

By the Book

October 2012

David Barton Memorial Issue

This issue is dedicated to the memory of David Barton, who passed away in June.

David was integral to the creation of the Library and Learning Center at Metropolitan State University and he served as its first Dean. He was well known within the university as an advocate for students and community members. Many also remember his wit, humor, and vibrant ties.



David found great joy in traveling and gardening, combining the two interests as he visited gardens around the world.

David Barton Reflective Garden and Community Labyrinth

David Barton's legacy can be found in the design of the library building, and in the unique programs and partnerships that place the library at the center of much of what happens within the university and community. When David passed away in June, the staff wanted to find a way to honor him and recognize his indelible impact. We realized that the natural expression would be in a garden. David had many interests, and chief among them was gardening. David's passion for gardening was reflected in the garden sanctuary he carefully created and tended at his home.

As the idea for a garden on the library grounds evolved, we approached the Facilities Department and learned that this project complemented a desire to create a labyrinth on campus. While labyrinths have ancient roots, there has been a resurgence in the creation and appreciation of labyrinths. Modern labyrinths can be found at hospitals, prisons, universities, and public spaces around the world. Our labyrinth will be the centerpiece of a reflective garden that will be constructed on the library grounds.

Work on the labyrinth should be complete by the end of October (*see photo*). The garden surrounding the labyrinth will be installed next spring. The garden and labyrinth will offer members of the university and Dayton's Bluff communities a place of calm, peace, reflection, and beauty. As difficult as the loss of David has been, the stories from members of the university community about David and his work will find expression in the David Barton Reflective Garden and Community Labyrinth. It is difficult to imagine a more fitting way to honor David's memory and to embody his legacy.

An Open House to introduce the campus and surrounding community to the labyrinth will be held on Wednesday, November 7 from 4-5:30 in Ecolab (LIB 302).

Memories of David

The first time I met David Barton was when I was serving on the Metropolitan State University Student Senate. When I first met Dean Barton, I admittedly was a bit intimidated. He always seems very serious and no-nonsense. After a time though, I began to realize this was a man with a great sense of humor, a love for our university, and a true compassion for the Dayton's Bluff Community and Metro State students. Perhaps because his external demeanor was usually so serious, whenever he would laugh or smile at meetings it would make me smile, too.

Over the years Dean Barton and I worked on extending library hours to accommodate Metro State's adult students, textbook and bookstore issues, and search committees. Dean Barton always made time in his schedule to talk and collaborate with students.

In meetings, Dean Barton always treated me with respect. He always made me feel welcome and he made me feel that my time and contributions were valuable. Speaking as a student, our campus is a better place because of David's effort and attention. He is greatly missed at the University.

Melissa Heinz

Student Senate President, 2008-2010

What stands out to me was his compassion in advocating for our community patrons—especially our homeless population who found a haven in our library.

Sage Holben

Library Technician

Library and Information Services



David was a quiet yet passionate colleague. As a member of the search committee that hired him I knew he understood the mission of Metropolitan State but it was wonderful to see him in action. His focus and attention to details and his vision helped plan our beautiful library building where he encouraged space for students to work individually and together, where he championed welcoming spaces for the community, where his voice was crucial to encouraging the university/public library partnership, where he welcomed the Third Floor Art Gallery and where he insisted the library building showcase the beauty of the setting it was in.

As he built his library staff one of his greatest legacies is selecting librarians and staff members who understand the history of libraries and who have a vision of what the library future could and should be to the university. When you use the library or library services we all have David Barton to thank.

Maythee Kantar

Professor

Communication, Writing and the Arts



David and I shared a passion for travel. In any given year, he traveled to one or another part of the world, as did I. Upon return, we often compared notes, shared stories and discussed our new discoveries. He is one of the few people I have come to know who consistently maintained a deep sense of appreciation for the cultures and stories of people near and far. I'm honored to have known David Barton and to have called him a friend.

Daniel Abebe
Associate Professor
College of Individualized Studies

It's hard for me to summon memories of David without seeing neckties. Beautiful neckties. Maybe it's because I'm short and he was tall but it was his neckties that were always the first thing I noticed when David approached. David loved color and wore it with ease. Pinks and blues and reds. I told him early on in our friendship that I thought his ties made him appear accessible and friendly even when his face seemed to be telling me to go away. He laughed and then his face said, "Stick around." So I did.

As I got to know him better, we found we had much in common. I learned that he, like me, loved to talk about art. He had strong political convictions that matched my own and a deep love for his family. My favorites among his ties reminded me of Monet's glorious paintings of water lilies and gardens and I told him so. That's when I discovered our mutual love of gardening. He was an intentional gardener, which was in contrast to my unintentional gardening style. But we both agreed that gardening was as much about the journey as the destination and always a labor of love. I miss David. His friendship offered comfort on days when the work here at the university seemed overwhelming and unfair. I'd pass him in the hall or find him in his office; I'd see his necktie and suddenly we were talking about Italy. Five minutes later, the world seemed more bearable. I am thankful to have crossed paths with this interesting, gentle man.

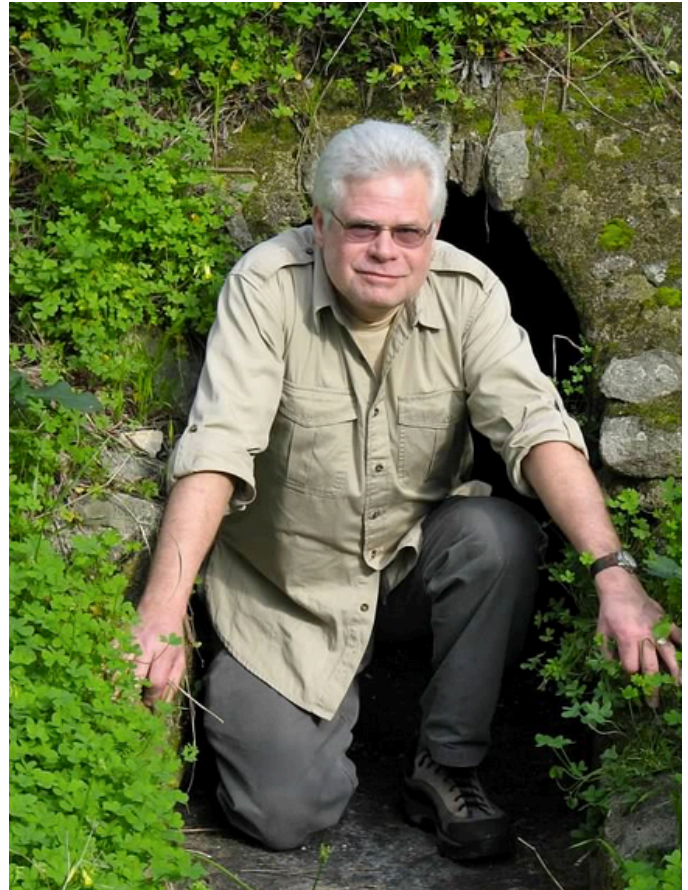
Nancy Bagshaw-Reasoner
Director of Facilities
Building Services

David's sense of humor was so dry that there were times I did a double take about something he said hours later. He had a way of dropping weird and edgy jokes into conversations right when you very least expected it. He loved classic art and books, but also embraced technology and new ideas, and pushed the library to move into the future. He advocated tirelessly for students and community users of the library, never afraid to butt heads with anyone over something he felt was important. At one point David went through a leadership retreat at the University where everyone had to divide themselves up into one of two kinds of animals that was supposed to represent their personality type. The group decided that they needed to create a third animal—a giraffe—just for David. It was because he liked to “stick his neck out,” but I imagine it was also because he was just the kind of person that defied easy categorization.

I miss David's leadership and I miss his colorful ties, I miss the way he covered all of our library documents in corny clip art, and I miss the flowers he would bring into his office from his beautiful gardens. And I will even miss his jokes. Actually, I will especially miss his jokes, because in the busy and sometimes overly serious world of the academic library, humor and kindness becomes as important as any other resource we have. He was a complex and unique person—and certainly the best boss I ever had.

Jennifer DeJonghe

*Associate Professor and Reference and
Instruction Librarian
Library and Information Services*



I think of David often and fondly, and never more poignantly than when I am sitting in a meeting and sure that everyone is thinking the same thing I am and not saying a word. At those times, I miss David, since we could always depend on him to voice what the rest of us only had the courage to think. He was such a breath of fresh air! And he is so deeply missed.

Nancy Traen

*Assistant to the Vice President
Academic Affairs*

Over the years I saw Dave feign shock as his associates not infrequently noted that he was not being PC in his comments. But what can you expect from a guy who got his news from the Daily Show. John Stewart like Dave is more concerned with truth than tact. Both these soul mates are eager to share the truth far and wide and if the truth hurts, suck it up folks.

The joint Metropolitan State/St. Paul Public Library in Dayton's Bluff is a tribute to Dave's ambition of providing easy access to truth to Metro students and to the Dayton's Bluff community. The building is a nice façade, but the foundation of the library and Dave's vision is giving access to truth so that everybody can sharpen their wits.

In the six years I worked with Dave at Metro State, he was always a champion of truth to power, which he loved to deliver with a big smile, a devilish twinkle in eyes, and an attitude of "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead."

Ed Malecki

Former Dean

College of Arts and Sciences



David Barton was a very special man and a very special Dean and I miss him terribly. Drawn to the same mission of empowerment and possibility most deeply embedded in the University's founding principles and vision, he checked his ego at the door, prioritizing people—both internally at the institution and in the larger community—and their advocacy over personal ambition. As a supervisor, David had the confidence and flexibility to recognize and encourage individual talents and strengths, understanding the rich rewards and benefits to the community as a whole in cultivating those professional passions.

His measured appearance masked a wickedly dry sense of humor—one of my favorite consistent memories was periodically walking by his classroom door when he was teaching (which he loved—I bet a lot of you didn't know that) and hearing rapid fire roars of laughter burst from the room—and a heart defined by a deeply ingrained compassion that underscored everything he did. David cared deeply about his legacy and the lasting impact he could have on the lives of all of those who crossed our Library's threshold.

He left us far too early, but he did so leaving behind an institution devoted to service and the greater good; in doing that he remains present and with us in every moment and opportunity to make our world a better place, and that is the true measure of man and a life.

Adela Peskorz

Professor Emerita

Library and Information Services