



**Nominee: Dr. Christopher Shaffer**  
**Troy University Libraries**  
**Troy, Alabama**

**Nominator: Judy Fulmer**

**1. Please tell us in 2-3 sentences why your nominee should win this award. What sets him/her apart?**

In the eight years that Chris Shaffer was director of the Troy University Dothan Campus Library, he transformed the role of our library at the campus, but also within the community at large. Through an active grant writing campaign, along with partnerships with entities throughout the city, Chris brought a wide variety of programming to the library that enriched the lives of numerous individuals, and gave them an opportunity to have learning opportunities that were often not only educational, but also impacted them frequently on an emotional and personal level.

**2. Please discuss how the nominee has helped you and/or others and made your experience of the library a more positive one.**

In 2010, Chris partnered with the synagogue in Dothan, AL, to bring a Holocaust survivor named Ann Rosenheck to speak at three of Troy University's campuses, and at other sites in southeast Alabama. Ultimately, she spoke to over 1,500 people, delivering a lecture that was filled with the horrors of the atrocities she experienced. The most important part of her lecture though, was her message of persevering in spite of adversity, and also learning of the remarkable power of forgiveness. What was intended to be essentially a history lecture, ended up being much more than anyone expected, with everyone who met Ann, myself included, being touched on a very personal and emotional level. The following year, because of the success of these lectures, multiple departments at Troy decided to work together to host a series of educational programs in what came to be known as The Year of Holocaust Remembrance. Chris, and the library again played an active role, and the yearlong series of events made a remarkably positive impact in each of the three cities where events were held: Dothan, AL, Troy, AL, and Montgomery, AL.

**3. How does the nominee make the college, community college, or university a better place?**

Chris' work in Dothan changed the perception of the role of the library within the context of the culture on Troy University's Dothan campus. Previously, the library had been viewed as a place that ultimately had a passive role. If faculty or students had a request, it was responded to. If people wanted to come by to study or conduct research, they could. That changed with Chris. He wanted the library to be an active part of the University community. He wanted the library to play a role that not only engaged the campus' students and faculty, but also engaged the Dothan community at large. He also encouraged the librarians to embrace their roles as faculty members, and become an active part of the academic community at the campus.

To these ends, Chris led by example, winning fellowships from both the Goethe Institute (2007) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2008) to study German culture and Japanese culture respectively. Following these experiences, he returned to the library to incorporate what he had learned into both the library's collection and the campus' culture. He achieved these goals in a variety of ways. Through book grants from several different sources, he increased the library's collection in terms of materials relating to Japan, which had been relatively weak. Grants from the Northeast Asian Council (2009) and the Nippon Foundation (2010) led to vast improvements in the library's collection on Japanese history and culture, and provided solid research materials for our students in the International Relations program.

Success often breeds success. While Chris was researching grant opportunities relating to Japan, he kept finding more opportunities for which to apply. In 2011 he received funding to expand the library's collection of materials on Turkish and Middle Eastern History. He also collaborated with two professors from the Education Department on four occasions in support of their summer reading initiative known as Summer Spectacular. This led to \$8,000 in grants from Target Corporation to purchase children's and young adult books. The library matched the grant, which led to the development of a children's section. It is frequently used by our education students, but is also used by members of the Dothan, AL community who have checkout privileges at the library. It is not uncommon to see parents reading to their children in this part of the library. These books have proven to be a resource for the community that also introduces many people to our University who otherwise might have never visited.

All of these activities made the library and its collection better. However, they also changed the perception of the role of librarians on the campus. In order to apply for these grants, it was necessary to collaborate with faculty members of the various departments that they related to. The end result has been that today teaching faculty in Dothan are far more likely to reach out to librarians for help, and collaborate with them on projects. In short, because of these various activities and interactions, the library is now a vibrant part of the daily academic life within the University community.

#### **4. How has the library, and the nominee in particular, had an impact on students and faculty and the teaching and learning process?**

Chris has impacted the teaching and learning process on Troy's Dothan campus by exposing students to ideas and topics that they were unlikely to learn about otherwise. Dothan is in rural southeastern Alabama, and there are relatively few face to face opportunities for residents to expand their worldview. He began, simply enough, by hosting a variety of film series. On three occasions starting in 2008, he hosted the

Tournees Film Festival, which is a series of current French films, and is funded through grants from the French American Cultural Exchange (FACE). For many viewers, these films were their first exposure to mainstream French culture. For each of the film festivals, there was an opening night wine and cheese reception, and while never particularly extravagant, this was a novel and exciting concept for many of the students and residents of Dothan who attended. In order to make the film series concept a year round program, Chris contracted with Film Movement, which allowed him to bring independent and foreign films to the campus on a regular basis.

Lecture series have become a mainstay of the Dothan library during Chris' tenure. Following the successful Rosenheck lectures, a variety of other speakers followed, often relating to exhibits the library was hosting. As a result of Alabama's history regarding the civil rights era, Chris tries to have programming relating to African American history on a regular basis, but particularly during February, which is Black History month. Some of his speakers have included, and expert on Black Cowboys, Mr. Mike Searles (2010), a documentary film maker and his subject, Ed Wood, who showed and discussed their film My Anniston, which detailed Wood's experiences during the 1960s. This year Chris hosted three films with support from the NEH and Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History with Troy history professors serving as discussion leaders. He also hosted an all day workshop for teachers this same month on teaching civil rights education in the classroom. The workshop was led by Georgette Norman, director of the Rosa Parks Museum in Montgomery, AL.

In 2014, Chris was kept busy with the NEH's Muslim Journeys initiative. All three of Troy's libraries received a set of 25 books on Islamic culture as a result of the Bookshelf grant from the NEH. The Dothan campus library also received funding for the Let's Talk About It book discussion series relating to Muslim Journeys. In an effort to gain as much community support as possible, Chris partnered with the synagogue in Dothan, as well as a mosque and a Presbyterian church. The result was an interfaith initiative that led to a series of constructive discussions in a friendly and non-threatening setting. A scholar on the Middle East, Dr. Matt Malczyk, of Auburn University gave 4 lectures with support from the Alabama Humanities Foundation, to provide additional historical context to the books being discussed. History professors from Troy led the book discussions, except for the first which was led by the leaders of the 3 religious institutions the library was partnering with.

### **5. How has the individual demonstrated leadership in the campus community?**

In August of last year, Chris was selected to be the new dean for Troy University Libraries, which gave him oversight of all three of Troy's campus libraries. He has quickly spread the types of programming that he was hosting in Dothan to our other two campuses, which has led to well attended lectures, film series, and exhibits at all of our sites. Consequently, students and faculty are frequenting the libraries more often than ever.