An Interview with History Professor Jen Purcell
By Laura Crain

In February I sat down with Professor Jen Purcell to find out how she and students in her fall 2013 course on 19th Century Britain uncovered an intimate view of the life of Queen Victoria and examined up close the underbelly of 19th century London. What follows are excerpts from my interview with Professor Purcell.

–Laura Crain, Associate Director for Collection Services

LC: Let’s start with the database *Queen Victoria’s Journals* and how students engaged with the material they found.

JP: *Queen Victoria’s Journals* provides insight into another side of Queen Victoria. You always think of this stodgy old woman in her mourning clothes after her beloved Prince Albert dies. But when you look at the documents in the database you gain insights into the private side of this very political, very public historical figure. Her journals cover the public aspect of her life, but also, they cover her day-to-day domestic life and they encompass her entire adult life. For instance, you hear in Victoria’s own words about the young man she’s falling in love with (Albert) and about her thoughts and preparations for marrying him. The journals cover her reactions to becoming a mother, and later, you read about the intense grief the middle-aged Victoria feels when Prince Albert tragically succumbs to typhoid fever at the young age of 42.

Students particularly connect with the experiences of Queen Victoria’s young life, and are able to see her in a different light when they get that close to her. You can read royal documents, but they are more official by necessity because she’s a monarch; she’s always going to be thinking about her audience and will never be entirely honest. There’s a bit of distance in official documents and the language is harder for students to connect with. Another bonus about the database is that it includes all of her paintings and her line drawings, which gives the students insights into another side of Queen Victoria.

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"It was with some emotion that I beheld Albert—who is beautiful.” Journal entry from *Queen Victoria’s Journals*, October 10, 1839. Photo: ProQuest.

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We’ll be sharing behind-the-scenes looks at library life, quick news, and Throwback Thursday photos from the Archives. Have something to share about the Library? Late night studying with friends? Favorite study spot? Find something interesting? Share your Durick Library photos with us: #smcvtlibrary
QUEEN VICTORIA, continued:

LC: How did students use the Queen Victoria’s Journals database?

JP: I first introduced the database in class and showed its general components. Then students started researching on their own. In class, students took turns teaching a lesson on a particular aspect of Queen Victoria’s life. In the process, students uncovered new ways of using the database. Some of the topics they presented were Queen Victoria’s relationship with Prince Albert, her coronation, her view of the Crimean War, her influence on fashion, her leisure time in Scotland and her landscape paintings.

LC: How did you incorporate London Lowlife in to the course?

London Lowlife was tied in with course readings, including A Prescription for Murder: the Victorian Serial Killings of Dr. Thomas Neill Cream by Angus McLaren and Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. McClaren’s book centers on the East End of London and the issues of poverty, prostitution, murder and medicine. Students worked in groups of three to four based on their various interests and presented on topics they researched in London Lowlife such as crime, prostitution and gender issues, poverty, and the urban landscape. One group presented on Swell’s Night Guide – a guide book on London night life which outlines where the “good brothels” were and rated brothels according to cost.

Students used the maps to explore various parts of London. One of the maps featured shows the locations of London’s asylums. Student Sarah LaForce used the maps to figure out where asylums were built in relation to urban populations. Sarah was able to use the database to drill in to see if an asylum was private or public and the contrasting conditions of a private “B&B-like” asylum versus Bedlam.

LC: What do see you as the value of incorporating primary sources into coursework?

JP: All historians place great value on using primary sources because they give students an insight into a world beyond their own experience. In the class on 19th century Britain, the primary sources illuminated significant questions about class, gender, and the way the environment of the time interacted with social and moral norms. In this way, the students were able to move beyond a standard tale of history. I could give them a description of the social and economic history of that time and place, but students don’t always know what questions to ask of the secondary material. When students do research using primary materials, the research helps them generate more questions and engage more deeply with the experience of the past. One of my greatest teaching challenges is helping students access useful and relevant non-American primary documents; only a small fraction of this material is available on the open web. And even getting on a plane to travel to various British or European archives would not uncover the volume and depth of the material collected in London Lowlife and Queen Victoria’s Journals. Historians understand that using primary documents to study a topic is the closest you can get to an historical understanding of the past. History books have their place in historical research, but primary documents give students an opportunity to actually connect and engage with the actors of the time. These databases have been incredibly useful in my teaching; I use them in both my 19th century Britain class and in my Modern Europe survey course.

News at your library

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From the Archives:
Diarium Societatis Patrum ac Fratrum à Sancto Edmundo.
A handwritten chronicle of the Society of Saint Edmund, begun in 1852.
LIBRARY INTERNS BRING FRESH PERSPECTIVE

By Michele McCaffrey

Who knew that Durick Library would come to be a mecca for interns? This spring, Saint Michael’s senior English major Sarah Fraser and SUNY-Albany library science graduate student (and SMC alumnus) Ian Gauthier have chosen Durick Library as their internship site. Fall 2013 also brought both an undergraduate and a graduate student intern to the Library. These student interns have worked on projects ranging from developing information literacy assessment, creating an online tutorial, arranging for Google mapping of the Library, to developing a collection development policy for the reference collection, organizing focus groups and analyzing the results, and helping to construct a library survey. They have also created displays, worked at the Reference Desk, and observed library instruction classes.

The interns have had the opportunity to meet with each Durick librarian as well as visit other area academic libraries, the State Library, the library at the Shelburne Museum, and a public library. Other undergraduate interns also regularly work with Liz Scott in the Archives.

Library interns bring fresh perspectives to Durick Library and in turn they have a chance to put into practice what they have previously read about in their coursework. They inform us about current student opinions and views and they help us to reflect on our jobs and roles as librarians. Additionally, the real life experiences encountered during internships will help these students build their professional resumes and library careers. Last semester’s graduate intern from San Jose State University, Maggie Lawrence, is already working at Champlain College while Sarah La Force, a Saint Michael’s history major, plans to study abroad in the fall and attend library school the next year.

MOBILE SITE

Check out our new look on the library mobile site.

smclibrary.com/m

BOOKS FOR A CAUSE

The Library receives thousands of book donations annually. Many of these gift books are added to the Library collection to fill gaps or provide duplicate copies of high use titles. Most of the gift books that are not added to the Library are put into storage for the annual book sale or go in the Library lobby for the ongoing book sale.

Fifteen years ago the Library joined forces with MOVE on the annual book sale. Each year, MOVE students preparing for service trips spend hours organizing books and staffing the four day book sale. In the past 10 years, over $9,500 from book sale proceeds have benefitted MOVE’s international partners in Kolkata, India, the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

-Laura Crain
OUR PROLIFIC FACULTY

Saint Michael’s College faculty members publish numerous journal articles and books each year. The faculty books display on the main floor of Durick Library showcases the recent creative and scholarly output of our prolific faculty.

Pictured at right: Professor of Religious Studies John Kenney with his recent publication *Contemplation and Classical Christianity: A Study in Augustine*, published by Oxford University Press, November 2013.

Marilyn Scoville is moving on

By Ron Jacobs

In summer 2014, longtime Saint Michael’s librarian Marilyn Scoville will retire. Marilyn first came to Durick Library in 1992, after stints as a school media specialist, public library children’s librarian and an interlibrary loan & reference librarian.

Marilyn was hired at Durick to oversee the library’s instruction program. During her 22 years as Instruction Coordinator, Marilyn led initiatives to increase library instruction sessions (now over 200 a year), implement library orientation for new students during opening week, and provide library instruction to 100 percent of the first-year seminars. Marilyn was instrumental in developing student learning outcomes and three-tiered approach to library instruction.

In the 40 years of Marilyn’s library career, she has witnessed a remarkable transformation in library resources and services. When asked what the biggest difference between her job now and when she started, Marilyn noted that in 1992 the Library had two computers dedicated to computer searching. Searches of outside databases were charged by the minute and were conducted via dial-up modems.

At one point in the late 1990s the Durick Library reference desk was literally dismantled and the librarians provided reference assistance while roaming the building. A few years later the reference desk was back in place. For several years Marilyn was also responsible for scheduling and teaching technology workshops on campus along with other library and IT staff. Remembering those days, she wrote in an email, “Now that was an interesting sidebar to my life as a librarian. Most people who know me well will find that hard to picture!”

After leaving Saint Michael’s at the end of June, Marilyn plans on spending more time with her seven grandchildren, who range in age from 14 months to four years. She also intends to expand her volunteer work with young children. She is currently a volunteer story time presenter at the Winooski library.

All the best wishes to Marilyn. She will be missed.
During fall 2013, the Library invited students to participate in small focus group sessions to gather input on the library website and library facilities, resources and services. Twenty-seven Saint Michael’s undergraduates engaged in discussions with peers that revealed their opinions and preferences regarding the Library.

**Some highlights:**
- Students appreciate the variety of study spaces in the Library which accommodate their diverse work styles.
- Students like group study rooms and large tables for spreading out.
- Students access the library website from off campus even when studying abroad.
- Students like the option to text a call number to their phone.

Students described taking varying approaches to research:
- Some utilize the Research by Subject pages on the library website because these pages present a manageable number of subject specific resources. According to several students “sorting through and narrowing down search results can be overwhelming.”
- When encountering obstacles in their online searching, some students consult with librarians and others ask a peer or a professor for help.
- Students generally prefer approaching a librarian they know and many take advantage of scheduling appointments with librarians.
- Most student interactions with librarians are via class instruction sessions.
- Some students prefer workshops scheduled for their classes because then they don’t have to go out of their way to meet with a librarian.

**Insightful suggestions included:**
- Requests for more library mapping options (maps integrated with discovery tools that show where to find a book in the building).
- In the new course management system, students would like to see links to citation help, Interlibrary Loan, Research by Subject pages, reference hours and the names of librarians assigned to classes.
- Advertise services and resources more.
- Librarians should create tutorials about databases and search strategies.

The library is currently developing action items based on focus group suggestions. Plans are also underway for an online questionnaire for students that will provide additional information for future library planning.

Focus Group committee members are library staff members Lela Kretzer, Michele McCaffrey, Stacey Knight, Marilyn Scoville and graduate intern Maggie Lawrence.

**RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS**

New database offerings this academic year include:

**Archives Unbound**
Topics covered in these primary source archives include the Cold War, Confederate newspapers, Nazi war crimes, Japanese-American relocation camp newspapers, the Spanish Civil War, the War of 1812, and much more.

**ARTFL - French Texts**
French ebooks! Novels, articles, essays, letters and verse from the Middle Ages to the present. Amusez-vous bien!

**Early American Newspapers: 1690-1876**
Full text historical American newspaper titles from 23 states and the District of Columbia.

**Early Republic: Critical Editions on the Founding of the United States**
This primary source database documents the actions, debates, and thoughts of the First Federal Congress (1789-1791) and its members.

**Oxford Music Online**

**SCOPUS**
Abstract and citation database of research literature in the fields of Medicine, Social Sciences, Physical Sciences and Life Sciences. SCOPUS also provides citation analysis for specific articles, authors, and journal metrics.
- Laura Crain
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Marilyn Scoville, Instruction Coordinator

CHANGE AHEAD

By John Payne

Two long-time members of the library staff will be leaving us this summer.

Tina Ryan, executive assistant to the director, has served the college for over 30 years, starting in Athletics. Since coming to the Library two decades ago, she has been the very heart of library administration. Directors have come and gone, but Tina has been the constant—the institutional memory, the engineer who kept the wheels turning, the rock. In my eight years here she has been the person with whom I have worked most closely. It is hard to imagine the Library without her.

As you read earlier, Marilyn Scoville will also be leaving us. Ron’s article sums up her many achievements and contributions, so I will just add that she is going out on top—the information literacy program she has built and led stands at record numbers. At my request, Kristen Hindes has agreed to take on the role of library instruction coordinator, while continuing her duties as head of interlibrary loan.

Both Marilyn and Tina have made incalculable contributions to the Library, and both are characterized by their dedication to our students. They will be greatly missed.

SEARCH DISCOVERY

By Stacey Knight

Since the launch of the library’s new search tool Discovery last fall, it has been used over 80,000 times. Discovery provides fast results and searches across most of the Library’s online and print resources. Hundreds of millions of journal articles, hundreds of thousands of books, and thousands of DVDs and streaming videos are now available in a single search.

Find too much? Try narrowing down your search by source type such as books or academic journals. Not quite on topic? Try narrowing down your search by subject. Need a peer reviewed article? Check the box. You can utilize the many different filters on the left of the search results to help target exactly what you are looking for. Because Discovery allows you to search across so many different resources at once, you may just unearth that hidden gem of an article.

SAINT MICHAEL’S ALUMNUS RETURNS TO THE LIBRARY STAFF

By Ron Jacobs

Anthony Bassignani ’13 joined the library staff at the beginning of the fall semester. A Saint Michael’s graduate who studied history and English, Anthony has worked in libraries since he was 17: four of those years were while he worked towards his bachelor’s degree at Saint Mike’s. Anthony plans to attend graduate school in 2014 at either Syracuse or Simmons for a master’s degree in Library and Information Science. When Anthony isn’t working one of his two jobs, he is baking cookies, cakes and breads, hiking, movie watching, and reading. His favorite books are the DJ MacHale Pendragon Adventure series.