

Uncovering History through Rare Book Cataloging



Photo by Joel Wintermantle

The description of this book, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, in the catalog record indicates the presence of numerous hand-colored woodcut illustrations. (Boethius. *De consolazione philosophiae*. Strassbourg: Johann Grüninger, 1501.)

BY RACHEL ROSENBERG

NOT ALL COPIES OF A BOOK ARE CREATED EQUAL. A copy of the *Odyssey* printed in the hand press era (1450 to roughly the 1840s), for example, would have different qualities than one printed in the machine press era (the 1840s to the present). What is more, each copy of a book takes on its own distinct history as it is acquired, studied, and passed from one person or institution to another. The extra-textual elements found in rare books—from handwritten annotations to bookplates, bindings, and stamps—can reveal a history that is vital to a scholar's research.

Thanks to the support of Julie and Roger Baskes, the Special Collections Research Center is undertaking a major project to

enhance its rare book cataloging, making the special characteristics of individual rare books readily discoverable by researchers around the world. Over the past year, Special Collections Project Cataloger Jennifer Dunlap and dedicated graduate rare books assistants have reviewed, corrected, and enhanced bibliographic records for more than 4,000 titles, making edits to the online University of Chicago Library Catalog and WorldCat, a global catalog of library collections.

Along the way, they have discovered many previously buried treasures. For example, the catalog record for the Library's 1486 edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia* now makes note of the presence of 32 hand-colored woodcut maps—including the pictured one with costly and striking blue paint filling the oceans. A box of sheet music previously listed under a single title

was found to contain 75 pieces of music about President James Garfield. Several were unique pieces not included in WorldCat until Dunlap created a new record there. "This project is not just impacting our local University of Chicago Catalog, but is also allowing other institutions to discover resources globally via WorldCat and link their own holdings to it," she explained.

Re-cataloging a title can take from as little as five minutes to an entire day. Dunlap describes the style of binding and marks of ownership in the record, as well as adding applicable terms that can aid in searching. If users made edits to the printed text, correcting a misspelling, adding a missing word or phrase, or censoring a word or line, Dunlap notes the presence of these edits in the online catalog record, transcribing them in full if they are short. For example, the Library's copy of *Chronicles of England* (circa 1486) includes crossed-out references to the pope and the sainthood and martyrdom of Thomas of Canterbury, suggesting that the owner may have been expressing anti-Catholic sentiments after the establishment of the independent Church of England.

In the eyes of scholars and experienced catalogers such as Dunlap, the many marks left by former owners bring a book's readership to life. Dunlap's cataloging work continues so that more stories of writers and their readers can be discovered and written over time.

Jennifer Dunlap with Ptolemy's *Geographia*. (Ulm: Justus Albano, 1486.) Call number: alc Incun 1486.P93



Photo by Joel Wintermantle

Exhibition runs through **JUNE 9, 2017**

Tensions in Renaissance Cities

Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery
1100 East 57th Street, Chicago

ROME, FLORENCE, GENEVA, LONDON: the rapidly transforming cities of the Renaissance used art and literature to express their growing power, and growing pains. In the centuries of recovery after the Black Death, wealth, trade, and technology accelerated exponentially. Urban centers existed in a geography of interdependence, in which the borders of fluctuating kingdoms were overlaid by geographies of mercantile connections, and information networks whose influence exploded with the arrival of the printing press, which let news of new discoveries or disasters sweep through Europe in weeks, instead of years. Moving geographically, this exhibit charts the interconnected tensions of great capitals from Venice to Mexico City, as they looked eastward toward the Ottoman world, westward toward the New World, backward toward the golden dream of antiquity, inward toward the microcosmic tensions of diversifying populations, or upward into a celestial geography which magic, science, and theology raced to make increasingly complete.

CURATORS: Ada Palmer, Assistant Professor, Department of History and the College; Hilary Barker, PhD student, Department of Art History; and Margo Weitzman, MAPH'15

HOURS: Mondays through Fridays, 9 a.m. – 4:45 p.m., and, when University of Chicago classes are in session, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 9 a.m. – 5:45 p.m.



Portraiture of Diverse Street Vendors. Engraving with etching [probably after 1579]. From the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library.



FAR LEFT: *Arch of Titus.* Etching and engraving. Cavalieri, Giovanni Battista de' Dosio, Giovanni Antonio, engraver [1569]. From the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library.

Cicero. *Philosophical treatises*, ca. 1400. Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library.

Desiderata

Librarians are seeking funding for a variety of titles that would be **valuable resources** for University of Chicago faculty and students. Below is a small sampling of these items.

The Judges Resolutions Upon the Several Statutes Concerning Bankrupts, With the Like Resolutions on the Statutes of 13 Eliz. And 27 Eliz. Touching Fraudulent Conveyances. George Billingham, attributed author. London: Printed for Henry Twyford, 1676. 2nd ed. **\$750.**

This is the second and last edition of an early treatise on English bankruptcy law, with heavy annotation.

Jane Austen's Fiction Manuscripts. Edited by Kathryn Sutherland. Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2017. **\$795.**

This volume is a facsimile collection of Austen's manuscripts of her novels and other fictions, with additional commentary.

Vocabulary for the Study of Religion Online. Edited by Robert A. Segal and Kocku von Stuckrad. **\$1,260.**

This volume includes over 400 entries, offering a unique overview of critical terms in the study of religions, as well as the themes and issues that have to be addressed in future research. This is the first dictionary in English that covers such a broad spectrum of theoretical topics.

To support the purchase of one of these titles, please send a check for the full cost, payable to the University of Chicago, with the title in the comment field, to The Library Society, 1100 East 57th Street, Suite 180, Chicago, IL 60637. You may also call Yasmin Omer at 773-834-3744.

THANK YOU
for your generosity.

For more information about the Library Society, visit lib.uchicago.edu/about/thelibrary/supportus/libsoc/