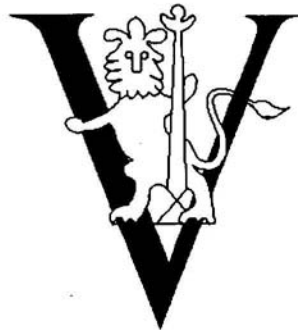


**RARITIES
AND
ODDITIES**

IN THE

**NEW YORK SOCIETY
LIBRARY'S
COLLECTIONS**



**PRESENTED BY AREVIG CAPRIELIAN
RARE BOOKS LIBRARIAN**

The very age of the New York Society Library indicates that our holdings would naturally include some rare books. Over the 246 years of our existence, we have accumulated some through regular acquisitions (for which we have manuscript records), some as generous gifts or bequests, and some through proper identification of volumes in the circulating collection. Few American libraries can boast such canonized rarities as incunabula, of which we hold 10 titles, dating from 1475 to 1498.

Representative titles of early printed books can be found in the Library's Sharp and Winthrop collections. (See our website for more information on the latter). Since most of these titles were purchased from European book dealers, they constitute a multi-lingual collection, including Latin, German, and French titles, and of course some English-language books. In the near future, a retrospective conversion project will provide full electronic access to our rare books collections.

Historical/Bibliographical rarities

Books that possess historical and/or bibliographical value constitute an important category of rare books. They can be divided into sub-categories as follows:

Pioneering in a field or discipline

The first group of 'pioneering' titles is a rather self-evident group of books that broke new ground in a particular subject. Examples are Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and Einstein's *Relativitätstheorie (Theory of relativity)*. This category also includes books on first expeditions, discoveries and explorations of little known regions and peoples.

Banned titles

Books -- and their precursors -- have been banned and destroyed throughout mankind's history. Such treatment makes a book subsequently more sought-after, and attracts more readers and collectors than it would have with a non-controversial past. A modern example of this is Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*; The Library holds numerous books that have been banned at some point of their existence. Examples mentioned below are only those that represent additional points of interest.

MACHIAVELLI, NICCOLO, 1469-1527. *Il Principe* (The Prince). First published in 1513, it has been banned in various countries. It made a regrettable return to notoriety via Mussolini's effusive praise and the Fascist state's distribution of cheap reprints in the thousands. We have an early printing (Frankfurt, 1622) of this work in the Winthrop collection.

ERASMUS, DESIDERIUS, d. 1536. *Moriae Encomium*. First published in 1512. In the Library's collection are a French translation (Paris, 1751) and another (New York, Haarlem, 1953; see figure 1) to which we shall return as an example of fine printing.

HEMINGWAY, ERNEST, 1899-1961. *The Old Man and the Sea*. First published in 1952. All books by Hemingway were included in the 1933 Nazi book burnings. Shockingly, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) was banned in Boston in 1930 on grounds of being lewd. This particular title was ultimately redeemed, receiving the Nobel Prize in Literature. The library has the 1st edition, 1st printing of this work.

It should also be mentioned that works by such luminaries as Mark Twain and Walt Whitman were banned in this country: *Leaves of Grass* was purchased by but a single library in its initial publication run, the Library Company of Philadelphia. Twain's *Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Huckleberry Finn* (1885) were banned in this very city, in Concord, Massachusetts, and by the Denver Public Library. Among the least predictable and most absurd reasons for banning was the one applied to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) by the Governor of Hunan Province in China in 1931. The Governor's reasoning was that "animals should not use human language, and that it was disastrous to put animals and human beings on the same level."

MORIAE ENCOMIUM
OR
THE PRAISE OF FOLLY
BY
DESIDERIUS ERASMUS

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN TEXT BY
HARRY CARTER / WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HENDRIK WILLEM VAN LOON / ILLUS-
TRATED WITH WOODCUTS BY
FRANZ MASEREEL

PRINTED BY
JOH. ENSCHEDÉ EN ZONEN / HAARLEM
FOR THE HERITAGE PRESS
NEW YORK



Fig. 1

- **Awarded and otherwise formally recognized titles**
This is a fairly easy group to identify. For the New York Society Library, awarded books by persons affiliated with the Library are of particular importance. Having an extraordinarily strong literature collection, we have quite a number of titles that fall into this category.
- **Controversial subjects**
Good examples of this category would be the first American anti-slavery pamphlets. This generally implies extreme expressions of thought, whichever end of the political (or moral) spectrum they reside.
- **Pirated editions**
Under this rather harsh definition one should rather recognize an impatience to make a popular work/author immediately available. It is not solely the desire for profit, but often a clever circumvention of delaying and cost factors. U.S. publishers were quicker to do this with British publications than vice versa, and most Soviet re-publications of Western literature could be considered piracies.

MISS MACKENZIE.

A Novel.

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF "RACHEL RAY," "DOCTOR THORNE," "ORLEY FARM,"
"THE SMALL HOUSE AT ALLINGTON,"
&c., &c., &c.

NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,

FRANKLIN SQUARE.

1865.

NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

Fig. 2

First editions

The importance of a 'first edition' is something that every reader understands. However, as Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* demonstrates, there can be various states and printings of a first edition. To make things more confusing, purists (and shrewd booksellers) intimidate lay people with the self-contradictory term 'pre-first', correctly qualified by John Carter as "symptomatic of the chronological obsession." This term is applied to advance copies, trial issues, pirated/unauthorized editions (Trollope's *Miss McKenzie*; see figure 2), and so on. The application of this term should be taken into consideration with several grains of salt.

Scarcity can be a consequence of innumerable causes. A few basic ones are:

- Destruction by humans
This first cause can be divided into 'innocent' and 'intentional.' Nikolai Gogol and Walt Whitman, among other authors, have destroyed their books in fits of artistic madness, thus the label 'innocent.' Intentional destruction includes the burning of the fabled library in Alexandria and (hopefully) ends with modern book burnings in Munich during the 1930s and the post-Shah Iran as some of the more chilling expressions of 'intentional'.
- Unintentional destruction
Unintentional destruction seems to overlap with 'innocent' intentional destruction but really means the lack of proper preservation measures and hence, comes from a devaluation of some forms of intellectual property and an ignorance of the importance of proper storage and handling. Most endangered are things like cookbooks and children's books, as well as materials apparently superseded by new truths.
- Progress in discipline/subject
These are often considered 'outdated' publications. One might not attach much importance to an old cookbook, and yet they are research sources not only for the culinary historians, but also economists, medical researchers (think of the ever-present lard used in the past), sociologists, etc. Similarly, old manuals or scientific-technical literature surely lose their application, but definitely retain value as retrospective and historical sources.
- Occasional publications
There are many types of these publications. It is essentially impossible to collect and preserve all such publications, but some libraries make an

attempt, if only in narrow subject areas. Groups of libraries will often divide responsibility for developing or maintaining historical collections. For example, the New York Public Library's Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center collects Playbills and concert programs. The New-York Historical Society and our Library have a wealth of 19th century pamphlets and broadsides. Figure 3 is the title page of a collection of public addresses given by President Woodrow Wilson while in office, an excellent example of an unusual early 20th century publication held by the New York Society Library.

U. S. President, 1913-1921 (Wilson)

THE PRESIDENT *to the* PEOPLE

Woodrow Wilson

IN this brochure are embodied extracts from the outstanding messages of our President, covering the entry of the United States into war, and up to the present time.

We believe the President's words of encouragement and appeal should be read and re-read by every American citizen in the spirit of renewed resolve to do his share in bringing this war to a successful end.



THE OUTLOOK COMPANY
NEW YORK

PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

Fig. 3

- **Ephemera**
Ephemeral publications resemble occasional publications, the main difference being their local importance rather than a broad importance. This being said, historical ephemera are a distinctively important category collected and preserved by libraries everywhere. Examples of ephemeral publications are advertisements, menus, and notices containing information that might not be available elsewhere.
- **Purposefully limited editions**
Limited editions are marketed mainly to known book collectors. They can be either publishers' editions, printing houses' editions (e.g.. Nonesuch Press), or intended to be a tribute to a particular author, work or artist/illustrator. The Library holds a wealth of limited editions: we have titles issued by the Heritage Club, the Limited Editions Club, Nonesuch Press, the Hogarth Press, Riverside Press, De Vinne Press and numerous others.
- **Unintentionally limited editions**
Unintentional limited editions are publications meant for limited distribution due to a perceived small target audience rather than an attempt to ensure scarcity. Typical examples would be reports (annual or otherwise) of a particular corporate body. Certain ministries in Russia used to print their annual reports in exactly three copies in appropriate bindings: royal for the Czar, armorial and monogrammed for the Grand Duke and black leather with gold lettering for the ministry archives. This category should not be confused with the occasional publications that are often limited to the number of intended audience: the membership or, in case of coronations, invited guests (see figure 4).
- **Casualties of time, conditions, human error**
Time, physical conditions and random judgment – as distinct from the aforementioned banning – can cause the destruction of books and printed matter. With the conviction that written word represents a record of the human experience, libraries have an important responsibility to preserve material that is known to be scarce or unique.

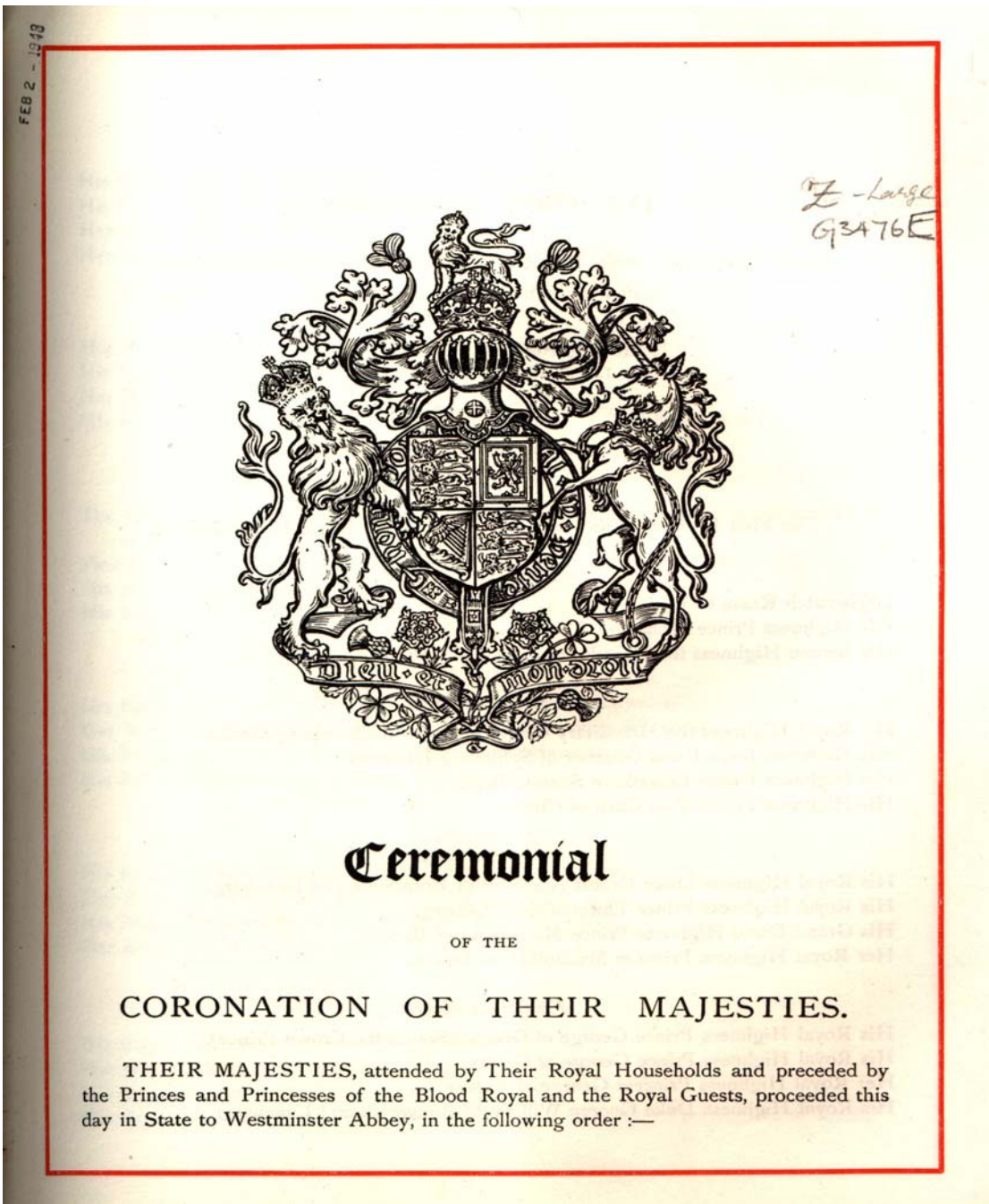


Fig. 4

Provenance is a very important aspect of an item's overall value. No amount of effort should be spared in proper research in this matter. In the antiquarian book trade and in libraries, significant provenance considerably elevates the price and 'status' of a book. The New York Society Library has a number of titles with unique marks of ownership. Worthy of mention is The Hammond collection is worthy of mention as an example of institutional provenance, as the entire collection constituted the holdings of an early 19th century Rhode Island rental

library. The Sharp and Winthrop collections are examples of individual's libraries. The Library traces some of its titles to the collections of figures as diverse as John Dee, Irene Sharaff, Mai-mai Sze, Sir Walter Scott, and Alfred Barr. This category often overlaps with the next one listed – association copies.

Association copies bear a connection to:

Creators (authors, translators, illustrators, compilers, editors)

Producers (publishers, printers)

Designers (type designers, binding designers, binders)

Evidence for this association is usually contained within the work; it can also be external (e.g. insertions) or inferred through another source. [Here goes the Winthrop/Dee; romance, and Mai-mai, Steve]

While the **aesthetic value** of a book is usually obvious, there is often a need for thorough bibliographical research to ensure accurate attribution. The usual areas of interest in the aesthetic value of a book are:

- Fine printing
- Special paper
- Illustrations
- Binding: design and execution
- Typefaces

The New York Public Library, Columbia University Library and a number of other libraries in the U.S. have, and continue to build, **artists' books** collections. The New York society Library recognizes the limitations of its scope and does not attempt to collect these expensive titles.

Within the category of bibliographical **oddities** are those self-created books (not to be confused with artists' books) that are created for a single person or event. [MINIATURES HERE] Some other important categories of oddities are:

- Unique entities
- Topical scrapbooks
- Bespoke bindings, regardless to their quantity, made solely for the owner. Grolier, Richelieu are more celebrated examples of this group.

Anomalies and points make a copy (or a number of copies) distinct from the rest of the edition. Distinctions can be caused either by the production process or simple human error. Akin to those rare postage stamps that have printing errors, books with distinctive features attract attention and create desirability for collectors. Common distinctions include but are not limited to:

- Broken type
- Misprints
- Altered printing
- Unexpected production

Library-specific materials that are designated as rare in large libraries comprise what are usually called 'special collections.' Individual books within a special collection may not possess objective qualifications for rarity, but they do possess some collective feature that is important for a specific library. Such qualities can be their subject matter; or it may be that they represent an institutional, named or personal collection. The New York Society Library has several subject collections, including the Winthrop collection, which features 17th century works of science and pseudo-science, and alchemy. The Library also makes it a point to continuously focus on New York City history and reference, 19th century fiction, and the institution's own archives and awarded books.

There are a few books to which none of the above categories apply, and yet they are considered rare. These are **copy-specific rarities**; often they are also association copies. Some of the features of 'important copies,' as they are often referred to by antiquarian booksellers, are annotations and/or corrections by a known person; informative notations; personalization other than the conventional (ex-libris, signature); and insertions. The latter might include reviews, correspondence, advertisements, announcements, receipts and the like.

To conclude, every Library member can assist in our collection development by considering the Library's needs when weeding a personal library. Gifts and bequests constantly enrich the existing profile and scope of the Library's collections. In addition, be sure to always use library material with care and please bring damaged copies to the attention of the staff.

