

An adventure in Iowa City, a city that loves books

Devotees of printing history and handmade paper have a joint conference in the midwest

Tad Boehmer

On October 26 and 27, the already bookishly vibrant Iowa City was further transformed into a destination for bibliophiles and book artists of all stripes when it hosted the joint conference of the American Printing History Association and the Friends of Dard Hunter. (Hunter, who lived from 1883 to 1966, was at the forefront of the revival in hand papermaking.) The meeting of these two groups was a rare but happy occurrence, as it brought together a broad range of scholars, practitioners, and craftspeople whose shared passions were apparent in the great energy that accompanied the gathering.

The University of Iowa does its part in living up to Iowa City's designation as a UNESCO City of Literature. For more than 80 years its Writers' Workshop has built its reputation by providing a place for writers to work on their manuscripts and exchange ideas about writing and reading with each other and the faculty.

In 2002 the university's Center for the Book added the book arts to Iowa's literary reputation. It promotes itself as "a distinctive degree-granting program that integrates training in book arts practice and technique with research into the history and culture of books." The curriculum offers courses in printing, calligraphy, bookbinding, and papermaking, among other disciplines.

Perhaps the program's most widely known instructor is its director, Timothy Barrett, a papermaker and paper historian (also a MacArthur Fellow who addressed the Club in 2000) who has developed a paper research and production facility off-campus. Here Barrett and his students are involved with every aspect of their subject through study, innovation, and practice, even cultivating the various plants whose fibers they then use in their work. Many of the program's students and alumni participated in the conference and

its associated events, adding to the vibrancy of the conversations among the participants.

Several official trips beyond the borders of Iowa City were open to attendees, including one the day before the conference began to the small college town of Grinnell, located about 65 miles to the west. As a senior at Grinnell College, I got to know Martha Pinder, who with her sister Peggy makes up the third

thrilled by the potential of this then largely unused equipment, and though graduate school called me out of Iowa, the shop and its contents stayed firmly my mind through the ensuing years.

Thanks to Rich Dana, a printing enthusiast and graduate student at the Center for the Book; Gary Frost, a book conservator and faculty member at the Center; and

Pinder, there has been a revival at the *Herald-Register*. Slowly but surely the equipment is being rehabilitated, the drawers of type and illustration blocks dusted off and studied by Dana and his fellow students, which has led to some preliminary experiments in printing posters for local events under the imprint of the Promised Land Press. The clattering of the in-restoration Intertype machine, the showpiece of the space, was a musical accompaniment for a Pinder-and-Dana-led tour for two vanloads of conference participants. Gasps



Gathering round the Intertype at the Herald-Register.

generation of her family to run the local newspaper, the *Herald-Register*. In 2012 she showed me around the paper's backshop, where I marveled at the sight of type cases, presses, and other remnants of the paper's letterpress era that had been unused for 20 years but that represented the vital role played by the shop for many decades, not only in the production of the biweekly paper but in the execution of job printing for innumerable clients. I was

of excitement were heard throughout the building as tour members inspected drawers of wood type and, down the spiral staircase in the basement, large cabinets full of bound issues of the paper dating back to the 1930s. The paper still preserves the standing type for the final hot-type issue, from 1973, and maintains an archive of its job work, which continued until the early '90s. The *Herald-Reg-*

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CAXTONIAN

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ister's building is an incredible space, serving as the headquarters for a vibrant and vital local publication, as a museum of a wide range of printing technology, and now as an incubator for the future of the craft.

Another excursion took place Friday morning, when two van loads of printing practitioners and enthusiasts traveled just over 35 miles to the northeast, their destination a small plot of restored prairie outside Anamosa, land owned by Tim Fay and his brother, the former one of the primary practitioners of letterpress printing in the state. Since the late '80s Fay has edited, composed, printed, bound, and distributed the *Wapsipinicon Almanac*, named for a tributary of the Mississippi flowing through the town. A studio space tacked onto his self-built home is packed with enough machinery to make any printer scream with envy. Fay gave a demonstration of his beloved 1936 Linotype machine, showing off just a few of the ways he can adapt its functions to the work at hand.

Among other pieces of machinery in Fay's shop are a Miller flatbed (one of only a few working examples left in the U.S.), a Michle vertical, and various stitching and plate-making machines. I first encountered the *Wapsipinicon Almanac* as a freshman at Grinnell College, and its celebration of all things Iowa reassured me that I had chosen the right state to spend four years in. Each issue combines nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and book reviews from a wide range of contributors, much like the *New Yorker* – a similarity nodded to by Fay in his own column, "The Talk of the Township." Although Fay has announced that issue 25 of his *Almanac* – likely off the press later this month – will be the last, his presses will not go silent; he has a vision of publishing chapbooks under his imprint, the Route 3 Press.

The conference program itself reflected the two main streams of bookish enthusiasm represented by the attendees, each session including talks on technical aspects of papermaking and on more historical or bibliographical topics, though many integrated the two fields and often included some kind of investigative angle. For instance, during one session Todd Samuelson of the University of Utah spoke on "Imperfect Iterations: Historical Wood Engraving Blocks Examined as Pairs"; writer Sonia Farmer discussed the crowd-sourced archive she is building in relation to a collection of printing blocks from her native city of Nassau in the Bahamas; and Barton College library dean Robert Cagna examined the use of handmade paper in early postage stamps. Concurrent sessions included a discussion on the use of fine papers by businesses and artists, an examination of new definitions of "watermark" and "paper," and a panel entitled "Support Interruptus: The Shifting Roles Between Surface and Substrate."



Volunteers worked on the formation of a very long sheet of handmade paper on the lawn near the paper studios.

As a rare book librarian and student of bibliography, I tended to lean more toward the papers on those subjects, and in each session I was pleased not only to encounter enthusiasm and expertise on the side of the presenters, but also within the audience – a shared foundation that often led to healthy debate, discussion, and sharing of ideas.

An enraptured audience met the keynote speaker, Suzanne Karr Schmidt, during her lecture on "Printing the Renaissance Pop-up Book." A Caxtonian who joined the staff of the Newberry in 2017 as the Poole Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Karr Schmidt provided example after fascinating example of the ways in which early European printers thought beyond simple ink on paper. They introduced interactive features, like intricate volvelles for calculating the date of Easter, brass instruments attached to the page that could act like an adjustable sundial, and, for medical students, tiny paper internal organs that could be removed from a printed human body. Karr Schmidt, who is an expert in this area of book history, having written her dissertation and a recent book on the topic, seemed to have an unending arsenal of bibliographical oddities to delight her listeners. My favorite among them was a large-scale woodcut printed by Georg Hartmann (1489-1564) that, after being cut out and assembled according to directions, yields a remarkable three-dimensional crucifix-cum-sundial.

Several speakers elaborated on their close examination of paper's physicality and on their efforts



to re-create historic styles. Donald Farnsworth of Magnolia Paper in California spoke on the great lengths he went to in trying to make felts mats – which papermakers have traditionally used to dry their newly-formed sheets – in order to impart the kind of texture to be found on drawings by Renaissance artists such as Michelangelo. With the improvement of press technology in the late 18th century, high-quality felts, which can drain water effectively more or less on their own, became less common, thereby changing the texture of the finished work, an insight Farnsworth spoke passionately on: how Michelangelo’s chalk “collaborated” with the paper in determining the look of the finished work. This will undoubtedly change the way I examine drawings in a museum or library.

Cathleen Baker of Ann Arbor’s Legacy Press described her own quest to re-create the early wove paper used in part of the edition of *Virgil* printed by John Baskerville in 1757. This paper was made by James Whatman the Elder at Turkey Mill in Maidstone, England, though the exact method of its manufacture is unclear. Baker chronicled her painstakingly close examination of the surviving copies of the *Virgil*, from which she worked backwards in experiments to recreate Whatman’s product.

A trade fair showcasing the work of various craftspeople, vendors, and organizations was held parallel to much of the conference, and during the first evening, as a bluegrass band played and conference goers enjoyed refreshments, Caxtonians Martha Chiplis and John Dunlevy proudly represented the Club at a table set up next to that of fellow member Bob McCamant’s Sherwin Beach Press. With the aim of raising awareness of the Caxton Club and its grants, Chiplis and Dunlevy displayed books from past grant recipients, along with the new Club publication, *Chicago by the*



TOP: opening book fair; BELOW Martha Chiplis tends the Caxton Club table.

Book, and handed out complimentary issues of the *Caxtonian*. The papermakers, book artists, fine printers, librarians, and students in attendance showed great interest in the Club’s work, and Chiplis reports that she spoke with a number of people who plan to apply for a grant. The Club’s public faces met potential new members, greeted current ones, and even encouraged lapsed members to rejoin. Overall, Chiplis described her and Dunlevy’s mission in Iowa City as “a delightful and worthwhile adventure.”

As with any successful conference, there were several receptions, including a closing dinner and silent auction. Though none of my bids were successful (and some of my losses yet remain fresh), this was an excellent opportunity to follow up with a few of the people whom I’d met at the various sessions, and to

turn some acquaintances into what I hope will be lasting friends.

In her talk “Why the Whole Book Matters: Making Books the Hard Way in 21st Century America,” Katherine McCamless Ruffin of Wellesley College proposed a formula for what it takes to make books: idealism plus grit. In retrospect, I can see that these characteristics were on display throughout the week – by the group restoring the backshop in Grinnell, by Tim Fay in his rural printshop, by Tim Barrett’s team growing mulberry to make Japanese-style paper, and by the scores of students at the Center for the Book, working to pursue their passions in keeping alive these ancient arts.

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Creating Chicago by the Book

Excerpts from the talk by Neil Harris at the Club's book-launch party on October 17

The Chicago 101 project, as we called it, has been a long time in preparation. Surviving records reveal continuous labor on the book has consumed, as of today's date, more than six years, about 325 weeks. Occasionally it has seemed longer. You may, or may not, wish to know more details about this odyssey. Ready or not, I'm about to give them. Describing these to others, I have likened them to visiting that proverbial sausage factory and watching the hot dog being made. But many here already have undergone the messy process of creating a book, even one with multiple authors. So I don't have to invoke that simile. Particularly at dinner.

The story began when a collection of Caxtonians – like a pride of lions – thought it was time to commission a book about Chicago books. The notion, perhaps surprising to outsiders, was that some books played a major role shaping the very life and reputation of Chicago. Preliminary discussions commenced, as near as I can tell, late in 2012. I joined them in January 2013. To give some historical perspective, that was the month of Barack Obama's second inaugural. A day that seems even further away than our book's origins.

The group of 10 or 11 who gathered for these discussions, soon reduced to eight who cohered, or congealed, at that number and remained there for the duration. This committee would endure more than a dozen lengthy meetings and many more informal communications to work out the project's details. We met for a period of time in a lounge at the Newberry Library, within earshot of its beverage machines. Later came far more comfortable physical settings at the high-rise headquarters of a Chicago law firm and the Driehaus Foundation on Chicago Avenue. The spectacular views occasionally relieved the tensions of intense discussions, and reminded us, again, that we were working on a book about Chicago.

We were led in our deliberations by Susan Rossen, who would become the general editor, mediator, copy editor, and shepherd of the project; and Kim Coventry, her coadjutor, who helped supply much of our early definition. I might note here, emphatically, that this was a group

enterprise. We were often divided, as you will shortly hear, about specific decisions. This was not insignificant, for our ranks, like your own, included members capable of speaking *ex tempore* for considerable periods of time and with some animation. Despite this capacity for protracted commentary and imaginative rhetoric, there was never – at least for long – any loss of good humor or sense of camaraderie. Email exchanges – in which we strengthened, modified, or withdrew arguments, expressed fervent commitments, cemented new alliances, or abandoned existing ones – took up a good deal of time outside of meetings. I have hundreds. Like Hillary Clinton, we did not have a secure Internet server, but unlike her there seemed no indication of interest by unfriendly foreign governments. And I don't believe we were ever hacked.

So let me mention, in alphabetical order, the other five, in addition to Susan, Kim, and myself: John Blew, John Chalmers, who also served as secretary and coordinator of our continually changing lists, Celia Hilliard, Ed Hirschland, and Brad Jonas. Academics, collectors, book dealers, librarians, editors, a blend not totally dissimilar to the Caxton Club's founders, except we were a bit more gender balanced.

For several years we toiled in comfortable obscurity, and each of us assumed the roles that personality and experience permitted. In the course of all this I think we came to gauge each other's tastes and preferences, and also to know when feelings were really strong about something, and when they were more malleable. Much of life, as someone

remarked, is just showing up; the rest is negotiation. And negotiate we did.

When I first joined the Chicago 101 group I was not optimistic about our prospects. Beyond the spirit of self-celebration, a local specialty, I couldn't understand precisely what was going on. I was unsure about the criteria to be applied for selection, and by our larger methods – or lack of any. The goal was to choose, somehow, and on some basis, about 100 Chicago books and have them explicated, briefly, by qualified commentators. Many of them, many of you, are here tonight. This was, at its heart then, a List Book.

Attending to criteria for inclusion more specifically: after lots of back and forth we determined, with Kim's special help, that our choices had to be focused on Chicago, be significant to the city's reputation, development, or identity, and/or tell an important story that reflected in some way on the city's own metanarrative.

Once these preliminaries were out of the way, combat began as texts were nominated. Tonight everyone here can see the final result, so the suspense is over. Talking about this project on a few previous occasions, I had to do something like a dance of the seven veils, because the committee was determined to keep the larger list, with a couple of exceptions, confidential. But it's now all out in the open, available to ponder, question, and above all, I assume, to criticize.

This final group of 101 reflects many months of serious combat. The initial lists were, as could be imagined, variegated, uneven in quality, confusing, puzzling, and above all, immense. To some extent, at the start, we were relying on free association. We came up with anything ever thought of that had some Chicago connection. And we enlisted the thoughts of others. Given the fact that bibliographies of fiction set in Chicago contain, alone, more than 4,000 entries, the possibilities seemed



photos / Alan Klehr



LEFT The membership gathers to celebrate. RIGHT Cook County Board President and book contributor Toni Preckwinkle with Bradley Jonas, a member of the Club's Publication Committee.

endless. The broadest list of proposals I have in my files contains some 236 texts, and this was from early 2013. More than twice the desired number. The final total was still larger, of course, because new titles continued to pop up after we had whittled the first unwieldy mass down. While some fundamental issues were not easily resolvable, the process – discussion, debate, voting, discussing again, voting again – was modified throughout by a concern for group consensus and cohesiveness. And this ultimately did work.

A few observations on our final list. We all received interesting suggestions that came in after the book was in press. Some were intriguing. Others were enticing. But alas it was too late. Fiction itself accounts

for fewer than 20 percent of our choices. I think this surprised some of us. And pre-fire Chicago supplied only six selections. With just a couple of exceptions we stopped about the year 2000, cautious about contemporary materials. We have no more than half a dozen texts by living authors. The book is really centered on the long 20th century, the era of Chicago's spasmodic growth. Others will provide their own analyses of our selections and characterize them. Some will find fault, I'm sure, with the distribution. But for better or worse we made our choices and achieved something of a consensus.

I will stop here, although I exclude the protracted task of identifying and inviting our commentators. Many of you are here

tonight. I don't think we realized at the outset how complex a task matchmaking would be. Without honoraria to offer we had to rely on the goodwill, civic spirit, and intellectual curiosity of others. That proved to be well founded. We have many authors because we needed multiple voices. Our efforts to reflect diversity were strenuous, but not invariably successful. There are more than 80 creators of *Chicago by the Book*. We worked hard to find you, and are happy so many agreed to join us.

On that note, I end. The future of this book will now be up to its readers. The committee hopes there will be many. That is also to its critics, who we hope will be discerning but enthusiastic.

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Many of the authors and other participants gathered for a group portrait.

Book- and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Lisa Pevtzow

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

American Writers Museum, 180 N. Michigan Avenue, second floor, Chicago, 312-374-8790: **"Bob Dylan: Electric"** (Dylan's influence on American music, literature, and culture), continuing. **"Frederick Douglass, Agitator"** (exploring the writer and "self-made man"), continuing.

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: **"I'll Show You! Posters and Promos from Chicago's Famous Artists"** (ephemera from the collection of Gladys Nilsson and Jim Nutt), Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, weekdays only through January 7. **"Photography + Books: Out of the Retina, Into the Brain – The Art Library of Aaron and Barbara Levine,"** through March 17.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: **"Laura Ingalls Wilder and Her Prairie"** (illustrations of prairie wildflowers and art by naturalist Helen Sharp), through January 13.

Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, 312-744-6630: **"Bronzeville Echoes: Faces and Places of Chicago's African-American Music"** (the city's music legacy through ragtime, jazz, and blues), Garland Gallery, first floor south, continuing.

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: **"Modern by Design"** (Chicago streamlines America), continuing.

Chicago Printmakers Collaborative, 4912 N. Western Avenue, Chicago, 773-293-2070: **"Small Print Exhibition & Holiday Sale"** (affordable prints for gift giving), through December 21.

Intuit Museum of Outsider Art, 756 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, 312-243-9088: **"Chicago Calling: Art Against the Flow"** (themes embodied in the works of ten Chicago artists), through January 6.

Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Avenue, Chicago, 312-280-2660: **"Picture Fiction: Kenneth Josephson and Contemporary Photography"** (explores the relationship between the photographer and his world), through December 30.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: **"Pictures from an Exhibition: Visualizing the 1893 World's Fair"** (art and ephemera from the fair, including photographs, paintings, illustrated albums, souvenirs, and guidebooks), through December 31.

Northwestern University Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: **"Up Is Down: Mid-century Experiments in Advertising and Film at the Goldsholl Studio,"** through December 9.

Pritzker Military Museum and Library, 104 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-374-9333: **"Lest We Forget: Sailors, Sammies, and Doughboys Over There in World War I"** (explores the experiences of those who served in the war), through March.

Spudnik Press Cooperative, 1821 W. Hubbard Street, Suite 302,

Chicago Botanic Garden /
Laura Ingalls Wilder and
Her Prairie



Chicago, 312-563-0302: **"Now More Than Ever"** (prints about environmental change by Emmy Lingscheit), through December 29.

Stony Island Arts Bank, 6760 S. Stony Island Avenue, Chicago, 312-857-5561: **"Tricontinental '66 and Other Acts of Liberation"** (a multidisciplinary "instigation"), through January 6.

University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: **"Food Cultures of the Middle East and Asia"** (five area-studies librarians celebrate the diversity of food cultures from across their areas of expertise), fifth floor, through December 31.

Contact Bob McCamant (bmccamant@earthlink.net) if you'd like to take over the preparation of our listings.



Newberry
Library/
Pictures from
an Exhibition

U of Chicago Library / Food Cultures of the Middle East and Asia



Caxtonians Collect: Richard Nielsen

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Richard Nielsen is that rare creature in the American landscape: a house-husband. He and his wife were both working for State Farm in Bloomington [Illinois] when they met, married, and started a family. He was ten years older than she was, but she seemed to be on a faster track within the company, so it just made sense.

He is very calm and easy-going. You get a hint of this when (as he often does) he checks you in at a luncheon meeting; that calm stood him in good stead while raising first one son, then (almost ten years later) a second.

That second son is now 14, so he has not required constant attention for a while. Nielsen joined the Caxton Club in 2011. Nielsen had discovered the Club because of his interest in P. G. Wodehouse. We brought Tony Ring, a Wodehouse specialist, to Chicago in June 2010. (Ring is thought to have more than 10,000 items in his Wodehouse collection.) Naturally, we invited Illinois Wodehouse collectors to attend, and Nielsen came.

Eventually, Skip Landt (then the Membership Chair) followed up with Nielsen to see if he would be interested in joining our Club. He would, and he did – nominated by Skip and seconded by Margaret Oellrich. Since he still lives in Bloomington, he's a non-resident member, but he manages

to be extremely regular attendee at luncheon meetings. He loves the variety of speakers. "Where else would I hear this range?"

"And frankly, I'm happy to come to Chicago once a month. I take the train, and often work in a trip to a bookstore – frequently the Dial Bookshop in the Fine Arts Building – or the Newberry Library, as well." "At the Newberry I go to read books about books," he explains. "One book almost always leads to another." He almost always takes the 7 pm train home.

His sons have, and continue to, provide another reason for travel. Both are baseball players, and participate in summer Travel Baseball. Unlike Little League, which tends to put teams up against others in the immediate area, games in Travel Baseball can be in other

states. Parental transport is needed, which gives additional reason to explore other towns, cities, and regions. And luckily, Travel Baseball never uses parents as coaches, reducing the risk of family stress. (The older son is now out on his own, working as a paramedic in Quincy.)

Nielsen was born and raised in Clinton,



Iowa. His father worked in a Pillsbury grain facility on the river. "My childhood was shades of Tom Sawyer," he explains. "We'd hang out most of the summer on the river, swimming, fishing, goofing off." He started to read and reread (dare we say collect?) Hardy Boys books, whose \$1 price matched his weekly allowance. He also recalls reading *Swiss Family Robinson* with a flashlight under the covers.

He graduated from Clinton High School in 1963, then started at the University of Iowa not far away. But the money ran out, so Nielsen enlisted for three years in the army. He trained at Fort Benning (south of Atlanta), then shipped out to Vietnam. He was attached to the First Cavalry, but drew an assignment that didn't involve shooting. "I was in an engineer

battalion. We'd do things like take a helicopter out to see if a particular area (where an incursion was planned) had suitable conditions, and then build bridges or reinforce runways to make support for the troops possible." He would hear an "occasional mortar round," but fortunately was never injured.

When he mustered out, he came back to the University of Iowa, where he stayed for a year. Then he found and took a job in Bloomington where he could combine work with finishing his business degree. He graduated in 1972 and went to work for State Farm, where he met Barb, a Wesleyan woman who was to become his wife. The company moved them around, to Louisiana and Maryland. "In Maryland, Barb wanted to pursue advanced work in accounting, so I became the primary caregiver. I worked as a part-time teacher in my son's elementary school as well."

Nielsen became a Wodehouse collector partly because of a Wodehouse-collector cousin. "He had a fairly complete collection, but he didn't have space for duplicates, so when he came across something he already had but with better provenance or condition, he'd give me his prior copy." This cousin loved to go to used book stores, so whenever Nielsen visited Wichita – where the cousin lived – he'd take him around with him. Soon Nielsen got hooked on reading the books, then gradually developed the collecting

"bug." And then, when the cousin died, he left his books to his immediate family, which promptly offered them for sale to Nielsen. As a result, he finds himself master of a very respectable Wodehouse library.

The bookstore visits also instilled a love of book shopping, which Nielsen happily continues. There's not much of that to be found in Bloomington these days, so he's happy for occasional book fairs there (Tom Joyce sometimes makes it) and won't miss Printer's Row fairs in Chicago.

As for life as a house-husband, he has this observation: "I cannot complain. I'd hate to work for my wife, but she'd be the first person I'd hire." Guess it's worked pretty well.

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Bookmarks...

Luncheon: Friday, December 7, Union League Club Karen Christianson on the Archeology of Medieval Manuscript Books

This is going to be positively medieval. Some of the most venerated and valuable books are those painstakingly constructed manuscripts with elaborate bindings. Everything was done by hand by craftspeople in a scriptorium somewhere that probably didn't have much in the way of central heating, air-conditioning, or enough of the pumpkin spice pods to go with the Keurig coffee makers. Join us as the Newberry's Karen Christianson's generously illustrated presentation reveals how the manuscripts were made – from preparing the parchments to illuminating the texts to binding the books. How complex was the process? How many people would be involved? Were there standard sizes or were all these books bespoke? She will answer all of this and more, finishing with an example that is particularly apt for the season. Karen Christianson draws on her background as historian, college lecturer, and associate director of the Center for Renaissance Studies at the Newberry, to deliver scholarly presentations with an entertaining touch. Mark your calendar for the first Friday in December and make your reservation today!

December 7 luncheon: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Buffet opens at 11:30 am; program 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is \$35. Program free but please let us know you're coming. Reservations or cancellations for meal by noon Wednesday the week of the luncheon. Reserve at caxtonclub.org, call 312-255-3710, or e-mail caxtonclub@newberry.org.

Beyond December...

JANUARY LUNCHEON

Wait! There's a Plan? On January 11, author and Lewis Mumford prize-winner Brad Hunt from the Newberry Library will reveal some fascinating stories about urban planning in Chicago.

JANUARY DINNER

January 16, Union League Club: Monique Lallier, internationally-recognized bookbinder and book artist, will present a visual tour of her artistry.

Dinner: Wednesday, Dec. 12, Newberry Library: Revels! Eat, Drink, Be Merry! Bid on books! Meet Other Members!

We're trying some experiments for 2018. For one thing, we will be in two new rooms at the Newberry, the Baskes Boardroom and Rettinger Hall. We're hoping that our silent auction, in Rettinger, will be the social highlight of the evening. Members will be encouraged to sip libations and exchange stories as they shop for bargains. Unless a member happens to donate something extraordinary, we'll skip a live auction for this year.

But that's not all: In a return to Caxton Club tradition, we will be entertained with live music and magic! The magic will be performed by Club member and magic professional John Railing, and vocal jazz will be by Laura Freeman.

Members of the auction committee will accept donations at the luncheon meeting December 7. If that's not convenient, e-mail bmccamant@earthlink.net and the committee will arrange to pick up your donation. We ask that you bring along a scrap of paper with each item, giving your name and contact information and your estimate of its value. Or fill out the item form we'll have on hand.

Revels: Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street. The festivities begin at 5:30. Dinner, \$63. Reservations must be made no later than noon Monday, December 10. Cancellations and no-shows after this deadline will require payment. To reserve call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org.

FEBRUARY LUNCHEON

The 200 candles on the cake probably scared the monster, but we'll be celebrating an historic publication with "Frankenstein and the Famous Circle" – a tale of the classic novel, its celebrated author, and the remarkable group she was a part of. Our speaker, Mark Canuel from UIC, will be electrifying! February 8.

FEBRUARY DINNER

February 20, (*note location!*) Newberry Library: Will Hansen, Newberry Library Curator of Americana, on "Melville: Celebrating America at Sea." A behind-the-scenes tour of the Newberry's upcoming Melville exhibit, a special presentation, and three-course dinner.