



# BEYOND THE SHELVES

**CALVIN ALUMS EXPAND  
THEIR ROLES IN  
LIBRARY WORK**  
by Kristin Tennant Bakker '92

**L**aura Kaiser '85 has her roots in Calvin's library.

As a student with an interdisciplinary major in history and political science, Kaiser elected to work at the library for her on-campus job. She stuck with the position for more than three years, shelving stacks of countless books, checking out volumes for study-weary students (without the aid of today's convenient computerized coding system) and helping overwhelmed freshmen find sections of the library they would otherwise have spent hours wandering in search of.

"I learned a lot about the library and how it was set up while I worked there," Kaiser said about her beginnings at Calvin's library. "I always liked reading and being around books so it was a fun job."

While Kaiser's Calvin experience did not lead her directly into a permanent career in libraries, anyone who took a moment to look closely at Kaiser's own bookshelf immediately recognized the influence of her background.



"For a long time after I worked at Calvin's library I arranged my own books in the Library of Congress order," she said. "Now I just don't have enough space on my bookshelf to do it the right way."

Shortly after her stint at Calvin, Kaiser did find herself in

library work again, as a research assistant to a librarian at the University of Iowa where she was working toward a master's degree in film studies. But that degree eventually led her away from books to Hollywood and a very different kind of library—that of film.

"A film library has very little in common with a library of books," Kaiser explained. "It's on a completely different inventory system that's based on shelving rather than the

Dewey Decimal system of the Library of Congress system."

Kaiser said she got her first job in films at the Chicago Film Festival, eventually moving out to Hollywood to look for work there. She was then a library page at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills. Later she moved into a position at UCLA as a cataloging assistant in the school's Film and Television Archives. One of her responsibilities there was to enter bibliographic information about films into a computer system so those doing research could easily locate a film according to such subjects as the film's genre, the decade during which it was filmed or the main players involved in the film, including the writer, producer, director or lead cast members.

"I really gained a better understanding of the history of film and I learned a lot about what films are out there and what they're about," Kaiser said about her experience.

But long hours spent entering data into a

computer eventually moved Kaiser to seek her current position as programming coordinator for the Film and Television Archives at UCLA. She now helps arrange the university's film series and serves as coordinator for the archives, where students and professionals do research. All of the films in the archives are available to the researchers for viewing on video or 16mm film.

"My current position has very little to do with any kind of librarian work, but it all kind of led up to this," said Kaiser, adding that finally she's truly in her field.

**M**ary Dykstra '60 has had a career in libraries since 1970—all of her professional life. But stability in Dykstra's career choice has by no means corresponded with a similar stability in library careers and the way libraries are organized and operated. In fact, during Dykstra's tenure in library science more significant changes have occurred in libraries than in any two decades since the institution was established.

An illustration of this fact is evident at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, where Dykstra has spent all of her professional library years. What was once known as the school of Library Science is now, thanks to Dykstra, the School of Library Science and Information Studies. Dykstra, who is a professor and former director of the school, prompted this significant change in the mid-1980s.

"This allows for a much greater expanded role for the students, who will be using what they've learned in a variety of capacities," Dykstra said. "We are living in a very revolutionary time, marked by an extraordinary move from dependence on physical space to cyber-space."



According to Dykstra, her passion has always been for the organization and retrieval of information—the art of helping others access information quickly and effectively. It's just that the methods have changed along the way.

"I've always had a love for books but so much is computerized now," said Dykstra. "Things are changing dramatically and will continue to. Some of the oldest institutions, like libraries, are now without walls. They've been fundamentally restructured by the infor-

mation highway."

This fundamental restructuring and her role in it has brought Dykstra a much sought after honor in Canada. This spring she was named one of 29 to serve on the country's Federal Information Advisory Council. In that role, Dykstra will join the country's top CEOs, ministers of the cabinet and others representing academia and business, to decide how Canada will develop and use the information highway for the economic, cultural and social advantage of all Canadians. While more than 1,000 Canadians lobbied actively for positions on the council, Dykstra was actively sought after to be the sole representative from the professional library/information studies community and also the only member from Nova Scotia. The group has been meeting monthly for two days at a time.

"It's a very stimulating group focusing on a very stimulating topic," Dykstra said. "The information highway can play a very important role in economic competitiveness, job creation and preservation and the preservation of Canadian culture. One of our goals is to teach people how to use it and ensure they have access to it."

Dykstra does admit that all of the changes can be overwhelming—particularly as she recalls her days as an English major at Calvin and the summer she worked in the college's archives before the phrase 'information highway' had ever been uttered. But she said she's excited about all of the possibilities technology has to offer in the area of information retrieval. And the future of books, Dykstra's first love, is not totally bleak she said.

"Books will be around in the foreseeable future," she said. "It's just that more and more of them will be available on the computers, where people can count on immediate access."

**C**harles Ryskamp '50 said he remembers loving books while in his earliest childhood,

"I started my own little library of books in my room as a child of seven or eight," Ryskamp recalled. And since then, Ryskamp and books have been like magnets to one another.

As a literature major and student library employee at Calvin to his professorship in literature at Princeton University, where he was also curator of American and English literature at the university's library, Ryskamp set himself on a clear course through a world filled with books.



A love and knowledge of rare books eventually directed Ryskamp's course to

the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City, where he was director for nearly 18 years.

"My responsibilities were, of course, varied, but what I truly loved (about the Morgan position) was that I worked very closely with a considerable number of curators who were experts in many different areas, dealing with many different kinds of books," said Ryskamp. "I was very actively involved in acquiring works and developing all areas of the library's collection. The variety of books I worked with was wonderful."

His career move in 1987 to director of the Frick Collection of art, also in New York City, may at first glance appear to be quite a jump in subject matter for Ryskamp—one from books to art. But his integration of the two, and deep love for them, dates back to his early years as a professor at Princeton University. With a particular interest and knowledge in both literature and the art of the 18th and early 19th centuries, Ryskamp saw fit to combine the study of the two areas in his seminars, rather than isolate them.

Since then, art and literature have enjoyed a continued union in Ryskamp's endeavors. Just as exhibitions of art were integral to his work as the Morgan Library, where he brought in such impressive exhibitions as the Michelangelo drawings, books are an integral component of the Frick Collection, which boasts the largest art reference library in the country. A full-time staff of 65 indicates its enormity, Ryskamp said.

"My move to the Frick Collection was really quite a natural step," said Ryskamp. "Both the Frick Collection and Morgan Library remain institutions of unparalleled, extraordinary quality, and both are half museum and half library, which is quite exceptional. So it was not so drastic a move for me."

While Ryskamp's current demanding responsibilities do not allow him to focus all his time on books alone, he said he continues to work with them as much as possible—both as director of the Frick Collection and in his own collection at home. He also continues to hold the ranks of professor of English at Princeton University, in Princeton, New Jersey, where he also resides.

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