‘Pamphleteer in America’ Exhibition at FAU’s Wimberly Library Reflects the Spirit of the American Revolution

BOCA RATON, FL (August 23, 2012) – Florida Atlantic University’s “Pamphleteer in America,” an exhibition that reflects the spirit of revolution in 18th century America through a series of original and rare political pamphlets, is now on display through Friday, September 28, at the university’s Wimberly Library, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton campus.

“The FAU community is fortunate to have such a complete collection of original documents from the Revolutionary War period, and this exhibition gives people a quick glimpse into the riches the Marvin and Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection contains,” said William Miller, Ph.D., dean of university libraries at FAU.

The exhibition features such persuasive pamphlets as Thomas Paine’s famous “Common Sense,” which presented the American colonies with the strongest argument for independence from England and was the most widely read pamphlet of all time; James Otis’ “The Rights of the British Colonies,” which asserts that rights are not derived from human institutions, but from nature and God; John Dickinson’s “Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania,” which were instrumental in uniting the colonists against the Townsend Acts; and “The Federalists Papers,” a collection of 85 articles written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay to influence the ratification and future interpretations of the Constitution. Pamphlets written by John Adams, John Hancock, Joseph Galloway and John Allen are also part of the political dialogue.

In addition to pamphlets, the exhibition features photographs; a 1768 copy of “The Pennsylvania Chronicle and Universal Advertiser,” which was the first newspaper to print the “Pennsylvania Farmer” essays; and a 1787 copy of “The American Museum,” which carried the first printing of the Constitution in a magazine.

Special Collections librarians Victoria Thur, Teresa Van Dyke, Bebe Chang and Leslie Siegel curated the exhibition from FAU Libraries’ Marvin and Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection, which consists of more than 13,000 items, including first and later editions of books, manuscripts and pamphlets that were printed before 1865. The late Marvin Weiner, a businessman who gifted the materials to FAU Libraries in 2006, devoted his life to collecting uniquely valuable items documenting the philosophical evolution and historical events that led to the birth of American democracy. His legacy lives on at FAU
through the collection, which he hoped would give students hands-on learning experiences and provide resources for research. The exhibition offers students another opportunity to explore the collection.

Pamphlets played a critical role during the American Revolution as a medium for people to express their opinions on contemporary issues. Pamphlets were inexpensive, produced quickly, widely circulated and read aloud in taverns, churches and town meetings. The pages of the pamphlets were stitched loosely and contained as few as five pages and as many as 30. Since people would buy pamphlets and later make their own books, some of the pamphlets on display are now bound in leather. Some of the pages of the pamphlets look untouched, while others are fragile from use and age.

The pamphlets in “Pamphleteer in America” were written between 1764 and 1789 and reflect the political positions of patriots, loyalists, federalists and antifederalists.

“Mr. Weiner was very strategic in picking the most important pamphlets to come out of the period,” said Thur, who is also university archivist. “The language and diction are absolutely wonderful. It’s the articulation and the eloquence that I am taken in awe by. You can really feel the persuasive power of their language and arguments in the pamphlets.”

For more information on “Pamphleteer in America,” contact special collections at 561-297-2693 or lysca@fau.edu.

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PHOTO CAPTION:
Photo 1 Common Sense: “Common Sense,” written by Thomas Paine in 1776, is one of the many original historic political pamphlets on display at FAU in the Wimberly Library’s “Pamphleteer in America” exhibition through Friday, September 28.

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 29,000 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.