

# THE RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY

STATE OF THE LIBRARY

WITH ANNUAL STATISTICS FOR JULY 1, 2015 TO JUNE 30, 2016

This is the 2015/2016 Annual Report for The Rare Book & Manuscript Library (RBML), but it is also my farewell to this magnificent library. Over the past 11 years, we, as a team, have accomplished a great deal.

- We have cataloged over 80,000 books, rendering them accessible for the first time and making wonderful discoveries along the way.
- We have renovated our public spaces and our vault, bringing the latter up to museum-quality standards.
- We have acquired such impressive additions such as the Gwendolyn Brooks papers, the papers of W.S. Merwin, and other modern poetry holdings.
- We have added numerous incunabula, including our first Hebrew 15th-century book, monuments of scientific publishing, scores of Marcel Proust letters, and significant acquisitions in theatre history, geology, mathematics, exploration, especially Arctic exploration, cooking, and economics, to name just a few of the areas we have strengthened and deepened.
- We have organized and curated over 50 local, national, and international exhibitions, hosted some 350 public events, and served thousands of students, faculty, and researchers.

- We have developed as a strong teaching library in two senses: collaborating with faculty on over 200 classes each year; and training the next generation of special collections librarians through intense apprenticeship programs and courses in conjunction with the Graduate School of Library and Information Science. *Over 350 students earned the Certificate of Special Collections since the program's inception in 2007.*
- We have entered the world of social media in a big way and redesigned our website three times over 10 years, keeping up with new styles and ways of communicating in much nimbler way than the Library as a whole has been able to do.
- We have introduced an automated public services system that not only allows readers to request rare items, but also keeps better records of our items in conservation, on-loan, and used in classes. Service to our readers has improved exponentially.
- We have received four major grants to make our collections more accessible through cataloging, digitization, and archival processing.
- We have produced or helped to produce about a dozen digital humanities projects based in our collections, including the award-winning "Women in Print" series with the University of Illinois Press.
- We have earned the support and loyalty of a broad and diverse community of researchers, teachers, students, and book lovers from the region who support us by coming to our many public events and through annual donations.

Remarkably, we have done all this with far less staff than any of our peer special collections libraries (they average 3 to 10 times the personnel) and with steadily

diminishing state funding. We have worked with donors, built up endowments, and found grants for many vital projects.

**Still left to do:**

- Find support and funding for a "Quick & Clean" project for our Archival holdings. Though we have some sort of finding aid for most of our literary papers, access has been stymied by the imposition of and poor support for Archon in our library system. Our legacy finding aids are often truly accessible only by trained curators. We need to make our archival holdings as "findable" as our book collections.
- Remodel to create a more appealing and safe exhibition space for our exhibits.
- Replace our Registrar, Reproductions, Conservation-Coordinator, and Exhibit Manager position (this was one person)
- Complete the grant-funded Cavagna cataloging project.
- Find institutional support to hire a permanent full-time cataloger in RBML.
- Find more funding for public engagement programming. This kind of outreach is essential for any good special collections library.
- Continue and expand our social media outreach.
- Continue to build our collections, using the subject expertise of our curators and colleagues.

- Work to redirect the Gray endowment funds back to collections and away from the student staffing (as mandated by Library administration last year). Or rethink our services in light of the 100% reduction in student staff funding.
  
- Redouble our enthusiastic efforts to publicize and raise campus awareness of special collections through cultural events in RBML.
  
- Expand and improve conservation efforts.
  
- Find funding for a separate, state-of-the art building in which to house this world-class collection. As the graduate studio class in Architecture made clear with their 16 amazing designs, a new space could be built that not only enlarged, but actually enhanced our current building, creating a separate and appealing space that would be more appropriate for this remarkable collection and give it the profile it deserves in our state.

## STATISTICAL PROFILE

### FACILITIES

Number of study places: **19**

Seminar Room can accommodate **15**

Exhibit area can be reconfigured to accommodate up to **60** for a lecture  
**biblioTECH** space (rooms 328+345 adjacent rooms next to RBML) has allowed us to house two staff members and students working on digital humanities and social media projects.

### PERSONNEL

Faculty: **5** (of this total one is three-year position; another is three-year grant funded)  
Academic professional: **1**  
Civil Service: **2**

Graduate Assistant: **1.5 FTE**  
Student Assistants **1.5 FTE**  
Grant/Endowment-funded hourly catalogers: **2 FTE**

### **USER SERVICES (CIRCULATION AND REFERENCE)**

Head Count: 3539 (including exhibit visitors)

Registered Reading Room Users: 960

Number of items used in Reading Room: 5067

Internal Reference questions answered: ~**1800** (underreported via Desktracker)

External Reference questions answered: ~**500** (underreported via Desktracker)

Number of hours open to the public per week: **42.5**

## COLLECTIONS

Acquisitions: 206 items (LIST ATTACHED)

Cataloging: 8,259 (3,068 titles received original cataloging, and 3,716 records were enhanced, and 1,475 were copy cataloging) (Appendix I)

Archival collections processed: 115 ft

## TEACHING AND OUTREACH

Courses and presentations: 149 in RBML; 46 outside of RBML

Students in courses and presentations: 2275

Major exhibitions: 3

Pop up exhibitions: 8

Loan exhibitions: 4

Valerie Hotchkiss (LIS590EX: *Planning, Production & Practice of Library and Museum Exhibitions*) taught Fall Semester, 24 students

Valerie Hotchkiss, Agora Week, University Laboratory High School, *A Short Course on the Short Short Story*, February 2016. 17 students

Valerie Hotchkiss, The Real Thing Reading Group. 6 meetings to read and discuss books for which RBML holds the author's manuscript. 16 participants

Anna Chen taught LIS 580LE Rare Book and Special Collections Librarianship), Spring Semester, 20 students

Adam Doskey and Chloe Ottenhoff taught 590BC Rare Book Cataloging, Spring Semester, 5 students

Caroline Szylowicz, Anna Chen, Valerie Hotchkiss, Chloe Ottenhoff, and Rosemary Trippe – along with graduate students, including Ann Foster, Sarah Lindenbaum, Sarah Hoover, and Dylan Burns – team-taught 8-week OLLI course on Special Collections, Fall Semester, total 75 students

Midwest Book & Manuscript Studies Program: Founding director Valerie Hotchkiss stepped down at the end of June, having overseen 373 students in their pursuit of the Certificate in Special Collections Librarianship over the past 8 years.

Practica, Independent Studies, and Curatorial Internships: 11 students;  
Alternative Spring Break placements: 3

Cultural events sponsored by and held in RBML: 17 with total of 657 participants

Blog postings: dozens of well-researched and engaging entries. See them at: <http://nonsolusblog.wordpress.com/>

## **CONCLUSION**

The RBML is indeed the jewel in the crown of our great library and a treasure of the university. We can truly claim to be No. 1 in the Big Ten, at least in the area of special collections and we continue to work to make this distinction better known and appreciated. Since the mid-1970s, RBML has not received the kind of institutional support warranted such a valuable cultural resource, neither from the Library, nor the university administration in general, nor the state. The future is

bright for this kind of cultural heritage collection at other universities in America. As the importance of the average physical book wanes, the significance and value of these extraordinary books and manuscripts increases. Indeed, most would give their eyeteeth for such an embarrassment of riches as Illinois possesses in RBML. It is both a pity and a scandal that Illinois is not supporting this resource appropriately.

## Appendix I

### RBML Cataloging Project July 2015-June 2016

With most of the major collections and backlogs cataloged, the Rare Book & Manuscript Library (RBML) Cataloging Project has focused on cataloging newly-acquired items, as well as continuing to re-do the cataloging of items that were represented by MARCette and MARS records. It is estimated that there are approximately 11,000 RBML titles represented by these extremely short bibliographic or machine-matched records, most of which are inaccurate and provide little to no bibliographic information. Replacing these records continues to be a priority for the project in order to make these titles properly accessible to scholars as well as to ensure that the library's holdings are accurately represented in the online catalog. The RBML would benefit tremendously from having a full-time permanent rare book cataloger on staff to continue this important work alongside the daily cataloging required for new acquisitions, gifts, and transfers.

In December 2014, The Rare Book & Manuscript Library received a Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR). The grant supports the project *Cataloging Cavagna: Italian Imprints from the Sixteenth through the Nineteenth Centuries*. With this funding, the project—one of only 19 selected from a total of 92 applications in 2014—will catalog more than 20,000 rare Italian imprints from the 16th through 19th centuries in the library's historically significant Cavagna Collection. The collection was purchased by the University in 1921 from the family of Count Antonio Cavagna Sangiuliani di Gualdana (1843-1913), a recognized authority on the local history of Northern Italy. Most of Count Cavagna's library of printed and manuscript documents are in Italian, but the collection also contains French, Latin, and German publications. A significant number of works written in various disappearing Italian dialects will be increasingly valuable to linguists. The collection also contains many *unica* (items



which are believed to be the only remaining copy in existence), as well as items that are the only copies in North America (or, often, outside of Italy itself). Cataloging this rich collection over the course of the next three years will make it newly accessible to scholars in multiple fields, including Italian history, literature, art, theater, law, economics, and religion. In addition, digitized versions of the printed works in the collection will also be made available. This extremely valuable cataloging effort continues apace, with 9,929 titles cataloged to date.

In addition to the above, notable cataloging achievements were made in regard to several important gift collections donated to the RBML, including the Michael L. VanBlaricum Ian Fleming and Bondiana Collection, the H.W. Vrooman Collection of Dickensiana and numerous other works donated by Martha Landis, and a large number of rare editions of J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan, along with several smaller donations over the course of the year. In addition, further acquisitions in the area of socialist and anarchist pamphlets, broadsides, and serials were cataloged, and continued work was done on the Aron Collection (acquired in 1913 and mainly uncataloged to date), many of which are unique items that no other libraries in the world hold. The RBML Cataloging Project continues to work cooperatively with specialist catalogers in International Area Studies to provide access to rare Japanese print and manuscript materials and an important collection of Soviet Samizdat works and other items in Slavic languages.

Further, in addition to keeping up with the cataloging of numerous gifts and with newly-purchased books, games, realia, serials, and other items, the Cataloging Project has also enhanced or, at times, entirely re-cataloged items represented in the catalog by poor or sometimes egregiously wrong bibliographic records. As RBML items circulate and errors or missing information are noticed in the catalog records, these materials are given to the Cataloging Project so errors can be rectified. This newly-accurate representation of our holdings results in improved access for students, faculty, and scholars everywhere.

NB: RBML's holdings in ESTC are currently 45,231.

#### Cataloging Project Statistics, July 2015-June 2016

Items Cataloged	Original Records Created in OCLC <sup>1</sup>	Enhanced Records in OCLC <sup>2</sup>	Copy Cataloging <sup>3</sup>	Total Titles Cataloged
July	274	327	56	657
August	381	262	142	785
September	354	323	184	861
October	281	359	131	771
November	271	303	115	689
December	222	277	123	622
January	170	183	62	415
February	253	347	116	716
March	245	341	109	695
April	227	392	192	811
May	171	350	142	663
June	219	252	103	574

<b>Total</b>	<b>3068</b>	<b>3716</b>	<b>1475</b>	<b>8259</b>
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1. Original bibliographic records contributed to the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) database
2. Preexisting records in OCLC that are improved, expanded, and/or corrected
3. Preexisting records in OCLC and Voyager that are updated for added copy information only

<b>Original Records in OCLC</b>	<b>New (no other record in OCLC)</b>	<b>Derived (no other English-language records in OCLC)</b>	<b>Total Original Records Created</b>
July	251	23	274
August	309	72	381
September	312	42	354
October	214	67	281
November	237	34	271
December	184	38	222
January	148	22	170
February	231	22	253
March	213	32	245
April	206	21	227
May	158	13	171
June	199	20	219
<b>Total</b>	<b>2662</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>3068</b>

<b>Unica Titles Identified</b>	228
<b>MARCette Records Replaced</b>	96
<b>MARS Records Corrected/Replaced</b>	1501