

RARE BOOKS
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
J. WILLARD MARRIOTT LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Collection Development

The origins of the rare books collection at the J. Willard Marriott Library can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, with the founding of both the University of Deseret and the Utah Territorial Library, and the donation of some 3,000 volumes from the personal library of University of Utah President, John R. Park. As the early collection consisted mainly of books on Utah and the Mormons, these materials were put together and set aside in a special room called the Utah Room, or Treasure Room. In anticipation of the move to the new library building in 1968, the Utah Room officially changed its name in to “Western Americana, Rare Books, and University Archives” in order to better reflect its holdings. At the time, the growing collection included approximately 33,000 bound volumes and 61,000 unbound volumes.

That same year, John Willard Marriott, Sr. had donated one million dollars for library acquisitions – the largest single contribution ever received by the University at that time. For his gift, the current five-story building was named in his honor. Using the Marriott funds, Special Collections Director, Everett Cooley, purchased over fifty percent of the titles listed in *The Plains and the Rockies*. This "Wagner-Camp bibliography," as it is often called, contains books published about the West during the years between 1805-1860. Combined with the library of Judge Tillman D. Johnson, these acquisitions placed the Marriott Library among the top dozen university libraries with significant Wagner-Camp holdings.

A second major collection that was acquired as a result of the Marriott gift was approximately one thousand titles related to the history of science – a collection that had been assembled by anatomist Herbert McLean Evans. Of these titles, some 350 could be considered classics in the field. The History of Science collection included first and early editions from the likes Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Andreas Vesalius, and Andreas Cellarius, to name but a few. In 1971, the department changed its name once again, this time to Special Collections.

The strengths of the rare books collection include the history of science, religion, and printing, materials that highlight overland exploration and the American West, limited editions of fine press and artists' books, manuscript facsimiles from Medieval Europe and Mesoamerica, and one of the nation's largest Middle East collections. By actively collecting and digitizing material of historical and aesthetic importance, the Rare Books Department preserves a heritage of thought, artistic endeavor, and innovation that inspires the human spirit today. Today, the Rare Books Department holds more than 80,000 items in the collection, comprised of books, maps, ephemera, and realia documenting the record of human communication - from Sumerian clay tablets to twenty-first-century artists' book.

COLLECTION STRENGTHS

Middle East Collection: One of the top ten Middle East libraries in North America, the Aziz S. Atiya Middle East Library is internationally recognized as a major center of research in Middle Eastern studies. The Middle East Center and the Aziz S. Atiya Middle East Library were first established at the University of Utah in 1959 with the appointment of just one faculty member. In 1961, the

department finally became official, with a small budget for library acquisitions. The Aziz S. Atiya library has since been incorporated into the Rare Books Department.

One of the highlights of the Middle East Library is the Arabic Papyrus, Parchment & Paper Collection. This collection is the largest of its kind in the United States, containing 770 Arabic papyrus documents, 1300 Arabic paper documents, and several pieces on parchment. The collection includes a significant number of documents from the pre-Ottoman period and thus offers unique source material on the political, economic, religious and intellectual life of Egypt during the first two centuries of Islamic rule and the period up to Ottoman domination.

Manuscript Facsimiles: Although we always say, there's nothing like holding the real thing in your hands, sometimes the real thing is simply inaccessible. In the case of medieval manuscripts, there is usually just one copy of the real thing. In order to share this one copy, meticulous reproductions that convey the spirit and power of the book have been made, we call these reproductions *facsimiles*.

The word "facsimile" comes from the Latin, meaning "to make the same" and often times it is so close to the original, it's hard to tell the difference. Each book is approached individually in order to successfully duplicate the format, tone and color, unique to each work. The actual condition of the original book is respected.

Water damage, tears, discoloration, uneven pages, etc., are re-created without changing, adding to, or enhancing the condition of the book in any way. No cost can be spared to achieve an exact replica. Bindings are handcrafted to faithfully duplicate things such as the original type of leather or fabric used, as well as any clasps, fasteners, gilding, and embossing.

Because facsimile production is such a painstaking process, editions are necessarily expensive and limited. The Marriott Library is among the few libraries in the world to own many of these beautiful books.

History of Science: But the rare books collection has more than fancy reproductions. Most of our books are, in fact, the *real* thing. How would you feel holding a first edition copy of Galileo's *Dialogs*? What about a signed copy of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*?

The Marriott Library has first editions of both of these works, and first editions of books by other pioneers of science such as William Gilbert, Johannes Kepler, Antoine Lavoisier, Carl Gauss, Charles Lyell, Michael Faraday, Louis Pasteur, Marie Curie, and more. Chronicling the history of science, books such as these give us insight into the communication, conversation, collaboration, and controversy that made scientific discovery possible – a revolution that has been going on in print for more than five hundred years. Each of these books has its own story to tell.

History of Religion: From the history of science to the history of religion, the rare books collection holds some of the most notable religious works, including a first edition copy of the Book of Mormon, signed by Joseph Smith, first printed editions of the Greek New Testament, and first and early editions by Martin Luther, among so many more.

Overland Exploration and the American West: Books certainly do travel far and wide. Both literally and figuratively. Travel books, particularly focused on overland exploration and the American West, are also considered to be one of our collection strengths.

The Western frontier, with its promise of wealth and adventure, inspired emigrants to trek hundreds of miles in search for a new life. Along with these emigrants, politicians, explorers, adventurers, and entrepreneurs set out to document their overland expeditions in print, making for some very interesting reading. Some of the most famous tales of westward exploration can be found in the Marriott Library's rare books collection.

Fine Press and Artists Books: Rare books can provide a truly insightful look into history. But rare books can also be used as lens in which we look through to view our own contemporary time.

Twenty-first century artists' books and fine press books are also considered "rare" due to both their aesthetic value and their scarcity. A particularly unique strength in our collection, the rare books shelves are lucky to hold such a vast number of these books. While fine press books have already been defined as emphasizing bookmaking craftsmanship, artists' books are significantly trickier to pin. Artists' books can vary in size and shape, often making us question what a book is and what a book can be.

History of the Book: The skills of bookmaking still draw intrigue from faculty, students and community members. If you are looking for more resources, a variety of titles on the history of the book and the history of printing can be found within the rare books collection.

WHAT MAKES A BOOK RARE?

Age: You might be wondering, what makes a book *rare*? While there can be a lot of criteria which determine the value of a book, some of the most important qualities we look at are age, scarcity, print history and provenance, in addition to historic, cultural, and aesthetic value.

Not all old books are rare books, but the age of a book can be an important factor. The oldest books in our collection are defined as *manuscripts*, meaning written by hand. Unlike handwritten books, printed books are typically not one-of-kind, although, early printed books can hold just as much value. For instance, books printed within the first fifty years of the printing press – called *incunables* -- are considered very rare. Overtime, and with the introduction of mass-market publications in the early 19th century, books began to lose their commercial value, but before you start judging a book by its cover, there are a few other things to examine.

Scarcity: How rare is a rare book exactly? Determining the scarcity of a book might be as simple as turning to the colophon, the statement at the end of a book that provides information about its authorship and printing. The colophon might note exactly how many editions were printed. If a book is printed in a limited edition run, or under five hundred copies, then that book is surely rare. Not all books, however, provide colophons. In this case, book collectors and dealers track the circulation of titles, to figure out approximately how many books were published.

Imprint: The author and even the publisher are often equally significant. A reader can look to a book's imprint to learn about the publishing history. An imprint is something like a brand, and some imprints hold a lot more prestige than others.

Historic Value: While a book's publishing history holds a lot a value in the world of rare books, history itself is often an underlying factor when determining how rare a book is. Historic value considers and contextualizes the historic moment during which the book was published, and how the circumstances of that moment might influence the actions of the author and the publisher.

Cultural Value: Like historic value, cultural value considers and contextualizes, only this time focusing on the dynamics of culture during the time of the publication. It looks at how emerging cultural movements, whether belonging to or going against the status quo, might influence the written word.

Aesthetic Value: Sometimes a book has value simply because it is a beautiful book. Aesthetic value looks at the craftsmanship of bookmaking and gives special attention to the skills of binding, papermaking, and letterpress printing. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder as they say, but not for a while, the practice of bookmaking centered around profit, rather than art.

HOW DO WE ACQUIRE BOOKS?

Purchased: A special budget set aside for rare books acquisitions has allowed us to purchase a variety of titles. In an effort to expand our collection to meet the needs of faculty, students, and community members, we look for books that we believe will make an impact on research and education.

Donated: While we are lucky to be able to purchase rare books, we are even luckier to receive kind donations from people both near and far, anonymous and named.

Reclassified: In addition to purchases and donations, some rare books are found within the library's general collection. Blink and you might miss them. Dependent on the criteria of what makes a book rare, some books might be reclassified from the general collection to the rare books collection, adding to our growing number of titles.

WHY WE KEEP COLLECTING

Without a doubt, the rare books at the J. Willard Marriott Library are *special*, and while a certain set of criteria might make a book rare, the true value of a book should not be determined by a price tag.

Books are important to our understanding of history, and to ensure that our history reflects all kinds of voices, we will continue to collect books and continue to tell their stories. Most importantly, we will continue to argue that there is nothing like **holding the real thing in your hands**.