Building Stronger Communities Together

By Kathy Irwin, Dean of University Libraries

At CMU Libraries, collaboration is how we create meaningful change. Over the years, we've developed many partnerships that expand access to information, increase community resources, and foster innovation. Today, collaboration and community are more important than ever.

Libraries connect people, ideas, and resources. We support learners and researchers in accomplishing their goals by reducing costs, sharing resources, and preserving local history.

Here are a few ways we foster collaboration and strengthen our CMU community:

- Reducing Student Costs: Through our Textbooks in the Library program and the Affordable Course Materials program, we provide students with free access to course readings, making college more affordable for thousands of students. Whether purchasing textbooks for our collections or working with faculty to adopt Open Access materials, we enable students to fully engage in their courses without making a difficult choice to opt out of purchasing their textbooks.

- Sharing Resources: In partnership with libraries worldwide, we borrow articles and books needed by our students and faculty. The reciprocal nature of our interlibrary loan service ensures quick and inexpensive access to materials our libraries do not own. We also participate in the Michigan Shared Print Initiative, which preserves access to at least two copies of book titles that are commonly held by many of our academic libraries. This collective-collections initiative has enabled us to enhance study spaces in the Park Library.

- Preserving Michigan's Cultural Heritage: The Clarke Historical Library partners with the Library of Michigan and local historical societies and public libraries to digitize newspapers. The Digital Michigan Newspapers portal, which contains over 1.7 million pages of local Michigan newspapers, helps historians and genealogists explore local history and shine a light on Michigan stories.

- Streamlining Research Support: We are teaming up with the Office of Research and Graduate Studies and the Office of Information Technology to create a virtual journey map that guides researchers through CMU's research services. Each of our units provides research support for students and faculty, yet our services are distinct. Being able to direct researchers to the right person or service saves them time and accelerates their research.

Your gifts to the CMU Libraries make many of these collaborations possible. Together, we're shaping the future of learning and research at CMU. Thank you for being an important part of that work.

In This Issue:

2024-2025: The Year in Numbers

CMU Libraries' 2024-2025 operational data showed an increase over the prior year in the number of individuals using the Park Library and our event spaces with study room reservations holding steady. Although library instruction sessions increased, use of research guides decreased due to guide consolidation and streamlining. Equipment checkout increased dramatically due to increasing the laptop checkout period to two weeks and increasing the number of laptops available. Interlibrary loans, Clarke digital collections, and e-book use also increased compared to the prior year.

- ↑ **7.9 %** - Park Library Usage
- ↓ **1.7 %** - Group Study Room Reservations
- ↑ **0.4 %** - Individual Study Room Reservations
- ↑ **11.3 %** - Event Space Usage
- ↑ **130.3 %** - Physical Equipment Checked Out
- ↑ **1.2 %** - E-books Accessed

- ↑ **4.8 %** - Clarke Digital Collection Usage
- ↓ **12.2 %** - Articles Downloaded
- ↑ **12.3 %** - Interlibrary Loan Requests
- ↑ **4.7 %** - Library Instruction
- ↓ **18.4 %** - Research Guide Usage

2024-2025 Library Use Divided by Student Headcount

- **22** Articles downloaded
- **22** Library research guides used
- **~1** Physical books checked out /renewed
- **~1** Items requested from Documents on Demand

- **4** E-books accessed
- **20** Visits to the Park Library

2025-2026
SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Grace Ellen Aubry
Robert & Marily Scholarship
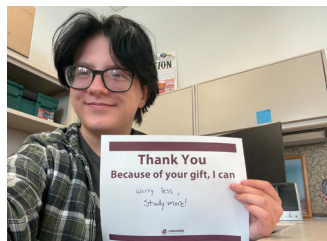
Max Maksymowski
Gus & Lucille Grozdon Family Scholarship

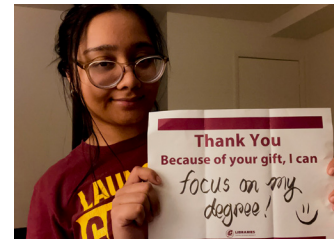**Lindsey Nguyen**
R&M Schmidt Endowed Award

Elijah Christian Rountree
Helen Holz Rooney Endowed Award

Olivia Van Avery
Helen Holz Rooney Endowed Award

Sai Cholik Vempati
Library Student Employee Scholarship

Nishat Ahmed
Library Student Employee Scholarship

Faculty Embrace Digital Literacy in the Libraries' New Fellows Program

By Katie Edmiston, Faculty Librarian

Throughout the 2025-2026 academic year, faculty members at Central Michigan University are participating in an initiative to engage in teaching digital literacy in their classrooms. Thirty-four faculty representing all academic colleges at the university are part of a cohort tasked with creating an assignment for one of their courses that requires students to design a digital or multimedia component (such as a digital flyer, website, or video). Digital and multimedia assignments teach students valuable skills in communicating information and demonstrating their learning by utilizing formats outside of a traditional written paper.

The Digital Learning & Leadership Faculty Fellows cohort connects faculty from multiple disciplines across campus to learn from one another and to identify the Adobe tools useful for teaching digital learning and visual communication. These tools are available to all CMU users through the Adobe Creative Campus Initiative. Monthly meetings are led by librarian Katie Edmiston (CMU Libraries) and Dr. Troy Hicks (College of Education and Human Services), where faculty engage in creative activities and conversations surrounding teaching digital skills in the classroom. Each month's lesson is designed to introduce faculty to a different digital or multimedia project type and how it can be adapted to their courses' learning objectives and content.

The eight-month cohort, funded by CMU Libraries and Adobe, will meet once a month throughout the academic year and culminate in a showcase in the Spring 2026 semester where faculty can display the digital projects their students have created. The Faculty Fellows program kicked off in Fall 2025 with presentations by Ms. Edmiston and Dr. Hicks, along with instruction from Adobe representatives on how to incorporate creative programs like Adobe Express into their teaching and learning.

Now at the halfway mark of the program, faculty have engaged in designing assignments incorporating visual design principles, infographics, audio/video components, and webpages. Several faculty implemented assignments into their fall semester courses, including English, Interior Design, and Nursing. New projects introduced in their classes included designing online portfolios recapping what has been learned throughout the semester, creating digital research posters, and adapting written essays into digital forms such as a webpage or video.

Many more faculty are engaged in introducing assignments into their courses this spring, with the intent of gathering student examples to display in the showcase. All newly designed assignments will be gathered into an online portal for CMU faculty to access, which will be a valuable resource allowing for increased teaching of digital literacy across campus. We look forward to seeing what all the Faculty Fellows have achieved by the end of the semester!

» *Left to Right: Steven Watson, Troy Hicks, Katie Edmiston, and Shauna Chung*

Clarke Summer Project Students' Achievements

By Carrie Marsh, Clarke Historical Library Director

Special collections libraries like the Clarke offer valuable experiential learning through primary source materials used for research, teaching, and learning. With donor support, the Clarke launched two pilot projects last summer, allowing Central Michigan University (CMU) students to gain hands-on experience and contribute to the library's collections and initiatives.

These pilot projects were designed to provide students with opportunities to develop professional skills and practices, while fostering relationships with Clarke archivists and librarians to support their learning. The projects also enabled students to apply their knowledge, reflect on their experiences, and receive constructive feedback.

After interviewing applicants, two were selected for the projects. Saima Rahman Anika, a graduate student in History, World Languages, and Cultures, worked with Public Services Librarian Bryan Whitledge to develop an exhibition marking the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Megan Monroe, a master's student in creative writing, partnered with Special Collections Cataloger Gabriella Stuardi to learn metadata creation and build an online exhibition using digitized Clarke manuscripts.

The exhibition examines how Michiganders have embodied the values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness outlined in the Declaration of Independence. Anika met daily with Bryan Whitledge to learn research methods and participated in discussions with subject consultants, including CMU professors Andrew Wehrman, Melissa Stanley, and former professor Michael Federspiel.

Anika's research deepened her understanding of Michigan history. She evaluated books, manuscripts, images, and other Clarke materials as both display items and historical sources. Her work resulted in four essays for the exhibition, covering topics such as World War I, education and charter schools, and the rise of conservatism in Michigan. Whitledge noted, "As the weeks went on, Anika honed her research skills and developed the knack for finding relevant materials in the Clarke's holdings and then reflecting on how those documents might be meaningful to a future exhibit goer. It was great to see her transfer her history background to our exhibit efforts."

At the end of the summer, Anika reflected on her experiences. "As an international and History student, it was a great learning experience for me working on this project. I learned [a] new research approach, which was different from my earlier style... I am hopeful to use this experience and approach in further academic research. My country also has [a] rich history of achieving independence and standing against tyranny over the years and I am glad I could link my learning and research experience of this project with that. I am hopeful maybe I can work on these issues after returning [home]."

Anika's research will be available to the public when the new exhibition opens in early 2026.

Megan's project had a different focus and methodology. Working with Gabriella Stuardi, she learned the Dublin Core metadata standard and applied Library of Congress Subject Headings. Megan described over 150 digitized items from sixteen Clarke manuscript collections related to nurses and nursing education in Michigan.

Megan created Dublin Core metadata for each digitized manuscript, which required careful reading and research to uncover each item's narrative. She applied this approach to Harriet Huebel's correspondence, for example.

"As I read through the letters, I noticed that several mentioned the dangers of a new flu that was spreading, and the correspondents would often share tips on how to take medical precautions to avoid it," Megan shared. "Rather than leaving the viewer to interpret what was happening within the letters, I conducted a bit of outside research and connected the time period and location to the Spanish Influenza Epidemic that occurred in 1918. [This information was] included in the item's description to provide context to the viewers who may be unfamiliar with the events at that time."

Megan's research also involved identifying individuals mentioned in the

International Children's Literature Research Grant Awardee Dhwani Hemant Mehta

By Carrie Marsh, Clarke Historical Library Director

Dhwani Mehta, this year's International Children's Literature Research Grant awardee at the Clarke Historical Library, is a Ph.D. student in English Literature at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Her research on postcolonial Indian children's literature focuses on how stories written during this period subtly carry history and cultural memory through everyday moments such as festivals, friendships, and solitude. Among the questions she's exploring is how young readers discover their identity and sense of belonging through the emotional journeys in these stories.

Arriving on campus in mid-July, 2025, she spent two weeks researching in the Clarke. She first delved into the works of Ruskin Bond, an Anglo-Indian writer whose stories have influenced generations of Indian children, looking at how Bond's stories served as what she terms "emotional archives." In other words, how do his stories preserve feelings and memories across generations, and how do they help shape Indian national identity in postcolonial times, through everyday life and small, meaningful experiences?

Reading Bond's author dossier, part of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) Dossiers of Award Nominees collection, was an illuminating experience for Mehta. "[Reading his dossier] helped me understand how Bond's work is framed internationally."

"I was surprised by how often Bond's work is described in global discourse as nostalgic or charming, sometimes to the point of being dismissed as simple or apolitical. However, upon reading *The Room on the Roof* closely, especially the final chapters, I noticed how deeply his writing engages with themes of loss, resilience, belonging, and emotional transformation. It's anything but shallow. That moment really shifted how I read

him, not just as a storyteller, but as someone quietly shaping how we think about national identity and personal memory."

Bond's author dossier was helpful to Mehta in another way. "[It] also led me to new archival leads, collections of Bond's materials that are available elsewhere in the U.S., which I hadn't been aware of before. That's going to be tremendously helpful for the next stages of my dissertation. It expanded the scope of what I thought was possible in this research and gave me more direction and confidence moving forward."

IBBY is a non-profit organization that represents an international network of people committed to bringing the highest-quality books to children worldwide. Among IBBY's numerous activities are its biennial Hans Christian Andersen Awards, often referred to as the "Little Nobel Prize." They are presented to an author and an illustrator, living at the time of the recognition, whose complete works have made a lasting contribution to children's literature. The IBBY Dossiers collection in the Clarke includes biographical information about the Hans Christian Andersen Awards nominees, photographs, and examples of their art or writing.

"One of the biggest benefits [of the research grant] was the space to feel uncertain, to follow leads that may or may not pan out, and to let the research breathe a little, something we don't always get to do in graduate school. I also found it emotionally validating to be supported in this way. It reminded me that others believe in the value of my work, and that kind of thoughtful support has a real impact on confidence and momentum. I'll be carrying the insights and clarity I gained here into the next stages of my dissertation and beyond."

» *Dhwani Mehta, Summer Research Grant Awardee*

Mehta is formulating an article about nostalgic realism and emotional memory in postcolonial Indian children's books and expanding her research to include other authors such as R.K. Narayan. "I'm hoping to bring more attention to Indian children's literature in global scholarly conversations."

The International Children's Literature Research Grant (ICLRG) is a competitive award that funds travel for a scholar to the Clarke Historical Library to conduct research using the Clarke's Lucile Clarke Memorial Children's Library, especially its international children's literature resources. The ICLRG honors Dr. Susan M. Stan, a renowned expert in global children's literature and a CMU English professor. She endowed the research grant at the Clarke to promote research by North American scholars who often have limited access to original editions of international children's books.

Students' Achievements

documents, even if a name appeared only once. She created a comprehensive spreadsheet with notes, web links, and additional information, resulting in a detailed name index with hyperlinks to each digitized document.

After completing the metadata, Megan developed the exhibition website using the Omeka platform. She organized the documents into four chronological eras and added a section on nursing education practices. This comprehensive approach makes the online exhibition, "Remarkable Legacies: Stories of Intrepid Michigan Nurses from the Clarke's Archives", a valuable scholarly resource on Michigan history. The collection explores the evolution of nursing and the impact of Michigan women on healthcare from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. To view this digital collection, visit: ***clarke.cmich.edu/minurses.***

About her summer project experience, Megan noted, "...perhaps most importantly for me, this experience opened a door toward a future education in library and information sciences. ...Through this project, I realized how much I enjoy that intersection of history, research, and technology, all combined to help others complete their own research. I also really loved the process of digging through the archives and through history to assemble information and format the presentation in a way that's engaging and accessible to others. So, after finishing my MA here at CMU, I plan to look more into graduate programs in library sciences to continue doing similar work to what I experienced this summer."

The Clarke Historical Library thanks the donors who supported this pilot project. With ongoing support, the library plans to build on these achievements and offer more experiential learning opportunities in the future.

Collaborating to Support Researchers

By Tim Peters, Associate Dean of University Libraries

CMU Libraries is partnering with the Office of Research and Graduate Studies (ORGS) and the Office of Information Technology (OIT) to enhance support for faculty and student researchers.

Central Michigan University is an active research institution. During 2024-25, CMU faculty, staff, and students published 650 research articles and secured 185 grants and contracts totaling nearly $22 million. Faculty and students across all colleges engage in diverse research activities, each requiring specific steps to ensure success and recognition. These efforts generate significant data, including statistics, transcripts, images, and recordings. The Libraries, ORGS, and OIT support researchers by guiding them through the research process and providing secure data management solutions.

Each partner offers distinct expertise to support research. The library provides access to databases, journals, and book collections. Librarians assist with literature searches, publishing options, and tools for managing research documents and citations. ORGS guides researchers in finding and applying for grants and meeting compliance and reporting requirements. It also offers training on the research

process. OIT supports software selection and ensures secure, reliable data storage, specializing in data security, privacy, and access.

Leaders from the three offices began meeting in Fall 2025 to discuss the goals and direction of their collaboration. In November, approximately 30 employees from the Libraries, ORGS, and OIT attended a lunch to connect and share ideas for improving research support. Future meet-ups are planned for 2026 to encourage further collaboration.

Librarians are developing a research journey map to guide researchers through each stage of the process, from selecting a topic to producing a final product. The map will include links to support services. For example, researchers seeking help with data management or secure storage can access relevant resources from the library, OIT, or ORGS. This tool aims to simplify the research process, especially for graduate students and new faculty.

Although CMU Libraries, OIT, and ORGS already support the research community, this partnership is expected to save time, reduce workloads, and increase productivity for researchers.

The Impact of AI on CMU Libraries

By Brady Cramer, Metadata Strategist and Lucas Lueder, Electronic Resources Specialist

Artificial Intelligence is transforming how we discover, analyze, and share knowledge. At CMU Libraries, AI tools are accelerating research, streamlining workflows, and enhancing user experiences. Below is an overview of how we are adopting this technology.

AI in libraries enables users to ask research questions in plain English and receive summarized insights from thousands of scholarly articles. Traditional database searches, which relied on Boolean logic and isolated keywords, are being replaced by AI-powered natural language discovery systems. These tools allow users to search using the full context of their queries, significantly improving information retrieval. In addition, AI serves as an analytical partner, summarizing academic texts and identifying patterns or trends across large datasets.

Many databases available through CMU Libraries, such as ProQuest, JSTOR, and EBSCO, have integrated AI features into their search interfaces at no additional cost. CMU Libraries' SmartSearch also now includes an AI research assistant that summarizes the top five results for each research question.

As AI is integrated into more databases, research skills are evolving. Just as well-constructed Boolean searches yield better results than simple keyword searches, carefully crafted prompts enable AI tools to deliver more accurate, valuable outputs. This makes academic libraries well-positioned to teach patrons prompt engineering skills.

With the rapid adoption of Large Language Models (LLMs), teaching prompt engineering is essential to help patrons use AI effectively for research, creative writing, and learning. By crafting precise prompts, users can interact with AI more productively and obtain accurate and relevant information. This year, CMU Libraries will offer workshops for students, faculty, and staff to promote AI literacy.

The Microsoft information ecosystem, including Copilot, provides AI capabilities that can significantly improve staff productivity. For file and information management, Copilot automates organization, streamlines advanced search and retrieval, and generates transcripts and notes from recorded meetings. Copilot also supports content creation and communication by helping staff draft emails, articles, and presentations.

In addition to Microsoft Copilot, Ex Libris, the provider of our catalog and SmartSearch, has released several AI tools that support staff workflows. The AI Metadata Assistant can create and modify bibliographic records using images of materials. Ex Libris also uses a specialized version of this tool to create and enhance the records we provide.

Ex Libris has also released an AI Fund Assistant that answers questions about budgets and spending and provides citations from our budget data. Ex Libris generates AI insights using CMU Libraries' data, automatically informing staff of trends and information relevant to their roles. These tools enable us to serve patrons more efficiently.

With the rapid deployment of many AI tools, each with specific uses and limitations, some library employees may not be fully aware of all available resources or how to use them effectively. To address this, the library's AI Committee will meet with each department throughout the spring semester to inform and guide staff on best practices for integrating AI into their workflows. Artificial Intelligence enhances library services by improving research capabilities, streamlining workflows, and enriching user experiences. Our aim is to ensure that AI supports, rather than complicates, our mission to connect people with knowledge.
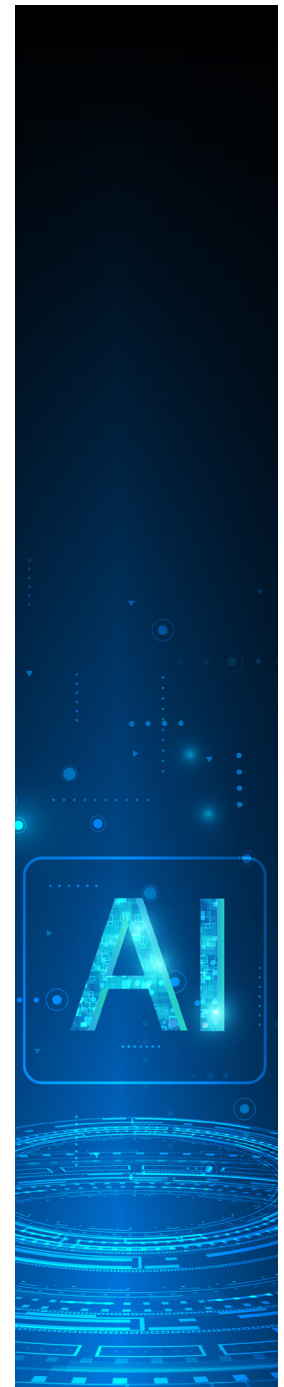
Coming Soon!

The Clarke Historical Library's next exhibit commemorates the 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. "The Consent of the Governed: Michigan and the Values of the Declaration of Independence" draws from the Clarke's collections to showcase events and people across Michigan that exemplify the values enshrined in the Declaration—life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, equality, and fighting for democracy.

The new exhibition will be on view in the Clarke from February through December 2026.

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Clarke Historical Library Spring 2026 Speaker Series

» In Person - **Wednesday, February 4, 7 p.m.**
John & Audrey Cumming Lecture - Dr. Frank Boles about Mackinaw Straits tourism.

» Online - **Tuesday, March 3, 7 p.m.**
Dr. Daniel Harrison on maritime archaeology in the Great Lakes.

» In Person - **Monday, March 30, 7 p.m.**
Christopher Gillcrist about the National Museum of the Great Lakes' temporary exhibition, *Dark Waters: True Crime and Mystery on the Great Lakes.*

» In Person - **Monday, April 13, 7 p.m.**
David & Eunice Sutherland Burgess Lecture, Laurie Halse Anderson on her new YA novel, *Rebellion 1776.*

For full CHL Speaker Series details, visit: **clarke.cmich.edu/speakerseries**

Libraries 2026 Art Exhibitions

January - March 2026, Baber Room Gallery
» FACES OF HUMANITY

March - May 2026, Baber Room Gallery
» GUSTAVO AYALA

May 2026, 3rd Floor Exhibition Space
» ANIMATION SENIOR SHOWCASE

June - September 2026, Baber Room Gallery
» NEW ACQUISITIONS

September - November 2026, Baber Room Gallery
» ERIC SOUTHER, FREQUENCIES OF DEEP TIME

November - December 2026, Baber Room Gallery
» LAURÉN GERIG & REBECCA CASEMENT

For full 2026 Libraries Art Exhibition details, visit: **library.cmich.edu/exhibitions**

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