

Rare Books and the Common Good: An Afternoon

Speakers, invited commentators, and audience consider the past and future of rare books in our society

The Club has not yet determined how, when, or where to publish the morning presentations of the Caxton-Newberry symposium held on Saturday, April 12. In the meantime, the Caxtonian has decided to publish the afternoon's discussions because they touch on many of the morning's topics and introduce some additional ones. The following text has been heavily edited by Wendy Husser and Robert McCamant. For the full flavor of the event (including humor!), you should consult the DVD recording available from Dorothy Sinson or the audio recordings planned to be available from the "Chicago Amplified" section of the WBEZ web site.



Clockwise from top: moderator Paul Gehl, audience member Dan Hayman, and afternoon panelist Mark Dimunation.

Gehl: We asked this morning's speakers to address the past and present of rare book collecting. This afternoon we want to have a discussion, starting with contributions from three distinguished librarians who were in the audience this morning. It's a chance for them to comment on what they heard. We'll also give the morning speakers the chance to reply.

I am Paul Gehl, Custodian of the John M. Wing Foundation on the History of Printing at the Newberry; you heard about John Wing in the first presentation this morning. He's still paying my salary, and I thank him for it.

Our afternoon panelists represent three different kinds of libraries: Mark Dimuna-

tion is the Chief of the Rare Book and Special Collections Section of the Library of Congress, which is not only our national library, but also the largest library in the world. Joel Silver is Curator of Books at the Lily Library at Indiana University, a specialized special-collections library on a major research-university campus. David Spadafora is President and Librarian of the Newberry Library, an independent research library.

This morning we first had a chance to think about our own local history; as Dan Meyer pointed out, Chicago has been a place where we look for solutions. The

major book swap between the Newberry and the Crerar is almost inconceivable to us today, not just because of that \$8 million Audubon, but also because, although libraries cooperate in many ways, they don't often swap books. The Metropolitan Agreement has influenced how our collections have developed.

Ed Tenner's talk on rarity and its meaning has resonance for all of us. I was particularly happy to see those Hallmark cards; I've collected some for the Newberry and catalogued some because of their

curious colophons.

Francis Wahlgren gave us a completely different point of view, and I think one that we were privileged to share; very few of us ever get inside an auction house. His observations on changes in the book market are particularly important as we go forward in collecting.

Dimunation: What we've heard today revolves around the twin issues of collections and of condition vs. content. Dan's [Daniel Meyer's] talk

about the history in Chicago had a reminiscent feel to those of us working in academic or even institutional environments. The story of collection building is very often the story of donors and large collections creating the foundation.

With respect to Ed's remarks, I'm happy to say that at the Library of Congress we eliminate the question of defining "rare" by tacking "special collections" onto our title. That way, anything which isn't rare is special. On the other hand, when I was working at

See RARE BOOK AFTERNOON, page 2



CAXTONIAN

The Caxton Club, Founded 1895

C. Steven Tomashefsky, President
Adele Hast, Vice-President
Susan Hanes, Secretary
John C. Roberts, Treasurer
Junie L. Sinson, Past President

Council

Class of 2008

John Blew
Edward C. Bronson
Jill Gage
Barbara Denmark Long
Anthony Mourek

Class of 2009

Rob Carlson
Kim Coventry
Ed Hirschland
Wendy Husser
David Mann

Class of 2010

Dorothy Anderson
Don Chatham
Mary Ann Johnson
Philip R. Liebson
J. William Locke

Appointed Officers

Robert Karrow, Programs
Paul F. Gehl, Archivist
Hayward R. Blake, FABS Representative
Frank J. Piehl, Historian

Committees

Thomas J. Joyce and Dorothy L. Sinson, Audio Visual
Robert Cotner, Development
Kim Coventry, Exhibitions
Adele Hast, Finance
Ed Quattrocchi (Honorary Chair), J. William Locke, Dorothy Sinson (Co-Chairs), Friday Luncheons
Dan "Skip" Landt, Membership
Junie L. Sinson, Nobel Study
Susan Rossen, Publications
Edward C. Bronson, Web Site

Caxton Club Staff

Dan Crawford, General Manager

Caxtonian

Robert McCamant, Editor
Wendy Husser, Copy Editor
Robert Cotner, Founder
Kathryn DeGraff, Matthew J. Doherty, Wendy Husser, Paul Ruxin, Florence Shay, Contributing Editors

©2007, The Caxton Club. The *Caxtonian* is published monthly by The Caxton Club, whose office is in the Newberry Library. Printing: River Street Press, Aurora, IL.

RARE BOOK AFTERNOON, from page 1

Cornell University we wanted to add "special collections" to our name, but the board of trustees at Cornell said everything in the library at Cornell was "special."

And that brings us to Francis [Wahlgren] talking about books from the perspective of the market. For those of us on the other side of the reference desk it's interesting to hear people in the marketplace talking about books; it's a completely different world.

A few days ago, the Library of Congress re-launched and re-cast all of its exhibitions. Included in this is a project I've been working on for the last 10 years, the reconstruction of Thomas Jefferson's book collection. This is the collection that Congress purchased from Jefferson in 1815 to replace the Congressional library that had been burned when the English paid a visit to Washington. In 1851 a chimney fire in the Capitol resulted in two-thirds of Jefferson's collection being destroyed. When I was hired, I was given the assignment of reconstructing it. My boss thought that this should take about 18 months. Ten years later, we installed the Thomas Jefferson Collection permanently in a circle of 10-foot-high transparent bookcases, a reconstruction of the original Library of Congress.

So the LOC, like many other large libraries, got its start by acquiring a large personal collection, in this case the largest library in private hands in North America in 1815. And in fact, the Rare Book and Special Collections Section has a long history of receiving large, private collections. We have more than 100 separately-named collections.

Some of the collections we have: the Lessing J. Rosenwald collection of the history of the illustrated book, the Susan B. Anthony collection, the John Davis Bachelder collection, the Catherine Golden Bitting collection on gastronomy, the William Montelle Carpenter Kipling collection, the Dunscombe Colt Kipling collection, the Hans P. Kraus Sir Francis Drake collection, the Charles Feinberg Whitman collection, the Carolyn Wells Houghton Whitman collection, the Harry Houdini collection, the Thomas Jefferson collection, the National American Woman Suffrage Collection, the Russian Imperial collection, the Alfred Whital Stern collection on Lincoln. All of these were gifts to the nation except Thomas Jefferson's and the Russian Imperial collection.

Francis Wahlgren alluded to changes in the notion of philanthropy. Far be it from me to tell collectors that they have a cultural mandate to present their collections to the American

people. I understand the nature of collecting; I understand the market. The list I just read to you, which really shapes the nation's rare book collection, would have been impossible for us to acquire through purchase. Recently, what we have noticed is that major collections, those that 30 years ago would have been natural candidates for gifts to universities, ones that could have transformed entire academic programs, have been auctioned. A major collection on the history of science, several major Americana collections, a very important early printing collection, a vast English literature collection...all have gone directly to the auction block. Librarians are often hit with an old canard that people are reluctant to give their collections because they're afraid that they will just disappear. I want to say, "as opposed to when they're stored in a private residence."

But it *is* a canard, because many of us have embraced the notions of what it is to be a librarian in this day and age, which is about access, availability, outreach, getting out of the building and into the streets, and making sure that our researchers, many of whom are virtual now, have access to their materials.

Fundamentally, then, it comes down to a question of content versus quality. Thomas Jefferson did not care about quality. He was building a workaday collection. A second Dublin printing was fine with him. He wanted books to work with. Auctions, now, have built connoisseurship in collections. For those of us who have to build research collections for future users, this is a tough market. We cannot possibly afford to build such collections from scratch. I worry that the unique nature of the sources a collector has put together are going to be lost if they're sold piecemeal. As a collector, I love that they're going back out into the market, because it gives us all a chance to play again, but for those of us trying to build collections, I worry about the fact that these great efforts are being lost.

Silver: The fact that we can talk about these issues and actually have other people show up is remarkable.

What I think was reflected earlier is what has been termed the "world of rare books." In an earlier era, Gordon Ray saw a symbiotic relationship between booksellers, auctioneers, collectors, and libraries and librarians. At various times in the cycles of the marketplace one of these groups has the upper hand, the resources. The role that each of these individuals or institutions have shifts, but each continues to play a necessary part in this world of rare books. Collectors are under no obligation to collect; they can stop tomorrow, whereas an institution has a role in society to

maintain and preserve its collections. And the collector brings new ideas into this cycle; collectors can do things that institutions cannot. Collecting is usually a private matter; in an institution, even if the institution is private, the collecting is more visible. Where do the dealers and auctioneers fit in? Collectors can stop buying, but dealers



Morning speakers in the afternoon: Francis Wahlgren, Dan Meyer, Edward Tenner

and auction houses provide a market all the time. When a collector is ready to part with something, a dealer is there, an auction house is there. When a collector needs advice, he can go to dealers and libraries for advice. I think this relationship still exists.

But there are slow changes in what collectors collect. Most collectors tend to collect what everyone else is collecting. If you are collecting things other people are not collecting, when you have amassed a collection of things, the response you get when you show your collection is often not the response that you hoped to get. "I have collected 2000 romance novels. Isn't that wonderful?" There's a subtle pressure on collectors to conform.

There have been times when the trade and certain collectors have tried to change the way people collect. One instance is a book published in 1934, edited by John Carter. It was written by his friends, known then and now as the biblio boys, on new

paths in book collecting; he consciously tried to get people not to collect the same things. Among the new paths advocated were fields like detective fiction, or musical first editions, things that today are very expensive.

Some 50 years later, there was another anthology, edited by Jean Peters, called *Collectible Books, Some New Paths*, advocating collecting books that people had a hard



time accepting: non-firsts. This has so far been less influential. There is such an emphasis on firsts that going to something else is not easy. Another is collecting by publisher, picking an imprint. A few collectors are trying this and finding that except for a few expensive books, say literary first editions, most books from a

their keep. People can see exhibitions, but looking at things in glass cases is not the same as being able to handle a book, see it as a book rather than an object revered for a reason that they can't quite fathom. [Lawrence Clark] Powell laid the blame for the lack of understanding not on the books themselves, but on librarians. He echoed John Milton when he said books are not dead things, but it was his observation that in the case of rare books, their custodians

often are. This is a change, because in 1939 the idea of having rare books was to have them, in most institutions, rather than to do anything with them.

Spadafora: I really am here because of my title. In fact, my real experience, after only two years at

the Newberry Library, is as a reader, not a librarian. So some of what I say may reflect that prejudice. Dan's fine talk, from which I learned a lot about the collecting enterprise in Chicago cultural institutions in the late 19th century and the early 20th century, pointed us very squarely at the Metropolitan Agreement. But I want to share that the interest in institutions working together here in the city is alive and well.

Right now, there is a group called the Chicago Collections Consortium, initiated out of a conversation between Mary Case, the recently arrived director of the libraries of the University of Illinois at Chicago, and me. This has then been expanded to the directors of universities and other libraries in this town. We're in the final stages of a proposal we hope will lead to a planning grant allowing us to craft what we're calling a "Chicago Portal," a consolidated Web gateway to archive materials that relate to Chicago. So the spirit of cooperation continues.

Nobody is talking about trading any materials. But for some time, under the leadership of Paul Sanger, the Newberry has been making joint purchases with universities in the Midwest. The collaborative spirit Dan was talking about continues.

Turning to Edward's talk, I fundamentally agree with his sense of the meaning of rare, but to rare I usually add "important."

See *RARE BOOK AFTERNOON*, page 4

CAXTONIAN, JULY 2008

Important for what? That's the question. Important makes rare something more than just "not many." This evolves for fortuitous reasons, but also because of changing perceptions of what scholars want.

In Dan's talk we heard a very important reminder that we want to stimulate young people to think about books, rare books, and collecting. I wonder how many people in this room began their collecting toward the end of high school, or in college?

With regard to Francis's very stimulating, amusing talk, I'd like to connect the point I just made and ask him a question about the backgrounds of the people out there doing that collecting now. Are these people who have collected for some decades, long before they had money at their disposal? How have they come to their collecting? Is it because for a while they found themselves priced out of the art market, or have they always had this sort of passion for books?

We've been talking about collecting, but I think we should also talk some about connecting. Ed talked of the connectedness of institutions here in Chicago. But it is the connection of materials that forms a collection. How do those connections get shaped? What can we do to foster this, on behalf of a surrounding entity, whether a city like this, or American society as a whole?

How do we build the connections that will enable us to build collections? We collect, we preserve, we make accessible. As we make accessible, we build in another set of connections; we craft relationships and links not just between single collections but groups of collections. We help people to realize relationships between types of materials that they had not thought of as being linked before. Collectors do this all the time. Libraries and related institutions do it too.

We have to weigh carefully how to expend our scarce resources. Should we collect materials, or should we spend for digital or other means of bringing the materials we already have to a wider public? Obviously, both.

Gehl: I'd like to give our morning speakers a chance for a word one more time, in case they'd like to take exception to something they've heard this afternoon, or want to clarify something they said.

Wahlgren: David directly asked a question about who the young collectors are. And it's not easy to say where they are learning about books. I think it's education, ultimately. Some of the major collectors have scientific backgrounds. I'm sure they must have been collecting before; whoever has the collecting bug has it from birth...it's congenital. When there are means, direction, and purpose, what they can do with it can be incredible.

Gehl: This morning you tried to generalize about this particular group of collectors and suggested that you're observing a trend in collecting more broadly, not in traditional fields, but across traditional fields. You suggested that they tend to go toward high points rather than toward more unusual or nontraditional items within those fields. Do you find that either encouraging or discouraging?

Wahlgren: It's easy to say it is both. I don't have a description of one collector I'm thinking about, but a composite of several very major collectors today. They're all relatively young. Book collecting has always come with a certain age, for economic reasons. But it's also a developmental thing that you're ready to collect in a serious way. There are some who will collect an Abraham Lincoln draft manuscript one day, and the next day might buy a first-edition printed Cicero. You could get this kind of range within weeks or months. They are doing it out of love of the book.

Certain collections, certain pieces, may, or should, end up at an institution, like the Archimedes Palimpsest, that was a generous thing. Auction houses are not just selling collections, breaking them up; each sale is also building someone's collection.

I went into the new acquisitions exhibit at the Newberry, and saw that Fred Kittle's collection has come to the Library. It's an incredible collection of detective stories. He's been an active bidder in our auctions and he's doing a great thing with it, and we wouldn't discourage that in any way. Economics, duplication—each of these has a part in how a collector decides to part with his or her collection.

Tenner: I was very interested in the remarks of all three librarians, but I want to concentrate on one issue that Mark raised about philanthropy and the public good. The first thing is the tremendous role of the changes in the tax code since the 1980s. There was philanthropy even before there

was income tax, so there's no reason that philanthropy shouldn't continue. But there was a definite material benefit in donations that doesn't exist to the same extent now. I believe that the Lily Library was formed in part because the advisors of Mr. Lily said that he might as well give the books away. Was that right or wrong?

Silver: That's what Dave Randall wrote, but I don't know whether that's true or not; certainly the tax rates in the mid 1950s when Mr. Lily was thinking about parting with his collection were very much higher than they are now. But Dave Randall also very frequently said, "Never let the truth get in the way of a good story."

Tenner: I'm sorry to hear that, it was such a good story.

The second is a part of the evolution of American higher education. There was a time in the 1950s and the 1960s when education was expanding very rapidly, and under circumstances of tremendous optimism. There seemed to be a utopia of learning around the corner, and everybody wanted to get into it. Everybody seemed to want to copy the California formula for success, which was "Let's start all of these universities and colleges and spend lots of money on them, and your economy will grow."

Today there seems to be, especially in the humanities, less of that competition, and certainly, there aren't major new sources of income available to many institutions. Instead, a group of established rare book departments in various public and private universities has continued to expand. The cost of a single inmate is about the same as the cost of tuition, room, and board at Harvard, so having the world's largest proportional prison population definitely has an effect on higher education, and on rare books.

As I've spoken at a number of places I have found departments of special collections interested in building their holdings in areas that relate to their institution's history and mission. At Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, which is a fascinating place in Daytona Beach, Florida, they specialize in everything in the aviation industry, from pilot training to homeland security, and they have an excellent faculty. A place like Embry is not going to build rare book department like those of Yale, Harvard, or Indiana, but what they can do is develop, for example, a collection in the



David Spadafora (top) and Joel Silver.

history of aviation, the heritage of their own fields. In doing so, they can become national resources as well as regional ones.

Certainly, the success of the Wolfsonian [at FIU], as part of a university, shows that a collection can also help to develop a university's identity. There is room to educate academic administrators in the positive value of rare books.

On the other hand, there are also orphaned collections. For example, the College of William and Mary has the second-most-important collection on a subject that interests me, the history of dogs and dog breeding. As I understand it, there is currently nobody on the William and Mary faculty interested in the growing field of animals and history. There seem to be two possibilities: one, some exchange; or two, for William and Mary to say, "We

have this resource, so the next time that we're making a faculty appointment, maybe we should look for somebody who likes dogs."

Gehl: I'm struck that in the course of your talks, Edward, you have mentioned two institutions of higher educa-

tion in Florida. I grew up in Florida in the 1950s and 1960s, and I left in 1961 because I had concluded that it was a land without books. Some months ago I had a chance to meet somebody from the library at Florida Atlantic University – an institution that did not even exist when I left Florida – and I learned that they recently celebrated the acquisition of their millionth book making a brand new and one-of-a-kind artist book, which seemed to me a very hopeful sign for Florida, if not for the rest of the world.

Meyer: One of the things that struck me in Mark's comments about content and quality is that this is an important distinction that can be mapped across many areas of collecting, and many types of institutions. Some collections and some institutions fall more readily into one category or the other. My own institution, the University of Chicago, is more a content institution than a quality institution, but that is not to say that we don't have collections of quality.

As we move more into the world of digital media and representation of materials online we are developing a new distinction between the material and what might be called the "immaterial." The collections I discussed this morning, and the ones mentioned by others are all unmistakably "material" collections. They have value and mass and weight, they sit on the shelf, they take up space. When they have to be moved, whether from the Newberry to the Crerar, or from one area of the stacks to another, all of us are very aware of the great weight, not only the intellectual weight, but the physical weight of those collections. Today the digital world is moving ahead with such speed that it seems that material collections are being left behind. What we haven't said

is that the dematerialization of these collections – the representation online by digital facsimiles and scanned images, searchable text, things that can be cut and pasted, stretched, and Photoshopped – can be collected, too.

In the era that I have been talking about, collections have been shaped by collectors (or bibliographers, librarians, or curators); the collections of the future may well be shaped by the user, instead. The users will decide what constitutes a collection worth having, and that may or may not be a material collection – it may very well be an immaterial collection.

David is taking a lead role. All of us in rare books and special collections here in Chicago are taking part in collaboration and cooperation. One of the most important parts in what David was referring to was the effort by Chicago institutions working together to try to seize and gain control of this new "immaterial" world building all around us, and to make sure that that "immaterial" world continues to relate, in useful, meaningful, and important ways to the material collections, which collectors will still build and institutions will still collect.

Gehl: I'd like to call attention to the fact that this man who just called attention to the ethereal and immaterial collections comes from a man whose institution just announced building a brand new book stack, the biggest in the city by far.

§§

Gehl: I invite questions from the audience, and I especially invite questions from people who want to talk about the future.

Audience member: I'm Audrey Niffenegger, and I work for Columbia College's Center for Book and Paper Arts, where we train book artists. All day we've been talking about books and collectors and institutions, but nobody's mentioned that books don't just make themselves. Joel mentioned that some people had been advocating new paths for collecting. I urge any who are looking for a new path in collecting to collect some book artists, and writers, and take them to lunch. Commission something. I would like to champion more active relationships between living bookmakers and institutions and private collectors and anybody else with some money.

Gehl: Audrey, that's the most shameless

See *RARE BOOK AFTERNOON*, page 6

CAXTONIAN, JULY 2008

PR I've ever heard! But it's a topic that I sympathize with. Do any of our speakers want to respond?

Dimunation: The Library of Congress is a major collector of fine press and artist books. I'm also aware of people who have built modern collections around them. But I also encourage book artists and presses to come to the libraries that collect book artists and presses to see your colleagues' work. It's a very individual and insular kind of art, and much can be learned by looking at your colleagues' work.

Gehl: Let me add that Chicago's one of the better places for that kind of interaction because we have a very lively scene of artists who do come to look at each others' work, both on exhibit and in local collections.

Audience member: My comments are directed to Daniel and his comments about the Metropolitan Agreement. I think that maybe there is an unintentional consequence of that plan. When I was growing up in Chicago in the 1940s, I was aware of the division of knowledge represented by the division between the Public Library, the Crerar across the street, and the Newberry. For the longest time I divided knowledge into the hard sciences, and the literary and artistic endeavors, and it has taken me a long time to recognize the ways these areas connect. Could you address that issue?

Meyer: At the time of the Agreement, academic disciplines as known today were still in their infancy. What was happening was the division of the world of learning into specialized disciplines. This specialization continued far into the 20th Century. Today the pendulum is swinging back and we see the way disciplines are related to each other. It is difficult for scientists to decide what is biologic science and what is physical science; it is also difficult for anyone to understand what is a work of literature and what is a work of history and what is a work of sociology.

Audience member: I was reflecting on what Dan Meyer said about the impact of the economic circumstances of a particular time, the Panic of 1893. The discussion this afternoon has had a significant economic driver in it, too – at all levels, from Dan's to Audrey's and everything in between. A comment from anyone?

Spadafora: First, let me refer you to an article by a historian named Roberto Lopez called "Hard Times and Investment in



Culture," about the early Florentine Renaissance. Second, I can say is yes, we're going to find out, as Francis said, about donors of money and of books. My sense, so far, is that people who care about institutions are holding firm in their overall support. I hear the same thing from other institutions as well. We just don't know enough about the downturn now to be able to say how enduring it will be. For now, I continue to be optimistic.

Audience member: My question involves a subject that hasn't been addressed at all today, but I suspect that it could have impact on institutions, universities, and collectors. Francis, you're probably the one who would be most familiar with it. If one collects ceramics or paintings, one of the things you're concerned with is the legitimacy of the objects. But you don't customarily hear about a phony Gutenberg Bible. What I'm concerned about is legitimacy, and the impact that may have on the investment policies of institutions when they go out to buy books or maps. Are you vigilant?

Wahlgren: We're extremely vigilant. With printed books, forgeries are less an issue than with manuscripts, letters, and documents. What's most likely with books

is theft. When you get a re-bound book, you suspect it might be stolen. We deal with that quite often.

Two years ago we had a Copernicus, first edition, missing several leaves and re-bound. It's in the census, known to be from an Eastern European library. So it was stolen. But the government there had no record of what had happened. We had to offer it. We made clear in the catalog that it came from an institution, but also that it wasn't something that was going to be seized if you purchased it. It was an awkward situation. Nobody wants to spend several hundred thousand dollars on an item and then find out it was not going to be theirs the next day. We take authenticity and provenance very seriously.

Dimunation: Theft is a major problem for rare

book libraries, although sometimes we also have provenance issues. I recently received a collection including Mayan and Aztec objects, all of which we have to be careful about. As for thefts, there are occasional thefts of full books, but even more, the problem is with book breakers, people who cut things out of books.

So we want to encourage collectors to be mindful of provenance. If it's just too good to be true – if somebody's offering an Audubon plate at a price that's too low, if something that hasn't been on the market suddenly is, if the colors in the map look suspiciously fresh, or looks like it's just been cut from something, well, then, it likely has. Hence the modern reality of rare book research which is cameras, videotapes, leaving your bags outside.

Silver: At the Lily we have a large collection of Latin American manuscripts, and it's difficult to establish where all of those came from. Fortunately, so far, the rare book market has been spared what has been common in the coin market, and that is "slamming." Slamming means taking a coin, having it authenticated by a service establishing the coin as authentic, and then encasing it in plastic or a substance that doesn't let you get at the coin. You can



Conversations during the reception which followed the symposium.

with an original.

Spadafora:

I certainly am sympathetic to your general point. The physicality of objects has immense meaning in a whole variety of ways – for scholars, for artists, for others. And our institutions are going to continue to provide the context for the realization of the acts of imagination that you refer to. There's a very nice short piece about this in the *New Yorker*, by Anthony Grafton. It lays out in

view it from all sides, but any attempt to get into it would damage it. So it's there as an authenticated object, but you can't do anything with it other than look at it, own it, and sell it.

Audience member: I make pictures. When I find a group of my pictures that do not stand alone, I place them into a book, in part for reasons of control, so that they do not stand individually. The stimulation of the imagination you get from my object would be stymied if it were digitized and placed online. I'm also fearful that I am not going to be able to examine things occasionally, and feel that rush of encounter

short order the reasons why going to the library and looking at the real thing is going to continue to be important. But I also make the argument that other kinds of imagination are well stimulated by the digitization of materials. There is much one can do as a scholar with machine-readable and searchable texts that is extremely stimulating. These two forms, as they connect, will be the best way to stimulate the imagination.

Dimunation: I work at an institution that does a great deal of digital representation, probably the largest single grouping of digitized images. Our

experience is that digital representations draw more attention and higher use of the physical object, rather than cause people not to use it. It actually becomes a lure. We have tracked use of items in the rare book and special collections department that are represented online. Just by the way people ask for them you know they've seen them online. Our fear is that we're creating a sort of sub-canon of material, because we've represented it online, and people don't come in and ask for related materials – they're asking for the ones that are visually familiar.

I don't have any argument with your point. One has to approach visual, unique art, in a careful way. We did an exhibition of the St. John's illuminated Bible that's traveling around the country. At the end, we showed some medieval manuscripts that related directly to the techniques being displayed in the contemporary one. We had a large screen, and Benedictine monks singing in the background, and there was this zoom thing going on, where these putti were really large, followed by initial letters. The point was to help people understand the historical origins of the modern craft. People were thrilled with it. It gave them a chance to see, in great detail, single brush strokes. Although I was the one who actually fomented it, I was a little horrified, because these very careful minute images, these historiated initials, were looming so large that those single hair strokes looked like very modern brush strokes. We had, indeed, altered the context. So I understand what you are saying.

On the other hand, I recently participated in an exhibition of Dan Kelm's bindings done at Smith, and one of the things they did for this exhibition was to have Dan Kelm manipulate his bindings, and put the books together. They did a videotape, now digitized and broadcast on the website, giving us the opportunity to see the creator of that book show us his intention. I have to say that when I balance the potential distortion as opposed to the kind of information otherwise unavailable, I always have to go to access.

Audience member: In today's economic market, and also with the concern for space, are there times when you're asked to make a return-on-investment proposal when you are collecting?

Silver: Fortunately we haven't been

See *RARE BOOK AFTERNOON*, page 9

CAXTONIAN, JULY 2008

CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES

Wynken de Worde

Hydrophobic is a fearsome word and is quite the opposite of *hydrophilic*, a word that applies to **Bill Mulliken** ('93), who won an Olympic gold medal in swimming, and almost equally to the book material known as vellum. Some people restrict the term vellum to a fine material made only of calfskin, and save the use of the term parchment for fine skins made from other animals such as sheep and goats. "Parchment is generally hydrophilic; it 'soaks up water rapidly and wet parchment has poor resistance to micro-organisms... but greater resistance if kept dry' (Hansen, Lee, Sobel 1992)." The same of course is applicable to vellum.

A concomitant challenge for vellum has been described by the conservation chemist Prof. Dr. Robert Fuchs,

The biochemical structure of parchment influences its response to the environment, to aging and during restoration. The collagen fibers are heat sensitive. Above 70°C, they begin to shrink irreversibly and denaturation sets in. The fibers also respond to changes in humidity by continuous shrinking and stretching. This is known as the climatic reflex because it is an automatic response which can only be prevented by keeping the parchment in a constant environment – "The History and Biology of Parchment," *The Karger Gazette*, no. 67.

With papyrus, parchment was the predominant writing surface of the Middle Ages, used by monks and government officials throughout Europe. If kept away from water and even water vapor, vellum can endure for centuries and has been a valued, attractive cover for bookbindings for millenia.

Because it is also costly to produce, vellum has only rarely been used in the past 500 years to print the pages of books, and it does take some extra skills to print it well. T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, for example, made limited issues of some of his books which were printed on and bound in vellum. These are rare, desirable, beautiful, tactile, pleasant, and sometimes quite costly.

If you have a one or two of these lying around in your library, you are to be



Another in the series of Caxtonian bookplates: this one designed by Ralph Fletcher Seymour.

congratulated, and you may be envied. However, should you have any book printed on vellum in the United States, you may wish to visit the website at The Bridwell Library of Southern Methodist University, where Eric White and Elizabeth Haluska have been building a short-title catalog of such books. You can send such information to Bridwell Library, care of Eric White, Curator of Special Collections, at ewhite@mail.smu.edu. This project was favored by **Valerie Hotchkiss** (2006) when she was the Director of the Bridwell Library, before she moved to UIUC.

Among the approximately 168 titles already noted are **Ralph Fletcher Seymour's** (1902) edition of John Keats' *The Eve of St. Agnes* (4cc.); and Robert Louis Stevenson's, *Diogenes at the Savile Club from an hitherto unpublished manuscript for David G. Joyce* ('18), published by Frank M Morris (1895) (5cc.).

Many of the listed titles were produced by the Thomas B. Mosher Press, and our fellow society, The Grolier Club.

From the beginning of The Caxton Club, the Publications Committee typically ordered three-and-only-three examples of our books to be printed on vellum. These included Joutel's *Journal of LaSalle's Last Voyage* (1896), *Some Letters of Edgar Allan*

Poe (1898), Thomas Berthelet Royal Printer and Bookbinder to Henry VIII (1901), William Caxton (1905), and, *Of Much Love and Some Knowledge of Books* (1912). That practice ended with our 23rd book, *An Attic Philosopher in Paris*, of which, curiously, only two copies were printed on vellum.

My personal favorite is the underappreciated *The Development of Chicago 1674 - 1914* (1916). It too was designed by Ralph Fletcher Seymour, and the three copies were on Imperial Japanese vellum. Our historian, **Frank Piehl** ('85) has owned both of the two copies in private hands, one of which was Seymour's own copy! According to Piehl's history of The Caxton Club, the first copy on vellum was to be reserved for the Club's archives, and the other two, typically unbound, were to be auctioned off to the membership. (Wynken wonders how many of those vellum copies are still in the Club's archives?).

Mayhap it would be both pleasing and useful to compile a census of the vellum copies of our 23 Caxtonian publications. If you know of any, please communicate to me and I will compile a list of them: wynkendeworde@comcast.net or write to Wynken de Worde, The Caxton Club, 60 W. Walton St., Chicago, Illinois 60610-3305.

Are you a boating booker? Boaters and bookers may find common ground in the new storage technology which is in use at the New Academic Library at Chicago State University, where **Stuart Campbell** ('98) teaches and heads the Archives, and where **Lawrence McCrank** ('03) is the Director. At CSU, the library materials are stored in bins in tall and lengthy shelving systems – not unlike at some warehouse stores. When needed, the bar-coded bins are retrieved by machinery, and returned the same way. It is known by its acronym, ASRS, or automated storage and retrieval system.

This same robotic technology will be employed at the Joe and Rika Mansueto Library to be built underground adjoining the John Crerar Library at the University of Chicago. The fifty-foot high storage units will be employed for selected materials that are expected to need the least borrowing, such as journals and serials which are now

accessible in electronic formats. The Manuseto Library will house materials from the Regenstien, D'Angelo Law, and John Crerar Libraries. The facility will store 3.5 million volumes in one-seventh of the space which they now occupy, and should be retrievable in five minutes.

As for the boaters? The same ASRS technology is expected to be used at the Chicago River, near 900 N. Ogden Avenue. What is proposed is that tall, vertical storage pods will be used to protect pleasure craft. When the boat owner calls in to have his vessel prepared, the robotic system will reach up and pluck the craft from its pod and deliver it to the dockside, where workers will fuel it and prepare it. When

the boaters arrive, everything will be immediately ready to cast off.

As for me, do not expect to see me boating, I am hydrophobic.

Karen Skubish ('76) and others still love Laura Ingalls Wilder, and so does Sarah S. Uthoff, the Reference Librarian at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Ms. Uthoff wrote to inform us that Laura Ingalls Wilder religiously replied to every fan letter she received. Ms. Uthoff has been collecting photocopies of Mrs. Wilder's letters for the archives at the Wilder Museum in Walnut Grove, MN. Anyone who has a letter they would like to share can contact her at uthoff@mchsi.com

Finally, there is a vicious rumor going

around that the Midwest Chapter of The Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America is planning to resuscitate the Chicago International Antiquarian Book Fair at Chicago in September, 2009. Please pass on this rumor. If you have any ideas to offer about it, please tell **Bruce Barnett** ('05), or **Brad Jonas** ('89), or **Tom Joyce** ('82), or **Florence Shay** ('85), or **Dan Weinberg** ('05). You can follow the progress by checking in on Florence's blog, where she proves that her husband Arthur and her son, Steve, are not the only writers in the family:

<http://indianhillmediaworks.typepad.com/titles/2008/05/writers-block.html>

§§

RARE BOOK AFTERNOON, from page 7

forced to do that, but we have been forced to turn down gifts because of space. Someone offered us several hundred thousand books on the history of transportation: books, catalogs, train schedules, everything. That person also wanted us to create an institute for the study of transportation. We couldn't house the collection, we couldn't create an institute. Quite often our cataloging staff, our technical services department, will come to us when we've bought a rather large collection of relatively low priced books – but extremely fascinating to those of us who do acquisitions – and they'll say, "Next year, can't you just buy one expensive book?"

Dimunation: I work at an institution where we're not allowed to de-accession material, so we're often required, when we're offered material, to justify it; once it's in the building, it's in the building. We're the generation of librarians who are called on to justify things that our predecessors never had to justify.

Nowadays we have to think about how something interacts in the context of our other holdings. And we have to cost out the expense of accepting it. Cataloging is very expensive. Shelving is very expensive. Processing and conservation are expensive. It's not so much return on investment as it is owning-up to the cost of owning the whole of the book, the whole of the collection. It's not uncommon to actually return to the donor with a request for funds to help cover the cost of processing. The reality is we are an institution that has to deliver. We have to make our materials accessible.

Gehl: I think it's safe to say that no librarian has failed to face this issue, especially in recent years. It is sometimes harder to convince your colleagues than it is your board of trustees.

Audience member: I'd like to direct a question to Francis Wahlgren: My understanding is that turnover, the time between a book being acquired and coming back onto the market was typically a generation, say 25-30 years. I have the sense

that recently the time period is shortening.

Wahlgren: I'd agree with you that it is shortening. Some of the sales in the last decade that did surprisingly well were high spot collections formed recently. There was a collection Sotheby's sold, formed at the time of the Norman sale in 1998, and it sold again, maybe 5 years later, having increased in value significantly, perhaps 30-40 percent. And the first collector had paid top prices; he'd bought some of the big things at the Norman sale. I think that the high spot way collections have been formed lends toward a faster turnover.

§§

Photographs by Robert McCamant. Special thanks to Dorothy Sinson for the recording of the afternoon.

We sadly note the passing of

Truman T. Metzel Jr. '64

A remembrance will appear in a future issue.

Club Notes

Membership Report, May 2008

1. Newly elected members

Bill Cellini Jr. has a passion for collecting propaganda posters. He began collecting in 1987 while traveling in Eastern

Europe; since then he has amassed a collection of over 400 pieces produced by the former Soviet Union and Soviet bloc nations. He is the owner of Pacific Management Inc., a firm active in the administration and supervision of commercial and residential properties throughout Illinois. He is a member of the Columbia College Board of Trustees and serves as President

of the Columbia College Alumni Association. His career has included work as a production analyst in the film industry, and in television and film production for Warner Brothers and Universal Pictures. Nominated by Susan Pezzino and Bill Locke.

Dan "Skip" Landt, Membership Chair,
skiplandt@sbcglobal.net, 773-604-4115.

Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Bernice E. Gallagher

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit)

"Images of Jewish Prayer, Politics, and Everyday Life from the Branka and Harry Sondheim Jewish Heritage Collection" (includes books, prints and works of art that focus on visual representations of Jewish life and customs, including works by artists Alphonse Levy, Moritz Oppenheim and Arthur Szyk) in the Main Gallery of the Special Collections Research Center, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, 1100 East 57th Street, Chicago 773-702-8705 (through July 8).

"Exploration 2008: The Chicago Calligraphy Collective's Annual Juried Exhibition" (promoting the study, practice, and appreciation of calligraphy in all its historical and present day applications, exhibit includes handmade artists' books and broadsides as well as three-dimensional works executed in various media and styles, from classical to contemporary) in the Herman Dunlap Smith Gallery at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago 312-255-3700 (through July 11).

"2008 Newberry Library Book Fair"

(this twenty-fourth annual book fair includes more than 100,000 donated books in over sixty categories, on subjects ranging from antiques to zoology) at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago 312-255-3556 (July 24 through July 27).

"From Prairie to Field: Photographs by Terry Evans" (internationally recognized and exhibited photographer presents exquisite photographs, beautifully printed and using state-of-the-art Iris technology, documenting the variety of prairie life that comprises the Field Museum's scientific collection) at the Field Museum Library, 1400 South Lake Shore Drive, Chicago 312-665-7892 (through July 27).

"The Arranged Flower: Ikebana and Flora in Japanese Prints" (includes limited-edition surimono, privately published prints that present complex representations of flowers replete with symbolic and poetic connotations, as well as printed botanical encyclopedias and other related texts) in Gallery 107 at the Art Institute of Chicago, 111 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago 312-443-3600 (through August 3).

"Graphic Thought Facility: Resourceful Design" (the first exhibition at the Art Institute devoted solely to the work of a single design firm, including GTF book designs for monographs on the work of Tord Boonjte and Ron Arad as well as catalogues for the 54th Carnegie International Exhibition, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, the Tate Britain and Tate

Modern retail stores) in Gallery 24 at the Art Institute of Chicago, 111 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago 312-443-3600 (through August 17).

"Temple of Flora" (features an exceedingly rare book with this title, published in England between 1799 and 1807 and considered the single most famous of all florilegia, along with a host of others written by London physician Robert John Thornton, all prized for their beautifully crafted and highly romantic illustrations) in the Lenhardt Library at the Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe 847-835-8202 (through August 17).

"The Fanciful and Fascinating Insect World" (includes artwork and rare books from the Morton Arboretum's library and illustrates how insects have fueled the human imagination) in the Sterling Morton Library at the Morton Arboretum, 4100 Illinois Route 53, Lisle 630-719-2430 (through August 25).

"Chicago Hand Bookbinders Exhibit" (annual exhibition that promotes awareness, understanding and appreciation of the craft of bookbinding) in the Main Exhibit Space at the Northwestern University Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston 847-491-7658 (through August 28).

"Imaginary Coordinates" (explores issues of national identity, borders, and the critical disparity between maps and experience by juxtaposing antique, modern and contemporary maps of the Holy Land) at the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, 610 South Michigan, Chicago 312-322-1700 (through September 7).

"Fun for All! Chicago's Amusement Parks" (draws on materials from the Library's collections and explores the development of the amusement park in Chicago, from the late 19th century to the present) in the Special Collections Exhibit Hall, 9th Floor, Harold Washington Library Center at the Chicago Public Library, 400 South State Street, Chicago 312-747-4300 (through September 14).

"Priests for Peace: The Nonviolent Roots of 1968 Protests" (includes items from the collection of Daniel Berrigan – Jesuit priest, social activist, author of nonfiction and poetry—and features works annotated by Berrigan while in prison as well as copies of works by Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hahn) in Special Collections and Archives, Room 314, at DePaul University's John T. Richardson Library, 2350 N. Kenmore Avenue, Chicago 773-325-2167 (through November 1).

"Chester Commodore, 1914-2004: The Work and Life of a Pioneering Cartoonist of Color" (includes original cartoons, photographs, letters, awards and other memorabilia relating to the artist's work as editorial cartoonist for the Chicago Defender; offers additional material from the Chicago Public Library's Vivian Harsh Research Collection, providing a historical context for social events depicted by Commodore and other African American cartoonists) in the Carter G. Woodson Regional Library, 9525 S. Halsted Street, Chicago 312-745-2080 (through December 31).

"Catholic Chicago" (the first in a series of exhibits exploring ways that religious communities shaped the ever-changing urban landscape, featuring books, historic documents, maps, architectural drawings, artifacts and film footage) at the Chicago History Museum, 1501 N. Clark Street, Chicago 312-642-4600 (through January 4, 2009).

Bernice Gallagher will be happy to receive your listings at either 847-234-5255 or gallagher@lakeforest.edu.



Temple of Flora at Chicago Botanic Garden
CUPID INSPIRING PLANTS WITH LOVE

Caxtonians Collect: Martin Starr

Forty-third in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Martin Starr lives two lives. Five days a week, he works for the information systems department at Chapman and Cutler LLP, a financial services law firm. When he goes home, he quietly morphs into a much-published author, collector, and world-renowned authority on Western Esotericism, which he describes as “all that which is rejected by science and religion but partakes of elements of both, e.g. astrology or alchemy.”

Members may remember his November, 2004 luncheon presentation on the books lavishly produced by Aleister Crowley (1875-1947). Starr has been collecting the works of Crowley and related authors since he discovered him in high school. “You could say I ‘drank the water’ when I was in high school,” Starr explains. “At the time, I was absorbed in the books themselves, and in the way they seemed to speak to me and some of my peers. It’s not the same in middle age. I’m much more interested in studying and thinking about the phenomenon now as aspects of new religious movements. To put it another way, to study history is to become a cynic.”

But his first response was to collect. “The old Occult Bookstore on State Street, just across from the now-demolished Dana Rooms (666 N. State) was full of mystery and had the full assortment of Crowley titles, rare and new, including his Tarot deck and a masterpiece on the Tarot, *The Book of Thoth*,” he says.

He also discovered rare book rooms of university libraries. Not far from home, there’s material at the Lily Library of Indiana University; farther away, he visited the Ransom Humanities Research Center in Austin, Texas. “But the mother lode of Crowleyana is at the Warburg Institute of the University of London. It was assembled by Gerald Yorke, with whom I corre-

sponded,” Starr concluded.

Today Starr owns the author’s fair copy of the original manuscript of Crowley’s *The Book of Lies*. In addition, he has a copy of the book printed on vellum. “Even the errata sheet is printed on vellum!” he exclaims. At his luncheon presentation, Starr also showed his copies of *The Sword*



of Song (although he printed an edition of 500, he changed the edition number on the title page every 100 copies, so Starr’s copy is labeled “fourth edition”), *The Book of the Law* (this was the transcription of a “direct-voice spirit communication”), *Konx Om Pax* (a tour-de-force demonstration of occult book design), and *Book Four* (a textbook of skeptical theurgy, built in a quaternary design that was Crowley’s perception of the design of St. Peter’s in Rome).

A second response was to start the Teitan Press as a vehicle to draw attention to some of Crowley’s unusually rare works. The first title, in 1986, was a new edition of the humorous erotic book *Snowdrops from a Curate’s Garden*. Starr found that his computer background provided an excellent platform for being a publisher: he had the software and knew how to run the programs that publishing required. He ran the Press with a friend for 20 years, but has recently given it over to an Maine book

dealer who has continued to sell the back list and occasionally adds titles.

Over the years Starr also wrote a number of scholarly articles about the field for such journals as *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* and *Theosophical History*. But then he felt called upon to work with all the materials he had amassed

about W.T. Smith, a Crowley acolyte who had founded a colony of believers in California. So Starr devoted two years of Sundays to writing *The Unknown God: W. T. Smith and the Thelemites*, which was published by Teitan Press in 2003.

He is currently working with the Swedish scholar Henrik Bogdan, editing a book of academic papers on Crowley which will be published by the SUNY Press in their Western Esotericism series, appropriately enough.

Starr was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, but has lived most of

his life in Chicago. He graduated from the College of the University of Chicago with a degree in Classical Languages, but never finished a graduate degree there in the history of science.

Starr was nominated to the club by his good friend Bob Williams, whom he knew from his University of Chicago connections. He was seconded by Bill Drendel, and joined the club in 1995. He admits to not attending many dinner meetings due to a prior conflict with masonic meetings, now resolved by the sale of the Scottish Rite Cathedral at Dearborn and Walton.

He lives on the Gold Coast with three parrots and practices “the faith of his fathers,” conventional Catholicism. He is a second generation Italian-American who also holds Italian citizenship, and is thinking of moving back to Italy – specifically Sicily – upon his retirement.

§§

photograph by Robert McCamant

Call For Submissions

DISCOVERY BY ASSOCIATION:

Insights from Collectors About their Books



The Caxton Club seeks submissions for a publication focused on Association Copies. The publication will include the stories of approximately 30 association copies as told by their current owners. The club may also organize an exhibition on the subject.

In the eighth edition of John Carter's ABC for Book Collectors, *Nicolas Barker* wrote: "This term [association copy] . . . is applied to a copy which once belonged to, or was annotated by, the author; which once belonged to someone connected with the author or someone of interest in his own right; or again, and perhaps most interestingly, belonged to someone peculiarly associated with its contents. Its extension to mean any book owned by a famous person can only be excused by establishing some point of real contact, other than the simple fact of possession."

Thus, association copy, as contemplated for the proposed publication, includes books that, in addition to their intrinsic value, have at least a secondary level of interest arising from their connection with a specific owner or donor. The association might be intellectual or personal; it might

be of literary or historical interest, but it results in making the specific copy more interesting than another copy of the same book. Thus, we seek association copies that evince a significant story about the association itself, and the process by which the association was uncovered and brought to light. Those stories, sometimes only known to the collector and almost certainly never before published — in essence the backstory to the association — are the focus of our project.

If you have association copies in your collection that you would like to submit for consideration, please send us a short description (100-150 words) of the nature of the association and how it was discovered. A jury will make the final selection. For books selected, we will request from the owners a more complete story of the association.

How to submit your association copy for consideration: Please send your description to Kim Coventry at coventryk@aol.com or by mail to 1250 N Dearborn, Ste 17C, Chicago, IL 60610, by October 1, 2008.