Libraries Acquire New Cookery Collection
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In the last few years, the ways scholars and publishers make books and reach readers have been changing. The scholarly world is in a time of transition. As many publishers move from print to electronic formats, we’re seeing both challenges and opportunities. What’s complicated? Figuring out who pays for the way scholarly research gets published and distributed. Is there some cause for optimism? Absolutely. New trends in support of Open Access mean more students and scholars will be able to find and read more information. Is there more to discuss? Yes, which is why Communications Manager Cindy Hunter Morgan talked with Associate Dean for Collections Strategies & Preservation Steve Sowards about some of these trends and challenges.

Sowards joined the MSU Libraries in 1996 as Head of Social Sciences and Humanities Reference. Two years later, he was named Head of Main Library Reference Services. Before coming to MSU, he was Humanities Librarian at McCabe Library at Swarthmore College, Assistant Librarian for Reference at the Duggan Library at Hanover College, and Supervisor of Microfilms Services in the Serials Department at Indiana University’s Main Library. He earned his bachelor’s degree in history and anthropology from Stanford University, and he earned three degrees from Indiana University: a master’s in history, an MLS, and a Ph.D. in history. He has published and presented widely on a variety of topics.
We promote equal access to information and spaces for all, so in many ways it’s great to see paywall barriers dissolve. We want to increase access. And yet, most any flip has consequences. What are the implications of this flip? There are two big ones. First, scholarly authors and their universities have to find ways to pay for what are called “article processing charges” (APCs) under an Open Access model (articles are much farther along the path to OA than full-length books). Scholars and university leaders are still sorting this out. Sometimes the money comes from the pockets of authors, sometimes from grants, department funds, or repurposed library funds. Sometimes it’s a combination. The second implication stems from the first: if authors must pay, we must think about how we avoid a future in which only the voices of the rich (and those who can secure money from the rich) get to be published, and therefore get to be read (readers have a stake in the outcome too).

I can’t help thinking about Lewis Hyde’s *The Gift*, a book (some have called it a manifesto) about the importance of sharing knowledge, information, and creativity in a world increasingly governed by money. Hyde asserts, “Ideas do not circulate freely when they are treated as commodities.” For Hyde, the circulation of knowledge is or should be a gift — an act of goodwill that contributes to community. I think we try to think like Hyde here at MSU Libraries: we advocate for and try to create a gift community built around accessibility and inclusion. Of course, we still have to pay for much of what we share as gifts, and in this way I suppose we agree to convert ideas into commodities so that we might turn them back into ideas and share them with students and scholars. Where and how does our ethos of stewardship guide our work as we decide which journals to subscribe to?

In the Libraries, we listen to our users — faculty members, graduate students, undergraduates, community users — and over time there are areas of consensus about what to collect. We consider both long-standing and emerging topics of interest, and the reputation of publishers and their journals. It is our job to choose on behalf of the campus, to both lead and support. We have to keep in mind that our ability to choose is a form of power. The Libraries have the duty to use that power as best we can: narrowly to serve campus needs, but more broadly to serve society.

Early in 2020, we signed a three-year “transformative” read-and-publish (R + P) agreement with the De Gruyter publishing house to provide default open access publishing for all articles by MSU authors in De Gruyter journals. What does this arrangement mean?

It means that MSU lead authors publishing in these journals no longer have to pay the usual De Gruyter article processing charge, which can amount to hundreds of dollars. These agreements, which are cropping up between many publishers and libraries, are called “transformative” because they are part of a transition process to the author-pays, APC-based model. Under the “read-and-publish” concept, the library is paying so that everyone on our campus will be eligible to “read” all the recent articles published by De Gruyter (even if they are not Open Access), and paying a bit more so that all our campus authors can “publish” articles in Open Access format in the many De Gruyter journals, without paying article-by-article fees from their grants or out of pocket. APC costs can be quite high.

“In a society where everything is for sale, libraries play a contrarian role: we try to give away what we have. Generosity is completely consistent with our mission.”

Scholarly Publishing

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It might help to begin this discussion with a brief and admittedly simplified definition of scholarly publishing, which we’ll distinguish from literary publishing and/or trade publishing. For the purposes of our discussion, let’s establish that we’re thinking about what many call academic publishing, centered around academic research and scholarship. For years, this work has been published in scientific and scholarly journals, in books, and sometimes as theses; for years this work has generally been vetted through peer review or some kind of editorial refereeing; and for years readers helped pay for what was published. There is a lot to admire about this traditional model, notably the circulation of important information (such as the kind of specialized research that leads to advances in medicine), but that circulation depended on access, and for years access was restricted to those who could afford subscriptions or purchase costs or to those who had access to institutions that provided access — academic libraries, for example. Now much of scholarly publishing is switching to an Open Access model. What does this mean?

In the flipped (Open Access) model, readers no longer have to pay to read what is published online. Paywall barriers to reading go away, but because publication costs persist, instead the authors or their sponsors pay to have their work published, or at least published in Open Access, which increasingly is the expectation of readers and grant funders. That is a great disruption: imagine what a shock that model would be for groceries, or music… oops, actually we have had something like this model for music, and it led to big changes.
Scholarly Publishing

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into the thousands of dollars per article: for De Gruyter, that cost is typically in the hundreds of dollars, and our R + P deal covers those costs on the basis of an estimated number of submitted and accepted articles each year.

What other costs related to scholarly publishing have we committed to in recent years in the interest of reducing barriers to information and supporting scholars?

We are sampling several experiments and pilots, which are trying out multiple methods to cover costs. In addition to De Gruyter, we have a similar arrangement with Cambridge University Press. In addition to R + P plans, we are partners in some membership models that digitize texts for Open Access. An obvious example is the “Independent Voices” project from Reveal Digital (now part of Ithaka) which digitized underground newspapers from the 1960s, in some cases using copies in the MSU Murray & Hong Special Collections. Reveal Digital began scanning from original newspapers about ten years ago: for example, they relied on MSU for copies of Joint Issue published in East Lansing from 1970–1974. You can find the whole collection at https://voices.revealdigital.org/.

As technology continues to evolve, scholars are able to do new things when they publish their work. They can embed a video or a data set in an article. How do we simultaneously accommodate these innovations and make sure we’re creating and sharing accessible content available to all users?

Libraries want to preserve texts (in all media and formats) for the long haul. We do our best to work with publishers and vendors who support those new features. Much of that takes place in negotiation of license terms: for example, we push for assurances about long-term archiving. Our licensing model also seeks accessibility, that is, compliance with the terms of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). That is another side of “access” that is just as important as OA.

Two questions that lurk. First, if authors must “pay to play” in the flipped Open Access model, is there some risk that publishers will accept inferior work to generate more money?

That is a substantial risk. We know about “predatory” sham journals from publishers who will publish almost anything in return for payment. That is where the credentialing function of reputable presses and responsible library acquisition can help.

Also, in a pay-to-play model, very powerful and/or very rich entities can find ways to throw their weight around when scholarly publishing happens on the internet. A national government may block access to a publication that is critical of its policies. A technology company like Facebook, Amazon, Google or Twitter can make it either easy or difficult to publish and find a text on the web. A corporation or trade association that pays for a research study may act to suppress or distort the findings if those are unfavorable.

And second…as the publishing model changes and more publishing shifts to theoretically “quicker” formats, will it become too easy to push work through to publication too fast?

The peer-review process for scholarly publication can be slow, but is regarded as the best way to bring the cream to the top. We’re faced with important questions: How can urgently-needed new research findings be published fast, without sacrificing quality? This is not just an abstract topic: it came up a lot with clinical study of COVID-19. A lot of so-called “pre-prints” were distributed in the last year: some reported on solid research, some did not. If those pre-prints are being found by readers who just use Google, how can those readers sort out what they see? This is not just about real versus “fake” information: for fast-moving topics, how do readers (including doctors) find the most current information, instead of tentative and preliminary findings?

It’s probably natural for many to confuse Open Access with Open Educational Resources (OER), though they aren’t the same thing, right?

Right. OER publications — which are typically textbooks assigned for course use — take a different approach to Open Access, one that explicitly aims to spare students from high costs of textbooks. Obviously someone still has to write, edit, publish and maintain the OER online, and that role falls to faculty, libraries, or other campus units. In the MSU Libraries, we have a program headed by Regina Gong that supports faculty work with grant dollars, and provides a framework to assist those faculty authors in course design.

Last May MSU Libraries, under the leadership of Dean Salem, were given oversight of MSU Press. How do you see the role of the university press evolving in this world of scholarly publishing?

The fundamental missions have much in common: publication in support of scholarship. The methods and formats evolve over time. A partnership between libraries and university presses is a benefit for both. There is efficiency when presses can operate with more confidence that libraries will buy what is published; and when libraries can operate with more confidence that presses are publishing what our readers want.

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As many publishing models transition from print to electronic formats, new opportunities open up for scholars. We’re seeing an explosion of interest in digital formats and digital repositories. Michigan State University has taken over hosting and development of Humanities Commons, an online network for people working in the humanities. The site was launched by the Modern Language Association (MLA) in 2016 and has become an important part of the online scholarly infrastructure. MESH Research, a collaboration of the College of Arts & Letters and the MSU Libraries, will oversee the Commons ongoing development. How do you see the role of MESH and Humanities Commons in digital scholarly communication?

KF: Scholarly communication is in a period of significant experimentation and development right now, as scholars and researchers from across the university’s fields consider the best ways to produce and share their work with one another and with the world, and as publishers seek new means of disseminating, preserving, and cultivating audiences for that work. Humanities Commons is a key part of that experimentation. The Commons is an open-access network on which more than 27,000 scholars and practitioners from across the humanities and around the world have created profiles, formed discussion groups, developed public websites, and shared a wide range of kinds of work through the network’s integrated repository. MSU is the home of the first institutional node on the network, MSU Commons (commons.msu.edu), which provides access all of the Commons features to all members of the MSU community.

MESH Research oversees the development of the Commons, and we have a lot of expansion planned for the next few years — opening up to more disciplines, bringing in more institutions, and adding more new features to make the platform a rich site for scholars as they invent the digital future of their fields.

Open Educational Resources (OER) continue to increase, and we’ve seen tremendous growth in the program here at MSU under your leadership. OER refers to works that copyright owners have “opened” by adding a Creative Commons or other license that removes some copyright restrictions. The idea, as you’ve helped many learn here at MSU, is to allow others to “retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute” and to reduce costs for students, who can access this material without having to pay for expensive textbooks. What’s the review process like for OER content? How rigorous is it?

RG: There’s a lot of work involved in collaborating, supporting, and building capacity for our faculty OER creators. While we do not have a formalized peer-review process yet for the content that our faculty create, my experience is that our faculty intentionally seek input from their disciplinary colleagues to provide feedback. Additionally, when our faculty implement their OER projects, they revise based on how their students interact with the course content. The good thing about OER is that it is never static and constantly undergoes an iterative process to make it more context-specific and engaging for our students. I also provide oversight and guidance when it comes to ensuring that the materials that faculty incorporate into their work (images, figures, photos, illustrations, videos, etc.) are copyright-free, which means that they are either in the public domain or have open licenses. We also review for accessibility to make sure that the material we published adheres to the University and MSU Libraries guidelines for accessible resources. We also provide copy-editing services in order to ensure that the materials we published conforms with our OER style guide. I call these our wrap-around services and support for our faculty as they engage and work through their OER projects.

Lastly, while the OER Program has affordability as one of our goals, it is more than that. Removing the barriers towards college affordability through OER is important but it is not all. Our faculty really appreciate the freedom and agency to create materials that not only makes the course more engaging, but also contributes to improved and better learning as well as more active student engagement (regardless of course modalities). The opportunity to practice open pedagogy through OER to innovate their teaching practices is one of the things that excites our faculty with open education. I’m so glad I’m able to do that with my work as the OER librarian.

As many publishing models transition from print to electronic formats, new opportunities open up for scholars. We’re seeing an explosion of interest in digital formats and digital repositories. Michigan State University has taken over hosting and development of Humanities Commons, an online network for people working in the humanities. The site was launched by the Modern Language Association (MLA) in 2016 and has become an important part of the online scholarly infrastructure. MESH Research, a collaboration of the College of Arts & Letters and the MSU Libraries, will oversee the Commons ongoing development. How do you see the role of MESH and Humanities Commons in digital scholarly communication?

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Director of Digital Humanities and Professor of English, Michigan State University

REGINA GONG
Open Education Resources Librarian

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he world begins at a kitchen table,” Joy Harjo asserts in her poem, “Perhaps the World Ends Here.” “Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it. / It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human,” she also writes. It is true our lives are inexorably intertwined with food, which figures into anything we study: slavery, plastic, trench warfare, medieval history, time & leisure, transportation, indigenous cultures, barbed wire, and our own childhoods. The end-stopped list is hardly sufficient: a catalog of subject areas affected by and conjoined with food is infinite, which is partly why the Library’s new cookery collection from the Brass Sisters is worth celebrating.

Murray & Hong Special Collections acquired more than 6,500 cookbooks and cookery ephemera from the famous Brass Sisters in May. The sisters are known for their love of food, their PBS Television show, (The Food Flirts); the four cookbooks they wrote together; and their tremendous collection of cookbooks, which spans five centuries (1698–2015) and includes more than 100 manuscript (handwritten) cookbooks, community cookbooks, and hundreds of published cookbooks. In addition to acquiring these cookbooks, MSU Libraries also acquired the sisters’ archive of food ephemera, menus, and personal papers. With this acquisition, Special Collections now holds more than 45,000 cookbooks.

Marilynn and Sheila Brass (the Brass Sisters) are longtime Cambridge, Massachusetts residents, and they are much-loved figures in the Boston food scene. Between them, they have 142 years of combined baking and cooking experience. They’ve been called “Dessert Geniuses” by Food & Wine Magazine. People Magazine chose one of their books, Heirloom Baking, for their Holiday Gift Guide. Now the sisters are working on a Memoir, Milk and Honey, Stories From A Jewish-American Life, in which they celebrate family and food and growing up in the 1930s to 1950s in a small town on the North Shore of Massachusetts. Of that time, they remember their home on Sea Foam Avenue in Winthrop with love and, probably too, some longing.

“We still re-live the glories of the cakes, cookies, breads, pies, tarts, pastries, and desserts that came out of that sunny home kitchen to honor and nurture family and friends,” the sisters have written. “When we could barely reach across the kitchen table, we were already turning scraps of dough into miniature braided desserts.”

Above: Marilynn and Sheila, The Brass Sisters, at home in their kitchen, ready for more culinary adventures. Photo by Bruce Seidel.

Right: Marilynn and Sheila with their mother, Dorothy Katziff Brass on Winthrop Shore Drive, 1945. Photo by their father, Harry Brass.
challahs and jam tarts, lovingly brushed with an egg glaze to make them shiny. We still remember what it was like to lie on the oilcloth-covered glider on the back porch, reading and eating an egg salad sandwich, watching our mother through the window as she put together one of her blueberry pies or frosted her Chocolate Velvet Cake.”

In recent years, the Brass Sisters were one of three finalists for a James Beard Foundation Broadcast Media Award for their nationally aired Public Television Series, *The Food Flirts*. They also were honored with a “Break Out Foodies of the Year” by the Taste Awards, and they were nominated and confirmed as Cambridge Food Heroes. The sisters have appeared on the Cooking Channel and hosted the PBS show, *The Brass Sisters: Queens of Comfort Food*, which featured the sisters preparing an informal dinner party for their friends while leading viewers on a gastronomic tour of some of their favorite Cambridge haunts. They’ve also appeared on *Throwdown with Bobby Flay* on the Food Network. (They beat Iron Chef Flay by baking their recipe for Pineapple Upside-Down Cake.) They have been guests on the PBS series *Simply Ming* with Chef Ming Tsai and have presented segments and recipes on National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered — Found Recipes* and the NPR blog, *The Salt*. The sisters were special guests on *Antiques Roadshow* and *FYI*, sharing a tour of their collection of culinary antiques, which included their unrivaled assortment of antique food molds. *The Boston Globe Magazine* devoted two complete Sunday food columns to recipes from their books *Heirloom Cooking* and *Baking With The Brass Sisters*. Their books are collected not only because of the reliability of the recipes and the culinary history they preserve but because readers come to think of the sisters as friends.

Large academic libraries collect around areas of strength, and the MSU Libraries are known for deep and far-reaching culinary collections. In late 2020, Head of Murray & Hong Special Collections Leslie McRoberts was contacted by Keith Arbour, a historian based in Cambridge, Massachusetts who specializes in early printing. Arbour, along with his aunt, Radcliffe College Culinary Curator Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, worked with Marilynn and Sheila to catalog the sisters’ vast collection of cookbooks and ephemera. Arbour knew about the strong collections at MSU Libraries through his colleague and friend, former MSU Libraries Head of Preservation and Head of Binding and Collections Care at the Library of Congress Jeanne M. Drewes. When he learned that the Brass Sisters’ collection might be available, he contacted McRoberts.

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As we consider our hopes for the Brass Sisters Collection — that the materials will be used by many people in many ways — it felt right and important to welcome others to reflect on what the collection might mean for MSU, for our wider community, and for them. Communications Manager Cindy Hunter Morgan asked several people in our immediate and wider communities various questions. Here is what we heard.

**More Flavor in the Pot: A Wider Community Reflects on the Brass Sisters Collection**

You made an initial trip to Cambridge to visit the Brass Sisters in January and another visit to examine an additional 500 pieces (print and manuscript cookbooks, menus, and other culinary ephemera) in June. Tell us a little about that time.

It was wonderful. On my first visit we only had time for a brief conversation, but this time we were much better able to get to know each other. I’d check in with them at the beginning and end of each day, as well as every few hours during the course of my work. I’d share interesting finds and ask questions, and this would always develop into fascinating conversations, often including stories told by Marilynn. We went through the boxes of manuscript cookbooks together, and the sisters always remembered when they had used a recipe from a particular item in their own books or television programs.

The items that I was inspecting were arranged on shelves in the basement, and as I worked down there — checking the items against the library catalog — I enjoyed hearing classic films or mystery shows the sisters were watching upstairs. *The King and I* made me whistle while I worked!

The sisters’ home is full of culinary memorabilia — charming old advertisements and shop signs, as well as hundreds of antique copper jelly molds. The house is truly a shrine to all things culinary.

**Did you learn anything about how the sisters acquired the items in the collection?**

From what I gleaned, these items were collected over many years, often in antique stores in New England. I believe they had an antique dealer friend who traveled frequently to England and would bring back a quantity of cookbooks for them after every visit. This explains the high number of scarce British titles in the collection.

**What are the highlights in this collection that our wider community should know about?**

I think that the most exciting items in this collection are the manuscript cookbooks, as well as the printed books that have been heavily annotated by hand. These are truly unique; by their very nature they exist in one copy only. They embody the lives, work, and interests of their owners and compilers. The notes on ingredient substitutions can tell us about the availability of various foods during times of hardships, while handwritten comments on the source of a recipe or how it was received at the dinner table are informative and charming glances into social history.

This entire collection is an extremely wide-ranging gathering of materials documenting one of life’s greatest pleasures — food — from countless cultural perspectives, often with unique features. It is a testament to the passion and dedication of two important figures in the culinary world — Sheila and Marilynn Brass — whose work deserves to be preserved and studied for generations to come.

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Manuscript No. 32 — Floral: Anon. English-language United States manuscript and clipped magazine and newspaper cookbook inscribed on and pasted onto 48 pages of the machine-ruled leaves of a narrow folio account book circa 1918 to 1920s. Original binding covered with floral pattern textile (muslin or chintz?) at early date. Attributions include: “Mrs. Manvilles Layer Cake”; “Walnut Jelly Cake Mrs. Matthews Newburgh”; “Mrs. Huntington”; Fannie; Miss Wells. Loosely inserted: ephemeral printed leaflet, “War Time Recipes for None Such Mince Meat using Substitute Flours to help win the War” (Syracuse, NY: Merrell-Soule Co., s.a.).
You’re collaborating with Head of Murray & Hong Special Collections Leslie McRoberts on a special topics course at Eastern Michigan University about culinary history, food, and cultural history. How will you use parts of the Brass Sisters collection for this course? Which items will you choose and how will your students interact with them? How will your experience as a museum curator influence the way you interact with this collection?

How might a collection like this help us better understand history? How might it help us interrogate it?

I’m thrilled that MSU Libraries have acquired the Brass Sisters cookery collection, which has thousands of sources covering centuries of culinary history. It’s very exciting to see such different source types in a single collection, too — ranging from published cookbooks to community cookbooks to advertisements to menus. These different kinds of sources can help to give us a richer picture of how food affected people’s daily lives and how food in turn was affected by changes in agriculture, technology, transportation, economics, and culture. I’m especially excited to work with the handwritten culinary manuscripts, which can reveal all sorts of fascinating things about cooking, eating, and beliefs about food on personal level. This is an important acquisition for MSU Libraries, enlarging on a culinary collection that is already one of the best in the world. Students, faculty, and visiting researchers will be using it for generations.

Social media is a powerful tool that keeps us connected, even on the periphery. As a member of the student and alumni group, Preservation Eastern, an arm of the Historic Preservation graduate program at EMU, I saw a posting from program director Nancy Bryk, who sought out cookery related topics from colleagues past and present to discuss in her Fall 2021 class on Food and Foodways. Since my first meeting with Nancy more than 15 years ago, she has always been one of those voices in my head, challenging me, and now is the time to return the favor. To share the Brass Sisters and our enormous cookery collection with the graduate students from EMU is a dream — food is always a common thread, for better or worse, it unites us all. Food plays an enormous role in our cultural and social lives, the exercise the students will have with the Sisters and their collection (including an oral history, virtual exhibition and collection guide), celebrates that very experience.

More Flavor in the Pot: A Wider Community Reflects on the Brass Sisters Collection

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Photo by Austin DeRaedt.
See p.19 for citations.
Why is this sort of collection important for what we think of as cultural heritage? Why is it important to preserve this history? How do you imagine scholars, educators, food writers, chefs, and community members might engage with this collection? How might you imagine engaging with it?

Food is the essence of our history. Like much of material culture, and perhaps more so, food tells us a lot about who we are, who we meet, and where we travel. An expansive collection of cookbooks that spans five centuries is a wonderful, multifaceted feast that serves the needs of both scholars and the public, opening the kitchen door to new research and the delight of discovery.

I could see both the public and scholars engaging it through an interface like whatamericaate.org — giving users access to the cookbooks but at the same time contextualizing them and allowing for searches by map and timeline.

If we had this collection when you were a student at MSU, how might you have used it for poetry or papers or general interest? How might you encourage others, now, to use this collection as a way into exploring the humanities?

It would have been really fun to write a persona poem from the perspective of the sisters growing up when their mother was teaching them to cook. It would be wonderful to study their personal papers and manuscript cookbooks and use the wealth of imagery that writing about food often supplies us with. I would also enjoy trying out these different recipes that were passed down through generations. It would make me feel connected to people I’ve never met before.

I would encourage others to simply explore the collection. Just by leafing through the cookbooks and papers, you can get a sense for who these people are and just how personal the recipes were to them. By reading about others’ experiences and upbringing it helps you gain understanding and perspective, and encourages a celebration of diversity, which is what the humanities are all about!

DEAN REHBERGER
Associate Professor, History, Director of MATRIX at MSU, and co-founder of MSU’s What America Ate project

ESTEE SCHLENNER
MSU Class of 2019 (English), Programs and Communications Coordinator at Michigan Humanities for Poetry Out Loud and Great Michigan Read
Why does food literacy matter, and how might an understanding of our cultural and historical eating habits help us make better food choices?

In the U.S., we are more removed than ever from the agricultural practices that sustain us. Nearly half of Americans never or rarely seek out information about where our food was grown and how it was produced. I hope the new Brass Sisters cookery collection encourages all of us to think more about the stories behind what we eat.

We often forget how malleable taste buds are! Our food preferences and attitudes change constantly due to what’s available, who’s eating it, and how much it costs. Looking back through time at American cuisine also provides an interesting glimpse at how people lived, what they planted and raised, how they celebrated and comforted each other, and what they valued. Food is truly at the heart of our broader human history.

When you wrote *Rose Water & Orange Blossoms*, you did your research. You went to Lebanon. Long before that, when you were in grad school at MSU studying English literature, you visited Sitto (your grandma, who lived in Lansing), to bake. Those were wonderful study breaks, but they were also early research. You were learning from her. How might people use this collection for research? How might they learn from it? How might a new collection of 6,500 cookbooks help connect people to food?

When we learn a new recipe, or repeat a recipe we know and love, there is so much more going on than the more obvious notion that we want to eat something delicious. In my community of cooks, I hear from many people who want to make connections both past and present. They want to understand all kinds of aspects about how I arrived not only at the method of my recipe, but also how the recipe fits into the story of our lives. They want to share their experience of making this dish, how good it was (or how it flopped!), and how meaningful their table became over communing with this food. The recipe is a bridge to connection. In my work, every recipe, every story is plated with the history associated with that dish and the story it evokes. There is feeling, emotion, pain, and love.

This giant new collection of the Brass Sisters cookbooks is a treasure trove for many of us who associate story and history with culinary pursuits. No matter the area of expertise, having the opportunity to peek into the world of such prolific creators as these gives us something very real to discover and be inspired by. I’m so grateful to Michigan State for expanding the library collections in this way, further supporting the work so many are doing to create as the Brass sisters have. I can’t wait to turn the pages of their books to learn, experience and touch, on every level, their world all with the sense that what they did can very much inspire and inform me with what I do.
McRoberts reached out to former Head of Special Collections Peter Berg, who conducted an extensive review of the collection. Together, they determined the materials would deepen and enrich the Library’s already vast culinary collection. As McRoberts finalized details of the acquisition, she had a solid understanding of what the Library would be getting. Even so, she’s still discovering materials that delight her. “The surprises are endless,” she said. “I was reviewing one box of items and came across Julia Child’s textbook of French verb conjugation. There, emblazoned on the front cover, was her signature, Julia McWilliams. Special Collections does have signed first editions of many of her famed cookbooks, but this one has a different history. This is a text she held and worked from as she learned a new language.”

As for personal favorites, McRoberts said there are too many to name, though she did emphasize how many of the volumes have book plates, handwritten notations of ownership, and clipped recipes from newspapers or magazines. “Those items contribute to the narratives of people and places,” she said.

What impresses McRoberts most is the extraordinary care the Brass Sisters took as they acquired cookbooks and culinary ephemera. “What they acquired represents the rich and diverse cultural history of the United States,” she said. “The highlights, for me, include 19th and 20th century menus and the handwritten manuscript cookbooks, which provide a deep and meaningful perspective into the lives of many people who aren’t here to share oral histories. Their written recipes present opportunities for all kinds of studies, including paleography. Here is rich information waiting to be mined.”

Those manuscript cookbooks McRoberts mentioned were the sisters’ main focus as they collected materials. These cookbooks are compilations of handwritten recipes by home cooks, handed down through generations of families and friends. The recipes provided the inspiration for Heirloom Baking, Heirloom Cooking, and the sisters’ latest cookbook, Baking With The Brass Sisters. That appreciation for heirloom recipes has contributed to the sisters’ standing in the food world. They’ve been called everything from recipe detectives to cultural anthropologists to guardians of the universal tradition of home-cooked meals.

“Years ago we discovered manuscript cookbooks, those collections of personal recipes compiled by home bakers and cooks,” the sisters wrote. “Handwritten notes on crumbling scraps of paper or the pages of old, well-worn cookbooks led us to “lost” family recipes. Recipe collections that survived were typically gathered together in small bundles, stitched, tied, stapled, or boxed, and handed down to the next generation. These forgotten bundles of culinary history often turn up at yard sales and flea markets, in used bookstores, and on the pantry shelves of friends.”

Over the years, the sisters acquired hundreds of these collections of living recipes. McRoberts calls the collection a true working collection and credits the Brass Sisters for collecting materials that reflect everything of culinary significance — the sisters’ motto. “So many of us are influenced by our mothers and grandmothers, and this collection solidifies that influence,” McRoberts said. “Sometimes, history does not do a good job of remembering or recalling narratives of everyday lives, but this collection does, and we are delighted to add the story of the Brass Sisters to our food history collections.”

Culinary Collection Acquisition
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McRoberts reached out to former Head of Special Collections Peter Berg, who conducted an extensive review of the collection. Together, they determined the materials would deepen and enrich the Library’s already vast culinary collection. As McRoberts finalized details of the acquisition, she had a solid understanding of what the Library would be getting. Even so, she’s still discovering materials that delight her. “The surprises are endless,” she said. “I was reviewing one box of items and came across Julia Child’s textbook of French verb conjugation. There, emblazoned on the front cover, was her signature, Julia McWilliams. Special Collections does have signed first editions of many of her famed cookbooks, but this one has a different history. This is a text she held and worked from as she learned a new language.”

As for personal favorites, McRoberts said there are too many to name, though she did emphasize how many of the volumes have book plates, handwritten notations of ownership, and clipped recipes from newspapers or magazines. “Those items contribute to the narratives of people and places,” she said.

What impresses McRoberts most is the extraordinary care the Brass Sisters took as they acquired cookbooks and culinary ephemera. “What they acquired represents the rich and diverse cultural history of the United States,” she said. “The highlights, for me, include 19th and 20th century menus and the handwritten manuscript cookbooks, which provide a deep and meaningful perspective into the lives of many people who aren’t here to share oral histories. Their written recipes present opportunities for all kinds of studies, including paleography. Here is rich information waiting to be mined.”

Those manuscript cookbooks McRoberts mentioned were the sisters’ main focus as they collected materials. These cookbooks are compilations of handwritten recipes by home cooks, handed down through generations of families and friends. The recipes provided the inspiration for Heirloom Baking, Heirloom Cooking, and the sisters’ latest cookbook, Baking With The Brass Sisters. That appreciation for heirloom recipes has contributed to the sisters’ standing in the food world. They’ve been called everything from recipe detectives to cultural anthropologists to guardians of the universal tradition of home-cooked meals.

“Years ago we discovered manuscript cookbooks, those collections of personal recipes compiled by home bakers and cooks,” the sisters wrote. “Handwritten notes on crumbling scraps of paper or the pages of old, well-worn cookbooks led us to “lost” family recipes. Recipe collections that survived were typically gathered together in small bundles, stitched, tied, stapled, or boxed, and handed down to the next generation. These forgotten bundles of culinary history often turn up at yard sales and flea markets, in used bookstores, and on the pantry shelves of friends.”

Over the years, the sisters acquired hundreds of these collections of living recipes. McRoberts calls the collection a true working collection and credits the Brass Sisters for collecting materials that reflect everything of culinary significance — the sisters’ motto. “So many of us are influenced by our mothers and grandmothers, and this collection solidifies that influence,” McRoberts said. “Sometimes, history does not do a good job of remembering or recalling narratives of everyday lives, but this collection does, and we are delighted to add the story of the Brass Sisters to our food history collections.”

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Lesbian Legacies Endowment Supports Research & Activism

In the 1970s, a decade in which the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from its list of illnesses and a decade in which 75,000 people participated in the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, MSU Libraries began collecting gay and lesbian materials to build a substantial history of personal papers, popular literature, and news clippings centered around the gay liberation movement, AIDS activism, same-sex domestic partnerships, and marriage equality. Anne E. Tracy, who worked at MSU Libraries for 32 years, helped build these collections, and the Anne E. Tracy Collection contains correspondence, notes, inventories, and miscellaneous material related to the creation of the Special Collections LGBTQ+ collection.

Since Tracy’s early work, the Libraries’ collection has grown to incorporate even more individual voices of the LGBTQ+ community. In the last 50 years, the Libraries have acquired a significant collection of fiction, graphic novels, zines, and graphic art informed by and responding to LGBTQ+ issues, as well as archival collections that include records of local and regional organizations. Among these collections are materials from the archives of Goldenrod Music, a national women’s music distributor based in Lansing, and the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival. These materials were given to Murray & Hong Special Collections by members of Purple, an umbrella organization for activities and initiatives that promote the lesbian community. The group, which is primarily engaged with a community of women in the Lansing community, began in 2005 when several women created a fundraising campaign to purchase tickets to the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival for women who would not otherwise be able to attend. In later years, the group continued this work, raising funds to support women who wanted to attend festivals in other years. The group officially incorporated as Purple, a non-profit umbrella, in 2013.

Because materials in Murray & Hong Special Collections must be used on site in the Main Library, Purple established the Lesbian Legacies Endowment to help researchers visit the MSU Library. Expenditures from the endowment will be used to support research travel grants and to acquire, maintain, and digitize materials. Travel grant recipients and others who use the LGBTQ+ resources in Special Collections can access a wealth of resources, including materials related to Goldenrod Music (catalogs, meeting minutes, internal correspondence, correspondence with artists, posters, press kits, promotional photographs, photographs and ephemera from music festivals, and more than 700 recordings in vinyl, cassette, and CD formats); materials from the Michigan Womyn's Festival (including crew set-up guides, interview transcripts, maps, banners, signs, mugs, t-shirts, wristbands, festival programs, brochures, posters, news clippings, and business records); personal archives of Anne E. Tracy, Terri L. Jewell, and Penny Gardner; the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Rights Press Photograph Collection; the Gay Magazine Collection; the Larry Tate Papers; LGBTQ manifestos; the Lansing Association for Human Rights and the Greater Lansing Lesbian/Gay Archives; the papers of Lev Raphael; the Marilyn Frye Collection of Feminist, Gay, and Lesbian Material; and other materials.

For more information about the MSU Libraries LGBTQ+ collections, visit https://libguides.lib.msu.edu/splGBTQ.

Clockwise from back left: MJ Stephenson, Terry Grant, Holly Near, and Susan Frazier at the October 2018 Library Colloquium event “Holly Near and the Women’s Music Collections.” Stephenson and Frazier are the current owners of Goldenrod Music. Photo by Shelby Kroske.
Purpose and Scope of the MSU Libraries LGBTQ+ Collection

This collection supports the research needs of MSU faculty, students, and visiting scholars interested in the interdisciplinary aspects of gender and sexuality studies.

Collecting controversial material pertaining to gender and sexuality studies, such as sexually explicit content or non-affirming literature, is supported as a method for using primary source material in order to document historical shifts in the social construction of sexual and gender identities.

Special Collections is committed to collecting material representing the diversity of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, and to aid in its preservation, discoverability, and accessibility.

Special Collections began collecting Gay and Lesbian material in the 1970s thanks to the work of bibliographer Anne E. Tracy. Since then, the collection has evolved to collect the individual voices of the LGBTQIA2S+ community.

Early primary materials focused on the Gay Liberation Movement, which included literature, posters, and ephemera meant to complement the American Radicalism Collection.

During the 1980s–1990s, the focus of the collection expanded to include issues of diversity within MSU. In order to ensure that LGBT people were included in the discussion and policy making of the University, a task force was formed to examine the climate for LGBT faculty, students and staff. In 1992, Moving Forward, a university-wide Gay and Lesbian task force report supported by the Office of the Provost, was released. The MSU Libraries responded with a commitment to build and expand upon the existing LGBT materials housed in Special Collections. Some of the material collected during this time included rare books, popular culture, and archival materials. The timeline reflected in the collection also expanded to include material from the 1950s Homophile Movement, pulp fiction, periodicals, and comic books.

A primary focus of the collection is to document local and regional movements, organizations, as well as individual stories of members of the Michigan LGBTQIA2S+ community. Examples include the Detroit Gay Liberator newspaper, the records of the Lansing Association for Human Rights, Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, Goldenrod Records, Camp Trans, the personal papers of Lev Raphael, and the Terri L. Jewell collection. However, in order to understand some of the changes and issues affecting the ever evolving LGBTQIA2S+ community, we aim to collect material that provides a snapshot of the different issues as well as communities that form the larger umbrella of the LGBTQIA2S+ community.

Sisters, a magazine published by the lesbian civil rights organization Daughters of Bilitis from 1970–1975. Photo by Austin DeRaedt
Murray and Hong
Special Collections Pop-Ups
Tuesdays, 1–3 p.m. • Special Collections Seminar Room

Join Special Collections staff for a hands-on display of rare, unusual, and historical titles.

Note: If closing is required at any time, events that are more than a week out will be offered online. Events less than a week out will be cancelled.

SEPTEMBER
9.7.2021
New Acquisitions in Special Collections
Hosted by Ruth Ann Jones

9.14.2021
Three Centuries of Sex Education
Hosted by Ruth Ann Jones

9.21.2021
Spotlight on MSU History
Hosted by Megan Badgley-Malone, University Archives

9.28.2021
Latinx Heritage Month
Hosted by Andrea Salazar McMillan and Ruth Ann Jones

OCTOBER
10.5.2021
Space Week
In coordination with the Digital Scholarship Lab

10.12.2021
Rare book topic to be determined
Hosted by Tad Boehmer

10.19.2021
“Why Do We Have This?”
Hosted by Dayna Topalian

10.26.2021
World Day for Audio Visual Heritage
Hosted by Sarah Mainville and the Media Preservation team

NOVEMBER
11.2.2021
Stereotypes Then and Now
Hosted by Ruth Ann Jones

11.9.2021
Topic to be announced

11.16.2021
Refugee Voices and Artist’s Responses
Hosted by Ruth Ann Jones

11.30.2021
Loterias
Hosted by Ruth Ann Jones


Remmelin’s Survey attempts to convey the complexity of human anatomy — with paper engineering. Layers of paper flaps can be gently lifted to reveal what lies beneath. In the close-up here, layers representing the skin, musculature, nervous system, and circulatory system have been lifted away to expose the skeleton. Each layer was carefully annotated, with descriptive text on the facing page. Every copy of this amazing work required many hours of delicate, painstaking assembly.

Photos by Austin DeRaedt
Scholarly Publishing
continued from p.4

Let’s return to Lewis Hyde, and to the epigraph for his book: “What is good is given back.” Hyde (as the scholar Warren Hagstrom did before him) writes about the emergence of community through the circulation of knowledge as gift. In his afterword to the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of his book, he asserts that any community that values categories of human enterprise that aren’t well supported by market forces “will find nonmarket ways to organize them. It will develop gift-exchange institutions dedicated to their support.” The academic library as we’ve known it and as we continue to reenvision it is a gift-exchange institution, which means, if we believe what Hyde says, we’ll find a way through these new challenges in scholarly publishing. How can libraries work to continue to exert an influence of good?

In a society where everything is for sale, libraries play a contrarian role: we try to give away what we have. Generosity is completely consistent with our mission. The economist Paul Courant — also Provost and Dean of Libraries at the University of Michigan — wrote about this in 2006 in *First Monday*, one of the earliest Open Access online journals. Scholarship can work as a public good like viewing a flag or a fireworks display. As Courant says, “one more person viewing it does not in any way diminish the experience for others … the good is non-rival. It then follows, as a matter of economic efficiency, that the market price ought to be zero.” Acknowledging the need to cover costs, that sounds a lot like Open Access.

The notion of community is important to Hyde. I know it’s important to you, too. You’ve worked for MSU Libraries for twenty-four years, and you’ve learned something about community.

MSU Libraries Welcome MSU Press with Recent Merge

In a move that reflects both a national trend and a campus commitment to partnership, Michigan State University Press has merged with MSU Libraries. “We’re thrilled about this partnership, and we think it’s a natural way to support scholarly publication and strengthen our mutual commitment to learning,” Salem said. “Like other academic libraries, MSU Libraries has taken an active role in scholarly publishing. And, like other academic libraries, we’ve always had an important relationship with our university press. We think this new model of organization will create more opportunities to optimize resources and expand access.”

The merge was effective May 1, but the process of integrating both units will evolve as a gradual transition. Dean Salem’s oversight of MSU Press began last spring, but the Press will continue operations in its current location in the Manly Miles building, and the two budgets will remain separated.

MSU Press Director Gabriel Dotto cited several benefits of the partnership. “We anticipate exploring more unique library collections to generate new publications; building our list in Digital Humanities, conceived both as traditional monographs and as born-digital projects; and enhancing the Press’s commitment toward finding sustainable models of open access, building on the two MSU-based OA journals the Press already publishes,” he said.

Dotto also mentioned opportunities related to MSU Press’s commitment to digital delivery of its content. “MSU Press journals were present early on in electronic platforms like Muse and Jstor,” he said. “And MSUP was recently invited, along with the presses of Penn State and Illinois, to participate in the Scholarly Publishing Collective, a new journals platform to be hosted by Duke University Press. Furthermore, the MSUP book division was a charter member of both the MUSE & JSTOR electronic book initiatives. Our digital reach to scholars is thus already global, but we expect that our partnership with MSU Libraries will help us explore additional new digital channels and opportunities.”

Established in 1947 as the scholarly publishing arm of Michigan State University, the Press has nearly one thousand titles in print and a national reputation. In the last dozen years, its publications have garnered more than 150 regional and national awards. Its mission has been to act as a catalyst for positive intellectual, social, and technological change through the publication of research and intellectual inquiry, making significant contributions to scholarship in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences. The Press’s journals division publishes fifteen award-winning academic journals, all available digitally, which span a wide variety of academic disciplines.

Where do you feel it, why is it important, and how do you cultivate it?

I see community in so many levels of what we do. Within the Libraries, I believe that every action each of us takes is really a team effort to buy, catalog and present a book for use. The university is a place that sustains and grows a community of scholars. At Michigan State, we can look as well at the positive goals of the land-grant mission, which is meant to benefit the state as a community. In the Libraries, our ability to know and serve the needs of campus readers has to rely on being in a community with those readers. And delivering that service has to rely on a community of library staff. Beyond the campus, we benefit from consortial communities — learning from and helping peer libraries — and from communities of interest with publishers and their authors (and those authors are the same people as our readers back on campus).
A Message from Dean Salem

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on the stories we share with you in this issue of Insight I am excited and encouraged to consider how the work we’re doing in our Libraries aligns with work our university is doing to support and advance accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion. We’re paying careful attention to programs and partnerships that advance these goals, and we’re working to make sure the collections we acquire support our communities of thinkers, creators, and researchers.

I am delighted to welcome the MSU Press into MSU Libraries, and I am excited about the expanding role MSU Libraries are playing in our wider academic community. Part of our mission is to facilitate connections that support research, teaching, and learning in our local and global communities. Welcoming the MSU Press into MSU Libraries will encourage these kinds of connections.

As scholarly publishing continues to change and grow, our partnership with the College of Arts and Letters keeps growing, and we value the collaborative research and development unit we’ve built together. With MESH and with Humanities Commons, we’re advancing digital work in support of scholarly communications, and we’re advancing equal access to information for all.

We are delighted to open up spaces that were closed during the pandemic, and we encourage you to visit — and use — our spaces and our resources. Maybe you’d like to make an appointment in Special Collections to see some of our materials up close and in person. Maybe you’d like to visit our 360 room in the Digital Scholarship Lab or explore our maps in the Map Library. Maybe you’d just like to come and browse or find a quiet table in a quiet corner to work. We welcome you. This is your Library.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Salem, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean of Libraries

Citations for books in the Brass Sisters Collection featured on pages 10–11.


Dedication begins: “To my soldier sons I dedicate my book. As I tried to conquer the battle of life, so they fought the terrible battle of the trenches...” (p. v). Bookplate of Shirley & Gerard Van Duser affixed to front free endpaper.

With printed dust-jacket.


Photo by Shelby Kroske, 2018.
For a dish of Beir, quart of dried beef of beef, 1 cup of beef, 1/2 cup of meat, 1/2 cup of marinade, and 1/2 cup of broth. After 6 days, take them out and put the beef at bottom.

To pickle Beets:

Make your pickles to be a jug, and put the pickles in a jug, and put them in for a week. After 2 weeks, take them out and put them.

Take 1/2 of cumin, 1/2 of mustard, 1/2 of vinegar, put the ingredients together and mince them, pour it boiling for the meat.