



The Aldus Society

NEWSLETTER

Winter, 2003-04

Volume 4, No. 3

The History of American Comic Strips Subject of January 22nd Program

On January 22, Lucy Caswell, founding curator of the Cartoon Research Library at The Ohio State University, will present a talk titled "Comics 100: The History of American Comic Strips."



Established in 1977, the library is currently the largest and most comprehensive academic research facility documenting printed cartoon art in the United States. Its inventory includes editorial cartoons, comic strips, graphic novels, sports and magazine cartoons. The collections include the largest assembly of newspaper comic strip tear sheets and clipping files in the world; 240,000 original cartoons; more than 20,000 books; more than 13,000 serial titles; and more than 2,800 linear feet of manuscript materials.

The papers of Milton Caniff, the Walt Kelly Collection, the Robert Roy Metz Collection, the Woody Gelman Collection of Winsor McCay cartoons, and the Will Eisner Collection are the most notable cartoon art collections.

Lucy's program will help you to understand your favorite cartoon character or strip in the context of cartoon art history as well as our social, political and cultural history. See you there!

Comics 100: The History of American Comic Strips

WHEN: Thursday, January 22nd

WHERE: Thurber Center,
91 Jefferson Avenue (just west of I-71
off of East Broad Street)

TIME: 7:00 PM

ABOVE: A *Turn of the Century*
New Year's Greeting
from *The Yellow Kid*, who was
created by Lancaster native
Richard F. Outcault.

A Different "Take" on First Editions Will be Program Topic in February

On February 12, Aldus trustee Bill Rich will present a talk on *First American Editions* of Nineteenth Century British authors. He will also touch on the topic of pirated editions, which in many cases, indeed, were the first American editions.

Rich's quietly humorous recollections of discoveries of treasured books in local shops have been the topic of a newsletter article and short talks at Aldus meetings.

His finds have included a 1787, two-volume set of Milton's *Paradise Lost* published in Philadelphia, which was the first separate publication of this work in America.

Bill's talk should be of special interest to those who might think all the "good stuff" is hidden away behind the glass doors in collectors' private collections.

First American Editions (By Nineteenth-Century British Authors)

WHEN: Thursday, February 12th

WHERE: Thurber Center,
91 Jefferson Ave.

TIME: 7:00 PM

The Aldus Society

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE From Ronald L. Ravneberg

My wife Janet and I recently traveled to Chicago to celebrate our daughter's completion of her Masters Degree at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. Needless to say, we had a wonderful time and are very proud of her accomplishment.

Our trip had an extra day built in to take advantage of Chicago during the holiday season, and after a leisurely breakfast Janet and I headed out onto the town. I was not interested in shopping, so we went our separate ways.

There was a used and antiquarian bookseller located a few blocks from our hotel, and I headed to the shop to see what I could find. What I encountered was the same thing I often encounter in such places — no books I needed to have, but many that I wanted to hold, and a delightful conversation with a bookseller. During our chat I discovered that she was a member of our fellow FABS organization, Chicago's Caxton Club. We compared notes and common acquaintances for a half hour or so, and I browsed around the shop, noting a few interesting items.

This coming summer's planned Aldus Society presentation by illustrator Barry Moser caused me to take particular note of a three volume Lakeside Press edition of *Moby Dick* illustrated by Rockwell Kent and housed in an aluminum slipcase. Moser's illustrations were what prompted me to finally read Melville's tome a few years ago, and I wanted to look over the Rockwell Kent edition. Out of my price range, but still a delight to see. There were other books to enjoy, of course, but the best part of the experience was still the conversation.

After a half hour or so, I decided to walk the block or two to the Newberry Library, one of the great research libraries of the world. The Newberry Library is an independent research library concentrating in the humanities. Free and open to the public, it houses an extensive non-circulating collection of rare books, maps, and manuscripts. The Newberry opened its doors in 1893 and has grown into an organization so diverse that noted author Nicholas Basbanes (another of this summer's Aldus Society speakers) noted in one of his books that the Newberry trustees adopted the motto, "An Uncommon Collection of Uncommon Collections."

I'd never been to the Newberry before, so I didn't know what to expect. What I found was wonderful! (Those of you who have been to the Newberry are no doubt smiling at this point.) Needless to say, I spent the rest of the day there. Where to begin?

The Exhibit – In one of the galleries off the entrance foyer there was an exhibition about Elizabeth I. Most of the exhibit items were drawn from the Newberry's Renaissance holdings, but there were also items on loan from other collections, including the British Library. Some of the items on display included:

- Elizabeth's birth announcement, Sept. 7, 1533
- Two vivid oil portraits of Elizabeth, from c. 1566 and c. 1580-1583
- Speeches Elizabeth wrote and delivered to Parliament concerning marriage, in 1563 and 1567, and Mary Queen of Scots, in 1586
- A pamphlet proclaiming the English victory over the Spanish Armada
- Rare and beautiful maps of England, Ireland, and America in the sixteenth century
- Handwritten letters between Elizabeth and James VI of Scotland concerning the execution of his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, and his claim to the English throne
- A 40-foot drawing of Elizabeth's funeral procession, complete with names and likenesses of notable people in attendance

All in all, it was an amazing experience.

The Tour – I showed up at the information desk at tour time and was greeted by a delightful woman named Minna who had been a volunteer at the Newberry for 18 years. I was the only person there for the tour, so for the next three-quarters of an hour Minna and I walked all over the library and talked about whatever seemed important at the time. It was delightful.

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Summer Outing to Oberlin College Inspiring and Rewarding

On Saturday, July 26, 2003, fifteen members of The Aldus Society visited Oberlin College where Ed Vermue, Curator of Special Collections (and a member of Aldus), presented an engaging overview of many of the rare and special items in the Oberlin collection. The extent and diversity of materials, everything from incunabula and fine bindings to anti-slavery materials and modern fiction, prove to be a rich collection not only for the undergraduates of Oberlin, but also a destination point for scholars from across the country.

Most impressive was the anti-slavery collection, the foremost of its kind in the nation. In addition to being the first co-educational college in the nation, Oberlin was also among the earliest institutions to admit African-Americans. Always a progressive institution, Oberlin, from its inception in 1833, supported anti-slavery activities and became a stop on the Underground Railroad. Anti-slavery documents have been a collecting focus at Oberlin throughout that time and to the present day. The collection includes books and pamphlets on the issue of anti-slavery, traveler's observations of slavery, slave narratives, newspapers and periodicals, political works, ephemera (bills of sale for slaves, manumission papers) and even pro-slavery literature. Vermue noted that scholars who had searched the archives at multiple research libraries mentioned that if they had begun at Oberlin they might not have had to go anywhere else.

Ed then presented us with select items of rare books, arranged in chronological order, and representing important books from many cultures. Under his guidance, Oberlin is developing some important modern resources including the archives of Seal Press, the feminist publishing house out of Seattle, Washington, a collection that coheres with the progressive nature of other Oberlin collections.

I can only highlight the many wonderful things that the group observed on a pleasant summer day, but I urge you to review the Oberlin College Library web site (<http://www.oberlin.edu/library/>) to get a sense of the many treasures there. Even better, visit Oberlin in person. We thank Ed Vermue for his gracious welcome and inspiring talk.

– Geoff Smith

Save These Dates for More Aldus Programs

March 11

The March program will have a "Show and Tell" format. Aldus members will be contacted in the next few weeks and asked to bring examples from their collections or interesting book-related items which they would like to share with program attendees. The annual business meeting for the Society will precede this program.

April 1

Daniel Frank, Assistant Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Ohio State University will present the sixth chapter of the History of Text & Image series when he speaks on early Hebrew manuscripts.

May 13

At our last regular meeting of the program year, Paul Ruxin, member both the Rowfant and Caxton Clubs, is scheduled to speak on his interest in Samuel Johnson.

Meetings of The Aldus Society are held at 7 PM at The Thurber Center, 91 Jefferson Avenue in Columbus.

Letter from the Editor

I was deeply gratified last year when the survey of Aldus members indicated that the newsletter was enjoyed by everyone, and depended upon as your main vehicle to learn what is happening with The Aldus Society, its members, and with other book-related organizations and programs.

After three years as editor, production person and column writer, I reluctantly am stepping down because of other constraints on my time.

Our president Ron Ravneberg and the rest of the trustees are preparing to launch a search for someone who can do some or all of the activities associated with the newsletter: writing and editing articles, doing production of a 4- or 6-page newsletter each quarter...or possibly even more often.

If you know of an individual or a company who can help us with any of these activities; or if YOU would like to help with any of these activities, do contact Ron at your earliest convenience!

Thanks for your kind comments about this publication over the years.

– Genie Hoster

Special Collections – The high point of my visit to the Newberry Library occurred in the Special Collections area. I'm a collector of books about Captain Cook, so I decided to see what interesting items the library held. To use the resources of the Newberry Library, one must get a reader's card, and after a surprisingly simple process I was given mine. With a reader's card you have access to everything in the collection. As Minna had told me, "You can touch everything in the library."

My first stop was the card catalog. Yes, a card catalog. Only about 20% of the Newberry's holdings are computerized, and everything acquired before 1978 is listed on cards. A general browse under the subject of "Cook, James" turned up two particular items of interest — one from the beginning of Cook's exploring career and one from the end.

John Hawkesworth's official account of the voyage. It's not a particularly good account, and lacks the beautiful plates and maps of the Admiralty-approved Hawkesworth edition. But it was the first account, and is how the western world first learned of Tahiti, New Zealand and the east coast of Australia. It's quite rare and commands a high price when it comes up for sale.

The second item was a brief account of the death of Captain Cook written by ship's surgeon David Samwell, and published in 1786. It's the best description of the events of the day and was written

Tritt's Swiss Trip

Wearing a royal blue hand-embroidered yodeler's shirt, Donald Tritt shared his life-long interest of books on Switzerland with Aldus members at the Thurber Center on November 20th. The pursuit of his collection, which includes North American Swiss immigrant accounts, has led him to a few discoveries and a surprising outcome.

Donald grew up in Columbus' German Village which, he noted, actually included a number of resident immigrants from German-speaking areas of Switzerland. He remembers as a young boy looking through his grandparents' books on Switzerland and becoming fascinated with learning more about his mountainous ancestral homeland. One of his early best finds was "down on his hands and knees" rummaging through piles of books at a 1960s book sale where he found the two volume set *Views of Switzerland* (1836). Just ten years ago, he happened upon the publisher's actual advertisement for this book, much to his delight. Donald laughed when he shared with the audience that moment of realization that his interest in Switzerland had turned him into a book collector.

Collecting books drove Tritt into book-sleuthing, and he's been able to identify the real authors of several anonymously published

by an eyewitness. The Samwell is one of the rarest of Cook items, and decades can pass between copies coming up for auction. Several years ago, the last copy sold at auction commanded \$135,000.

Two special books, indeed. But what was *really* special was that twenty minutes after learning of their existence at the Newberry, I had them in front of me on the table. The librarian's only request? Simply to be sure to ask if there was anything else I needed.

To have and to hold. It would be nice to have books like that, but sometimes you only get the chance to hold them. That's good enough.

So what was the total cost of my wonderful day in Chicago? ... Not a dime. Libraries are neat places!

OR

Enough of my rambling. Another calendar year is behind us and the Aldus Society continues to thrive, thanks to all of you. In 2004, the Aldus Society will continue its excellent programming and will offer camaraderie to lovers of books and the printed word. The history of cartoons, members' collections, Hebrew texts, Samuel Johnson, a special summer "Celebration of the Book," more field trips and special programs ... it's all on tap. It should be a great New Year!

19th century works on Switzerland. Also of importance, Donald has helped rediscover 19th century Swiss tourist accounts of America (including that of Swiss immigrants). Several of these discoveries he has helped to assure translations into English.

Tritt shared a large variety of his collection of two very well known Swiss stories: *Heidi* and *William Tell*. And an excerpt from Mark Twain's visit to Switzerland provided a good laugh. On a more serious note, attendees learned of important historical works, gained an appreciation of Switzerland's unique history of "confederation," and viewed copies of Tritt's own publications regarding Swiss festivals and the Tritt family.

Donald Tritt's book collecting odyssey, much to his amazement, has resulted in a library being named after him. He recounted that in an attempt to spark the formation of a national cultural and historical resource center for Swiss immigrants, his idea was adopted by America's "Little Switzerland," New Glarus, Wisconsin. With Wisconsin's governor and state legislature supporting the idea, his book collection will now become the core of the Donald Tritt Library of Swiss Studies at the North American Swiss Center, whose ground-breaking ceremony is expected in 2004.

– Scott Williams