

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement

Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir

Clayton A. Lewis, M.F.A., curator in the William L. Clements Library, retired from active status on June 30, 2023.

Mr. Lewis earned his B.F.A. degree from the Swain School of Design in 1982 and his M.F.A. degree from the Parsons School of Design in 1985. Mr. Lewis joined the Clements Library in 2002 to manage the library's visual collections, retiring as curator of graphics in 2023. During his career at the Clements he was responsible creating the Graphics Division from a wide range of disparate smaller collections, and adding to it with strategic acquisitions of prints, photographs, sheet music, and other printed material. He was instrumental in facilitating the donation of visual materials valued at close to \$10 million.

Mr. Lewis is a respected authority in the fields of 19th century American visual culture, printmaking, and illustration. For over 20 years he has been an active member of the American Historical Print Collectors Society, of which he is currently the President. He has also been particularly active in connecting the university to the work of the Michigan Photographic Historical Society, organizing a series of co-sponsored lectures and internships that has spanned two decades. He has published numerous articles on early American visual culture, 19th century photograph, and the work of teaching undergraduates with primary sources.

During his career Mr. Lewis gave countless presentations on the library's collections to visiting classes, tour groups, collectors, and prospective donors. He enjoyed a reputation on campus as an enthusiastic collaborator with U-M faculty. Of particular note are two exhibits that Mr. Lewis co-organized. "Reframing the Color Line" (2009-10) included a major conference in October 2009. This exhibit used the library's visual collections to examine the origins of racism's visual vocabulary. "Proclaiming Emancipation" (Fall 2012) marked the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. This exhibit also featured a major symposium that brought leading scholars of slavery and abolitionism to U-M. After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Lewis launched two successful online exhibits focused on 19th-century American photography.

The Regents now salute this distinguished librarian and scholar for his dedicated service by naming **Clayton A. Lewis, curator emeritus, William L. Clements Library**.

Requested by:



Jon Kinsey
Vice President and Secretary of the University

September 2024