional art of cast metal.

Maria Cristina Moroles of Ponca, a traditional healer or curandera, mentored Artemis Diaz in curanderismo, teaching techniques such as limpias (cleansings) and herbal healing. Troy Odom of Mountain View trained Megan Lunsford in letterpress printing, sharing his decades of experience at the Ozark Folk Center State Park. Ed Pennebaker of Clinton, a master glassblower whose work is displayed in the Clinton Presidential Library, mentored Amanda Whatley in blown glass artistry.

Alejandra Reyes of Dardanelle taught Adamaris Moreno to create traditional Day of the Dead altars, an art she has practiced and shared for more than 20 years. Cory Winters of Van Buren mentored Allison Langson in shape-note singing, a traditional form of American choral music.

"Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts is dedicated to creating opportunities that put resources and funding back into the hands of artists and tradition-bearers," said Virginia Siegel, AFTA director. "It's inspiring to see these artists continue to share their expertise and preserve Arkansas's cultural heritage."

The apprenticeships ran from November 2024 through May 2025.



Fulbright Processing Grant

In FY25, the University of Arkansas Libraries Special Collections Division received a \$149,796 grant from the Fulbright Program to support processing of its extensive collection documenting the program's global impact. Katrina Windon, head of the Collections Management and Processing Unit, serves as principal investigator, while Kayci Kruhmin, International Education Project archivist, leads processing efforts.

The Institute of International Education Records on the Fulbright Program (MC 2567) is one of Special Collections' largest holdings, spanning 1990–2017. The collection includes 1,025 linear feet of materials and 78.2 gigabytes of digital content, offering a rich record of the Fulbright Program's influence on international education and cultural exchange.

"Special Collections is honored to be the home of the Fulbright Program's records, as well as numerous other collections documenting decades of international educational exchange," said Windon. "We're grateful that the Fulbright Program's support will help us process and make these extensive records accessible to researchers in the coming years."

Kruhmin is assisted by graduate assistant Alejandra Gomez and student employees in organizing and cataloging the materials. The detailed processing work ensures that the collection is fully arranged, described, and accessible for research. The project's first phase is expected to conclude in late 2025, with the University Libraries providing additional support for two more years to ensure long-term access.

Researchers can already explore related resources, including the Council for International Exchange of Scholars Records (MC 703) and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Historical Collection (MC 468), which document the Fulbright Program's earlier decades.

Together, these collections offer a rare and comprehensive window into the Fulbright Program's enduring legacy in international education and cross-cultural understanding.

AR Creation Studios

Level 2 of Mullins Library has transformed into one of the most innovative and creative spaces on the University of Arkansas campus. The newly opened AR Creation Studios (ACS) bring together a suite of hands-on, digital, and immersive learning environments designed to support students, faculty, and staff in creating, experimenting, and producing work across disciplines.

At the center of the renovation is the Makerspace, a vibrant hub equipped with 3D printers, sewing machines, vinyl and laser cutters, hand tools, and other fabrication equipment. Open to users of all skill levels, the Makerspace gives the campus community a place to prototype objects, build models, craft designs, and learn new making techniques. Before using the Makerspace, users complete a safety orientation and, for some tools, specialized training.

Nearby, Mullins now features a full audio and video recording suite, including three podcast studios, a semiprofessional audio recording studio, and a dedicated video recording studio. The podcast booths seat up to two people and are ideal for interviews, solo episodes, student media projects and class assignments. The audio recording studio supports a range of projects, from voiceover sessions to small musical ensembles, with a separate control room and professional-grade equipment. The adjacent video studio offers space to film presentations, interviews, class projects and creative work; as with the audio studio, an orientation is required before booking.

Immersive technology is another major focus. The Kaufman Augmented & Virtual Reality Studios include several rooms dedicated to AR and VR creation, experimentation and research. These studios allow students to explore 3D modeling, virtual environments, immersive storytelling, interactive design and spatial visualization. They are open to users across disciplines, from architecture and engineering to art, media studies and education.

Complementing the AR/VR spaces is the Visualization Lab, a black-box, projection-based environment with a large curved screen designed for immersive display. Students and faculty use the lab to present 3D models, display data visualizations, run interactive simulations, or share digital media in an environment optimized for collaboration and group discussion. Because of the specialized setup, reservations require advance coordination with ACS staff.

Rounding out the floor is the Digital Media and Music Lab, equipped with iMac workstations, multimedia software and MIDI keyboards for music production and editing. This lab serves as a post-production space for polishing projects created elsewhere in ACS—mixing audio, editing video, refining podcast episodes or assembling digital media for presentation.

Across all of Level 2, ACS emphasizes accessibility and learning by doing. Most studios require an orientation, and reservations are recommended, but the facilities are intentionally open to beginners and experts alike. Staff assist users in learning the equipment and workflows, but the focus is on empowering creators to develop their own skills.

With AR Creation Studios, Mullins Library has reimagined what a library can be: a place where ideas become tangible, recordings come to life, virtual worlds take shape, and students gain hands-on experience with tools that support coursework, research and creative exploration. The renovated Level 2 now stands as a campus-wide resource for innovation, collaboration and the future of digital and physical making.



BEYOND THE BOOKS: CREATING SPACES FOR CONNECTION



Stress Busters

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the University of Arkansas Libraries expanded the long-standing tradition of finals week Study Breaks into a broader series of Stress Buster events held throughout the semester. What was once an end-of-semester ritual in Mullins Library has evolved into an ongoing effort to support student well-being during multiple high-pressure times, including midterms.

The new Stress Buster format offered students more frequent opportunities to unwind, recharge, and connect with others in a welcoming space. Events took place in both the east and west lobbies of Mullins Library, featuring everything from coffee and snacks to craft sessions, gaming, and visits from therapy dogs. In October, for example, students could stop by to paint pumpkins or make friendship bracelets between study sessions. During December finals, hot cocoa and Pop-Tarts returned alongside cozy crafts and the ever-popular canine visitors. By April and early May, spring Study Breaks featured fresh fruit, coffee, and creative activities designed to help students de-stress before exams.

The shift from a single week of Study Breaks to a semester-long schedule reflects a growing focus on holistic student support. By introducing stress busters during midterms, the Libraries recognized that academic stress doesn't wait until finals, and neither should wellness resources. The events encouraged students to take intentional pauses, offering a mental reset and a reminder that success includes balance and self-care.

Partnerships with campus groups such as University Housing, Counseling and Psychological Services, and the Associated Student Government helped make these events more dynamic and accessible. Drop-in by design, they welcomed hundreds of students each semester who came for the snacks and stayed for the sense of community.

Through these expanded stress busters, Mullins Library continues to demonstrate that it's more than a study space - it's a place where students can find encouragement, connection, and a moment of calm when they need it most.

ASERL Conference

In May 2025, the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) held its Annual Meeting and Spring Membership Meeting at the University of Arkansas Libraries. The two-day event welcomed representatives from 35 of ASERL's 39 member institutions, highlighting the organization's strong regional engagement and the University Libraries' growing leadership in research collaboration across the Southeast.

Attendees toured the updated spaces in Mullins Library as well as the nearby annex facility, gaining firsthand insight into how the U of A Libraries are redefining research and learning environments for the modern scholar.

The program combined formal business sessions with professional development and networking. ASERL President Jeff Steely moderated a panel discussion on evolving staffing models for researcher support, while University of Arkansas Dean of Libraries Jason Battles joined colleagues in leading a session on donor engagement and strategic growth. Margaret Sova McCabe, Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation at the University of Arkansas, delivered the keynote address, emphasizing the Libraries' critical role in advancing the University's research mission.

Beyond meetings, the conference also offered opportunities for connection and collaboration. Attendees visited Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and enjoyed informal gatherings that strengthened professional relationships among member institutions. These exchanges reflected ASERL's ongoing commitment to fostering community and innovation among research libraries throughout the Southeast. The meeting concluded with a reception at Carnall Hall, where the ASERL Board surprised Executive Director John Burger with a cake in honor of his 25 years of service to the organization.

For the University of Arkansas Libraries, hosting the ASERL meeting was both an honor and a milestone. It showcased the Libraries' revitalized spaces, research partnerships, and strategic vision while positioning Fayetteville as a hub for regional academic collaboration. The 2025 ASERL meeting served as a reminder that the Libraries are not only stewards of knowledge, but also active leaders in shaping the future of research, learning, and engagement.





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