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TOP STORY

MCC marks rare art library anniversary

By Dawn Zimmer, Tribune Contributor
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Celebrating the fifth anniversary of Mesa Community College's rare art history library recently were Art Department Chair Ginger Leyendecker, left, and benefactor Dr. Carole Drachler. (*Special to the Tribune*)

Mesa Community College recently celebrated the fifth anniversary of the opening of its rare art history research library.

The Dr. Carole Drachler Library of Art History is a treasure trove of data critical to numerous college and community research projects.

Located at the college's Southern Avenue-Dobson Road Campus, the library is opened to students, faculty and staff as well as the general public in 2018.

It was built with a \$250,000 gift from retired MCC art history professor Dr. Carole Drachler and her husband, Dr. David Drachler, and consists of more than 3,000 art and art history books collected by the Drachlers from their world travels.

The collection includes rare items from the groundbreaking 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, also known as the Chicago World's Fair. Dr. Carole Drachler also donated 17,000 slides which were digitized and are currently available for classroom use.

An art history professor within the Maricopa County Community College District for nearly 40 years, Carole Drachler retired from MCC in 2009 after teaching there for 34 years.

Her classes were some of the most popular on campus, packing the lecture hall for each of the five class sections she taught each semester.

A past lecturer for the Arizona Humanities Council, Drachler considers the advancement of the arts in Arizona to be of paramount importance "to ensure that future generations may continue to enjoy and benefit from the well-documented pleasures and advantages of an art education."

MCC Art Department Chair Gingher Leyendecker said, "The library has become a major resource for anyone requiring in-depth research."

She said it "has offered not only a wealth of information but a space for students to gather and study."

"It is a welcoming, comfortable space and it is exactly how Dr. Drachler envisioned the space and its use. She wanted it to be a little treasure, an artistic experience," Leyendecker added.

Art History faculty member Lindsey Pedersen pointed out that students find the library to be a valuable and convenient resource for many class research projects.

"For students in the Art from Renaissance to Modernism course, the Drachler library offers hard-to-find materials for their portraiture projects," she said.

"They are required to gather information on specific artists and paintings to create and present a report to their peers and also to inform the portraits they create at the end of the semester."

Another course, Art from Prehistory through the Middle Ages, requires students to engage in a semester-long project researching a particular time and place to prepare a “Global Reporter” presentation.

Pedersen shared that a future proposal for a student honors project involves using travel guides in the Drachler Library to study the relationship between architecture and tourism throughout history.

Faculty also benefit from the library and its voluminous materials.

“Our art and communication faculty keep copies of their textbooks and related materials in the library so students can study them and consult books regularly to enrich their teaching,” she added.

“We are developing a teaching collection of visual aids and materials to enhance learning in our art history classes. The teaching collection will be available in the Drachler Library of Art History for all faculty to check out and use in the classroom,” Pedersen noted.

“Faculty appreciate that the library functions as a space for students to work with tutors, meet with instructors and collaborate on group assignments in the facility.”

Leyendecker said that because it is located in a building that houses communication and theatre departments in addition to art, it is often used for a variety of activities.

“Students in other fields of study do homework, practice speeches, and meet with their peers for study sessions.”

Library walls showcase mini exhibitions, from student-led ideas to artwork revolving around important dates such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month and Women’s History Month, among others, “Art elevates us. It makes us feel like we’re immortal. It opens up the world,” Carole Drachler said.

Added Leyendecker: “The space has taken on a life of its own, and is an important hub for learning and exchanging ideas. We will be forever thankful for Carole Drachler’s donation and service to our department and our college.”

The library’s hours are 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Fridays.

Information: [Mesacc.edu/departments/art](https://mesacc.edu/departments/art).