Crossing Cultures follows Living Library as the second major exhibit to fully occupy Bizzell Memorial Library’s fifth-floor Exhibit Hall. Comprising more than 180 volumes in 15 display cases, Crossing Cultures showcases rare books and materials from Bass Business History Collection, Bizzell Bible Collection, History of Science Collections, and the John and Mary Nichols Collection. Designed to coincide with the university’s hosting of the Mid-America Conference: Transnationalism and Minority Cultures in September 2013 (and ongoing through April 2014), the exhibit highlights the themes of cultural exchange and the transmission and transformation of ideas across centuries and across cultures. Geographies, travel accounts, and voyage narratives provide a glimpse into the exploratory encounters that shaped perceptions of places and peoples. A broad range of multilingual scientific texts, lexicons, and guides illustrate the material foundations for the transfer of knowledge across time and place.

Dozens of rare books from the John and Mary Nichols Collection are featured prominently in the exhibit, illustrating the richness of resources within OU’s special collections available to support a broad range of teaching and research needs. The significance of the linguistic aspect of the transfer of knowledge across centuries and across cultures is seen in the diversity of languages of the books in the exhibit. “Languages and Lexicons” (case 7) features several multilingual items, including Valentin Schindler, Lexicon pentaglotton (1612) and James Howell, A French-English Dictionary (1650). “Exploratory Encounters” (case 11) showcases travel narratives, diaries, and accounts of missionary efforts by women authors from the 18th through 20th centuries. Works on display in this case include: Maria Graham (Lady Callcott), Journal of a Residence in India (1812); Sophia Poole, The Englishwoman in Egypt (1842); and Amanda Smith, An Autobiography (1893).

Kariann Yokota’s book Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation was the focus of a panel at the September conference and provided inspiration for the selection of items for “Viewing America” (case 12). Books on display here include: William Winterbotham, An Historical, Geographical, Commercial, and Philosophical View of the American United States (1795), and multiple editions of Jedidiah Morse’s influential geographical textbook. Also featured is an important resource for scholars of American history - B.F. Steven's Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives relating to America, 1773-1783 (1889-95). Notable features of this 25-volume set are an extensive index, images of archival materials such as letters and maps, and translations of non-English language items. Volume 24 is open for viewing of an image of a letter penned in French by Benjamin Franklin, next to its English translation.

For more information about the exhibit and books, see http://guides.ou.edu/fifthfloorexhibits.