Mirabile Dictu: the Bryn Mawr College Library Newsletter 23 (2020)

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Exquisite corpse collage of objects from Special Collections, created Spring 2020, by students in “A Gendered History of the Avant-Garde” and executed by Alessandro Giammei
Calendar

The Girl's Own Book: Selections from the Ellery Yale Wood Collection
September 21, 2020-May 2021
Class of 1912 Rare Book Room, Canaday Library
Open 10-4 weekdays to the campus community

The Girl's Own Book Online
http://exhibitions.digital.brynmawr.edu/the-girls-own-book/index

Bauhaus at Bryn Mawr: Marcel Breuer's Furniture for Rhoads
Eva Jane Romaine Coombe '52 Special Collections Suite Gallery, Second Floor, Canaday Library

Coloring the Past: Restoring Color to Ancient Sculpture Through Projection Mapping
February-May 2021. Digital Media and Collaboration Lab, Carpenter Library

Events

All events are virtual this year and you must register to attend. Go to https://www.brynmawr.edu/lits/exhibitions-events/girls_own_book for up-to-date information on events as they are added and to sign up.

What Makes Children’s Books Rare?
November 12, 2020, 7:30-9:00 pm, via Zoom.
Lecture by Heather Klemann, Yale University
Is rarity a way of looking? Historical and ephemeral children's books sometimes fall short of the criteria antiquarians, booksellers, and librarians use to designate “rareness.” What happens when works gathering dust in attics or meticulously categorized and shelved in storage facilities receive national and even global audiences as they migrate online.
You must register to attend this event:
https://brynmawr.libcal.com/event/7187752

Friday Finds
Friday Finds are a series of informal luncheon chats about historical and cultural objects held in Bryn Mawr’s Special Collections, or about ongoing exhibitions. Most events are Fridays at noon and last about an hour. Friday Finds this year will include author readings, book arts, and story hours. Register at https://www.brynmawr.edu/lits/exhibitions-events/girls_own_book.

Friends of the Libraries Board Members 2020–2021

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From the Director

Welcome to our 2020 edition of *Mirabile Dictu*. I have never been prouder to be associated with the Bryn Mawr College Libraries, and I have always been quite proud and honored to be associated with our Libraries' rich collections and amazing people. As you'll find in these pages, this has been a year of tremendous adaptation, innovation, and transformation for our library services, programs, projects, and systems. When the pandemic hit, colleagues in Library & Information Technology Services were well-poised to shift to online forms of programming and collaboration, skillfully and creatively enabling our community to continue accessing resources, working on scholarly projects, and joining together to explore topics and materials of shared interest.

Bryn Mawr is no stranger to pandemics, and the Archives brilliantly framed the College’s historical materials around the 1918 influenza epidemic as resources to be integrated with current courses or research projects exploring plague, epidemiology, or other facets of the COVID-19 crisis. Our College Archivist also launched a project to collect from community members anything they want to share about their experiences of the current pandemic so that we will have a new archival collection that enables contemporary and future researchers to understand this historical moment through evidence and stories from diverse Bryn Mawr perspectives.

Though we had to delay the on-site opening of the exhibition showcasing Ellery Yale Wood’s collection of books for young readers last spring, curator Marianne Hansen immediately provided alternative “tastes” of the exhibit through online research blog entries. *The Girl’s Own Book* opened in September, and it is beautiful in person. Students, faculty, and staff who are on campus this year will be able to visit, with masks and social distancing, of course. Though we are sad that visitors will not be able to come to the campus this year, a wonderful digital version of the exhibition is available for all of you to explore and enjoy, and the online version brings the added opportunity of digitized books that you can read and view in their entirety.

Our interns and fellows have been collaborating with faculty and staff to produce an intellectually stimulating array of projects that you’ll read about in this issue of *Mirabile*.

Meanwhile, library and technology colleagues have been hard at work behind the scenes, updating the systems that support our management and preservation of physical and digital collections and creating improved interfaces for discovering and learning about Bryn Mawr’s wealth of special collections objects.

We are ever thankful for the support of Friends like you, who continue to engage with Bryn Mawr's collections and programs and to explore the treasures that the College has to offer. This year we welcomed many new Friends, including graduating students who had worked with us in the Library & Information Technology Services organization. I hope you’ll feel the joy of being connected to this institution and a similar kind of pride that I’m feeling when you read about this year’s happenings across the Bryn Mawr College Libraries.

All my best,
Gina Siesing
Chief Information Officer & Constance A. Jones Director of Libraries
Over the summer, Special Collections launched a project encouraging Bryn Mawr alumnae/i, students, faculty, and staff to document their experiences during COVID-19 and to contribute them to the College Archives. The project aims to capture the impact of COVID-19 on our daily lives. While Bryn Mawr College’s official response to the pandemic will be preserved in the Archives through web capture and through the routine transfer of administrative records, we did not have a way to ensure the experiences of individual members of the college community would be preserved alongside the official responses.

Katrina Sousounis ’23 submitted videos taken in spring of 2020 of her participation in her Advanced Ballet class via Zoom from her home.

be preserved in the Archives through web capture and through the routine transfer of administrative records, we did not have a way to ensure the experiences of individual members of the college community would be preserved alongside the official responses.

Christmas comes but once a year
And only lasts a day.
The Quarantine is yearly too
But makes a longer stay.

D. E. P.

From the yearbook of the Class of 1920, p. 51

Documenting COVID-19 at Bryn Mawr

addresses that issue. Its goal is to create a community-sourced, digital archive of personal experiences of, and reactions to, the pandemic — one which shows the ways in which we are living now. Since launch, the project has received submissions from across the college community. A wide range of materials, including journal entries, videos, and photographs, will offer future researchers a glimpse of the different ways our community experienced 2020-21.

This is not the first time Bryn Mawr College community members have faced a pandemic. The College Archives holds records from the 1918 Spanish Flu outbreak, including student diaries and letters. The class of 1920 experienced multiple quarantine periods during their four years at Bryn Mawr, enough that they included a poem about them in their senior yearbook. With Documenting COVID-19 at Bryn Mawr, we are actively collecting material for people to look back on a century from now.

For more information, including how to submit material, visit https://tinyurl.com/bmc-covid-project.
The Girl's Own Book

Ellery Yale Wood offered us her children’s books ten years ago and, when she died in 2013, bequeathed more than 10,000 volumes to the College. The books arrived by container ship in 2015 and after sorting, sifting, and processing we are finally approaching the end of our five-year project to add the books to the Libraries’ catalog, Tripod, so that students, faculty, and scholars worldwide can uncover the richness of the collection. To celebrate this achievement, the collection is highlighted in the exhibition The Girl's Own Book.

The exhibition opened September 14, after a six-month delay due to the pandemic and last-minute installation with student help. Open to the campus community in the Rare Book Room in Canaday Library, the exhibition has already served as a safe gallery site visit for the class “Museum Studies: History, Theory, Practice.” We are also welcoming individual viewers, who enjoy the 93 books on display as well as hands-on copies of related original and facsimile books available to visitors.

There are also many opportunities to experience the show and Wood’s collection online. Curator of Rare Books Marianne Hansen, who created the exhibition in collaboration with student employees, began blogging about the collection as soon as we knew the opening would be delayed. Articles (at https://specialcollections.blogs.brynmawr.edu) have included dad jokes; musings on apparently silly books that reveal class, gender, and social expectations of their readers; research into how early 19th-century child mortality statistics explain cautionary poetry; and everything you need for DIY paper dolls.

An online version of the exhibition at http://exhibitions.digital.brynmawr.edu/the-girls-own-book extends the physical exhibition by including links to full digital versions of some of the books on the Internet Archive and to the blog posts that discuss individual books.

All events for The Girl's Own Book are digital this year. Heather Klemann lectures on “What Makes Children's Books Rare?” November 12, 2020, 7:30-9:00 pm, via Zoom, contemplating what happens when books for young readers migrate online. Friday Finds occur many Fridays, usually at noon. Please check the events listing and register at https://www.brynmawr.edu/lits/exhibitions-events/girls-owned-book. We hope you will join us!
COVID-19: LITS Responds

The pandemic required faculty and students to pivot to remote teaching and learning in a matter of days in March. It transformed our work as librarians and educational technology specialists, as we stepped in to help faculty learn how to teach online courses, record instructional videos, and develop interactive online assignments. We also assisted in finding digital books and journals for classes and research, and facilitated access to software normally used in the computer labs. The libraries took advantage of the hundreds of thousands of ebooks available through the Hathi Trust and the Internet Archive’s National Emergency Library and invested heavily in packages of ebooks from academic publishers. These measures maintained academic continuity and allowed instructors and students to finish out the spring semester, even under far from ideal circumstances.

Through the summer we focused on preparing for a fall semester with numerous students attending remotely and many classes taught at least partly online. To help faculty prepare, Library and Information Technology Services (LITS) offered a series of Online Teaching Institutes, collaboratively developed by Maria Oceano Finc, Christine Boyland, Ellen Farr, Alex Pfundt, and Gina Siesing of LITS and Assistant Professor of Social Work Tamarah Moss. The Institutes provided more than 100 faculty and academic support staff with an online professional development opportunity that combined self-paced instructional modules, online discussions, technology workshops, and one-on-one consultation with Institute staff. Participants learned how to foster communities of inquiry in online courses, support student learning in a time of crisis, manage student and instructor workloads, design effective online assessments, and identify the learning technology approaches that best fit their courses’ learning objectives.

New Digital Portal

Over the past year, TriCollege Libraries staff have been working on a large-scale migration project to consolidate digital collections currently residing in Triptych (CONTENTdm) and Triceratops (DSpace) into one user-friendly and accessible platform called Islandora. The new TriCollege Libraries Digital Collections website will also include new types of content, like audio, video, and oral histories, that are more web-accessible than ever before. Users will be able to view captions and synchronized audio transcription as well as transcribed text; download copies of images, books, audio/video files, and descriptive information (or metadata); search within the text of books and newspapers; and filter and search records in more intuitive ways through the powerful Solr search engine.

It will also be simpler to determine the copyright status of images, thanks to standardized rights status labels from RightsStatements.org. We have made it easier to relate digital content to physical items and the collections from which they came by adding links back to ArchivesSpace and Tripod records. Look for more announcements about the official launch of the site in January before the spring semester begins.
Several spring courses designed around visiting Special Collections and focusing on art objects were interrupted when COVID-19 broke out. In some cases, as with a Museum Studies course learning to catalog previously unidentified African sculpture, staff scrambled to produce videos of objects in the round to simulate looking closely and in person at three-dimensional objects. With other classes we were grateful for our efforts over the past several years to digitize collections, as we drew on extant assets, especially TriArte (triarte.brynmawr.edu).

COVID-19 made painfully clear how privileged we are at Bryn Mawr to have collections for first-hand study. Alessandro Giammei’s students in “A Gendered History of the Avant-Garde” managed to visit only one of several times planned. Giammei embraced the experience, enfolding it into a revised version of his assignment.

The problem of suddenly inaccessible objects that are also conceptually obscure drove his students to produce a virtual gallery based on remembered versions of their selected objects. Their lived experience of the disruption of normal systems gave new weight to the calls for revolt by the avant-garde authors they were reading. Working with curator Carrie Robbins MA ’09 PhD ’13, the class produced an inventive set of interpretations rooted in their shared readings. Visit their gallery at https://www.brynmawr.edu/lits/exhibitions-events/venusian_virtual_vanguards.

In preparation for the fall semester, Special Collections developed a website to highlight collection items that give historic context to the COVID-19 pandemic (https://guides.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/documentingcovid19/1918pandemic). Faculty who want to include students’ experiences into their course content or assignments can turn to materials on public health, disease, medicine, and quarantine on campus during the Spanish Flu. We also recommend potential assignments that utilize collections, even with modified access. Past digital exhibitions, map builders, and blog posts are linked through our website for faculty to use as inspiration or examples.
Summer School for Women Workers Centennial

The Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry welcomed over a thousand factory workers and manual laborers to the College between 1921 and 1938. The program provided a two-month retreat to study economic theory, but also subjects to enrich life outside the workplace like literature, astronomy, and music. While classroom lectures provided a liberal-arts context for the labor movement and skills necessary for self-advocating in the workplace, alumnae also remembered their first experience of life away from the smog and cramped confines of cities and mills.

This summer, I began developing a digital retrospective exhibit on the Summer School, which celebrates its centennial in March 2021. The Rita Rubinstein Heller ’59 collection on the School includes student poetry, personal correspondence, and transcriptions of oral history interviews from the 1980s. I was particularly drawn to the former students’ descriptions of campus life, speaking vividly of the power of Bryn Mawr fifty years after they had gone back to their jobs. For most, this was their first time living and working in spaces like the elaborately designed dorms and the castle-like academic buildings. The chance to play baseball and field hockey on the vast greens and to indulge in recreation during the day were also new for many.

Re-experiencing these first impressions of Bryn Mawr reminded me how special our College community is, and how transformative setting foot on campus can be. In this moment, when students connect with Bryn Mawr from across the globe, it can be hard to recall the spark that brings us together as an institution. The accounts of the students of the Summer School point out what it means to be a Bryn Mawr student—our education consists not just of classroom lessons, but also of our experiences together as a community exploring and navigating the unfamiliar together.

– Beck Morawski ’21

TriArte Updated

The TriArte database contains searchable records of nearly forty thousand objects collected by Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore, including Classical and Near Eastern archaeological artifacts, fine art, decorative arts objects, and minerals. First introduced in 2013, TriArte has recently been updated to improve access to these records.

LITS staff upgraded the database with a new server and software. Graduate student employees Megan Sligar and Kaylee Verkruisen, with undergraduates Esme Read ’22 and Katie Perry ’21, worked during the spring and summer to expand cataloging and improve records.

New or greatly improved features include the ability to browse by donors, exhibitions, publications, or user portfolios. The advanced search feature now permits searching by artists, exhibitions, and bibliography. Donor biographies, an enhanced bibliographic section with images of comparanda, and a conservation section for some object records are all new.

Try it out yourself at http://triarte.brynmawr.edu/.
Exhibitions Go Online

As stay-at-home orders went into effect this spring, it became clear that Special Collections needed to explore new ways of connecting with our audiences – especially online. *The Girl’s Own Book* couldn’t open to visitors in March as scheduled, but curator Marianne Hansen began sharing its content through the Special Collections blog and an online exhibition.

In a similar, but much more extensive project, over the summer, Carrie Robbins, Curator of Art & Artifacts, recruited Friends of the Libraries interns to create digital versions of exhibitions from the past four years. She developed detailed workflows so that students, unable to work in person with her or one another, could remotely upload many years’ worth of exhibition content and digital assets to the web platform Scalar. This utilized an exhibition template developed in tandem with the former Digital Scholarship Specialist Alicia Peaker specifically for this purpose. Esmé Read ’22 and Katie Perry ’21, working under Robbins’ guidance, also tried their hand at layout and design of webpages.

Work on the websites continues this fall, as the project moves into troubleshooting for accessibility. Tessa Haas, PhD student and McPherson Fellow for Special Collections, will work closely with Alice McGrath, Digital Scholarship Specialist, on this final phase. You can tour exhibitions you missed or review those you want to see again via these improved sites later this year at https://www.brynmawr.edu/lits/exhibition-history.

Example of landing page for digital versions of past exhibitions showcases the exhibition produced in 2016-17 by students in a 360° course cluster, "Poetics and Politics of Race: Querying Black and White"

The King’s Treasures

This summer I began work on a transcription and translation of *The Jewel Roll of Edward I*, a Latin document from 1301. This is an inventory of codices and gold, silver, and precious stone objects. I worked with a similar document during my Masters research at the University of Toronto, where I translated the last will and testament of Blanche of Navarre, Queen of France (died 1398).

The jewel roll offers challenges beyond those of my previous project: The roll is in Latin while the will was written in an old French dialect. I also had a printed transcription of the will and did not have to depend on my paleography skills. With the jewel roll I must decipher the handwritten text of a scribe from 720 years ago. I had to re-learn my ABCs to work through the document, identifying specific letters, piecing together whole words, then assembling the partial sentences and phrases that record the king’s treasure.

The roll lists the contents of thirteen separate boxes. Preliminary translation reveals the presence of a variety of objects: one box, for example, contained an assortment of rings with rubies, sapphires and diamonds; in another several precious metal vessels were stored. There are also numerous notations of manuscripts in the boxes, including a book of Scottish legends.

The jewel roll is not very long – barely four pages of text – and would not have been an exhaustive catalog of the King of England’s treasures. But the organization of the roll, the information about how and where various precious items were stored, and the treasure itself all have potential for further study. My transcription, translation, and findings will be presented in a website in the spring.

See the manuscript at https://bibliophilly.library.upenn.edu/viewer.php?id=MS 8.

– Kaylee Verkruisen, Graduate Assistant for Special Collections
In 2019 Bryn Mawr was invited to participate in a multi-institution research initiative exploring historic library collections. Book Traces (http://booktraces.org), based at the University of Virginia, captures data on marginalia and other reader interventions in books published before 1923. Bryn Mawr was chosen because our open stacks (not including Special Collections) hold over 13,000 books from the 19th and early 20th century.

Last fall, Book Traces project leads Andy Stauffer and Kristin Jensen visited campus to present on the project and train LITS staff and students to use their app to record various types of reader markings. Our team surveyed hundreds of volumes, including some from the personal libraries of notable figures in Bryn Mawr’s history. Though our data collection efforts had to stop prematurely due to the pandemic, we did collect data on reader interactions with over 1,100 books. Highlights include marginal notes from the Deanery’s library, a funeral notice from 1885, and a gift inscription by one J.R.R. Tolkien.

The Book Traces project focuses on marginalia by individual owners of books that later came into library collections, but we also looked at more recent markings in our books, including marginal comments by students and faculty. Digital Scholarship Project Assistants Emily Elmore ’20, Catherine Lin ’23, and Vy Pham ’22 created Mawrginalia, a digital showcase of our local findings with photographs, data, and reflections on these books’ unique histories: https://digitalscholarship.brynmawr.edu/scalar/mawrginalia/.

– Alice McGrath, Digital Scholarship Specialist

Dr. Jane Martin ’53 MA ’58, the generous donor of a significant collection of African art and related papers from her professional work in Liberia, died this spring. After graduating from Bryn Mawr, Martin went on to earn her PhD in African History from Boston University in 1968. Her research focused on the Glebo of Eastern Liberia, and many of her interests there are reflected in the archives she donated to the College, including material on specific individuals in the Kru tribe, African women and their roles in education and society, and governmental and non-profit organizations in Africa.

Martin lived and worked in West Africa for several years, teaching African History at the University of Calabar in Nigeria and the University of Liberia in the 1970s. Her papers demonstrate her careful thinking about how to teach history, and what to teach, and include research interviews she conducted during this time. From 1984 to 1989, she was Executive Director of the United States Educational and Cultural Foundation in Liberia, administering the Fulbright and other cultural exchange programs. She was a strong advocate for binationalism between the US and Liberia for all of her life, continuing this work at the African-American Institute in New York when civil war forced her to leave Liberia in 1989.

Throughout her travels in Africa, Martin collected a wide variety of art and cultural objects, some 150 of which she donated to the College Art & Artifacts Collection. These include masks danced by women of Liberia’s Sande society, Ashanti gold weights, baby carriers, toys made by the artist Saarenald T. S. Yaawaisan from recycled materials.
Coloring the Past: Restoring Color to Ancient Sculpture Through Projection Mapping creates a more accurate viewing experience by reintroducing polychromy to plaster casts in our collections. Librarian and archaeologist Laura Surtees PhD ’12 led the interdisciplinary project, which was supported by a Digital Bryn Mawr project grant. During the summer of 2020 graduate student Molly Kuchler (Classics) trained two undergraduate students, Mira Yuan ’21 and Vimbai Mawoneke ’21, in photogrammetry and the 3-D graphics and modeling program Blender.

For our colorized reconstructions of ancient sculpture, we chose the Borgia Stele and Nike Adjusting her Sandal. Through research on ancient pigments, Mira and Vimbai created colorful 3-D reconstructions of the casts. Due to COVID-19, we were not able to complete the final stage of projection mapping, which uses a physical art object as a canvas for displaying projected images or videos. but installation is scheduled for spring 2021.

Read more about the project at https://digitalscholarship.brynmawr.edu/coloringthepast.

– Laura Surtees, Research and Instruction Librarian and Coordinator of Rhys Carpenter Library
Celebrating Student Workers

Fifty-five new members joined the Friends of the Libraries on one day last spring, all of them graduating seniors who worked for LITS during their student years. The two-year complimentary Friends membership is part of a new program of celebrating LITS student workers as they graduate. The event was originally planned as a buffet dinner with a champagne toast, but COVID-19 changed it into a Zoom gathering with an online site: https://padlet.com/mocandofin/2020litsworkers.

In her note of appreciation to the students, Chief Information Officer and Constance A. Jones Director of Libraries Gina Siesing wrote:

“We are deeply grateful to all of the student employees who work with Library & Information Technology Services and especially to those of you graduating this year! Thank you for your service, for your dedication to excellent work, and for helping us to support learning, teaching, scholarship, and creativity across Bryn Mawr. We couldn’t do what we do without you, and our lives are better for having the opportunity to work with all of you!”

Friends of the Bryn Mawr College Libraries

Book Collector’s Prize Enters Fifth Decade

This year the Seymour Adelman Book Collector’s competition began its fifth decade. Since 1980, student collectors have described their books in brief essays and annotated bibliographies and presented examples of their collections to a panel of judges. Winners have collected modern Greece, Herman Melville, Hungarian poetry, souvenir books about Finland, African-American writers, Edward Gorey, ghost stories, cryptozoology, the Titanic, sailing ships, Scottish Country Dance, South Asians in America, and World of Warcraft. A list of winners appears at https://www.brynmawr.edu/lits/seymour-adelman-book-collectors-prize.

This spring’s judging happened through Zoom, but the judges were excited, as always, by the passion and enthusiasm of the student collectors. Chloë Epstein ’21 won the contest with her collection of comic books and graphic novels that inform her drawing of her own comic series. She presented a bibliography of 33 of the most important of more than a hundred books on her shelves.

Seymour Adelman brought his own collection of books and manuscripts to Bryn Mawr College in 1976. Adelman believed that students are often collectors without realizing it, and he established the contest in 1979 to encourage students to think about their books in a new way. The prize is now sponsored by the Friends of the Bryn Mawr College Libraries.