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Two Winthrop Fine Arts Professors Will Lead Study of Commonplace Books

Winthrop University

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Two Winthrop Fine Arts Professors Will Lead Study of Commonplace Books

Quick Facts

- During two weeks in July the scholars from across the country will research “Commonplace Books and Scrapbooks” as part of an National Endowment of the Humanities grant.
- They will explore how commonplace books - early attempts to manage and make sense of information - helped record lives, ideas, notes and bits over time.



Lucas Bransen's Commonplace Book from 1828

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Two Winthrop University fine arts professors received \$93,000 from the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) to lead 16 university educators in the exploration of the commonplace book, scrapbook, friendship album, and travel books in Asheville, North Carolina.

During two weeks in July the scholars from across the country will research “**Commonplace Books and Scrapbooks**” as part of the grant. They will explore how commonplace books - early attempts to manage and make sense of information - helped record lives, ideas, notes and bits over time.

Their descendants - the scrapbook, memory books, photograph albums, etc., and 21st century blogs - show a current time’s meaning and reveal an identity about an individual or place. Famous figures such as Leonardo da Vinci, Mark Twain and Susan B. Anthony created commonplace books and scrapbooks in their lifetimes. The group will explore previously overlooked materials in Western North Carolina collections.

Organizers said the scholars will create their own commonplace book as part of the experience. “We’re asking the scholars to find something memorable,” said [Laura Gardner](#), professor of fine arts. She and [Laura Dufresne](#), also professor of fine arts, organized this 2016

summer seminar for college and university teachers and chose Asheville because it has a history of strong arts and health communities.

They will be in Asheville from **July 17-31** to investigate the collections at **several locations**: Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina Asheville; Western Regional Archives, State Archives of NC; Buncombe County Library System; Special Collections at Mars Hill College; and private archives at the Carl Sandburg Home and Biltmore Estate.

The scholars will be sharing information about their findings in a traveling exhibit that will be in the [Winthrop Galleries](#) during the fall of 2017.

The Endowment is a federal agency that supports each summer enrichment opportunities at colleges,

universities, and cultural institutions, so that faculty can work in collaboration and study with experts in humanities disciplines.

Among other topics for the **23 seminars and institutes** offered for college and university teachers this summer are: Alexis de Tocqueville and American Democracy; American Maritime History; “Beowulf” and Old Norse-Icelandic Literature; Chaucer’s “Canterbury Tales;” Confucian Asia; Ernest J. Gaines and the Southern Experience; The History of Political Economy; The Land Ethic, Sustainability, and the Humanities; Mapping, Text, and Travel; Modern Mongolia; Moral Psychology and Education; Native American Histories and the Land; The Ottoman Empire, Europe, and the Mediterranean World, 1500-1800; Presuppositions and Perception; Problems in the Study of Religion; Religion, Secularism, and the English Novel, 1719-1897; Teaching the Reformation; Tokyo: High City and Low City; Urban Arts in Africa and the African Diaspora; Veterans in American Society; The Visual Culture of the Civil War and Reconstruction; Westward Expansion and the Constitution.

The approximately 521 **NEH Summer Scholars** who participate in these programs of study will teach more than 91,175 American students the following year.

For more information about the Winthrop project, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or e-mail her at longshawj@winthrop.edu.

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