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Wood Libraries: Knowing with Wood and Word

Bonnie Mak

A wood library sounds as if it should be a collection of books on the topic of wood. In fact, it is a collection of wood. How can we “know” with wood?

A remarkable wood library was created by Carl Schildbach, who worked as a caretaker on the estates of the Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The library comprises more than 500 samples of different wood species, each taking the form of a book-shaped box (hereafter referred to as a book). The growth habit of the tree was used to determine the size or format of its book, ranging from a small duodecimo to a large folio. The spine of each book is fashioned from the bark of the species and is labelled with its Linnaean classification number, Latin name, and common name in German. The top edge is made up of cross-sections of young branches to show the tissues of the tree in their early stages of development. The bottom edge is a cross-section of mature heartwood. This cut provides an opportunity to inspect the size and density of vascular elements, which are indicators of the hardness of the wood. The front cover is made of sapwood – the softer, more recently formed part of the tree that is lighter in color. The back of the book is an example of



The “books” in Schildbach’s wood library with their Linnaean classification numbers, Latin names, and common names. Photo by Peter Mansfeld.

the heartwood, cut lengthwise to exhibit the grain. The fore-edge displays the wood in its oldest state; the fungus that might be typically found on the tree is glued to that fore-edge; and a small block of polished wood that shows off the color is affixed. Meanwhile, a cubic zoll

(about an inch) of heartwood is accompanied by details of its typical weights according to season. An example of the wood in its carbonized state is marked with its diminished size and weight, and its calorific values – the

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Top edges of the “books” of the Schildbach’s wood library.



“Fore-edges” with wood samples and labels affixed.

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Wood library compiled by Carl Schildbach. Kassel, 1771-99.
Exhibition cabinet by Mark Dion, 2012. Naturkundemuseum Kassel.

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heating power produced by burning – are listed in two different temperature scales.

The front cover of each book slides open to reveal a chamber. Inside are specimens that illustrate different points in the tree's lifecycle, marked according to month. These consist of seeds and seed capsules; a complete seedling with its roots and first pair of leaves; a branch with knobs and joints; buds and leaves in different stages of development; young, wilted, and dried flowers; a wax model of the fruit; and a skeleton of the leaf. A slip of paper pasted inside the front cover carries a handwritten description of the tree's distribution, special properties, prevalent forms of rot, as

well as information about its ideal placement in the landscape.

Schildbach drew upon at least two different systems of classification to help organize his wood library: that of the Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus, with its emphasis on the male and female parts of the plant, and that of Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, with its emphasis on the structure of the flower and fruit. The Linnaean system uses 24 "classes" to identify plants. These groupings are determined by the number of male organs, or stamens, in the flower, and further subdivided by the number of female parts, called pistils. The Linnaean class numbers are prominently displayed on the spines of Schildbach's volumes and provide an ordering schema for the collection.

Schildbach's staging of a "virtual reality" inside each book is built upon Tournefort's theory that plants should be known through the resemblances of their flowers, fruits, and growth patterns. Such features can be seen with the naked eye and include characteristics beyond the number of reproductive organs. Tournefort, a professor of botany at the royal gardens in Paris, described the blossoms and fruits of thousands of plants in a three-volume publication in 1694. He linked his text to matching illustrations, helping the reader see what he was expressing with words.

Schildbach complemented his written descriptions of trees with the opportunity to see, touch, and smell nature – if not in the wild, then at least with the dried plant material and wax models of his wood library. His work attracted the attention of experts and collectors across Europe, but he rebuffed an



The seeds, a twig with leaves, flowers, and fruits.
Photo by Peter Mansfeld.



The different “formats” in a wood library compiled by Candid Huber. Ebersberg, c. 1791. Technische Universität München.



Featuring salix cinerea or pussy willow. Lilienfeld Abbey. Photo by Harald Schmid.



Wood library compiled by Friedrich Alexander von Schlümbach and Johann Goller. Nuremberg, 1805-1810. Alnarp, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Photo by Mikael Risedal.

invitation to take the wood library to Paris and also refused to sell it to Empress Catherine the Great of Russia. Schildbach wrote that he hoped his work would be beneficial to those concerned with nature, forestry, and the management of such resources. In the end, he left the wood library to his patron in exchange for a pension. The collection remains in Kassel and is now housed in the Ottoneum Natural History Museum.

Although Schildbach produced only one wood library, his approach was imitated widely. These collections came to market from around 1790 to 1810. For example, Candid Huber, a Benedictine monk and contemporary of Schildbach, constructed and sold more than 30 wood libraries by subscription. Among his customers were foresters, forest owners, members of the nobility and clergy, as well as government officials. Huber organized his books according to a system that focused on the use of trees as natural resources and in which plants were categorized into seven classes according to height. He followed this schema in the design of his volumes – the tallest of the seven sizes reserved for timber, such as oaks, and the shortest for low-growing shrubs and groundcovers, such as creeping broom. Each item in the library consists of two wooden boards affixed to a central spine of bark with leather straps, permitting it to be opened like a book or clamshell. The name of the species was written around the “margins” in Latin, German, French, and English. The interior of the book was hollowed out to accommodate seedlings, small branches, flowers, fruits, leaves, needles, cones, resin, and sometimes the insects likely to be found on the tree. A small drawer with a pull-knob inside the spine contains seeds and pips. Large seeds or nuts were embedded directly into the surface of the wood.

Instead of using replicas mimicking the

look of fresh fruit, Huber employed actual specimens that had been dried in the manner of a herbarium. This minor difference is a departure from the virtual reality conjured by Schildbach’s combination of nature and artifice. Huber warned that the desiccated fruits in his library should not be eaten or put in the mouth, even as a joke, because they were coated with arsenic to reduce the likelihood of infestation. However, recurring problems with insects and vermin eventually prompted him to replace the fruits with wax imitations. Eleven of Huber’s wood libraries survive. One of the largest is housed in a museum in his hometown of Ebersberg in Bavaria. Other volumes are in Munich, Regensburg, and the library of the Lilienfeld Abbey in Austria.

In the early nineteenth century, Friedrich Alexander von Schlümbach and Johann Goller began producing wood libraries in Nuremberg. These libraries were chiefly marketed to aristocratic collectors. Whereas the particular growth characteristics of the trees had been physically represented by the different sizes of the books made by Schildbach and Huber, the regular ten-inch height of the volumes in these later libraries suggests that the customers were more interested in having a visually coherent collection than learning about the habits of individual species. An example of this generation of wood library, comprising 217 volumes, may be found at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Alnarp.

The forests of the German-speaking lands had been greatly damaged by the Seven Years’ War (1756-63) but they were nevertheless considered to be key to economic recovery. Wood was essential in the construction and heating of the homes needed to support expanding populations. Wood was also necessary in industrial projects such as the production of iron, as well as crafts and trades that included glassmaking and shipbuilding.

Responding to a sense of impending crisis, government officials tried to economize on their dwindling reserves while increasing future supply. To this end, theorists concocted ways to measure forests, and administrators developed tables with rows converting wood into numbers, and numbers into current value. Despite these efforts, the forestry authorities had difficulty reconciling their calculations of wood mass, growth rates, and sustained yield with reality, because there remained some distance between the living forest and their “science” of it.

Because they are comprehensive collections of wood specimens, wood libraries are of significant use to those with interests in forestry, the wood sciences, and the wood trade. Yet William L. Stern, former curator of wood collections at the Smithsonian and professor of botany, despaired in 1973 that such collections in the United States were in the process of being consolidated. Recent years have witnessed a further devaluation of wood libraries: efforts have been made to separate the “scientific” wood libraries at research institutions – often associated with herbaria and microscope slides – from the more “informal” collections of woodworkers and hobbyists. What may be seen in the wood library, then and now, is a continuing debate about how to know nature. Are trees best understood through words and taxonomic names? Through tables or spreadsheets filled with numbers and genomic data? Or through an experience of nature itself? Standing, as we are, at the precipice of an environmental disaster of global proportions, whatever ways we have come to think nature should be known have proven inadequate. What will be needed to address the current crisis is a richer understanding of our world that is based on more and different ways of knowing.

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Juliette Kinzie as Historian

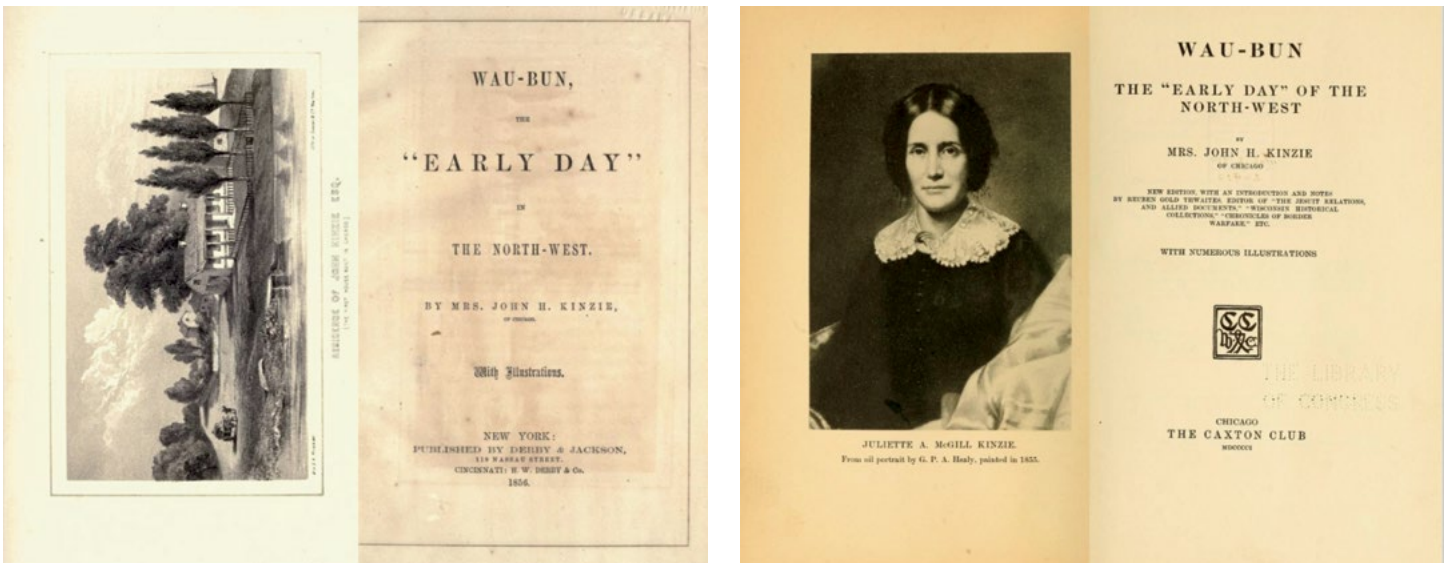
Ann Durkin Keating

Juliette Kinzie's *Wau-Bun: The "Early Day" in the North-West* has been in print since 1856, far longer than any other book of Chicago history. The author related her own experiences, as well as those of her extended family, in the Chicago region when it was still part of "Indian country." While some historians have dismissed her work as a romanticized fiction, I found much that could be confirmed in other historical sources and consider her a

Juliette Kinzie was one of the first historians in the United States writing about the American West and devoted considerable energy to framing the early history of Chicago around the experiences of her family. Much of her legacy rests on continued interest in her 1856 book *Wau-Bun*. From the start, *Wau-Bun* was highly praised for providing a "faithful and well-drawn picture of the life of those pioneers of the American wilderness." The book comprises several distinct parts in its 38 chapters. Thirty of them describe Juliette's experiences

history. She wanted to be sure that the accomplishments of her husband and his extended family provided the base from which Chicago history emerged.

These Chicago chapters comprise the basis of many later histories of the city, and it is here that we see Juliette's methods as a historian. She did not use sources like newspapers or government documents. Instead, she relied on family stories and accounts of friends and acquaintances. She wrote in the first person and interjected herself into the narrative so as not to lose "its air of



credible source. After finishing my book *Rising Up from Indian Country: The Battle of Fort Dearborn and the Birth of Chicago*, I decided to learn more about this Chicago historian.

I found that Juliette Kinzie led an interesting life that went far beyond what she shared in *Wau-Bun*. Born in 1806 in Middletown, Connecticut, Juliette received an unusually strong education. She married John Kinzie, a U.S. Indian Agent in Wisconsin in 1830. They relocated to Chicago a few years later. Juliette was part of a small but critical cohort who migrated into the former Northwest Territory. In Chicago, the couple raised a family as the city grew from a few hundred residents to over half a million. In the last decade of their lives, they endured the Civil War that split their family north and south. *The World of Juliette Kinzie: Chicago before the Fire* (Chicago, 2019) chronicles the story of Juliette and her family. In this essay, I want to focus on her as a historian.

in Wisconsin in the years just before and after the 1832 Black Hawk War. She drew a vivid picture of the lives of the Ho-Chunk and their world that "sparkles with humor and with the pleasure of youth." Most of the book can be described as memoir, a highly personal and detailed view of a world that by 1856 had already disappeared from view. Women and families are the center point of her attention, as she writes sympathetically of the Native American world that she observed.

The chapters on Chicago include Juliette's own accounts of the town in 1831, but also lay out the earliest history of the city. Four of the six chapters of *Wau-Bun* that explore Chicago and environs revolve around her own experiences, while the other two are focused on the Kinzie family in August 1812 and the Battle of Fort Dearborn (that she described as "the massacre"). Without question, Juliette placed the Kinzie family front and center in Chicago

truth and reality." Works of history in this era, including *Wau-Bun*, reflected a world based in households, communities, and dense kin and friendship ties. In a very real sense, *Wau-Bun* is a work of social history.

Juliette was accepted as a historian in her day when there was no graduate training with which one could have gained expertise from a number of sources. As a young woman, she encountered Henry Schoolcraft, who wrote an 1821 travelogue of an expedition through the western Great Lakes that included Chicago. She pored over his powerful combination of sketches and written descriptions. Juliette was also influenced by her studies with Emma Willard, who wrote early histories and geographies of the United States. In addition, Juliette read the works of women authors who found commercial success during these years, including the fiction of the Bronte sisters and the domestic economy writings of Catharine



"Birds-Eye View of Chicago," by J. T. Palmatary, 1857. In this closeup, just north of the Rush Street bridge is the Lake House and traveling one block west (up) at the northeast corner of Cass Street and Michigan Avenue is the Kinzie House. Chicago History Museum.

Beecher. All offered Juliette models for her own writing.

Wau-Bun was read and discussed by historical societies, both in the Midwest as well as the east coast. It was ordered by state public schools and adopted for their curricula in Michigan and Wisconsin. Nineteenth-century historians such as A.T. Andreas relied heavily on Juliette's accounts. He reprinted her 1812 map and several of the lithographs from *Wau-Bun*. Andreas's widely available volumes on Chicago history solidified the Kinzie historical legacy.

Despite the acceptance of *Wau-Bun*, history during Juliette's lifetime was written primarily by men with the time, skill, and inclination to explore the past. Juliette was an exception, not the rule. Local and state historical societies were founded across the country by men who wanted to preserve their communities' past. The Chicago Historical Society, which had initially included women in its gatherings,

became more and more a men's club.

Her many dowry-related lawsuits against leading businessmen left a trail of ill will that diminished the Kinzie family in Chicago history, as well as her reputation as a historian. Instead, it was William Ogden, who spent the last years of his life in New York City, who became linked in the public mind with early Chicago. Why? In 1881, Ogden's brother-in-law, Charles Butler, penned a letter to the Chicago Historical Society suggesting that Chicago was a monument "to his genius and his enterprise." The following year, his friends Isaac Newton Arnold and Y. Young Scammon presented essays on the central role of Ogden in Chicago history to the Historical Society.

Placing Ogden, a highly successful capitalist, at the center of Chicago's early history made even more sense by the early twentieth century, as American society had been transformed by industrialization and urbanization.

The market had expanded deeply into the public sphere as more individuals became waged and salaried employees and purchased more and more of the goods consumed within their households. Formal institutions and government developed to mitigate the worst excesses of the market. Women, who did not have equal standing with men in the formal public sphere, were sidelined. The writing of history also changed. The first generation of university-trained historians challenged the work of earlier chroniclers without graduate degrees, including Juliette Kinzie. While bars to the entrance of women into the academy were not insurmountable, there were only a few who became university-trained researchers. Professional male historians were skeptical of earlier local histories that did not hew to their standards, or consider topics related to government, politics, and corporations.

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Women rarely wrote history, and topics relating to women were seldom deemed important enough to study.

Not surprisingly, Juliette's *Wau-Bun* came under skeptical scrutiny. Her focus on individuals and their families was replaced with an emphasis on political leaders and formal institutions. New graduate training in history included collecting and analyzing a range of sources in the hopes of presenting an objective view of the past. Juliette's works, so deliberately shaped to highlight the role of her family, stood in sharp relief to the standards of the new professional history and made her an easy target.

Milo Milton Quaife was a young historian who took aim at *Wau-Bun*. Armed with graduate training from the University of Missouri and the University of Chicago, Quaife wrote unequivocally "that Mrs. Kinzie had but the vaguest comprehension of the historian's calling." He dismissed her work because she was not dispassionate about her subject: "nothing would have been more abhorrent to her than the disclosure of anything unflattering to a member of her family." In 1913, Quaife wrote his own account of this early period that included a critical assessment of Juliette's work, based on a wide range of archival records. Juliette, then dead for more than 40 years, could not defend herself. But her daughter, 77-year-old Nellie Kinzie Gordon, launched a counter-offensive. She commissioned a fifth edition of *Wau-Bun* to counter Quaife's critique. A Chicago bookseller wrote Nellie reassuringly, "I do not think that you need fear the opinion of Mr. Quaife ... Your books are far better known than his and will carry more weight with most of the Chicago public."

Nellie worked to keep Juliette's legacy alive within her own family as well, especially with her mother's namesake, Juliette "Daisy," born in 1860. Daisy did not meet her "Yankee Gammy" until after the Civil War, but she cast a long shadow on her Savannah home. Her grandparents' Healy portraits had pride of place in their parlor. Daisy heard *Wau-Bun* read aloud from an early age and grew up with romantic stories of Indian country and early Chicago. She heard about her grandmother's skill in traditional household tasks – from baking and canning to sewing and nursing.

In 1912, when Juliette Gordon Low (as Daisy became) founded the Girl Scouts of America

in Savannah, one could see the influence of her grandmother's life. Girls were encouraged to learn traditional household arts through badges that rewarded mastery of skills like cooking and sewing that had been central to Juliette's vision of a well-trained woman: "in every century it has been woman's work to direct the household, and very largely her responsibility to maintain a happy, efficient, hospitable spirit there." An early Girl Scout handbook made a clear connection to "pioneer ancestors" like Juliette Kinzie who had "left the settlements on the eastern borders of our continent and went far westward."



Juliette Kinzie, by George Healy, c. 1856.
Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace.

Until her death in 1917, Nellie Gordon was a champion of her daughter's efforts in founding the Girl Scouts, as well as of her mother's Chicago history. No one replaced Nellie as her mother's defender, but Milo Quaife moderated his indictment over time, eventually endorsing her as "Chicago's earliest author." While Juliette's work did not meet the standards of the modern historical profession, he argued it still had value as a primary source on Chicago in the 1830s. However, when Bessie Louise Pierce published the first volume of her monumental history of Chicago in 1937, she relied on Milo Quaife, with little reference to *Wau-Bun*. Indeed, there is almost no mention of Juliette Kinzie, even ignoring her foundational role in the story of St. James Episcopal Church. By contrast, William Ogden is mentioned more than 50 times in Pierce's index.

In subsequent years, some historians and literary critics have embraced Quaife's early

harsh criticisms of *Wau-Bun* as a work of fiction, not of history. Against this tide, in 1971, the editors of *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary*, identified Juliette as one of 26 historians included in the volume. Kathryn Kish Sklar identified Juliette as a historian and Nina Baym, in the introduction to the 1992 edition of *Wau-Bun*, unequivocally described Juliette's book as "a key narrative of early Illinois history." However, the controversy still lingers, and Juliette Kinzie's reputation has languished.

My work on this era made use of *Wau-Bun*. In *Rising Up from Indian Country*, I found

much that could be confirmed in other historical sources. What Juliette included is truthful, but she left out many people and stories that would cast a less than positive light on her family. She did not provide the documentation that Quaife expected of history, but that does not mean that her work was not part of the genre. History written in the first half of the nineteenth century emerged from literary culture, not from an academic setting, and Juliette's style put her squarely within the norms of her era. *Wau-Bun* is history written from an earlier era when families and kin networks served as the basis for society. We are reminded that history reflects the construction of the world in which it is crafted. That Milo Quaife did not value her perspective reflects his era of high industrialization when the individual, the

market, and formal institutions were paramount to understanding events and trends. Perhaps Quaife did not realize that he was as trapped by his time as Juliette had been. His work on early Chicago did not focus on families, but on government and military records. Through these sources, Quaife was able to uncover the experience of soldiers, officers, and political leaders in early Chicago. He added much to our understanding of this era, as had Juliette before him. My work offers another view of that past, shaped as much by our present as was that of Juliette Kinzie and Milo Quaife. All offer paths into the past, but also evidence of the world in which they were created.

Juliette's erasure from U.S. history is less personal; she was a significant woman, but not exceptional in her age. She was not a leader such as Abraham Lincoln or Frederick Douglass, nor a strident reformer like fellow Chicagoans Mary Livermore or Myra Bradwell. She was a rule follower, not a rule breaker. While exceptional people defy conventions



Image of the Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable Homesite as rendered by Juliette Kinzie in her 1856 Wau-Bun.



Alexander Hesler, 1856, Fort Dearborn with Lake House across the main stem of the Chicago River in the background. Chicago History Museum.

and challenge orthodox thinking. Juliette's life offers insight into the world of more ordinary people. She is representative of the majority of white northerners who were not strong proponents of slavery, but were willing to see it continue until the crises of the 1850s. In this, she was much like Abraham Lincoln and the western Republican Party on the cusp of the Civil War. Understanding her views can help us better understand this crucial time in American history. Historians too frequently have focused on figures who held what were then extreme views. Juliette was not an abolitionist nor was she a proponent of slavery; yet she held deep prejudices against African-Americans and most immigrants. Known for her charitable work among Chicago's poorest residents, she also did not hesitate to use racial slurs against her Irish neighbors or the enslaved people working in her daughter's household. Juliette's life suggests that alongside a narrative that emphasizes individual rights, historians should focus on household responsibilities to better understand the United States in the decades before the Civil War. Her life and views challenged me to reconsider several of the broad frames that have informed long years of teaching and researching in America's nineteenth century. The fight for individual rights (freedoms) has been a critical organizing tool for much of the recent history of nineteenth-century America. From the 1776 *Declaration of Independence*, individual rights expanded from a limited notion of propertied men who were heads of households, to the broader sense in Lincoln's 1863 Gettysburg Address that offered "a new birth of freedom" with the end of slavery. The extension of suffrage (to all men), the individ-

ualism of the Second Great Awakening, abolition, women's rights, and the Civil War itself, are parts of this powerful interpretation that have dominated thinking and teaching about American history for more than a generation. However, they cannot alone help us to understand the complexity of this past.

Chasing Juliette has caused me to rethink much that I thought I understood about nineteenth-century America. Her experiences reminded me that individualism is not the only lens by which to explore the past. Juliette was not much concerned with individual rights; household responsibilities were at the center of her worldview. She looked to households, not the market, as the central arbiter for civic culture. While there is much to admire in this worldview, it is rightfully reviled today because it supported the enslavement of millions of people and accepted inequality for most Americans. The deep racial and gender prejudices and stereotypes that underlay the patriarchy of this worldview must be confronted, both in history and in our world today. Juliette's deep prejudices were very real, but to dismiss her commitment to households simply as racist misses an opportunity to consider an alternative to our market-driven world. The problem was not with her acceptance of a household compact of shared responsibilities that stood outside the market, but in the patriarchy grounded in racism and sexism with which it was coupled. By the end of Juliette's life, the household world of shared responsibilities was losing ground to an individualism that was at the heart of capitalism. While an end to slavery marked a significant gain for individual rights, Juliette and other women still encountered a patriarchal world,

even as the market became the primary social and economic arbiter. During the height of industrial capitalism, progressive reforms mitigated the worst excesses of the market through an activist government, unionism, and a strong core of formal social service institutions. Occasionally, reformers like settlement house workers returned to the model of household responsibilities, but most looked to large-scale solutions to match the power of industrial capitalism.

Nearly 150 years later, Chicagoans are at another crossroads. Many of the public institutions of the industrial era have fallen to privatization as the formal market has made inroads into virtually every aspect of life. As Juliette's experiences have shown us, the market does not have to be the arbiter of all. Civic engagement and responsibility still matter to the life of the city. While individual rights and a commitment to equality are fundamental, they should not eclipse a commitment to common responsibilities. Juliette's life and times challenge us to envision a world where monetization and privatization do not entirely dominate, where the end goal is not the atomization of the individual in the marketplace.

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Bread and Salt in African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song

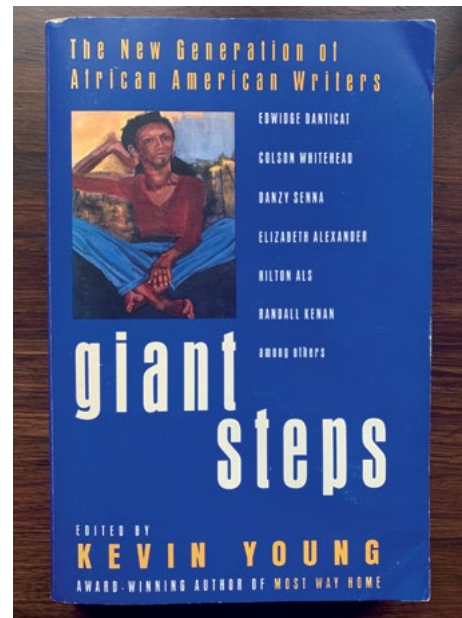
Irvin J. Hunt

The summer before I flew off to college, I was given a book I have taken everywhere I have lived: Kevin Young's *Giant Steps: The New Generation of African American Writers* (2000). Many of the writers gathered between its thick, sizeable pages, spanning and bending all literary genres, were only a handful of years older than myself. With its sea-blue cover and autumnal yellow print, the book represented for me the ocean I was about to cross to enter the next season of my life – my own giant step. I am struck by this now, because racked by a season of what writer Imani Perry has recently called “our hibernation without rest,” our long Covid-exhaustion, nothing feels further from my capacities than a giant step.

Yet it is precisely this narrowing of our energies that makes Young's latest rhapsody to Black expressive arts, *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song* (Library of America, 2020), so necessary, so fitting, for our times. Everything about the volume is an invitation to rest, from the colors on its cover, muted-red and marigold, to the modesty of its title, captured best by the last word – “song.” Without the article, “song” denotes something smaller than a song, something as soft and intimate as “the music the wind / Makes when I run for a bus,” to quote one of the book's bards, Amiri Baraka. It certainly does not suggest anything on the order of John Coltrane's “Giant Steps,” widely regarded as “the most feared song in jazz.” Despite how light it feels to carry, this volume bears giant numbers: 246 Black writers, 675 poems, first published between 1746 and 2020 (even the titular total of “250 years” adds modesty to magnitude), on 1160 pages.

I started my mornings with this beautifully printed book throughout the winter last year. What I loved most was that I could read through it at random, back to front, front to back, middle to middle, a kind of iniminimini-more, and still get the same effect – recharge. I lacked the energy for the long attention required by a novel, but I found I could slip into a poem, as knee-bending as Baraka's, as mind-bending as “Giant Steps,” and be carried through the day. From Lucy

Terry's “Bar's Fight” to Jamila Woods's “Ode to Herb Kent” – whose voice is imagined “as speaking coolly to flames ... spreading the gospel of soul in a time of fire” – none of these works are easy, but all of them give ease. What Young captures best in his only “comprehensive” anthology is the care Black poetry takes with our flames. In the words of George R. Margetson, a little-known writer from the early twentieth century, this is a tradition of song “to the people ... with the people ... for the people ... of the people ... to rouse the people.” It is a tradition of togetherness across time, place, and even pandemics.



Nothing makes this closeness clearer than Young's omission of the publication dates from the ends of the poems (a standard inclusion in anthologies) and his use of painterly names for its eight, numbered sections (one gets the sense they could go on forever). Instead of the Black Arts Era for 1971-1989, Young calls these years “Blue Light Sutras.” Instead of the weighty “Harlem Renaissance” for 1919-1936, Young pulls an image from a poem by Countee Cullen, “the dark tower.” It is no coincidence that “The Dark Tower” was also the name for the legendary gathering space for Black literati during the 1920s – A'Lelia Walker's palatial

townhouse on West 136th Street. An invitation to gather, not to generalize; to specify, not to pigeonhole; unites all the work in this volume, along with its graceful, editorial input.

Lavishly open to all kinds of imagination, these are poems for people who read nothing but poetry and anything but poetry. Young describes contemporary poets like Claudia Rankine as uniquely irreverent about the “old artificial divide between vernacular and formal,” but to read through the volume is to see that this irreverence to divisions of taste was present from the start. Even the most intricately wrought poem of the Ballads of Remembrance (1936-1959) section, Melvin B. Tolson's “Dark Symphony,” is trellised to the vernacular:

Black Crispus Attucks taught

Us how to die

Before white Patrick Henry's bugle breath
Uttered the vertical

Transmitting cry:

‘Yea, give me liberty or give me death.’

The inclusion of big names like Tolson next to all but forgotten ones like George Margetson suggests the other contribution this book makes to American letters. Recovery. Take Angelina Grimke, for instance. Grimke is most often anthologized for her anti-lynching play *Rachel* (1916), but Young includes her recently disinterred, never before published, love poems on gay life. Or take the first anthology of African American poetry, *Les Cenelles: Choix de poésies indigènes* (1845), by free Creoles in Louisiana. Young departs from tradition by including translations of these works, written in languages other than English. Above all, Young recovers the notion that African American poetry is not defined by one renaissance here, another one there. It is defined by renaissance in and of itself. When he published *Giant Steps*, he wanted, he said, “to capture the new energy afoot.” Twenty years later, he is still saying, as he told the *Chicago Tribune*, that “people are writing in what I think is a real renaissance of Black poetry and they're leading the way of the renaissance in American poetry, more generally. I think you see the ways contemporary

poets have just exploded in numbers, but also the quality of poetry now."

That explosive quality is evident in the way Francis Ellen Watkins Harper draws out the tough implications of what it means to live together even as we live apart. I say "draw," but a better word would be "unspool." Here is a verse that may very well leave you undone, from Harper's "A Double Standard" (1895).

*Yes, blame me for my downward course,
But oh! remember well,
Within your homes you press the hand
That led me down to hell.*

Here everyone is a friend of a fiend, six degrees of separation reduced to none.

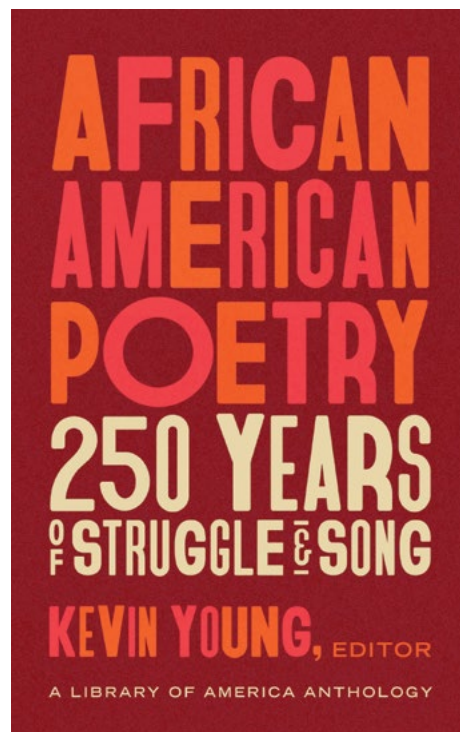
The notion of broad implications in history's crime and the failure to collectively face this keep reappearing through the volume. This failure sometimes surfaces as cognitive impairments, as in one of Grimké's most famous poems, "Tenebris," meaning "darkness" or "after dark." The paranoid speaker asks about a tree "whose black hand plucks and plucks / At the bricks, ... is it a black hand / Or is it a shadow?" Uncannily touching the tone of our times, this speaker has lost all sense of the divide between fiction and fact, between the dark and a dark body, between a body and the absence of it. When we all share the house that slavery built, ghosts and griefs lurk in every shadow in every corner of every eye. Haunted rooms among the scratch and play of shadows, these poems beseech us to do what we have not been able to do – mourn our dead as if our sanity depends on it. Because our sanity depends on it.

I, for one, depended last winter on all these excursions into the relationship between death and survival. They were sometimes simply stated, as in Sarah Louisa Forten's "The Grave of the Slave," from the aptly named section "Bury Me in a Free Land (1770-1899)" – "The sod of the valley now covers his form, / He is safe in his last home, he feels not the storm." Sometimes simply spoofed, as in Lucille Clifton's wink of a poem from "Ideas of Ancestry (1959-1975)." For obvious reasons, this one poem became a sort of Covid-anthem across social media.

*... come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.*

These works do not make grieving easy, but between their flint and humor they do make it possible.

I want to say more, much more, about how these works may carry you when the ends of your week feel withered and thin, but account-



ing for over a thousand pages of poetry feels a lot like accounting for over a thousand pages of poetry. So I leave you with this, Yusef Komunyakaa's "Anodyne," from the "Blue Light Sutras (1976-1989)." While it is customary to see during this period of bald indignation for all cultural hierarchies the juxtaposition of the high and the low, the very abstract and the very concrete, the inside and the outside, it is rare to see it done to such ecstatic effect, and even rarer as an "anodyne," an alleviation of pain, the speaker's own pain at looking at his body, until, that is, he decides to look again.

*I love my crooked feet
shaped by vanity & work
shoes made to outlast
belief.*

*... I love
how everything begs
blood into song & prayer
inside an egg.*

*I love this body
made to weather the storm
in the brain.*

Looking again at values given to the Black body, at grief ungiven to the loss of it, describes all the poems selected for the volume. So let us look again at Komunyakaa's juxtapositions. How many there are – a "body" in the "storm" in the "brain," "feet" in "work" in "shoes" in "belief," "everything" in "blood" in "prayer" in an "egg." Komunyakaa is moving in and out, in and out, ever-expanding concentric containers of scrutiny, like shuffling babushka dolls, until, at last, they cease to contain him, and even his angels are stunned.

*... I love my big hands.
I love it clear down to the soft
quick motor of each breath ...*

*I love this body, this
solo & ragtime jubilee
behind the left nipple,
because I know I was born
to wear out at least
one hundred angels.*

Young's latest book makes you want to cry out in the middle of a winter morning, I love this tradition! I love how all its children shepherd winter into grief into bread and salt on a broken moon. If Young's sections are its seasons, I love all eight of them. Big enough to carry us, light enough to carry around, this anthology articulates less a map of a territory than touchstones on which to stand, withstand, and go on, less a song than song: the idea that our smallest steps are sometimes our biggest.

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Glen Wiche, Bookman, Pepysian, Caxtonian: Memories and Appreciations

With thanks to Robert Cotner, Susan Hanes, Bob Karrow, and Charles Priestley

Glen Norman Wiche, born in 1950, passed away on Friday, August 28, 2020. He joined the Caxton Club in 1979 and served on the club's council and as its secretary. Glen spent his youth in Naperville, graduated from Naperville High and from Allegheny College in Pennsylvania, then returned to live in Chicago and, in latter years, back in Naperville. He owned the London Book Shop, the name an echo of his life-long Anglophilia, and was a noted antiquarian bookman and history enthusiast. He was the author of two books – *Dispatches from Bermuda* and *Their Loyalty They Kept*. He travelled extensively – often to England and to Nova Scotia, Iceland, Bermuda, and the Falkland Islands for historical sites and more. He made a special trip to Greenland where his father landed as a pilot during WWII. Glen Wiche was also a member of the Civil War Roundtable of Chicago, Cliff Dwellers, the Newberry Consort, and Union League Club. Donations in Glen's name may be made to The Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago or Second Sense (previously the Guild for the Blind of Chicago).

Robert Cotner remembers that "Glen Wiche could be called the 'quiet one.' Softly spoken, his friendly smile was a presence for Caxton Club members for the past several decades. A frequent speaker at our noon luncheons, Glen entertained us on a wide variety of topics – the Fine Arts Building of Chicago and its role in the book trade, book hunting in the Arctic, and the naval side of the American Civil War, among other topics. In February 1996, Glen's life was touched by grief when Susan, his wife and constant companion, died. And now we share this grief with Glen's passing: We shall miss this kind, unassuming Caxtonian."

Susan Hanes recalls: "Glen and Susan Wiche were the first people I met when I attended my first Caxton Club meeting back in February 1995, when they led a lively tour of the Fine Arts Building. In 1998, I succeeded Glen as secretary of the club. I enjoyed discussing bookish subjects with him, particularly Samuel Pepys, and was inspired by the way he demonstrated that life could present new interests to pursue to those who reach for them. He

was a wonderful example. I will never forget how he could talk without notes and not lose track of which slide he was on when he gave presentations to the Caxton Club."

Bob Karrow: "Glen and I shared an interest in places in the extreme north or south (Greenland, Iceland, the Falklands, to name three) and in maps, and variants of these interests formed the gist of most of our conversations. His fascination with Samuel Pepys led him to investigate the appearance on seventeenth-century maps of 'Pepys Island,' a place reported to lie north of the Falklands. I gave him some assistance and he amassed a good deal of material though never, I think, published on the topic. Glen was also a serious student of the Civil War. His book *Dispatches from Bermuda* contained the letters of the man who was the United States Consul to Bermuda during the Civil War when the island was a hub of Confederate commerce. It was a fine, solid piece of work that I reviewed for the *Caxtonian*. I well remember his Caxton Club presentation about visiting the Faroes. Ever the bookman, he reported on the state of publishing, on bookstores, magazines, and newspapers in these isolated subarctic isles. I was struck by how bravely he met the challenge of the blindness that afflicted him as an adult. He taught himself to use various devices for enlarging texts and continued to use computers in his work and research. He was most pleased when a Caxton presentation did not rely too much on slides."

Charles Priestley: "I first met Glen Wiche in 1967, when I was in my final year at Trinity College, Cambridge. That was our first meeting, but we had been in contact for at least three years before that, as a result of a shared interest in the American Civil War. It must have been in early 1964 that I was writing a paper on the battle of Wilson's Creek that mentioned a Confederate unit called the South Kansas-Texas Regiment. The name intrigued me – why 'South Kansas-Texas?' I placed an advertisement in *Civil War Times Illustrated* asking if anyone could give me information about that unit. I received a letter from Glen Wiche. He was only 13 or 14 at the time and I was only 18. This letter was the start of a correspondence, and a friendship that continued until Glen's death 56 years



Glen Wiche

later. Over the years, he visited England on a number of occasions and always entered spiritedly into our various activities, including regular visits to various pubs. He was a great Anglophile, and a great lover of London in particular. He often referred to Britain as 'the mother country,' and when he started his own book business it was no surprise that he called it the London Book Shop. Glen's two great loves were books and history. He was truly knowledgeable about books and was a habitué of London's second-hand bookshops. Glen was a gregarious and sociable man who enjoyed good food and drink, and liked meeting friends over dinner or over a pint or two in a pub. Glen had suffered the loss of his wife, Susan, who died at the age of only 41. Shortly after that his sight began to fail him, becoming progressively worse until he was almost completely blind. Many would have been tempted to give up in despair at this point, but Glen refused to be cowed or pitied and insisted on carrying on his life as before."

A memory from Susan Hanes: "In January 1999, I lost my husband, Houston, in an accident at home. I will always be grateful for Glen's kindness. He wrote to me and included a quotation from John Donne."

All mankind is one volume. When one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language. And every chapter must be so translated. God employs several translators. Some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice. But God's hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again in that library where every book shall lie open to one another.

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Eminent Caxtonians, Five: The Blue and the Grey

Dan Crawford

The Caxton Club's membership has included a number of veterans, sometimes of more than one war, sometimes from armies other than that of the United States. Some members belonged to the U.S. military and the club at the same time, in recognition of which, the Caxton Club council, overcome with patriotic fervor during the Second World War, actually announced that any member of the club on active duty would not be expected to pay dues.

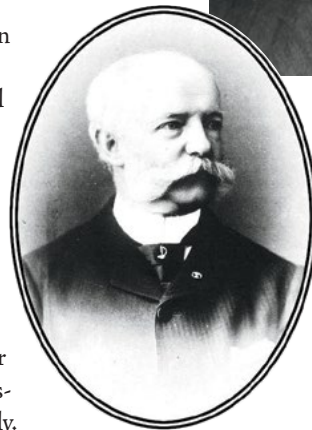
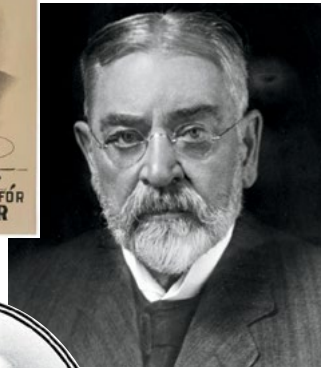
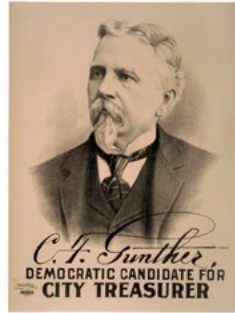
Of course, the club was founded at a time when Civil War veterans were approaching the age of leisure, moving toward retirement, or thinking of it. Three early members had Civil War records which are still being discussed and debated. (Military history encourages debate; such is the martial spirit.)

Robert Todd Lincoln (1843-1926; member 1900-1926) was, by all accounts, better suited to local government work than anything on a larger stage, political or military. He served as a captain on the personal staff of Ulysses S. Grant and was present during the surrender at Appomattox. (When he died he was the last living witness of Lee's surrender.) Otherwise his service was brief and uneventful, because his mother had insisted that her husband, the Commander in Chief, make sure that Robert did not serve until the war was nearly over and in a role where his presence at any actual fighting would be unlikely. After the war, he was constantly urged by the Republican Party to accept positions with the government. He finally gave in, serving as secretary of war from 1881 to 1885, to no particular distinction, good or bad. To the surprise of the people of Springfield, Illinois and against his own intentions, he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery (his widow decided he deserved a spot where he would not be overshadowed by his more famous father.)

Charles Frederick (né Carl Friedrich) Gunther (1837-1920; member 1907-1920) is well worthy of a book, if anyone reading this is looking for a project. He was a German immigrant who became one of Chicago's major candy manufacturers, a Chicago alderman, and one of the city's most notable eccentrics. His private collection, which now belongs to the Chicago History Museum, not only

included Libby Prison (shipped stone by stone and rebuilt here) and Abraham Lincoln's deathbed, but also the skin of the snake that tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden and the mummified body of the Pharaoh's daughter who found Moses in the bulrushes. (He also attempted to buy an Egyptian pyramid and ship it to Chicago).

His Civil War service was an accident. Starting with an ice company in Peru, Illinois, he headed south to Memphis, Tennessee, to



Clockwise from top left: Charles Frederick Gunther, Robert Todd Lincoln, and Alexander C. McClurg

work for another ice distributor. When war broke out, he found himself shipping Confederate troops instead of ice. Whether he wanted this job, or simply took it in preference to being thrown into prison as a citizen of the Union, has been under discussion for many years. It is true that when the steamboat where he worked was captured by Union troops in 1862, authorities decided he was no traitor, and sent him back to Peru. He spent the rest of the war as a travelling candy salesman, later going to Europe to study candy production and returning to start his own candy factory, which was lost in the Great Fire. Rebuilding, he went on, according to some writers, to produce the first advertising giveaways seen in Chicago, introduce caramel to the United States, and invent Cracker Jacks.

Alexander C. McClurg (1832-1901; member 1895-1901) was a bookseller and wanted very much to remain a bookseller, but when war came along, he joined one of the companies that formed itself in the business district. (In those days, any group which could get a hundred men to enlist at one time could form a company, elect their own officers up to the rank of Captain, and stick together during training and combat.) He showed an aptitude for the work, and eventually found himself a brigadier general, with a star on each shoulder and a command as part of Sherman's March to the Sea.

His moment of legend came during the Battle of Jonesboro, on August 31, 1864. Georgia is warm at the end of August, and his mission was not easy. He was to take his brigade through the Confederate line and return to attack from the rear. Three assaults were repulsed.

Mopping his face with his handkerchief after the third attempt, he spotted what looked like a weak spot in the Confederate front. There was not time to think about it, or even draw a sword. Waving his handkerchief over his head, he called out to his men to follow him, and rode straight at the perceived weak spot.

Fortunately for McClurg, it *was* a weak spot, and his men *did* follow. They broke through the line, making McClurg famous as the man who charged the enemy waving a handkerchief. Considered both talented, brave, and lucky, a winning combination in any army, he was offered more stars for his shoulders after the war, if he would continue to lead soldiers into battle.

McClurg still wanted to be a bookseller, and declined this offer, going back to Chicago to build up a business, rebuild it after the Chicago Fire, and become a mover and shaker in the world of literature as both bookseller and publisher. The gatherings of book-minded people in his store gradually turned into The Caxton Club, which he joined within two months of its founding, remaining a member until his death in 1901.

As if being a publisher and bookseller and godfather of the Caxton Club were not enough, he also made his mark as a literary critic. In this role he was absolutely scathing in his hatred for Stephen Crane and *The Red Badge of Courage*, which he called a totally unrealistic and un-American view of war. Nothing like that had ever happened under his command.

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Caxton Club Supports 2021 Honey & Wax Prize



2021 HONEY & WAX BOOK COLLECTING PRIZE

Here at Honey & Wax, we take a particular interest in the evolving role of women in the rare book trade, on both the buying and selling sides. We are delighted to announce the fifth annual Honey & Wax Book Collecting Prize, a cash award of \$1000 for an outstanding book collection built by a woman aged 30 or younger, anywhere in the United States.

The winning collection must have been started by the contestant, and all items in the collection must be owned by her. A collection may include books, manuscripts, and ephemera; it may be organized by theme, author, illustrator, printing technique, binding style, or another clearly articulated principle. A great collection is more than a reading list: it's a chosen group of printed or manuscript items, creatively put together.

Collections will not be judged on their size or their market value, but on their originality and their success in illuminating their chosen subjects.

Please submit the following by the deadline of June 1, 2021:

- An essay of no more than 1500 words describing the purpose, history, and goal of the collection. What inspired you to begin collecting? How has your focus changed over time? What question does your collection seek to answer?
- A bibliography of at least 20, but no more than 50, items in the collection arranged by author, date, or another principle of your choice. Each entry should include, at minimum, the author, title, place of publication, publisher, date, and a brief description.
- A wish list of the three books you would most like to add to the collection, explaining your reasoning.

Meet our past winners, and apply here:
www.honeyandwaxbooks.com/prize.php

Many thanks to our 2021 sponsors: Biblio, The Caxton Club, Swann Galleries, and Ellen A. Michelson.

This year's winner will be announced in September.

honey&wax
BOOKSELLERS

May and June 2021 club events

Full details and registration can be found on our website, under Events. (All events are Central Time.)

May 14, 12:30p.m. Sara Quashnie on *Americana is a Creed: Notable Twentieth Century Collectors, Dealers, and Curators*

May 19, 6:30p.m. Anthony Grafton on *Inky Fingers: The Making of Books in Early Modern Europe*

May 26, 6:30p.m. Teri J. Edelstein on *Art Deco from Paris to Chicago: The 1925 Exposition and the Windy City* (co-sponsored with Chicago Collections Consortium, and the Union League Club of Chicago Library)

June 3, 6:30p.m. John Hoover on *A Nation, A City, & Its First Library: Americana as a Way of Life at the St. Louis Mercantile Library for 175 Years* (co-sponsored with St. Louis Mercantile Library)

June 11, 12:30p.m. Eric Johnson on *Pieces of the Puzzle – Manuscript Fragments and Reconstruction*

June 16, 6:30p.m. Book Artists and Binders: *A New Look at Chicago by the Book*