FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Time is Running Out!

The Chester Fritz Library holds the secret of its mysterious donor   
and the fate of the world hangs in the balance.

Anyone who has spent time on the University of North Dakota's campus knows it to be an enchanted place. A new novel takes this feeling to the next level.

*The Library of Chester Fritz*, is the debut novel by Professor of Political Science, Brian R. Ulacher. This daring and imaginative work hints that the power of the UND campus might go far beyond its well-kept gardens and collegiate Gothic architecture. Urlacher's novel traces the travels of former UND student and benefactor, Chester Fritz, through early 20th-century China and speculates that his experiences on this journey introduced him to a powerful, and dangerous, secret.

Chester Fritz's journal a version of which was published by the University of North Dakota Press in the 1980s and describes his work and travels in China prior to World War II. Fritz was born in Buxton, North Dakota and attended UND before heading to the West Coast and then abroad to make his fortune. In 1950 and 1969, Fritz made sizeable donations to UND which funded the library and auditorium that bear his name. Urlacher built from this manuscript and developed his story in a way that integrates seamlessly with Fritz’s own words. The result is a chimerical narrative where Fritz’s words, Urlacher’s story, and the landscape of early 20th century China combine to create a world where the line between truth and fiction is so blurry as to be almost indistinguishable.

Urlacher points out that Fritz’s journals themselves offer more than enough fodder for the imagination. He said, "I’m fascinated and frankly perplexed by Fritz’s choice to travel across China in 1917. He was utterly unprepared when he set his course through the heart of a civil war in which warlords, bandits, and crusader armies vied for every inch of territory."

In Urlacher’s novel, Fritz's mysterious experiences abroad become entangled with his monumental library at the heart of the UND campus. Urlacher explains that he was inspired by the Chester Fritz Library: "I’ve spent a lot of time just wandering among the stacks.  I’m not sure if other people experience this, but I get a static tingle in libraries.  Something about massing books, each representing a lifetime’s worth of experience, in such close proximity is powerful. There are so many stories about books being more than just pages, and libraries being more than just buildings.  When I sat down to start world building, there was never a question of where to anchor the story.  It had to be the Chester Fritz Library.”

Urlacher noted that something of Chester Fritz's spirit lingers on our campus, observing, "Fritz had this unshakable optimism, and it comes through in his journal.  He writes with an understated North Dakota humor, which is makes for very charming prose."

Like all books from The Digital Press at the University of North Dakota, *The Library of Chester Fritz* is available as a free download or as a paperback book from Amazon.com.

<https://thedigitalpress.org/the-library-of-chester-fritz/>

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