Greetings! As the newly-appointed Dean of the Ball State University Libraries, I look forward to working with the Board of Governors and dedicated members of the Friends of the Alexander M. Bracken Library to continue the Libraries’ 40-year legacy of service to our students, faculty, and community. In many ways, my appointment has been a homecoming. I actually hold two degrees from Ball State and served as a librarian at the University Libraries from 2004 until 2013, when I assumed the directorship of the Kranert Memorial Library at the University of Indianapolis. I value the opportunity to return to the Ball State University Libraries in this leadership role and will sustain the culture of creativity, innovation, and service that continues to distinguish the work of the Libraries to support the teaching and learning mission of the University.

Academic libraries are evolving rapidly to meet the emerging needs of users who require expanded information, digital, and technological literacies to navigate the complex world of learning. Libraries maintain a high level of relevance in the changing information landscape, and the University Libraries continue to diversify our collections and services to optimize the discovery and access to scholarly resources, engaging students and faculty in new modes of research and knowledge building.

The future of the Libraries must also include the creation of more flexible, active learning spaces to invite student engagement, deep research, and meaningful collaboration. Ball State’s commitment to transformative, real-world experiences for students expands the learning locus beyond the boundaries of the classroom and inspires the re-imagination of library environments that integrate the traditional academic library ambiance with innovative educational technologies, vibrant social space, and creative physical aesthetics.

Since 1977, the Friends of the Alexander M. Bracken Library have played an important role in fueling the momentum of the Libraries. The interest, support, and engagement of the Friends will continue to be a valuable asset to the Libraries as we collectively pursue a vision aligned with the teaching, learning, and service mission of the University and continue to develop the Libraries’ collections, services, and spaces to promote information discovery, creative and collaborative learning, social enrichment, and the best habits of the intellectual life.

University Libraries Hosts Muncie Sesquicentennial and Bracken Library Anniversary Exhibits

Although the Friends of Bracken Library did not hold any programs this past year, the Friends did sponsor opening events for two major exhibits curated by Archives and Special Collections. On the evening of August 6, 2015, more than 100 Friends joined us for the opening of From Magic City to Middletown: 150 Years of Muncie’s History, an exhibit celebrating Muncie’s history through the scope of the Middletown studies that were conducted in the early twentieth century. The exhibit featured historic photographs, letters, diaries, and artifacts highlighting key individuals, businesses, and events from Muncie’s dynamic and well-documented past.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Alexander M. Bracken Library. Dozens of Friends, library staff both past and present, and community members joined us for an exhibit opening held on March 25, 2016 to honor this important milestone. The exhibit, titled Bracken Library: 40 Years of Service, Innovation, and Growth, celebrated the library’s legacy of service to Ball State University students, faculty, staff, and members of the surrounding communities and documented the library’s early years as well as its transition to a predominantly digital service and learning environment.

Dear Friends of Bracken Library,

As the newly-appointed Interim Executive Secretary of the Friends of Bracken Library, I would like to begin this inaugural column by thanking our outgoing Executive Secretary, John Straw, for his excellent leadership and service to the Friends and to Ball State University over the past fifteen years. Additionally, during his eighteen-year tenure at the University Libraries, John guided the Archives and Special Collections program through a tremendous period of growth that included the acquisition of several significant research collections, an increased emphasis on building strong relationships with donors and community members, and the development of an online, digital research and learning environment for the University Libraries.

This past year was another successful one for the Friends. Currently, there are over 2,000 members internationally and Friends continue to make significant financial contributions and donations of books, special collections items, and other materials to support the University Libraries’ mission to serve the academic needs of Ball State University students and faculty. In addition to gaining several new members over the past year, we unfortunately also had to say goodbye to a great Friend of the Library, Frank A. Bracken. In addition to his successful career as an attorney and public official, Frank served on the Ball State University Board of Trustees for thirty-five years and was a long-time member of the Friends. Frank and his wife, Judy Bracken, have made several generous financial contributions and gift-in-kind donations to the University Libraries over the years; the most significant being the Frank A. Bracken U.S. Civil War Collection and the Bracken Family Papers that were donated to Archives and Special Collections and featured in a popular exhibit sponsored by the Friends in Winter 2014. Frank’s generosity and leadership will be greatly missed.

This year we are very excited to welcome Matthew Shaw back to the Ball State University community as our new Dean of University Libraries and President of the Friends. I look forward to working with the Board of Governors, Dean Shaw, and all of the Friends to continue to grow and strengthen the Libraries’ collections and services. As always, we are grateful for your contributions and continued support.

Sincerely,
Brandon T. Pieczko
Interim Executive Secretary
Financial Donations Support the University Libraries’ Collections, Services, and Programs

Financial donations by the Library Friends to existing Ball State University Foundation accounts supporting the University Libraries totaled more than $22,200. The following donors made contributions of $100 or more in fiscal year 2015-2016.

Ms. Jennifer J. Abell
Mr. and Mrs. Byron Adcock
Mr. Stefan and Mrs. Joan Anderson
Mr. David and Mrs. Joan Bahlmann
Mrs. Linda S. Barb and Mr. David Hinshaw
Dr. John and Mrs. Jane Beekman
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Mr. Bruce A. Venable
Mr. Clyde P. Watkins
Drs. Donald and Sue Whittaker
Mr. Daniel L. Young
Mrs. Marjorie P. Zeigler
Mrs. Carol A. Zuck

In addition to their generous financial gifts, Friends helped strengthen our collections by donating hundreds of books, DVDs, journals, manuscripts, archival collections, and other materials that support the educational, instructional, and research needs of Ball State students and faculty. The following are just a few examples of the gifts-in-kind received from Library Friends in the past year.

Nancy Baker donated a collection of photographs, scrapbooks, audio and video recordings, and other instructional materials pertaining to Jewish self-help and family planning education programs in Muncie and Delaware County between 1965 and 2012.

Dr. Emerita S. Schulte donated 529 books and 6 audiovisual recordings including bestselling novels, literary fiction, classical literature, and titles pertaining to art, philosophy, history, poetry, and French studies.

Mrs. Sue A. Sommer donated a collection of material relating to the history of the Muncie Public Education and the Indiana Bicentennial.

Mrs. Penny A. Smith donated a collection of material relating to the history of Hillcroft Services, Inc.

Donor Board of Governors

Friends Sponsor Annual Dinner and Kirkmah Lecture

Annual Dinner and Kirkmah Lecture

The Friends of Bracken Library held its annual dinner at the Ball State University Alumni Center on the evening of September 22, 2016. The program included recognition of members of the Board of Governors and the annual Kirkmah Lecture. This year’s Kirkmah Lecture was delivered by our new Dean of University Libraries, Matthew Shaw. Dean Shaw’s talk was entitled “And Many More! Building on Bracken Library’s 40 Years of Service.” (The newsletter publication deadline preceded the date of the annual dinner. More information about the event will be provided in next year’s newsletter.)

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors for the Friends of the Alexander M. Bracken Library are a group of dedicated supporters of the University Libraries who give of their time and talents to help establish goals and coordinate functions of the Friends. Board members recognize with certificates of appreciation for completing their terms on the Board were John Bower, J. Andrew Dale, Christopher Flook, John McCreery, Brenda Williamsom, and student member Jake Griffin. New Board members who began their three-year terms and received a Friends’ lapel pin at the annual dinner are Linda Barber Pike, Dale Basnah, Anne Condran, Beth Messner, Nancy Norris, and student member Maia Jones.

"Middletown USA" Concert Celebrates Muncie’s History and Indiana’s Bicentennial

On the evening of May 14, 2016 the University Libraries collaborated with Masterworks Chorale, the Center for Middletown Studies, Motivate Our Minds, and WIPB-TV to sponsor a special musical event celebrating 150 years of Muncie’s history and its legacy as America’s “Middletown.” The free event, held in the Muncie Central High School Auditorium, featured a performance by Masterworks Chorale of Middletown Chronicles: The Making of Middletown, America, an original choral symphonic piece about Muncie’s history created by classical composer Marjorie M. Rusche specifically for the Indiana Bicentennial. The lyrics for the performance were inspired by oral histories and other archival resources held by Archives and Special Collections and the performance was supplemented by historic photographs of Muncie provided by the archives. The event also featured a special proclamation by Mayor Dennis Tyler, as well as artwork and performances by local fourth and fifth graders from Motivate Our Minds (MOMs). In preparation for the event, the MOMs students visited Bracken Library to learn more about the history of Muncie and the Middletown Studies. The “Middletown USA” project received an official endorsement from the Indiana Bicentennial Commission and was funded by several grants including a state-funded grant from the Indiana Arts Commission. A recorded version of the concert aired on WIPB-TV in June 2016.