

The Rare Book Library

In Crisis or Merely Challenged?

Bruce Hatton Boyer

With the third annual Caxton/Newberry Symposium on the Book looming, now seems a propitious moment to consider some of the issues surrounding rare book libraries. My intention here is not to second-guess what our Symposium speakers will say on the subject or to set the parameters of their talks. They are experts and I am not. Instead, I would like simply to get symposium attendees thinking about some of the issues that are sure to be raised.

It is a common device for writers in my situation to begin by stating that their subject is "in crisis." Such openings are good at capturing attention. I am not sure that rare books libraries are in a crisis, but they are at least at a crossroads.

Many of the challenges rare book libraries face are, of course, common to all libraries – the number of books being published is increasing almost exponentially while the resources for managing those books are, if anything, shrinking. The demands for those resources come from many directions – from administrators needing to hire more staff, from outside readers and institutions expecting increased access to collections, even from the plumbers, carpenters, and roofers charged with keeping the physical plants sound and healthy.

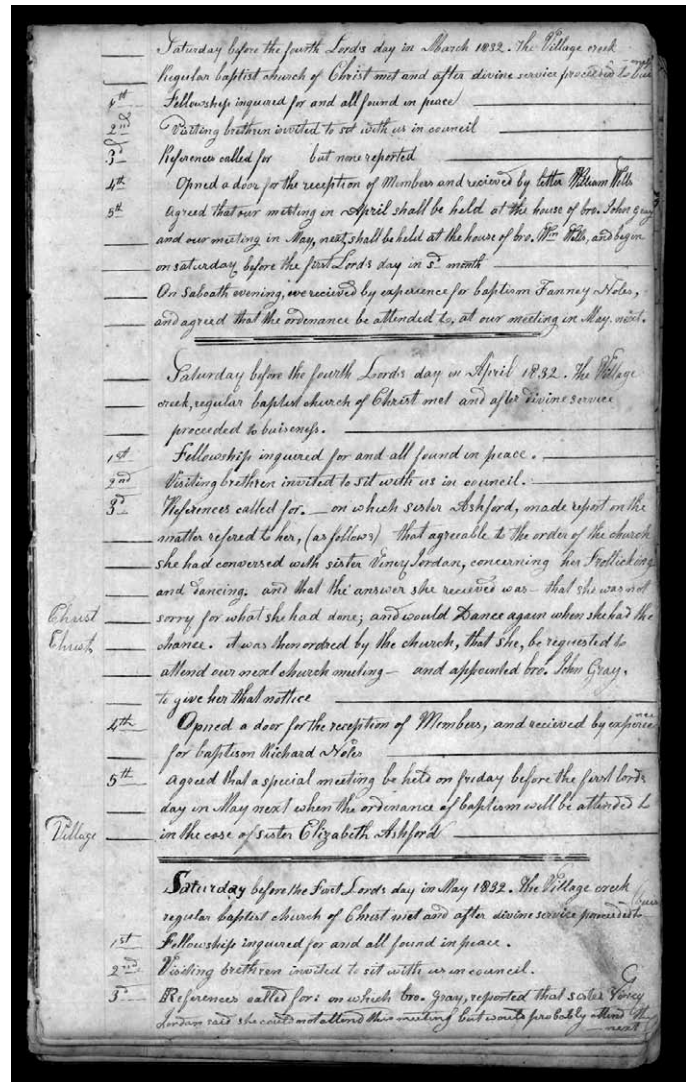
Newer demands are, of course, being imposed by that eight-hundred-pound gorilla known as The Web. As each of us undoubtedly knows from personal experience, the Web is a prime case of mixed blessings. For sure, it has made access to library catalogs easier and faster, both *in situ* and from a distance. It has surely expedited interlibrary cooperation and, as more and more items become available digitally on the Web, vastly increased access

to actual written and printed materials. To take just one example, the digitization of scholarly journals has been a godsend to university libraries both in terms of space and money saved. It has been a godsend to consumers of those journals as well – I find myself able to complete today in three or four hours scholarly research that would have taken me weeks to do just a decade ago. Finally, if and when the Google project ever comes to fruition, the need for scholars to travel to conduct primary research will be significantly alleviated.

But the curse is there as well. More and more information is flying around at greater and greater speeds, and all of it needs somehow to be managed if it is to be available and useful, and that management is already soaking up significant amounts of library money in just keeping up with new technologies.

So, choices must be made and those choices are dictated by the audiences libraries serve. Public libraries face constant taxpayer demands. The Chicago Public Library, for example, has by my count seventy-nine branches, meaning that its collection has a tremendous amount of duplication. In addition, different branches within the

A church minute book from the Village Creek Baptist Church. See page 3.



Chicago system have different materials – the Rogers Park branch, for example, has an extensive collection of books in Russian, befitting a community with so many Russian speakers in it. And there is always the constant pressure on public libraries to keep certain books out of collections for political reasons, as the American Library Association's annual list of censorship actions attests. Even special collections within public libraries have collecting

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RARE BOOK LIBRARY, *from page 1*

agendas dictated by their communities; there is little impetus for a Chicago Public Library to collect rare books on Boston, say, or on Bangkok.

University libraries fare a little better. The need for title duplication at branches is significantly lower there, and the censorship issue is less important. But conflicts still exist, as academic librarians are both assisted and tormented by requests from faculty members and students. If there is money only for one new book, whose request will carry more weight, the biologist's or the anthropologist's?

While the rare book library may avoid some of these issues, it certainly has special challenges all its own. It may not be burdened by constituent publics, but that freedom can be a trap by itself. The rare book librarian has solely personal professional judgment to fall back on when it comes to shaping collections, and that professional judgment can face some very tricky booby traps.

The central dilemma in all of this is deciding what makes a book worthy of being labeled "rare." Rarity is a very slippery concept, and the closer we look at it, the slipperier it gets.

In colloquial terms, the word rare revolves around the idea of "uncommon" but it also usually carries with it an indefinable connotation of "cherished." Thus, rarity does not just mean scarce. Time is, after all, a relentless garbage disposal, and there are many things that are rare simply because they have disappeared down the chute. A Commonwealth Edison bill from thirty years ago is probably rare today but who cherishes it? Even books, the object of our lesson, are not all universally cherished. Employee newsmagazines, instruction manuals for VCR machines and auto parts catalogues are the very epitome of transience, and as such, hold little interest for the literary critic or the rare book bibliophile. Yet they are hardly without value. For the historian and the philologist they are red meat, but does that mean they are cherished in the usual sense of that word? I doubt that very much. By way of example, Caxtonian Paul Gehl has been collecting old school textbooks for the Newberry Library. Neither he nor his colleagues would try to defend that collecting under the rubric of "rare" in the sense of being cherished, but the historian in me can only applaud the effort – could there possibly be a better way to see what is on a society's mind than to examine how it has chosen to present itself to its children?

In my case, I can remember the rush of joy I felt years ago on discovering a moth-eaten 1939 *Michelin Rouge* in the Amherst College library. Why? Because I was working on a book about

World War II, and that Michelin guide had data about life in rural France during the immediate pre-war period which was simply unavailable anywhere else. I do not know what possessed some long-gone librarian to purchase that volume, or to maintain it in the collections, but I am still grateful for the foresight.

At the other end of the spectrum is rarity that is deliberately induced. We are all familiar with limited editions, whether of books or works of art. Here the rarity of the object is intrinsic to its creation, almost as if the producer wished to perform historic attrition before the fact. But will that rarity be cherished? Only history can judge that value, whether from the monetary or the aesthetic viewpoint. Drawing again on my own example, I have a lovely Picasso etching hanging in my living room but since it was signed only in plate in an edition of indeterminate size, it is hardly rare in the fine art sense. Not so the Rockwell Kent lithograph that hangs nearby, a hand signed copy in an edition of limited size. Picasso was the greater artist and his works are in demand all over the world, but the Rockwell Kent is surely rarer and hence, more valuable. Sentimentally, I value them both, but monetarily I am not fooling myself. Yet fooling oneself is an American obsession when it comes to induced rarity – witness the innumerable "mints" which turn out medallions, plates, dolls and ingots in "strictly limited editions" that are, according to the advertisements, "sure to increase in value even as your family cherishes them for generations to come."

In between these two extremes lies a vast spectrum. Stores exist that specialize in selling old comic books. They prosper because the mothers of America throw away so many comics that the ones that somehow survive became rare and hence, cherished. So it is with baseball cards, newspapers, magazines and toy soldiers. Along the same line are objects which had rarity built into them simply because they were unique. Paintings, sculptures, and handcrafted furniture come to mind in this regard. Because they are one of a kind, time can only increase their rarity as other, similar products disappear. But the value of that rarity is subject to the ups and downs of taste and fashion. There are only some two dozen paintings in the world by Vermeer and thousands by Picasso, and all are expensive today because the supply is so thoroughly outstripped by demand. Paintings by Bougureau, on the other hand, once greatly prized by the academics of the 19th Century French salons, are far less prized today because they are so completely out of sync

with our notions of fine art.

One common thread, though, unites the 1957 Mickey Mantle Topps baseball card with *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* – they are both prized solely as objects. Their content cannot be separated from their form. The historian, the aesthetician, the anthropologist, and the connoisseur may find different qualities to prize in the same object, but they cannot transfer those contents to another object and say they have remained unchanged.

Books, on the other hand, have two distinct halves to them – the object itself and the words contained within it. To pick an obvious example, there is no reason for the average reader to revere a *First Folio* of Shakespeare for its content – indeed, for his or her purposes, a nicely-edited, well-printed and annotated edition that can be carried around is far preferable. But we prize the *First Folio* as an object as well as for what it contains.

Which brings us to another concept that touches on the issue of rarity, and that is

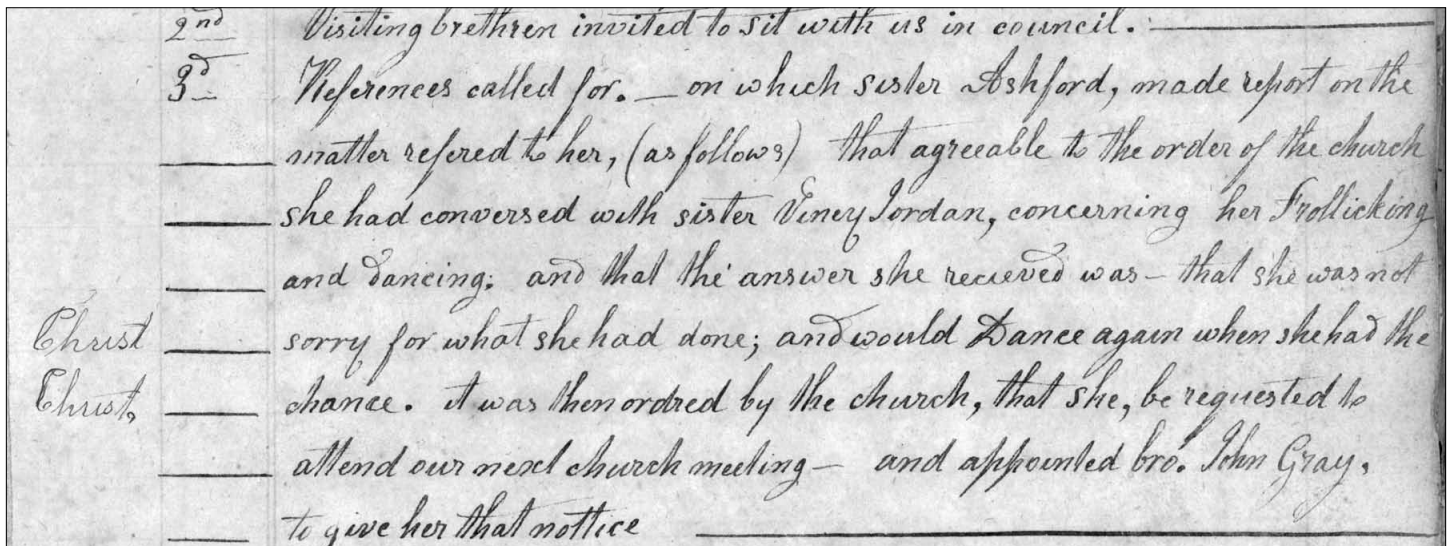
the issue of genuineness. What we prize about the *First Folio* is its utter reality – it is here today and was there four hundred years ago – well, 385 years, anyway. When we pick up a copy of it, we can well imagine that it was actually touched by Condell and Heminges, two men who in turn knew Shakespeare personally. The value of that feeling is immeasurable. The cracks, spots and stains on the *Folio's* pages remind us of all it has endured to make its voyage from Jacobean London to the air-conditioned reading room in which we so reverently page it today.

Museums deal with this phenomenon all the time. Indeed, the principal reason to go to a museum is to see genuine objects. The Field Museum spent millions of dollars a decade ago to buy Sue, the most complete Tyrannosaurus Rex skeleton ever discovered. It is an awesome object by any measure, and the thrill we get from looking comes from the fact that Sue is so very, very real – those bones really are two hundred million years old! Taken to

an extreme, genuineness can turn an object into a fetish, a word I use in the anthropologic sense. Beads, bones, and eagle feathers have been used for millennia by shamans to create and transmit magic. The practice continues today in the veneration of sacred relics – the church of San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome displays the chains that purportedly bound Saint Peter's hands when he was a prisoner of the Romans 2000 years ago. At this level, genuine – and hence rare – objects possess a power literally palpable to those who encounter them.

Yet in this, the age of Disney, genuineness often becomes blurred. One of the first things the Field Museum did when it got Sue was to make molds from which replicas could be made and sent to other natural history museums. To all but the most experienced eye, the replicas completely mimic the original. Is this a bad thing? If such a replica inspires a wide-eyed ten-year old in Indianapolis to become a paleontologist when he grows up, can we

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Detail from page shown on cover.

Participants at the April 12 Newberry / Caxton Symposium, "Rare Books and the Common Good: American Perspectives" will have an opportunity to view an exhibit of the Newberry Library's new acquisitions. The Newberry has in mind to make this an annual show, offering a look at a few of the notable books and manuscripts that enrich the research collections each year.

Among the forty items on display this spring will be two church minute books. One comes from the relatively liberal Presbyterian Church of China Grove, North Carolina, which includes a segregated list for "Colored Members" admitted between 1860 and 1864. The other, shown here, is a document of a much more conservative congregation in early Illinois, the "primitive Baptists" of the Village

Creek Baptist Church in rural Wabash County. This book runs from the establishment of the church in 1836 to 1839.

Church registers of the sort are invaluable for genealogical research, but they also evidence the social organization of small communities, the finances of individual members and of the congregation, and everyday manners of American life. The Village Creek founders set down a list of thirteen "Rules of Decorum" at the very start of their book. Weekly business meetings that followed the prayer service included matters like the one shown here where a member is unrepentant for her "frolicking and dancing."

The exhibit, "Recent Acquisitions of The Newberry Library" will run from March 15 to May 3, 2008.

deny the validity of his experience? Likewise, is the pleasure we find in a necklace that so perfectly emulates one worn by Nefertiti somehow illegitimate because it is a replica? As our technologies have become more sophisticated, and our ability to reproduce things has become ever more complete, the line between genuine and its cousin becomes harder to see and hence harder to appreciate. Today, museum curators are usually careful to show which parts of an ancient Greek vase have been restored, reversing the practice of restoration practiced a century ago. The recent exhibition on Darwin at the Field last year, a collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History, mixed a few original Darwin letters with a number of facsimiles that were carefully – but very inconspicuously – identified as such. Yet, in the very next gallery, the Field's contribution to the Festival of Maps uses only originals. Is any one of these ways right and the others wrong? Stores now sell reproductions of oil paintings that match the artist's brushstrokes almost perfectly. There are now digitized reproductions of Audubon prints, created right here in Chicago, which so completely mimic the originals that we need a magnifying glass to see the differences. The prints are not the originals, but they are being marketed as originals in their own right – the induced rarity I mentioned earlier.

Finally, there is rarity of context. A single book may not be especially rare in and of itself, but when it is part of a significant collection, its value automatically increases. Any rare book library needs to have such items because they augment books both rare and cherished. The Folger Shakespeare Library has 79 copies of the *First Folio*, but it also has some 7000 other complete editions of Shakespeare, some of them in foreign languages, all of which add rich perspective to our understanding of how Shakespeare has been understood through the ages. Likewise, the Wing Collection at the Newberry has many pieces of printed ephemera simply because they are part of the history of printing.

Association copies fall into this domain. One of the gems in Caxtonian Paul Ruxin's collection of Boswelliana is a little book entitled *The Returne of Prayers*, a tiny volume published in London in 1638. It is a

book of daily devotions – sort of a Norman Vincent Peale thought for the day volume – which would be of little value itself except that Ruxin's copy is James Boswell's personal copy, signed by him in 1779 and complete with his marginal notes.

Viewed in this way, rare books have a certain three-dimensionality in their rarity – rarity of numbers, rarity of content, and rarity of context. They can come up short on one or two of these value scales but not on all three and still be considered rare. The challenge for the librarian is to sort through personal prejudices, fashionable trends, and opportunities for acquisition, and ask the deceptively simple question – why should this book be considered rare? And if it is not rare today, will it become so tomorrow? Even if it does not become rare itself, will it somehow become valuable in future years because of its relationship to other books that are rare? Tough questions, all.

And, as if all these considerations were not enough, the rare book library has to consider other parts of its collection besides those in its “rare” section. Rare items, be they books, maps, letters, manuscripts, or ephemera, do not speak for themselves. They must be placed into context for interpretation. Hence, the librarian must ask what sources does my audience need to help understand these rare items? Because resources are limited, the question becomes one of balancing the rare books with the not-so-rare ones. To return to the example of the Folger Library, it is inconceivable that a library devoted principally to Shakespeare and Elizabethan history not have a significant number of critical works in its collection. But how many? Shakespeare has been the subject of thousands and thousands of books throughout the centuries. Which of these should a Folger – or a Huntington or a Newberry – Library have on its shelves, which ones should it rely on neighboring libraries to acquire, and which ones are simply not worth owning at all? The advent of interlibrary loan has alleviated the pressures of such questions but certainly not eliminated them.

To make things even more complicated, none of these considerations touches on manuscripts. Most rare book libraries have manuscript divisions because manuscripts are rare simply by virtue of being unique.

But how do we assess their value? Papers hand written by famous people are always in demand – the Lincoln Library in Springfield has one of only a few copies of the Gettysburg Address written in Lincoln's hand, and who could possibly dispute its value as a precious object? Other manuscripts, however, have worth that might be less glamorous but which is still uniquely valuable. The Huntington Library has 2500 manuscripts of plays submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for performance licensure between 1737 and 1824. Because many of the plays were neither performed nor published, the collection is an indispensable augment to the Huntington's collection of printed plays. It tells us a great deal about what was – and what was not – acceptable in Georgian England.

All of these considerations lead to the issue of acquisitions. Librarians and collectors scour the bookstores, auction houses, and junk stores of the world, looking constantly to augment their collections. Well and good. But how are those limited resources best spent? On one big item or a thousand small ones? The recent sale of a 1297 copy of the Magna Carta for \$21,321,000 is a case in point. Just one such purchase would exhaust the acquisition budgets of many libraries for years. Significantly, it was not purchased by a library but by a newly-minted billionaire named David Rubenstein. Indeed, as Paul Ruxin observed to me, the emergence of new wealth has so distorted the collecting market that many libraries are being left out in the cold. The fact that Rubenstein intends to donate his copy of the Magna Carta to the National Archives was welcome news but hardly makes the problem go away. On the other hand, as Paul Gehl notes, superstar acquisitions can help libraries by attracting new donors and generating new interest in the collections. What to do, what to do?

Finally, there is the question of books in general. Will we as a society increasingly place less value on printed books as we move forward through the digital age? Book lovers shudder at the prospect, but the evidence is in front of us. Digital publishing bypasses the traditional roles of editor and typesetter, and the office laser already has supplanted the traditional print shop as the disseminator of much information. Devices are already on the market that

make reading digital information nearly as handy as a traditional book. If these trends continue, will we have a world in which the only value books have will be those of the rare object, making all libraries in effect rare book libraries? Only time will tell.

I hope these few thoughts might be enough to demonstrate how complicated the mission of the rare book library is. And, as I said at the outset, I do not know if these issues represent a crisis or just a set of challenges that is always changing. I certainly hope for the latter but I will leave it up to the experts to tell us their views. See you all at the Symposium!

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Symposium Details

The Third Annual Caxton Club/Newberry Library Symposium on the Book, *Rare Books and the Common Good*, will be held on April 12th at the Newberry Library. Six leading figures in the world of books will explore the role of American rare books and special collections libraries in the digital age. Among the speakers will be noted authors **Daniel Meyer** of the University of Chicago Library and **Edward Tenner** of Princeton University, along

with Christie's expert **Francis Wahlgren**, well known from his appearances on *Antiques Road Show*. Following the morning presentations, a panel of rare book librarians will reflect on where rare books will stand in the hierarchy of public priorities for the 21st century.

The symposium is free to the public; reservations are required since space is limited. Reservations can be made by sending in the form found on the Club web site, www.caxtonclub.org.

Grant Talbot Dean, Chicago Historian and Caxtonian

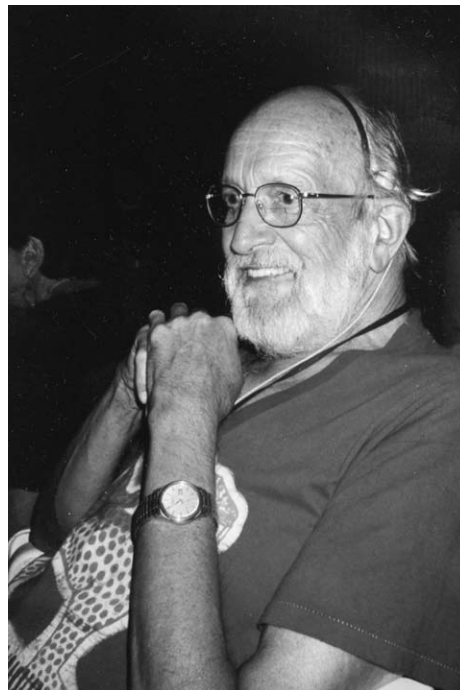
March 14, 1923, Alma, Michigan –
December 16, 2007, Puerto Escondido, Mexico

J. William Locke

Those who best knew or worked with Grant Dean attest that he was a walking encyclopedia of Chicago. He was a true Chicago historian, knowing dates and events. He also knew its geography, how the city developed, street names, and stories associated with the names. Dean loved Chicago, though he left it in 1989.

Grant worked at the Chicago Historical Society from 1951 until his retirement, interrupted only by a three-year stint with the Carnegie Endowment for Peace in New York City. At his retirement from the CHS in 1987, he was chief cataloger. Caxtonian Paul Angle was Director of the CHS when Grant was hired, so it is not surprising that Grant joined the Caxton Club in 1962 while he was curator of books and maps and a reference librarian.

Grant had a reputation for knowing everything in the collection. He was the go-to man for information relating to Chicago. He helped many researchers; many books written about Chicago during his time at the Historical Society mention his name in the acknowledgments. With Larry Vis-kochil, he co-authored *Chicago At the Turn of the Century*. He was one of the original members of the Chicago Landmarks Commission. For a Special Libraries Association meeting in Chicago, he designed the original Chicago River Architectural Landmarks



Cruise.

In purchasing and rehabbing an old home on Burling Street, near Armitage Avenue in 1964, Grant was years ahead of Lincoln Park gentrification. His garden was well known and he was an avid gardener with extensive knowledge of plants and trees, knowing both the Latin and familiar names. Caxtonian Barbara Denmark Long was Assistant Reference Librarian at CHS in the early '70s and remembers him returning to the Library after lunch one day carrying the biggest round purple flower she had ever seen. "Allium gigantum," Grant announced. At his home in Beverly Shores,

Indiana, he planted another wonderful garden.

After retirement, he moved to Beverly Shores in 1989, where he lived with his best friend and nephew, Patrick Dean. They operated Stocking Bale Antiques in Michigan City for fourteen years. All during his adult life, he was a world traveler, enjoying the Cunard Queens and other great ships. Ultimately, he decided to spend his winters in Mexico, most recent years in Puerto Escondido.

His lifelong love of reading continued. In addition to Chicago history and gardening, Grant had a strong interest in Mexican history and the Mayan and Aztec cultures and collected in those areas. He was a voracious current fiction reader, as well as a student of words and word origins.

His neighbors remember him for the unusual hats he found on his world travels and often wore for walking his Shelty, Callie.

He is survived by a brother, Dr. Harold Dean, Alma, Michigan; his best friend and nephew Patrick Dean of Beverly Shores, Indiana, with whom he lived; and numerous nieces, nephews, grand-nieces, grand-nephews, great-grand-nieces and great-grand-nephews; and an adopted nephew, Michael McKerverey, Michigan City, Indiana.

Condolences may be sent to Box 251, Beverly Shores, IN 46301.

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Much information was provided by Patrick Dean.

Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by John Blew

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

“Romance and Chess: A Tale of Two Manuscripts Reunited” (an exhibit celebrating the University of Chicago Library’s recent acquisition of *Le Roman de la Rose* or *The Romance of the Rose*, a 14th century illuminated manuscript which scholars have referred to as the most popular medieval love-poem, and its reunion after a 100-year separation with another 14th century illuminated manuscript – *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé* or *The Moralized Game of Chess* – with which it had been bound and which has been in the Library’s collection since 1931; both manuscripts and related materials will be on display) at the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago 773-705-8705 (closes 14 March 2008)

“Newberry Recent Acquisitions” (an exhibit of some of the outstanding items acquired by the Library in recent years, together with an explanation as to how they were acquired) at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago 312-255-3700 (15 March 2008 to 3 May 2008)

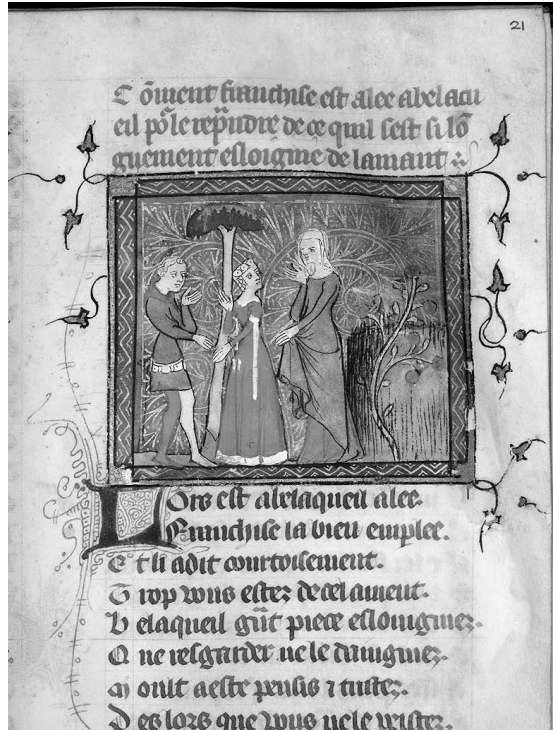
“The Language of Flowers” (charming examples of illustrated books displaying the Victorian fascination with floral symbolism and the language of flowers are featured in this exhibit, together with dried flower arrangements) in the Lenhardt Library at the Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook

Road, Glencoe 847-835-8202 (closes 18 May 2008)
“Artists’ Books” (examples of livres d’artistes created by artists from the collections of the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries and the Library of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago) in the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago, 111 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago 312-443-3666 (closes 14 April 2008)

“Fun For All! Chicago’s Amusement Parks” (this exhibit, drawing on materials from the Library’s collections, explores the development of the amusement park in Chicago, from the late 19th century to the present) in the Special Collections Exhibit Hall, 9th Floor, Harold Washington Library Center of the Chicago Public Library, 400 South State Street, Chicago 312-747-4300 (closes 14 September 2008)

“Under Study: Maps and Photographs of Chicago’s Near West Side” (drawing on the Library’s holdings, this exhibit follows the Near West Side as it changes from a 19th century port of entry neighborhood for waves of immigrants served by Jane Addam’s Hull House settlement up to its present-day growth and development as a revitalized 21st-century community) at the Richard J. Daley Library of the University of Illinois at Chicago, 801 South Morgan, Chicago 312-996-2742 (closes 31 March 2008)

“The Irene Balzekas Memorial Map Collection” (antiquarian and modern maps of Lithuania and its Eastern European neighbors, as well as maps which document the multifaceted Lithuanian immigration experience throughout much of the 20th century) at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, 6500 South Pulaski Road, Chicago 773-582-6500 (a permanent exhibit)



Romance and Chess at University of Chicago
LORRIS AND MEUN, LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE, FRANCE, CA. 1365

Starting next month, exhibition information will be compiled by Bernice E. Gallagher. She will be happy to receive your listings at either 847-234-5255 or gallagher@lakeforest.edu.

MILLARD RIGGS, from page 3

Riggs has built his collections in a remarkably wide range of areas. In addition to Presidential manuscripts, the civil war, and Sandburg, he has Margaret Mitchell signed first editions, Harriet Beecher Stowe, annotated first edition Federalist papers and a first edition Johnson’s dictionary. Just when you think you’ve found a common thread in his collections – Early Americana – he mentions that he has a fair amount of Thackeray, Ripton, Dickens, and several incunables. “Sometimes guests to my resi-

dence in Princeton think I have more books than needed,” he admits. In particular, the stacks of books outside the bathroom door attract comment. “But it’s not really possible to have too many books. If you have the gene for book collecting, you really cannot help yourself. It’s a madness.”

He’s still in the collecting phase, but he has given some thought to where his books will go in the end. “The one thing I can say with certainty is that they will not go en bloc to a large library. The great private libraries have more books than they know what to do with. I don’t want the books

I spent so much effort and enjoyment in acquiring to end up in the third sub-basement of some institution.” Perhaps, like Berland, he will put his books up for sale, so that a new group of collectors can enjoy them. He mentions Grolier friend Hal Friedlander, who sold his collection at the height of the market in 2000 and has been buying a few of his own books back as they appear on the market for less. “That must be a most satisfying thing to do!” Riggs concludes. Meanwhile, the search for one-of-a-kind collectibles continues.

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Caxtonians Collect: Millard M. Riggs, Jr.

Thirty-ninth in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Even though Millard Riggs spent only four years of his career living in the Chicago area, he counts Caxtonians and Chicago book dealers as among the major influences in his life. "When I look at my library – first edition books, manuscripts, photographs, and associated antiquities – the connections come back to me. I would be a very different person without my Chicago experiences."

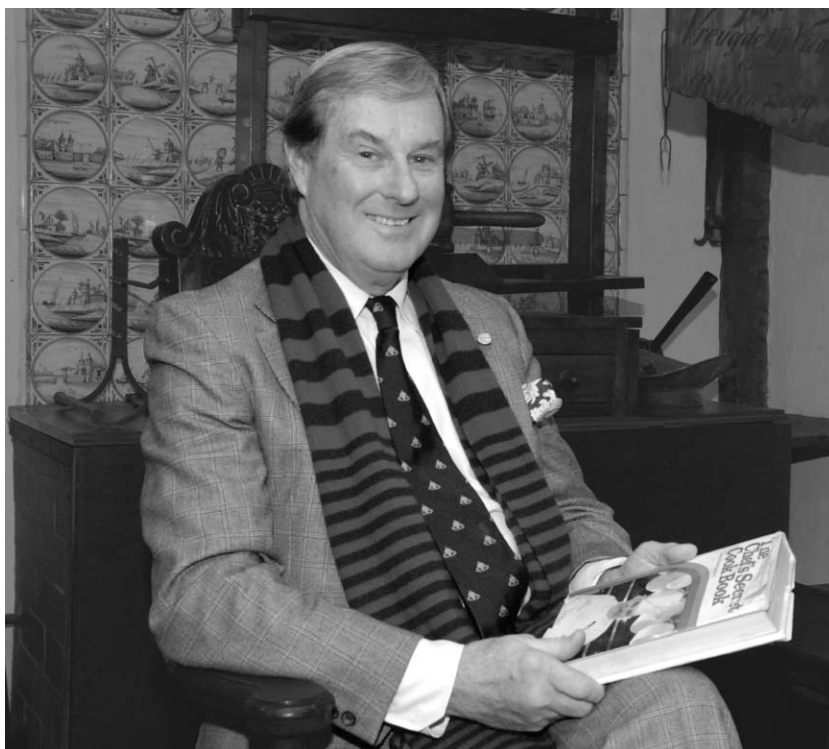
But we're getting ahead of the story. Riggs is a native of North Carolina. He studied organic chemistry at Duke. "In a way, the collecting bug bit me while I was a student," he explained. "I was always envious of my friends in the liberal arts. While I was going off to the lab for hours of experiments, they were sitting around talking and reading. I started collecting in a small way just to have a window on their world."

"At first I would simply pore over book review sections to see what was being written about. Then I met the late Atlanta book dealer Dan Abrams, who expanded my view of collecting. He taught me the importance of waiting for just the right copy of a book, the one in the right condition with the right associations." (The Abrams family was close personal friends of Margaret Mitchell.)

By the time Riggs came to the Chicago area in the 1970s, he had already started on his collection of U.S. Presidential manuscripts. (His then-employer, Celanese Corporation, had purchased a subsidiary, and sent him to manage the chemical division.) He had a particularly choice Washington manuscript, a 3-page ALS letter to Governor Morris of Pennsylvania on his reason from moving the troops to Valley Forge. Abel Berland chanced to hear of the letter from the Atlanta dealer, who put him in touch with Riggs.

"Abel wanted that letter. I even let him

borrow it for appraisal in Boston. In the end, I kept it. It just was not for sale." But it was the start of a friendship with Abel, who soon invited him to visit the Caxton Club at one of its meetings atop the First National Bank building, in the then-new Mid-Day Club. He joined the Club in



1974. "Abel also introduced me to the many wonderful book dealers in Chicago: Frances Hamill and Margery Barker, Ralph Newman's Abraham Lincoln Bookshop, Terrence Tanner. With so many antiquarian places to browse, my book collection became a larger part of my life."

Riggs traces the start of his Sandburg collection to Hamill and Barker. Then, as now, Sandburg was easier to collect than his contemporary Frost. Riggs has many of Frost's early publications, all first edition presentation copies. "A man of modest means, such as myself, could build an excellent Sandburg collection. I was able to acquire the manuscript and galley proofs of *The War Years* with the help of Frances Hamill. I literally carried them out of her shop in my suitcase. Who knows what library would have them today if she hadn't gotten me to overextend myself?"

He tells a similar story about his Joshua Speed pamphlets. "I was in Ralph

Newman's new shop, looking them over. Newman excused himself to take a call. "That was Malcolm Forbes," he explained when he came back. "He's very interested in the pamphlets with the association to Lincoln's first trip West." That was just the push it took to get me to take the leap. I've often wondered whether it really was Malcolm Forbes on the phone." But Riggs clearly does not regret his purchase.

Another fond memory of the Caxton Club is the late chef Louis Szathmari. "I visited the Bakery on a trip back to Chicago. He came out and recognized me as a Caxtonian. I mentioned that I had none of his cookbooks in my library. He went in back and came out with a first edition of his *Chef's Secret Cookbook*, which he inscribed to me."

When Riggs moved back to the east coast, it was largely his Chicago connections that put him in touch with the New

York collecting world. Abel Berland proposed Riggs for membership in the Grolier Club, and his seconders were John Fleming and Bill Scheide, both friends he made through Abel.

It was in Princeton that Riggs resolved that his library – while eclectic – must be one-of-a-kind editions that could not be duplicated. This is no more exemplified than by his Woodrow Wilson ALS, written the night before Wilson signed the League of Nations treaty. This non-published letter is housed with several of Wilson's early signed first edition/presentation copies.

He no longer works in organic chemistry. Currently he's at a major investment firm, managing the portfolios of private clients and non-profit institutions. "It is a better job for a book collector," he says. "The hours are more flexible, and the income means I no longer have to go into debt when I find something I want for my collection."

See MILLARD RIGGS, page 6

CAXTONIAN, MARCH 2008

Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program

Friday, March 14, 2008, Women's Athletic Club

Diane Dillon

"The Mystery of Ellen Gates Starr"

Diane Dillon holds a PhD in the History of Art from Yale. She is currently the Assistant Director of research and Education at the Newberry and teaches regularly in the Seminars Program.

Ellen Gates Starr co-founded Hull House with Jane Addams in 1889 and lived and worked there for 30 years. Why is Addams a household name and Starr is not? And how did 2 young upper-class, college-educated women end up living and working with newly-arrived immigrants at Halsted and Polk Streets?

The Hull House Bindery, created by Starr (in 1900), bound books (including the Kelmscott Chaucer) that are highly desired by collectors and museums, many primarily for their bindings. How could this and did this all come about? What was the significance of the arrival of the very young and very rich Mary Rozet Smith into the lives and work of Jane and Ellen?

Find out the answers and so very much more at the March Friday Luncheon.

The March luncheon will take place at the Women's Athletic Club, 600 N. Michigan Avenue. (Enter on Ontario; go to the Silver Room on the 4th floor.) Luncheon buffet opens at 11:30; program 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is \$27. The March dinner will take place at the Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street. Revels timing: spirits at 5 pm, dinner at 6 pm, live auction and film

Beyond March...

APRIL LUNCHEON

On April 11, we will lunch at the Women's Athletic Club to hear Valerie Hochkiss, Head of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), talk on "Caxton's Club: Early English Printers."

APRIL DINNER

Our April 16 dinner will be held at the Women's Athletic Club. The speaker will be Charles Middleton, President of Roosevelt University, on "Six Books that Changed History."

Dinner Program

Wednesday, March 19, 2008, Newberry Library

2008 March Revels and Auction

"Lights, Camera, Auction!"

Dust off your *ABC for Book Collectors* and bring your check-book; it's time for the Ninth Annual Live and Silent Auction. Our auction organizers, Dan Crawford, Tom Joyce, Adam Muhlig, and Dorothy Sinson have been gathering donations of *rare*, *uncommon*, *used*, and downright *curious* books both publicly and *privately printed*. Here is your chance to find that nineteenth-century title in *publisher's cloth*, that *quarter cloth édition de luxe*, something with a charming *provenance* or *inscription*, perhaps something in *morocco* or in *Blanck*, or with *broken type*, maybe even an *advance copy* to satisfy your *chronological obsession*. Whatever your taste in printing, the auction is sure to have something for you. During the festivities we will be treated to a rare showing of a 1965 film made in Sotheby's New Bond Street rooms. The film stars John Carter and Anthony Hobson, with cameo appearances by Lew David Feldman ("El Dieff"), John Howell, H. P. Kraus, and Bill and Rachel Towner, and will be narrated by Ken Nebenzahl. (And if you haven't yet donated something for the auction, it's not too late – donations will be accepted up to Friday March 14th.)

at 7:30 pm. Price for dinner is \$48. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org; reservations are needed by noon Wednesday for the Friday Luncheon, and by noon Monday for the Wednesday dinner. See www.caxtonclub.org for parking and transit information.

MAY LUNCHEON

May 9, at the Women's Athletic Club, Caxtonian Jack Weiner will tell about a bookplate he noticed in the Newberry's copy of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and how this led him down a fascinating research path about the life and activities of billionaire Cuban bibliophile Oscar Benjamin Cintas.

MAY DINNER

Our May dinner will be held May 21 at Petterino's restaurant. The speaker will be announced.

Calling All Collectors! Make your reservation: Saturday, April 12...

Rare Books and the Common Good: American Perspectives

This year's Caxton Club / Newberry Library Symposium on the Book will take as its theme the future of the rare book. Dan Meyer of the University of Chicago will start the morning with an account of Chicago collecting history. He will be followed by Edward Tenner (Princeton) on the state of rare book research, and Francis

Wahlgren (Christie's) on the state of the book auction market today. Alice Schreyer will lead an afternoon panel of librarians from across the country in responding to the provocative morning talks, and will invite your participation. A registration form is now available on the Club's web site, www.caxtonclub.org.