

Libraryinsider

Welcome to the University of Pittsburgh Library System's *Library Insider*. Here, we share brief updates on library spaces, services, programs, and people, and extend invitations to library-hosted events we hope you will find interesting. Thanks for reading!

In this Issue:

"The Archive I'm In": The Opening of the Sharon G. Flake Papers

Winners of the Three Minute Thesis Competition Held at Hillman Library

Hyland Archives & Special Collections Gallery Talk:

Chūshingura: Musha-e and Kabuki-e

Archival Scholars in Conversation

Save the Date: Pgh Book Fest, Co-hosted by the ULS, is May 30th

"The Archive I'm In": The Opening of the Sharon G. Flake Papers



On March 31, the University Library System's Archives & Special Collections celebrated the opening of

the Sharon G. Flake Papers. A University of Pitt alumna (English, 1978), Flake is a prolific award-winning author of children's literature. Her 1998 debut novel, "The Skin I'm In," explores themes of colorism and self-worth that continue to resonate with audiences today. In 2024, Flake designated the library to steward her life's work and provide access to her collection, which documents her literary career and professional activities. Archives & Special Collections displayed a selection at the event, including her picture books, young adult novels, books from the "I'm In" trilogy, a photograph of Flake and August Wilson with her winning story for his 1992 contest, and more.



Clare Withers, Curator of the Elizabeth Nesbitt Collection of children's literature, moderated a panel of Pitt faculty, including Professor Courtney Weikle-Mills, Director of the Children's Literature Program; Hebah Uddin, PhD candidate and children's literature author; and Professor Khirsten Scott, Director of the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project, who discussed the significance of Flake's writing and its cultural impact over the years.



Nina Giles, an English Literature senior on the pre-med track, is a 2026 recipient of the Archival Scholars Research Award (ASRA). Alongside her ASRA faculty mentor, Professor Rachel Maley, Giles discussed her research on the critical reception of Flake's "The Skin I'm In."



In her closing statements, Flake reflected on growing up in her Philadelphia neighborhood, on the community she's building here in Pittsburgh, and the library she's entrusted with her literacy legacy. We invite you to explore her work alongside collections from other African American writers such as Bebe Moore Campbell, Albert French, and August Wilson.

Winners of the Three Minute Thesis Competition Held at Hillman Library

The ULS hosted Pitt's Three Minute Thesis Competition (3MT) on April 6. The competition celebrates the exciting research conducted by PhD students and cultivates their academic, presentation, and research communication skills. It tests their ability to explain their research effectively in three minutes to a non-specialist audience. And where better to host than at the library? We are a cross-disciplinary, valuable resource to students at all stages of their academic careers, and the renovated Hillman is an inspiring place where ideas come to life!



From left to right, the 3MT awardees are Alireza Mohammadzadeh, Runner-Up, Keith Kaufman, Runner-Up and People's Choice, and Youjia Wang, First Place.

Learn more about the competition and other finalists [here](#), and come and find your inspiration whenever we are open.

Hyland Archives & Special Collections Gallery Talk: Chūshingura: Musha-e and Kabuki-e



On March 27, Japanese Studies Librarian Hiroyuki Good gave a talk in the Hyland Gallery about the exhibit *Chūshingura: Musha-e and Kabuki-e*, which explores a famous revenge story known as the Akō Incident (1701-1703), in which 47 *rōnin* (lordless samurai) avenged their lord *Asano Takumi no Kami*.



This classic tale of vengeance inspired the 1748 Kabuki play "Kanadehon Chūshingura," which became one of Japan's most enduring theatrical works. Featuring *musha-e* (warrior prints) of the 47 *rōnin* from the [Barry Rosensteel Japanese Print Collection](#), and a complete set of prints from the [Japanese Theater Print Collection](#), the exhibit highlights the lasting cultural impact of this historical event in print and performance. Drawing on his deep expertise, Hiroyuki Good brought the saga to life surrounded by the library's rare treasures.



The exhibit will be on display in the Archives & Special Collections' Hyland Gallery until September. Stop by [anytime we are open](#) to see them for yourself!

Archival Scholars in Conversation



The ULS is home to distinctive collections that form the foundation of the [Archival Scholar Research Awards](#) (ASRA), an annual program offered in partnership with the Office of Undergraduate Research. These collections—spanning archives, manuscripts, music, rare books, and other special collections—offer undergraduates access to unique materials unavailable anywhere else. Awardees receive a stipend and specialized research mentorship from both an academic faculty member and a ULS subject expert. Past recipients have conducted original research using [Archives & Special Collections](#), the [Frick Fine Arts Library](#), the [Center for American Music](#), and the [Finney Music Library](#).



On April 17, ASRA students gathered in the Thornburgh Room to share the research inspired by the collections. The materials used were a testament to the depth and range of ULS holdings: artist's books, feminist magazines spanning the 1970s to the 2000s, horror film scripts across the 20th century, and the Nuremberg Chronicle, among the most significant books printed before 1500. For many students, the collections revealed something beyond their primary content: notes and marginalia left by earlier readers, opening a direct line to the scholars, annotators, and curious minds who had engaged with these same pages before them.



Nina Giles discussed her experience researching the Sharon G. Flake Papers, where she encountered fan mail and correspondence that revealed the breadth of Flake's reach. Among the letters was one from a Japanese graduate student who translated selections from "The Skin I'm In" for her dissertation, a detail that crystallized for Giles how profoundly Flake's writing had resonated beyond its original audience.



Sharon G. Flake and Nina Giles.



The event closed with the awardees performing a ceremonial ribbon-cutting to launch the exhibit on our interactive digital wall showcasing their research. You can explore their research exhibit on the first-floor digital wall at Hillman Library.

**Save the Date: Pgh Book Fest,
Co-hosted by the ULS, is May
30th**

Save the Date!

May 30, 2026



Events begin at 10 a.m.

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh – Main (Oakland)
4400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213

What's in Store:

Free literary programming
for all ages

Locally and nationally
recognized authors
and poets

Hands-on workshops

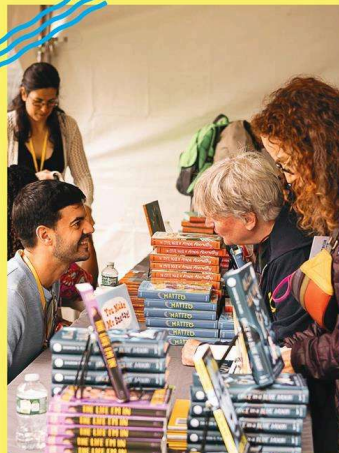
Independent bookstores

Literary exhibitors
and vendors

And so much more!



pittsburghbookfestival.org



The ULS will host several exciting events in Hillman Library as part of The Pgh Book Fest (formerly known as the Greater Pittsburgh Festival of Books), which will take place on May 30th with our neighbors at the main Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh in Oakland.

- Stop by our [Historic Pittsburgh](#) table to see treasures related to the greater Pittsburgh region, such as Andrew Carnegie's correspondence, the H.J. Heinz Company Photographs, and PPG Industries Records.
- Are you [Keen to Zine](#)? Learn how to create a single-sheet zine in the Text & conText Lab. We'll provide the materials, history, and context for zine-making.
- [Bookmark your Festival](#) with the ULS! This drop-in workshop will introduce the printmaking process, and participants will have the chance to operate our printing press to create a unique bookmark in the Text & conText Lab.
- Did you know that the papers of [America's "Agatha Christie"](#), [Mary Roberts Rinehart](#), are part of our digital collections? Join us for a panel discussion about Rinehart, a nurse from Allegheny City best known for her mysteries, who dominated the literary market in the early 1900s.

- [Connecting Pittsburgh through Storytelling: Children, Media, and Innovation](#) is a panel discussion you won't want to miss, exploring how mid-century broadcast technology and collaboration redefined storytelling on radio and television in Pittsburgh and beyond.
- Join Pulitzer Prize-winning author Daniel Kraus, who finished George Romero's incomplete manuscript, "Pay the Piper," using the [George A. Romero Archival Collection](#), as he discusses "[How the Night of the Living Dead Saved My Life and Changed the World.](#)"

Learn more and register [here](#).

See our [events and workshops calendar](#) to find upcoming programs of interest.

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