

Silk, punched cards, and the book arts

by Robin Rider
Curator, Special Collections

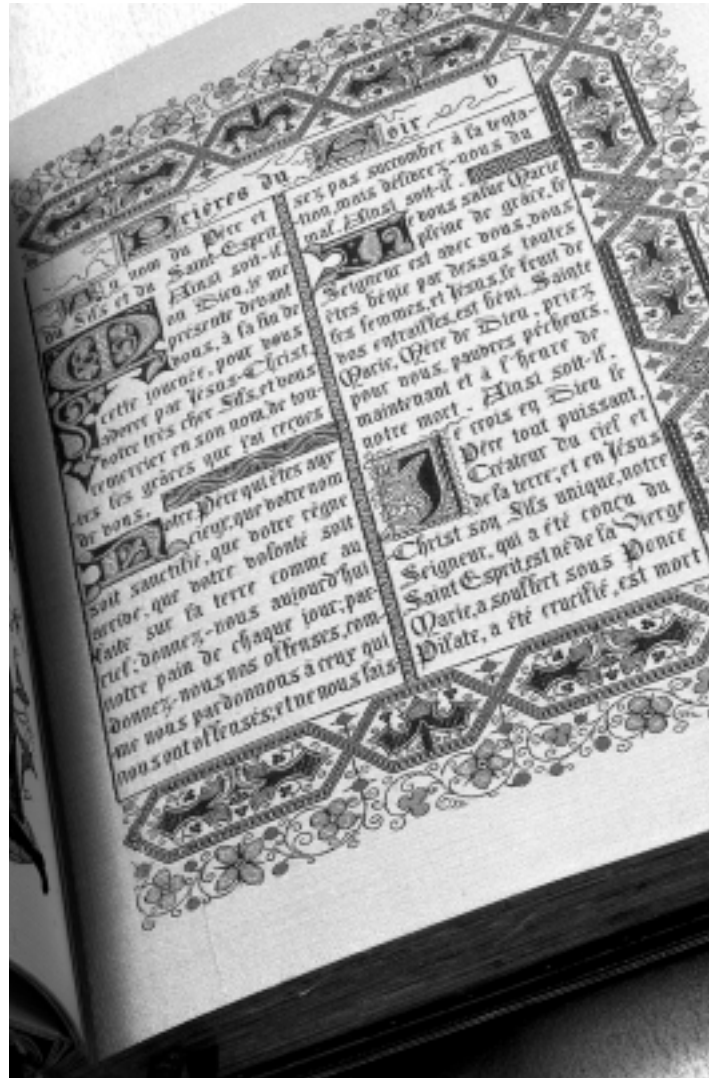
Those of us who remember when computers were room-sized, not palm-sized, also recall the punched cards that carried information and instructions for early digital computers. Punched cards were a fixture of the scientific and business world at the time Memorial Library first opened in 1953. A new acquisition honors this half-century anniversary and reflects the times in which the state's largest library has come of age. The volume, more than 100 years old, can be considered the first digitally produced book—a beautiful, creative combination of early punched card technology and the craftsmanship of the decorative arts.

The practice of using punched cards to convey information and control production has a long history. In the midst of the French Revolution, the French inventor Joseph-Marie Jacquard (1752–1834) used perforated cards to control the pattern produced by a loom. Large, intricate patterns like brocade and damask could be produced and replicated with relative ease. So easily, in fact, that French silk weavers, fearing for their jobs, attacked both Jacquard and his machines.

The English mathematician and economist Charles Babbage (1791–1871) saw that punched cards as used in Jacquard looms might automate the production and printing of elaborate astronomical calculations with a steam-driven “analytical engine.” Though Babbage’s full plans were never implemented, his concept of the analytical engine is now recognized as the first general-purpose programmable mechanical computer, where instructions and data would be entered using punched cards.

By the 1880s, the possibilities of punched card technology had been recognized by Herman Hollerith for entering data in his census tabulating machines. For years afterward the cards were known as Hollerith cards. Hollerith’s Tabulating Machine Company later grew into the International Business Machine Corporation, or IBM, and the cards themselves came to be called IBM cards.

Our new acquisition weaves together themes of industrialization, the book arts, and digital technologies, and is itself a beautiful, rare object. The book, one of sixty copies published in 1886 in Lyon, Jacquard’s hometown, is made of



ERIC FERGUSON

Livre de prières: tissé d'après les enluminures des manuscrits du XIV au XVI siècle. Lyon: A. Roux, 1886.

silk—not printed on silk, but rather woven in silk: that is, each page was produced by a loom guided by Jacquard’s punched card system. The text itself, in gothic letters in two columns with large and small initials, elaborate border decoration, and miniatures reproduces pages from medieval manuscripts. The binding features blue morocco leather, gilt edges, blue silk doublures, and a filigrane brass clasp.

As the first digitally produced book, it is a fitting acquisition to honor a library that embraces both books and electronic resources—in an era when books and papers are customarily produced using the successors to Babbage’s analytical engine.

University of
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Board of Regents

From the president A renewed vision

The Friends of the University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries were privileged to participate this fall in celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Memorial Library.

Director Ken Frazier inaugurated the fall 2003 lecture series with an illustrated discussion of the history and the future of the libraries. The fits and starts of negotiating and finding a separate university library building were detailed, with comments on the objectives, activities, and styles of the six library directors. We all learned much to explain the richness of the member libraries in relation to the central collections and the depth and breadth of the holdings of this formidable research library.

In the spring meetings this year, the board of directors undertook self-evaluation discussions, wherein were examined the objectives and accomplishments of the organization. One result was a resolution to reexamine and perhaps modify the mission statement governing the organization.

The responsible committee has produced a statement, which the board has approved, that is remarkably congruent with the charge of the university regents to the Friends in 1947. This reaffirmation of our objectives as a service organization must be validated by vote of the membership at the annual meeting in April. The new mission statement appears elsewhere in this issue of *Friends News*; it would be appreciated if all members would consider the statement before discussion of its adoption at the annual meeting in April.

Another stated objective for this year is to increase membership. While several ideas are being discussed by the membership committee, I would like to provide a personal challenge: let each



current member obtain one new member for the Friends this year. Should this personal method be pursued energetically by us all, the result could be truly impressive.

This newsletter is the first result of lengthy discussions

with the library administration and communication offices. A major objective for all of us is the timely communication of library activities, problems, and challenges to our membership and the general public. For 2004 we shall produce a single magazine issue, with its usual features of scholarship and news and the acknowledgment list of donors to the library. At about three-month intervals, a newsletter such as this one will provide the calendar of events, descriptions of exhibitions in the Department of Special Collections and elsewhere, and features covering the collections and activities of the UW–Madison Libraries.

Notable acquisitions of the library, whether new electronic periodicals, specialized periodicals, or rare books, will be brought to your attention. While working to improve the flow of information under this new plan, we would appreciate your suggestions concerning issues to be addressed in future newsletters or our methodology.

William G. Reeder

Friends online

Go to <http://giving.library.wisc.edu> to learn more about the Friends of the UW–Madison Libraries. The site features information on upcoming events, membership, and continuing Friends programs, such as the grant-in-aid program, the book sale, and grants to campus libraries and library departments.

Astronomy Library continues to grow

by Barry Osborne

In 1883 Cyrus Woodman established a trust for the Astronomical Library, then located in the newly constructed Washburn Observatory. Although his trust made the library secure, it existed for “many years in anonymity on top of the hill.”

If Woodman turned up today to check in on his legacy, however, he would find it on the sixth floor of Sterling Hall, where it was transplanted from the Observatory in 1959. His original sign would welcome him to the warm confines of the Woodman Astronomical Library, where the students of Kepler and Newton pour through journals, logs, and Web sites.

The library has seen its share of history. What began as the director’s personal collection now comprises 6,000 monographs, 6,000 bound journals, and more than 800 observatory publications. What was once gleaned from the



Image taken from: *Claudii Ptolemaei Pelusiensis. Alexandrini omnia quae extant opera, praeter Geographiam.* Basileae: In officina Henrichi Petri, 1551.

Observatory is now an intimate piece of an expanse of knowledge that requires the frequent travel of faculty and students alike to Europe for conferences, or to Africa for the South African Large Telescope (SALT) partnership.

“They are a jet-setting group,” solo librarian Erin Meyer-Blasing says of the

university’s astronomical community. In choosing the library as a home base of sorts, those who use the library for formal and informal study are just as likely to turn up for lunches, colloquium coffees, and farewell parties.

Mission statement revised

On September 10, a subcommittee of the Friends presented a revised draft of the Friends mission statement. The statement, drafted by subcommittee chair Patricia Bender and members Paula Panczenko, John Toussaint, Friends President William Reeder, Vice President Christopher Kleinhenz, along with Library Liaison Tom Garver, serves to update and reaffirm the Friends original purpose outlined by the Board of Regents. Members will vote on the proposal at the annual meeting in April.

The purpose of the Friends of the University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries shall be:

- *To stimulate interest in the use of the University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries within the student body, faculty and staff, alumni, community, and the state;*
- *To attract and encourage monetary gifts and gifts-in-kind in recognition of the needs and potentials of the libraries;*
- *To advance recognition of library collections and services through publications, grant programs, special events, membership development, and other activities;*
- *To continue the development of a long-term endowment fund to insure continuity of Friends programs.*



New bookplates

The UW–Madison Libraries recently redesigned the bookplates that ascribe gift books to donors or other designees. The bookplates now feature one of four native Wisconsin tree leaves, symbols of growth and knowledge as well as the process of papermaking itself, a major Wisconsin industry. The libraries have added a bookplate—*In Recognition of*—to acknowledge recently tenured faculty. Other bookplates are: *A Gift of*, *In Honor of*, and *In Memory of*.

calendar

**Thursday, January 29,
4:30 p.m.**

**FELIX:
A Series of New Writing**

Special Collections, Memorial Library



The second in the FELIX series will bring together editors and contributors from Madison literary journals *The Styles* and *Premiere Generation Ink* to read their work, and participate in a discussion about literary “little magazines.” Named after Felix Pollak (1909-1987), poet and former curator of Special Collections, this new lecture series seeks original, young writers in the area and provides a forum for conversation on the role of the “little magazine” in literary culture and how these journals continue to evolve. Past discussions have focused on the emerging online little magazine culture and the necessity of an experimental literary voice for young writers. The event will be accompanied by an exhibit of titles from Special Collection’s Little Magazines. The series is being organized by graduate students Barry Osborne and David Pavelich.

**Thursday, February 26,
4:30 p.m.**

**With Discriminating
Knowledge: The Libraries
of the University of
Wisconsin-Madison, 1848- .**

David Null, University Archivist

126 Memorial Library



With more than six million volumes, the UW-Madison Libraries have grown during the past 150 years into one of the largest library systems in North America. David Null, the University of Wisconsin-Madison archivist and co-curator of the current exhibit in Special Collections, will speak on the history and development of the university’s collections. The talk will also cover the ways in which the libraries’ histories are documented in media varying from university publications to oral histories.

This lecture is held in conjunction with the Special Collections exhibit of the same name.

**Wednesday-Saturday,
March 3-6**

**Friends of the University
of Wisconsin-Madison
Libraries Book Sale**

116 Memorial Library



Come and explore the Friends semiannual book sale, the single largest used book sale in Wisconsin. Students, faculty, staff, and Madison residents donate materials ranging from philosophy and literature to science and reference texts. Proceeds from the fundraiser help support the Friends grant-in-aid program for visiting scholars, a grant program for campus libraries, and other programming. In addition, 10 percent of the proceeds are transferred to the Friends endowment. To donate books or volunteer for the Friends spring book sale, please call 608-265-2505.

of events

**Thursday, March 25,
4:30 p.m.**

Evolution of an Icon: Whistler's *Mother* and Popular Culture

Martha Tedeschi, Curator of Prints
and Drawings, Art Institute
of Chicago

126 Memorial Library



Like Grant Wood's *American Gothic* and Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, a handful of paintings have evolved beyond masterpiece status and become part of popular culture. These paintings have risen beyond the realm of aesthetics or history and become icons.

Martha Tedeschi, curator of prints and drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago, will give a lecture addressing this evolution in Whistler's painting *Mother*, describing how and why this image made the transition.

**Thursday, April 15,
5:30 p.m.**

Friends of the UW-Madison Libraries Annual Lecture

Carmen Agra Deedy, Author and Storyteller

Howard Auditorium, Fluno Center



Author and award-winning storyteller Carmen Agra Deedy will be the featured speaker at this spring's annual meeting.

Often profound and hilarious, Deedy's stories deal with the themes of separation and perseverance she has encountered growing up with an American-Cuban heritage. Born in Havana, Cuba, in 1960, Deedy's family immigrated to Decatur, Georgia, during the mid-1960s to escape the chaos of Castro's post-revolutionary Cuba.

Much of Deedy's early American experience involved coping with the departure from her cultural homeland and relatives. Eventually, Deedy and her family thrived in their new environment. While Deedy's storytelling style has deep roots in the difficulties of immigration and cultural collision, she is better known for her sharp wit and humorous approach toward the misunderstandings between cultures.

This year, she made her third consecutive appearance at the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C. Deedy has also spoken at the National Storytelling Festival and has been featured on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*.

Her most recent book, *The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark*, is the winner of numerous awards, including the 2001 International Reading Association Notable Book for A Global Society, the 2001 Jane Addams Peace Association Honor Book Award, and the 2000 Parent's Choice Gold Award. She has published seven earlier books, including *Growing up Cuban in Decatur, Georgia*, which was a 1996 Parent's Choice Gold Award Winner and was named Best Audiobook-Storytelling by *Publishers Weekly* in 1995.

The lecture is open to the public at no charge.

Grant-in-Aid Scholar spends September in Cairns Collection

Although he traveled a long way, Macquarie University Professor of English Tony Cousins found his trip to Memorial Library very rewarding. As one of six grant-in-aid recipients in 2003, Cousins traveled from his native Sydney, Australia, to Madison in late August to explore eighteenth- and nineteenth-century perceptions of Islam through the writing of European travel authors.

“What is so invaluable is the wonderful collection of both male and female travel writers from Europe to the Middle East,” Cousins says. “It is a gold mine.” Cousins originally heard about the William B. Cairns Collection of American Women Writers (1650–1920) from UW–Madison English Professor Heather Dubrow. The Special Collections’ staff has also directed Cousins towards other valuable resources.

“I have had tremendous logistical support from [Library Liaison] Tom Garver as well as support and guidance from the librarians. They have all been terrific,” Cousins says.



GABRIEL MILLER

Macquarie University English Professor Tony Cousins of Sydney.

Canterbury Books hosts *A Literary Feast*

An overflow crowd attended the launching of *A Literary Feast* at Canterbury Booksellers in Madison October 2. The book combines historic recipes with writings by American women authors and has been called an “entertaining and illuminating way to experience the culture of a by-gone era” by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. The compilers, Loni Hayman, Joan Jones, and Anne Tedeschi, spoke at the event, as did Yvonne Schofer, who edited the volume. The book was published by Jones Books with a first edition run of 2,500 copies and will be available at Barnes & Noble and Borders, as well as every major local bookstore.



Left to right: Joan Jones, Anne Tedeschi, Yvonne Schofer, Loni Hayman.

Upcoming grants-in-aid:

Federica Francesconi, University of Haifa–Israel, will study northern Italian ghettos of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Sharon Gordon, Leipzig University, will study Jewish-Christian conversion between 1890 and 1914.

A brief history of the Friends

On December 13, 1947, the Regents of the University of Wisconsin authorized the creation of “The Friends of the University Library.” The Regents stated that this group shall “be composed of those interested in the welfare of the University Library.” More than a half-century later, the Friends have continued to grow and support the University’s libraries.

The Friends flourished in the early 1980s, purchasing a rare book for the libraries in 1982, reviving the extinct newsletter, and inaugurating an annual lecture series featuring library scholars and academics from a variety of fields.

At the suggestion of John Tedeschi, in 1992 the Friends established a grant-in-aid program modeled after that at the Newberry Library, which provides four to six grants a year to visiting scholars for research at the libraries in the humanities.

In 1997, the Friends introduced the library grants program. Since then, the Friends have awarded more than \$100,000 to campus libraries for projects varying from conservation to the acquisition of new and specialized library resources.

In the last eight years, the Friends book sales have grown into the largest used book sales in Wisconsin—semiannual events that often generate more than \$20,000. The sales provide a significant financial foundation for Friends programs.

All-night hours popular

Early feedback indicates the new extended hours at College Library are an instant success. In September alone, more than 13,000 students used College Library during late-night hours. Of those, 88 percent were in the building between midnight and 4 A.M.

Libraries receive electronic version of original Beowulf manuscript

by Gabriel Miller

For nearly 150 years, reading the entire Beowulf manuscript was impossible. In 1845, after the manuscript had survived nine centuries, five floods, and one near-fatal library fire, British Museum Keeper of Manuscripts Frederic Madden halted further deterioration of the manuscript by placing each leaf of the Scandinavian epic poem under glass frames. While Madden's decision effectively stopped further damage from handling and the elements, it also covered crucial sections around the edges of the manuscript.

That was until 1993, when the British Library undertook one of the first transcriptions of a medieval manuscript into a digital medium. Utilizing fiber optics and computer imaging software, Beowulf scholars and British Library preservationists successfully uncovered the sections of text long-hidden beneath the framework of the manuscript cases.

The project, titled *The Electronic Beowulf*, was published in a small run in 1994 as a CD-ROM. Because of the generosity of UW English Professor A.N. Doane, this important electronic resource will soon be available to UW students and faculty.

"This is the most important manuscript from the Anglo-Saxon period and it is unique in that there is only one copy," Humanities Bibliographer Yvonne Schofer says.

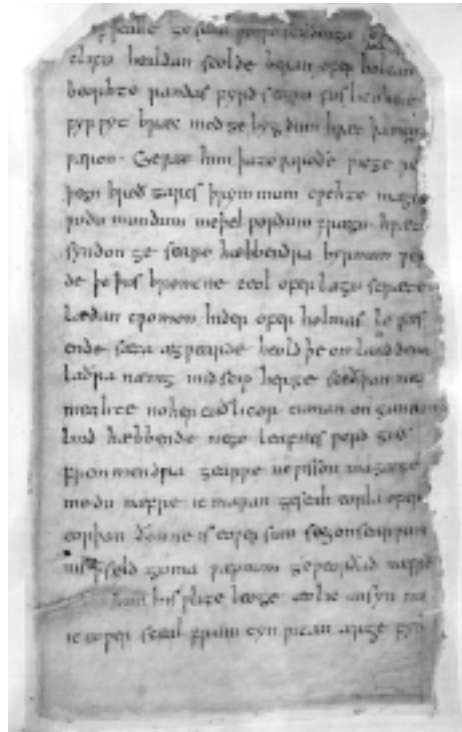
Because there is only one copy, many modern editions of the text have been based predominantly on the eighteenth-century Thorkelin transcriptions rather than the original manuscript. *The Electronic Beowulf* makes the once inaccessible manuscript readily available.

Yet the images are what separates not only the digital resource from facsimiles but Beowulf from the whole of Anglo-Saxon literature.

"It is an illustrated manuscript and one of the only early manuscripts to have been illustrated," Schofer says. In addition to the first-ever images of hundreds of letters concealed by the frames, *The Electronic Beowulf* is also the first color digital reproduction of the full text and illustrations.

One of the principal benefits is the teaching applications made possible by an electronic resource. "It enables an entire classroom to view an image. While there have been facsimiles before, they have not been interactive," Schofer says.

The CD-ROM allows researchers to place the original manuscript alongside both the Thorkelin A and B transcriptions to compare translations. It also provides an exhaustive glossary of Old English letters and etymology.



From *The Electronic Beowulf*.

UW accompanist donates forty-year collection of music

"I have shared music in a lot of ways: performing, teaching, transcribing. I thought this is another way of passing it on."

This is the modesty with which John Peter Gesinski describes his recent gift of more than forty years of music to the Mills Music Library. But this humility underscores the significance, not only of Gesinski's gift, but of his contribution to the university and the world of music at large.

Gesinski's unique gift is comprised primarily of entire collections of composers including Tchaikovsky, Liszt, and Chopin. In addition, it provides music students with an introduction to composers not traditionally associated with the piano canon and a large selection of piano pedagogy.

Gesinski has been teaching piano and accompanying ballet classes in the UW-Madison School of Dance for more than twenty years.

Perhaps his greatest contribution has come in the field of Braille transcription. Gesinski, himself a victim of failing eyesight, is one of only two North American transcriptionists working for both the Library of Congress and the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

And he still treats his life and music casually. "These transcriptions are no longer necessary to me personally.

"I have another opportunity to share. I hope this gift is an impetus to others to say, 'We could do something like this'," he says.

Exhibit to highlight history of UW-Madison Libraries

On November 13, Special Collections opened "With Discriminating Knowledge: The Libraries of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1848- ." The exhibit, organized by

Special Collections Curator Robin Rider and University Archivist David Null, features historical documents and photos, major collection pieces, and found objects from a variety of UW-Madison libraries.

The exhibit points out the close connection between library collections, services, and facilities.

Primary source materials from as early as 1850, as well as secondary materials drawn from library publications and transcripts of oral histories, complement pieces from the various collections.

Several smaller exhibits in UW-Madison member libraries will be held in conjunction with the exhibit.

"With Discriminating Knowledge" continues through March 2004.



A library ledger and an 1851 annual report.

Poet laureate speaks

U.S. Poet Laureate (2001-2003) Billy Collins brought a crowd of more than 1,000 people to their feet October 22 at the Wisconsin Union Theater with an hour-long reading of his ironic, humorous poetry. The event was part of the second annual Wisconsin Book Festival and was sponsored by the UW-Madison Libraries.

The first FELIX

On October 13, a full house packed Special Collections for the first lecture in *FELIX: A Series of New Writing*. The event featured readings and discussions by editors from the Milwaukee poetry journal *Traverse* and the Chicago journals *Conundrum* and *Antennae*. The discussion focused on the emerging presence of online literary magazines and the need for a greater presence by Midwest literary culture.

Book sale nears record

The sixteenth semiannual Friends book sale, October 22-25, netted the second largest income in the event's history. Forty-eight volunteers worked at the sale, which brought in \$22,255 in total sales before taxes. At the end of the four-day event, only one box of materials was left from the 500 that contained books, records, magazines, and journals. The sale, organized by board members John Toussaint and Jim Dast, is the principal source of support for the Friends' grant-in-aid program, the lecture series, and grants to campus libraries and library departments.

The next sale is March 3-6.

Friends news

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