Sam Kean, a bestselling popular science author living in Washington, D.C., is scheduled as keynote speaker at the annual Friends of Dacus Library meeting at 6 p.m. on October 5, 2015. His topic will be “Brains, Genes, Spoons: The Stories of Science,” in which he will talk about his three bestsellers.

Kean, whose wild, funny, spooky stories about science have captivated audiences across the world, is author of The Disappearing Spoon (2010), a romp through the periodic table; The Violinist’s Thumb (2012), an omnibus of all the stories buried in human DNA; and The Dueling Neurosurgeons (2014), an exploration of all the bizarre ways the human brain can go haywire. In addition to his books, Kean writes for several national publications, including New York Times Magazine and Psychology Today. He has been featured on NPR’s “Fresh Air” and “Radiolab.”

Kean’s books have earned positive reviews from the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Library Journal, and numerous other publications. Rachel Ehrenberg, writing in Science News, described his first book as “quirky, thoughtful, and thorough… From the Big Bang to ancient Greece to Nazi Germany and Gandhi’s India, Kean highlights the prominent roles of various chemical elements throughout history.”

Further details about Kean’s talk and the business to be conducted at the annual Friends meeting will appear in the next issue of this newsletter.
FIRST FRIENDS RAFFLE PLANNED

As everyone knows, at the election on November 4, 2014, the voters approved a constitutional amendment permitting charity raffles in the state of South Carolina. On November 17 the Friends of Dacus Library Board authorized Secretary-Treasurer Ronnie Faulkner to pursue plans for a raffle to be conducted by the Friends group. On March 5th, 2015, the SC Legislature passed raffle enabling legislation. The required registration for the Friends to conduct such a raffle was completed and mailed along with a small registration fee to the Secretary of State’s Office on March 23rd. Authorizations for registered organizations to conduct raffles will commence on April 4.

The Friends of Dacus Library plans, pending appropriate approval by the state, to conduct a fundraising raffle to raise money for the Friends of Dacus Library Endowed Fund. Plans are to raffle off a one-week stay at a beach house at North Myrtle Beach. It is anticipated that tickets will be in the $100 range. This will constitute a wonderful and cost effective vacation for some lucky winner at one of the state’s most popular beaches. Once everything is finalized, details will be forthcoming. Keep your eyes open for further publicity about this first ever Friends of Dacus Library charity raffle.

FRIENDS OF DACUS ACTIVE / LIFE MEMBERSHIPS FOR 2015

A significant number of persons have not renewed their Friends of Dacus Library memberships for 2015. If your name is not listed below, your membership is currently inactive. You may renew for the coming year by using and mailing the attached form. Please consider designating your gift for the Friends of Dacus Library Endowed Fund, which has an initial goal of $100,000.

Ashley H. Barron
Dr. Roger R. Baumgarte
Dr. Marsha and Mark Bollinger
Rick and Kay Carlisle (LIFE)
G. Byrnes & Alice B. Coleman (LIFE)
Caroline B. Cooney (LIFE)
Gloria J. Crank
Nancy Cornwell-Daves (LIFE)
Dr. Kelly and Beth Costner
Harry M. and Becca Dalton
Ian and Nancy Davidson
Dr. Luckett Davis
Dr. Ronnie W. Faulkner
Edmund J. and Pat FitzGerald
Janet Gray and Russell E. Luke (LIFE)
Dr. Mark Y. and Carol Herring
Clarence and Lynn Hornsby
Rick and Kim Lee (LIFE)
Simms M. and Doris Leitner
David and Judy Lyon
Ray and Sherron Marshall
Dr. Antje Mays
Joann Woods McMaster
Randy and Kay McSpadden (LIFE)
Paul and Cindy Nigro (LIFE)
Dr. Terry L. Norton
Louise Pettus (LIFE)
Joyce Plyler & Mark Horoschak (LIFE)
Dr. Marilyn S. and Roger Sarow
Dr. Spiro J. Shetuni
Dr. Mickey Taylor
Gale Teaster-Woods & Henry Woods
Baxter G. and Joyce Simpson
Dr. Jack W. Weaver (LIFE)
Ruth K. Webb (LIFE)

———Additional Gifts———

Deborah K. Lanius
Shirley M. Howell
It’s become something of a cliché to say that we in higher education live in tumultuous times. With the rise of MOOCs (massive open online courses), the disillusionment with the humanities, and the increasing cost of getting a 4 (or 5 or 6) year degree, only those living on an island or purposely trying to ignore the handwriting on the wall can miss these challenges. Adding to the woes of this litany of abuses is yet another new book touting the end of it all. Education specialist Kevin Carey cries doomsday with his The End of College: Creating the Future of Learning and the University of Everywhere.

It would be easy to dismiss Carey’s book as yet one more log on the bonfire of higher education’s ash heap. Certainly it isn’t the first, with Harvard’s Clayton Christensen’s “disruption” series coming out more than six years ago. Then there is Henry Eyring’s The Innovative University that appeared not too long after Christensen’s books, announcing the technological juggernaut that would wash over traditional colleges quickly and easily unless they changed. But why not dismiss these doomsayers? Higher education has been around for nearly half a millennium, modern higher education about a century. We have nothing to worry about, right? Think fiddling Nero and burning Rome.

Carey’s book is less a log on the bonfire of higher education and more a balefire, a warning that the dark night may not only be coming but is already upon us. Sure, it’s given to purple rhetoric, hyperbole, and not a few errors. Carey talks about “thunder lizards” in Silicon Valley ready to “hack” education and leave it in ruins, “charred carcasses” rolled by “advancing tank brigades.” What these hackers have in mind is nothing short of the Armageddon of higher education, the Day of Doom, the pis aller, the… well, you get the picture.

Still, Carey, like all those before him, makes some very good points. Getting a conventional degree costs too much, requires assumption of too much debt, and yields too little market value. After all, one can find some of the best professors online, so long as one is willing to look for them.

Carey also talks about the “frills” of traditional higher education: palatial housing, luxury wellness buildings, gorgeous campus centers, athletic facilities that rival the NFL, the NBA, MLB, and so on. Included among the “frills” he opines is another one that hits very close to home: sprawling libraries.

I cannot speak to any of the so-called “frills” beyond libraries, but to those I can speak. On the one hand, libraries are expensive to operate. While no one would ever call Dacus “sprawling,” it is not cheap to run. We are open 24/5 during the regular semesters, have over 100 databases, and a collection that hovers around half a million, give or take, all crammed into about 89,000 square feet.

But the fact of the matter is, and this is one fact that Carey and many others who write about higher education miss, no one could take an online degree without libraries like Dacus. None of the primary databases we take are free. They are all proprietary information that no one in the 99% could afford to buy alone, and few of the 1% would take them on as a debt.

Yes, much is online today, far more than only a decade ago. But much of the real scholarship required for a degree is still available only through subscriptions. And, believe it or not, not every book you want and need is online. Even those that are may not be available without access made possible via a library’s subscription to them. Furthermore, you may find the book you want, yet it may prove too unwieldy to read in an online format. While you may not need to go to a physical library every single time you need something, if you cut out those physical libraries, within even 24 hours, you’ll discover that in your rush to cut the costs of knowing, you cut out the heart of learning by mistake.

Carey and other doomsayers mean well. Higher education does need to look carefully at costs, does need to make more courses available online (especially those with small enrollments), and does need to take a serious look at any cost that cannot be fully justified. That kind of soul-searching will result in many changes, some of which will doubtless hurt. (Think of Sweet Briar College and its recent decision to close in spite of nearly $90 million in endowment!) But what Carey and all those calling for an end to traditional higher education often miss is that pointing and clicking isn’t all there is to

Continued on p. 4
learning. Putting wheels and a horn in a garage isn’t going to make a car. Furthermore, it won’t get you anywhere other than your garage. A bad hair day can be fixed by shaving your head bald. It saves money, and costs nothing. But it really doesn’t fix anything, and soon you’ll begin to miss even that bad hair.

Can higher education do better about controlling costs? You bet it can.

But is it time to put an end to it, along will the so-called “frills” of libraries?

Only if you wish to widen the gap between those who have and those who have never had.

Reflections on Reading…

Dr. Jane J. White, Chair

I just came back from a ten mile ride in the country with my husband on our tandem bike (it’s old and creaky like we are). Now, after all that refreshing wind on a rather gray day, I can snuggle up to a good book, all the while feeling utterly virtuous. My calendar says the Spring equinox is March 20, but I wonder if I have enough murder mysteries and historical fiction to last until all this rain ends.

It is curious, I suppose, to remember that when I was teaching (having taught for 49 years), I and many other adults worried that the “new” influence of television would result in children becoming more violent, not doing their homework, and even worse, not reading. I mourned the loss of that time when children were so enamored of a good book that they could not put it down and often read it with a flashlight under the covers.

I have changed my mind somewhat about the dire influence of television in exterminating the art of reading. And I have begun to think that it is a two way street. I hear young adults talking about reading Game of Thrones by R.R. Martin. The first thing one person will ask the other is 

“Where are you in the book? I don’t want to spoil it for you.” Once that has been established, there is hot discussion of characterization: “At first I thought Tyrin Lannister was so evil and had a cold heart but now I am starting to wonder…” Plot predictions are made and there is much discussion about how closely the TV series follows the books. There is one constituency that won’t watch an episode until they have read the book first and, of course, another that won’t read any of the books until they have watched it on HBO. Higher order thinking skills abound; some young adults have claimed that the Houses of Lannister and Stark represent a medieval civil war in Europe. And this same pattern of book to movie to television and back to “book tie-ins” can be found with The Hunger Games trilogy (2008-10) written by Suzanne Collins.

And now, because of an excellent movie my family just saw, The Theory of Everything (2014), we are all in the process of reading A Brief History of Time (2012) by Stephen Hawking. This, I believe, is quite a change of pace for me, but now I am beginning to understand several ideas that I never did before. This has led to me gently adding the world of non-fiction science with books such as Annals of the Former World (2000), a geology book by John McPhee; the 2014 edition of The Best American Science and Nature Writing by Deborah Blum; and In Search of Lost Frogs (2014) by Robin Moore.

I am very excited about Rudy Mancke, host of the award-winning public television series NatureScene coming to talk to us on April 14 at 6:00 pm at the Dinkins Auditorium on the Winthrop campus. I am currently writing a children’s book on ponds for the Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation and I have several questions on which Mancke can doubtless enlighten me. Bring friends and ask questions at the event. I look forward to seeing you there.
Membership Application: The Friends of Dacus Library (Mail to address in box below)

Name: ____________________________________________

Mailing Address: ________________________________________________________________

Home Phone No.: ________________________________________________________________

Cell Phone No. (if different than home no.): ________________________________

Primary Email Address: ________________________________________________________

Class Year (if applicable): ________ Relationship to Winthrop (check one):

  __ Alumni  __ Faculty/Staff  __ Friend  __ Parent  __ Student

Amount of Gift: ____________ If you would like your gift to go to the Friends of Dacus Library Endowed Fund (Check): ___

Levels:

Life (Individuals Only) $1,000.00+
Corporate (Businesses/Organizations Only) $500-$999.99
Patron $200-$499.99
Sustaining Member $100-$199.99
Member $50-$99.99
Winthrop Student $10-$49.99

If you wish to make a gift ___ in honor of, or ___ in memory of someone, please indicate whom:

____________________________________________________________

Name/address of person to be notified about honor/memorial in box below:

Make check payable to:
Winthrop University Foundation

Mail to:
Winthrop University Foundation
302 Tillman Hall
Rock Hill, SC 29733

In memo line of check write:
Friends of Dacus Library

Your contribution receipt will provide specific information about any benefit that would affect your tax deductible gift.