

MARIOTT LIBRARY RADIO FEATURE

((AMBIENT: LIBRARY SOUNDS / SOFT FOOTSTEPS / LOW STUDY HUM))

Lead in Official... ()

Intro JT: For many, the general sentiment of a library is associated with shushing librarians, that robust book smell, and the occasional ping of a random document being scanned in or out. For students, the library is often seen as a simple place for study, and fancy-free seating. Many students at the U may be under this impression whenever they frequent the Marriott Library. But take a closer look, and the Marriott Library's importance goes far deeper than simply being a place for poring over your math homework. Rather, it is a place of discovery and conservation. A place where knowledge is preserved, created, and spread.

((Nat Sound- Collection))

Basin #1: "We have Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Kepler-like all of the big names in science. We have at least a couple of their first editions or early editions of their work...

JT: Secluded away by four flights of stairs, lying completely hidden behind an ordinary looking wall,

Basin #2: "We have Lewis and Clark, Stansbury, John C. Fremont, John Wesley Powell—all the names related to exploring the West."

JT: lies a trove of books and manuscripts from centuries long gone, carrying on their words into the present.

Basin #3: "My name is Luba Basin and I am the rare books librarian and special collections at the Marriott Library. I oversee a collection of over 80,000 books, maps, ephemera, and artifacts ranging from 4,000-year-old Sumerian clay tablets to 21st-century artist books."

JT: Basin, just like the collections she oversees, is a part of a longer story of preservation, study, and research.

Basin #4: "During the pandemic we lost a lot of institutional knowledge when longtime staff retired. I started researching the history of Special Collections and found it goes back to the John R. Park Library collection in the 1890s."

JT: Basin discovered her love for ancient books and ephemera unintentionally, a sort of groundbreaking discovery of her own.

Basin #5: "It kind of came as a surprise. I was actually a student here at the University of Utah studying English literature and linguistics... and one of my classes brought me in to do a rare book session—just an overview of the history of the book throughout 4,000 years of history."

JT: Her love and passion started humbly from a seemingly unremarkable chunk of clay that was placed into her hands. But upon closer examination, you will get the oldest taste of "don't judge a book by its cover".

Basin #6: "And this is a receipt for grain to make beer for a party, a Sumerian clay tablet. You can actually see a thumbprint, which was created when the clay was still wet as the scribe was pushing into the clay with his stylus. That thumbprint is about 4,000 years old, and now you're holding your own fingers to that same fingerprint."

JT: To Basin, this is what it is all about. Nothing dispenses the beauty, story, and knowledge of something better than the real thing.

Basin #7: "What we lose with digital photographs is materiality. We can't tell how big or small something is, how heavy it is, what the binding feels like. Even with something like Galileo's Dialogues, printed in 1632—you can feel the paper is different. It's cotton and linen rag paper. You can scan it as a PDF, but you'll never get the texture, or the watermarks, or the physical details of how it was made. And when you hold it, you realize: this is the book that got Galileo under house arrest. He may

have touched this. And suddenly it's not just information—it's presence."

JT: By understanding our past, we can start to understand, and empathize with others.

Lyuba#8: "I think people get emotional when they recognize themselves in these objects. Because we're just another extension of the book, and the book is an extension of us. The human condition hasn't changed—we still want the same things: to be loved, to find homes, to be heroes in our own stories. There are rivalries, revenge stories, all of that. And when people see that reflected across centuries, they realize we're part of the same human record."

JT: In addition to preserving the knowledge of the past, the Marriott Library also seeks to create new knowledge. Dale Larson, a Social Science and Humanities librarian for more than fifteen years, is ready to help.

Larson #1: "I'm a social sciences and humanities librarian... I show people how to use the library databases and help them do research."

Larson #2: "Most of what we do is scholarly articles, which there are roughly 100 to 150 million of, and so literally anything you want to look at is being written about."

JT: People like Dale ensure researchers get material that is not filled with unfounded conspiracy theories and sketchy research. Although he does come across the occasional eccentric story.

Larson #3: "Somebody published a paper, and I think you can find it still, but somebody published a paper that said, 'Oh yeah, I made a little boy out of warm horse poop and electricity, and now he's my little servant, and I call him Homunculus.'"

Larson #4: "And they're like, 'Can we see Homunculus Boy?' 'Oh no, he's very shy.' And all of a sudden it's like all these red flags start coming up."

JT: "The Marriott's database isn't some pool of unmitigated information, it is a mountain of quality research that does not discriminate on any topic. In a way, the database is a conglomerate of the imagination of people from around the world. Your creativity becomes a part of a larger painting. No matter the topic, you can be almost sure to find it in the libraries database.

Larson #5: "So the main idea of academic libraries is that we subscribe to licensed information where they've gone to all the trouble of vetting all of the resources and checking. It's like the peer review process."

JT: The collection has everything you need to learn more about Harry Styles, tattoos, to what people were wearing in the 1850s. Dale is happy to help you research your favorite rock band, too. The human imagination, he says, is limitless.

Larson #6: "I had a student whose goal for their entire undergraduate degree... every research project was about the heavy metal band Korn... and they did it."

Larson #7: "People think it's about nuclear decay rates... but there's a lot of other stuff for every single discipline."

Larson #8: "Harry Styles had like 30 or 40 scholarly articles written about them because they're like an economic phenomenon... genderbender, pop star, business aspect."

JT: If it exists, it's researchable. If it's researchable, Larson says, you may be in for a treat of uncommon knowledge. Curiosity is what should drive people to the library.

Larson #9: "Check out the library space and hang out for an extended period of time and see if it's a good place to hang out. And then the second one is to go to the library homepage and look up any words whatsoever and see what you can find. I encourage people to look up naughty words—we are an uncensored library, so it's fun."

JT: The importance of the library is not dead, Larson says, but is evolving like it always has. Evolving into something even more powerful and useful.

Larson #10: "So for example, we had microfilm... and the last microfilm reader was broken, and the one guy in the United States who could fix them was retiring. So we had to acquire a new one. Stuff is always getting sunsetted, but new stuff is coming on all the time."

Larson #11: "We've got 8 million books now. Half of them are online. So when people say the library is going away, it's always going away—but it never actually goes away."

JT: Things do not change when leaving the library. As the hub for events, debates, and even pop-up thrifting boutiques, it is a place where campus life becomes visible. Brexton, a University of Utah Union advocate, finds this to be invaluable.

Brexton #1- "I think in terms of the library, it's a place where a lot of people congregate. It gets a lot of foot traffic. And right now with what the union's doing, we're trying to represent all workers and the community as a whole. We believe the 'U for Who' campaign is focused on all these changes happening in higher education, and making sure they're centered on students and workers—who are the ones actually here at this library. Whether you're a worker at the library or a student coming to study, it's a place where everybody can go and you're not being charged to be here."

JT: If you ever find yourself wondering about the economics of Taylor Swift, why humans love gossip, or simply want to hold a book that Galileo could have held in his hands, the Marriott library has what you're looking for.

((AMBIENT: LIBRARY HUM FADES OUT))

JT: Reporting from the J. Willard Marriott Library, I'm Jonathon Theodore