

On a warm late-August evening, students watch a movie on the Eastman Quadrangle before attending in-person classes at the start of Fall Semester 2020. (Photo by J. Adam Fenster, University of Rochester)

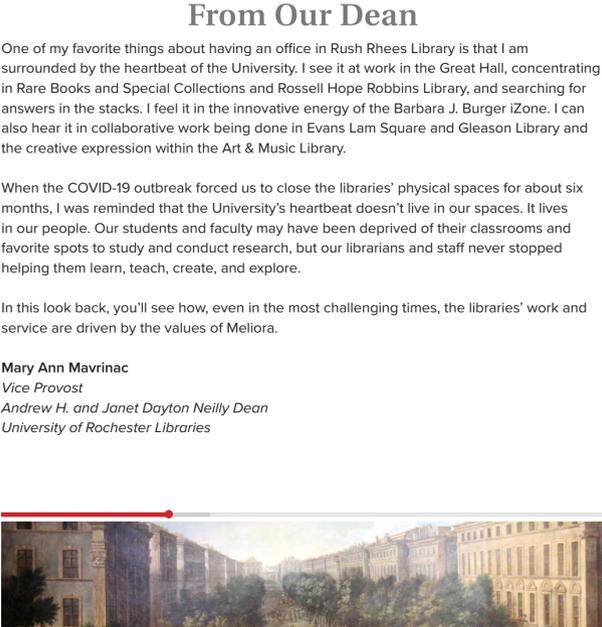
University of Rochester Libraries

A Year's Highlights in Brief, 2020

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Mary Ann Mavrinac

Mary Ann Mavrinac, dean of the University of Rochester Libraries



As part of virtual celebratory activities, the Digital Scholarship team created a start-to-finish video tour of Rush Rhees Library's tower and the 360-degree view from the top.

From Our Dean

One of my favorite things about having an office in Rush Rhees Library is that I am surrounded by the heartbeat of the University. I see it at work in the Great Hall, concentrating in Rare Books and Special Collections and Russell Hope Robbins Library, and searching for answers in the stacks. I feel it in the innovative energy of the Barbara J. Burger iZone. I can also hear it in collaborative work being done in Evans Lam Square and Gleason Library and the creative expression within the Art & Music Library.

When the COVID-19 outbreak forced us to close the libraries' physical spaces for about six months, I was reminded that the University's heartbeat doesn't live in our spaces. It lives in our people. Our students and faculty may have been deprived of their classrooms and favorite spots to study and conduct research, but our librarians and staff never stopped helping them learn, teach, create, and explore.

In this look back, you'll see how, even in the most challenging times, the libraries' work and service are driven by the values of Meliora.

Mary Ann Mavrinac

Vice Provost

Andrew H. and Janet Dayton Neilly Dean

University of Rochester Libraries



View of the Cours during the Plague of 1720 by Michel Serre, c. 1721, depicting the Great Plague of Marseille, the last significant outbreak of bubonic plague in Europe

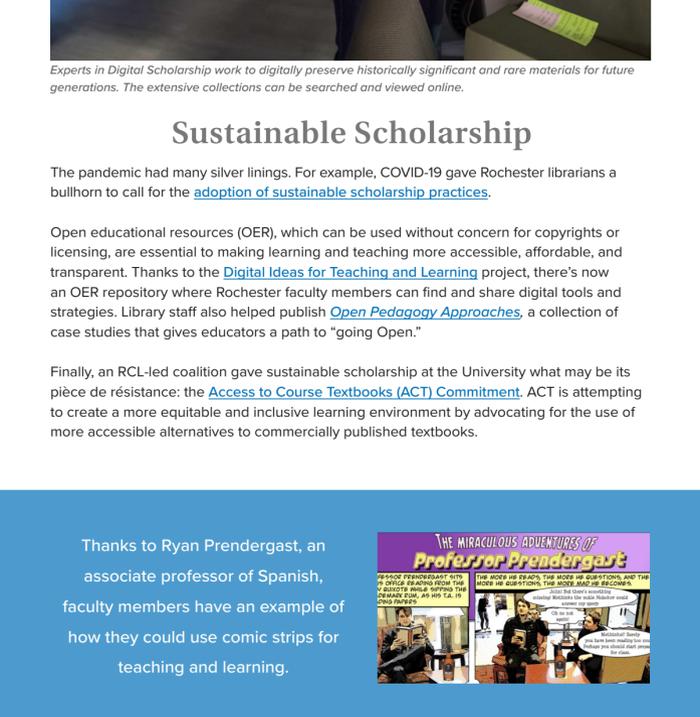
COVID-19: Uncharted Territory

Let's address the novel coronavirus in the room. We spent more of the year in a pandemic than not. That reality, which was genuinely unprecedented on the River Campus, dictated much of what the libraries did in 2020.

For example, national stay-at-home orders gave timely relevance to the [almost 300-year-old "bills of health"](#) document acquired in the fall of 2019 and held in the Medical Center's Edward G. Miner Library's history of medicine section. During the Great Plague of Marseille (1720–23), travel between major cities in Europe wasn't possible without such documents.

In May, when the University was forced to confer degrees online, the Digital Scholarship team stepped up to create virtual celebratory activities, including a start-to-finish [video tour](#) up Rush Rhees Library's tower and the [360-degree view](#) from the top.

Mostly, we were making adjustments on the fly. With all of the recalibrating required as life turned upside down, the University Archives launched the [Archiving Our COVID-19 Stories](#) project to [preserve pandemic experiences](#)—and their impact—for future research.



Patentes di partenza or "bills of departure" printed and issued by the Deputies of Health of the Marquisate of Pregola in Lombardy, Italy, 1722



A view of iZone's booth seating from the Norris Plaza

COVID-19: Adaptation

After we found our footing in the off-kilter world of COVID-19, we got back to doing what we do best: providing support and expertise for learning, teaching, and research.

Our unflappable [subject librarians helped professors make the shift to remote learning](#) by walking them through Zoom, creating [video tutorials for online resources](#), and being extraordinarily available for questions. Our Digital Scholarship team held a [workshop series](#) that presented tools, exercises, and examples for teaching in a virtual classroom. And when we were able to reopen, we provided the "how-to" through the Barbara J. Burger iZone, [one of the first University spaces to reopen](#). iZone was also a lead collaborator in the [COVID-19 Challenge](#), a virtual experience that challenged students to address COVID-created problems that community partners were facing.

Finally, as part of our efforts to maintain safe spaces, we invested in sensor-based technology, Occupaspace. With the use of the Waitz app, our patrons get real-time information on study space density and availability.



Experts in Digital Scholarship work to digitally preserve historically significant and rare materials for future generations. The extensive collections can be searched and viewed online.

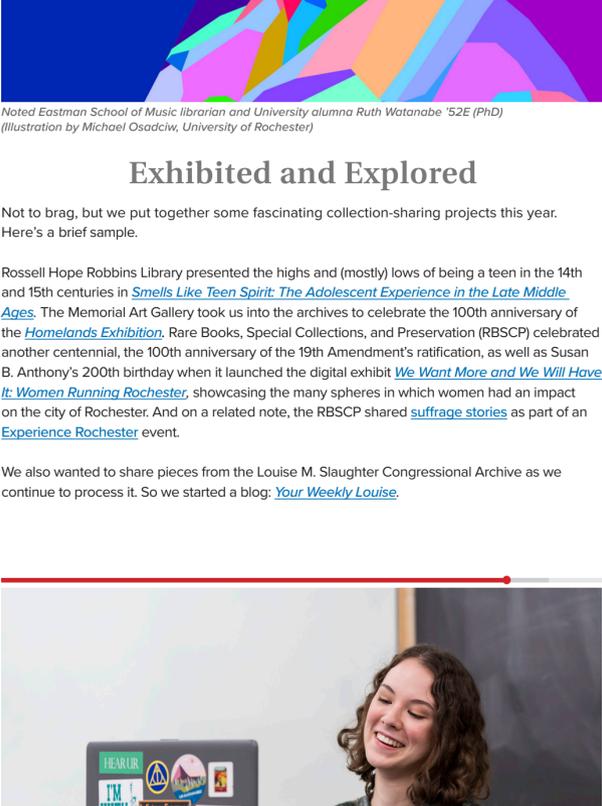
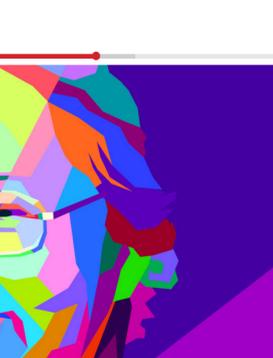
Sustainable Scholarship

The pandemic had many silver linings. For example, COVID-19 gave Rochester librarians a bullhorn to call for the [adoption of sustainable scholarship practices](#).

Opening educational resources (OER), which can be used without concern for copyrights or licensing, are essential to making learning and teaching more accessible, affordable, and transparent. Thanks to the [Digital Ideas for Teaching and Learning](#) project, there's now an OER repository where Rochester faculty members can find and share digital tools and strategies. Library staff also helped publish [Open Pedagogy Approaches](#), a collection of case studies that gives educators a path to "going Open."

Finally, an RCL-led coalition gave sustainable scholarship at the University what may be its pièce de résistance: the [Access to Course Textbooks \(ACT\) Commitment](#). ACT is using to create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment by advocating for the use of more accessible alternatives to commercially published textbooks.

Thanks to Ryan Prendergast, an associate professor of Spanish, faculty members have an example of how they could use comic strips for teaching and learning.



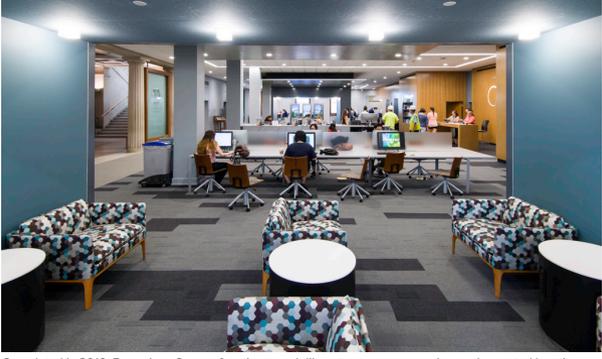
Noted Eastman School of Music librarian and University alumna Ruth Watanabe '52E (PhD) (Illustration by Michael Osadciw, University of Rochester)

Exhibited and Explored

Not to brag, but we put together some fascinating collection-sharing projects this year. Here's a brief sample.

Russell Hope Robbins Library presented the highs and (mostly) lows of being a teen in the 14th and 15th centuries in [Smells Like Teen Spirit: The Adolescent Experience in the Late Middle Ages](#). The Memorial Art Gallery took us into the archives to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the [Homelands Exhibition](#). Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation (RBSCP) celebrated another centennial, the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment's ratification, as well as Susan B. Anthony's 200th birthday when it launched the digital exhibit [We Want More and We Will Have It: Women Running Rochester](#), showcasing the many spheres in which women had an impact on the city of Rochester. And on a related note, the RBSCP shared [suffrage stories](#) as part of an [Experience Rochester](#) event.

We also wanted to share pieces from the Louise M. Slaughter Congressional Archive as we continue to process it. So we started a blog: [Your Weekly Louise](#).



Emma Schaale, a Karp Library Fellow and the public programs coordinator for Studio X, leads a Blender workshop over Zoom.

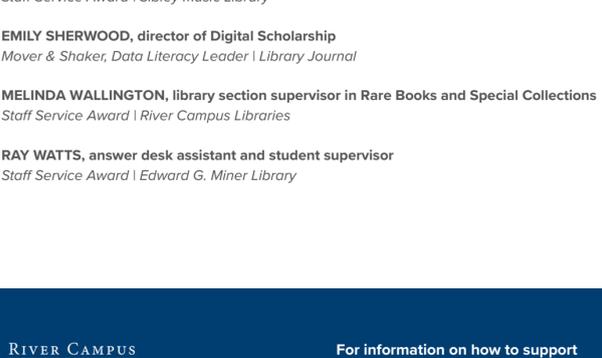
Ever Forward, Ever Better

True to Meliora, we remained committed to growth, progress, and improvement. Before "COVID-19" had even been uttered, we launched Phase I of the River Campus Libraries website redesign. We also initiated [RCL Forward](#), an internal project to help us be our best by identifying and building upon our strengths using appreciative inquiry.

Even in the mire of the pandemic, we kept moving forward. In May, we welcomed the new [Joseph N. Lambert and Harold B. Schliefer Director of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation, Miranda Mims](#). Soon after, we introduced a new and innovative, experiential work program, the Carol '74, P'11 and Sarah '11 [Karp Library Fellows Program](#), whose inaugural cohort is contributing to the leadership, service, and research development of iZone and Studio X, the University's hub for extended reality.

And AIDS awareness and education got three wins. The upcoming collaborative exhibit with the Memorial Art Gallery, [Up Against the Wall](#), received grants from the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#), the National Endowment for the Arts, and the [Rochester Area Community Foundation](#).

Karp Library Fellow Emma Schaale '21 taught students how to create virtual animals like this one in a Studio X workshop for the 3-D modeling software Blender.



Completed in 2016, Evans Lam Square functions much like a town square, serving as the central location for library users to get information, do research, collaborate on projects, and explore new technologies.

Distinguished Service

In 2020, going "above and beyond" was kind of the baseline for workplace responsibilities. That means the people recognized here—by the University and external organizations—took exceptional service to a new level.

- EMILY CLASPER**, director of Service Strategies
Martin E. Messinger Libraries Recognition Award | River Campus Libraries
- RANDALL COOK**, director of Project Management and Physical Spaces
Martin E. Messinger Libraries Recognition Award | River Campus Libraries
- LINDSAY CRONK**, head of Collection Strategies and Scholarly Communication
Presidential Citation | Association for Library Collections & Technical Services
- MARGARET DULL**, head of Metadata Strategies
Esther J. Piercy Award | Association for Library Collections & Technical Services
- RICK McRAE**, catalog and reference librarian
Staff Service Award | Sibley Music Library
- EMILY SHERWOOD**, director of Digital Scholarship
Mover & Shaker, Data Literacy Leader | Library Journal
- MELINDA WALLINGTON**, library section supervisor in Rare Books and Special Collections
Staff Service Award | River Campus Libraries
- RAY WATTS**, answer desk assistant and student supervisor
Staff Service Award | Edward G. Miner Library