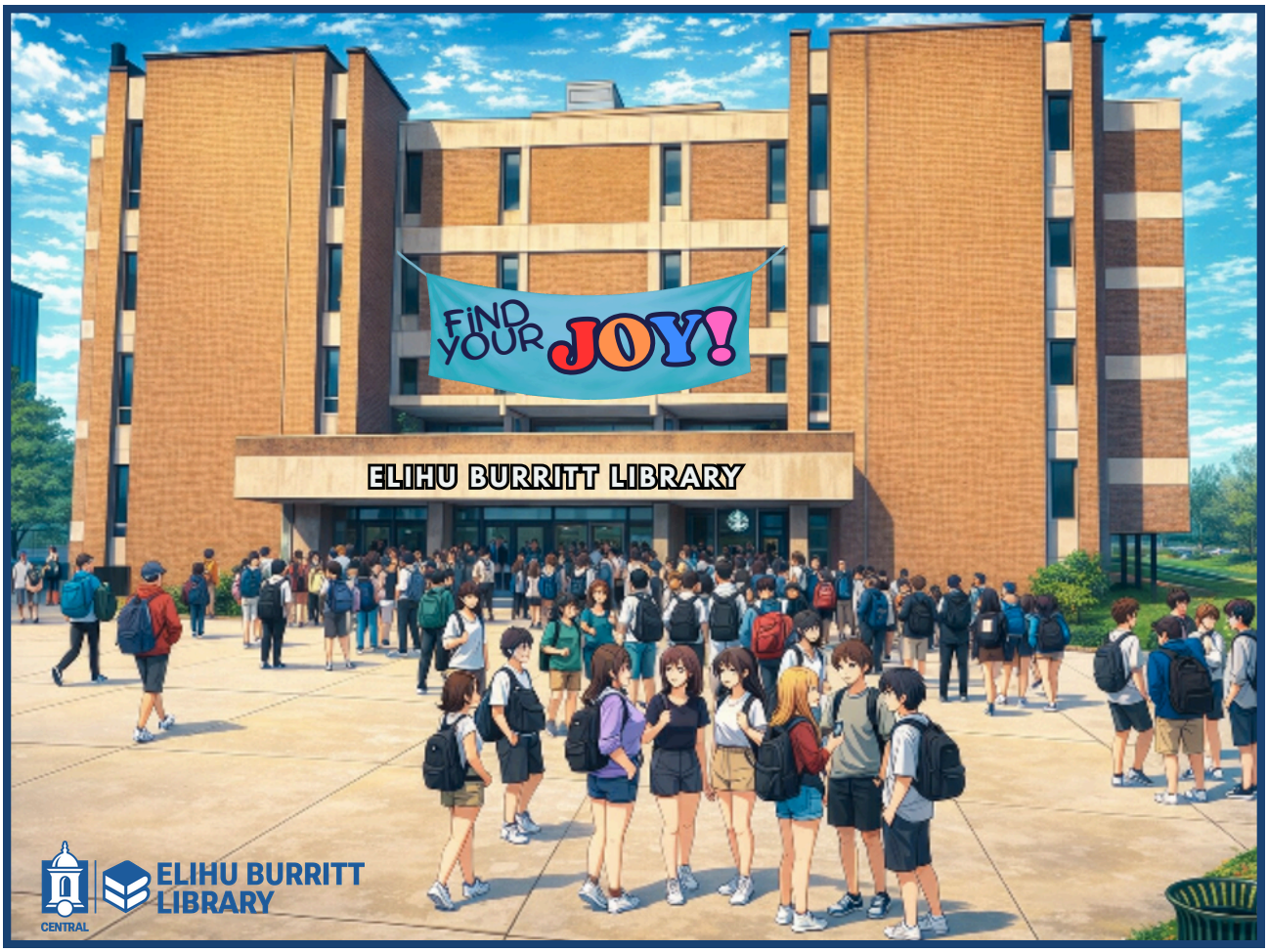
THE BURRITT CONNECTION

SPRING 2026
VOL.30:NO.2

FIND YOUR LIBRARY JOY! ISSUE



215th Anniversary Symposium Honoring Elihu Burritt 2
The Learned Blacksmith 3
From the Director's Desk 4
Outreach to the Greater Community 5
National Library Week 6 - 7
Access Services Presents Resource Sharing Upgrades Statewide 8
The 2026 Connecticut Digital Humanities Conference 9
Intern Reflections / DNAP Orientation 10
Literacy Across the Disciplines 11
Research and Instruction Updates 12
Yokai Parade Exhibit 13
Thank You to our Donors 14
Donors to the Library from 12/3/25-5/15/26 15

Elihu Burritt Honored at 215th Anniversary Symposium - Waldemar Kostrzewa

A 70-member audience learned more about Central's library namesake and New Britain's native son at the April 22 symposium honoring Elihu Burritt. Frequently called "The Learned Blacksmith," Burritt was lesser known as abolitionist, pacifist, and global reformer. His intellectual skills, international influence, and sometimes-quirky behavior informed and impressed the faculty, students, and community members gathered in Founders Hall, Davidson Hall.

Dr. John Tully, Interim Associate VP for Academic Affairs & Graduate Studies, opened the symposium and was followed by welcome remarks from CCSU President, Dr. Zulma Toro. She expressed pride in Central's connections to Burritt and his legacy of academic and public service.

New Britain mayor, Robert "Bobby" Sanchez brought greetings from the City of New Britain. As the city's first Latino mayor, he observed that Burritt respected all nationalities and championed human rights. Dr. Carl Antonucci, Jr., Director of Library Services, invited attendees to learn more about Burritt among the library shelves and other holdings.

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Dr. Robert Wolff holds a copy of John Loughery's book about Elihu Burritt.
photo credit Devin Geyer

Assistant Professor of Italian, Dr. Simone Puleo, sang an original, lighthearted tribute, *The Learned Blacksmith: An Ode to Elihu Burritt*. Dr. Gilbert Gigliotti, Interim Dean of the Carol A. Ammon College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, introduced the four symposium speakers.

Award-winning author John Loughery, himself a New Britain native, chronicled Burritt's values and numerous achievements. He also commented on how little recognition Burritt has been accorded despite his significant contributions to national and international affairs during his lifetime. Loughery later signed free copies of his book, *A Radical Vision: The Life and Times of Elihu Burritt, Abolitionist, Pacifist, and Linguist*. Loughery turned over his rights to the book to Central.


Mayor Sanchez speaks of fellow New Britain native, Elihu Burritt.

Dr. Robert Wolff, Professor of History, spoke about *Elihu Burritt in the United Kingdom*, observations from his research grant which included a recent trip to England. Wolff reported that Burritt was respected there for his positions on international affairs and human rights. Sherrod "Rod" Skinner III, a descendant of Elihu Burritt, presented The Burritt Family Ethos, from a Descendant's Perspective, observing that Burritt was a man of his time and also a man for our time.

Heaven Rich, a student from the Graduate Public History Program, discussed Elihu Burritt, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, highlights about the connections among these giants of American history and thought. Renata Vickrey, University Archivist & Special Collections Librarian, introduced poetry readings by Dr. Julien Strong, Assistant Professor, Department of English, and Dr. Eilyn Lombard-Cabrera, Assistant Professor, Department of World Languages.

Attendees ended the symposium with a reception of light refreshments and a celebratory birthday cake complete with an edible photo of Elihu Burritt.


Dr. Puleo performs his original composition about Elihu Burritt.

The Learned Blacksmith: An Ode to Elihu Burritt

- Simone Maria Puleo

They called him Learned Blacksmith, working metal from his forge,
but in his free time, noble pursuits he did explore.

He learned to speak of peace with every person that he met.
Heroes can be born in New Britain, Connecticut.

Elihu.

They say he learned to speak those fifty languages or more,
that he used to spread the word of peace around the world.

He always came back home to his hometown in New England,
where he's laid to rest in good ole, sleepy New Britain.

Elihu.

He's the Learned Blacksmith, working from his forge.
He's the Learned Blacksmith, hungry to know more.

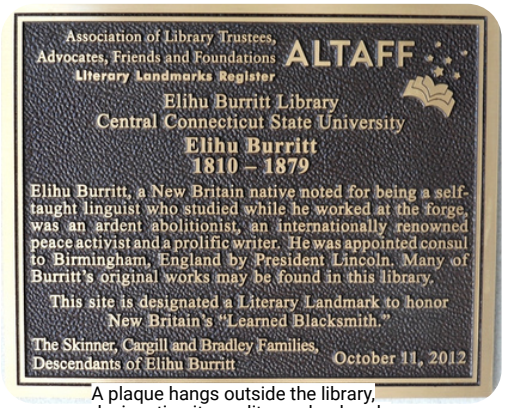
Elihu.


Dr. Antonucci encourages attendees to learn more about Burritt at the university's library.

To view a recording of the Symposium, go to https://tinyurl.com/Burritt-Symposium-215


Elihu Burritt's great, great, great grand nephew, Rod Skinner, talks about Burritt's legacy.

photo credit Devin Geyer



A plaque hangs outside the library, designating it as a literary landmark.


Graduate student Heaven Rich presents her research into Burritt's relationships with his contemporaries.


Library Friends, Central faculty, staff, and students celebrate the 215th Anniversary of Elihu Burritt's birth.

photo credit Devin Geyer

From the Director's Desk - Dr. Carl Antonucci, Jr.

The Burritt Library Team has just finished another busy academic year. This edition of our newsletter will highlight how our students, faculty, staff and community members find their joy at our library. From National Library week events, art exhibits, hosting a conference on Digital Humanities and the Burritt 215th Anniversary Symposium, the entire Burritt Library Team is continuing to provide programming, information literacy instruction sessions and credit courses to our internal and external communities.

The Elihu Burritt Library continues to serve the day-to-day information needs of all our patrons. During the summer months the staff and I will work on programs and initiatives for the next academic year. We will be starting to work on our digitization studio and rolling out an updated library website. I would also like to thank the Friends of the Library Board and the CCSU Faculty Senate Library Committee for all the work that they do to advocate for the Elihu Burritt Library as we strive to discover the true needs of the diverse communities that we serve both on and off campus. Throughout the pages of this newsletter, we highlight the many events that illustrate our continued outreach and collaboration efforts with campus and community stakeholders.

The Elihu Burritt Library is very pleased to partner with the Japanese Program in the Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures and to present the Japan Foundation traveling exhibit *Yokai Parade: Supernatural Monsters from Japan*, on view from June 23 through July 16, 2026, on the second floor of the Elihu Burritt Library. The exhibit explores the rich tradition of Japanese ghost stories and folkloric creatures known as *yokai*, which have fascinated audiences for generations and continue to influence Japanese popular culture today. The library supporters, students, faculty, and members of the community are warmly invited to visit and experience this unique cultural exhibit. Please see pg. 13 of the newsletter for a preview of the exhibit.



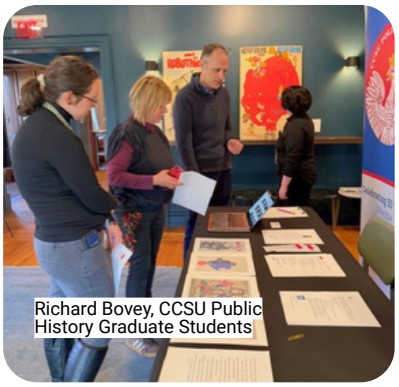
photo credit Devin Geyer

John Loughery reads from his book, *A Radical Vision: The Life and Times of Elihu Burritt, Abolitionist, Pacifist, and Linguist* during the symposium on April 22, 2026.

Outreach to the Greater Community - Renata Vickrey

The Elihu Burritt library is home to the Connecticut Polish American Archives and the Polish Heritage Book Collection, resources that support CCSU's nationally recognized Polish Studies Program. Reaching out to the community is a natural extension of the library's mission to preserve, promote, and share Polish and Polish American culture and history.

March 28, 2026: The Polish Heritage Celebration at the New Britain Museum of American Art
The Connecticut Polish American Archives is a repository of personal papers and organizational records, in addition has an extensive collection of Polish Posters. The poster collection is a good representation of post-war original Polish posters covering movies, theater, music, jazz, opera, dance, tourism, political, circus, exhibitions and some product advertising. The collection represents the work of leading artists from the acclaimed Polish School of Design and later generations of poster artists.
During Polish Heritage Day we presented several examples of the posters and shared information about the Polish Studies Program and the Polish collection at the Burritt Library.


Richard Bovey, CCSU Public History Graduate Students


Alicja Koszalka and Renata Vickrey


Dr. Karolina Kolpak, Endowed Chair in Polish Studies and Richard Bovey

From April 10 through May 15, the Elihu Burritt Library hosted an exhibit featuring works by artists from the Polish Society of Artists in Connecticut.
The exhibit served as an important example of the library's ongoing connection to the wider community and its role as a cultural and educational center beyond the university campus.
The Polish Society of Artists is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. The organization has been dedicated to sharing the beauty of art with both the Polish community in New Britain and the broader public. Today, PSA includes about ten artists of Polish descent whose work reflects both Polish traditions and the experiences of life in America. The exhibit brought many new visitors from the community into the library. This type of collaboration demonstrates how libraries can serve as welcoming spaces where academic learning and community life intersect.




Polish Society of Artists



National Library Week 2026 – Find Your Library Joy - Jillian Maynard & Gretchen Gallagher

What brings you joy? For National Library Week 2026 (April 20-24) we asked the Central community to think about what brings them joy while we celebrated all that the library has to offer. At our daily snack-filled Welcome Table, students told us what brings them joy, which included things such as their friends, a quiet place to study, being ready to graduate, and someone's cat!

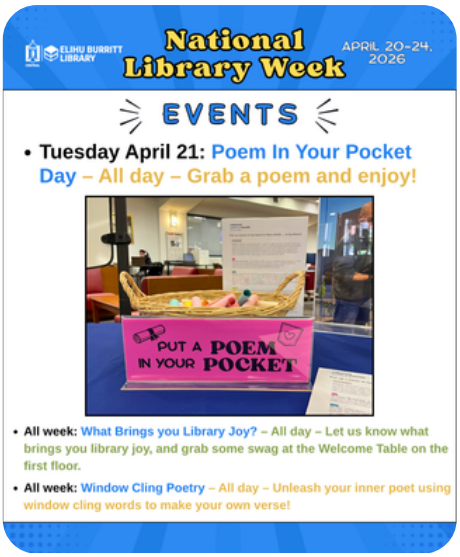


Students tell us what brings them joy at the Welcome Table during National Library Week.

We received almost 200 examples of what brings students joy, and posted a selection of responses to the library's social media accounts.



Students were also invited to create their own poems throughout the week using window cling word poetry on the glass wall behind Starbucks. Their creativity certainly inspired joy in the library! We celebrated students' right to read by surprising students "caught reading" with Starbucks gift cards. Students were encouraged to pick up "pocket poems" for National Poetry Month.



We advertised our National Library Week events on social media and digital signs in the library.

Window cling poetry was very popular. Students composed poems throughout the week.



About the newsletter's cover illustration: During the solar eclipse on April 8, 2024, a photo was taken of students gathered in front of the library for a National Library Week program. This photo was then uploaded to an app on the Canva website and an anime version of the photo was created! We used this illustration for our National Library Week promotional materials.



National Library Week 2026 – Find Your Library Joy - Jillian Maynard & Gretchen Gallagher

Students, faculty, and staff had a chance to get their pictures taken for their very own READ poster, a National Library Week favorite here at Central.



CLASS deans and staff

Former Burritt Library student intern, Ashley





Librarian Craig Guild



Central students Omri, William, George, and Cesar

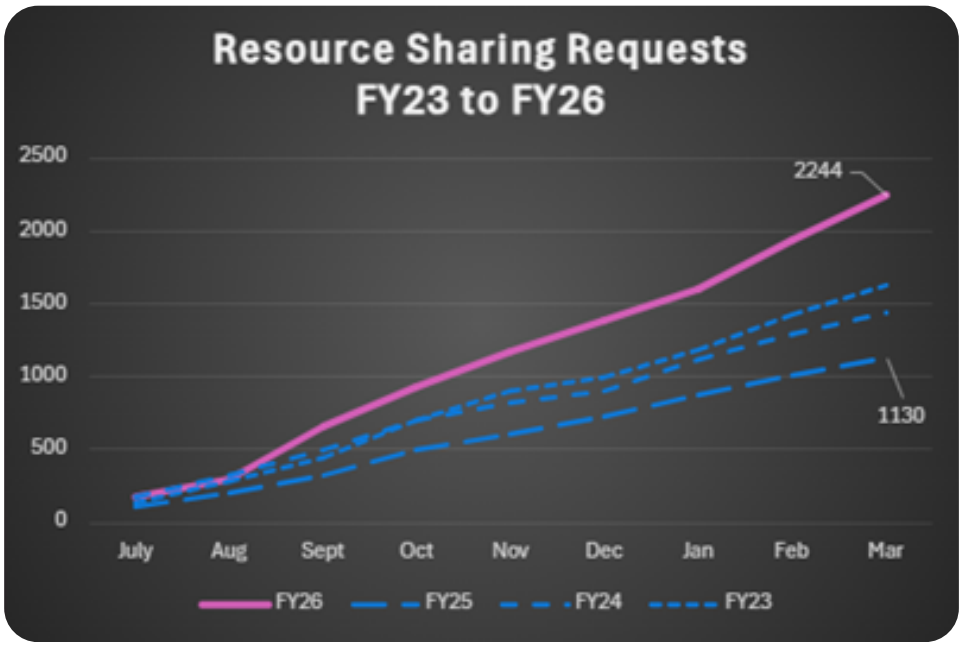
Graduating nursing students Angela, Yakina, and Jenna



We also hosted a Faculty Appreciation Coffee Hour to let our faculty know how much we value their support of the library and especially our students. The running theme of the week was certainly joy, inspired by our students and our Central community, Thank you to everyone who helped us celebrate our great library for National Library Week. Let's do this again in 2027!

Access Services Presents Resource Sharing Upgrades Statewide - Kenny Herniman, Alyssa DePaolis

Elihu Burritt Library's Access Services team implemented a new resource sharing process in July 2025, making it easier for our users to find, request, and receive items they need - while also reducing costs to the University. After working with and troubleshooting this new process for a full semester, and since our total number of requests doubled from last year, we felt excited to share what we learned with the greater Connecticut library community.



The Access Services team presented their successes and setbacks three times this year with the intent to:

1. show other libraries who may be overpaying for ILLiad that it is possible to successfully operate without it
2. spread awareness to other CT libraries that we are a free borrowing option for them and show them how to make requests.

The first presentation was for the CSCU Library Consortium Winter Retreat in January, and the second was for about 60 CT librarians at the Connecticut Library Consortium's Interlibrary Loan Roundtable in April. Finally, Access Services Librarian Kenneth Herniman and Alyssa DePaolis presented these changes at the Connecticut Library Association's (CLA) Annual Conference. The CLA presentation, titled "How Odd to See: Our Post ILLiad Journey", elaborated on why and how this change was made, the results of the change, and what it means for CCSU patrons and public libraries interested in borrowing Central materials.

To our delight, we've had several schools reach out about making a similar transition, and many others get in contact about becoming borrowers!

The 2026 Connecticut Digital Humanities Conference - Brian Matzke

On March 19-20, 2026, the Elihu Burritt Library hosted the fourth Connecticut Digital Humanities Conference. CTDH is an annual event where students, scholars, librarians, and museum professionals can share their work and learn how colleagues are using digital tools to preserve, teach, and research about history and culture.



Over 100 people attended the conference, making it the most popular CTDH to date. Attendees came from a variety of institutions, including Yale, Brown, Wesleyan, Northeastern, UConn, Mt. Holyoke, CUNY, NYU, and Villanova, as well as Central, Southern, Eastern, Manchester Community College, and Quinebaug Community College. The conference also boasted international presenters from the University of Toronto and the University of Genoa, Italy. The conference also highlighted the work of institutions outside of higher education, including the Bushnell Center, the Queens Public Library, the Connecticut Museum of Culture and History, the Connecticut League of Museums, the Pennhurst Memorial & Preservation Alliance, the Roxbury Latin School, and the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office.

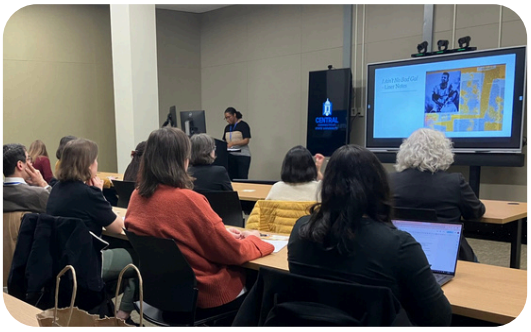
This year, the conference took place in the library building itself, and used our computer classroom as well as our proscenium hyflex classroom, allowing for interactive workshops and virtual participation in some of the sessions.

Highlights of the conference included:

- A keynote speech from Dr. Roopika Risam, Dartmouth Professor and editor of Reviews in DH, who spoke on the history of data and the uses of data in digital humanities projects.
- Demonstrations of valuable digital resources such as Connecticut Collections (a catalogue of digitized materials created by the Connecticut League of Museums), ConnCRIS (a map of historic resources from the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office), and Sourcery (a web app for requesting digitization on demand).
- Presentations about unique cultural histories of New England's Indigenous, Asian American, and Italian immigrant communities.
- Exciting projects that make history come alive using oral histories, GIS mapping, Artificial Intelligence, and Virtual Reality.

We are excited to announce that the Burritt Library will be hosting the CTDH conference again in March 2027. For news about upcoming events or to see pictures and videos of past conferences, visit https://ctdh.io/.







Photos from the CTDH Conference

Intern Reflections: Finding Joy in Library Work - Sera Montagna

The Elihu Burritt library has been a host site for many Southern Connecticut State University interns as part of their MLIS degree program over the years. It is a symbiotic relationship that allows experienced library professionals and technicians to impart their wisdom to young professionals who, in turn, bring an outside perspective through the lens of their current library studies.

This past Spring '26 semester I was fortunate to be an intern at Central to gain experience working in an academic library and it was agreed that I would visit several departments to get a holistic perspective. While the expected library tasks were part of the experience, what was really eye opening was the time and effort invested in constant improvement and innovation in every department. In the Access Services department there was a newly developed method for resource sharing, increased partnerships with other academic libraries for improved resource access, a big collection development project to improve alignment with the university and library's strategic goals, and significant steps made towards giving students practical work experience and opportunities to fully embrace the library as a partner in their educational endeavors. In the Research and Instruction Department there were similar advancements underway in updating frameworks to assess the current state of the library, practical research initiated to benefit the students and professors, ongoing professional development initiatives like hosting the CTDA conference, and again inviting students to participate in hands-on learning through projects like developing metadata creation methods for digital collections.

During my time in the Special Collections and Archives Department I also witnessed the outreach efforts to connect the university to the greater community such as welcoming frequent visits to the GLBTQ+ archives, a local artist display on the second floor, and the Elihu Burritt Symposium event. I was also given a recent donation, the Rev. M. T. Gorzela and Severina Zawistowski collection, to describe for the CPAA, or Connecticut Polish American Archives. In full disclosure, my SCSU studies did not concentrate on archival work, and I did not know much about Polish culture in America before this project. However, this collection was full of joyful discoveries that made me appreciate the history of Polish American culture, and United States history a great deal. I was particularly enamored with the preserved magazines, books, and correspondence that, in spending time with them, cultivated a sense of connection with the family and the historic events that were concurrently recorded throughout their lives. If I may add this final personal note, being open to new experiences and taking advantage of tangential opportunities may lead you to joy in learning. I have never regretted stepping outside of my chosen path to explore a new one for a little while and generally find these side quests end up supporting my main goal after all.

DNAP Orientation - Martha Kruy

On Tuesday, April 21st, the instructional librarians welcomed the newest cohort of CCSU's Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice program students to the library for an orientation on the library's services and resources. Craig Guild, Susan Slaga-Metivier, and I rotated through three different classrooms in the library to deliver instructions on navigating the library's website, the library's research guide for the DNAP students, and the ClinicalKey and PubMed databases.

The newest cohort is the largest in the past three years at 40 students, all of whom were eager to find a corner of the library's quiet floor to study!

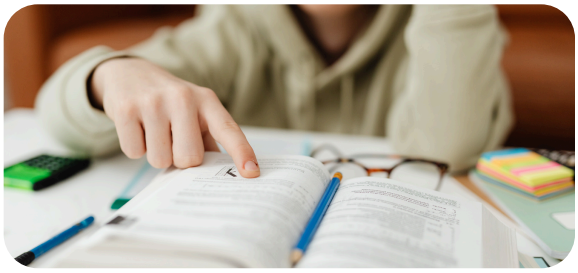
Literacy Across the Disciplines: An Exploration of our Students' Reading Attitudes and Skills - Martha Kruy

On Friday, April 24th, Julia Kara-Soteriou, Martie Kaczmarek, and I presented our research on CCSU reading attitudes and skills at the Next Gen Grant End of Year Symposium. Our mixed primary research methodology of student surveys and faculty forums yielded findings that echo much of what we have read in our literature review: briefly, many – though not all - of our faculty members are struggling to engage students with reading assignments, and that they believe students are struggling with reading engagement and comprehension as a result of social media distraction, weak literacy skills, and limited time to complete homework assignments because of family and employment commitments.

Our attendance at two different conferences on higher education (i.e., College Reading & Learning Association and the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)'s conference on learning and student success) resulted in our understanding that CCSU students are not alone in their reading issues and habits. The AAC&U executives could not identify any specific schools using their VALUE rubric for reading assessment; nor were we able to find any presenters addressing the decline in student reading abilities or time spent reading. We will be following up on possible partnerships with AAC&U to explore this topic at a national level--from research to building national conversations to expanding the use of their reading rubric.

The student surveys showed that the majority of our surveyed students self-report to reading well in their last year of high school, while our faculty report students' declining interest in reading as well as the ability to understand and retain information read for assignments in courses across the curriculum. Most of our students completing the survey also reported valuing the ability to read well and reading for pleasure (specifically for entertainment purposes, learning new things, and relaxation), though they do *not* value reading for homework or social engagement. Of those who value reading for pleasure, physical books and tablets were the preferred modes of content delivery.

Conversely, the faculty reported that students are also not reading in a critical manner for understanding and application; and, they are skimming the assigned text, thereby missing authors' hidden, implied, or unstated meanings, feelings, or intentions. Additionally, they see students using generative AI to do the reading for them. Stamina and persistence in reading longer texts and/or source materials with unfamiliar vocabulary have declined, as demonstrated by students giving up the task of reading texts that are longer, more difficult, or containing unfamiliar vocabulary. Faculty are adapting their coursework to help students succeed academically, but they worry they are enabling students' poor reading habits and skills, rather than addressing the underlying issues.



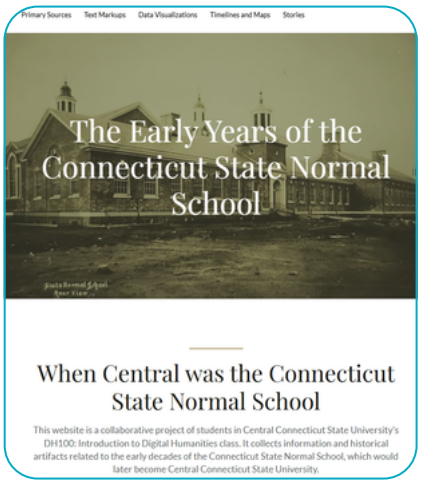
Pending funding to our research for the 2026-2027 academic year by the CCSU Next Generation of Student Success, Diversity, Innovation, and Community Engagement grant, our next steps will be to recruit two different faculty groups for the fall 2026 semester. The first group will create in-class strategies for reengaging students in reading college-level texts across the curriculum and then design workshops for interested faculty members for the spring 2027 semester. The second group will create a reading assessment instrument and then align assignments to it to begin assessing our students' reading abilities in first-year and senior-year courses. Please contact Martha Kruy, Julia Kara-Soteriou, or Martie Kaczmarek if you are interested in participating in either faculty group.

LSC160: Information Exploration in the AI Era - Sharon Clapp

Given the pace of AI development, *LSC160: Information Exploration in the AI Era* – which ran in both the Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 semesters – was a blur of modifications, changes, and updates. OpenAI (ChatGPT's creator) initiated over a dozen model drops in the past year, while Anthropic (Claude's creator) accelerated its release schedule from every 4–6 weeks to roughly every two weeks in early 2026. Consequently, it's been a busy two semesters for both the instructor and the students. During that time, "thinking" models that rated more highly than prior, non-thinking ("fast") versions became standard while newer agentic configurations, like Claude Code, Cowork, and Design were adopted across many workplaces. The increasing capacity of these tools often misleads college students who rely on AI to uncritically use the outputs provided to them by large language models. Even as the models have improved, however, the likelihood of AI making up or being inaccurate about citations remains high. Students learn to "ground truth" AI generated citations with library indexes like CentralSearch and special AI tools designed for research such as Scite.ai. The library provides all CCSU students, faculty, and staff members with access to both CentralSearch's AI Assistant and Scite. In both semesters, students also engaged with topics such as AI safety, legislation, academic integrity, copyright, and mental health impacts of AI usage. Things moved quickly this year and it doesn't look like they're slowing down any time soon!

DH100: Introduction to Digital Humanities - Brian Matzke

DH100 provides students with an introduction to Digital Humanities tools and methods, including digital archives, website building, and data visualization. In Spring 2026, DH100 students collaborated on a digital exhibit about the early years of the Connecticut State Normal School. Students started the semester by scanning graduation programs from the early years of the school, then they conducted research projects about some of the historical context around the time. Their research projects included finding primary and secondary sources about their topics; creating timelines, maps, and graphs; and writing a final paper. The students' work can be found online at https://dh100.ccsulibrary.digital/.



LSC150: Library Research in the Digital Age - Craig Guild

The library ran two sections of the one credit course *LSC150: Library Research in the Digital Age*, in the Fall 2025 semester. One section had 15 enrolled students, the other had 14 enrolled students.
Susan Slaga-Metivier taught one of the sections and made minimal changes from the fall edition of the course. Craig Guild taught the other course. They updated a few assignments in the winter intersession that they felt helped the class flow smoother in an asynchronous environment.
Two sections of the course are being offered again this Fall 2026 semester for interested students.

2026 Elihu Burritt Library Research Award Winner is Announced - Susan Slaga-Metivier

The Elihu Burritt Library is excited to announce that Danielle Morris is the winner of the 2026 Elihu Burritt Research Award for her paper entitled, "Factors affecting hospital readmissions." She did a tremendous job and put a lot of hard work into her paper. If you would like to read a copy, please go to https://library.ccsu.edu/wp/uncategorized/research-awarded-2026/

SAVE THE DATE

Yokai Parade: Supernatural Monsters from Japan
Opening Reception
Tuesday, June 23
5 - 7 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE

All are welcome to attend an opening reception for the Japan Foundation special traveling exhibit "Yokai Parade: Supernatural Monsters from Japan" to be held on the second floor of the Elihu Burritt Library. Diplomats from the Consulate General of Japan in Boston including Consul General Seiichirō Takahasi will attend as special guests to provide remarks and also meet with Central administrators, faculty, and the greater community.

This exhibition introduces Japan's yokai (Japanese folkloric imaginary monsters) culture that extends to the present day through picture scrolls and nishiki-e (a multicolored Japanese woodblock print), as well as a diverse range of media, including toys and films.

Presented by the Japan Foundation, the Consulate General of Japan in Boston, the Burritt Library, and the department of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures (WLLC).



The cover of the event flyer for the Yokai Parade exhibit at the Burritt Library, on view this summer from **June 23 - July 16**.



The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons Picture Scroll (*Courtesy of the Japan Foundation of New York)*

Thank You TO OUR DONORS

Joy of Giving!

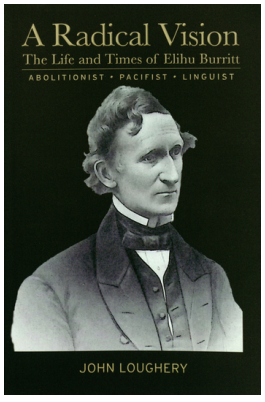
The Elihu Burritt Library team extends heartfelt thanks to all of our donors, supporters, alumni, and friends for your generous support over the years.

Your contributions make a meaningful difference for our students, faculty, and staff. We are especially grateful to everyone who supported the library during this year's Devil Double Dare campaign — your gifts were doubled!

Donations of all sizes help support our book budget, electronic databases, preservation and digitization efforts, exhibits, programming, and student-centered projects.

Thank you for believing in the mission of the Elihu Burritt Library!

If you would like to donate to benefit the Friends of the Library , please visit www.ccsu.edu/give and select the check box for the library.



For more information about John Loughery's book *A Radical Vision: The Life and Times of Elihu Burritt, Abolitionist, Pacifist, Linguist*, please contact Renata Vickrey at vickreyr@ccsu.edu or call 860-832-2085.

DONORS TO THE FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY FROM DECEMBER 3, 2025, TO MAY 15, 2026

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