William Gass To Receive 2007 St. Louis Literary Award

The Saint Louis University Library Associates are pleased to announce the recipient of the 2007 Saint Louis Literary Award. Dr. William H. Gass, a distinguished Professor in Humanities at Washington University, will be presented this prestigious award on October 24th at Saint Louis University.

Biography

William H. Gass, biographer, famous novelist, short story writer, essayist and literary critic was born in Fargo, North Dakota in 1924. He endured an unhappy childhood in Ohio and served in the Navy during WWII before studying philosophy at Kenyon College and Cornell University, where he wrote a dissertation on “A Philosophical Investigation of Metaphor” and read the experimental writings of Gertrude Stein. For most of his career, he has been the David May Distinguished Professor at Washington University, where he founded the International Writers Center.

Professor Gass has won many awards, including a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Mark Twain Award for Distinguished Contribution to the Literature of the Midwest, the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, the American Book Award, and the Lennan Lifetime Achievement Award. He received the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism, not once but three times, and this year received the Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism. He is married to Mary Henderson Gass, an architect, who wrote Parkview: A St. Louis Urban Oasis. They have two daughters.

Summary of Gass’ Work

His body of work is extensively covered in the Contemporary Literary Criticism encyclopedia of 2000. The following is taken from that document:

A precise and highly regarded literary stylist, William H. Gass prefers to be known as a “writer of prose” rather than a novelist, short story writer, postmodern theorist, or essayist, as his body of work attests to. Gass is distinguished for his preoccupation with the literary and the philosophical facets of language, particularly his view that a writer should not attempt to represent the world through mimesis, the imitation of nature, but should instead use language to create his or her own imaginary world. For his emphatic insistence on the purely aesthetic significance of the written text, Gass has become known as a literary figure who defies the restrictions of genre. His innovative works, including the novels, “Omensetter’s Luck” (1966) and “The Tunnel”, (1994), the novella Willie Masters’ “Lonesome Wife”, (1971), and several volumes of critical essays, have earned Gass a reputation as a brilliant and imaginative literary experimenter.

(CLIC, vol. 132. Detroit: Gale Group, Inc. 2000, pp. 139, 141.)
President’s Message

This fall, as we celebrate the 40th year of the St. Louis Literary Award, it is exciting to see students crossing the campus and beginning their studies at the University where we make our home. The work of the libraries we support is made manifest in all those young faces, full of promise, energy and possibility -- and in the seasoned faces of the scholars they encounter. The Library Associates is a special group of friends of the Libraries, who gather for literary presentations, historical tours and book discussions.

Through their support, they help Pius XII and the libraries of the Schools of Law and Medicine maintain their distinctive collections and keep pace with information technology.

The past year has been a solid partnership with the University Libraries, working together with us in our mission to support their role in research and scholarship. The leadership of Dr. Gail M. Staines, Assistant Provost for University Libraries, has been especially helpful in advancing our joint mission. The generous support of our patrons and members has enabled us to remain strong financially. We are grateful also to the Edward H. and Rosemary Young Fund, a component of the Greater Saint Louis Community Foundation, for the Fund’s continuing and generous support of our programs.

Events are also a vital element of our mission. Most importantly is the St. Louis Literary Award. This past year Professor Hal Bush gave an informative talk on little known aspects of a great local writer, speaking in a lovely Compton Heights mansion, on “Mark Twain and the Spiritual Crisis of His Age”.

Other programs will follow.

I am pleased to announce that this year’s St. Louis Literary Award will be presented to our fellow St. Louisan William H. Gass. We honor Gass, a renowned novelist, essayist, critic, and professor of philosophy, founder of the International Writer’s Center at Washington University. He joins a distinguished list of authors the Library Associates has selected for their sustained and extraordinary achievement.

I hope to see you at the award presentation on Wednesday, October 24, at 5:00pm in the Anheuser Busch Auditorium and the dinner following at the Coronado Ballroom.

Hugh Law
President

Evening at Home with Mark Twain

SLU professor Harold Bush gave an evening at home presentation about Mark Twain on September 25, 2007 at the Compton Heights home of Drs. Elizabeth Hilliker and Reed Townsend. The popular perception of Mark Twain as an irreligious cynic, shaking his fist at God, was dispelled as being a distortion caused by a concentration on the latter part of his life. Twain’s cultural and religious attitudes had an enormous impact on his contemporaries. Because of his status as one of the most important American writers, this influence continues. The truth about his views on spiritual and religious issues is significant even today when religion, especially that of the established and religious attitudes had an enormous impact on his contemporaries. Because of his status as one of the most important American writers, this influence continues. The truth about his views on spiritual and religious issues is significant even today when religion, especially that of the established institutions, is increasingly disregarded by the population in general and university students in particular.

Bush has the wonderful gift of engagement. His theme is postulated, not pronounced, and his evidence is developed in collaboration with the audience as participants. Twain's religious upbringing in Hannibal, his membership in churches and the revelation that his best friend and travelling companion was Rev. Joe Twichell, are among the many indications of his intense interest both personally and sociologically in religion and spiritual questions. This is not to imply that Twain held to any rigid ideological doctrine. Rather he should be viewed as deist. In other words, that while there is a Supreme Being, he does not involve himself in the day-to-day affairs of men a view held by several of the Founding Fathers.

Several striking excerpts from Twain's writings and letters proved to be quite substantiating as to Twain's beliefs. One of the most fascinating as well as entertaining examples from his writings is the following quote from, “The Indignity Put upon the Remains of George Holland”, by the Rev. Mr. Sabine. For Twain, “nine-tenths of all the kindness and forbearance and Christian charity and generosity in the hearts of the American people today, got there by being filtered down from their fountainhead, the gospel of Christ, through dramas and tragedies and comedies on the stage, and through the despised novel and the Christmas story, and through the thousand and one lessons, suggestions, and narratives of generous deeds that stir the pulses, and exalt and augment the nobility of the nation day-by-day from the teeming columns of ten thousand newspapers, and NOT from the drowsy pulpit: (In Budd, ed., Collected Tales 517,518–519).

For more of Bush’s writing on this subject, his excellent book, Mark Twain and the Spiritual Crisis of His Age, which was recently published, is enthusiastically recommended.

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(Left to right) Ann Holton, Harold Bush, Edward Fehlig, Hugh Law
Evenings at Home
Several times a year, members gather in private homes to hear speakers or authors on a variety of topics.


Librarian’s Corner

It has been just over a year since I started my position as University Librarian at Saint Louis University and what a year it has been! So many exciting projects and activities have taken place in the world of the University Libraries that it is a challenge to describe them all here.

Several renovations have been completed within the Pius XII Memorial Library. Last November we opened Café Libros. The Café has become a hotspot on campus for study, conversation, and relaxation. On September 20th we opened the Writing Center and the Testing Center in the Anheuser Busch wing of the Library. The Writing Center is available for students needing assistance in improving their writing skills for papers and projects. The purpose of the Testing Center is to assist students in need of special accommodations when taking exams as well as for faculty to schedule an exam for a student when he or she misses class. Both centers complement the Graduate Writing Center located on the 5th floor. With grant, foundation, and University funding, we now have a Digitization Center. Located in the Lewis Annex, we have begun digitizing materials from the Ong collection as well as Parks College archival information that includes fly-over films from WWII. This work is so important to researchers, scholars, and students because it is the first time that these rare, unique, and historical materials are accessible outside of the Library’s walls.

Library faculty and staff at both the Pius Library and the Medical Center Library have been hard at work on the goals and objectives we set forth in our 5-Year Strategic Plan (2006-2012). Accomplishments to date include moving medical and health care information to electronic formats, replacing computers in Pius Library in the main reference area as well as in both information literacy classrooms; developing new ways of communicating to the SLU community and beyond through podcasts, blogs, and the new University Libraries e-newsletter.

The University Libraries are in the process of identifying a location for storing 500,000 books of legacy materials from the three University Libraries - the Pius XII Memorial Library, the Omer Poos Law Library, and the Medical Center Library. Locating space is critical as all three libraries, most especially Pius, are filled beyond capacity. We are also looking to refresh the interior of the Medical Center Library as well as refresh, renovate, and expand Pius Library. Both places must meet the needs of today’s students and faculty, who study and research very differently from as little as five years ago. Making a climate-controlled environment for our rare books and other special collections is also a priority. For each day our intellectual treasures are not in the proper environment means additional deterioration of materials, some of which go back to the 14th Century. Through collaboration, partnership, and development efforts, we will be able to transform the library.

Thanks to the Library Associates generous gift, Pius Library was able to acquire a brilliant replication of the Anglo-Catalan Psalter, the last copy of the Utrecht Psalter. (see article pg. 4) We hope that you are able to enjoy the many public programs and library exhibits that are presented on campus. Know that we are grateful for the Associates continued support as we strive to fulfill the University’s mission in all areas of teaching, research, and service.

Gail M. Staines, Ph.D.
Assistant Provost, University Libraries

Library Associates Book Club
Members are cordially invited to join our Book Club. We are reading the works of our previous honorees! Discussions take place in a warm, friendly environment every other month on the second Monday from 7-9pm. We’ve read Joyce Carol Oates, We Were the Mulvaneys, Richard Ford’s Independence Day, Michael Frayn’s Spies, John Updike’s Gertrude and Claudius among others, and will read and discuss William Gass’s *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country* on Monday, November 12, 7-9pm. This book is available at Left Bank Books in the CWE at a discount for our members. RSVP to Hannah Langsam, 997-6594, if you wish to attend.

Grand Opening Celebration of the Writing Center & Testing Center
The University Libraries and Student Educational Services announced the opening of SLU’s new Writing Center & Testing Center within the Pius XII Memorial Library. Located on the third floor of Pius Library in the Anheuser Busch wing. “This new space is more easily accessible for undergrads,” says Gail M. Staines, Ph.D., Assistant Provost of University Libraries. “We are excited about the partnership the Library is a great place for us to be,” says Writing Center Coordinator Sue Mendelsohn. “When students are tackling their research, we’ll be right there to answer their questions about writing.” (Celebrants were on hand to join in the festivities. see above picture)
Pius Library Acquires
Anglo-Catalan Psalter

Through a generous gift from the St. Louis University Library Associates, the Pius XII Memorial Library has acquired the recently published printed manuscript facsimile of the Anglo-Catalan Psalter, the last copy of the Utrecht Psalter. (See image right).
The Anglo-Catalan Psalter, the most luxurious copy of the ninth-century Utrecht Psalter, was produced in two different locales. Its text was written by two scribes and parts of its illumination executed in Christ Church, Canterbury, England around 1175-1190, and probably destined for a very important individual. The illustration was completed in Catalonia (Spain) in the 14th century by an outstanding Catalonian artist Ferrer Bassa around 1340-1350.

Nigel Morgan from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, this year’s guest speaker at the 34th Annual Saint Louis Conference on Manuscript Studies, (held at SLU on Oct. 12-13, 2007) spoke Friday, Oct. 12th, on the topic of “Winchester, Canterbury, and Sigena: The Problem of the Last Copy of the Utrecht Psalter” The exhibit “Facsimiles of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles”, which includes the Anglo-Catalan Psalter will be on display in Pius Library Oct. 1-31, 2007. From November on it will be housed in Special Collections. For more information, contact Dr. Gregory Pass at (314) 977-3096 or passga@slu.edu

New Text Authored by SLU Faculty

Theological Foundations: Concepts and Methods for Understanding Christian Faith, an introductory theology textbook authored by several members of the Theological Studies department at SLU under the editorship of Fr. J.J. Mueller, SJ, has just been published by St. Mary’s Press. Unique features of the textbook are several sections designated “From the Reference Librarian” written by Dr. Ron Crown, Associate Professor and Theological Reference Librarian at Pius Library. It offers guidance on using both print and electronic library resources. In addition to serving as a text for an introductory theology course, the book aims both to emphasize the importance of information literacy for studying and researching theology and to enhance faculty/librarian collaboration.

A copy of ”Theological Foundations” will be available at Pius Library. For more information, visit the St. Mary’s Press website at http://www.smp.org
Ravenna Mosaics & Photographs Exhibit
(Located on the second floor of Pius Library)

Glass mosaic art has a centuries old tradition and it’s vanishing. The Ravenna Mosaic company, which was based in Saint Louis throughout its entire eighty year history, installed virtually all the mosaics in the Saint Louis New Cathedral on Lindell Boulevard. The New Cathedral is the largest single installation of glass mosaics in the entire world. Ravenna installed mosaics in buildings across the country including: Radio City Music Hall, the #1 Wall Street Building, NY City; the Catholic Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and the AFL-CIO Headquarters in Washington D.C.

University Archives in Pius Library now houses the corporate records of the company. at:
http://www.slu.edu/libraries/pius/archives/ravenna/index.html

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The University Libraries new Digitization Center

Located in the former Circulation area of the Divinity Library, Lewis Annex, Room 302, this Center focuses on digitizing rare and unique materials and making them accessible electronically. Created with support from the University’s Center for Excellence fund, the ICF Foundation, and the Parks College of Engineering, Aviation, & Technology, the Center houses high-end equipment used to digitize such items as rare books, manuscripts, films, videos, and audio tapes. This new venture will make items from the University Libraries’ collections, including the Archives and Special Collections, more accessible to students, faculty, and scholars. This center is also available as a naming opportunity.
NEWS

from

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY ASSOCIATES

Pius XII Memorial Library
3650 Lindell Blvd.
Saint Louis, Missouri 63108

A REMINDER OF THE PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATES MEMBERSHIP

A great library is the heart of a great university. The libraries of Saint Louis University constitute an extraordinary resource. With Pius XII Memorial Library, Saint Louis University has become internationally renowned as a research center. The library is the sole depository in the Western Hemisphere for the Vatican microfilm collection, described by one Oxford scholar as "the most important single addition ever made to the libraries of America." It houses a superb collection of rare books, especially rich in early Americana, Medieval and Renaissance literature. In addition, Saint Louis University's professional libraries at the School of Medicine and Law are widely used by scholars throughout the region.

Why Become an Associate of Saint Louis University Libraries?
If you love books, if you enjoy meeting people who share your interest in cultural pursuits, if you believe in supporting one of our community's major intellectual resources, the Associates of Saint Louis University Libraries welcome you.

What Associates Offers Its Members
- An invitation to the annual Saint Louis Literary Award Dinner at which such distinguished contributors to the literary world as W.H. Auden, Barbara Tuchman, Tennessee Williams, James A. Michener, Eudora Welty, Saul Bellow, Joyce Carol Oates, Shelby Foote, David McCullough and Edward Albee have been honored.
- Invitations to membership-only socials and programs of substance are variously held in private homes and unusual settings.
- Borrowing privileges from Pius XII Memorial Library.
- Access to the unique resources of Saint Louis University Libraries, including of the priceless Americana Collection and Vatican Library microfilm collections.
- Priority invitations to join Associates-sponsored trips.