FAU Libraries Receive Collection of Rare Books, Materials to Promote Interest in British Fiction Writer Angela Thirkell

BOCA RATON, FL (June 27, 2011) Florida Atlantic University Libraries recently received a collection of rare books and papers written by or about Angela Thirkell, a popular British fiction author who chronicled the 1930s, World War II and the post-war years in England.

The gift consists of original hard-bound books with dust jackets by London publisher Hamish Hamilton and American editions of the same books by New York publisher Alfred A. Knopf. Paperbacks by New York publisher Moyer Bell, three books authored by FAU professor Penelope Fritzer, as well as manuscripts, ephemera, society bulletins and pamphlets are also part of the gift.

The books are from the estate of Carol Haskell, a former membership chairman of The Angela Thirkell Society of North America. The 300-member society, based in San Diego, augmented the collection with reference works and other materials prior to gifting it to the Wimberly Library and has underwritten costs for outreach.

“Angela Thirkell was a very special author who wrote about the times in which she lived,” said Barbara Houlton, the society’s president. “But we have seen popular authors, particularly women writers who have faded from view. An academic presence is the only way that an entire body of work can be made available.”

Born in 1890 in London, Thirkell was the daughter of J.W. Mackail, a poetry professor; granddaughter of Edward Burne-Jones, a pre-Raphaelite painter; and cousin of writer Rudyard Kipling and Stanley Baldwin, the prime minister shown in the recent movie, “The King’s Speech.”

Thirkell began writing in 1929 when she moved with her son from Australia to London to live with her parents after her second marriage ended. The author wrote 29 Barsetshire books, producing a book almost every year until her death in 1961, just before her 71st birthday.
Yale University, which received books from Thirkell when she lectured there, as well as a gift of the author’s books and papers from the society, is one of the few other American universities with a collection of Thirkell books.

“FAU Libraries are committed to honoring the memory of this popular writer and making her works available to new generations,” said Rita Pellen, associate dean of Libraries at FAU. “We look forward to our FAU faculty members and students using the materials from the Thirkell collection in their classes and for their personal reading.”

Fritzer, who teaches English and social studies methods, is the society’s academic coordinator. She began reading Thirkell in the 1970s, joined the society in the 1990s and has fostered a strong link between FAU and the society by recruiting some of her FAU colleagues.

FAU professor Mary Faraci recently received a sabbatical to do research on and write a book on Thirkell. FAU professor John Childrey, who retired last year, also has written about Thirkell. Faraci and Childrey have presented papers on Thirkell. Andrew Binder, an FAU instructor, has designed covers for three of the society’s book publications. The late Laura Collins, wife of Bob Collins, a retired FAU English professor who also is deceased, wrote the first scholarly study on Thirkell.

“I was charmed by Thirkell’s sense of humor and her very amusing politically incorrect social commentary,” said Fritzer, author of “Aesthetics and Nostalgia in the Barsetshire Novels of Angela Thirkell,” her third Thirkell book. “I recommend Thirkell’s books to my students who are going to be high school teachers. The books are very accurate social snapshots of the war years and the post-war Labour Government years.”

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Cutline:
Photo 2: Left, Angela Thirkell’s “County Chronicle,” American publication, and London publication.

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.