

Fall 2016

## Founders Type Newsletter, Issue No. 60

Friends of NIU Libraries

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Friends  
of NIU  
Libraries

# Founders' Type



A Newsletter of the Northern Illinois University Libraries and Friends of NIU Libraries



## A Letter from the Interim Dean of Libraries

It is good to see a lot of students walk around campus this first few weeks of fall semester after a long quiet summer. The Libraries -- especially Founders Memorial -- are busy with requests, questions, and foot traffic. It is beautiful! Welcome to NIU!

Our previous dean, Patrick Dawson, left NIU at the end of last January to pursue a deanship out East. On behalf of everyone at the Libraries, I would like to thank him for guiding and leading our Libraries during seven years of a tough financial situation. It was not an easy task.

Many of you might have read or heard that every unit on NIU campus had to reduce their operational budget except for personnel lines for FY'16. The NIU Libraries' budget was reduced by close to 10%. This reduction tremendously impacted the library's materials budget during this fiscal year. Since serials (scholarly journals and databases) subscriptions could not be terminated without a strategically sustainable plan in that short a period of time due to contract restrictions, we had no choice. The monographic (books) side of the budget suffered the brunt of the cut. We now have had close to a year to plan some serials cancellations; subject specialists and academic departments worked together closely to complete this challenging task. Further cuts made in the next round of the materials budget will be more balanced between books and journals/databases.

Due to the state political situation and the state budget impasse, as well as low enrollment, NIU Administration has asked every unit to submit an FY'17 budget proposal with *another* 10% reduction excluding personnel. These financial troubles leave the University Libraries with the ability to buy fewer scholarly journals and databases and fewer books. This also impacts our interlibrary loan activities; more requests flow in from other Illinois institutions in the same boat. If NIU wants to be a strong research based institution, further trimming of the University Libraries collections budgets must be stopped. It will already take many more years for NIU to build up appropriate, beneficial research and scholarship collections due to the previous and ongoing cuts.

As the University Libraries struggled this past fiscal year, the Friends of NIU Libraries Board gracefully stepped up to help. They voted to contribute most of their money from their budget year to help the Libraries acquire books and some expensive materials for the collections, selected by subject specialists. We are so grateful for this generous gift from you, the members of the Friends.

The NIU Libraries will continue providing the best possible services to NIU students, faculty, staff, and community even during this tough time. We believe that information and knowledge are crucial to enrich our minds and the society in which we function. We hope that our state law makers come to realize that investing in our younger generations by funding higher education now is worth it. The education of today's students is deeply valuable to our shared future.

Chalermsee Olson  
Interim Dean, University Libraries

## Student Success:

### Text Mining and Library Cataloging NIU Libraries' Dime Novel Collection

During the spring semester of 2016, a team of Northern Illinois students (Marcos Quezada, a graduate student in Operations Management and Information Systems; Fredrik Stark, a PhD candidate in NIU's English Department, and Mitchell Zaretsky, a junior Computer Science major) explored text mining in the context of Northern Illinois University Libraries' large online collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century dime novels (<http://dimenovels.lib.niu.edu>). They sought to determine if text mining activities might increase the volume and accuracy of the work of library faculty and staff members cataloging these unique materials.

Dime novels are a form of inexpensive popular literature produced in the United States from 1860 through the 1920s, sold predominantly at railway stations, general stores, through the mail, and virtually anywhere else other than bookshops. Clothbound novels were sold for roughly \$1.25 per volume in 1860s dollars, but dime novels were sold for a dime, opening up leisure reading for the masses in a way previously not possible. They were the bestsellers of their time; the most popular characters and stories sold in hundreds of thousands of copies, and bestselling authors published within the format for their entire careers.

The original dime novels imitated the frontier stories of James Fenimore Cooper, and westerns were so popular that for a time the term "dime novel" became synonymous with the genre. Eventually, the cowboy and frontiersman made way for the detective and stockbroker, reflecting a more urban readership, but numerous genres were popular in the format, including piracy and seafaring stories, war stories, historical fiction, love stories, and even some of our earliest science fiction. Characters like Nick Carter, Deadwood Dick, and Frank Merriwell were at one time as popular and recognizable as Superman or Mickey Mouse is today, even spawning their own fan fiction.

The popularity of dime novels and the fact that they were sold primarily to children inevitably raised questions concerning their moral impact on young people. Anthony Comstock, Secretary and Chief Special Agent of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, waged a one man war against the format, destroying thousands of issues and even arresting publisher Frank Tousey. Disparaged and dismissed for decades as trash fiction, the dime novel was largely ignored by literary critics and historians for decades. A recent increase in scholarly interest in the materials can perhaps be attributed to the rising popularity of popular culture studies and the materials' frequent depictions of matters of race and gender identity. However, research libraries did not begin collecting them until long after they had ceased being published, which accounts for the gaps in available collections, as well as the many missing, torn, and yellowing pages. Northern Illinois University Libraries' *Nickels and Dimes* Project is an ongoing effort to preserve the dime novel and to make them freely and openly accessible to scholars and students.

The team worked in the format of an experiential learning activity, meaning that they addressed a problem brought to them by a client. In this case Matthew Short, NIU Libraries Metadata Librarian and Cataloger, served as the client. Drew VandeCreek, Director of Digital Scholarship at NIU Libraries, served as the team's official coach. Northern Illinois University's Digital Convergence Lab ([dcl.niu.edu](http://dcl.niu.edu)), a partnership between the University Libraries and the university's division of Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development, supported the team with additional coaching as well as technical and administrative support.

In the experiential learning format, the client presents the student team with a set of goals. Mr. Short asked the team to develop a text classification application or tool to help library catalogers to determine the genre of the approximately 1,900 digitized text in the collection. In traditional cataloging activities, the cataloger inspects a work manually in order to derive basic information necessary to catalog it accurately. This can be a lengthy process. Perhaps text-mining technology could help catalogers to improve the speed and efficiency with which they determined the genre of individual works in a very large collection.

Mr. Short's goals also included the compilation of a list of genres and related subject terms for possible use in reclassifying online digitized collections; investigating text-mining tools for the future development of the prototype classifier application and future studies of the collections.

The team began work by using Weka, an open-source data and text-mining application. Mr. Short selected it because it enables users to acquaint themselves with the separate activities that make up text mining and construct original applications using blocks of existing Java code.

Mr. Short introduced the students to a typical text-mining work flow. He had been working to achieve his goals prior to engaging with this group, and for all intents and purposes led the team's activities. The students began by gathering text files of digitized dime novels cataloged as belonging to the collection's better-represented genres. These genres included detective and mystery stories; western stories; sea stories; historical fiction; adventure stories; and bildungsromans (coming of age) stories.

The team next engaged in pre-processing activities to produce the most accurate text possible. NIU Libraries staff members originally produced the digital texts in the digital dime novel collection by the use of Optical Character Recognition software and did not attempt to correct any mistakes within them. Most of the digitized works included a significant number scanning errors due to the analog materials' age and the fact that they were purposefully manufactured using cheap paper and ink. Pre-processing began with the removal of stop words (such as the, an, and, etc.) and also included tokenization (identifying groups of characters as words) and stemming (reducing different inflections of a word to their root form) of words. We also used Weka to render the text materials as a bag of words (i.e., set aside grammar and word order) and transform words into vectors, or numerical representations.

The team then moved on to text classification. They began by using a set of already-cataloged works to train Weka to identify specific words or sets of words with the individual genres mentioned above. Of the algorithms available in Weka, Naive Bayes proved most effective. Team members found that in 65% of works examined Weka's classification agreed with that of a human cataloger. Investigating this discrepancy, the team found that the use of additional filtering techniques, including the use of TF-IDF (a process to determine how important a word is to a document in a collection or corpus); a better stemmer (the open-source product Snowball); a list of nineteenth-century stop words composed by Matthew Jockers, Professor of English at the University of Nebraska and pioneer in the use of text mining technology to analyze the period's literature; rendering all letters in lower-case; and setting the number of words in each text to be analyzed to 500 improved accuracy, i.e., Weka agreeing with a human cataloger's genre classification, to 75 %. They also discovered that a number of texts in the training set had been cataloged as belonging in two different genres. Removal of these works improved accuracy to 83%.

With the information above, Mitchell Zaretsky used Weka's Java API to construct an original classifier application. It reported the probability of a work fitting in one of the several genres. Working with a new test corpus of 214 digitized dime novels, the team found that their classifier agreed with human catalogers 71% of the time.

On the basis of this test, the team determined that their application can help catalogers to determine a dime novel's genre. It can also serve as an effective tool for evaluating the genre determinations of catalogers who have not used the application in their work. Team members also suggested that text-mining might prove useful in the cataloging of other types of library materials. Further research can address that matter. Finally, the team determined that their activities uncovered details about the form and content of works in NIU's digitized dime novel collection that invite scholarly examination.

**Drew VandeCreek, Director of Digital Scholarship, NIU Libraries**

**Matthew Short, Metadata Librarian, NIU Libraries**

**Fredrik Stark, Department of English, Northern Illinois University**

**Marcos Quezada, Department of Operations Management and Information Systems, Northern Illinois University**

**Mitchell Zaretsky, Department of Computer Science, Northern Illinois University**

## Thank you to our Life Members (donating \$1000.00 or more)

Adra Baker-Gallagher  
Paul & Jean Burtness  
Glen & Dawn Ericksen  
Deborah Erickson  
James Erman & Lydia Vitello  
Glen & Jamie Gildemeister  
Elroy & Urla Golden  
Deanne Holzberlein  
Samuel & Corinna Huang  
E. Nelson & Marilyn S. James  
William C. Johnson  
Yvonne Johnson  
Barbara & David Johnson-Wint  
Harriet Kallich  
Ron Klein  
Josephine Korcek  
Mike Korcek

Judith M. Looney & John Jefferson  
Scott & Kathy Miller  
William & Josephine Monat  
Carla W. Montgomery  
Charles & Mary Munroe  
Todd & Joanne Nebel  
James Block Pick & Rosalyn Laudati  
Ron & Barbara Provencher  
Gordon Rasmussen  
Lawrence Rast  
Larry & Judy Sill  
Sally Stevens  
Peggy Sullivan  
Rebekah Wilson  
Arthur & Pat Young  
Jerrold & Carol Zar



## A Note From the Faculty Liaison

The fall semester has arrived! While my spring semester was consumed by Program Prioritization, this fall has been eaten by all of the activities I postponed from the spring semester, as expected.

As you may note from our Interim Dean's article, budget cuts in the University Libraries have been particularly challenging this year. As a result, we have a slightly

reduced events calendar for the Friends this year. This frees up additional Friends funds to spend on library materials.

While we are pleased to provide our usual opportunities to socialize through the **Wine and Cheese** (now come and gone) and our **Ice Cream Social** (tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, May 4, 2017**), we are only sponsoring two guest speaker events this year.

On **Wednesday, October 19, 2016** from 7-8 pm in Rare Books and Special Collections, on the 4th floor, we are pleased to help present: Dr. Tin Laing Win, Associate Professor in History, Mandalay University, speaking on "The Art of Cartography in Ancient Burma." This event is co-sponsored with the Center for Burma Studies, the NIU Libraries Southeast Asia Collection, and the NIU Art Museum.

Please also save these dates for the spring: **April 24th & 25th, 2017**. While we're still working out the event details, New York Times Bestselling author of the Southern Reach trilogy (*Annihilation, Authority, Acceptance*) Jeff VanderMeer will be on campus, and there will definitely be a Friends-specific event as part of his visit. Jeff's visit is co-sponsored with the STEM Outreach program. He may be talking about the film adaptation of *Annihilation* currently being filmed, among other things.

We hope that you will join us for these excellent events.

Given the continuing challenges of state funding and dropping enrollment, the work of the Friends of the NIU Libraries has become even more vital to our ability to successfully provide appropriate research-level resources to our students and faculty. I hope that you will consider making your gift to the Friends of the NIU Libraries today.

Lynne M. Thomas  
Faculty Liaison

### Member Benefits:

Receive a 10% discount on merchandise at the following stores:

-Ed Ripp Fine Art Books, Chicago

Friends tote bags! {email (aschroeder@niu.edu) or call (815-753-8091) Angie Schroeder for details.}

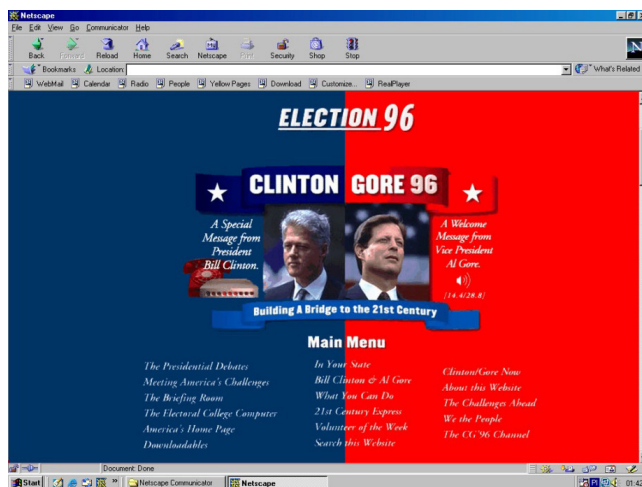
## NIU Libraries Help Preserve Our Digital Past and Future

Did you know that, in the past 4 years, NIU's University Libraries have been awarded \$770,000 in federal grants for research and education efforts related to the long-term preservation of digital objects deemed to be of enduring cultural value? Jaime Schumacher, Drew VandeCreek, and Lynne M. Thomas are the leaders of Digital POWRR (Preserving digital Objects With Restricted Resources), a multi-institutional program created with a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, currently funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In partnership with 4 other Illinois Universities (Illinois State, Illinois Wesleyan, Western Illinois, and Chicago State), the POWRR team investigated potential solution models for preserving digital materials at libraries and archives that are under-funded, under-staffed, and/or facing technology constraints. The preservation of digital materials is challenging on several fronts:

- The storage media on which the materials physically reside can fail or become out-of-date and unusable (e.g. floppy, zip, and Jaz disks)
- The software programs with which they were created become obsolete, making older formats unreadable by newer versions (e.g. WordStar and Lotus 1-2-3)
- The basic bits that comprise digital content can become corrupt over time (e.g. bit rot)
- Materials can be mismanaged, lost, or de-contextualized before being acquired by a library or archive

Consider this example of loss: In 1996, the first candidate to use the World Wide Web in his Presidential Campaign, William Jefferson Clinton, was elected. Due to a number of the factors listed above, all that remains of this historic digital artifact 20 years later is a screen shot of the homepage. The rest is lost to history.

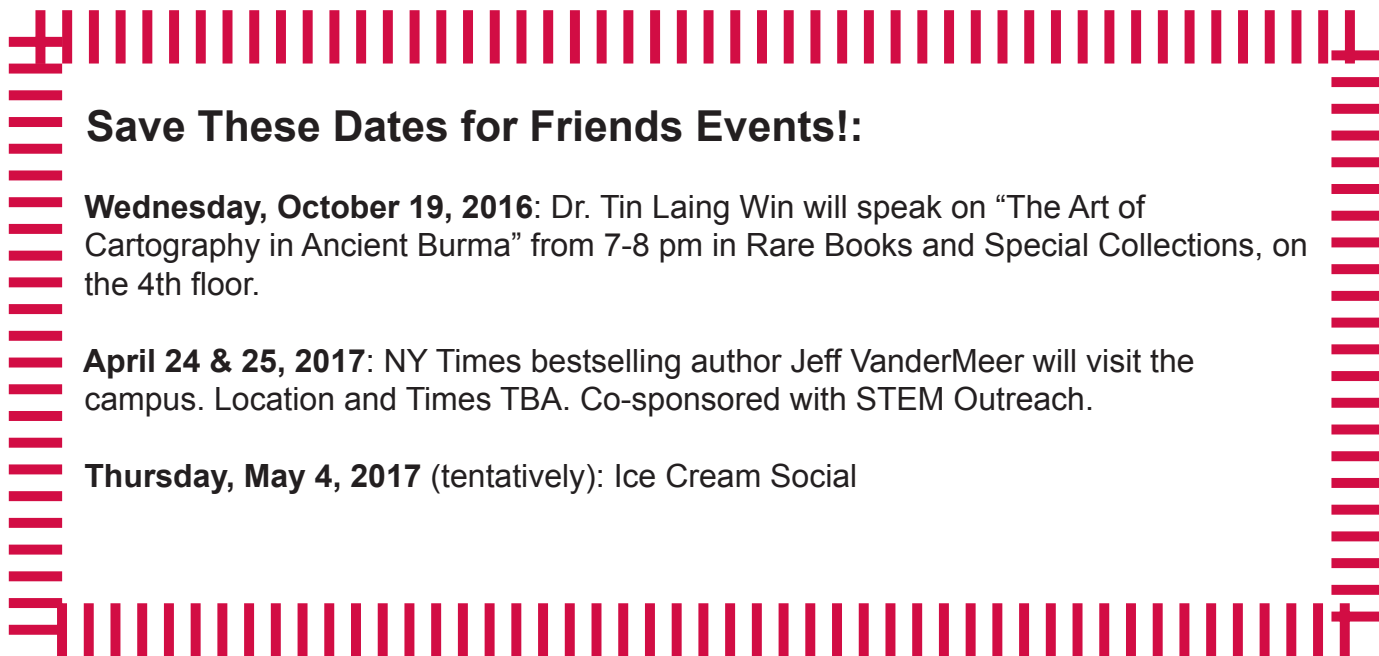


As more and more of our daily activities are manifested in digital objects (pictures, research, emails, committee meeting minutes, recordings, tweets, scholarly publications, newsletters, etc.), it is a point of pride that the University Libraries are on the leading edge of digital preservation research. In recognition of their efforts, the Digital POWRR team received the National Digital Stewardship Alliance's 2015 Innovation Award and the Society of American Archivists' 2015 Preservation Publication Award. POWRR also is active in the continuing education of librarians and archivists across the country. They have taught more than 25 digital preservation workshops in 15 states in the past 3 years, and the POWRR leaders are called upon frequently to speak at national conferences and symposiums.

Locally, the University Libraries are eager to apply their nationally-recognized expertise to the preservation

of NIU's digital heritage: the research and artistry of our students and faculty, the achievements of our campus community, the efforts of our organizations, and university records of enduring value. The Program Prioritization's Administrative Task Force stated in their 2016 report that there is, "...a need for a campus-wide system, policies, and resources for long-term access to, and digital preservation for, research produced by the university, as required by current and future federal grant agency data management plans (e.g. NSF) and the IL Open Access to Research Articles Act. This system should also incorporate electronic records created through the running of the university, as required through the Illinois State Records Act and NIU's Records Management Policy." (p. 67) Whether the impetus for preservation comes from government mandates or from professional obligations to ensure the future availability of historical artifacts, NIU's University Libraries is ready to help secure our digital past and future.

Jaime L. Schumacher  
Director, Scholarly Communications



**Save These Dates for Friends Events!**

**Wednesday, October 19, 2016:** Dr. Tin Laing Win will speak on "The Art of Cartography in Ancient Burma" from 7-8 pm in Rare Books and Special Collections, on the 4th floor.

**April 24 & 25, 2017:** NY Times bestselling author Jeff VanderMeer will visit the campus. Location and Times TBA. Co-sponsored with STEM Outreach.

**Thursday, May 4, 2017 (tentatively):** Ice Cream Social



## NIU Librarians in the News

Wendell G. Johnson, Head of Reference and Research, was recently appointed editor of *the Journal of Religious and Theological Information (JRTI)*, published by Taylor & Francis. *JRTI* is an essential resource for librarians and scholars interested in the literature of religion and theology. The journal encourages publication of scholarship in the field of librarianship as it relates to religious studies and related disciplines, including anthropology, communications, ethnic studies, history, LGBT concerns, philosophy and sociology.

JRTI focuses on various aspects of librarianship, including:

- production (including printing and publishing)
- dissemination
- user behavior
- storage
- retrieval
- preservation
- bibliography
- collection development
- instruction and information literacy
- digitization and multimedia
- special collections and archives
- history of libraries and librarianship
- censorship and intellectual freedom

Articles from recent issues include “Writing about Islam for Youth: A Study of Two Authors and Two World Views,” by Bernard Lukenbill, “The Protestant Reformation and Catholic Publishing: A Framework for Contemporary Understanding,” by Karen F. Sciaballa, and “Online Primary Sources in Religious Studies: Active Learning Exercises for Information Literacy Instruction” by Randall Studstill and Peggy Cabrera. *JRTI* is indexed in Academic Search Complete.

Wendell G. Johnson was previously editor of *Community and Junior College Libraries* and is currently editing *End of Days. An Encyclopedia of the Apocalypse* for ABC CLIO. He holds doctorates in theology (Ph.D.) and educational technology (Ed.D.).

FRIENDS OF NIU LIBRARIES  
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 3, 2016

RARE BOOKS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, FOUNDERS MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Meeting called to order by President Ferald Bryan at 3:33 pm.

Treasurer's Report:

The Principal Endowment as of 3/31/16 was \$381,463.

The Expendable Endowment was \$26,462. \$15,000 will be used to purchase materials (books) for the Library since there is no budget for materials at all.

The Operating Account currently has \$4,800.

Election of officers: President Bryan called for a vote to keep the current slate of officers:

Ferald Bryan, President,  
Gary Vander Meer, Treasurer  
Ruth Anne Tobias, Secretary  
Program Chair

At large members: Carla Montgomery, Drew Vandercreek

Slate approved by voice acclamation.

No Old Business

No New Business

Carla Montgomery moved to close the meeting; seconded by Ruth Anne Tobias



## A Tribute to Author Pat Conroy



It has always been difficult for me to take the time to read works of fiction. As an academic, my focus is almost always on dense treatises offering some new theoretical, critical or historical perspective in my discipline. When I take time to relax and read for pleasure, my choices tend, again, to be more nonfiction such as historical biography, military history, and political memoirs. When I read of the recent death of writer Pat Conroy on March 4, 2016, however, I was immediately reminded of my favorite contemporary novel, *The Prince of Tides*, published in

1986.

I first read *Prince of Tides* about a year after it was published based on a friend's recommendation. I had just finished graduate school and had accepted my first academic teaching position. The summer of 1987 was an important time for me to reflect on the past and to plan for the future. *The Prince of Tides* impressed me because of Pat Conroy's sensitive treatment of the central character, Tom Wingo. Wingo is an unemployed teacher from South Carolina who travels to New York City to help his sister, a poet, who has attempted suicide. When Wingo meets his sister's therapist, he agrees to enter therapy himself and slowly reveals his own deep psychological wounds. Conroy's depiction of Wingo—an insecure southerner often wrongly stereotyped by arrogant and insensitive New Yorkers—really resonated with me then and still does today.

The next Conroy novel that I read was *The Lords of Discipline*, originally published in 1980. I also read *The Water is Wide*—Conroy's first book, published in 1972. For those of you familiar with Conroy's works, you are probably wondering, "What about *The Great Santini*?" *Santini* is likely Conroy's most well-known work. Originally published as a novel in 1976, *The Great Santini* achieved even greater success as a feature film released in 1979 with Robert Duvall as Lt. Col. Bull Meecham and Blythe Danner as his wife. I made the monumental mistake of seeing the film version of *Santini* before reading the novel. The film I enjoyed, but Conroy's much more detailed treatment of an abusive, dysfunctional military family left me cold.

My reaction to seeing the 1991 film version of *The Prince of Tides* was just the opposite of *The Great Santini*. I still love *The Prince of Tides* as a novel, but I was sincerely disappointed in the film. My unhappiness with the film version of *Tides* is based on its casting. I could not relate at all to Nick Nolte playing the role of Tom Wingo. As much as I have admired most of her films, I also did not care for how Barbara Streisand directed and starred in the film as the therapist.

Shortly after learning of Conroy's death in March, I purchased a copy of his 2013 memoir, *The Death of Santini: The Story of a Father and His Son*. In reading this nonfiction work, I learned just how autobiographical Conroy's novels really were. He did major in English at The Citadel Military Academy in Charleston, South Carolina but also suffered the hazing and brutality as depicted in *The Lords of Discipline*. After graduation, Conroy really taught poor black children on a coastal island similar to his *The Water is Wide*. *Santini* is Conroy's dark and tense accounting of his life growing up in a much travelled military family.

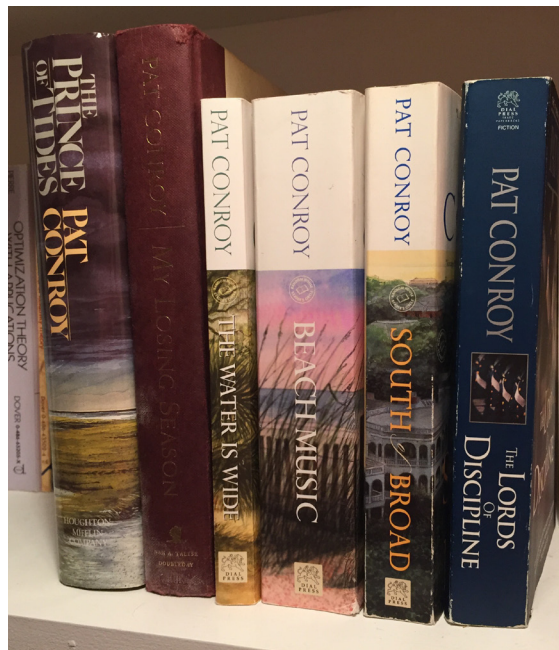
The unsuccessful suicide attempt of Conroy's real life sister formed the basis of his *Prince of Tides* and did lead him to enter therapy. Conroy, however, did not apparently have an affair with his

therapist. Of this novel, Conroy simply says, “it is the best” that he could do. I could not agree more with Conroy’s sentiments. Given what I now know was a very troubled personal life, I can only say, “Rest in Peace, Pat Conroy.”

Ferald Bryan, President  
Friends of NIU Libraries



Pat Conroy



Friends of NIU Libraries  
Founders Memorial Library  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, IL 60115

Yes! I/We wish to join the Friends of NIU Libraries at the following level:

- \$1,000 or more Life Member
- \$500 Benefactor/Corporate
- \$100 Donor
- \$50 Family
- \$35 Individual
- \$10 Student (Must show ID)
- Enclosed is a gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(installment plans are available for large gifts)
- Please charge to my  
 Visa  MC  Discover

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to Friends of NIU Libraries  
NIU also offers Payroll Deduction for faculty and staff

If a gift is in memory or in honor of someone, please include the purpose and the name and address to which acknowledgement should be sent.

Would you like any of the following brochures?

- Friends of NIU Library
- Ensuring the Future Trees Library Book Fund

Dr.  Mr.  Mrs.  Ms.  Miss  Mr. & Mrs.  Other

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State/Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

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Mail to: Friends of NIU Libraries, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115-2868  
Thank you for your support!