Arthur Jaffe, Book Arts Center Founder at FAU Libraries, to Receive Honorary Doctorate from FAU, Retire as Curator

BOCA RATON, FL (May 2, 2011) – Florida Atlantic University President Mary Jane Saunders will present an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters on Friday, May 6, to Arthur Jaffe, who transformed a private collection of artists’ books into one of the nation’s most prominent centers for books handmade by artists.

Saunders will award the honorary degree to Jaffe during the university’s spring commencement ceremonies. This honor will come to the founder and curator of the Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts, housed at FAU’s Wimberly Library, on the eve of his 90th birthday and as he prepares to retire. He and his late wife, Mata, made an initial donation of 2,800 artists’ books to the library in 1998. Over the years, it has developed into a bustling cultural center that houses 12,000 rare books, many of them one-of-a-kind. The center is also a venue for concerts, film screenings, exhibitions, workshops and classes – all of which are open to the public.

“Arthur Jaffe is a living treasure at Florida Atlantic University,” said Saunders. “His lifelong interest in books as works of art has made him one of the world’s leading experts in this fascinating field. FAU is so fortunate to not only have the honor of housing his priceless collection of books, but also to have had the great pleasure of his personal participation in the life of the university for many years. He will always be a valued member of the FAU family.”

Jaffe came to the Wimberly Library on FAU’s Boca Raton campus as a volunteer in 1994 and worked there for four years prior to donating the books. Behind him were distinguished careers as a World War II Army captain in charge of a unique combat military intelligence unit from 1942 to 1946, a partner in a department store chain for 30 years, and a leader in many local and national community organizations. With the expansion of the library in 2007, the Jaffe collection became the core of the new 4,800 square-foot center, largely funded by a substantial gift that Mata Jaffe earmarked for that purpose before her death in 2001. Jaffe also served as the Ario S. Hyams Professor, an endowed position at FAU Libraries, until December 2010.
“If I was able to do some good things, it was because others were helping me and because I was willing to accept their help,” said Jaffe. “Success is only made possible through cooperation. It is never something that is achieved by one person alone.”

The center’s patrons range from elementary school children to retirees. Jaffe is at the center nearly every weekday and on some weekends. His daily schedule might include buying and showing books, popping in on bookmaking classes or film screenings, talking with visiting artists, or sitting for hours with artists or prospective donors. While Jaffe’s enthusiasm remains high for book arts education, he said he no longer has the energy to continue what has been an arduous work schedule.

William Miller, dean of Libraries at FAU, said he never envisioned the Jaffe collection becoming as large, prominent and important as it is now. “This is a tribute to Arthur’s continued dedication in coming here every day, continuing to build the collection, proselytizing and teaching, and to the staff that he has assembled, who are equally as dedicated to the teaching and outreach activities they conduct, in addition to building the collection,” said Miller.

The Jaffe Center will continue to educate book arts enthusiasts. Plans are on track to open a papermaking studio this summer, to bolster the center’s metal and wood types, allowing for more classes and to welcome the first book artist in the “Helen R. Salzberg Artist in Residence Program.” The center’s staff views Jaffe’s status not as “retirement,” but as a “transition.”

“It’s hard to keep a man like Arthur from his passion,” said John Cutrone, who was named the center’s director in December. “Arthur’s office will remain here for him, and I envision his role here as an active one. He plans to see through to completion ‘Stories on the Skin: Tattoo Culture at FAU’ and other projects that he initiated. I’ll call on him when we need help with tours and when book dealers come to town.”

The library plans to celebrate Jaffe’s birthday/retirement all summer and will kick it off with an extensive exhibition titled “Time Flies When You’re Having Fun,” which will open on Sunday, May 8, and run through Wednesday, August 10. The exhibition, free and open to the public, will feature a timeline of Jaffe’s life and accolades, including a reference to the “Chevalier” Legion of Honor award, a high honor that the French government will bestow on Jaffe on Tuesday, May 17, for his contributions to the liberation of France during World War II.
The “Time Flies” Open House at the Jaffe Center will be held on Saturday, May 21, from 1 to 4 p.m. Festivities will include letterpress demonstrations, a Poem Depot with the Miami Poetry Collective, chats with Jaffe and an unveiling of “Student Body Art,” a photo exhibition.

The Jaffe Center will host workshops all summer as part of the celebration. The first one, titled “Explore, Invent, Inspire: Playful Ways of Approaching Artists’ Books,” will be on display Saturday, May 14, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Workshops are open to the public. Registration is required.

Jaffe has requested that no personal gifts be given for his retirement or birthday, but said he would be honored by donations to the Jaffe Center for Book Arts Education Fund. For more information on the Jaffe retirement/birthday celebration events or on the Jaffe Center for Book Arts, contact John Cutrone at 561-297-0455 or visit www.jaffecollection.org.

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**Cutline:**

*Photo #1:* Arthur Jaffe, founder and curator, Arthur and Mata Jaffe Center for Book Arts.

*Photo #2:* Arthur Jaffe, with “Colours of Persia” by Susan Allix, from the Jaffe Center’s collection.

**About Florida Atlantic University:**

*Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. In commemoration of its origin, FAU is celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout 2011. Today, the University serves more than 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students on seven campuses and sites. FAU’s world-class teaching and research faculty serves students through 10 colleges: the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts & Letters, the College of Business, the College for Design and Social Inquiry, the College of Education, the College of Engineering & 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. For more information, visit [www.fau.edu](http://www.fau.edu).*