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Bibliophile

KU LIBRARIES
The University of Kansas

A University of Kansas Libraries publication for alumni, friends, and benefactors

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

A story waiting in the archives









Ken Stephens researching items in the Samuel L. Adams collection. On right, "Highways to Hope" series; Adams in 1964.

As memories fade and firsthand witnesses disappear, archives serve as a bridge to stories that might otherwise be lost. Retired journalist and KU alumnus Ken Stephens of Wichita experienced that reality firsthand while researching Samuel L. Adams, a former journalism faculty member. Adams' collection of papers was donated to KU in 2025 by his daughter Carol Adams Smith and is preserved at Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

Decades after graduating from KU, Stephens was surprised to discover there was much he did not know about Adams, a familiar figure on campus during his student years in the 1970s. A conversation with a KU Endowment contact in KU's school of journalism sparked Stephens' curiosity, leading him to spend hours in Spencer Library's reading room, where Adams' preserved papers revealed the depth and significance of a career intertwined with defining moments of the civil rights era.

Prior to his time at KU, Adams worked as one of the few Black reporters covering race and civil rights for a Southern newspaper. In 1964, he chronicled a 4,300-mile road trip though the South with his wife, Elenora, for the St. Petersburg Times "Highways to Hope" series. Undertaken just after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the series documented their firsthand experiences in a region in the midst of historic change.

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KU Reads common book program connects campus and community



Panelists Sarah Lamm, Rick Hale, Steve Hawley, Loral O'Hara, and moderator Giselle Anatol.

Each year, KU Reads: A Common Book Experience brings students, faculty, staff, and community members together through a shared reading experience. A partnership of KU Libraries, the Hall Center for the Humanities, and Academic Affairs, this year's selection, “Orbital” by Samantha Harvey, has inspired a series of programs exploring space, perspective, discovery, and humanity's connection to our planet.

This fall KU Libraries welcomed visitors to “Ad Astra: A Kansas Story Written in the Stars,” an exhibit highlighting Kansas' remarkable connections to space exploration, in Watson Library Haricombe Gallery. On view through December 10, the exhibit brings together artifacts from astronaut, KU alumnus, and professor emeritus Steve Hawley, and collections from across the university and beyond. During the September 10 opening celebration, Hawley shared stories from his NASA career and discussed his new memoir, offering attendees a firsthand glimpse into the history, wonder, and human experience of space travel.

On October 8, KU Reads welcomed home astronaut and KU alumna Loral O'Hara for “From Lawrence to Low-Earth Orbit,” an event drawing an excited crowd of students, faculty, and community members to gather in the Union Ballroom. O'Hara shared reflections from her 204-day mission aboard the International Space Station, bringing a lived perspective of life in space and the experience of viewing Earth from orbit. O'Hara brought the themes of “Orbital” to life in conversation with a panel of fellow Jayhawks — Hawley, aerospace engineering professor Rick Hale, and graduate student and aspiring astronaut Sarah Lamm. The discussion was moderated by Giselle Anatol, director of the Hall Center for the Humanities.

“I thought [the book] did an amazing job of capturing life in space on the space station, just the human experience of living there,” O'Hara said. “The space station definitely felt like home by the time I left. And it felt like home for the same reasons that Kansas felt like home, and that was mostly the people I got to be there with.”

The evening highlighted the power of the KU Reads program to connect literature, research, and lived experience in ways that inspire curiosity and new perspectives. ■

Watch at rockcha.lk/watch-ohara.











A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Every day, KU Libraries bring people, ideas, and possibilities together in ways that enrich our campus and community — and the stories in these pages offer just a glimmer of that vibrant and multifaceted work in action.

In different ways, each story in this issue is about leaving something behind for others. From preserving the legacy of a pioneering journalist, to exploring new perspectives through a common read, to showcasing student creativity, the libraries' efforts create benefits that extend far beyond a single event, program, or project. That same spirit is reflected in your generosity. Through your support, you help create these opportunities whose influence extends across our community today and opens doors for generations of Jayhawks to come.

Thank you for carrying these possibilities forward, and for helping today's discoveries, experiences, and ideas become future opportunities. I'm so excited to continue creating, together.

With shared fortitude,

Carol E. Smith
Dean of Libraries

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A story waiting in the archives

(continued from cover)



Stephens explores Adams' papers with Reference Coordinator Shelby Schellenger.

As profound as that contribution was, the archives revealed that Adams' impact extended far beyond a single acclaimed series.

> *"As I started following the little clues in the papers, finding out that he wasn't a one-hit wonder with 'Highways to Hope' he did all these other things. It was just an incredible career."*
>
> *-Ken Stephens*

Stephens realized Adams had documented some of the most consequential moments of the civil rights era, from the March on Washington to the struggles for racial equity across the South, leaving behind a firsthand record of a complex and pivotal period in American history.

As a journalist himself, Stephens recognized the value of having archival primary sources to illuminate a story that might otherwise have faded with time.

"Sam would have been 100 years old this year if he was still alive. The people he worked with are gone," Stephens said. "We're just running out of people to talk to about him, which is another reason why having these papers [at Spencer Library] is so important."

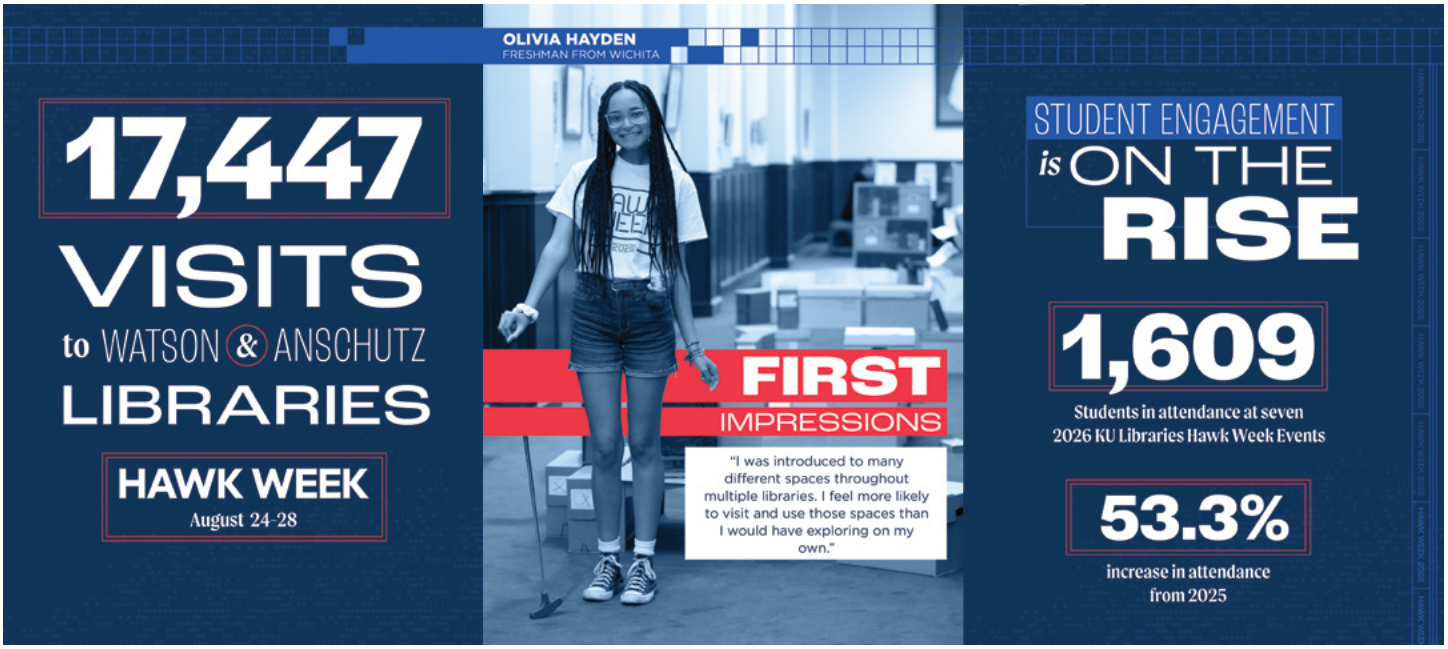
The project led Stephens to write a story about Adams and partner with KU Libraries to publish it on the "Inside Spencer" blog. That experience reinforced and made personal something Stephens, past chair of the Libraries Board of Advocates, has long understood, the essential work of libraries in preserving stories that future generations may one day need, study, or rediscover. He hopes others will continue to learn from Adams' story.

"If the papers weren't here, I wouldn't be doing this story," Stephens said. "There will be other people who are going to learn about him from reading the story. There will be students on this campus who are going to hear about it, who may come over here and want to go through these papers. And Sam will live on, and what he did will live on, because it's preserved here." ■

Read Ken Stephens' article at rockcha.lk/read-adams.

Stacked with impact

As students settled back into campus life for the fall semester, KU Libraries rolled out a full week of Hawk Week programming, designed to introduce Jayhawks to library spaces and services while tying into the university's broader welcome-back festivities. KU Libraries events gave students a chance to meet staff, explore campus spaces, and tap into resources that support both academic success and personal exploration.



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A canvas for creativity







A group of LibArt winners with their awards (top), Bella LeJuerrne accepting "Best in Show," and Michael and Kathryn Hughes presenting the Hughes Award.

KU Libraries' annual LibArt exhibition has once again transformed KU Libraries' spaces into galleries of student creativity, showcasing 228 works by 101 students representing 49 majors. From animation and graphic design to printmaking, painting, ceramics, and more, the exhibition reflects the many ways students express themselves beyond the classroom.

For many participants, LibArt is an important opportunity to share their work, build confidence, and connect with the KU community. Students from disciplines ranging from engineering and mathematics to journalism and social work displayed their creative talents alongside art and design majors, highlighting the breadth of artistic expression across campus. Seeing their artwork displayed in the libraries also creates a sense of connection and belonging for Jayhawks that extends beyond graduation.

"I've done the show the past two years, and it just makes me feel like I'm really connected to KU because I often see my artwork in the libraries," said Elliot McCurdy, an illustration and animation major from Wichita. "It makes me feel like I've left my mark on KU."

Support from KU Libraries donors Michael and Kathryn Hughes helps make LibArt possible through student awards and recognition. Their generosity ensures that emerging artists have opportunities to share their creativity with thousands of library visitors each year while enriching library spaces for the entire KU community. ■

Watch a recap video at rockcha.lk/watch-libart.



A NOTE FROM KU ENDOWMENT

One of the most powerful ways you can support KU Libraries is to champion it during the university's annual 24-hour giving day, One Day One KU, March 9-10, 2027, noon to noon.

Started in 2018, this 24-hour crowd-funding campaign unites Jayhawks across the state, the nation, and the world in support of the university and the areas that are most meaningful to them. Last year, KU Libraries raised $84,575 during One Day One KU, a new library record. It was all thanks to the generosity of donors like you.

This March there will be multiple opportunities to help KU Libraries top last year's record and continue its legacy of supporting the success of all KU students and faculty.

Be a One Day One KU Ambassador
As an ambassador, you can help spread the word about KU Libraries before and during One Day One KU, through methods you already use to stay in touch with your friends and contacts. Your voice can inspire others to give through email, text, social media, or word of mouth. We provide you with resources to make it easy, too. Last year, nearly 200 ambassadors inspired more than 1,400 gifts to the university during One Day One KU.

Fund a One Day One KU Challenge
Your challenge gift of $1,000 or more for One Day One KU can create impact, but also momentum as donors give gifts to unlock your challenge (for example, it may be unlocked once 20 gifts of $25 have been received).

Donate on One Day One KU
Your gift of any amount on One Day One KU makes a big difference. Your gift combines with those from other Jayhawks to strengthen KU Libraries' bright future. Your gift can also help unlock challenge gifts, making the most of every dollar.

Mark your calendars now and look for details about the 10th annual One Day One KU campaign in the coming months.

Thank you for your continued support of KU Libraries.

Rock Chalk!

David Byrd-Stadler
Assistant Vice President, Lawrence Development

To learn how your philanthropy supports KU Libraries and Jayhawk students, contact **David Byrd-Stadler** at **dstadler@kuendowment.org** or **785-832-7308**

Rising together



Danny Duong (right) with visual communications classmates.

When KU Libraries created The Kettle, a student-centered gathering space in Watson Library, the goal was to foster connection, belonging, and community. That vision took on a new form though a mural designed by student Danny Duong and inspired by the people who use the space every day.

A collaboration with students in KU's Department of Design, students in Professor Jeremy Shellhorn's visual communications studio were challenged to create concepts reflecting the identity and purpose of The Kettle. Through presentations, feedback sessions, and revisions, students gained real-world experience while contributing to a lasting part of campus life.

The final mural design features hawks, clouds, and native plants that create a welcoming and inspiring environment. For Duong, the project offered an opportunity to stretch his skills while making a visible contribution to the KU community.

> *"The mural definitely could not have happened without the help I received from everyone in the library."*
>
> *-Danny Duong*

Eighteen members of the libraries' community took part in the effort, from serving on a selection committee that worked closely with the design class, to employees who dropped in to paint a few clouds while taking a break from regular tasks.

All the work and collaboration has made an impact.

"I was able to spend time with students in The Kettle and it struck me how differently students respond to the space now that the mural is up," said Amber Ovsak, undergraduate engagement librarian. "And being able to share the origin story of the mural is almost as great as the mural itself." ■

Watch a recap video at rockcha.lk/watch-mural.

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LIBRARIES THROWBACK



KU Libraries' 2026-27 traveling exhibit, "In the Paint and on the Podium: Celebrating 1952 Jayhawk Basketball," will highlight the 75th anniversary of KU's first NCAA title and seven players who won Olympic gold led by Phog Allen, Dick Harp, Clyde Lovellette, and trailblazer LaVannes Squires. Explore the season through historic items from University Archives at Spencer Research Library.

Judith Harris Murphy, Chancellor Frank Murphy, and Phog Allen viewing a special edition of the University Daily Kansan, University Archives, 1952.

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