

Chronicle

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Notable Friends Acquisitions

In the continuing grand tradition of notable acquisitions, the Friends of the Library has recently purchased significant and varied materials for the Jean and Alexander Heard Library.

Records of Ante-Bellum Southern Plantations from the Revolution to the Civil War has been chosen as the acquisition most fitting for the Herbert Weaver Memorial, reflecting as it does the subject of Professor Weaver's work. The Friends added necessary funds to complete this purchase. Another collection in the field of history, a twenty-two volume facsimile series of Chartist literature along with two Chartist serials, was purchased due to the great interest of its background, the 1919 gift to Vanderbilt of Chartist leader George Julian Harney's library, recently rediscovered and reassembled.

The Medical Center Library received funds to purchase John Grant Malcolmson's 1835 classic account of beriberi in India, bound with his observations on rheumatism. The Music Library will benefit from funds to purchase a seventy-two volume set of *Early Romantic Opera* and the Friends affirmed their continuing annual support of purchase of Fugitive/Agrarian materials. To support the outstanding Goldberg Research Library (described in *Chronicle*, Volume Ten, Number Two), the Friends supported the purchase of *The Turner Bequest*, a reproduction of a collection of some 18,000 watercolors and sketches of the artist John Crome, given to the British Museum by Dawson Turner.

The Friends of the Library has again supported the Library's continuing growth in

French literature through its contribution to purchase the collection of Gilbert Sigaux. Sigaux was an author, a translator, a professor of theater history at the "Conservatoire national d'art dramatique" in Paris and secretary of the "Société d'auteurs et de compositeurs dramatiques." Over a period of many years until his death in 1982, Sigaux gathered an enormous personal library of play texts, and books and other valuable documents on theater. "The collection represents," writes Dan Church, Associate Professor of French, "the single most valuable resource for research on theater in France in the twentieth-century." The collection was purchased from Patricia Sigaux, the author's widow. In addition to some 6,000 volumes, including monographs, theater journals and primary texts, there are numerous boxes of meticulously kept files on authors, directors, actors, and theaters. These files contain such items as press clippings, programs, publicity releases, and articles from journals, many of which are no longer available. The addition of the Sigaux Collection constitutes an ideal complement to the strong collections in French literature already at Vanderbilt.

BOMBES FUMIGÈNES A L'ODÉON

pour l'ultime représentation
des « Paravents »

La dernière représentation des Paravents, à l'Odéon, a été troublée, samedi soir, par un groupe de jeunes gens qui ont lancé deux bombes fumigènes dans la salle. Les lumières de la salle s'allumèrent aussitôt, le rideau tomba et les projecteurs furent braqués sur les galeries.

Les pompiers durent intervenir pour éteindre le début d'incendie qui s'était déclaré. Des flammes hautes d'un mètre provoquèrent la panique, les spectateurs de l'orchestre essayant de gagner les sorties de secours.

Une dizaine de minutes plus tard, la représentation reprit et put se poursuivre sans autre incident.

Clipping from *Lz Figaro*, May 1966



*Sigil of the Printer's Guild
Jeno 1720*

Preservation of Library Materials

Editor's Note: Marice Wolfe, Head of Special Collections and University Archivist, has been dedicating a considerable portion of her effort of late to educating the Library and University community about the critical need for preservation of library materials. We have asked Marice to provide for our readers an overview of the issues and procedures related to conserving the rich and valuable heritage reflected in the stacks of the Jean and Alexander Heard Library.

Summer of 1986 will bring the start of exciting new projects at The Jean and Alexander Heard Library. In its broad implications and system-wide application it may be seen as a complement to the major work in automation begun during the past year. As automation gives us the capability to manage the information explosion and to extend that management retrospectively, so the preservation program we are about to begin will enable us to ensure the durability of materials we add to the collection and to treat the existing collection in such a way as to extend its exceedingly valuable life.

If one were to place a value on the library assembled over the one hundred thirteen years of the University's existence, fifty to sixty million dollars would not be an unreasonable figure. Although impossible in practical terms, since most works are no longer available, replacement would most certainly cost more than that. Each year we add another two million dollars worth of library materials which, of their very nature, have already begun the process of degradation.

The natural tendency of books, as of all organic creatures, is to deteriorate. Books in libraries are encouraged in this self-destructive behavior by the environment in which they are maintained and by the people who handle them. An ideal climate for books might be at 60 degrees temperature, 50 percent humidity and no light. But more important than the exactness of the temperature and humidity ideal is

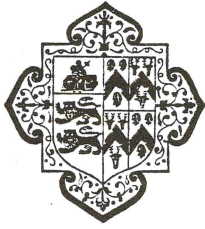


Marice Wolfe

the stability of those elements.

Papers and bindings expand and contract with fluctuations in atmospheric conditions, causing strain on the book structure and further embrittling what may be already brittle paper. Total absence of light would prevent use, and that is undesirable, of course; but also undesirable is the fading and discoloration of paper and cloth caused by exposure to bright or prolonged light which we have all noticed in our own newspaper clippings and bindings. Light accelerates the destructive action of the acid residue in the wood pulp papers which have been heavily used for the last century and more.

The deleterious effect of people on library materials is susceptible to a more immediate, perhaps even a perfect solution. Careless handling; the unnecessary use of glues, tapes, and destructive binding techniques; tight shelving



*Book stamp of John Williams,
Bishop of Lincoln, 1642*

necessitating that a book be pulled from the shelf by its head-cap which may then tear; holding books with dirty hands; allowing lunches, soda bottles, gum, candy, and the like in the proximity of books; exposing books to unsupervised animals and babies; strains imposed by photocopying; water damage of various sorts — all, except acts of God, may be eliminated. What is required is an educational program directed to staff members and users of the libraries. Provision of some protective materials during inclement weather, for instance, if such wrappers were imprinted with an appropriate message, could both protect the books and develop awareness.

Once the environment is stabilized and the handlers of books informed, measures may be taken to restore the library's collection. A conservative estimate is that fifty percent of our books need attention at some level. From a torn page to a loose binding of brittle pages, the problems are available to a number of alternative solutions. Repairs may be made. If the book cannot be salvaged, a reprint could be secured or a microfilm copy made to preserve the intellectual content. If the book itself has artifactual value, a protective enclosure may be made for it. The enclosure possibilities range from a plastic film wrapper, through a simple board box, to a linen-covered clamshell box built to the exact measurements of the book — a mini-environment.

Within the past several years the organizations which reflect the cumulative interest of those who are concerned with the preservation of knowledge and the dissemination of information, organizations such as the Association of Research Libraries and the Library of Congress, have declared themselves activists in the preservation effort by formally establishing preservation offices and programs. Major philanthropic agencies such as the Mellon Foundation and the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities are concentrating support for pioneer preservation initiatives. We are launched toward widespread conservation consciousness in the libraries of the United

States.

Although there had earlier been some uneasiness about the condition of books in our libraries, the enormity of the conservation challenge was brought home to the world by the 1966 floods in Florence, Italy. Because of the unquestioned treasures known to have been there, volunteers rushed from every part of the globe to assist in the recovery, not only of works of art, but of books and manuscripts as well. Many then young humanities and fine arts students, inspired by that experience, have become the preservation specialists of today. As a result of his work in Florence, a young bookbinder from England was sought as consultant to the Library of Congress. He has remained in the United States to build the ideal conservation laboratory at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas. The sophisticated analytical equipment there is almost pre-state-of-the-art in that conservators know its potential for research in the chemistry and physics of paper and adhesives, but have only begun to use it.

After a decade or so of debate, the distinction between conservation and preservation seems to have come to rest on these definitions: Preservation, in library applications, is the activity of planning to maintain in effective condition the materials of research. A preservation officer is an administrator with a broad understanding of potentially destructive forces and a commitment on all levels to protect the holdings of its library. Thus the preservation librarian might be involved in budgeting, lobbying for environmental controls, disaster planning, education of staff members and patrons, supervision of stack maintenance, repair and restoration work. On the other hand, in the library context, conservation refers to the physical measures taken to maintain individual items in the collection. The conservator is more craftsman or studio technician than the preservation officer.

The Vanderbilt program will officially begin with the appointment of a preservation

Continued overleaf

Friends

The membership campaign for 1986-87 will begin this summer. All Friends who contribute to the Friends of the Library after May 1, 1986 will be enrolled for the 1986-87 membership year. Please respond positively and promptly when you receive your membership renewal materials.

librarian engaged in planning and coordinating activities. We will survey the collection and decide how to proceed with its responsible care. A disaster plan must be created, then updated, to prepare us for emergencies. Some of the planning may serve a conscious-raising purpose as study teams look at the particulars of disaster preparedness or the variety of ways to retain the intellectual content of a hopeless volume.

In an upper corner of the General Library Building, within which the Central Library, Divinity Library, General Technical Services, Special Collections and the Television News Archive are housed, there is a room ideal for a conservation studio. Next to it is the micro-photographic laboratory of the original 1941 building, a darkroom providing the necessary water source. Fitted with workbenches and equipment this summer, the room will be dedicated to the conservation effort and will become the base of operations for the preservation librarian.

Friends of the Library in sympathy with the program to preserve our documentary heritage may wish to support this effort with time or funds. In late August 1986, a special event will be held for interested Friends in the form of a workshop on the preservation of personal memorabilia—scrapbooks, letters, clippings, treasured texts. We hope that the opportunity will engage your concern with the preservation issue and demonstrate the appealing measures which may be taken to care for the books and papers which mean so much to us all.

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Friends of the Library

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