With the challenge from Provost Lazarus that it would be a “triumph” if we accomplished our task, Doris Ann Sweet, Liz Maisey, Mary Brunelle, and Nancy O’Sullivan traveled to Rome over spring break to support the College’s preparation for the new study abroad program. The task was to prepare upwards of 2000 old and rare books for long-term storage, with a finding list that would allow any specific title to be easily retrieved.

The Assumptionist complex in Rome consists of three buildings around a small courtyard: the General House, a convent of the Oblate Sisters of the Assumption, and a now-unused building which houses several collections of books. This latter building will be the home for the Assumption College Program in Rome, and all of the collections need to be removed from the building so that renovations can commence. Our project focused on books published between 1500 and 1830, though there was an even larger collection of books published after 1830. Both of these collections had been in the library of a long-closed college run by the Assumptionists in Rome. Two additional collections in the building are very precious to the Assumptionist community: Fr. Emmanuel d’Alzon’s sizeable personal collection of books, and the central Archives of the Assumptionists, including papers of Fr. d’Alzon.

We arrived in Rome on Sunday just in time to settle into our rooms at the General House before lunch. We were greeted by Fr. John Franck, Fr. Jerome Lively (both with strong ties to the College), and Fr. Benoît Grière, the current Superior General. We quickly learned that English was only one of several languages used at the House. There were priests, brothers, and sisters from the U.S., Italy, Congo, France, Chile, and Peru, all of whom spoke some Italian and French and most with a smattering of English. With our collective, varying levels of foreign language skills and a little body language, we managed to communicate with this diverse and welcoming community of Assumptionists.

The work began Monday morning. Doris Ann and Liz had been in Rome briefly a few weeks before with Provost Lazarus to devise a workable methodology for the project. They set up procedures, incorporating a helpful, though incomplete and sometimes inaccurate inventory listing of the books. We matched books to the inventory list, created records for books not on the inventory, and wrapped each book in acid-free tissue paper to protect it from the chemicals found in cardboard. We quickly realized that a long-dormant skill learned in fourth grade was coming in handy—reading Roman numerals to date the books! These old books were fascinating with their leather, vellum, and decorated paper bindings, the detailed engravings, and intriguing manuscript.
Why don’t I write new poems?

Larry “the Librarian” Spongberg

Some of you may be wondering why I do not come up with new material. You deserve an explanation, so here it is:

Why don’t I write new poems?
People asked one day
I just read the same ones
Much to their dismay
They have a point – I should attempt
To write new poetry
But I really do enjoy
Just being your M C
Then I got to thinking
I guess that I should try
But I had no inkling
Because my pen ran dry
Rewards might come to me
If new attempts I’m bravin’
I know – about Edgar’s poetry
People are still Raven
I thought some new creations
Would help me find my place
I wrote about the Red Sox
But I was off base
I thought of famous people
Like Casey at the Bat
I wrote about Humpty Dumpty
But that one fell flat
I wrote about Jesse James
You know, the famous bandit
I wrote about a gold rush
But the critics panned it
I wrote about a colander
Because I thought I outta
I thought it great but my theory
Simply held no water
I tried to put on paper
My humor and my mirth
Went to my publisher and asked
“What are my Wordsworth?”

I really tried my best
With my attempts and fumblings
I suffer lack of capital
Just like e.e. cummings
Maybe I can send them to
Our paper, the PROVOC
They might decide to print them
Before I go in hock
At least, now I have tried
And you people know it
It’s time for me to introduce
Tonight’s featured poet
Composed March 10, 2012

Library Finals Hours:

Mon, Apr 30 - Fri, May 4: 8am - 2am
Sat, May 5: 8am - midnight
Sun, May 6: 8am - 2am
Mon, May 7: 8am - 4:30pm

Wishing you a safe and fun-filled summer from the Interlibrary Loan Department

Vivienne Anthony

As the spring semester draws to a close, we would like to thank all those interlibrary loan patrons who took advantage of this wonderful resource offered at the Emmanuel d’Alzon Library. We are pleased to report another successful semester, sharing resources with colleges and universities as close as Worcester and as far away as Puerto Rico, Edinburgh, United Kingdom, Germany, Beirut and New Zealand. From the end of August 2011 (the beginning of the new school year) to the beginning of April 2012, we had 1,841 requests from our patrons to borrow library materials and 2,490 requests to lend to other libraries.

In the past few months, with the help of our systems librarian, we have acquired the new ILLiad software 8.0 and attended a series of online workshops to facilitate and improve the interlibrary loan workflow. We are very happy with the updated version and will continue to educate ourselves about its new and improved functions. We would like to take this time to thank all our superb student employees who assist with interlibrary loan on a daily basis. We certainly could not fill the number of lending requests without them.

Vivienne Anthony will be away for eight weeks during the summer, returning in mid August. During this time Robin Maddalena, Head of Access Services & Collection Management, will be available to answer any Interlibrary loan questions you may have and can be reached at x7271 or r.maddalena@assumption.edu

We wish you a happy, safe and fun-filled summer and look forward to filling your Interlibrary loan requests.
Card Swipe Now Available for Printing!

You spoke, and we listened! Thanks to the feedback from the MISO Survey, IT&MS installed card readers on the HoundPrint print release stations in the IT Center and the Library. This means that you can swipe your AC ID and immediately see a list of your print jobs!

The first time you swipe your card, you will be asked to enter your username and password as before. This registers your card, so the system associates your card with your user name. After this first time, you’ll never have to type in your username and password again: just swipe!

We hope this will make printing jobs easier and less time-consuming for you. We are very aware of the long lines in the mornings and are working to alleviate the backup.

As always, we love to hear your feedback. Please let us know how the new card readers are working for you.

How Wii Fit Saved My Life

Well, Wii Fit didn’t actually save my life, at least not in the literal sense. But it has alleviated the intense, chronic back pain that I’ve had since I was a child. Most days, I actually have no pain at all, which is something I never imagined was possible.

Wii Fit is an exercise and fitness add-on to the Nintendo Wii video game console, which debuted in 2006. I do have a few games, but mostly I use Wii Fit for yoga and balance games. I do 30 minutes on weekdays and try to do 60 minutes on weekend days. (And yes, I freely admit to cheat days.)

I’ve been doing yoga on and off for 10 years, and quite seriously for 6 years. So I was no stranger to yoga when I received Wii Fit as a Christmas gift two years ago. To my great surprise, though, Wii Fit told me I had been doing yoga all wrong.

The neat thing about Wii Fit is that it measures your balance. When you stand on the balance board (which resembles the board used in step aerobics), it displays your center of gravity with a floating dot on the TV screen. I realized that despite being able to hold the yoga poses quite easily, I was never actually balanced. Apparently my left side is much stronger and more stable than my right. In fact, even standing still, I always stand back and to the left.

Now, I’m training myself to distribute more weight forward and to the right. When I’m washing dishes or standing in line at the grocery store, I try to concentrate on balancing properly. Consequently, the pain in my back, which always emanates from the lower left side, is almost gone, and the relief I feel is indescribable. I had seen a bunch of doctors and been on a number of pain medications, but somehow, it is Wii Fit that has done the trick. I told this to my spine specialist, and he literally laughed in my face. He doesn’t believe me. I like to think he’s missing out on a groundbreaking medical phenomenon.

Technology should always help us, or improve the quality of our lives somehow (insert standard Microsoft joke here). It may sound cheesy, and members of the medical profession may dispute it, but I truly believe a video game has changed my life.
In February, a very special exhibit, organized by Professor Esteban Loustaunau, was installed in the library. Community Service Learning students in Loustaunau’s Spanish 381 class collaborated with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students at Training Resources of America, Inc. (TRA-Inc.) to produce a *Literacy Through Photography* exhibit titled *Immigrant Perspectives of Life in Worcester*. The success of this collaboration was apparent at the standing room only opening reception, which brought together members of both the Assumption and Worcester communities. The photographs and accompanying essays by students at TRA-Inc. were truly inspirational.

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**D’ALZON EVENTS**

**Senior Seminar Art Show**
April 16 – May 11

**Works and Remarks by:**
Michelle Hemeon, Chris Cirilli, Laura Traverse, Maribeth DeFlaminis, Ashley Costanzo, Stephanie Wilcinski, Sean O’Gara, Melissa Brazeau, Anne Harris, Mike O’Connor, Christina Hitchins, Jasper Coutu, and Nick Frazier

**Student Poetry Reading**
Friday, April 20, 7:00pm
Prof. John Hodgen’s Creative Writing class

**Featured Readers:**
Benjamin Bickford, Isabelle Biennestin, Crismel Calderon, Joseph Curnane, Michael DellaCame, Nicole Fontaine, Erik Gallup, Robert Handy, Nicole Kirkland, Matthew Lasko, Patrick Lee, Kelly Meredith, Colleen Montague, Matthew Olbert, Alexandria Paladino, Vincent Perrone, Molly Pietrantonio, Erin Sliney, Corey Walker, Mark Whelan
What We Need to Know About Open Access

Doris Ann Sweet

The Open Access movement has been around for at least a couple of decades now and originated in the financial crisis in academe, especially libraries, caused by skyrocketing journal prices. Librarians and faculty became alarmed at what the scholarly communication process had become: colleges, universities, the federal government, and other grant-making bodies subsidized research, as commercial publishers used the free labor of faculty for peer review and editing, and then published journals at high and annually escalating prices that far outpaced library budgets and led to massive journal cancellations in many libraries. The journal publishers, by now conglomerates, made (and still make) huge profits. Scientific publishing alone is a multi-billion dollar, international business.

Open Access proponents, primarily academics, government agencies, non-profit scholarly organizations, and foundations, are seeking to radically change the scholarly communication system and de-commoditize it. How is that happening? Academics worldwide have collaborated on developing peer-reviewed, open access journals to directly compete with some of the high cost journals. Their business models typically include author fees, which are often covered by grants or subsidized by colleges and universities, but no cost to users, including libraries. Note that many commercial publishers have been charging “page” fees to authors for some time. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ http://www.doaj.org/) reports the existence of 1361 open access peer-review journals in the United States and thousands more in other countries. The number is growing steadily, with 81 added just last month.

Government agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, have given the Open Access movement a big boost. Just four years ago the National Institutes of Health initiated their Public Access Policy, which requires that all members of the public must have free access to publications emanating from research funded by the agency. This can be achieved by depositing the article in an institutional repository at the home base of the researcher, or in a special subject-based repository, of which there are many. Other organizations such as the World Bank and the Wellcome Trust, reportedly the second-largest nongovernmental funder of scientific research in the world, are falling in line with similar policies. The National Science Foundation is taking this one step deeper by requiring that the public have access to data generated by research it has funded. The Federal Research Public Access Act of 2012 (FRPAA), which would greatly expand Open Access, is currently before Congress.

Faculty at a number of academic institutions, among them Harvard University, Boston University and MIT, have, with great publicity, adopted campus open-access policies. Most of these policies require that faculty authors deposit a copy of each article publication in the institutional repository, although there is an opt-out exception for certain circumstances. While most institutions with open-access policies are indeed large universities, Lafayette College, Bucknell University, and Hope College are representative of the growing number of smaller colleges that have become open-access campuses. ROARMAP (http://roarmap.eprints.org/) is an international clearinghouse where academic institutions with open-access policies can register their status—so the site provides a large, though not comprehensive, list.

What do you as an author need to know about making sure your scholarship is as widely available as Open Access can make it? First you can request from your publisher (if not an Open Access journal) that you retain the right to post a copy of the article to an institutional repository or a special subject repository that will be open to the public. Publishers are becoming accustomed to this kind of request and sometimes will simply give permission. SHERPA/ROMEO (http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/index.php?fIDnum=|&mode=simple&la=en) is a fairly comprehensive database of publishers’ policies where you can find out, for instance, what Elsevier allows. Elsevier’s default policy allows authors to post pre-referree or final versions of articles to an open repository. Authors must always check directly with the journal editor, though, because an individual journal, even though published by Elsevier, may have a more specific policy. SPARC, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (http://www.arl.org/sparc/author/index.shtml), has a website with author rights resources, including a model Author Addendum you can convey to your publisher.

Peter Suber, Research Professor of Philosophy at Earlham College and Director of the Open Access Project at Harvard University, has written extensively on the subject of Open Access and provides a brief overview at http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm. His writings and the SPARC website can inform authors about Open Access in general and new developments as they occur. Barrie Mooney, a d’Alzon Reference Librarian, has developed a Research Guide for Open Access with selected resources and links for anyone who wishes to learn more: http://assumption.libguides.com/content.php?pid=308810.

While Assumption College does not yet have an institutional repository (IR), d’Alzon Library is looking to create one as soon as it is feasible. An IR would provide a showcase for faculty and student scholarship, and increase exposure. I welcome any thoughts or suggestions on this topic and any accounts of experience with Open Access, either through a funding mandate, or publication in an Open Access journal. It would be great to know if Assumption College faculty members have already become a part of this revolution in the scholarly communication process!
National Library Week: Voices of Worcester Women

This year’s National Library Week program was filled with Assumption connections. Charlene Longhi Martin, ’78 and Maureen Ryan Doyle, ’73 presented their book *Voices of Worcester Women*, a compilation of selected stories from the Worcester Women’s Oral History Project. Many of the subjects and interviewers have ties to the Assumption community.

After Director of Library Services Doris Ann Sweet welcomed students, staff, faculty, and WISE members, Professor Carl Keyes set the stage for the stories by discussing how oral histories provide a unique look into the past, and how students gain a different appreciation of history when they interview its participants rather than just read a scholarly work. He also noted that while students can’t add a list of tests they’ve taken to their resumes, they can include participation in this project and the fact that their interviews are on file at the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Harvard University.

Martin and Doyle then provided background about the Oral History Project. The Worcester Women’s History Project began as a committee wanting to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the first National Women’s Rights Convention that was held in Worcester in 1850. The Oral History Project grew from those roots when the committee decided to document the lives of ordinary Worcester-area women for posterity. They enlisted the support of local college professors who involved their students in the interview and transcription process. Martin and Doyle chose 69 women to feature in their book from the more than 250 women who have been interviewed. They focused on stories which illustrate topics of concern to women at the National Convention: education, work, health, and politics/community involvement, as well as Worcester remembrances. For the program, they presented summaries of stories about women who have connections to Assumption College, and who were interviewed by Assumption students.

Many of the stories described what it was like to grow up in a man’s world where choices were limited to a degree that today’s women can hardly imagine. These women often had to make choices between working and child-rearing or fight to break out of lives considered “normal” for women. Some women spoke of serious health problems they endured and how those problems affected their outlook on life. One woman described her experiences during the 1953 Worcester tornado. All of the stories were fascinating and the audience was struck by the openness with which these women shared their life experiences.

The program concluded with comments from students Katie Jankun and Mark Mulligan who commented on their experiences as interviewers. Katie noted an unexpected connection she had with her interviewee. She also said that it was a bit intimidating at first to have to transcribe the entire interview word for word. Mark commented briefly on his appreciation of the process, especially as a future historian. All who attended thoroughly enjoyed the program and said they look forward to reading about other women in the book.

Check out their blog: [Voices of Worcester Women](http://voicesofworcesterwomen.com)
Summer Reading Anyone?

The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie, By Alan Bradley
It's the beginning of a lazy summer in 1950 at the sleepy English village of Bishop's Lacey. Up at the great house of Buckshaw, aspiring chemist Flavia de Luce passes the time tinkering in the laboratory she's inherited from her deceased mother and an eccentric great uncle. When Flavia discovers a murdered stranger in the cucumber patch outside her bedroom window early one morning, she decides to leave aside her flasks and Bunsen burners to solve the crime herself, much to the chagrin of the local authorities. But who can blame her? What else does an eleven-year-old science prodigy have to do when left to her own devices? The story is cleverly plotted and has many twists and turns. I highly recommend it. (Amazon Best of the Month, April 2009.)
— Review by Julie O'Shea

The Good Earth, By Pearl S. Buck
Published in 1931 and awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1932, The Good Earth was the bestselling novel in the United States in both 1931 and 1932 and was an influential factor in Buck winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1938. I decided to read The Good Earth after visiting Pearl Buck's house and burial ground in Bucks County, Pennsylvania which happened to be close to where I lived for nineteen years. I was struck by how beautifully the book was written and the truly vivid portrayal of what it was like to live in pre-revolutionary war China. The story follows the life of an illiterate, poor, peasant farmer, Wang Lung, who ventures from the rural countryside and goes to the great house of Hwang to obtain a bride from those among the rank of slave. There, he is given the slave O-Lan as his bride. With O-Lan at his side, Wang Lung begins to prosper and with hard work he is gradually able to buy land and becomes very wealthy. His life becomes more complicated, however, the richer he gets. Wang Lung then commits a life-changing act that breaks O-Lan's heart in the most profound way. As the years pass, his sons become educated and literate, and the family continues to prosper. Wang Lung is then given the opportunity to buy the house of the wealthy Hwang family; the very same house from where he had fetched O-Lan many years ago. With the purchase of the house and terrible drought conditions, the family's good fortune takes a turn for the worse and they begin to lose all they have gained. It is a story of the cyclical nature of life, of the passions and desires that motivate a human being, and of the desire to survive and thrive against great odds. I really recommend this book. It is the best book I have read to date and I plan to re-read it this summer. — Review by Vivienne Anthony

Death at La Fenice (Book 1 of the Commissario Guido Brunetti mysteries) By Donna Leon
If you’re looking for mysteries this summer, check out this series. Detective Guido Brunetti works to solve murders in his beloved Venice. However, it is not the Venice with which the tourists are acquainted, but a Venice which is mysterious and world-weary. The relationships between her citizens are convoluted and as polluted as her canals. Brunetti tries to maintain his belief in the rule of law while watching the myriad of ways in which it is circumvented and abused by regular citizens as well as government bureaucrats. There are no simple answers to who should be found and punished for the crimes, and the truth is rarely clear. What is legal is often not what is right, but Brunetti, in his humanity, tries to set things right. He is sustained in his quest by his loving family, precious few of his colleagues, his reading of ancient history, and the meals prepared by his beloved wife, Paola. Join the astute Commissario as he fights corruption and other evils that beset his corner of civilization. — Review by Nancy O’Sullivan

All Creatures Great and Small, All things Bright and Beautiful, All Things Wise and Wonderful, The Lord God Made Them All, By James Herriot (nom de plume for Alf Wright).
I first read these books in the spring and summer of 1983 and I’ve never read any book(s) that made me so happy. The books are autobiographical and describe the life and adventures of a veterinarian in the Yorkshire Dales. The Herriot books are funny (sometimes hysterical), touching, and fascinating. We learn about life in 1940's -1960's in a rural and beautiful part of England. The characters we meet include farmers, aristocrats, and colleagues of Herriot’s. His descriptions of the countryside and these characters make you feel like you are living in Yorkshire and driving across the Dales with him. I’m reading these books again, and the pleasure they give me has not waned. Please give yourself the treat of reading these wonderful stories. — Review by Liz Maisey
By the Numbers: Rome

2 Trips

Over TWO THOUSAND Books

Published from 1500 to 1839

Lovingly preserved in 193 boxes

For students and researchers of the future

very appreciative librarians who learned about the Assumptionist Community in Rome
additions written by long-ago owners or readers. All the books were written in languages other than English, so our “title page” language skills were well exercised. We worked closely with Father Julio Navarro Román, the Archivist and Librarian, whose knowledge of the collection was invaluable as we resolved issues of difficult-to-identify books.

Professor Lance Lazar joined us on Monday to take a lead role in overseeing Italian workers who moved the collection of several thousand books published from approximately 1830 to 1950 to upper levels of the building. Here booksellers and librarians can view them and ascertain whether they wish to purchase any. Professor Lazar also directed the workers in moving the boxes we packed to the upper floor of the convent for storage.

We worked long hours and succeeded in accomplishing our task by Friday. We then had some free time to explore Rome, and were privileged to attend the signing of the agreement between the Assumptionists and Assumption College that provides the basis for the Rome Program. It was a great event and wonderful to see all the students on the History of Rome trip. We were able to join them in an extraordinary guided tour of the Vatican Museum and the Sistine Chapel. We also were able to visit the Vatican and explore other parts of Rome on our own, and, of course, enjoy Italian cuisine.

On Saturday, we ate our final meal with all of our new Assumptionist friends. Each of us left with happy memories of the people we met and the places we’d seen. We also left with a new appreciation for being part of the greater Assumptionist family. The College is just one part of a much larger, international community. We know that the students who have an opportunity to study in Rome will have a special experience and become aware of being part of this worldwide community.
Good-Bye to Graduating Student Workers

Eleven of our library student employees are graduating this semester. We would like to thank them for all of their hard work and hope that their experiences at the Emmanuel d’Alzon Library will help them in their professional endeavors. Good luck to the seniors. We will miss them all!

The following is a list of the 2012 graduating students:

- Melissa Brazeau
- Greg Barry
- Lauren DeVita
- Tito Encarnacion
- John Jackson
- Patrick Keeley
- Aaron Kressbach
- Sarah Leonido
- Greg O’Rourke
- Jerry Reilly
- Chris Trajkovski

We asked the students to comment on their years at the library. The following are some remarks.

**Greg Barry:**
I have worked in the library for four years and will remember seeing students come in and out of the library and interacting with them. I will also remember closing the empty library at 1am and finally Larry's puns (they never get old even after four years). Using the research databases helped me with my internship. The experience made me familiar with how to search for different things online and other databases. The library has been a great place to work and I enjoyed all four years. I have met many people and made friends working in the library because a good majority of the school comes in to get work done.

**Melissa Brazeau:**
I have worked in the library for four years and will always remember working over the summer and really getting to know the entire staff, and of course I will remember every shift with Larry! The library was a wonderful place to learn professionalism with coworkers, and to build research skills by teaching others. Thank you for the wonderful memories. I would be very lucky to be able to work with a staff half as kind and helpful as you all are.

**Sarah Leonido:**
The people are definitely the most memorable part of working here. Sometimes you really click with the student you are working beside, and long shifts give you a chance to get to know each other. Also, the library staff is so wonderfully friendly and supportive. I have made some special friendships here that I hope to keep up with after graduation. My experience working at the library has definitely enhanced my ability to navigate the search engines for resources online or outside of the d’Alzon Library. Though I had some research skills before working here, being able to share the approach with fellow students really solidified and enhanced my ability to use journal resources and ILLs. Thank you for a wonderful two years!
Christopher Trajkovski:
I have worked at the library since my freshman year. I will always remember closing the library at 1am. I learned very extensive research skills working in the Reference Department. These skills will help me in any upcoming jobs and if I decide to continue schooling! Working at the library is by far the best job on campus!!

Lauren DeVita:
I have been working in the library for three years. I always enjoyed coming to work at the library. It has an extremely welcoming and relaxing atmosphere. I got to know and become very good friends with many of my coworkers and I am so happy to have been able to spend time with them and get to know them. To break the work shift up, I had Larry to tell me some jokes and make me laugh. Working at the library has been a great experience and truly helpful for when I start working in the real world! I absolutely believe that working at the library has provided me with numerous skills I will need for after graduation. I have improved upon my customer service skills and learned how to balance my time with the customers as well as working in the back room providing other help the librarians. I have learned to effectively communicate and work as a team member as well as an individual in the work environment. The skills I have acquired and the ones that I have improved here at the library will be greatly needed when I enter the real world! The library has been a great experience and I will cherish the time I got to spend with the faculty and students I have worked with throughout my years at Assumption!

Meet the d’Alzon Library’s Newest Librarian

Phil Waterman

On April 17th, we welcomed Libby Lipin as our newest Reference and Information Literacy Librarian. Libby, who earned a BA degree in Art from the University of Massachusetts and an MLIS from Simmons College, comes to us from the Athol Public Library, where she was the Library Technician for Online Services. She also owns her own research company, Libby Lipin Information Services. One of her favorite clients was the PBS television series, America’s Test Kitchen. Her position here at Assumption will be to provide reference and information literacy services to support the curriculum and research needs of the college community. Libby works Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Library staff members are delighted to have Libby on board.
Evangelicals and Nicene Faith, Edited by Timothy George

“The Nicene Creed is the most universally accepted statement of Christian faith by Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox believers alike. In this volume, top scholars examine the Nicene Creed’s connection with the evangelical tradition, presenting evangelicalism as a renewal movement with the one holy catholic and apostolic church.” -- Book cover

Tales of a Shaman’s Apprentice, By Mark J. Plotkin, Ph.D.

“Mark Plotkin has spent much of the last decade in the rain forests tracking the shamans whose knowledge of the curative powers of plants may hold the cure to some of today’s devastating diseases. This is the fascinating account of his apprenticeships to these powerful wise men, an anthropological adventure story that also vividly clarifies what destruction of the region’s plant species may ultimately cost humanity.” -- Book cover

AD410: The Year That Shook Rome, By Sam Moorhead

“No one knows who opened Rome’s gates to Alaric and his Goths on 24 August AD410. Contemporary accounts vary, but all agree that someone let the barbarians in. Whoever may have been responsible, the outcome was dire. The Goths were in Rome, and the city was at their mercy. A compelling chronicle of the forces that laid Rome open to attack and tore the empire apart, AD410: The Year That Shook Rome offers a fresh perspective on a defining moment in Western history.” -- Book jacket

Useful Fictions: Evolution, Anxiety, and the Origins of Literature, By Michael Austin

“Drawing on evolutionary biology, anthropology, narrative theory, cognitive psychology, game theory, and evolutionary aesthetics, Austin develops the concept of a ‘useful fiction,’ a simple narrative that serves an adaptive function unrelated to its factual one. In his work we see how these useful fictions play a key role in neutralizing the overwhelming anxiety that humans can experience as their minds gather and process information.” -- Book jacket

Witchcraft in Early North America, By Alison Games

“Alison Games’s engaging book takes us beyond the infamous outbreak at Salem, Massachusetts, to look at how witchcraft was a central feature of colonial societies in North America. Her substantial and lively introduction orients readers to the subject and to the rich selection of document that follows… This fascinating topic and the book’s broad geographic and chronological coverage make this book ideally suited for readers interested in new approaches to colonial history and the history of witchcraft.” -- Book jacket

Too Big to Know, By David Weinberger

“We used to know how to know. We got our answers from books or experts. We’d nail down the facts and move on. But in the Internet age, knowledge has moved onto networks. There’s more knowledge than ever, of course, but it’s different. All the nails have been pulled up, topics have no boundaries, and nobody agrees on anything. Yet this is the greatest time in history to be a knowledge seeker – if you know how. In Too Big to Know, David Weinberger, a leading thinker about the Internet, shows how networked knowledge increases understanding in business, science, education, and government, and how it enables people to make smarter decisions than they could when they had to rely on traditional sources of expertise.” -- Book jacket