

Partnership

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Fall/Winter 2014

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

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From the University Librarian

After 35 years of serving Rutgers University Libraries, during which I have had the privilege to serve the university in my current capacity for 17 years, I have decided to retire from my position as Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian as of December 31, 2014.

Working for the university, and particularly the University Libraries, has been a distinct honor. It has been incredibly rewarding to be immersed daily in an environment where the goals are to support the creation of new knowledge and the education of young men and women for their lives' work.

The Rutgers University Libraries have evolved substantially over that time both physically and virtually and new technologies have enabled the Libraries to become more valuable and relevant to the university than ever before. Our libraries serve as nexus for intellectual activity across the academic landscape, offering students and faculty a vast range of resources from a quiet space to examine a one-of-kind manuscript to a technologically-rich seminar room where study groups can work collaboratively on multimedia presentations.

In my work advancing the University Libraries, I have been fortunate to have had the support of loyal donors and advocates such as yourself. Private funds have played an important role in enhancing our collections and technical infrastructure; creating welcoming and state-of-the-art spaces for study; and embarking on new initiatives that will enhance research and learning at the university. Thank you for all you have done, and for all you will continue to do, for Rutgers.

Yours truly,

Marianne Gaunt
Rutgers Libraries
Vice President for Information Services
and University Librarian

Cover photo:
Shakiela Morton, a Rutgers senior, found books she needed to add weight to her independent project through UBorrow. Photo: Nick Romanenko/Rutgers University

Anarchism and Education in New Jersey

Libraries' collection documents progressive learning community

Some in the Rutgers community may be surprised to learn that a significant chapter in the story of educational and social reform in the New Jersey area was written right in the university's backyard. Just beyond the confines of what is today Rutgers' Piscataway campus, the Ferrer Colony of Stelton—an anarchist intentional community inspired by the teachings of freethinking Spanish educator and activist Francisco Ferrer (1859-1909)—and the Modern School which lay at its center served an important part in the progressive education movement from 1915 until its dissolution in the early 1950s. With their stewardship of the Modern School Collection, Rutgers University Libraries play a special role in preserving and promoting the history of this unique experiment in communal living and learning.

The tradition of the Modern School begins with Ferrer, who in 1901 established the *Escuela Moderna* in Barcelona to free education from the influence of the Church. Of his educational philosophy, Ferrer wrote that, "The whole value of education consists in respect for the physical, intellectual, and moral faculties of the child. As in science, the only possible demonstration is demonstration by facts; education is not worthy of the name unless it be stripped of all dogmatism." He was tried and executed in 1909 for allegedly orchestrating the events of the "Tragic Week," a series of workers' protests in Barcelona and its environs that escalated into a bloody rebellion.

There was an international response to the perceived injustice of the execution and, in order to continue Ferrer's work, anarchists in New York established the Francisco Ferrer Association in 1910 and the next year opened the Ferrer Center and Modern

School in Greenwich Village. The initial premises were only large enough to accommodate an adult school, but after fundraising, the center was able to move to a location large enough to include a day school as well. The classes thrived and the school became an important nexus for the radical movement in New York. However, after another move within the city due to limitations of space, and resulting in part from increasing political tension in the city deemed unhealthy for the children, the decision was made by the Association in 1914 to move the day school to New Jersey.

Negotiations were made to purchase farmland in Piscataway Township near the Raritan Township community of Stelton, where a colony would be built with a Modern School at its core. On May 16, 1915, the 32 students of the New York day school were moved to Stelton, and by 1919, about 100 families owned land in the community. There, the families of natives and immigrants, intellectuals and workers lived, learned, and worked alongside one another. Though as many as three quarters

of the colonists were of an Eastern European Jewish background, most were estranged from their faith, and the colony was non-sectarian. Living conditions in the beginning were harsh—colonists went without electricity, central heating, and indoor plumbing—and as a result the school went through four principals in just its first year. Conditions improved beginning in 1917 when Jim and Nellie Dick, who had been involved in the Modern School movement in England, worked to improve the facilities and to impose some discipline on the children. The Dicks remained until 1924 when they left for another Modern School in New York.

In 1920, Elizabeth and Alexis Ferm took over as co-principals, and the school began its most successful period. The Fermes developed workshops to aid in the teaching of printing, weaving, carpentry, basket-making, pottery, metalworking, gardening, singing, and dancing. A highlight of this period is *Voice of the Children*, a magazine written,





Clockwise from top left: Modern School staff meeting (ca. 1920-21); members of the Stelton Children's Theatre perform in Newark, New Jersey (1916); the completed school building and workshops (ca. 1920); Anna Schwartz teaching the wood shop (1950s); two woodcuts from *Voice of the Children* (1920s); and students at work (1914).



illustrated, and printed entirely by the children of the colony. The Ferns left in 1925, however, after disputes with parents who wanted a more academic and politicized education for their children. The Ferns returned in 1933 but the school began to struggle, first economically during the Depression and then during World War II, when the federal government's installation of a military base on adjoining land disrupted the culture of the community. In 1944 Elizabeth died of a stroke, and four years later Alexis retired to Alabama. By 1953 the school was finally closed, and in the subsequent years the property was sold and the assets were distributed.

In 1973, a group of trustees, scholars, and former colonists, students, and teachers established the Friends of the Modern School to continue the school's legacy. Yearly reunions are held by the Friends to reminisce, discuss topics relating to the Modern School

movement, and contribute to the Libraries' Modern School Collection.

The Modern School Collection, held by the Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives, is comprised of the official records of the Stelton Modern School and materials—such as publications, photographs, newspaper clippings, and personal papers—donated by the Friends of the Modern School. The collection, spanning approximately 1880 to 1974, has been used as the foundation for several scholarly monographs. For more information, please visit the collection's finding aid online at libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib/scua/modern_school/modern.shtml. **RUI-P**

Stelton taught me the value of community;

a community based on diversity; a community based on passionate convictions; a community based on differences; a community based on living your life as if your values mattered. My mother participated in putting on a play with the women down at the Modern School. There were groups gathering down there regularly for discussions, concerts by the children. Our living room was a gathering place for any number of people engaged in any number of points of advocacy. I personally did not go to the Modern School, I would take the mile-long walk to the other side of School Street to attend the Fellowship Farms School which was a two room schoolhouse in the socialist colony across the road. On the one hand, I had a bit of attitude because I was going off to really learn but on the other hand I thought of my friends with their nature classes, their art, the plays and I knew they were having more fun. What was home like? It was where lots of one-of-a-kind individuals related to each other. My father a lifelong carpenter; the person across the street-Einstein's associate; the man down the road-the laundry truck driver and everyone had things to say to one another and things to argue about. They argued things like anarchism vs. socialism and the wisdom of the Henry Wallace campaign in 1948 to the injustices of the Rosenberg trial to issues of nudism, free love and militarism. It was a vital and alive place.

Robert Rosen (RC'63) grew up in the Stelton Colony and is a member of the Friends of the Modern School





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Wikipedians at Work

Rutgers librarians take an active role in shaping the online resource

Wikipedia—the openly editable, free-content online encyclopedia—has been a controversial resource for research since its inception. Despite the site's history of being shunned by many academics on the basis of its crowd-sourced contributions, some innovative librarians are taking its rising popularity—and, frankly, the inevitability of its being used, especially by those seeking an introduction to a given topic—as an opportunity to learn about how today's students conduct research.

Librarians at Rutgers are at the forefront of this activity by taking part in the GLAM-Wiki (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) initiative designed to help cultural institutions share their resources via Wikipedia through partnerships with experienced Wikipedia editors. For the 2014-2015 GLAM project, "Cultures, Diversity, and Inequality—Local and Global," teams of Rutgers liaison librarians have been evaluating the depth and authoritativeness of Wikipedia diversity content and identifying content gaps based on the relevant Rutgers curricular. Then, in collaboration with Wikipedians-in-residence, they have been adding reliable Libraries-licensed resources and digital content to close the identified gaps in the Wikipedia articles, while also familiarizing themselves with Wikipedia editing culture to enable future contributions to the site.

Topics of focus for the Rutgers team include: women in jazz and Newark jazz history; the Asian immigrant experience in New Jersey (including Chinese and Japanese immigration to New Jersey, the Seabrook Farms experience, and Newark Chinatown); and cultural competence in health care. In contributing these articles and additions to Wikipedia, the librarians will enhance the quality of information available to users while also leveraging the popularity of the site, projected to serve 1 billion people worldwide by 2015, to increase access to key resources that are either published by Rutgers faculty or

made available through the Libraries' digital content, such as the university's open access journals and RUcore, the online institutional repository.

The first of the major additions to appear online—a collaborative effort of Yingting Zhang, Information and Education Librarian at the Robert Wood Johnson Library of the Health Sciences, visiting scholar Daniela Mejia, and Yu-Hung Lin, Head of Continuing Resources, Scholarship and Research Data—discusses cultural competence in health care, a topic that examines the ability for health care systems to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. Its content, designed as a starting point for general readers, draws on the relevant curricular at Rutgers Medical Schools and the work of faculty who are subject matter experts in the field. The article went live on Wikipedia in August, though there are also plans to add further content regarding ethnic background, religious beliefs, and physical appearance.

Other newly-available contributions to Wikipedia as part of Rutgers' participation in GLAM include additions and/or expansions of pages concerning pianist Jeanette Kimball, trumpeter Dolly Jones, and all-female swing band Darlings of Rhythm; Newark jazz venues Sparky J's and the Key Club; as well as several Rutgers schools, centers, and faculty members. Additional pages, including topics pertaining to the Asian immigrant experience in New Jersey, are currently outlined in GLAM "sandboxes," online workspaces where the teams can write and edit content before the articles are published. Still others remain slated for future development.

For more information on GLAM and to follow the Libraries' contributions to Wikipedia as they are made, please visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:GLAM/Rutgers. [RUI-P](#)

