FAU Libraries Host “John Adams Unbound” Traveling Exhibition, Lecture Series and Rare Books Display

BOCA RATON, FL (January 13, 2011) – Florida Atlantic University Libraries are hosting “John Adams Unbound,” a traveling exhibition that explores the personal library of John Adams, one of the nation’s founding fathers, through Thursday, February 17, at the Wimberly Library on FAU’s Boca Raton campus, 777 Glades Road.

The colorful panel exhibition showcases selections from a collection of 3,500 books Adams willed to the people of Massachusetts. The collection, deposited in the Boston Public Library in 1894, provides insight into how Adams shaped American history and how he was shaped through his lifelong dedication to reading and books. In conjunction with the exhibition, FAU Libraries are featuring more than 100 rare books and pamphlets from its Marvin & Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection and a lecture series.

“We are pleased to have been selected as a site for this exhibition,” said William Miller, dean of Libraries at FAU. “John Adams’ dedication to self-education and intellectual reflection will be an inspiration to our library’s patrons and to our community.”

Adams’ engagement with books was active and argumentative, as evidenced by the meticulous and personal commentary he crammed into the margins of the works he read. Seeing the numerous notations in his own hand is like listening in on his personal conversations with writers such as Cicero, William Blackstone, Thomas Paine and others across oceans and across centuries. As Adams the lawyer prepares in 1770 to defend British soldiers on trial after the Boston Massacre, for example, he references Cicero’s views on self defense contained in Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England.

Through photo-reproductions of many of Adams’ books, as well as personal objects, graphics, maps and portraits, exhibition viewers can see one of the nation’s founding fathers wrestling with intellectual and political ideas at every stage in his long life – as a boy, university student, Boston lawyer, revolutionary, diplomat, president and citizen of the early American Republic. The exhibition is also an extraordinary case study in the power of reading, and reveals the role of books and libraries in the health and prosperity of a democracy.
The Marvin & Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection contains Colonial American and other printed materials related to American history, including more than 8,000 imprints, rare books, pamphlets and first edition newspapers dated from 1538 to 1890.

“The Rare Books and Pamphlets Companion Exhibition,” selected from this collection features materials related to Adams, his time and the thematic areas of the traveling exhibition. It includes works by Cicero, William Blackstone, Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft, and highlight law, theology, American Revolution and other critical aspects.

FAU professor Anna Lawrence, Ph.D., will kick off the lecture series with a presentation titled “John and Abigail Adams: Love and Marriage in the New Nation,” on Thursday, January 20, at 2 p.m. on the library’s fifth floor. Lawrence will discuss letters the couple wrote to each other during the turbulent years of Revolutionary America and explore how men and women related to each other in love and marriage.

Dramatists William and Sue Wills will explore the lives, career and sacrifices of John and Abigail Adams, using speeches, letters and diaries in a presentation titled “John and Abigail Adams Dramatically Speaking,” on Monday, January 24, at 1:30 p.m., on the fifth floor of the Wimberly Library. The Winter Park entertainers use period costumes, dialects and demeanor to recreate history.

The final lecture will feature FAU Professor Kristen Block, Ph.D., who will present a lecture titled “Giving Meaning to the Revolution: Celebrations and Counter-Celebrations in the First 50 Years of America’s Nationhood,” on Monday, January 31, at 2 p.m. on the library’s fifth floor. Block will show America’s earliest efforts to make sense of the violence and upheaval that resulted from the war for independence from Britain.

The “John Adams Unbound” traveling exhibition was organized by the Boston Public Library and the America Library Association, and made possible by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: great ideas brought to life. The exhibition is based upon the gallery exhibition of the same name mounted by the Boston Public Library in 2006, the first public display of Adams’ complete 3,500-book collection.

For additional information, contact Sara Landset at 561-297-3921 or slandset@fau.edu or visit http://www.library.fau.edu/news/flyers/adams_flyer.pdf.
**Cutline**

**Photo #1:** “John Adams,” undated, by unknown artist. Engraving. Private Collection.

**Photo #2:** “John Adams Talks to His Books,” 2006 by Christoph Abbrederis.