

UB Libraries *Today*

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Toxic Legacy, Archival Memory

University Archives keeps Love Canal's history alive, preserving the voices, images and stories that shaped a movement.



UB Libraries Today is published by the University at Buffalo Libraries for alumni, faculty, staff, students and friends.

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On the Cover

Penelope D. Ploughman, PhD and JD, and University Archivist Hope Dunbar in front of the *Toxic Archives: Voices from Love Canal* exhibition.



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DO YOU KNOW?



Hornbooks were educational tools used to teach children the alphabet. Crafted from a wooden paddle, this 18th century hornbook donated by Peter Boyd-Bowman is one of the distinctive books in the Rare Books Collection.

from **EVVIVA**

A Year of Discovery

As the fall semester draws to a close and we look ahead to a new year, I am filled with gratitude for the ways the University at Buffalo Libraries continues to serve as a beacon of knowledge, discovery and community engagement across our campus and beyond.

This issue of *UB Libraries Today* highlights the depth of our collections, the dedication of our extraordinary staff, and our commitment to creating spaces where scholarship and learning thrive.

I am especially proud to share our new exhibition, *Toxic Archives: Voices from Love Canal*, which showcases the invaluable Penelope D. Ploughman Love Canal Collection.

Dr. Ploughman's foresight in donating more than 600 photographic slides, manuscripts and oral history interviews, has given UB the nation's most comprehensive archival record of this pivotal environmental disaster. Through careful redaction work by our archivists, sensitive oral histories are now accessible for the first time—balancing transparency with confidentiality. The exhibition underscores our role not just as stewards of history but as advocates for making difficult stories available to researchers, students and the public.

Our collections continue to inspire discovery across disciplines. This year, in celebration of Jane Austen's 250th birthday, we are showcasing first editions of her work from our Rare Books Collection—offering a unique opportunity for students and scholars to engage with literary history firsthand. Another exciting development is the recent discovery of a 1951 time capsule in the Farber Hall datestone, which offers a tangible link to UB's past, reminding us that history often reveals itself in unexpected ways. These discoveries underscore the Libraries' commitment to preserving and celebrating UB's rich history. Visitors can also explore a recreated 20th-century dental office featuring authentic pieces from the historic Dr. George W. Ferry Dental Collection—a fascinating glimpse into the early days of dental education at UB.

Beyond our collections, we continue to transform our physical spaces to meet the evolving needs of our community. The reimaged Abbott Library in historic Abbott Hall now features refreshed interiors, upgraded technology and collaborative areas that honor the building's architectural legacy while supporting today's students.

I am also proud to recognize two outstanding librarians honored with 2025 SUNY Chancellor's Awards for Excellence: Deborah Chiarella, associate librarian and liaison to the departments of Music and Theatre and Dance, and Ophelia Morey, associate librarian and coordinator of community outreach in Abbott Library. Their achievements exemplify the dedication and excellence that define UB Libraries.

As we move forward, we remain committed to our mission as the flagship library of the SUNY system—supporting research, education and service while preserving the past and building toward the future. Thank you for your continued support of the University at Buffalo Libraries.

With appreciation and optimism,

Evviva Weinraub Lajoie, Vice Provost for University Libraries



Janeites Rejoice!

Two and a half centuries later, Jane Austen's wit, insight and unforgettable characters still captivate readers worldwide.

By Nicholas Michalski

December 16 marks 250 years since the birth of Jane Austen (1775–1817), one of the English language's most celebrated writers. Her novels are beloved for their wit, romance, critique of social and literary conventions, and their complex and flawed women characters. Despite Austen's widespread influence, many aspects of her life remain shrouded in mystery. Austen died at age 41, and a watercolor portrait by her older sister, Cassandra, is the only known likeness of Jane's face made from life. Cassandra is also widely believed to have destroyed most of Jane's letters after her death. Austen's surviving family members sought to carefully control the author's public image as "good quiet Aunt Jane." According to Virginia Woolf, much of what we know today about "the most perfect artist among women" comes from "a little gossip, a few letters, and her books."

UB's storied Rare Books Collection boasts first editions of five of Austen's six novels, offering a remarkable chance to encounter her works as they first appeared. Austen's first four novels were originally published as three volumes each—and anonymously. The title page of her first book, *Sense and Sensibility*, reads simply, "by a lady." During her lifetime, Austen's largest first printing was just 2,000 copies. A 1929 bibliography says of Austen first editions, "To read any of these now in the original boards is a satisfaction which only the very opulent could enjoy." Like many other books, three-volume novels were commonly rebound for stability and aesthetic reasons. This makes first editions in their fragile original bindings especially rare. Of UB's first printings, only *Pride and Prejudice* is beautifully rebound in brown leather and marbled paper, while *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Persuasion* are just the way readers would have first come across them in the early 19th century.

Several other books supplement these rare originals, including one containing facsimile Austen letters and one by a relative tracing Austen's connection to Lyme Regis, a small coastal town that features prominently in *Persuasion*.



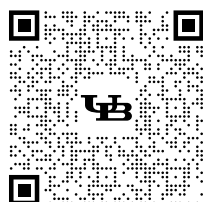
Jane Austen, by Cassandra Austen, drawing, 1810.

In the Poetry Collection, Austen's books are found in the personal libraries of James Joyce, Robert Duncan, and Basil Bunting, in addition to the work of many writers Austen inspired.

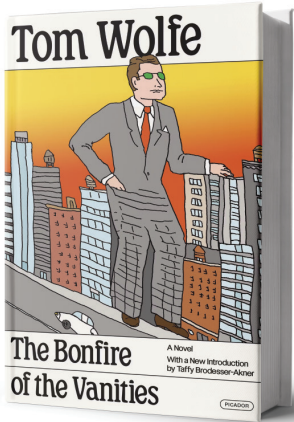
Whether you're a veteran Janeite or a newcomer to Austen's works, this year is the perfect opportunity to explore UB Libraries' rich resources on the beloved author—no opulence required.



First editions of Jane Austen's works from the Rare Books Collection.



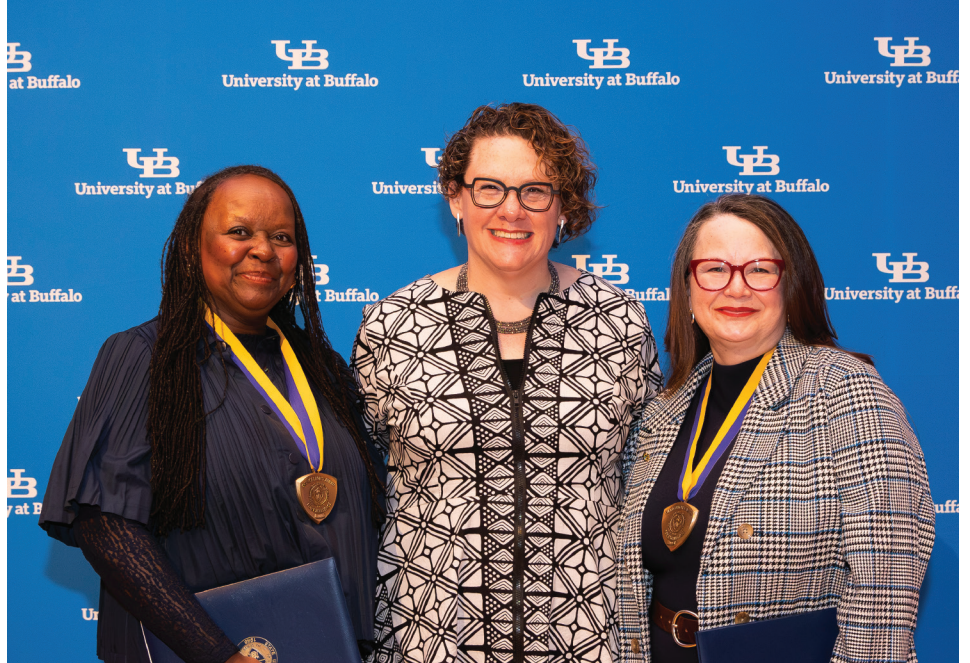
Stay informed about the Rare Books Collection by becoming a Friend of the Rare Books Collection.



What We're Reading

After enjoying the 1990 Brian De Palma adaptation, I decided to read *The Bonfire of the Vanities* by Tom Wolfe. Wolfe, known for *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and *The Right Stuff*, explores social class, money and power in New York City during the decadent 1980s. *Bonfire* follows Sherman McCoy, a wealthy bond trader at the top of his career, with a wife, child and mistress. Sherman and his mistress are involved in an accident with a Black teenager in the Bronx, unleashing a procession of opportunists. Readers can expect to be drawn into the complexities of socioeconomic divides and justice, with grit at every level of society and an expansive cast of intertwining characters.

Nicole Thomas, Undergraduate Nursing Liaison Librarian



From left to right: Ophelia Morey, Evviva Weinraub Lajoie and Deborah Chiarella. Photo: Duy Phan Media

Celebrating Excellence

UB Librarians Honored with 2025 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence

The University Libraries is proud to announce that Deborah Chiarella and Ophelia Morey have received the 2025 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence, one of the highest honors in the State University of New York system.

Deborah Chiarella

An associate librarian and liaison to the Departments of Music and Theatre and Dance, Chiarella has been part of the University Libraries since 2007. A graduate of York University and UB's master's program in library science, she oversees the Music Library's collections, archives and instruction. Among her accomplishments is leading the 2024 relocation of UB's music collection from Baird Hall to Lockwood Memorial Library. She also mentors junior faculty, supports theatre and dance students, and will serve as chair of the New York and Ontario Chapter of the Music Library Association.

Ophelia Morey

An associate librarian and coordinator of community outreach in Abbott Library, Morey has dedicated her career to advancing health literacy and equity. Since joining UB in 2001, she has led NIH- and NNLM-funded initiatives addressing maternal health disparities and promoting access to reliable medical information. Chiarella and Morey exemplify the Libraries' mission of excellence, service, and community impact.



The University at Buffalo Libraries has launched an official **LinkedIn** page. Follow us to stay connected with news, events, resources and highlights. We'll also share stories that showcase the impact of our librarians, staff and collections.





A map from *Memoir, Prepared at the Request of a Committee of the Common Council of the City of New York; and Presented to the Mayor of the City, at the Celebration of the Completion of the New York Canals* by Cadwallader D. Colden (1825).

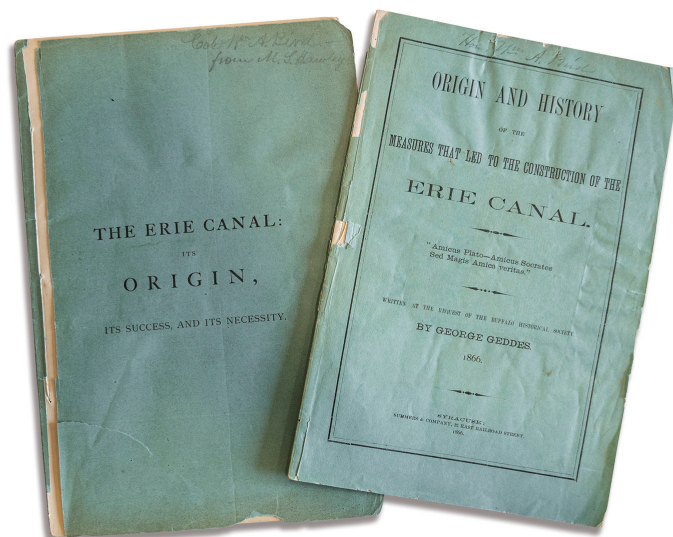
Marking 200 Years of the Erie Canal

With this year marking the bicentennial of the Erie Canal's opening in 1825, the University at Buffalo Libraries is highlighting treasures in its Rare Books Collection that illuminate this transformational moment in New York's history.

One of the most notable works is *Memoir, Prepared at the Request of a Committee of the Common Council of the City of New York*, published in 1825, the same year the Erie Canal opened. The volume not only celebrates the canal's completion but also includes the first lithographic town views published in the United States—scenes of Buffalo and Lockport created by George Catlin. Though Catlin is primarily known for his depictions of Native American culture, his early works also featured engravings of natural sites along the Erie Canal route. These images, published in *Memoir*, represent a significant moment in American print history, as the book is among the first to use lithography.

Other volumes in the collection, such as *Origin and History of the Measures that Led to the Construction of the Erie Canal* (1866) and *Erie Canal: Its Origin, Its Success, and Its Necessity* (1868), reflect on the project's lasting influence.

Together, these works preserve the Erie Canal's legacy and underscore its enduring importance to New York's history.



The Erie Canal: Its Origin, Its Success and Its Necessity. A Paper Read Before the Buffalo Historical Club, Feb. 3, 1868 by Merwin S. Hawley and *Origin and History of the Measures that Led to the Construction of the Erie Canal*: Written at the Request of the Buffalo Historical Society by George Geddes (1866).



Austin Flint Main
Reading Room

A Brighter Abbott

Library Updates Enhance Student Experience

The University at Buffalo Libraries has reimagined Abbott Library, housed within the historic Abbott Hall, through a series of carefully planned renovations. The updates transform the university's oldest library into a brighter, more functional environment for study and collaboration. Located on UB's South Campus, Abbott Library now features refreshed interiors, upgraded technology, and redesigned spaces that reflect the needs of today's students while honoring the building's architectural legacy.

The centerpiece of these updates is the Austin Flint Main Reading Room, one of Abbott Library's most iconic spaces. Subtle yet meaningful improvements include new carpeting, fresh paint, four stately fireside chairs, and—coming soon—brighter table lamps. These enhancements preserve the room's timeless ambiance while creating an even more inviting space for reading and reflection.



Fireside chair in
the Austin Flint Main
Reading Room

Another renovation took place in the upper mezzanine, which includes 14 individual study rooms and three group study rooms. These areas had grown dated over the years. The refresh introduced new carpeting, modern furniture, and a fresh coat of paint, creating lighter, more inviting spaces for focused study and teamwork. Door locks were also upgraded to ensure secure, easily reservable rooms that meet students' needs.

The relocation of the Polish Room to the second floor of Abbott Library created an opportunity to expand student study areas. In its place, a new 24-seat study area was designed, with updated carpeting and furniture extending into the adjacent area. Plans are underway to add more power outlets, allowing students to work comfortably with laptops and other devices.

A significant transformation also took place in the Roswell Park Classroom, a space renewed for modern teaching and learning. The

room now features new flooring, lighting, modular furniture, and a lecturer's station equipped with the latest technology. The renovated classroom can accommodate up to 48 people and will serve as a flexible venue for programs, workshops and classes.

"These updates breathe new life into UB's most historic library," said Marnie Mancuso, facilities planning and management officer for the University Libraries. "Our goal was to modernize Abbott while respecting its original design. The result is a space that feels both timeless and ready for how students learn today."

Designed by noted architect E.B. Green, Abbott Hall remains a South Campus landmark. The recent renovations blend modern comfort with historic detail, ensuring Abbott Library continues to serve as a treasured academic resource and a dynamic hub for the UB community for generations to come.



New study area outside of the Polish Room



“

These updates breathe new life into UB's most historic library”

Marnie Mancuso
Facilities Planning and Management Officer



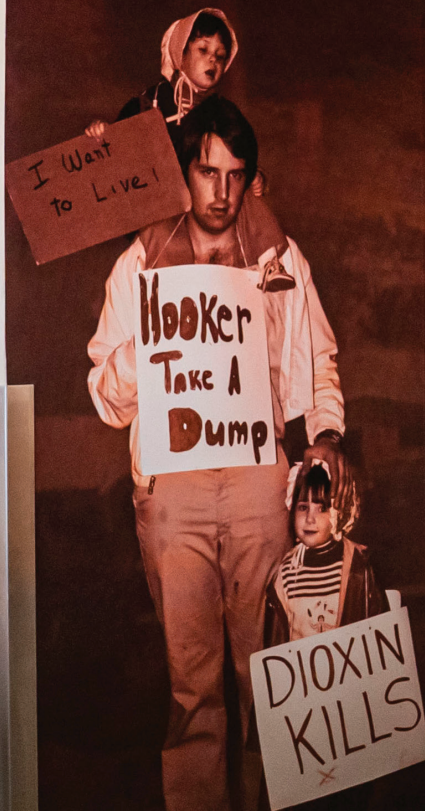
Roswell Park Classroom

TOXIC ARCHIVES

Voices from Love Canal

Step into the lived experiences of a community forever changed by environmental crisis. This exhibition presents the poignant stories of Love Canal residents from Niagara Falls, New York, through carefully redacted interviews conducted in 1978-79, now open to the public for the first time. The University Archives' ethical redaction project balances transparency with privacy, making these powerful testimonies available while protecting personal information.

As you explore photographs, correspondence, and firsthand accounts, you'll witness not only the struggle for environmental justice but also the delicate balance archivists maintain as stewards of sensitive historical records. These voices from Love Canal speak to us across time—of loss, resilience, and the ongoing pursuit of accountability.



Left to Right: Grace M
Penelope Ploughman

Preserving the Legacy of Love Canal

University Archives Leads the Way

By Hope Dunbar

In the fall of 2025, the University at Buffalo University Libraries unveiled a landmark exhibition, *Toxic Archives: Voices from Love Canal*, in Silverman Library. The exhibition, co-curated by University Archivist Hope Dunbar and Assistant Professor Saguna Shankar of UB's Department of Information Science, showcases the University Libraries' role in preserving the extensive archival record of Love Canal, one of the nation's most consequential environmental disasters.

More than a historical display, the exhibition demonstrates the transformative power of archives in shaping public memory, fostering education, and building community connections. For alumni and donors, it is also a reminder of how the generosity of UB graduates such as Penelope D. Ploughman has sustained the University Archives as a center of scholarly excellence and community engagement.

CONTINUE



McCoulf, Lois Gibbs, Debbie Cerrillo, and Miranda Dunn.

The Legacy of a UB Graduate

At the heart of the exhibition is the Penelope D. Ploughman Love Canal Collection, an archive that exemplifies the enduring impact of alumni contributions. Ploughman (PhD '84, JD '89), formerly an attorney for SUNY, first encountered Love Canal as a graduate student in sociology at UB. She joined the pioneering Love Canal Research Group in the late 1970s led by Adeline Levine, a University at Buffalo sociology professor, immersing herself in a community on the front lines of an environmental crisis.

Armed with a camera, cassette recorder, and notebook, Ploughman documented residents' struggles, attended meetings of the Love Canal Homeowners Association, and recorded the voices of women such as Lois Gibbs, whose grassroots leadership would become nationally recognized.

Ploughman later recalled that experience as a "unique fieldwork opportunity" that changed her trajectory as both a scholar and an advocate. Her doctoral dissertation, *The Creation of Newsworthy Events: An Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of the Man-Made Disaster of Love Canal* (1984), analyzed the dynamics of media coverage and the ways local activism shaped national attention.



10002 Colvin Boulevard resident Marie Posniak evacuating her home with a sign: '4 Sale Buy 1, Get 1 Free' in the Love Canal neighborhood, Niagara Falls, New York, July 3, 1980.

Years later, recognizing the enduring value of her research materials, she donated them to the University Archives in 2008. The donation included more than 600 photographic slides, manuscripts, clippings, and records of interviews—all painstakingly collected, transcribed, and preserved during her graduate years. Today, these items form the backbone of UB's holdings on Love Canal, joining complementary collections such as the records of the Ecumenical Task Force and the Love Canal Area Revitalization Agency, as well as the Adeline Levine papers. Thanks to Ploughman's foresight, UB holds the nation's most comprehensive record of the disaster.

From Private Research to Public History

The story of Love Canal is both local and national. Beginning in the 1940s, Hooker Chemical Co. buried more than 20,000 tons of toxic waste in a former canal bed in Niagara Falls. Decades later, several homes and an elementary school were built on the site. By the 1970s, residents began experiencing alarming health problems. Miscarriages, birth defects, and cancers increased as chemicals seeped into basements and yards.

The community mobilized, led largely by mothers who demanded government action. Their efforts led to the evacuation of hundreds of families and to the creation of the federal Superfund program in 1980.

Ploughman's collection captures this history from the ground up. Her slides show abandoned houses with "Danger" signs posted on their doors, crowds gathered at meetings, community protests, and the quiet devastation of families leaving their homes behind. Her transcripts preserve the voices of ordinary residents describing illnesses, frustrations with officials, and the determination to fight for their children's futures. Taken together, these documents convey both the trauma and resilience of a community forced into the national spotlight.

The Work of the University Archives

For the University Archives, preserving and providing access to these records is not a passive task. It requires careful stewardship, ethical decision-making, and active engagement with researchers, students, and the public.

In recent years, archivists at UB undertook a comprehensive redaction project to make sensitive oral history interviews from the Ploughman and Levine collections available for the first time. This multilayered process involved a graduate student from environment and sustainability, as well as two archivists. Together, they reviewed and redacted transcripts to protect privacy while preserving the substance of residents' testimonies.

The redacted transcripts are now accessible as a standalone manuscript collection in the Archives' reading room, striking a careful balance between transparency and confidentiality.

This work illustrates a broader point: archives are not static repositories but living institutions. By grappling with the ethical challenges of access, UB's archivists have ensured that the voices of Love Canal residents can now inform new generations of students, scholars and activists.



Corner view of the exhibition wall graphics introducing “In Their Words: Diverse Voices of Love Canal” alongside the companion section “Ethical Stewardship: The Art and Practice of Archival Redaction.”

Education and Community Engagement

The impact of these collections extends well beyond the exhibition. The University Archives has emerged as one of UB’s fastest-growing sites of student learning. Instruction sessions now span disciplines ranging from history and English to engineering and environmental studies, all of which have used the Love Canal archives.

Students are given hands-on engagement with original documents, photographs, and artifacts, learning to interpret primary sources and evaluate authorship, context and preservation practices. These experiences develop critical thinking skills while underscoring the importance of archives in shaping knowledge.

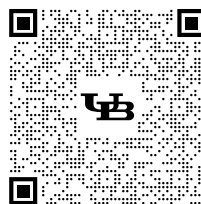
Community members continue to find meaning in the collections as well. Local residents and activists have visited the University Archives exhibition to reconnect with their past, while filmmakers and journalists draw on the materials to keep Love Canal in public memory—most recently in the PBS documentary *Poisoned Ground*.

The exhibition *Toxic Archives* brings these audiences together, offering both a historical narrative and an exploration of archival ethics. By linking student learning with public engagement, the University Archives demonstrates how collections can serve scholarship, teaching and community.

Sustaining the Archives

The success of the Love Canal collections and the *Toxic Archives* exhibition reflect the ongoing importance of institutional stewardship. The preservation of fragile materials, the careful redaction of sensitive interviews, and the development of instructional uses for archival sources all require sustained resources and attention.

The University Archives has become a vital campus resource for teaching and research, supporting both the university community and the wider public. By safeguarding and interpreting the records of Love Canal, the University Archives ensures that this history remains accessible for future generations. In doing so, the archives continue to serve as both a scholarly resource and a community anchor, preserving memory



Please consider supporting
the University Archives

"I LOVE WHEN THESE THINGS ARE UNCOVERED. IT'S SUCH AN INTERESTING MOMENT IN TIME, LIKE PEOPLE FROM THE PAST REACHING FORWARD TO A PRESENT THEY COULD ONLY IMAGINE"



Renovation crew discovers time capsule in the Farber Hall datestone

An observant crew member repairing exterior masonry at Farber Hall recently saved a piece of UB history from being discarded. While removing a fractured 1951 datestone—set to be replaced with a modern equivalent—the worker noticed a copper box tucked inside an opening at its base. The time capsule, held in place by deteriorated wooden shims, was seconds away from being lifted into a dumpster when it was spotted.

Kim Navaroli, director of Facilities, Design and Construction, delivered the capsule to University Archives the same day.

“I love when these things are uncovered,” University Archivist Hope Dunbar said. “It’s such an interesting moment in time, like people from the past reaching forward to a present they could only imagine.”

Dunbar notes that time capsules symbolize optimism—and the construction of Farber Hall offered plenty of it. The building, then known as the Medical-Dental Building, was dedicated in 1953 and named in honor of Chancellor Emeritus Samuel P. Capen. Its opening represented a milestone: bringing UB’s medical school from High Street and dental school from Goodrich Street together under one roof on the South Campus.

According to a 1953 *Buffalo Courier-Express* article, the building’s lecture halls, facilities and laboratories were designed “to provide each student with the stimulus and opportunity to develop his full potentiality for practice, teaching or research in an atmosphere of scholarship, discovery and professional example.” The Edward H. Butler Auditorium’s 500 seats were filled for the dedication ceremony, with overflow attendees directed to a second hall.

“Three short years ago, this building seemed to many little more than a hope or a dream,” Chancellor T. Raymond McConnell said in his opening remarks that day.

Finding the time capsule echoes that sense of excitement, said Erik Seeman, PhD, professor of history. “Those who open time capsules feel the same sense of excitement that historians

feel in the archives when someone from the past communicated with us in an especially vivid way.”

The capsule was placed in the datestone on Dec. 8, 1951, during an afternoon ceremony. The *Courier-Express* reported that its contents included meeting minutes from the building’s construction, books and pamphlets about UB’s history, and 1951 coins. University Archives holds a complete list of items on onion-skin paper.



A University Facilities crew discovered a 1951 datestone, which contains a time capsule, while repairing exterior masonry at Farber Hall. Photo: Douglas Levere

Dunbar is compiling a list of other known time capsules buried across campus. The list will be shared with the School of Architecture and Planning and University Facilities to help account for these capsules during future renovation and construction work.

“Archivists are trained to think 50, 100 or 200 years into the future,” Dunbar said. “I’m hoping that as new construction continues on our campuses, we’ll continue this tradition. Time capsules give the future a chance to think about the past.”

A Glimpse of Dentistry's Past

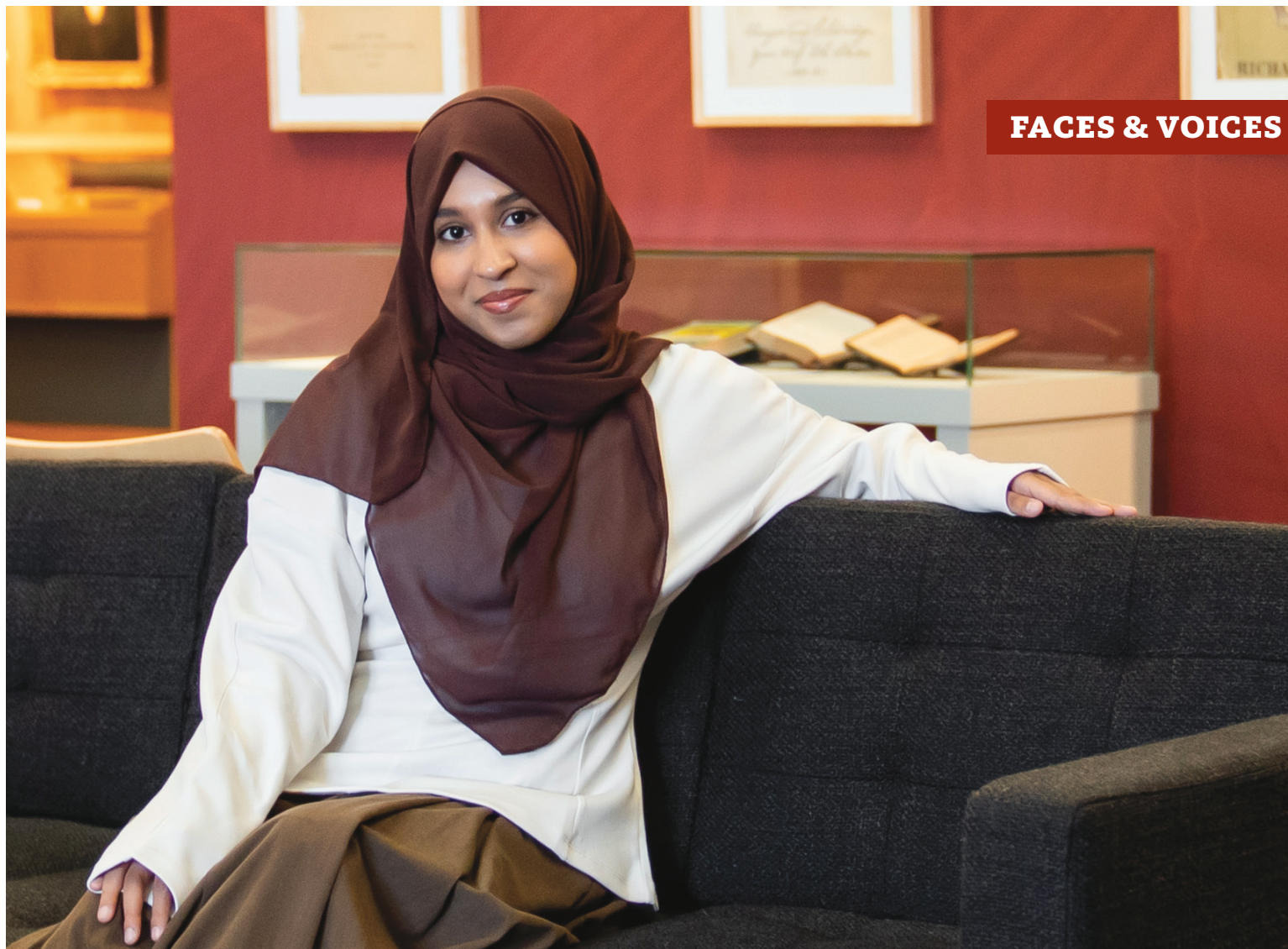
Take a step back in time with UB's fascinating replica of a dentist's office from the early 20th century. Featuring items from the historic Dr. George W. Ferry Dental Collection—once displayed in Squire Hall at the UB School of Dental Medicine—this vintage display offers a glimpse into the tools and environment that shaped dental care in the early days of the school.

Key highlights include an antique dentist's desk and chair, a classic red velvet dental chair, a Ritter Tri-Dent Dental Station with its cuspidor, drills and an examination lamp, and even a period dental cabinet. The lamp was later removed due to height restrictions. These authentic pieces were once used by UB dental

students and faculty, offering a fascinating window into their daily practices.

Adding to the experience, the room features wallpaper faithfully reproduced from an original design by M.H. Birge & Sons, a renowned Buffalo-based wallpaper company. The green, pink, cream and gold design mirrors the elegant style of the early 1900s and showcases the artistry of Charles Burchfield, who designed for Birge between 1921 and 1929. The original framed version of this wallpaper can be viewed in the University Libraries' Poetry Collection on UB's North Campus.





A Future Doctor Finds Her Space

In the Libraries, neuroscience major Afifa Roja finds space to thrive

Friendly, determined and patient. That's how Afifa Roja, a third-year neuroscience major at the University at Buffalo, describes herself.

Originally from New York City, Roja has called Buffalo home for the past five years. She chose UB for its strong STEM programs, proximity to family and neuroscience offerings. On a pre-med track, she plans to graduate in 2027 and continue her studies at the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

Her days are full, balancing coursework with a job as a medical scribe at a nearby primary care office. She also serves as vice president of the Association of Pre-Medical Students, helping her peers prepare for the rigors of medical school.

Although many of her classes are based on South Campus, Roja gravitates to Silverman

Library on North Campus for her study sessions. She finds its lively, collaborative environment helps her focus. "I work better in a busy atmosphere," she said. The group study rooms, in particular, give her a dedicated place to meet and prepare for exams.

Roja also relies on the Libraries' *Delivery+* service, which provides quick access to PubMed and other journal articles essential for her coursework. "It saves me so much time," she said.

Looking back, Roja recalls how challenging it was to navigate UB's size when she first arrived. Today, she feels grounded, often finding inspiration in UB Libraries, which give her both space and resources to succeed.

"The Libraries make it easier," she said. "They give me the room I need to learn."

Preserve the Past. Inspire the Future.



UB is home to the world's largest James Joyce collection—and soon, new museum space will open it up to all. You can help bring this literary treasure to light—and make your impact really stack up—through the SUNY Endowment Match Program. For a limited time, New York State will match \$1 for every \$2 of a qualifying gift you make.

Your support expands access to this literary legacy—today and for generations to come.

**Explore how to make an even greater
impact ----->**

