

Libraries Home

Articles & Databases

Catalog: books & more

E-journals

Research by Subject

Course Reserves

Library Pages A-Z

Images

KU ScholarWorks

» more Digital Collections

Hours

My Account

Request Articles, Books, ...

Friends & Benefactors

Suggestions



KU Libraries launch Vosper Giving Society, named for internationally noted KU librarian

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An inspiration to generations of librarians now inspires the name of the giving society that celebrates the generosity of KU Libraries' benefactors.

In the midst of a brilliant career, Robert Vosper (1913-1994) spent ten years as KU Libraries' director (from 1951 to 1960), going on to become an internationally acclaimed champion of libraries and earning a slot in the top 100 librarians of the 20th century. Now KU Libraries pays him tribute by introducing the Vosper Society, which honors those who demonstrate interest in and support for KU Libraries' purpose, vision and potential as an essential partner to scholarship at KU and beyond.

The society recognizes five giving levels, with baseline annual membership achieved with a gift of at least \$100 or a gift in kind made during the fiscal year. To join the Vosper Society, please visit www.lib.ku.edu/giving/vosper.

Membership supports KU Libraries in these essential areas:

Collections – preserving archival and rare items at Spencer Research Library and other collections now held at the Library Annex for future generations of scholars; and bringing new information resources, such as datasets, geospatial data, rich digital image collections and more to KU today.

Services – instructing students in how to seek out the best sources of information, answering reference questions and offering consultation to all who need advanced help navigating the information world, as well as helping KU staff and faculty contribute to emerging digitally based scholarship and publication.

Facilities – creating vital spaces within library buildings that welcome and support students, faculty researchers, and the community—and adapt to their changing needs.

Vosper Society members will be invited to attend private sessions with visiting speakers and special events to visit and learn about special features of the libraries. They will also be recognized for their contribution to KU Libraries, and for making a lasting positive impact on KU by supporting the collections, services and facilities of KU Libraries.

About Robert Vosper

Robert Vosper was named one of the top 100 most important people in 20th century librarianship by *American Libraries*, a publication of the American Library Association (ALA). The ALA lauded him “as a force for libraries and for the rights of librarians as partners in scholarly enterprise.... [H]is commitment to the library as an intellectual sanctuary was an inspiration to many.”

Vosper served as director of KU Libraries for a decade, shaping the collections with many of its most important acquisitions and establishing such innovative means to reach out to students as the Snyder Book Collecting Contest. He was especially known for his defense of intellectual freedom, notably mounting an exhibition on banned books during the height of the McCarthy era, doing so with strong support from Chancellor Franklin D. Murphy. That exhibition gained international notice, and more than 20,000 copies of its catalog were printed and distributed. It remains in demand and has been recreated in a digital version created by the libraries (<http://spencer.lib.ku.edu/exhibits/bannedbooks/bannedbooks.html>).

Vosper's contributions to the field of librarianship spanned more than four decades and included several national and international leadership roles. Among these achievements, he served as president of the Association of College and Research Libraries (1955-56) and helped lead the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions from 1971 to 1977 as chairman and vice-chairman. He received many awards for his work, including a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1969 and the prestigious Lippincott Award in 1985 from the ALA.

The importance of libraries in the fight for intellectual freedom remained a theme for Vosper throughout his life. “The Library is an open sanctuary,” he wrote in 1970. “It is



Robert Vosper

[Learn more about the new Vosper Society.](#)

devoted to individual intellectual inquiry and contemplation. Its function is to provide free access to ideas and information.... Since it is thus committed to free and open inquiry on a personal basis, the Library must remain open, with access to it always guaranteed.”

“Robert Vosper has been an inspiration to many librarians, at KU and throughout the world,” said dean of libraries Lorraine Haricombe. “At KU Libraries, we are proud to use his name to honor the growing group of contributors who continue to help us achieve excellence and support the success of the entire university.”

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