



Aldus Society Notes

Autumn 2005

Volume 6, No. 1

ALDUS EXPLORES ART NOUVEAU

At our first meeting of the 2005-2006 program year Columbus physician Dr. Paul Christenson shared his fascination with Art Nouveau in a presentation entitled "Art Nouveau Book Illustration in England and France." Art Nouveau is an international style of decoration and architecture which developed in the 1880s and 1890s. The name derives from the *Maison de l'Art Nouveau*, an interior design gallery opened in Paris in 1896.



Dr. Christenson and his wife have collected Art Nouveau for 25 years. In his presentation he presented a brief overview of art and historical factors that influenced book illustration in England and France from around 1880 to 1910. His thoroughly researched and well prepared presentation was enhanced by the presence of a number of illustrated volumes and prints typical of the period which he shared with attendees.

Following the meeting, several attendees commented that it was one of the best Aldus Society meetings they could remember. That's quite an endorsement! We hope to see Paul at future Aldus Society activities.



Aldus Featured in Columbus Monthly

Bill Evans

Be sure to check out the September issue of Columbus Monthly for a nice article about the Aldus Society. The author, Charlie Toft, interviewed several Aldus members and included a picture of Ron Ravneberg in his library. Having this issue on the coffee table at home would be a great way to introduce our friends and neighbors to, as Toft puts it, A (bibliophilic) Love Story. We might even pick up a member or two!



Regular meetings of the Aldus Society are held at 7:30 PM on the second Thursday of the month at the Thurber Center, 91 Jefferson Avenue, Columbus, Ohio

☞ Socializing Begins One-Half Hour Before ☞



The Aldus Society

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The Road from Serendip

Ron Ravneberg

Have you ever looked at your books?

Of course you have. But my question goes beyond just a casual look. Have you ever really looked at your books to appreciate the details they hold?

When you look deeply, you're likely to find things you never suspected were there. Accidental discovery – or as we're more likely to call it – serendipity.

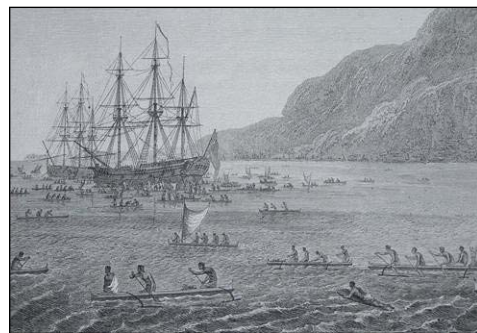
We are indebted to the English author Horace Walpole for coining the word serendipity. In a letter of January 28, 1754, Walpole stated that “this discovery, indeed, is almost of that kind which I call Serendipity, a very expressive word.” Walpole formed the word on an old name for Sri Lanka, *Serendip*. He explained that this name was part of the title of a “silly fairy tale, called *The Three Princes of Serendip*; as their highnesses traveled, they were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of” He further noted that “no discovery of a thing you *are* looking for comes under this description.”



Serendipity takes many forms, and what I find in my collections will be different than what you find in yours. Take, for example, the 1629 copperplate engraving of London pictured in the last issue of *Aldus Society Notes*. At first glance, it's simply a detailed panorama of London as it existed around 1600. One glances across its many buildings and familiar sights, looks at people in late-Elizabethan dress walking the streets and marvels at what life was like in the time of Shakespeare. But upon further examination a darker side emerges – a time when life was held less precious than today – a time when it was common to place the severed heads of traitors atop pikes and display them

over the stone gate of London Bridge to remind visitors and residents that things were fine as long as one didn't challenge the established order. Not what I expected to find.

On a more positive note, there's a wonderful plate in the official account of Captain Cook's third voyage that shows a bay on the west coast of the island of Hawaii. The water is full of craft, from Cook's *Resolution* and *Discovery* to the many Hawaiian canoes, large and small, surrounding the English ships. But if you look very carefully, you can also find one individual near the bottom of the image floating on a surfboard, the first depiction of surfing ever. From this to the Beach Boys in only 200 years.



Many people never see such detail; they quickly glance at books or pictures, possibly think about how they fit into their collections, and move on to the next item. But there's treasure to be found in the small details, no matter what the object of examination. What makes the Tenniel illustrations in *Alice in Wonderland* so special? Have you ever looked at Maurice Sendak's illustrations in detail? What about that book over there in the embossed Victorian binding?

Look to your shelves, find an old biblio-friend, take it down and look it over ... closely.

You might be surprised.

A handwritten signature, likely of Ron Ravneberg, in dark ink. The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first letter being a large, prominent 'R'.

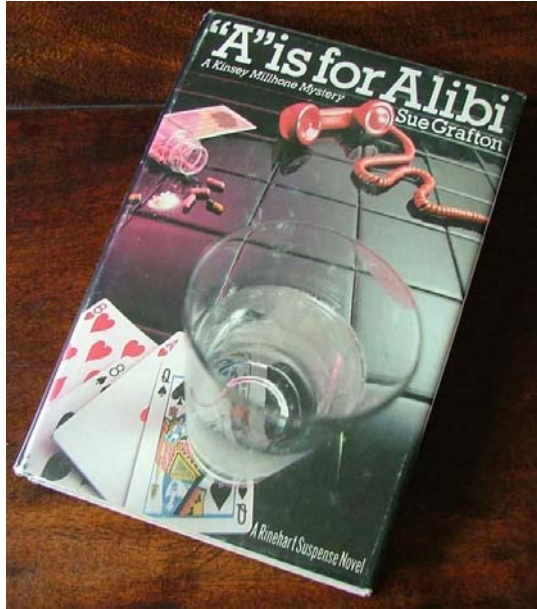
A “Bookstore-y”

George Cowmeadow Bauman
Co-owner, The Acorn Bookshop

A is for Alibi

“It’s still here!” exclaimed a blond, curly-headed young man who comes in our bookshop once in a while.

He had entered the propped-open side door, zipped around the counter, and headed straight for our showcase. Standing in front of the special books behind the glass doors, he pointed to the scarce first edition of Sue Grafton’s *A is for Alibi*, which we had priced at \$1,000.



“I think I’d like to look at that again,” he asked, and I remembered that he’d been in a couple of weeks ago looking at it.

“Help yourself,” I replied, gesturing for him to open the case. I could have gotten it out for him, but I know the thrill of being permitted to personally open a bookseller’s treasure-box and reaching inside.

He brought the object of his affection to the counter, and lovingly turned it over and over in his hands. “It’s in amazingly good shape; even the dust jacket is pristine,” he said reverentially.

Quiet Kenny G music was playing in the background, and we had no other customers in the store to distract him or me from this his big moment.

“I’m a little nervous,” he confessed. “I didn’t think it would still be here, but I wanted it so bad.”

He took a few seconds to look up at me. “I was really obsessed with this book for about a week after seeing it here,” he sheepishly grinned. “I asked my friend Carol if she thought the book would still be here, and she said that she had seen it again last week, so I decided that I would come in today, and if it was still here, to buy it.”

His hands were caressing the book while he talked to me. I could tell that though he was trying to convince himself that he COULD walk away if he chose to, that he was deeply hooked and was going home with this treasure.

He took a deep sigh. “I have some store credit on file with you,” and he paused, out of nervousness, not for effect, though it sure had that impact, and concluded, “So if the balance is approved on my credit card, I think I’ll take this today.”

With that decision made, he finally broke into a big smile.

The smile didn’t crack when I said to him, “I’ll sell you this book on one condition.”

He didn’t care; for this treasure he would have nosed a John Grisham hardback across Fifth Avenue to the Giant Eagle and back if I’d have asked him.

“All I want is for you to take a picture of me with this book before it leaves the store, for I’ll probably never see a copy of it again.”

He laughed, took my ever-present camera, and shot me standing up against the wall of mysteries.

I ran his balance amount successfully through MasterCard, and as he signed the slip, he said, “One reason I decided it to buy it today was that it is Sue Grafton’s birthday.”

“A most appropriate way to remember the day you bought this book at Acorn,” I said. I reached out and shook his hand, saying, “Congratulations. You will get a lot of pleasure out of owning this.”

“I can’t tell you how happy I am!” he said, heading toward the door.

Today, A is for Adios to Sue Grafton’s first mystery.



Monsignor’s Archaeology Books on Display at ODU

Laura Masonbrink

The Special Collections exhibit area of the Spangler Learning Center at Ohio Dominican University is currently featuring an exhibit of archeology books from the collection of the late Monsignor George Wolz.

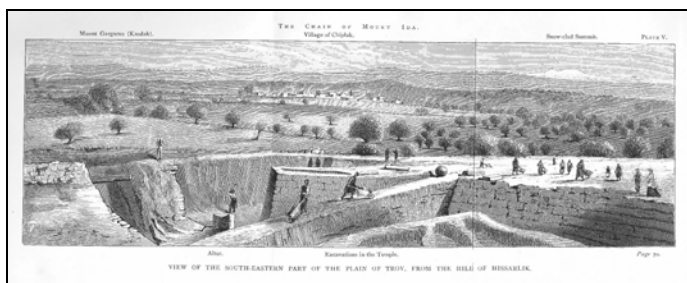
Although ancient civilizations around the Mediterranean Sea and in the Middle East date back to 5,000 years ago, archaeology as an academic discipline is only a little over a century old. Prior to the late nineteenth century, ancient sites were often exploited by treasure-hunters, destroyed by armies, or defaced by religious zealots, rather than excavated by scholars with controlled methods and preservation in mind.

Monsignor George Wolz, an educator, administrator, and pastor in the Catholic community of Columbus for nearly five decades, collected books that were published by pioneers of modern archaeology during the infancy of the field.

He studied in Rome from 1934 to 1937, where he acquired many of the books that are included in this display. Over the course of his lifetime from 1909 to 1983, Monsignor Wolz collected hundreds of books relating to classical archaeology, Egyptology, and Biblical studies.

Spotlighted in the display is a two volume set titled, *The Tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen*, by archaeologist Howard Carter. These books document the famous discovery in 1922 of the previously undisturbed tomb of the Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamen, published shortly after the monumental find.

Of particular interest is a book titled *Troy and its Remains*, by Heinrich Schliemann, a retired German-American businessman. Published in London in 1875, this book describes Schliemann's excavation in 1870 of what some believe was the legendary city of Troy, the location of the epic war between the Greeks and Trojans depicted in Homer's *Iliad*. Although Schliemann was an amateur by today's standards, his passion and discovery paved the way to the development of the discipline.



Engraving from Schliemann's book representing some of the excavations at Troy

After he passed away, Monsignor Wolz's collections were shared between the libraries of Ohio Dominican, the Pontifical College Josephinum in Worthington, and Albertus Magnus College in Connecticut. Some of the books in the Wolz donation are rare and are housed in Special Collections – such as the items included in this exhibition – but many circulate as part of the main collection. Monsignor Wolz's name is on the inside cover of every book he owned.

This exhibition of Monsignor Wolz's special archaeology books will be open throughout Fall semester, 2005 in the display cases at the foot of the stairs on the bottom floor in the Spangler Learning Center.

Ohio Dominican University is located on the east side of Columbus near the airport. From I-670, take the Fifth Ave. exit and go west to the light at Sunbury Road. Turn right on Sunbury and continue to the third traffic light, which is the entrance to the main parking lot of ODU. Visitor parking is in the first section on the left. For more detailed directions and maps, please visit:

<http://www.ohiodominican.edu/about/directions/>

The Spangler Learning Center is on the east side of Sunbury Road and is the farthest south building on campus. The library is open from 7:30 AM to 10:00 PM Monday through Thursday; 7:30 AM – 8:00 PM on Fridays, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

on Saturdays, and 1:00 PM – 9:00 PM on Sundays. The Special Collections display cases are located on the bottom floor, and are free of charge and available for viewing any time the building is open. For more information about the ODU library, please call 614-251-4752 or visit :

<http://www.ohiodominican.edu/library/>



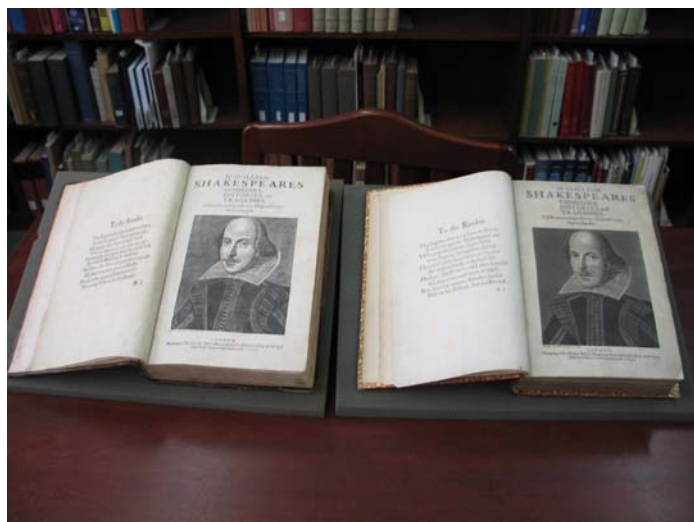
A Visit to the Bard

Jim Smith

The theme of the August 13th First Saturday presentation at the Ohio State University Rare Books and Manuscripts Library was Shakespeare.

Aldus members were treated to a portion of the Library's Shakespeare holdings: 47 volumes, including two copies of the Second Folio, numerous contemporary quartos, many later versions of Shakespeare including editions by Samuel Johnson and Alexander Pope, and many later adaptations of Shakespeare by Dryden, Otway, Ravenscroft, and others were on display. An interesting curiosity was a 1907 edition of *Richard II* presented to William S. Burroughs by Victor Bockris "on the occasion of the Royal Wedding".

Geoff Smith, head of Rare Books and Manuscripts, moderated an open discussion and inspection of the volumes.



A pair of Shakespeare Second Folios from the Rare Books & Manuscripts Library at the Ohio State University



Book Hunting Notes

Bill Rich

Last year in *Aldus Society Notes*, I contributed some notes on "Book Scouting in Columbus Shops". Book scouting, as I understand it, is searching the shops, the thrift stores, the garage sales, everywhere there might be books – for "a find". The book is a find because it is inconsequential in the eyes of the seller, and is priced accordingly. For the scout, it is of some considerably greater value. The scout's motiva-

tion is various – most often, the scout quickly resells the item to a book dealer, perhaps a specialist antiquarian book dealer, who may pay a considerable advance over the original price. Such an operator is usually called a “runner” in the U.K. It is a precarious business. Nevertheless, there are people whose major or sole source of income is book scouting – particularly in larger cities, where there are a large number of book stores and multiple additional sources of books, and costs can be minimized by use of either public transportation or shoe leather.

My own book scouting is usually to obtain items for my collection. I am not adverse, however, to snapping up “an unconsidered trifle” that is not part of my own book collecting interests, but which I know (or hope) I can resell profitably to a dealer. But book scouting, while enjoyable, cannot be a major source of books or even of book collecting money for the usual amateur collector. Now, he can cross that very tenuous line that separates the scout from the professional dealer, and quit his day job. Some book collectors have done this. But this path is not open to all of us, and is certainly inadvisable for most. For us, scouting is a small subset of book hunting, the thing that collectors do most weeks, and it is this broader topic I wish to discuss. Specifically, hunting in shops, in book fairs, in dealer’s and auction catalogs, and, increasingly, even on the internet. Here is another example of hunting in Columbus that seems particularly successful to me. Perhaps another time, we can talk about ones that got away, when the hunter missed the target.

Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, [Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1499]

Hypnerotomachia translates as “The Strife of Love in a Dream”. This, then, is the Hypnerotomachia of one Poliphilus, the love-sick protagonist. I first read of this famous book in Alan Thomas’s “Great Books and Book Collectors”, a book on book collecting that remains in print, and one I heartedly recommend to all bibliophiles. *Hypnerotomachia*, published, as it was, in the first 50 years of printing, is classed as one of the “incunabula”, books printed before 1501. Thomas referred to this book as “... among the most beautiful printed books of all time, a black tulip in the midst of [Aldus Manutius’s] classical texts”. The book is a pure product of the high renaissance. It is a romance, describing the wanderings, reflections, and encounters of Poliphilus as he seeks his lady love, Polia. The prose has been called “almost Joycean”, and is a strange mix of Italian, Latin, and, sometimes, Greek and Hebrew! It is filled with asides, including long reflections on ancient Roman epitaphs, for instance, and frequent discourse on the futility of love. A complex book, and a great contrast to the religious books and publications of the classics that formed the bulk of the productions of the printing presses in this first half century. The very modern-looking typeface created for Aldus has been widely adopted by fine presses today, and is, indeed, called “Poliphilus”. Even more notably, a gifted, but unidentified genius made literally hundreds of striking wood cut illustrations for the book. Some have a strikingly contempo-

rary appearance. The illustration below is from towards the end of the book, when the loving reunion of Polia and Poliphilus is vividly described. This is a long way from the paintings in books of hours and other devotional works of the same age.

*



Thomas quotes one critic’s (George Painter’s) benediction on this work:

“Gutenberg’s Forty-two-Line Bible of 1455 and the *Hypnerotomachia* of 1499 confront one another from opposite ends of the incunabula period with equal and contrasting pre-eminence. The Gutenberg Bible is somberly and sternly German, gothic, Christian and mediaeval; the *Hypnerotomachia* is radiantly and graciously Italian, classic, pagan and renescent. These are the two supreme masterpieces of the art of printing, and stand at the two poles of human endeavour and desire.”

Where was this book found in Columbus, OH? Well, to state an old book-collecting joke, it was in sadly incomplete condition – in truth, it was lacking all but two leaves! These were offered at the Columbus Antiquarian Book Fair, in 1993. This was in the days when Columbus *had* an antiquarian book fair. It was organized for several years by Karen Wickliff Books in Columbus. Several dealers had put out boxes of prints, loose book illustrations, and odd leaves from older books, and even manuscript leaves. This is still not an uncommon practice. One Columbus dealer had several incunabula leaves, variously priced, in such a box – among them, the two leaves from the *Hypnerotomachia*. They were identified as such in pencil on their margins, and priced at \$45 each. No hesitation here – the \$90 was paid, and the two leaves, matted and framed together, are on my wall at home now. I have never, before or since, seen individual leaves from this famous book offered for sale. Whether this was a bargain, I don’t know. But, I need never to worry about eventually having to trade up to a complete copy – such copies have recently brought in the range \$100,000 to \$300,000 at auction. This is a little out of my book buying budget.

And what about the author, Francesco Colonna? Well, he was a man of the cloth – despite his authoring this spicy classic. Specifically, he was a Dominican friar, a graduate of the University of Padua, who died in the monastery of SS. John and Paul in Venice, in 1527 at the tremendous age, for the times, of 93. He was 66 in 1499 when Aldus printed his masterpiece. Francesco’s monastery was regarded as “unreformed”. The friars did not have to abide by strict rules of monasticism, and could even live independently, outside the monastery, and, indeed could work, earn and retain money of their own. Colonna evidently did this for years at a time. There are legal records surviving that suggest various moral and monetary difficulties involving our author. The *Hypnerotomachia* was evidently at least partially financed by a wealthy nobleman, Leonardo Grassi, who proudly announces himself as the publisher in the book’s preface. Nevertheless, two years after publication, we find that Colonna was ordered to repay the Dominican Order the sum provided him “for the publication of a book”. Perhaps the good fathers had second thoughts about the kind of book their money had brought forth, or, more likely, they were merely seeking to realize return on the investment.

Until recently, there has never been a complete translation of this classic into English. In 1999, however, Thames & Hudson published such a complete rendition, by Joscelyn Godwin of Colgate University. This modern book reproduces the size, page layout, and illustrations of the original. It is a beautiful example of modern trade book production; I bought my copy at Border’s at the \$70 published price. Even more recently, it has been republished in a smaller format, which is even available in paperback. Such reprinting suggests an unexpectedly widespread popularity for what is, after all, a relatively obscure work outside humanistic (and bibliophilic) circles. The reason for this popularity is not hard to find. Two young men, Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason, last year published a thriller, *The Rule of Four*. The two have been friends from childhood: Caldwell is a history major from Princeton, and Thomason did English at Harvard. After graduation in 1999, they collaborated on *The Rule of Four*, which has become a bestseller. This is a literary and historical whodunit, of the *Da Vinci Code* type, a now rapidly-growing genre. Like the *Da Vinci Code*, the *Sign* plays fast and loose with both history and the results of literary research. Poor Friar Francesco is “proven” not to have authored the *Hypnerotomachia* at all. Authorship is instead ascribed to a Colonna of the great Roman noble family, and thereon is hung a tale of murder and intrigue. Joscelyn Godwin has now published *The Real Rule of Four*, in an attempt to set the historical record straight. Good luck to him on this. I think the modern thriller is something of a yawn compared to the Renaissance original – but, then, I am a book collector.



Upcoming Programs in 2005

The schedule for the remainder of our 2005 program year is coming together, and it looks like another exciting one.

October 13th — John King, Distinguished University Professor, Humanities Distinguished Professor of English & Religious Studies at the Ohio State University will present the seventh chapter of the Aldus Society History of Text & Image series when he speaks on John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments of the English Martyrs* (popularly known as the *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*).

The burning of Thomas Tomkins hand by Bishop Boner, who not long after burnt also his body.



November 10th — Joel Silver, Curator of Rare Books at Indiana University’s Lilly Library and columnist for *Fine Books & Collections* magazine will join us for a presentation about J.K. Lilly.



J. K. Lilly was a collector most of his life. From the mid-1920s until his death, he devoted a great deal of his leisure time to building his collections of books and manuscripts, works of art, coins, stamps, military miniatures, firearms and edged weapons, and nautical models.

J. K. Lilly’s collections of books and manuscripts, totaling more than 20,000 books and 17,000 manuscripts, together with more than fifty oil paintings and 300 prints, were given by the collector to Indiana University between 1954 and 1957. These materials form the foundation of the rare book and manuscript collections of the Lilly Library.

December (Date & Location TBA) — December will once again find members of the Aldus Society gathered together at the annual Holiday Dinner to celebrate the wrap-up of another year. The Holiday Dinner this year will be the venue for our always popular “Aldus Collects” program,

wherein multiple members of the Aldus Society share their collecting interests. Stay tuned for more details.



An Anecdote with a Moral: A Favorite Rare Book Nugget

Aldus Society Notes periodically includes items about books that are no longer under copyright, but have moved to the public domain.

Book lovers who were contemporaries of Moses Polock treated him as though he would live forever. It has been noted that those who collect things outlive people who do not. No one notices this so much, perhaps, as the collector himself who has his eye on the collection of another, or the book collector who cannot sleep well at night for the thought of a valuable first edition he would like to own. Book collectors, I make no exceptions, are buzzards who stretch their wings in anticipation as they wait patiently for a colleague's demise; then they swoop down and ghoulishly grab some long-coveted treasure from the dear departed's trove.

Two years before my uncle's death I gave up my fellowship in English at the University of Pennsylvania to enter professionally the sport of book collecting and the business of selling. Uncle Moses was extremely pleased to have me as a competitor. He often said he believed I had all the necessary requisites for collecting, an excellent memory, perseverance, taste, and a fair knowledge of literature. Alas, all requisites but one — money! He thought if I were fortunate enough to acquire that, I would also have the other virtue — courage: the courage to pay a high price for a good book and to refuse a poor one at any price. And I was fortunate. Two gentlemen whose interest in books was as intense as mine made it possible for me to establish myself as a bookseller. The first, Clarence S. Bement, possessed a glorious collection over which he had spent years of constant study and search. All collectors were eager to secure his volumes, each being fine and rare. As a silent partner he was invaluable to me in many ways, and with the second, Joseph M. Fox, spurred me on to collecting the choicest books and manuscripts as they came on the market, pointing out the fact that at all times there is a demand for the finest things. Mr. Fox, one of the most lovable of men, lived in a very old Colonial house called Wakefield, in the suburbs of Philadelphia, in which he had discovered wonderful Revolutionary letters and documents.

It is difficult to know at what moment one becomes a miser of books. For many years preceding his death, Uncle Moses kept a fireproof vault in the rear of his office, where he secreted rarities no one ever saw. His books were as real to him as friends. He feared showing the most precious lest he part with one in a moment of weakness. One of the amusing incidents of his life was that he had sold a copy of the *Bradford Lams of New York*, published in 1694, to Doctor Brinley for sixteen dollars, and many years later he had seen it sell at

the Brinley sale for \$1600. The money consideration did not cause his regret so much as the fact that he had felt an affection for this volume, which had rested upon his shelves for more than thirty years. By an amusing turn of the wheel of chance, which my uncle might have foreseen, the same volume would be worth to-day \$20,000!

At the death of my uncle, in 1903, I came into possession of some of his wonderful books; others were purchased by private buyers and are to-day parts of various famous libraries. I was greatly thrilled when, as administrator of his estate, I entered his secret vault for the first time in my life. In the half light I stumbled against something very hard on the floor. Lighting a match, I looked down, to discover a curious bulky package. Examining it more closely, I found it was a bag of old gold coins. A reserve supply cautiously hoarded, no doubt, to buy further rarities.

Moral: Always keep a bag of gold coins in the hall closet.

[From: A.S.W. Rosenbach. *Books and Bidders: The Adventures of a Bibliophile*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1927.]



Membership Year Change

We've made a change in Aldus Society membership year. In an attempt to simplify our recordkeeping, last year we shifted our membership year to correspond with the calendar year. Recently, we took yet another step. Beginning this year, new members who join the Aldus Society after the end of the program year (usually the May meeting, but sometimes continuing into the summer) will have their membership terms extended through the remainder of current year plus next complete calendar year. Subsequent renewals will be for the calendar year.

Also, if you're one of our members who lives more than 100 miles from Columbus and can't regularly attend Aldus Society functions, you're eligible for a half-price membership. Just remember to check the appropriate box on the membership form when you renew.



Visit the Aldus Society web site for up-to-date information about our programs and activities, in-depth articles about many of our speakers, and links to other book related organizations.

www.AldusSociety.com





The Aldus Society

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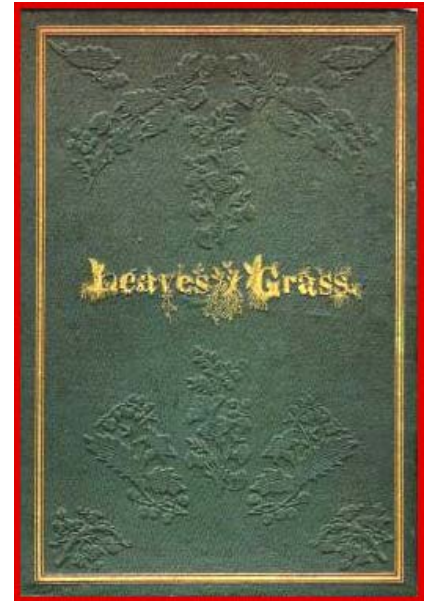
WWW.ALDUSOCIETY.COM

October's First Saturday to Feature Walt Whitman



The October First Saturday program will be held on October 1st, and will feature works of Walt Whitman, particularly the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, in commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the publication of that great work.

All Aldus members and guests are welcome to attend any and all First Saturday programs. The sessions, wherein members are invited to the OSU Rare Books and Manuscripts Reading Room to view and discuss several books selected from the OSU collection, are designed to provide attendees with an opportunity to explore books in relative depth with commentary by a subject specialist. First Saturdays are held at 3:00 p.m. in Room 327 (the Rare Book Reading Room) of OSU's Main Library. Map and directions can be found at:



<http://library.osu.edu/sites/rarebooks/travel.html>

