Spring 2010

Thomas Cooper Society Newsletter - Spring 2010

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The University Libraries’ eagerly awaited Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library will be dedicated this summer. The Hollings library will house the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections (RBSC) as well as South Carolina Political Collections (SCPC). The two departments will share a reading room and a meeting room but will have individual exhibit areas, offices, workrooms, and stack areas. The library will also house the University Libraries’ Digital Collections Department.

Dean of Libraries Thomas F. McNally says of the new building, “The Hollings library was envisioned by George Terry, begun by Paul Willis, and will be completed on my watch. In many ways, the Hollings library will exceed any of our expectations. It will be the place in which scholars will want to do their research, the venue we want for our programs and teaching, and the secure home where our donors will want to place their collections.”

Entry to the 50,000-square-foot Hollings library will be across an indoor bridge from the main level of Thomas Cooper Library. State-of-the-art spaces on three levels will provide an ideal climate and atmosphere for both people and library materials. Scholars will find ideal study conditions in the Reading Room while visitors will enjoy changing exhibits mounted by both RBSC and SCPC. The meeting room, with windows opening to the garden area below the building, will be available for library, University, and public programs including presentations, symposia, and annual meetings of the libraries’ support groups.

The University of South Carolina (then South Carolina College) started building its library collections in 1803. By 1850, with 25,000 volumes, South Carolina College had the largest library collection south of Washington, D.C. Two centuries later, the University has the only nationally ranked research library in the state, with extensive provision of digital resources and other media in addition to more than 3.5 million print volumes. The Department of Rare Books and Special Collections preserves many of the great books acquired in the library’s early years. Over the past 25 years, Thomas Cooper’s special collections have grown sixfold, to more than 150,000 volumes, with several comprehensive author collections and modern literary archives.
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SOCIETY YEAR

We opened the fall with an exhibit of selected public documents in the library’s collection and a visit from the public printer of the United States to honor the library on its 125 years as a federal repository library, the longest record in South Carolina and one of the oldest in the South. During the Fall Festival of Authors in October, we welcomed noted poet Billy Collins to a reception prior to his popular public reading.

Later in the month, we gave a reception during the Southeastern Renaissance Conference to unveil two wonderful early oil portraits given to the library by Dr. Peter Koblenzer and Dr. Caroline Koblenzer of Philadelphia. One of the portraits (1792) depicts John Milton as a college student at Cambridge, and the other is the only known image of Milton’s mother, Sara Milton (ca. 1621).

Concluding the fall activities were two events. The first was a reception for William B. Thesing, retired professor of English, on the publication of his book The Way We Read James Dickey (USC Press), coedited with Theda Wrede. In December, we hosted our annual holiday coffee for retired members of the faculty. With great humor, Charleston authors and spouses Nathalie Dupree and Jack Bass discussed their writing careers and sold copies of their latest books.

In late January, we hosted a weekend exhibition of S.C. naturalist prints and drawings from our collections at Kiawah Island. Patrick Scott and Jeffrey Makala brought some of the rarest pieces by John James Audubon and Mark Catesby for the opening of the exhibition, and Patrick gave a delightful talk. This event represents a new level of outreach for the society into the state, and the response of visitors to the materials was overwhelmingly positive.

Since January, members of the rare books and special collections staff have been engaged in getting ready for the move to the new library, and we have had only one activity, our annual booth at the South Carolina Book Festival, together with the always well-received cocktail reception.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On April 8, we gathered at the Summit Club for the society’s annual general meeting. We acknowledged the four retiring board members for their faithful service and special talents: Warren Darby, longtime chair of the Membership Committee; Manton Greer; Hyman Rubin Jr.; and Professor Robert Weir.

We elected Warren Darby vice president/president elect for 2010–2012. He will serve as president in 2011–2012. We elected the following board members to serve 2010–2013: John Mark Dean, Ardis Savory, H. Simmons Tate, and Tom Terrill.

Society membership exceeds 500, and the endowment has grown to more than $100,000. Endowment figures have improved during the year, and we have been able to spend some of our earnings on important books and materials for the collections. As a memorial to one of our long-term supporters and members, Dorothy Ackerman, we purchased a 1654 commentary on Cervantes’ Don Quixote, an author about whom she had published a standard catalogue.

For the opening of the Hollings library, we made two monetary contributions: $2,500 for exhibit equipment and
the purchase of Thomas Babbage’s *Passages from the Life of a Philosopher* (1864), the only major work by Babbage that the library did not own already. Babbage’s other works were in the original collections of South Carolina College.

This year, the society has offered honorary life memberships to three donors of important materials to our library collections: Drs. Peter and Caroline Koblenzer, who gave the Milton portraits, and Dr. E. Conyers O’Bryan Jr., of Florence, whose Winston Churchill collection was acquired in 2009.

We are turning the society over to the very capable hands of Warren Irvin as next year’s president. My major regret has been an inability to offer the Thomas Cooper Medal to a deserving man or woman of letters this year. More than once the Awards Committee worked to identify such a person, and then some circumstance out of our control led to nonsuccess. Yet we have set in motion a strategy to find someone worthy in 2010 in order to award a medal in 2011 so that all of our members can hear this person talk about the honored practice of reading and writing, a central focus of all libraries.

For me personally this has been a fine and rewarding year. For their contributions to the society, I would like to acknowledge Patrick Scott, Elizabeth Sudduth, Jeffrey Makala, and other special collections staff, as well as those who work behind the scenes, Maggie Bergmans and Zella Hilton. We could not function successfully without them.

We are on the verge of opening the Hollings library for our collections. I saw the building in early April. It is a jewel for which we can all be proud for decades to come. Let us rejoice with our library staff and our members in this long-sought achievement finally coming to fruition in 2010.

Following the business meeting, society members enjoyed a fine meal and an excellent speech by one of science’s eminent men and book collectors, Professor Owen Gingerich from Harvard University. Gingerich, author of *The Book Nobody Read: Chasing the Revolutions of Nicolaus Copernicus*, is the author of more than 600 scientific papers as well as *The Eye of Heaven: Ptolemy, Copernicus, Kepler* (1993) and *God’s Universe* (2005).
April 2010 saw the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections’ last exhibit in the Thomas Cooper Library, closing out 45 years of varied and often spectacular displays. “It’s the end of an era,” said Patrick Scott, director of special collections since 1996, “but our exhibition space in the new Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library will bring us much greater flexibility in exhibit design and a better exhibit environment.”

The Mezzanine Gallery was opened when the library’s non–South Carolina special collections moved from McKissick to Thomas Cooper Library in 1976. The first major exhibition, coinciding with the nation’s bicentennial, focused on early American history and featured early George Washington–related pamphlets and a first edition of the Federalist Papers. Initially, the four large upright cases held a permanent display of John James Audubon engravings. The Audubons were also featured in a larger exhibition with McKissick Museum, for which Davy-Jo Ridge, then associate director of libraries, wrote an illustrated catalogue, *A Load of Gratitude: Audubon in South Carolina* (1985).

Over the next 20 years, then head of special collections Roger Mortimer mounted exhibitions on topics ranging from civil engineering and Romantic poetry to camellias and the history of bookbinding. Notable exhibitions for special events included *Aspects of the Western Religious Heritage* (1987) for the University’s Ecumenical Year, *Aspects of French Culture* (1988) for the Society for French Historical Studies, and *Bards and Makers* (1990) for the Sixth International Conference on Early Scottish Literature. “Roger Mortimer set a high standard for the exhibit program. He focused on the quality and rarity of the materials exhibited,” Scott said.

Recent exhibitions have put increasing emphasis on education and interpretation, in grouping and selecting items for display and in preparing the accompanying text. In planning some exhibitions, Scott has worked with the department’s honorary curators (Dr. G. Ross Roy, the late Dr. Matthew Bruccoli, and Dr. Joel Myerson) or other teaching faculty. In the last few years he has shared the exhibit program with another rare books librarian, Jeffrey Makala. Many of the exhibitions have been supported with guided tours for classes or other groups and, most recently, with audio podcasts giving case-by-case commentary. Seating in the gallery area has made it a favorite quiet study space for students, especially in the evenings and during exam periods.
NEW COLLECTIONS, NEW EXHIBITS


Other exhibitions featured recent large acquisitions, including the Joseph Heller archive (2003), the George V. Higgins collection (2006), the James Dickey library (2007), and the Fitzgerald screenplays (2007).

Each of the new major collections in time led to further exhibitions on particular topics. Some of these were Hugh MacDiarmid and “Ossian” from the G. Ross Roy Collection, the Galapagos Islands from Charles Darwin Collection, Walt Whitman from the Joel Myerson Collection, and Milton illustration from the Robert J. Wickenheiser Collection.

Equally important have been the exhibitions displaying items the library has owned for a long time, some acquired more than 200 years ago for the original South Carolina College Library. Over the past 15 years, full-scale mezzanine exhibitions have ranged widely, from African exploration, children’s literature, and Irish writers through science fiction and medieval manuscripts, the Great War, literary biography, and the battle of Gettysburg to Mexican history, the Lewis and Clark expedition, the first 100 years of printing, medieval manuscripts, the history of maps, and the artist William Blake.

NEW GALLERIES, NEW AUDIENCES

From 1996 onward, additional cases in the Graniteville Room and the main floor lobby have allowed simultaneous smaller exhibits. Some of these included annual exhibits of recent gifts; exhibits for the First-Year Reading Experience, African American history month, and women’s history month; student book-collecting exhibits; exhibits for such special events as the Brazil quincentenary in 2000, the Charlotte Perkins Gilman conference in 2001, and the Poe and Lincoln centenaries in 2009; and exhibits on topics designed to educate or intrigue undergraduates such as the Olympics, the history of the Bible, the American Constitution, James Ellroy’s Black Dahlia, vaccination, Charles Babbage’s Calculating Engine, Christmas, China, geology, phrenology, military aviation, and handwriting.

After the exhibitions in the library are taken down, many start a new life, with adapted versions touring to other campuses and Web versions making information about the libraries’ treasures available to students and researchers worldwide. A few exhibitions get the added permanence and cachet of a printed exhibition catalogue, and two of the department’s catalogues have won national Leab Awards for Excellence.

THE FUTURE

“We’ll never run out of new topics because interests change,” said Scott, “though because undergraduates are only here a few years, we sometimes repeat topics to let a new generation experience the library’s treasures.”

The department’s exhibition program will resume in the summer in the Hollings library with Two Centuries of Collecting, a new exhibition showing great books and highlights from all the major collections.
IN MEMORIAM

University Libraries staff members noted with sadness the recent passing of three women whose lives directly impacted the mission of the University Libraries.

Dorothy Anne Peterson Ackerman (Dottie) passed away Nov. 25, 2009. She was a friend and supporter of the University Libraries for many years, most recently as a volunteer in the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Her background as a librarian and her language facility were invaluable in this service.

Longtime members of the Thomas Cooper Society, Mrs. Ackerman and her husband, Steve, received the South Carolina Library Association’s 2006 award for volunteers in recognition of their service to the University Libraries and to the Richland County Public Library.

Mary Alice Copeland Patterson, widow of Dr. William Herman Patterson, the University’s 24th president, passed away Nov. 26, 2009. She was Carolina’s first lady from 1974 to 1977.

Mrs. Patterson showed her support for the University Libraries by establishing the Mary Alice Patterson Fund, to which memorials may be made. With the assistance of Harriette Wunder, Mrs. Patterson established a charitable remainder trust to benefit the George D. Terry Library Building Fund.

Dorothy Katherine Payne, Distinguished Professor Emerita of Music Theory and former dean of the University’s School of Music, passed away on March 11, 2010, in Cincinnati.

Dr. Payne was an enthusiastic supporter of the University Libraries in general and the Music Library in particular. In 1999, the Dorothy K. Payne Music Library Endowment was established in Payne’s honor by an anonymous donor. The endowment has been enriched by gifts from many of Dr. Payne’s other friends and colleagues and has been designated to receive memorial gifts.

Since 2006, the Payne endowment has enabled the library to subscribe to the Naxos Digital Music Library, and the 24-hour streaming audio service DRAM, a scholarly resource of recordings, particularly strong in American and 20th-century music.

ONE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND RARE AND SPECIAL TREASURES ARE ON THE MOVE

During the past two years, staff members have worked to merge such subcollections as children’s literature and Civil War history into the main special collections shelf arrangement.

The process involved shifting and inter-shelving some 50,000 volumes previously shelved in different locations. This was the last and most intensive phase of a 10-year effort, which also included providing protective cases for fragile books.

Over the past year, staff members have been measuring space needed for each collection, planning how materials of many different sizes and formats will fit the new library’s compact shelving, and developing the logistical plan to get them ready to be moved.

One of the final and most challenging aspects of the project was the merger of all of the “folios,” the largest size books, into a single shelving sequence.

Staff members of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections spent April and May finishing preparations for the move to the new Ernest F. Hollings Special Collections Library this summer.
Christina Rossetti, An Exhibition of Books Recently Purchased with Gifts to the Treasures Acquisition Program was on display in Thomas Cooper Library’s Main Level East Gallery during the spring semester.

According to Director of Rare Books and Special Collections Patrick Scott, “Almost all the books in the exhibit were purchased for the library during the past year. The purchases were made possible by gifts from two donors to the libraries’ Treasures Acquisition Program [TAP]. TAP differs from most other library donor funds in that money is donated for expenditure on purchases now, rather than to build endowments for the future.

“Because Christina Rossetti’s work is frequently taught in both undergraduate and graduate courses, we wanted to improve the range of her work available to students in its original format. The first donation, at the end of 2008, allowed the purchase of the majority of the first editions of her work; the second, from a different donor, in May 2009, funded the purchase of Rossetti’s very rare first book, Verses (privately printed, 1847).”

Susan Hogue of the University’s art department and her husband, William Hogue of University Technology Services, contributed to the University Libraries’ Treasures Acquisition Fund at the end of 2009 to support the purchase of new works in the areas of contemporary book arts.

Among the items purchased are: Maureen Cummins’ Anatomy of Insanity (2008), an elaborate artist’s book that explores the highly gendered differences in the causes of “insanity” from patient records of a 19th-century Massachusetts hospital; Gaylord Schanilec’s My Colorful Career (Bird and Bull Press, 1996), which recounts his early work as an illustrator and private press printer and includes a set of progressive woodblock illustrations that show exactly how a multicolor reduction woodblock print is made; two works from Rochester-based book artist Scott McCarney: State of the Union/LIVE EVIL VILE, a political commentary from 2003, and C(a[e(I)o]u)P: Autobiography #5 (2005), an exploration of family history and memory; Sheryl Oring’s I Wish to Say Vol. 2 (2005) that documents the performance art pieces for which she chooses a location in a public space and takes letters of dictation to the president from passersby; and To You, Walt Whitman (Red Angel Press, 1997), a beautifully designed and printed homage to Whitman by a host of 20th-century poets.

Each of these works was produced in an edition of fewer than 100 and each fills a gap in the library’s teaching collections, either by use of a particular process or subject matter or by the use of historical sources to create something new. Several classes have already used the items, and interest in them is expected to grow as students continue to explore the relationships between text, image, and artistic process in the library’s book arts collections.
Student researchers working in Thomas Cooper Library’s Graniteville Room are (left to right), at the front table, Maggie Brilhart and Sydney Daisle researching the Jazz Age; at the back table, Charles Addision studying boarding schools in the United Kingdom and Elizabeth Wilson researching the Harlem Renaissance; and on the couch, Dennis Murray using Michael Chabon’s book *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh, a Bildungsroman* for a paper on the genre.