



Aldus Society Notes

Summer 2005

Volume 5, No.4

John Lawrence Speaks on Illuminated Manuscripts

Thursday, May 12th — In the final Aldus Society meeting of the program year, internationally known collector John M. Lawrence, spoke about his passion for illuminated manuscripts. Lawrence, who became interested in illuminated manuscripts three decades years ago when he was studying at Indiana State University and purchased his first manuscript for \$10, now has an extensive collection of manuscripts and an even greater knowledge base.

John brought along several treasures from his extensive collection and shared with his audience the significance and any special story related to each. After the program, Aldus Society members were encouraged to examine the items and ask questions.

It was an altogether fitting end to an excellent and varied Aldus Society program year.



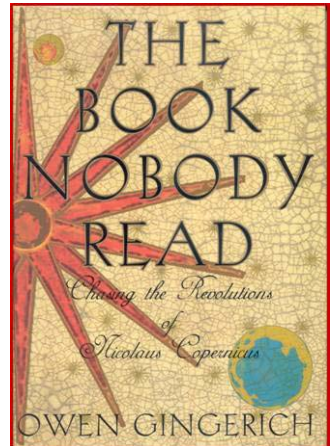
[Images courtesy of George Cowmeadow Bauman]

Upcoming Aldus Society Programs

The schedule for our 2005-2006 program year is coming together, and it looks like another exciting one.

Some of the highlights for the coming season will include OSU's John King and a discussion of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, followed by a visit and presentation by Joel Silver, Curator of Rare Books at Indiana University's Lilly Library and columnist for *Fine Books & Collections* magazine.

Next spring's programs will include a rescheduling of Michael Zwettler's presentation on early Arabic manuscripts, and a special visit by Owen Gingerich, senior astronomer emeritus at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory and research professor of astronomy and of the history of science at Harvard University. Gingerich will tell his saga of *The Book Nobody Read*, his 30-year search to record all the first and second editions of Nicholas Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*.



Additional programs will be announced as the details are finalized. Stay tuned.



Regular meetings of the Aldus Society are held at 7:30 PM at:

**The Thurber Center
91 Jefferson Avenue
Columbus, Ohio**

☞ Socializing Begins One-Half Hour Before ☞



The Aldus Society

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Books: The Future of the Past

Ron Ravneberg

This isn't what I originally intended to write, but as John Lennon once observed, "Life is what happens while you're making other plans."

This morning London was rocked by a series of explosions that appear to be the result of terrorist attacks, that bane of the modern world. As I watched the news unfold and recognized familiar names and places on the television, it occurred to me that my recognitions were shaped less by memories of my one trip to London in 1999 than by wanderings through the city and views through the eyes of people I knew from books ... people with names like Cook, Pepys, Banks, Wren, Johnson, Hooke, Newton, Boswell, Harrison, Shakespeare and Franklin. I knew their London better than my own, but it was a familiar city nonetheless.

I recently acquired a panoramic view of London [shown on page 8] that was published in 1629, only 13 years after Shakespeare's death. Those of you who know London will recognize the city immediately — from Whitehall on the left to the Tower of London on the right. The pre-fire incarnation of St. Paul's Cathedral dominates the city, as its post-fire replacement does today. There are fewer bridges than now, but the waterborne traffic on the Thames is just as plentiful. In the foreground one's eye is drawn to the spires of the church of St. Mary Overie (now Southwark Cathedral). The Globe Theater sits left of center, as its successor does today.

It's unquestionably the same London we know, but that doesn't mean London hasn't changed. Indeed, since the panorama was engraved, much has happened. Plagues have swept the city, leaving tens of thousands dead in their wakes. During four terrible days in 1666, virtually everything from the Tower of London to a point beyond St. Paul's was burned to the ground. From September 1940 to May 1941, Adolf Hitler tried everything in his power to reduce London to ruins. And this morning, on a much smaller scale, terrorists tried to bring the city to its knees.



In his excellent 1996 book, *A History of Reading*, Alberto Manguel describes a "photograph taken in 1940, during the bombing of London in the Second World War, [that] shows the remains of a caved-in library. Through the torn roof can be seen ghostly buildings outside, and in the centre of the store is a heap of beams and crippled furniture. But the shelves on the walls have held fast, and the books lined up along them seem unharmed. Three men [only one of whom is shown in the portion of the photo at left] are standing amidst the rubble: one, as if hesitant about which book to choose, is apparently reading the titles on the spines; another, wearing glasses, is reaching for a volume; the third is reading, holding an open book in his hands. They are not turning their backs on the war, or ignoring the destruction. They are not choosing the books over the outside. They are trying to persist against the obvious odds; they are asserting a common right to ask; they are attempting to find once again — among the ruins, in the astonished recognition that reading sometimes grants — an understanding."

The events of today will eventually fade and London will carry on, much as it has for the last thousand years. The passage of time grants perspective, but it can only do so if we have some way to view and understand what came before. For many of us, that view comes through books.

Books truly are the future of the past.



A Census of the Kelmscott Chaucer

We are compiling a census of copies of the Kelmscott Press Chaucer (1896) in both public & private collections – a census that will be published in book form by 2008. Our census will be more than a simple checklist; we are describing precisely the distinguishing physical characteristics of each copy & reconstructing, as far as is possible, its provenance. To that end, we need information about bindings, ownership history, bookplates, inscriptions, & exhibitions. While we have been able to locate many copies in libraries with online catalogues, we need help in identifying small museums & libraries, club libraries, and business libraries throughout the world that may own a Kelmscott Chaucer. In some libraries (even very large ones) the holdings in Special Collections are not yet fully reflected in their electronic catalogues.

✦ We wish to include copies owned by private collectors in our census and will protect their anonymity if they wish. We will also list and describe copies that have been destroyed by war or fire or vandalism. In short, we are trying to be as comprehensive as possible.

✦ If you can offer any information that would be helpful to us, please write to Sylvia Peterson at either swholton2@cs.com or 517 A Street SE, Washington, DC 20003.

✦ WILLIAM S. PETERSON & SYLVIA HOLTON PETERSON

An Auction Treasure

George Cowmeadow Bauman

One of the better bookscouts in the area stopped into our bookshop with a book in his hand and a story to tell.

Garry Gibbons has been around the central Ohio area as a bookman for many years. He was tutored by the late, well-respected bookdealer from Mansfield, John Stark. Though he doesn't have an open shop, Garry does set up a booth offering books and autographs at various book fairs.

I was having lunch back in the office at three in the afternoon – lunchtime in retail is flexible, depending on a break in customer traffic – when my colleague, Christine Hayes,

came back to inform me that Garry was here in the shop. That's always good news, for conversation with him is book-laden, and he scouts high-quality books to us. Lunch could wait.

He had gone to an auction in northern Ohio with the right attitude – high hopes and low expectations. While browsing through the items awaiting their moment of glory in the auctioneer's hand, he came across a book that he thought might be special: *Spanish America; or a Descriptive, Historical, and Geographical Account of the Dominions of Spain in the Western Hemisphere, Continental & Insular*, by Canadian writer R. H. Bonycastle, published in 1819, bound in three-quarters leather in good to very good condition with the spine label still

brightly gilded.

Seeing that it would be hours before it come up for sale – 8,000 items were being sold in four auction rings, Garry made notes about the book, and decided to drive to his not-too-distant home to do some research on this title.

On abebooks.com just four copies were listed, ranging in price from \$800 to \$1,200, depending upon condition.

Back our scout went to the auction hall, arriving in good time, with 30 items to go before the Bonnycastle book came up. He waited impatiently, hoping that no one else was knowledgeable about the value of this book.

Finally the auctioneer held up *Spanish America*, and began his fast-paced auction-speak. From the beginning another bidder competed for the book, causing Garry some concern that there might be someone else who knew the book was quite collectible. At \$100, there was still some guy bidding against him, which was discouraging. However, with a probable retail of around a thousand dollars, he knew he could bid the price up a bit more, and still make a profit when he scouted the book.

Fortunately the other bidder dropped out at \$175, leaving Garry in possession of the handsome treasure that could at least double his investment.

Excitedly he took the book home and examined it more closely, which is when he unexpectedly discovered just how special this book was. He realized that he'd purchased something so unique that it shouldn't have even been in the local auction, but rather placed with one of the big national auction houses. The book harbored a story that our scout uncovered by diligent research, one of the joys of book ownership.

Here's what he found.

On the third blank page in the front matter, he was surprised to see writing that he'd missed on his brief pre-auction examination. In a bold, flowing hand was written: "Com. O. H. Perry/United States Ship/John Adams".

Could this be the famous Admiral Oliver Hazard Perry of the Battle of Lake Erie and the War of 1812 fame? And could this signature possibly be in Perry's own hand? Might this book have once belonged to famous American naval captain and hero?

The first thing Garry did – after steadying himself from light-headedness brought on by the possibilities – was authenticating the signature. Having dealt professionally in autographs for years, he had several reference books available for research assistance. One verification wasn't enough, though it did increase his excitement. Two more sources that matched the book's signature convinced him that he really did have an authentic Perry signature in his newly-acquired book. It was now worth far more than the \$175 he paid for it, and even more than the \$800-1200 listed online for *Spanish America*. His research indicated that Perry's auto-

graph alone could be worth up to \$1,500.

The next step was to research Perry's biography, in order to connect events in the former Admiral's life with the book, published in 1819. He went searching for context and provenance.



Garry learned that sometime after the War of 1812, Perry – now Commodore Perry – was sent to England, where the hot-headed man let his temper get the best of him on at least two occasions, which ended in duels.

He was summoned back to the States, and eventually given a diplomatic mission to South America, where he had not previously been. Why the US government would send such a hothead on a diplomatic mission is a mystery, but posted he was. He was assigned to the ship the John Adams, which he had not been on before.

His delicate mission was to establish friendly relations with the government of newly independent Venezuela and to negotiate restitution for United States vessels which had been illegally captured during the revolution under the guise of patriotism. Perry boarded his flagship the John Adams at Annapolis and sailed south in June of 1819. A month later he reached the mouth of the Orinoco River. He traveled to the interior on a smaller ship, while the John Adams sailed on to Trinidad to await his return at Port-of-Spain, which indicates that Perry was aboard the John Adams for about a month.

Yellow fever was a danger in Venezuela ports, and some of his crew fell ill and died. Perry himself contracted the disease, and died in August of 1819, and was buried in Trinidad, two months after sailing. He was just 32 years old.

From this information, our erstwhile scout has assembled this rather logical story connecting his newly-purchased book with Perry:

Upon learning of his mission to Latin America – which was unfamiliar to him, Perry went looking for the latest information on that area of the world. He found and bought this just-published book, *Spanish America; or a Descriptive, Historical, and Geographical Account of the Dominions of Spain in the Western Hemisphere, Continental & Insular*, to take with him on the voyage. On board the south-bound ship, the USS John Adams, Perry placed his name and the ship's name in the book, then studied the attached fold-out maps of the region as well as the text, which provided the most up-to-date information to educate him for his mission to the southern hemisphere.

After he died two months later, this book would have been then forwarded to his family, along with whatever other possessions he had with him on the voyage.

Underneath Perry's signature and the ship's name, there is written the name "E. C. Perry/Brooklyn". And on the front pastedown can be found a sticker with "George Perry/Cadiz".

From O. H. Perry himself on the high sea, to the other Perrys in the book, to the auction house where *Spanish America* was sold – unbeknownst to auctioneer and buyer that it was once a very critical possession of Commander Oliver Hazard Perry on his last voyage in the last months of his young life.

Assuming that this scenario is correct – and it would be difficult to create a more plausible story, *Spanish America* is worth several thousand dollars – a great book with a great story, discovered by an alert and experienced bookscout who knows the value of research.

When I facetiously offered to double his money right away – "no, no, Garry, let me be generous and make that an even \$500!", Garry quickly replied, "Not this one, George. It's a keeper! It's going into my private library."

"But if I *were* to price it for sale, I'd put \$4,500 on it."

Not bad for an auction investment of \$175.

If, on a still night, Garry wakes to the plashing sound of the sea, and feels his bed begin to roll, and the scent of salty sea air wafts about the room, he need not take Dramamine and he need not worry – it's just the ghost of the crusty old commander, back to visit his book.



The Write Stuff

We're delighted to hear that Ann Alaia Woods, whose lectures on hand writing and lettering were well received by the Aldus Society, has won the 2005 World Handwriting Contest. For further details, see:

www.global2000.net/handwritingrepair/WHAC/#winners



The New York Antiquarian Book Fair

Bill Evans

A 6'4" drag queen in a short white prom dress walks down an aisle discussing rare books with a gentleman in a business suit while a jazz combo improvises in the background; wine flows. Crisp bow ties mix easily with rumpled sport shirts; tennis shoes with polished wingtips. Women speak French; men, Dutch. – no one seems out of place.

The 2005 New York Antiquarian Book Fair began with a cocktail reception and preview to benefit the New York Public Library. This was my first trip to the 45 year old event and I looked forward to the Wednesday evening preview, figuring I might be able to snap up a couple of bargains before the doors opened to the public the following morning. Besides, I couldn't wait to see the books.

The books! – millions and millions of dollars worth of books. More rare books than I had ever seen in one place. 180 booksellers from all over the world offering a huge variety of books, maps, manuscripts, autographs, ephemera and, of course, conversation.

Several things still stick in my mind about my experience both at the preview and two days later when I returned to the show with my brother Albert.

First – bargain is not a term I would ever use at this show. Unique, stunning, incredible all seem appropriate, but bargain? While a triple-decker first edition of *Pride and Prejudice* may be worth \$125,000, it is not a bargain, at least not in my world.

Second – there are an amazing number of very fine old books out there. Their prices may also be amazing, but the number and quality is truly astonishing.

Third – if you spend several hours searching the stalls at the New York Book Fair your price constraints began to get fuzzy. By the time I forced myself to leave I was looking at \$700 books like they were on wheeled clearance carts outside of used bookstores back home.

Finally – I plan to return next year.

"\$700? Hmmm, that doesn't seem like so much...."



FABS Tour 2005

Geoff Smith

Although I was not in attendance for the entire FABS tour, I did attend some events and heard enough praise of the others to attest to the tour's variety and quality. Certainly, I would encourage anyone who can to attend the 2006 FABS tour in Seattle and/or the 2007 FABS tour in Washington D.C. The libraries of St. Louis opened their doors for access to their special collections and tour members saw the collections of Becker Medical School Library, the Vatican Film Library at St. Louis University, the Washington University Library, the St. Louis Mercantile Library, the St. Louis Public Library and the Botanical Garden Library. One of the more popular features of the tour is the visit to private collections. Mr. and Mrs. Kay Michael Kramer, Mr. and Mrs. Julian Edison, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Gleich, and Anthony Garnett graciously opened their homes in order for FABS members to view their splendid private collections.

Each evening, Wednesday through Saturday, was ended by dinner. Additionally, on Wednesday evening FABS members were treated to a talk by Eric P. Newman, currency expert, and, on Thursday evening dinner they enjoyed a lecture on paper marbling by Curtis Finley. Dinner on Friday was at the home of noted book collector Anthony Garnett where people ate their meals amidst thousands of precious books with nary a spill. The Saturday banquet at the University Club was enjoyed by all. At this point, if people were still standing, there was an optional Sunday tour to the Museum of Westward Expansion and Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (Arch) and the Old Courthouse.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the tour was that, despite the flurry of activities, everything proceeded so smoothly. At one of our Aldus lectures, we heard the story of Mark Twain declaring the people of Columbus being the handsomest people in the land. I think the same can be applied to the citizenry of St. Louis. Finally, extraordinary credit must be given to John Hoover of the St. Louis Mercantile Library and Kay Kramer of *The Printery* for their remarkable itinerary and impeccable organization.



Cartoon Research Library Fall Program

Mark your calendars. Liza Donnelly will speak about *Funny Ladies*, her latest book, on Wednesday, October 19, 2005, at the Columbus Metropolitan Library's Main Library, 96 S. State St., at 7 p.m. in the Auditorium. This event, which is cosponsored by the Ohio State University Cartoon Research Library and the Friends of the Columbus Metropolitan Library, is free and open to the public.



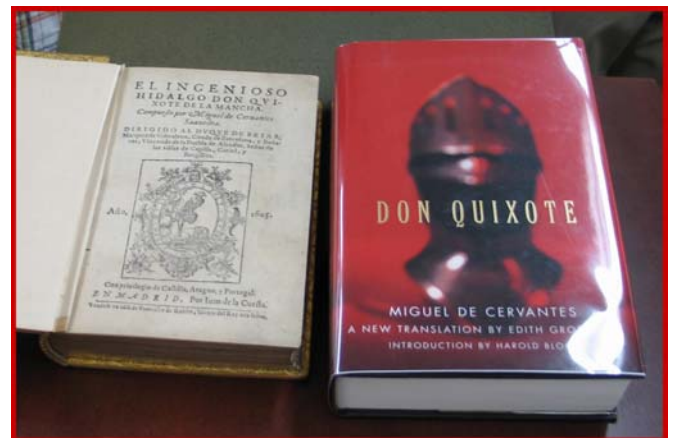
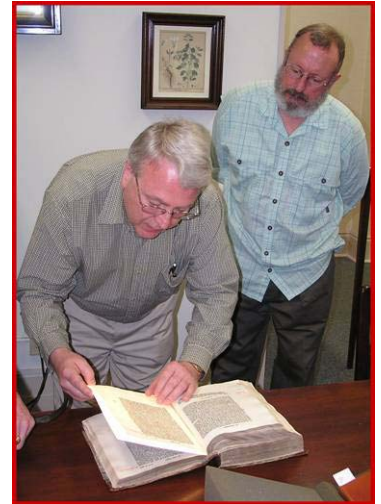
First Saturday Continues with Caxton, Cervantes, Schedel and The Bard

Willkie Cirker

These informal 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.

May – On May 7th around 15 Aldus Society members and guests took a look at OSU's sole Caxton: Higden's *Polychronicon* (1482). William Caxton was the first English printer. Geoff Smith presented the program and also included a sampling of other incunabula, i.e., "cradle books" from before 1500.

June – On Saturday, June 4th, an enthusiastic group of about 12 Aldus members and friends gathered in the Rare Book Room at OSU's Main Library to inspect its impressive collection by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, principally his masterwork *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, and to hear a presentation by Dr. John M. Bennett of Rare Books. The day was actually the last in a series of events marking the 400th anniversary of the work's publication at which the Spain's ambassador was present earlier in the week.



The wonderfully varied *Quixotes* included the 1605 first edition, as well as numerous later editions and translations from the 17th and each succeeding century in English, Portuguese, Italian, French, German, Dutch, Russian, Polish, and Japanese. Among those of a more unusual nature were a Portuguese edition printed on cork on the occasion of the work's 400th anniversary, and a lavishly illustrated oversized Dutch translation. One of the most notable illustrators represented

was Gustave Doré whose fantastical and intricate images appear in many nineteenth-century translations.



Taken as a whole, OSU's Cervantes collection provides an instructive demonstration of the varied pace of progress in printing technology across various countries since the early 17th century.

Dr. Bennett's presentation placed the work in its historic and linguistic context. Cervantes' satire on chivalric romances operates on many levels which are sometimes lost in translation. In fact, Cervantes language contributed in a such a critical way to the formation of the modern Spanish language that even today his work is used as a foundational text in the country's schools, and as a result his language remains even more accessible to speakers of modern Spanish than does Shakespeare's English to us. In response to questions about the "best" translations, John indicated that all are imperfect when placed against the original, but are often interesting in what they reveal about the time/country/translator who produced them. Nevertheless, to be fair to the translation profession, Edith Grossman's 2003 English translation, also on display, received very positive reviews and does at least offer those of us with insufficient Spanish access to this *obra maestra*.

July – The next in the First Saturday series will be held July 9th and will focus on the Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum*, better known to most as the Nuremberg Chronicle. [N.B.: this is the 2nd Saturday of July due to the holiday weekend on the first Saturday].

Anne M. Morganstern, Professor Emeritus of OSU's Department of Art History will present Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum* (1493), i.e., *The Nuremberg Chronicle*. Considered one of the greatest books of the 15th century, *The Nuremberg Chronicle* is the most lavishly illustrated book of the period with woodcuts by Michael Wohlgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff. Albrecht Dürer trained under Wohlgemut. Professor Morganstern used *The Nuremberg Chronicle* extensively in her art history courses and will bring some wonderful commentary to the session. Google "Nuremberg Chronicle" and you will find ample examples of what you can look forward to seeing in person.




August – August 13th [N.B.: this is the 2nd Saturday of August because Geoff Smith will be on vacation August 6th]. We will head off to early-17th century London and look at some Shakespeare: Rare Books 2nd Folio (alas OSU have no 1st Folio, though it does have two 2nd Folios), *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Othello* (2nd printing) and others.

All Aldus members and guests are welcome to attend any and all First Saturday sessions. 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>.





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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The Bard says ...

"What's so special about some Spaniard on a horse, or a dusty old German and his picture book? If you want to see and hear some good stuff, come to the First Saturday program on August 13th to learn about real writing! After all, the play's the thing!"

William Shakespeare

