

**Report on recent Special Collections developments to the
SHeLF Committee Meeting, 6 September 2010**

Introduction

Since the last report, members of the Special Collections staff team have continued to deliver the researcher-focused reading room service. June and July 2010 were particularly busy months, with some 315 printed books and manuscripts provided for 12 classes during the London Rare Books School, 28 June – 9 July 2010 inclusive. Karen Attar, Rare Books Librarian, launched each week with a lecture on “Treasures of Senate House Library”, supported by a display of rare books and manuscripts mounted by Angela Craft, Senior Conservator, and Alexandra Bruce, Conservator. We have also welcomed numerous visiting scholars to the Special Collections Reading Room.

Promotion and outreach

Special Collections staff undertake a wide range of promotion and outreach to bring rare books, archives and manuscripts to the widest possible audiences. The following are highlights amongst recent activities.

Richard Temple, Archivist, has worked with Andrew Preater, IT Systems Manager, to create access to digital copies of student records for the period 1926 to 1930. As nearly 30,000 internal students joined the University of London during this period, this significantly extends the amount of information available for historians and genealogists via the ULRIS Archival and Manuscript Database.

Items from the University of London Archive concerning graduates of the University of London during the First and Second World Wars, and also damage to Senate House Library during the Second World War, were filmed on Wednesday 30 June 2010 for inclusion in an episode of the BBC “One Show”.

Special Collections provided a display to support the Institute of English Studies’ conference “Literary London”, 7 – 9 July 2010. The captions have been mounted on the Senate House Library web pages as a virtual exhibition. Displays were also provided to support the T. S. Eliot Summer School, 10-17 July 2010, and the Victorian Popular Culture conference, 22-24 July 2010, again in the Institute of English Studies.

Karen Attar delivered a conference paper, “Views of Culture and Society: the M. S. Anderson Collection of Western Writings about Russia, 1525-1917”, on 20 July 2010, at a conference, “Language, Culture and Society in Russian/English Studies”, organised

jointly by the Institute of English Studies, the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Russian Academy of Linguistics and the Moscow Institute of Foreign Languages.

On 2 August, a group of eighteen American visitors from the National Endowment for the Humanities took part in a class in Senate House Library on early editions of Chaucer. This was conducted by Professors A. S. G. Edwards and Julia Boffey, and organised in liaison with the Institute of English Studies. The visitors had the opportunity to view medieval manuscripts, books printed by Caxton, and landmark editions of Chaucer from 1492 to 1894.

We were pleased to see several references to books in the Harry Price Library of Magical Literature in Arnold Hunt's article, "Charles Maurice Davies", in the summer 2010 issue of *The Book Collector* (June 2010, vol. 59, no. 2).

Resource discovery: cataloguing and appraisal projects

Opening up intellectual access to collections previous unknown to researchers continues to be a key activity in Special Collections.

Christopher Josiffe has completed cataloguing works from the bequest of Dr John Lord for addition to the Harry Price Library of Magical Literature, and is now cataloguing printed books in the Malcolm Morley Collection. Julio Cazzasa has begun to catalogue printed books from the Playne Collection of printed books about the First World War.

Karen Attar continues to catalogue rare book collections and Jane Kirby MS 978, the Thomas Sturge Moore papers.

A Collection Level Description has been added to the ULRIS Archival and Manuscripts Database for the papers of the actor Martin Miller (1899 – 1969) and the actress Hannah Norbert Miller (1916 – 18998), held in the Germanic Studies Library.

Daniella Maller, an archives volunteer, has listed MS 1175, papers of Ronald Heisler, and MS 1167, photographs of Native Americans taken by the American photographer David Barry.

Preservation and conservation

Alexandra Bruce conserved the following work which has been required for teaching:

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Workes of Geffray Chaucer Newly Printed with Dyuers Works Whiche were Neuer in Print Before, as in the Table more Playnly Dothe Appere...* (London, [1550?])
[S.L.] I [Chaucer – 1532] fol

The full calf tight back of this item had been re-backed in the 20th century. This was dependent on the leather, which had degraded to leave the boards detached and areas of the spine missing. Lifting the calf spine without loss of the original tooling was problematic.

The spine was consolidated before it was lifted. The re-back leather had to be carefully removed from this and the spine. New braids were laid across the original sewing supports and sewn to hold them. The spine was lined with cloth for strength and paper to provide a smooth spine. The boards were attached by pasting the lining and braids to the boards. New leather was dyed to match and covered the spine. On completion of this challenging work, the item is now once again available for researcher consultation.

A review of historic videos in the University of London Archive is underway, with a view to scoping these for potential viewing at an event in the SHeLF event programme, and also for migration to digital format.

Conclusion

The support of the Senate House Library Friends is warmly appreciated by colleagues as we continue to support and promote researcher access to Special Collections.

Report compiled by Christine Wise, Head of Special Collections
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