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Mirabile Dictu: The Bryn Mawr College Library
Newsletter

Bryn Mawr College Publications, Special
Collections, Digitized Books

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Mirabile Dictu

The Bryn Mawr College Library Newsletter

Mariam Coffin Canaday Library, Bryn Mawr College, 101 N. Merion Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010-2899



*View of the town of Padua.
Woodcut from the Nuremberg Chronicle, 1493.*

From the Director

Along with manuscripts, exquisite African sculpture, the incunables and the collection of antiquities that are the treasures of Bryn Mawr's special collections, are a range of other special materials that are less rare, but no less integral to the educational mission of the College. This semester, when I taught a senior seminar in the social history of advertising in the U.S. and Europe, I used materials that were produced on a mass level in the 19th century, but were not often retained, and thus have become relatively scarce. And when they were added to the collection, it was probably not for the reason for which we have deployed them.

When libraries build collections, the books and manuscripts and other artifacts that we amass are usually procured for a straightforward reason. But as time passes,



other aspects of the material in question gain interest for the reader. Take this trade card as an example. We think it was produced in 1899, one of a set of nine, to advertise Enameline, a stove polish. We in the library purchased this interesting novelty for its obvious connection to the College – note the text in red below, “I am a Bryn Mawr girl” – and probably precisely because it bears little resemblance to an actual turn of (the twentieth!) century Bryn Mawr student. When we passed it around in a class on the history of advertising, though, it sparked an animated conversation about the possible connections between the growth in opportunities for education for women in this period, the development of the notion of the consumer, and, most intriguingly, the elusive connections between the



“new” woman and the arrival of modern marketing techniques.

Another example. The first edition of *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* by



Charles Dickens was published in parts during 1836 and 1837 and as a rare item was purchased by the library in the 1950s, an excellent copy with some of the twenty parts in their rare first issue form. The excitement that this book caused in our seminar, in addition to the obvious thrill of working with a Dickens first edition, was the extensive use of advertising: in some of the serial parts, the number of pages of advertising far exceeds the number of pages of the novel. Even more intriguing to us was the first use of what is known today as “product placement,” mentioning a branded product for commercial purposes. That caused us to think that a range of categories normally understood as separate from one another, such as literature and advertising, are closely connected.

Largely due to the generosity of the Friends of the Library, its board and its current chair, Susan Klaus, we can provide a wide range of primary research materials to our students and faculty. We thank you very much for your continued support and hope you enjoy this fourth issue of *Mirabile Dictu*, which has been edited and designed by Jean G. Miller.

Elliott Shore
The Constance A. Jones Director of Libraries

A Wealth of Information - in Bryn Mawr's Course Catalogs

By Loretta Treese

Those researching the lives of Bryn Mawr alumnae are sometimes surprised to discover that their subject was a double major. But this was not at all uncommon; all the early graduates of Bryn Mawr College were double majors. The fact can be confirmed in that series of documents that forms one of the most valuable components of the BrynMawrCollege Archives: the Bryn Mawr Course Catalogs.

Originally published in "Eleventh Month, 1883," the course catalogs clearly state the purpose of the college, the courses of study, and the requirements for admission, as well as describing the campus and even the cost of attending.

As for the double major or "Group System," the 1885-86 edition states "It is required that every candidate for a degree take two such major courses as shall be homogeneous, or shall complete each other, and major courses which fulfill this condition are designated as Groups. It is meant that the student, under this system, should lay the foundations of a specialist's knowledge." Students had a number of choices; they could combine physics with chemistry, history with political science, any language with any other language - the course catalogs list all the possible choices.

They also list the "academic appointments" for the year. While Woodrow Wilson was teaching here as an Associate in History, his name appears with the information that that he graduated from Princeton in 1879 and studied law at the University of Virginia. Since a great deal has

been written about Woodrow Wilson, this information is available in a number of secondary sources. But biographers researching scholars who did not go on to have quite such public careers are often delighted to learn these details.



The course catalogs provide the most detailed information about exactly

high school.

Today's Bryn Mawr students are sometimes fascinated by the original floor plans for the dorms that are also to be found in the early course catalogs. These were once useful to students in selecting a specific room. They show current students just how the dorms have been altered over the years and a glimpse of what college life was like "back then."

The Bryn Mawr College course catalogs have traveled the world via interlibrary loans. Scholars interested in the education of women or the teaching of a particular subject, like physics or chemistry, specifically to women, have been eager to review them. Volumes of the course catalogs have been sent to England, Australia, and Japan as well as many states. It is hoped that funds will become available to microfilm these valuable

In addition the catalogs list the members of the board of trustees for each year and the other members of the college community. In the case of students, they mention the student's hometown, her majors (if she had declared them), and identify her high school with a polite phrase like, "Prepared by Miss Irwin's School, Philadelphia, PA." Genealogists are often quite pleased to thus discover the name of an ancestor's

A Year in Bryn Mawr's Collections

By Eric Pumroy

After almost a year at Bryn Mawr, it is still a rare week that goes by when I don't come across some extraordinary part of the collection that I had not previously appreciated. One week might turn up early writings on Latin America; the next, illustrated 15th century printed books; and after that, pamphlets from the French Revolution, Carrie Chapman Catt's scrapbooks of photographs documenting the suffrage movement, or Katherine Sergeant White's papers from her career as an editor at the New Yorker. Bryn Mawr has been blessed with great collectors over the years, most recently in James Tanis, Mary Leahy, and Leo Dolenski, all of whom have retired in the last three years, and with the large number of generous Friends of the Library, whose support has made the collections possible. Building upon this legacy is a daunting, but exciting task.

Even more gratifying than the discoveries is watching the ways in which the students and faculty are making use of the collections, from class sessions devoted to hands-on presentations on the history of the book or history of prints, to individual assignments to research art objects or read texts on British women's history. Collections of the depth and richness of those at Bryn Mawr are normally found at comprehensive research universities, not liberal arts colleges, and so most students only use original texts if they pursue graduate degrees. At Bryn Mawr, though, students get to experience the intellectual excitement of handling and analyzing original materials as part of their regular academic program.

As impressive as the collections are, there is still much work to be done to make them more readily accessible to both the college

community and the wider international scholarly world. The emergence of new information technologies over the last ten years has transformed the process of teaching and research. Twenty years ago, scholars located research materials through the laborious process of checking printed bibliographies and writing letters to institutions. Now they are using the Internet to search library catalogs and access detailed information about collections worldwide, and as a result, we are almost as likely to receive an e-mail inquiry about our collections from a scholar in Italy as we are from a faculty member across campus.

In such an interconnected world, it is no longer enough to catalog collections in the traditional way. Under the direction of our new Special Collections Librarian, Miriam Spectre, we are undertaking a major enhancement of our web site by systematically mounting detailed descriptions of our manuscript, image, and other special collections, linked to cataloging records in Tripod.

We will be paying particular attention to our collections of prints and photographs, collections that number approximately 100,000 items and are used extensively for class projects, especially in Art History, and for book illustrations, documentary films, and exhibitions.

Much of the collection is uncataloged, and information about the rest is available only through paper files and the Special Collections staff. We recently created a half-time Visual Collections Specialist position to coordinate the cataloging of images and the development of an image database that will make it possible to search our collections on the web. We were fortunate in being able to hire for this position an experienced museum curator, Barbara Ward Grubb.



*Martyrdom of the Apostle Simon.
Woodcut from the Nuremberg Chronicle, 1493.*

Our exhibition next year will celebrate the 500th anniversary of the end of the incunable period of printing by examining the early history of the book. The exhibition will draw heavily upon the remarkable collections donated to Bryn Mawr by Howard Goodhart and his daughter, Phyllis Goodhart Gordan '35, collections that include more than one thousand books printed by the year 1500. Thanks to their generosity, only three academic institutions in the country have more incunables than does Bryn Mawr. We will use the books as an opportunity to explore how the development of printing influenced the intellectual, cultural and political world of early modern Europe.

The centerpiece of the exhibition will be the first great coffee-table book, Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum*, more popularly known as the *Nuremberg Chronicle*. This mammoth history of the world was published by Anton Koberger in 1493, with 1500 copies printed in Latin early in the year, and another thousand in German six months later (Bryn Mawr has copies of both). While Schedel's text was mostly copied from other sources, the 1809 woodcut illustrations have kept the book alive as a window onto the world of the late middle ages. Most of the woodcuts were the work of Michael Wolgemut and his apprentices, including a young Albrecht Durer. Of course, with the treasures available in Bryn Mawr's

collections there will be many other books worth seeing as well, such as Antoine Vérard's beautifully illustrated 1492 French edition of Josephus's *De la bataille Judaïque*, and the strangely elegant *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* of Francesco Colonna, published by Aldus Manutius in 1499.

We hope to see you next fall at both the exhibition and the programs celebrating the history of the book.



Woodcut from Flavius Josephus, *De la Bataille Judaïque*, printed in Paris by Antoine Vérard, 1492.

New Staff join the Canaday Library

by Jean Miller

Once again, Bryn Mawr College has been fortunate that some wonderful librarians have joined us in the last year. You will find them ready to help you at the Reference Desk, in Special Collections and in our Technical Services Department. Let's meet the latest members of the Bryn Mawr College Library Staff.

Barbara Grubb is the new Visual Collections Specialist in the Special Collections Department. She came to us from the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies where she worked as the Museum Curator. She has also worked in several academic institutions including North Carolina State University, Duke University, and Emory University. She will be working with the college's prints and photographs collections preparing them for cataloging and digitization.

Esmeralda Kale joined our staff last summer from the University of Fort Hare in South

Africa where she taught in the Department of Library and Information Science. She also worked at the University of Swaziland where she earned her M.L.S. She currently works in the Tri-College Automation Office maintaining TRIPOD for the Bryn Mawr, Haverford and Swarthmore Libraries. You may also find her staffing the Reference Desk at the Canaday Library.

Christee Pascale joined us in January 2000 after finishing her M.L.S. in May 1999 from the University of Pittsburgh. She has joined the Cataloging Division in the Technical Services Department. Christee comes to us from the West Virginia University Libraries where she worked as a cataloger for their music materials.

Miriam Spectre joins us from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University where she worked as the Archivist.

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New Collection Provides a Unique Glimpse into the Life of Poet Christina Rossetti

by Miriam B. Spectre

The Library has recently received from Mary Louise Maser and Frederick E. Maser an addition to their manuscript collection of the English poet Christina Rossetti, originally donated in 1991. Rossetti is considered by many to be the greatest female poet in English literature. This addition by the Masers, which is a deposit in the process of becoming a gift, is twice the size of the original manuscript collection.

The collection was formed by Mackenzie Bell during his work on *Christina Rossetti: A Biographical and Critical Study*, which was published in 1898. Rossetti's brother, the literary critic and editor of the *Germ*, William Michael Rossetti, provided Bell with handwritten information about Christina and the Rossetti family, along with notes and comments about Bell's drafts of the book. In 1896, William Michael also presented to Bell some of his sister's letters. Because Bell made a list of these letters, it is possible to identify them in the collection.

Bell borrowed from Rossetti's friend, Mrs. C. M. Gemmer, Rossetti's letters to her, as referenced in the carbons of Bell's outgoing letters to Gemmer in 1903. In one of Gemmer's letters to Bell, she urges him to keep the Rossetti letters, stating that she is of "a great age now; 82 and have no further use for them." Bell had made transcriptions of the Rossetti letters while working on his book, and some of these transcriptions are annotated, probably by English bibliographer Thomas J. Wise, who was working on an appendix to Bell's book.

The remainder of the materials in the collection were purchased by Bell, and we are fortunate to have in the collection a short account of this purchase, written by Bell on 4 January 1898. Bell explains that he had attended

a party on 31 December 1897 given by the English illustrator Walter Crane, and was talking to one of the guests about his Rossetti biography. The guest told him that the bookseller Frederick H. Hutt was selling various Rossetti letters that Hutt had obtained from an unknown man. Bell had a hunch that the man was probably William J. Bryant, who had served as literary secretary for Bell's book on Charles Whitehead, published in 1894. The next day, Bell visited Hutt, who confirmed that the letters had been sold to him by Bryant. In Bell's written account of this meeting, Bell remarks that he then "purchased all the remaining stock of Christina Rossetti's handwriting." The collection now at Bryn Mawr contains these items, including six letters from Rossetti to Bryant and his wife in 1892 regarding their financial misfortune.

Some of the letters and documents in the collection have the signatures cut out, which was apparently done by Bell, according to notes that he made on one of his lists of Rossetti letters: "autographs cut off & sent to the Dean of Canterbury and Mr. Fagan of the British Museum of



Christina Rossetti Bookplate

Natural History, S[ou]th Kensington, at their request." Rossetti's common practice of not dating her letters, but marking them only with the day of the week, might have proved problematic to scholars except that the collection includes most of the postmarked envelopes in which Rossetti's letters were sent. Through the use of a perpetual calendar, dates have been assigned to the letters. There are some letters that do not have envelopes, but many of these have been marked with a date either by Mackenzie Bell or by William Michael Rossetti.

The letters by Christina Rossetti in this collection span the years 1870 to 1894. There are three letters in 1894 to Bell himself, thanking him for his letters and expressions of sympathy on the death of her mother; Bell's side of the correspondence is represented as well by carbons of his letters to her. Other correspondence by Rossetti includes eight letters to John H. Ingram in 1883 regarding her research for a biography of Ann Radcliffe; an undated letter to Theophilus Marzials, giving him permission to set one of her poems to music; and a letter to Arthur Symons in 1891 commenting on proofs that he had sent her, probably of an article about her writings. The largest group of Rossetti letters consists of the aforementioned thirty-two letters to her friend, Mrs. C. M. Gemmer, from 1870 to 1893, in which Rossetti discusses her writing, reading, family, and friends. Other letters in the collection to various friends and acquaintances touch on similar themes, especially mentioning her life with her mother. One 1883 letter to an unidentified recipient describes her mother's plans for a grave and memorial window for Christina Rossetti's brother, the Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

There are a number of letters from Rossetti to family members, discussing visits and family news, and relaying messages from her mother. These letters are addressed to her brothers, Dante Gabriel and William Michael, and to William Michael's wife, Lucy, who was the daughter of the English painter Ford Madox Brown. There is also a letter from Brown to his daughter. On the side of the Rossetti family, there are a few letters from Dante Gabriel to various recipients about visits and about his work, as well as a check made out by him to "Queen's taxes." There are

30 Torrington Square - W.C.
Thursday,
Dear Mr. Mackenzie Bell
Pray accept my grateful
thanks for a letter of kindness
which I value especially because
it points to the Only Source of
strength. I am so glad my poor
brother passed the last sad
weeks with his wife who
retained consciousness to the
last.
Gratefully yours
Christina G. Rossetti

One of three letters written by Christina Rossetti in 1894 to Mr. Mackenzie Bell thanking him for his letters and expressions of sympathy on the death of her mother.

two letters from Christina Rossetti's sister, Maria Francesca Rossetti, one to an unidentified recipient discussing a child's studies, and one to Miss Wynne Jones about an autograph collection. The only printed item in this addition is also by Maria Francesca: a pamphlet entitled *The Rivulets; A Dream Not All a Dream*, published in 1846.

Because the Maser's addition to the Rossetti collection was formed by Rossetti's biographer, it presents scholars with a detailed picture of her life both at work and at home, as well as shedding light on the research and writing

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Prior to her work at Yale, Miriam worked at the American Philosophical Society as the Senior Processing Archivist. She joined the staff last summer as the Special Collections Librarian and works closely with the College's collections of rare books, manuscripts, archives, prints and photographs.

Arleen Zimmerle, Media Studies Reference Librarian, began in the Canaday Library this past January after working at LaSalle University's Connolly Library as the Head of Media Services. Arleen is working on developing the library's film and video collection. She is also designing a viewing room in the library where students can watch the videos alone or in small groups.

Did you know that *Mirabile Dictu* is available on the World Wide Web? The Web version contains full color images and active links to other interesting Library web pages. Please visit the *Mirabile Dictu* Web page at <http://www.brynmawr.edu/Library/Docs/mirabile4.html>.

And, in case you missed previous issues of *Mirabile Dictu*, you can read them on the Library's Web pages as well. Point your web browser to <http://www.brynmawr.edu/Library/Docs/pubx.html> and look for *Mirabile Dictu* Numbers 1, 2, and 3.

New Archaeological Gifts

by Hilary Hunt '00

In May of 1999, Dr. Henry S. Robinson and his wife Rebecca Wood Robinson, Class of 1945 and MA in 1950, presented Bryn Mawr College with a donation of 75 Mediterranean antiquities from their own collection. The varied donation includes such interesting pieces as a bronze figurine of the Egyptian goddess, Isis, a black glaze Greek amphora and oinochoe, three Roman glass vessels, and a child's inscribed gold ring. Additionally, there are Attic lead weights, faience objects and even a terracotta architectural fragment. The diverse and choice nature of the donation contributes significantly to our Ella Riegel Memorial Study Collection available for study and enjoyment to both students and scholars. Dr. Henry S. Robinson was Director of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens from 1959-1969, at which time the Robinsons acquired many of the pieces in their collection as gifts from scholars and friends. An archaeologist by profession, Dr. Robinson worked

for many years at the American School excavations in Corinth, contributing greatly to the publication and interpretation of this Classical site. He was also a faculty member at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma. Rebecca Wood Robinson graduated from Bryn Mawr with a BA and an MA in Classical Archaeology. While Mrs. Robinson was working on her Masters, she was one of the first archaeology assistants to the Ella Riegel Museum. The Robinsons' love for antiquities and her work with the Collections led the Robinsons to donate their extensive and valuable collection to Bryn Mawr, where it will be used in the education of many members of our community.

The Ella Riegel Study Collection is located in Thomas and is available for viewing, by appointment. Please contact the curator (610) 526-5335 or the archaeology assistant, Hilary Hunt (610) 526-5775.



*Curator of Collections and archaeological assistant Hunt examine objects from Robinson gift.
May of 1999*