

Fall/Winter 2005

*A newsletter for members of the Coe College Library Association*

## New Library webpage is gateway to worldwide information resources

The Stewart Memorial Library webpage—one of the most frequently visited of all pages on the Coe website—recently underwent a facelift that is far more than skin-deep.

“It’s an exploding information world,” says Betty Rogers, the library’s head of reference. “There are more and more databases and there’s more information in each database.” This creates challenges for reference staff members as well as for students and others who rely on them for guidance in locating materials.

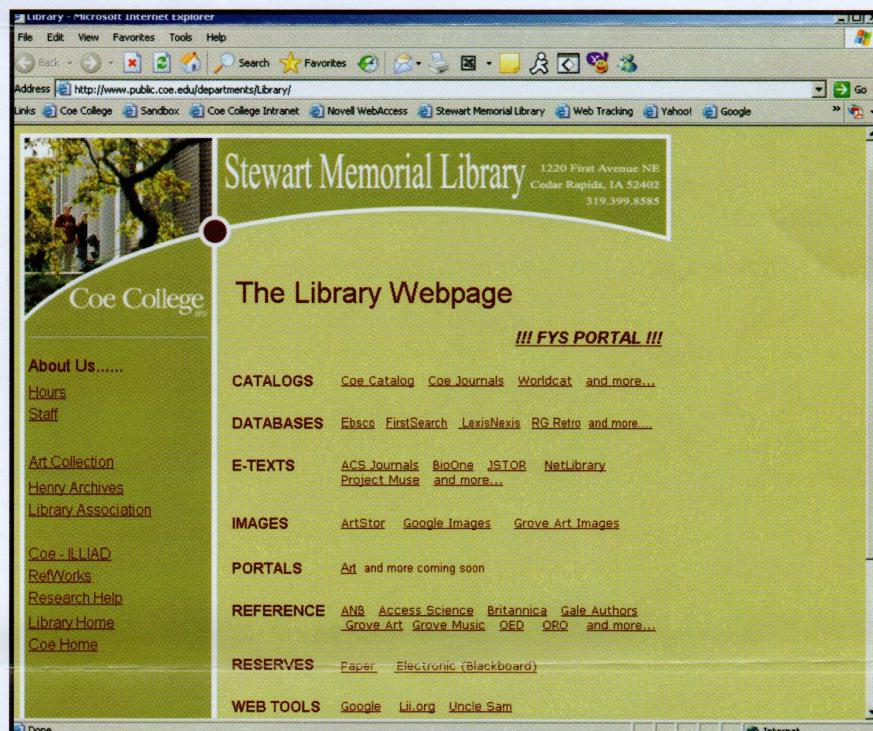
“We needed to restructure the page to better meet the needs of the users and add materials that hadn’t been there,” Rogers explains. “We also wanted to update the look and feel of the page and make it connect better with the college’s website.”

Rogers designed the new page, then worked with Coe’s computer services staff and Web Developer Andy Molison, “who executed it wonderfully,” she says.

“The new page puts almost all of the content right up front,” she adds. “Our previous front page was more complicated to use and didn’t work as well for people who didn’t understand that type of technology.” The webpage format also allows staff to add or remove “seasonal” items such as First-Year Seminar links.

Perhaps most importantly, the revised homepage incorporates a significant new feature—“portal pages” that provide direct access to services the library owns or subscribes to in various disciplines. Eventually, each academic department will have its own portal page accessible from the library’s webpage, Rogers explains.

“As we become more dependent on electronic resources, it’s harder to pinpoint exactly what a student needs. The portal



*The Library’s newly designed webpage provides direct access to key databases and information sources, with a “portals” link to department-specific academic sites and materials.*

page will link them to resources specific to their discipline that are available online or on paper.” Faculty members in each department are providing critical input for the pages, Rogers says.

The new library webpage signals the changing role of reference librarians, Rogers observes. “A lot of reference work that we used to do people can do on their own now with Google and other sources, and 20 years ago we didn’t have access to the resources we do now.” Rogers says her current focus is

on evaluating materials, providing a gateway to online tools and resources, and helping people learn to use them.

“Even though our students seem to be very information-savvy, in some ways they’re not,” she points out. “They can go to Google and get a million hits on a topic like civil rights, but they don’t have the ability to limit their research to more focused material.” The new webpage will help direct them to the most targeted and useful resources available through the Coe library.



*"Mme Charcot's Bouquet" (at left), donated by Willie Blosser, and "Clouds" (above), donated by Eliza "Roby" Hickok Kesler, are the two most recent additions to Coe's collection of works by regionalist painter Marvin Cone.*

## **Two Marvin Cone works donated to Coe**

Two new works were recently added to Coe's extensive collection of paintings by regionalist artist Marvin D. Cone '14.

"Mme Charcot's Bouquet" (13 by 15 inches) was donated by Willie Blosser, a long-time Cedar Rapids resident who frequently attended Coe events before moving to California. According to information written on the back of the painting, in the summer of 1929 a French-woman named Madame Charcot gave the bouquet depicted in the painting to Edward Rowan, who was head of the Little Gallery in Cedar Rapids. He brought the flowers to Cone's studio in Paris, where he was studying art, and this painting resulted. Upon Cone's return to the

United States in the fall of 1929, the painting was purchased by Ralph D. and Eleanor Hunting for the sum of \$50.00. It was willed to Wilma ("Willie") Blosser in 1993 by Marian Hunting, daughter of Ralph and Eleanor.

A second work, titled "Clouds," was donated to Coe by the late Eliza "Roby" Hickok Kesler '31, Life Trustee and devoted friend of the college. The oil on canvas work was created during the years 1959-60.

With the addition of these two works, Coe's collection of Marvin Cone paintings numbers more than 60.

**Sending volumes of hurricane relief:** Students Michelle Uthe and Brandon Scodius prepare boxes of books left over from the library's fall book sale for shipment to the state librarian in Mississippi, where efforts are underway to rebuild 17 libraries destroyed by the Gulf Coast hurricanes. (Stewart Library holds occasional book sales to dispose of books that are duplicates or not suitable for an academic library.)



## Rediscovering "American Gothic" – its 1952 visit to Coe

When Grant Wood's legendary "American Gothic" returned to Cedar Rapids this fall as the centerpiece of a major Grant Wood exhibit at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art (CRMA), The Gazette announced that the work was returning to its place of origin for the first time since it was acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago in 1930.

"I knew that wasn't true," says Carolyn Schmidt, who was a public relations staff member at Coe for more than 30 years before retiring in 2000 and has hardly abandoned her role as upholder of Coe's name and reputation. Schmidt was certain she remembered seeing a photo of the painting being uncrated for an exhibit at Coe at some point after it had achieved fame in the Art Institute's collection. Her memory was seconded by Director of Library Services Rich Doyle, who commenced a search of the college's archives.

In a box labeled "Fine Arts Week," Doyle found a program from Coe's first Fine Arts Week exhibit in 1952, mounted as part of the college's 1951-52 centennial year celebration. "American Gothic" was listed as work #24 in the exhibit in Sinclair Galleries. This, in turn, led Doyle to the photo of Art Professor Marvin Cone, along with a student since identified as Audrey Reggentin '55, uncrating the famous work.

Cone, a Coe graduate who taught French at Coe beginning in 1920 and founded the art department in 1934, was Grant Wood's close friend, fellow alumnus of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and also a respected regionalist painter. Schmidt says he had

*This photo from the Coe archives documented the arrival of Grant Wood's "American Gothic" at the college in 1952 for display in the college's centennial year Fine Arts Week exhibit.*

contacted art museums around the country requesting loaned works for Coe's centennial exhibit, with impressive results.

"Of course, 'American Gothic' was not as valuable then as it is now, when it comes with a full-time guard," she points out.

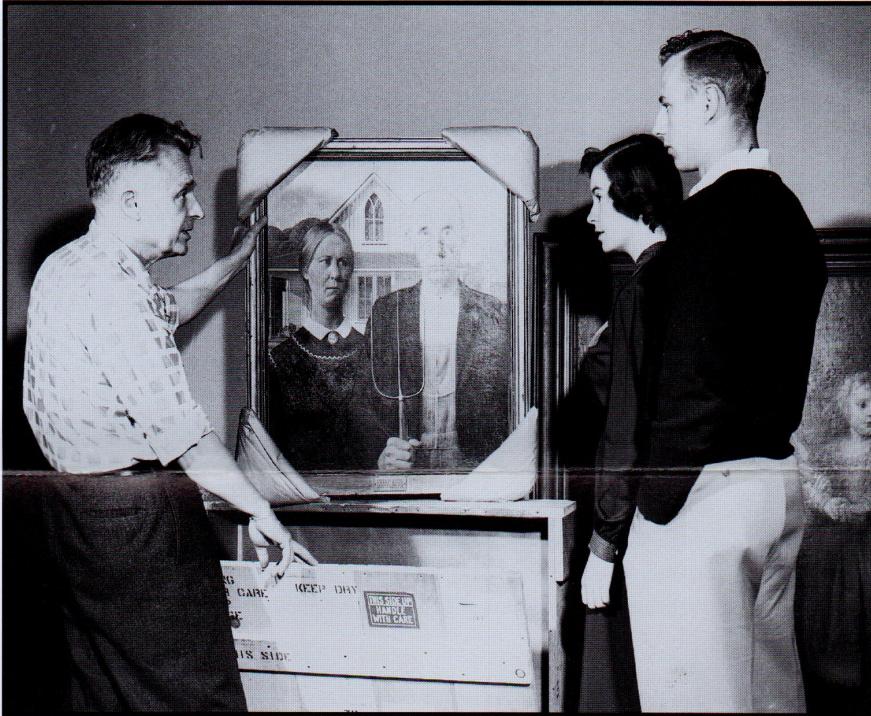
Under a warden's watchful eye, the iconic piece currently hangs among more than 170 works by Grant Wood on display at the CRMA as part of "Grant Wood at 5 Turner Alley," an exhibit planned in conjunction with the opening of Wood's studio apartment at that address, where he lived from 1924 to 1934 and painted "American Gothic" and many of his other best-known works. Coincidentally, the studio was donated to the art museum in 2002 by Cedar Rapids philan-

thropist Audrey Linge-Ovel (nee Reggentin)

the former student who 50 years earlier had helped her professor unveil the most celebrated work in the college's first Fine Arts Week exhibit.

Meanwhile, with assistance from current Coe PR director Rod Pritchard, the story of the painting's 1952 appearance at Coe received front-page coverage in The Gazette on October 18.

"I just wanted Coe to get its due," says Schmidt, who has also reminded local docents and tour guides to make sure visitors are aware of the striking collection of Grant Wood murals, "The Fruits of Iowa," displayed in the Perrine Gallery of Stewart Memorial Library.



### More electronic books added to collection

In September, the library acquired an additional 1,459 recently "published" online books through NetLibrary, a division of the Online Computer Library Center Inc. (OCLC), bringing the total number of e-books to 14,294. Each title has been fully cataloged and made available through the library's online catalog, making the content of each book just a click away. In addition, once Coe students and faculty have registered at NetLibrary through the campus network, these online resources are accessible from any Internet-ready computer. The library's e-book content ranges across the disciplines and complements the printed collection. The library plans to add another 1,200 titles in the near future.

## Technical Services director brings rare perspective to library services

Hongbo Xie, the new head of technical services at Stewart Memorial Library, took an unusual path to her career in library services

but one that reflects a deep appreciation for the ways libraries serve their communities.

Born in Mainyang, China, Xie (pronounced "she") graduated from the Nanjing Institute of Meteorology in 1982 and spent 17 years working as an agricultural meteorologist for the Sichuan provincial government. When her husband, Yu Zeng, traveled to Tucson, Arizona, to pursue a graduate degree in hydrology, Xie and their young daughter followed in 1999. The next year the family moved to Iowa City, where Zeng began a Ph.D. program at the University of Iowa.

Xie wanted to earn an advanced degree, she says, but meteorology wasn't an option at the university, so she decided to study library science.

"An important reason is my experience with public libraries in the United States," she recounts. "In Tucson my daughter and I went to the public library twice a week and borrowed a lot of books, CDs and cassettes. I was amazed that this library had so many materials and you could borrow as much as you wanted for free! In China you would never find this."

Xie says her nine-year-old daughter Jessica went from knowing little more than her ABCs to speaking, writing and reading English within a year. Today Jessica is an honors English

student at Iowa City West High School, Xie notes proudly. "The public library also helped me. I read newspapers, journals, everything, and I was amazed at the services the library provided."

Even with improved English-language skills, Xie says, the UI's Master in Library Science program nearly overwhelmed her at first. "At the beginning of the first semester, I spent six hours reading one article," she recalls. But she persevered, earning her degree this past May after completing a practicum at the Cornell College Library.

Xie began her tenure at Coe in August, taking the place of long-time Head of Technical Services Randy Roeder, who left to become head of complex cataloging at the University of Iowa's main library. Her responsibilities include cataloging and classifying library acquisitions, maintaining the library's catalogs, and upgrading library computer systems. Xie says she hopes to grow into the college archivist role also held by Roeder, and she looks forward to spending more time working with faculty and students.

"The library's management style is very human," she emphasizes. "Rich Doyle and the others have very good relationships with students and faculty, and the librarians get deeply involved with the life of the college. This library has a very good reputation, and I can tell students like to use it a lot."



*Hongbo Xie is the new head of technical services at Stewart Memorial Library.*

Xie says she has had some assistance learning her job from Roeder, who spent Labor Day helping the library staff update student information in the computer system. He told her that her office at Coe is far nicer than his at the university — with ample windows so she can keep an eye on the weather.



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