William Miller, Dean of Libraries at Florida Atlantic University, Wins One of Highest Honors Awarded to Nation’s Librarians

BOCA RATON, Fla. (April 17, 2014) — William Miller, Ph.D., an eminent scholar and prolific author who has written 60 articles and edited 10 books in the field of librarianship, and who has been dean of libraries at Florida Atlantic University for 26 years, has won the 2014 Isadore Gilbert Mudge Award, the highest honor given by the American Library Association’s (ALA) Reference and User Services Division (RUSA).

“RUSA’s Achievement Awards are a chance to give praise to the most notable librarians, libraries and library research in reference services,” said Kathleen Kern, RUSA’s president. “These awards are of the highest honor and recognize invaluable contributions to the field that may go unnoticed otherwise.”

Miller’s distinguished career is being acknowledged as librarians across the country celebrate National Library Week, which the ALA is sponsoring through Saturday, April 19, to celebrate the contributions of libraries and librarians and to promote support for libraries.

“I am both surprised and honored to receive this award after a career that focused on reference librarianship and instruction in the use of libraries, a connection that I maintain through my co-editorship of The Reference Librarian,” said Miller, who will receive a citation and a $5,000 stipend in June during the ALA’s annual convention in Las Vegas.

When Miller arrived at FAU in 1987, he began to aggressively engage the Wimberly Library in outreach, and believing that information would increasingly become electronic, he decided that only special collections would make libraries distinctive.

Today, like most other academic libraries, the working collection is primarily electronic and includes all of the journal subscriptions that support FAU’s many doctoral programs in the sciences and engineering. Much of the library’s distinctiveness and community outreach, however, derive from its special collections.

In 2007, Miller opened the 4,800-square-foot Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts, one of the nation’s most prominent centers for books handmade by artists. He established the Marvin and Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection of rare Americana, one of the top such
collections of its kind in the U.S., with a 2006 gift. More than 150,000 donated sound recordings constitute the rapidly growing Recorded Sound Archives, which boasts the world’s largest online collection of recorded Jewish music, an impressive collection of early vintage phonograph records and more than 21,000 Jazz albums. The Klezmer Company Orchestra, the only professional ensemble-in-residence at an academic library, was founded in 1997 and uses FAU Libraries’ print music collection of more than 90,000 vintage scores as source materials to take the music from the “shelf-to-stage.” The Harold L. Glasser Collection, which features materials from World War II and the Miss Universe pageant, was gifted to FAU Libraries in 2011. A museum display case in the Wimberly Library’s lobby features contemporary fine arts and crafts from the Drs. J. Rosmarin Chodorkoff and B. Chodorkoff Collection, which was gifted in 2009.

In addition to being a source for research, FAU Libraries’ world-class special collections are a gold mine for interdisciplinary programs, lectures, workshops, art exhibitions, concerts, film screenings and a weeklong cultural festival.

Among the 918,646 patrons who visited the Wimberly Library during the 2012-13 fiscal year were about 500 FAU students who came for an inaugural “HOWLoween Party,” which the library will co-host in October for the third year. For this popular party, the student government transforms the library into a haunted house for a night of games and dancing, as Miller and his staff chaperone.

Students in English Romantic writing, Shakespeare and writing courses are as acquainted with Miller as an adjunct professor as they are with him in his role as the libraries’ dean. He occasionally teaches a seminar on academic libraries or a course on library administration for the University of South Florida’s Master of Library Science program.

Beyond the U.S. borders, FAU Libraries have redirected English language books to Armenia and Iraq and FAU Libraries now share copies of articles and documents with the American University of Nigeria Library in Yola, Nigeria; and the University of Kurdistan Hawler Library in Erbil, Iraq.

Miller, who graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in English from Temple University, earned his master’s and doctorate degree in English and American Literature from the University of Rochester and a Master of Library Science degree from the University of Toronto. Before coming to FAU, Miller was the associate dean of libraries and learning resources at Bowling Green State University.
Besides the Wimberly, FAU Libraries include two other libraries – one at the John D. MacArthur Campus in Jupiter and one at the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution in Fort Pierce. Miller operates the system on an annual budget of $8.5 million and a staff of 112 librarians, clerical and administrative/professional employees. As he reaches his 27th year at FAU, he continues to find each work day challenging and exciting.

“Everything we do, we do it for the students and faculty,” said Miller. “That is the only reason we are here.”

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Photo Captions
WilliamMiller1.jpg: William Miller, Ph.D., dean of libraries at Florida Atlantic University.
WilliamMiller2.jpg: William Miller, Ph.D., dean of libraries at Florida Atlantic University.

About Florida Atlantic University:
Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. Today, the University, with an annual economic impact of $6.3 billion, serves more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students at sites throughout its six-county service region in southeast Florida. FAU’s world-class teaching and research faculty serves students through 10 colleges: the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters, the College of Business, the College for Design and Social Inquiry, the College of Education, the College of Engineering and Computer Science, the Graduate College, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science. FAU is ranked as a High Research Activity institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The University is placing special focus on the rapid development of three signature themes – marine and coastal issues, biotechnology and contemporary societal challenges – which provide opportunities for faculty and students to build upon FAU’s existing strengths in research and scholarship. For more information, visit www.fau.edu.