

The Aldus Society

A Columbus Book Club

NEWSLETTER

Winter, 2000-01

Vol. 1, No. 4

President's Column: Winter Melancholy

I am not a luddite: I find the computer to be quite functional and the Internet a useful resource for certain information, especially the location and purchase of books. Still, the flashing lights, the incessant sell, sell, sell, and the invasive, indelible boxes in the corners of the screen bother me, not to mention the suspicion that all my personal data is being distributed to myriad dot-coms from New York to Prague to Manila.

I do not think that I am alone in my occasional yearnings for respite from all things modern. I imagine that other Aldus Society members have reluctantly shaken the sentiment of the holidays, accepted the dismal mantle of winter, and ensconced themselves in an easy chair to begin reading the books that undoubtedly came their way in late December. It is with uncommon insouciance, then, that I, too, retire from the electronic universe and, with a dismissive glance at the grey hibernal sky of Columbus, begin to read a book of my choosing.

The book is solid and the text stable. If I choose to set it aside, it does not change and malleable text is a condition of the interpretative mind and not physical alteration of data on a cathode-ray screen. The book is selling me nothing other than the images and ideas, rhythms and sounds of the printed word. The book gives of itself and takes nothing from me: a generous arrangement to say the least. It sometimes evokes a soft nostalgia, when certain passages cause me to remember other words from another book read, perhaps, in the midsummer light during an adolescent afternoon. I recall the discovery of new words and new names and new places and I experience them again and, as I return to the present, discover still more from the book in hand. And all becomes part of me.

But I drift and I beg indulgence for my dull romanticism: the book is lovely, rich and deep and I have leaves to read before I sleep, and leaves to read before I sleep.

Calligraphy Will be Featured at February 27th Meeting

The word calligraphy comes from the Greek words “kalos” meaning “beautiful,” and “graphos” meaning “writing.” The word can apply to any beautiful or elegant form of writing, but calligraphers tend to use it when referring to any of the styles of writing that were in use before and during the Middle Ages in Europe.

Nationally recognized calligrapher Ann Alaia Woods will be the featured speaker at our February 27th meeting of The Aldus Society. She will talk about the history of script lettering, and the alphabets developed and employed by early artisans. She will also demonstrate how calligraphy is done and how broad-edged tools are utilized to create this lovely art form.

Ann is an instructor of lettering and the history of hand lettering at Columbus College of Art and Design (CCAD). She also freelances as AIMIA Art Works, specializing in custom hand lettering, marbling, and design of one-of-a-kind books. She was calligrapher for several Logan Elm press publications, and has juried the international Calligrapher's Engagement Calendar for the past ten years. She is currently co-curating with Richard Aschenbrand an exhibit called “Reverent Writings – Scribed Cultural Journals” at CCAD. It will run from March 2nd through April 24th.

Although the first written communication is lost to history, early forms include painting primitive pictures found on cave walls, making indentations onto tablets of soft clay tablets found in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and chiseling messages into stone walls in early Rome.

During the Middle Ages, scribes were concerned with preserving the word of God and dedicated their lives to creating beautiful hand-written manuscripts on parchment with quill pens; they left space where illuminators added decorative initial letters, miniature scenes and portraits and floral borders.

However, the invention of movable type and the discovery of papermaking techniques during the Renaissance caused the printed word as we know it today to quickly replace these decorative but labor-intensive manuscripts.



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Jean Grolier Considered Patron Saint of Modern Book Collectors

A. S. W. Rosenbach, the legendary collector and dealer, recounted his life with books in *Books and Bidders: The Adventures of a Bibliophile* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1927). In an early section of his autobiography he recounts other great collectors particularly Jean Grolier, namesake of the famous New York City bibliophilic society, and the special relationship between Grolier and Aldus Manutius, namesake of the burgeoning Columbus bibliophilic society.

The collecting passion is as old as time. Even book collecting, which many believe to be a comparatively recent development, can be traced back to the Babylonians. They, with their passion for preserving records on clay tablets, could hardly go in for all the little niceties, such as original paper boards or beautifully tooled bindings, but they were collectors nevertheless.

Among the early individual book collectors such colorful names as Jean Grolier, De Thou, Colbert, and the Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin shine forth. Jean Grolier, a collector of the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century, now considered the patron saint of modern book collectors, showed unusual vision in selecting his books. Though many libraries of that time are both remarkable and valuable, their worth varies.

But every collector is keen to possess a Grolier volume, and at each sale the prices increase. He evidently read what he selected, and his taste showed that he had education and discernment. Aldus Manutius, the most famous printer of that day, dedicated books to him and printed certain works for him on special paper. Aldus was the first to popularize the small-sized book, and that is why many from the Grolier collection are easier to handle than the more gross volumes from other early libraries.

Grolier's generous disposition is indicated by the fact that he has either written in, or had stamped on the outside of the truly exquisite bindings, "*Io Grolierii et Amicorum*" — his books were for himself and his friends too. Many people have since copied this inscription on their bookplates.

The Grolier family were book lovers, and his library was kept intact for three generations. Not

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Calligraphy was revived 100 years ago during the Arts and Crafts movement in England by William Morris and others. The invention of steel nibs and fountain pens made calligraphy accessible to both artists and hobbyists alike.

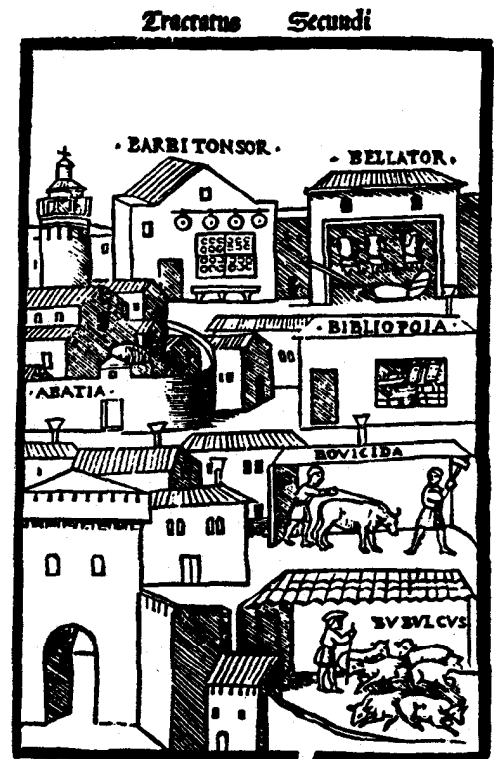
You won't want to miss this informative presentation which will be our first to be held at the Whetstone Branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library.

The Art of Calligraphy — Ann Alaia Woods

Tuesday, February 27th, 7 p.m.

Whetstone Public Library

3909 North High Street, Clintonville



This is the first picture of a European bookseller's shop to appear in a printed book. John Horst von Romberch. *Congestorium Artificiose Memoriae*. Venice, 1533.

until one hundred and sixteen years after his death was it sold, and although many were bought by other famous collectors, old records show that some disappeared entirely.

It is just such knowledge that keeps the true bibliophile living in hopes — a long-missing Grolier might turn up any time, anywhere.

Manuscript Treasures Presentation Scheduled for April 5th

William Voelke, Curator of Medieval Manuscripts at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City, will be speaking on Thursday, April 5th. His topic will be "Between Papyrus and Paper: Vellum Manuscript Treasures of The Pierpont Morgan Library." His talk will offer a brief overview of the history of manuscript illumination on vellum, beginning with its sources in antiquity (with papyrus in roll form) and ending with the Renaissance (where paper bound in codex form began to prevail).

The event will be co-sponsored by The Ohio State University Libraries, the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies of OSU, and The Aldus Society. His program will be held at CCAD beginning at 5:00 p.m., and will be followed by a reception and viewing of the calligraphy exhibit, "Reverent Words." Aldus Society members and friends are invited to attend.

Lecture on Saint John's Bible Scheduled at OSU

Of interest to many Aldus members will be a public lecture by Father Eric Hollas, Director of the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library at Saint John's University. The program is sponsored by the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at The Ohio State University. Father Hollas will talk about the Saint John's Bible, the first Bible to be written and illustrated entirely by hand since the invention of movable type.

The Hill Monastic Manuscript Library is located at Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota and is the repository for a major collection of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts on microfilm. The Hill Library has microfilm of more than 25 million manuscript pages from 90,000 volumes in 200 libraries in Europe and Africa.

The lecture will begin at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 21st, 2001, in the Faculty Club on The Ohio State University campus.

Jack Matthews to Speak at Annual Meeting in March

Confessed bibliomaniac, book collector, Distinguished Professor of English at Ohio University, award-winning novelist, short story writer, poet, playwright, national literary critic...and the list goes on and on. The Aldus Society is pleased to announce that Jack Matthews will speak at our March 22nd Annual Meeting, celebrating a full year of programs centering on the history and appreciation of books.

Jack has written a number of books about his adventures as a book collector, and since book collecting is changing so rapidly due to the economy and the influences of the Internet, the title of his talk will be "Prophetic Whims." He will share his personal testimony and observations on the future of book collecting.

Jack refers to booking as "the covetous foraging for old and rare books." He has been known to travel as many as 30,000 miles a year to auctions, book sales, antique shops, yard sales and flea markets.

The old books that Jack has written about are rare in more ways than one. Some are objects of physical beauty, others have investment potential. You can read about these books and his booking adventures in *Memoirs of a Bookman*, *Collecting Rare Books for Pleasure and Profit*, *Booking Pleasures*, and *Booking in the Heartland*. Or if you prefer fiction, you will enjoy *An Almanac for Twilight*, *The Tale of Asa Bean*, *Sassafras*, and *Crazy Women*.

Literally "hot off the press," Jack has just finished *Reading Matter: A Rabid Bibliophile's Adventure Among Old and Rare Books*, published by Oak Knoll Press. This book is a series of essays on the joys and challenges of collecting rare and old books, and includes twelve personal essays about book collecting that run from profound to humorous. *Reading Matter* will not be available for purchase the night of the program, but can be purchased prior to the 22nd (see below) so that you may have it signed by Jack the night of his talk.

Jack's program will begin at 7 p.m. at the Worthington Public Library. It will be preceded by a business meeting of The Aldus Society at 6:30 p.m., where interested members can attend and cast a vote for their choice of trustees for the coming year.

Prophetic Whims — Jack Matthews

Thursday, March 22nd, 7 p.m.
Worthington Public Library
820 High Street, Worthington
(6:30 p.m. Business Meeting)

Jack's latest book *Reading Matter*, (\$29.95), as well as other out-of-print titles, can be purchased at Books on High, 3510 North High Street in Clintonville. Other used book stores which also carry Jack's out-of-print titles are Aldus Society member stores: Acorn Bookshop at 1464 West 5th in Grandview, and Hoffman's Book Shop at 211 Arcadia in Clintonville.

Preserving for the Future

Wes Boomgaarden, Preservation Officer at The Ohio State University Libraries was the featured speaker at our first program for 2001. Wes' talk was entertaining, insightful and educational.

After acquiring valuable books and manuscripts, curators and collectors alike are faced with the responsibility of preservation and restoration of these often fragile and sometimes even irreplaceable documents. Vintage volumes that are not stored properly can be threatened by climate conditions (such as humidity...or even floods), nature (both four-legged and six-legged critters), and sometimes even the inherent materials from which they are made (particularly acidic paper). Wes shared many of the restoration techniques and preventative measures taken by the experts such as cleaning, de-acidifying, rebinding, and sometimes temporarily freezing books and documents which have become wet.

The audience was treated to examples of books in OSU's Rare Books and Manuscripts collection which have been expertly restored for future generations. Wes emphasized that the cost of preservation and restoration are just a fraction of

the cost of actually replacing these important items. We should all be careful to keep our own special collections out of direct sun light and away from humid or very dry conditions as found in basements or attics. A few dollars invested in archival storage boxes or other archival storage methods will protect precious books and documents well into the future.

First Books in Columbus Topic for May 17th Program

Did you know that the first book that was published in Columbus was written by John Kilbourn in 1816? Or that the most prolific author in early Columbus was a woman, Margaret Coxe?

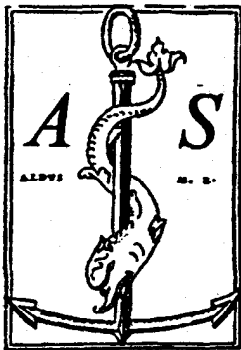
Mark your calendars now, and save May 17th when Aldus trustee Charles Cole, Jr., presents a program about the earliest books which were published in our fair city. Charlie is the author of *A Fragile Capital: Identity and the Early Years of Columbus, Ohio*, which has just been published by Ohio State University Press.

Look for more information about this program, as well as possible summer outings and our fall program announcements in the next issue of the Newsletter.

It's almost membership renewal time...

We hope you've enjoyed the programs we've presented this past year, and will renew your membership for 2001-02 when the form arrives in your mail soon. (If you joined after November 2000, you're automatically renewed for 2001-02.)

Not a Member Yet? Copy or Clip this Form and Return it TODAY!



The Aldus Society

A Columbus Book Club

"May you find yourself always in the company of good books and kindred spirits."

— Colleen Sell

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____

STREET: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ e-mail: _____

Special Interests or Meeting Ideas:

Yearly Dues:

- \$25 - Individual
- \$40 - Family
- \$50 - Patron
- \$100 - Founder
- \$10 - Student

We welcome the names and addresses of anyone you think would like to join our organization.

Return this form with your check to the Aldus Society, Box 1150, Worthington, Ohio 43085-1150