

December 2012

## Profile-Gracemary Smulewitz

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

(2012) "Profile-Gracemary Smulewitz," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 24: Iss. 6, Article 24.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6238>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

can raise fruitful discussion about the choice and organization of stories and the execution of images with ample material for analysis of artistic, cultural, economic, and religious issues. Themed courses, for example, classes which use environmental studies approaches to understand the middle ages, might use several different manuscript facsimiles. *The Hunting Book of Gaston Phébus: Manuscrit Français 616, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale* both describes and illustrates hunting techniques for prized game animals or herds for feeding large groups of people.<sup>14</sup> *Medicina Antiqua: Codex Vindobonensis 93, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek* is a recipe book for medicines with abundant illustrations of plants and descriptions of appropriate seasons and techniques for harvesting ingredients.<sup>15</sup> *Book of Beasts: A Facsimile of Ms. Bodley 764* is a compendium of information about animals, a bestiary, compiled from various ancient and late antique authorities with many illustrations and *Aesop's* fable-like moral conclusions.<sup>16</sup>

The editions listed above are all affordable, but these less expensive facsimiles have drawbacks and can additionally be difficult to locate. They are often radically altered from the original in size, material, method of construction, and binding, which limits the level of analysis an instructor can teach or require. Instructors will most likely have strong feelings about which manuscripts they would like to teach, but budget concerns may limit the library's ability to purchase the most "authentic" manuscript facsimiles. These facsimiles can prepare students to work with the real thing, if faculty want to arrange a capstone experience like visiting a manuscript repository. As a special collections librarian, I often work with groups from regional institutions who come to work with manuscripts in **Western Michigan University's** collections because their own schools neither have nor are likely to acquire any due to lack of funds, lack of expertise, or low priority for this type of acquisition. Knowing a class has some practice with facsimiles can be reassuring to a special collections staff, who may be concerned about unleashing a group of unknown undergraduates on the university's treasured possessions, particularly for a faculty member they do not know personally. The "home" librarian can often help reassure the host librarian of the preparation and reliability of the students involved until the faculty member establishes a relationship with the curators at the host institution.

Librarians increasingly strive to become partners in instruction, but that requires them to be aware of pedagogical innovations in the disciplines they serve and to develop creative ways to support them, particularly in interdisciplinary fields. The richness of the manuscript tradition is an integral feature of medieval studies, and these materials can intrigue students and stimulate classroom discussion, but few undergraduates have the basic skills to fully realize the benefits of working with handwritten

*against the grain*  
**people profile**

Head, Distributed Technical Services  
Rutgers University Libraries  
169 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Phone: (848) 932-6120 • Fax: (732) 932-8141  
<smulewi@rutgers.edu>

**Gracemary Smulewitz**

**BORN AND LIVED:** Born and lived in New Jersey but spent four years in Knoxville Tennessee. My husband and I now reside in Highland Park, NJ and have for 29 years.

**EARLY LIFE:** Raised in Fort Lee, NJ with two brothers.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** Member of **NASIG, ALA,** and **NJLA.** Have participated in many programs in these organizations and given many presentations. Currently President-Elect of **NJLA/ACRL/CUS.** Also member of **ALCTS/Continuing Resource Executive Committee** as Secretary. On a personal level — Member of Board of Trustees of Highland Park Educational Foundation.

**FAMILY:** Have three children — **Marietta, Henry,** and **Jon,** all married, and among them there are six grandchildren ranging in age from 1 to 13.

**PETS:** Two adopted greyhounds — Smarty Jones, age ten, and Ben Webster, age four.

**IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO:** Garden, Read, and Cook.

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** *The Stranger* by **Camus;** *Candide* by **Voltaire.**

**PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD:** Narrow-minded thinking.

**PHILOSOPHY:** We need to understand the environment we currently live in as well as where we have come from to understand and have influence over where we are going as a society and industry and profession.

**MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT:** Our department is recognized as a well run, productive department. Our success can be measured, in part, by the success of the staff. I try to cultivate critical thinking at all levels. It is not always easy, but it is very rewarding. As a result of our work, many of our staff have pursued MLS degrees and have mentioned that they are motivated by the work they are doing within the department. We are contributing talented librarians to the field.

**GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW:** Five years from now I hope that we can stabilize some aspects of the electronic frontier, particularly fair pricing for content and increased open access with favorable business models. I hope to contribute to standards in this frontier that promote discoverability and access.

**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** I would like to think that libraries and librarians are acclaimed by the larger institutional bodies, for their intellectual influence in the education of their community. That the larger institutions understand and incorporate "return on investment" not only from the financial perspective but, most importantly, from the intellectual perspective. 🍀



materials in other languages, a tension which Johnston characterizes as "student resistance and attraction to using rare books and manuscripts."<sup>17</sup> Instructors want to challenge their students through this kind of study because manuscript description and analysis involve the attention to detail, interdisciplinary thinking, and analytical skills that are among the primary goals of a liberal arts education. This approach can also lead to discussions on issues such as authorial intent, cultural change, the transmission of information, and the ways in which history and its artifacts are reinterpreted by

modern scholars, which lead students to challenge their assumptions. For librarians, these new trends in teaching illustrate the vitality of library collections at a time when much of the focus of the profession has been on the growth and promise of digital resources, and this work can provide stimulating challenges. Specialized collection development is an important tool to help instructors realize their goals for student achievement and to help academic librarians stay involved with the intellectual life of the departments they serve. 🍀

see endnotes on page 80