What excites you about libraries?
Pundits have wondered if libraries are relevant in this hyper-networked world. This despite the long, meaningful role libraries have played in communities they serve, public or academic. I believe libraries have a more important role now than ever! It’s clear libraries of all types have remained vital centers for community engagement and learning by inventing and reinventing services.

What are your plans for the next year?
I’m especially excited for the opportunity to reinvent library spaces. We have to enable new modes of research and learning. How can we respond to trends, help students develop new skillsets, and incorporate new technologies into their learning? I look forward to this adventure.

One challenge is demonstrating Snell’s impact supporting the curriculum, research, and lifelong learning. This will require partnerships across the institution, a great opportunity for me to get to know the community. Another challenge is providing access to all of the information Northeastern students and faculty need. We have a responsibility to promote the resources we have now—not just the books and journals, but the media, the maps, the databases, the archives—but even that is not enough. Expanding resources to support Northeastern’s momentum is key. I hope to play a key role maximizing use of existing resources and advocating for more to propel creative teaching, world-class research, and great careers. Last but certainly not least, I’m looking forward to showing my daughter the wonders of Snell’s 3D printing studio—she would like a Husky dog for her bedside table!
Give Your Data a Voice – and Location!

By Steven Braun

This diagram shows entries to the library for each hour of every day in the 2015 calendar year. The intention behind this project has been to find some way to visually capture the influx and efflux of Snell and show how patrons’ engagement with Snell follows the rhythm of campus activity. Each color represents a different semester of the year: red for fall, yellow for summer, green for spring, and blue for any intercession periods. The relative size of the smaller circles along the arc correspond to the total number of recorded ID card swipes for that time: the more color you see, the more entries there were into Snell Library at that time. The research process often produces a great variety of data - some quantitative, some qualitative, and often a mixture of both. Data visualization refers to the methodologies, tools, and modes of representation involved in the process of visually communicating data to others. Data can be visually communicated in many ways, ranging from a simple table of numbers to complex and highly sophisticated charts and interactive graphics. My position is new to the library, serving as yet another example of the adaptable nature of Snell Library. Since I joined the staff of the Northeastern University Libraries in November as Data Analytics and Visualization Specialist, I’ve been inspired and engaged by Northeastern’s incredibly talented faculty, staff and students. Their passion for interdisciplinary inquiry is truly refreshing, and I’m often impressed by how hard people work and collaborate with one another.
By Bahare Sanaie-Movahed

As a part of the Digital Scholarship Group, GIS and Mapping Services were added to Snell Library for members of the Northeastern University Community in July 2015. A Geographical Information System (GIS) is a system designed to visualize and analyze geographical data and find hidden patterns behind the datasets by spatially linking records.

As Snell Library’s GIS Specialist, I have held more than 60 consultations for mapping and spatial analysis during the last 8 months with students and faculty across the campus, from the College of Engineering to the College of Social Sciences and Humanities. This spring GIS and Data Visualization Services also held a successful series of Open Office Hours, offering drop in assistance for students and faculty alike. Together we provided various introductory and custom workshops on relevant topics for different individual courses at the University throughout the year.

In addition to supporting classes and research at Northeastern, GIS services can support library projects, for example geo-tagging historical photographs from the Library Archives and Special Collections, and displaying them in Google Maps.

GIS has wide applications in the fields of agriculture, healthcare, environmental management, transportation and real estate, and public safety, and plays a strong role in making management decisions. Visiting every location in a project can be difficult and costly, but utilizing GIS tools makes data management much more feasible.

In recent years, an increasing number of historians and social scientists are also becoming interested in using GIS for research and teaching. The GIS-Data Visualization library subject guide contains a vast variety of free and downloadable datasets across many areas of interest, including political and administrative boundaries, infrastructures, terrestrial features, land use and environmental resources, census blocks, demographic statistic, healthcare, public safety and many more sources for students to use and manipulate. Finding, cleaning, manipulating and wrangling data into a mapping platform and further data examining using spatial analysis tools are a part of the GIS service we provide at Snell Library. By providing these services the Library allows students and faculty to bring new perspectives to their research.

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– Ellen Cushman
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Steven Braun (left), Data Visualization Specialist and Bahare Sanaie-Movahed (right), GIS Specialist
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“It’s exciting to be at a place like Northeastern, where experiential liberal arts can craft a new identity.”

- Ellen Cushman
Ellen Cushman, Professor of English and the Dean’s Professor of Civic Sustainability, has spearheaded a unique course this semester, Writing and Community Engagement. One of the learning goals of the course is to “to understand and practice how to tell the story of organizations and communities” through writing and digital production.

Professor Cushman has teamed up with nearly every department of the library to offer her students the opportunity to create a complete multimedia project. The course seeks to tell a narrative of communities and organizations in Boston. This semester, students had the choice of two projects: following the journeys of Northeastern English graduates, and telling the story of Dudley Square in Boston, Massachusetts. Students have connected with community members in the area to gather information, take photographs, and film interviews.

Professor Cushman kept library resources in mind when designing this course. First, students took a trip to the Archives and Special Collections to familiarize themselves with the rich history of Dudley Square. Emma Pacquette, a student in the class, says of the archive, “The materials down in the Northeastern archives are amazing and really have revealed a lot of interesting topics of research that I wouldn’t have been able to discover otherwise.” Next, they met with Bahare Sanaie-Movahed, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Specialist, to create a digital map of the area, both past and present. Thomas Bary, Digital Media Specialist at Snell Library, held several class sessions teaching the students how to edit and format their interview footage. At each milestone of the project’s development, library staff were available to assist and advise.

With this course, Professor Cushman hopes to change traditional educational practices, to get “hands-on experience embedded into the humanities curriculum.” As a library, we strive for the same goals. Staff that have worked with her class seek to create “how-to” guides based on how they assisted students in this course, so there will be a model for future courses of the same nature. Eventually, she’d like to use the same processes to give voice to the communities of the entire Washington Street corridor.

The final projects of Professor Cushman’s class were featured in a showcase at Northeastern Crossing at the end of the semester.

“What I love about this course is how it has allowed me to feel connected to the place I now live through understanding its history. I think projects like this one have the potential to allow community members to give voice to the true character of a neighborhood and break through any negative stereotypes such as the ones attached to Roxbury—and Dudley Square by extension.”

– Emma Pacquette, AMD’20
Streaming Media

by Debra Mandel,
Director, Digital Media Commons Studios

Snell Library is steadily building an interdisciplinary collection of streaming online media content and providing 24/7 access to documentaries, feature films, music, and instructional content for the Northeastern community on campus and around the globe.

Two new instructional resources include Kanopy which offers access to 26,000 titles, including award-winning collections from the Criterion Collection, foreign films, PBS, and BBC, to name a few, and Swank Digital Campus, which provides access to feature films. The library also offers titles such as eXistenZ, The Social Network, and No Country For Old Men to support media studies classes.

Professor Inez Hedges, founder of Northeastern’s Program in Cinema Studies, reaps the benefits of the library’s expanded streaming collection in her French Film and Culture, World Cultures through Film, and Israeli and Palestinian Film classes. Professor Hedges has taught with film in its many formats during her 33 years here — 16mm, VHS, laser disk, and DVD, transitioning from threading reels on heavy projectors to the clicking of a mouse. Through each evolution, Professor Hedges has harnessed the features of each medium to enhance student appreciation of the creative process and encourage interactivity.

“It’s changing the way we teach film! Students can now look at a film a second time and read it like a text, resulting in a better understanding of the subject matter.” explained Professor Hedges on describing how streaming media improves her classes. “I can also assign documentaries to go along with the films to fill in the gaps.” Now that students can easily access and view films on their own from their computer, they gain a more in depth knowledge of each topic.

Snell Library is steadily building an interdisciplinary collection of streaming video to replace our aging DVDs and VHS. Many students don’t have access to DVD players (to say nothing of VCRs!), so they must use library equipment to play physical videos. Their expectation is that they should be able to stream a video on their laptop or tablet instead.

This requires considerable library investment, but streaming video has tremendous advantages over physical collections, such as simultaneous access for Northeastern users around the world: in online classes, on co-op, and at regional campuses. The library is keen to enrich the campus media environment and make more streaming media content available, discoverable and accessible.

We also want to ensure the fulfillment of Professor Hedges goals —to educate students on the film classics—perhaps the “10 best films ever made.” She hopes that more students will become familiar with Ingmar Bergman’s Wild Strawberries.

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Student Spotlight

The library relies on its student workers, from troubleshooters at the IT Desk to data analysts for user engagement. We interviewed students who work in the library to see what the library means to them.

“Working in the library has taught me what it’s like to be part of an innovative, collaborative environment. This institution fosters scholarly development in all fields, from engineering to the digital humanities, and it’s exciting to witness these new initiatives.”

Kaley Bachelder, SSH’19
Marketing and Events Assistant

“My favorite thing about the library is the ambiance of productivity. Being surrounded by students who are working hard and getting a lot of work done is very motivating and helps me want to do the same. If I try to get homework or assignments done at home or in a busy place like Curry Student Center, it’s always difficult to focus, whereas at the library, I’m always confident that the environment will foster productivity.”

Karina Patterson, DMSB’17
Assessment Analyst, User Services

“I’ve learned that there are many more resources available to the student body here than I ever imagined. 3D printing, audio and video recording, you name it. There’s even a yearly 48-hour game design marathon!”

Aidan Breen, AMD’16
Digital Media Commons Studio Co-op

“I learned a lot more about the Northeastern community outside of my own department. I worked with students across the whole university because the library is a central and neutral location for all students to come and work together on projects.”

Madison Maduri, AMD’18
3D Printing Studio Co-op
In spring of 2011, art collector Graham Arader donated over one hundred original maps, Audubon prints, and botanical watercolors to Northeastern University Libraries. The physical pieces, which represent a unique intersection of natural history, art history, and early North American history, are displayed in library classrooms, and include signs that link to online descriptions. This summer, I worked with the Digital Scholarship Group at Snell Library to create a unique website with two online exhibits cataloguing and contextualizing these prints.

I spent the summer after my freshman year familiarizing myself with the prints as well with software to adapt them to digital use. The software I used is part of an open source Toolkit developed in the library’s Digital Scholarship Group that helps users create online exhibits based on the library’s digital archival collections. The result is a website called Picturing the World that dynamically displays images, text, video, and more. Throughout the semester I worked with several other library staff members to interact with the fledgling site and note any issues present or request features that may improve site functionality. My decisions ranged from site hierarchy and layout to content creation (both written and design), and I received frequent feedback on all areas of the project, striving to infinitely improve the site.

The process by which I created this digital exhibit is unique to Northeastern, but not to the Northeastern community. Other exhibits created with the Toolkit have focused on the Boston-Bouvé College at Northeastern and interviews with Jewish Latin American writers and artists, to name a few. Each year, the DSG sends out a call for proposals for new exhibits, and then provide the Toolkit materials and personal assistance for the researcher. As an aspiring graphic and interactive designer, I gained invaluable relevant experience in my field from this project. Picturing the World marked my first experience with website design, and I learned to consider responsive design and site accessibility when designing, honing the site as needed to ensure it was as clear and intuitive as possible. Picturing the World offers connections to a myriad of academic subjects, ranging from early cartography to art history. The interdisciplinary collection invites further research in a variety of fields, and could be a great opportunity for independent student papers or projects within a course. I hope that my research, and the Picturing the World website, can aid students seeking to learn more about the collection and its larger historical context.
Seven students from Northeastern’s Astronomy Club examine telescopes.

To find out more about the Northeastern Archives, visit library.northeastern.edu/archives-special-collections.

#Huskiana

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Teresa Mayors locates her name on the 1990 Campus Campaign quilt.