JCB Joins World Digital Library

In April 2009, the JCB participated in the launch of the World Digital Library, an ambitious venture sponsored by the Library of Congress and unesco. Drawing on the resources of the world’s great libraries, the WDL aims to “promote international and intercultural understanding,” according to James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress, who spoke about the initiative before a gaggle of reporters at unesco headquarters in Paris (the launch received wide coverage the next day). Many of the world’s great national libraries (twenty-six in all) were represented, and with the launch, every page of more than 1,250 essential cultural treasures became available on the project website (www.wdl.org). The JCB offered full access to ten of its greatest holdings, including the Columbus Letter, the Bay Psalm Book, and the earliest European depiction of Mexico City. More than $10 million was raised in support of the venture—$3 million from Google alone—and it will...

This is the first printed depiction of an American city, Tenochtitlán (now Mexico City). It was included in Hernán Cortés, Praecclara Ferdinanda Cortesii de novo maris oceani Hispania narratio sacratissimo ac inuitissimo Carolo Romanor[i] Imperatore semper Augusto, Hispaniaru[m], [etc] Regi Anno Domini. M. D. XX. transmitta... Nuremberg, 1524.
continue to evolve as new items are added and new institutions invited to join. The site is global in every sense—representing human knowledge assembled over many centuries, and in many languages—but its use is relatively simple. Readers may search the treasures by a number of criteria, including geographic origin and historic era, and they will find ample background information for every object. Furthermore, all of the items are translated into seven languages: English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic and Portuguese.

Since April, our pages alone have received 115,403 views, and the statistics reveal other fascinating glimpses of a world reading our documents. For example, 196 people have now read the Chinese introduction to our Bay Psalm Book, and 2,476 people have used the “zoom” feature to peer closely at our famous Stevens-Brown map. One likes to think that Columbus, the globalist who launched the modern era, and always traveled with translators, would have approved.

Amazon.com notwithstanding, it can take a long time to buy a book. After years of negotiations, the John Carter Brown Library has acquired an extremely important codex produced in the Jesuit missions in Paraguay in 1713. The manuscript consists of seventeen sermons, a catechism, a confession manual, and devotional exercises, all written in the Guaraní language. In fact, it is the only known example of Guaraní devotional exercises. The manuscript joins a small but world-renowned collection of printed books from the Paraguay missions. Of nine books known to survive, the jcb owns seven, more than any other library in the world. A handful of manuscripts also survived and may be found today at libraries in Spain, England, Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil. With this recent acquisition, the jcb can be added to the list, making us the world’s premier institution for the study of the Guaraní language and the Jesuit missions. Our new manuscript was purchased with the generous assistance of the B.H. Breslauer Foundation in honor of Thomas R. Adams, the former Librarian.

JCB Acquires Rare Guaraní Manuscript

In Memoriam: TRA

On December 6, 2008, the MacMillan Room was filled to capacity and then some to honor Thomas Randolph Adams, Librarian emeritus, who died six days earlier. At the event, planned nearly a year in advance, the John Carter Brown Library Medal was accepted on his behalf by Po Adams. Several close friends of Tom’s spoke movingly about his distinguished life in service to rare books and libraries, including Nicolas Barker, the editor of The Book Collector, Marcus McCorison, President emeritus of the American Antiquarian Society, and Samuel Streit, Associate University Librarian for Special Collections at Brown University. Fortunately, Tom—ever vigilant—had recently finished an eloquent and entertaining memoir of his tenure at the jcb (1957–1983), which appeared in two installments in The Book Collector. It has now been printed as a single publication by the Library, and will be distributed to Associates. Characteristically, he understated his own achievements, which were legion, and included the creation of the jcb Fellows program, the constant deepening of the collection, and the adaptation of the Library to new technologies. Tom was a legendary bibliographer as well, and his classic studies of printed works on the American Revolution remain the standard. To preserve that legacy, we encourage all friends of the jcb to donate to a new Thomas Randolph Adams Book Fund, which will expand our holdings on the War of Independence.

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Islamic Encounters

An exhibit on “Islamic Encounters,” prepared by Dennis C. Landis, was launched in November and remained in place through late February. We offered this exhibition in the conviction that the Library’s strong collections can be used to tell other stories than the familiar one of the western hemisphere’s exploration and settlement. We felt that the story of Islamic–Western interaction formed an intimately parallel one to the oceanic aspirations of Spain’s Ferdinand and Isabella. Columbus’s voyage became a reality in the context of the re-conquest of the Iberian peninsula from its longtime Muslim rulers. The expulsion of Jewish and Muslim populations from Spain that began in steps in the 15th century would give birth to new conflicts in the Mediterranean Sea that would concern Europeans and Americans for centuries to come.

At the same time, the movement of early cultural tourists—Islamic visitors to America and western Europe, and westerners to Islamic lands—offer unique insights that are rarely addressed. Many other visitors were involuntary travelers—westerners captured for ransom or galley servitude on the one hand—and untold numbers of Africans, including Muslims, sold into slavery in the Americas. The rare published story of Job, Son of Solomon, related by Thomas Bluett, tells of a passage from Senegal to Maryland to England, and back to freedom in Senegal, whetting an insatiable appetite for those uncounted stories that can never be recovered. The Library has been invited to collaborate with the Istanbul Research Institute to develop a larger version of the exhibition in 2011.

Separately-Published Maps

The fundamental factor that brought maps into the John Carter Brown collection is that the discovery and exploration of the New World were primarily a series of geographical events. From the outset, the cartographic and written records through which Europeans learned of the unknown parts of the world ran parallel to each other. In the nineteenth-century, however, when John Carter Brown began to collect, maps were often seen as a risky business because the lack of an extensive carto-bibliographical literature made it difficult to be certain of what one was buying, so Brown focused more comfortably on collecting well-known books that contained maps, such as editions of Ptolemy’s Geography or Ortelius’s Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. In fact, the only separately-issued map to come into the Library in the early years arrived by accident. The manuscript Draught of Genl. Braddock’s route towards Fort DuQuesne drawn by Christopher Gist, a frontier scout who accompanied the expedition, was discovered in a copy of Thomas Mante’s The history of the late war in America (London, 1772), bought by John Carter Brown in 1846.

Now, the Library has more than half of the separately published maps listed in J. C. Wheat and C. F. Brun’s cartobibliography, Maps and charts published in America [i.e. United States] before 1800 (New Haven, 1969) and a strong collection of maps of American focus issued in the publishing centers of Europe throughout our collecting period. The maps and charts in the collection document the attempts of Europeans and European colonists to delineate the geography and the events unfolding in their back yards as well as in the farther reaches of the continents of North and South America.

Currently, access to the JCB collection of 1300–1500 separate maps is through a traditional card catalogue. Although this catalogue contains a wealth of information that is the product of years of research by Library curators, it is only accessible to those who visit Providence. In 2002, the Library hired the Donohue Group to do a “recon” project to transform paper cataloguing records for the books in our collection to electronic records that will be available on Brown’s online catalogue, “Josiah,” and accessible to the larger world of scholarship through the internet. This project was extremely successful and we are now gearing up to do the same thing with our map records. When the paper records have been converted to electronic format and loaded into the Brown University online catalogue we intend to further enhance the information available to the researcher by linking each cataloguing record to a digital image of the map.

—Susan Danforth

From the first illustrated book ever to be produced on an Ottoman printing press, Tarîh-i Hind-i garbî (Constantinople, 1730, probably translated and adapted by Emir Mehmet ibn Emir Hasan el-Suudi, Constantinople, 1730). Ninety percent of the book was translated from Francisco López de Gómara, Historia de las Indias. Here the woodcut illustrates an opossum (somewhat hidden) sneaking up on a chicken at night to drink its blood, while a decidedly exotic hunter prepares to shoot an arrow into a tree. The long-necked animal is meant to be a sloth.
Up for Adoption

Collectors are responsible for the well-being of the things they bring together. Caring for the maintenance and conservation requirements of the many facets of the John Carter Brown Library collection, which contains materials from 1492 to circa 1825, is a daily activity and we have found that the best way to deal with never-ending conservation issues is to just keep plugging away. A partial list of our conservation accomplishments over the course of the last ten years reads something like this: 340 custom boxes made to protect fragile original bindings; 178 volumes restored (everything from re-attaching covers to re-sewing and re-binding from scratch); 4,860 coverless political pamphlets and sermons re-housed in acid-free protective binders; and 3,650 flat maps and printed broadsides placed in mylar enclosures for safe storage (which also allows for more researcher-friendly consultation). These are some of the everyday solutions to many of the basic health needs of our rare books, maps, and prints. But there are a number of “special cases” that need more extensive help. We will introduce some of these books and tell you a little about their histories when we launch our new Adopt-a-Book program later this year. Stay tuned.

—Susan Danforth

Public Health at the JCB

The so-called swine flu (H1N1) and SARS are but two in a long list of diseases that have reached epidemic proportions. Health and disease are a large part of the story of European expansion, and the Library has added this year an array of treatises and early government documents that illuminate earlier disease management concerns.

Archbishop Liñan y Cisneros’s Carta pastoral (Lima, 1703) advised the public to observe modesty in dress to help preserve Lima from the plague. Moulie’s Essai sur la fièvre jaune (Paris, 1812) and Beaujeu’s Dissertation sur la fièvre jaune (Paris, 1814) both address yellow fever outbreaks in Haiti. Medical authorities in Mexico City compiled the Instruccion formada para ministrar la vacuna (Mexico, 1814), to vaccinate effectively against smallpox.

The growth of international commerce carried with it the opportunity to introduce disease along with trade goods. Among the government regulations recently acquired are Portugal’s Regulamento provisional sobre quarantenas… nos portos maritimos, a evitar o contagio (Lisbon, 1807), setting terms of quarantine for ports. We were able to secure rare Swedish quarantine regulations of 1819 and 1832 focused on ships from Cuba and South America, and equally rare royal Danish broadside announcements (printed in German) from 1824, 1826, 1832, and 1834.

Listed here for reference:


—Dennis Landis
An American Hero Returns

On May 13, the JCB community was thrilled to welcome back one of its own, the distinguished historian Edmund S. Morgan, Sterling Professor of History emeritus at Yale University, and an Associate of the Library since 1947. A festive lunch was held in the Chancellor’s Dining Room of the Sharpe Refectory, both to celebrate the release of Morgan’s latest work, American Heroes: Profiles of Men and Women Who Shaped Early America (Norton), and simply to bask in his presence. Morgan delighted the crowd with reminiscences of his time as a young Brown professor between 1946 and 1955, and his particular fondness for the JCB (“it changed my life”). Indeed, one of the great moments in JCB lore—the delivery of Perry Miller’s classic talk, “Errand in the Wilderness,” in 1952—stemmed from the invitation extended by Morgan, his former student. Morgan’s remarks were preceded by a moving appreciation delivered by Annette Gordon-Reed, who received the Pulitzer for history this year for her study of the Hemings family of Monticello. In fact, there was a brace of history Pulitzer winners in the room that day, including Professor Morgan himself and Gordon Wood. A very large crowd filled up every chair for this special lunch, and then stayed to hear a JCB Fellow, Russell Stoermer, discuss his recent research, in much the same way that young scholars (and possible future Pulitzer winners) have been doing since the lunch talks began in 1984.

Two New Unknown Peruvian Imprints

The JCB holds one of the finest collections of early Peruvian, to which we have just added two previously unregistered Peruvian imprints from circa 1660, both of which are the only known copies in the world:

1. The 1660 (?) edition of Pablo de Prado’s Directorio espiritual en la lengua española, y quichua general del inca; and
2. The 1660 (?) edition of Francisco de Quiros’s Lunario perpetuo anadido, y restituido a su verdadero original.

These two items come to the JCB bound together in contemporary vellum. Neither of them appear in any bibliography or catalogue. No other copies of either are known to exist anywhere else. The JCB also holds the only known copy of the 1650 edition of Prado’s Directorio espiritual. The Directorio espiritual en la lengua española, y quichua general del inca appeared in at least five editions: (1) for the first time in 1641; (2) in a second edition in 1650; (3) in what appears to be the third edition circa 1660—the date is based on internal evidence; (4) for the fourth time in 1705 in an abridgement; and (5) in yet another version sometime later in the 1700s. This makes Prado’s Directorio espiritual the most often-reprised compendium of Christian doctrine and devotions in Southern Peruvian Quechua published during the colonial period. It is known to have been used by Andean catechists as well as white and mestizo priests. Notwithstanding the importance of the Directorio espiritual, it has been largely ignored, probably because of the paucity of surviving copies.

Quiros’s Lunario perpetuo registers the phases of the moon for the years 1650 through 1680. The Madrid-born Quiros was the chief cosmographer of the Viceroyalty of Peru from 1619 through 1645. It is not known who updated his work, only that the responsible person was a Jesuit. The date of this edition, the first to be acquired by the JCB, is based on the content of the work and its having been bound together with the 1660 (?) edition of Prado’s Directorio espiritual.

—Michael T. Hamerly

JCB Completes Aymara Set and it Only Takes 158 Years

In 1612 the Jesuits engaged in a remarkable experiment. They had a printing press brought from Lima to their language school at Juli in the highlands of Peru so that the Italian-born Bertonio Ludovico (1555–1652) could oversee the publication of four works in Aymara that he had prepared, with assistance from other Jesuits and several Andean proselytes. The Jesuits went to all that trouble because the Society of Jesus had already attempted to publish materials in Aymara—the second-most important native language of the Andes—in Rome in 1603, but without much success. Even though the Black Robes considered these vade mecum most important (the Father General of the Order himself oversaw their printing) no one in Rome knew Aymara, and the two works produced were so error-riddled as to be all but useless.

The first of the Juli set to be acquired by the JCB was Bertonio’s Confesionario muy copioso en dos lenguas, Aymara, y Española… (1612). It was purchased in 1851 for a pittance by today’s standards (4 pounds, 13 shillings, and 6 pence). The second was Bertonio’s Vocabulario dela lengua aymara… (1612). It was acquired in 1914, also for a small amount (16 pounds). The third was Martin de Santa Cruz’s translation into Aymara of Alonso de Villegas Selvago’s Life of Christ. Martin de Santa Cruz was an Aymara noble who had been educated at the Jesuit school for the sons of kunkas or chiefs and other Indian nobles. His Libro de la vida y milagros de nuestro señor Jesu Christo en dos lenguas, Aymara, y Romance (1612) was acquired on Nov. 7, 1961, for considerably more money ($262.85), than Bertonio’s Confesionario and Vocabulario.

Now the JCB has finally laid its hands on the remaining piece in this set, Bertonio’s Arte dela lengua aymara, con vna silva de phrases de la misma lengua, y su declaracion en Romance (1612), a mere 158 years after John Carter Brown acquired Bertonio’s Confesionario. As for its cost, suffice it to say that the JCB paid substantially more for Bertonio’s Arte than the other three works put together, prices having escalated in recent decades. But it was well worth the wait and the cost.

Bertonio’s 1612 Arte is indispensable for the study of the Aymara language as it was codified in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Its acquisition makes the JCB the only repository in the world to hold a complete set of these materials. No acceptable facsimile or modern critical edition exists. The JCB also has the world’s most comprehensive collection of colonial Aymara imprints (including texts as well as grammars and dictionaries); the Library lacks only one of the 1603 grammars.

—Michael T. Hamerly
The First Female Poet of Peru?

This short poem was written to honor Manuel de Amat y Junient (1707–1782), viceroy of Peru between 1761 and 1776. It is the first Peruvian publication of the colonial period by an identifiable woman, inasmuch as it is signed: “Doña Marcelina de las Cuentas y Sayas.” It is also the only known copy in the world of this Peruvian imprint. The copy seen by the great Chilean bibliographer José Toribio Medina in a private library in Buenos Aires in 1892 and described by him in his La imprenta en Lima (1963) is the same as that acquired by the JCB several years ago.

This piece is spectacularly decorated and colored by hand in keeping with the flamboyant character of Viceroy Amat. Amat delighted in publicly flaunting his mistress, the celebrated actress Micaela Villegas (1748–1819), better known as La Perricholi, by whom he had a son, one of the signers of Peru’s declaration of independence in 1821.

Other poems by Peruvian women were published before the 1760s, beginning as early as 1602, but they always appeared anonymously or under a pseudonym. Moreover, if they were not for modern scholarship, we would not now know the identities of some of those women authors. Apparently Marcelina de las Cuentas y Sayas was from Upper Peru or modern Bolivia in accordance with documentary references to her person. How long she lived is unknown, but she was still alive as of 1780.

—Michael T. Hamerly

Fiering House Dedication

On October 21, at 5 pm, the building known variously in the past as the Frederick Fuller House, Eldridge Hall, and 59 Charleston Street will receive a new name: Fiering House. That name, of course, honours the JCB’s Emeritus Director and Librarian, Norman Fiering, who greatly enhanced the fellowship program over his twenty-three years at the helm (1983–2006), and conceived the idea of a JCB residence. All friends of the Library are invited to attend this festive celebration.

Welcome new JCB Associates!

Finn Caspersen

The JCB community was saddened to learn of the death of Finn A.W. Caspersen on September 8, 2009. Mr. Caspersen was a long-term friend of the JCB, and served on its Board of Governors from 1999–2005. But that only begins to describe his influence on the Library. He literally reshaped it, contributing generously to the 1991 renovation project that led to the building that bears his name, and endowing fellowships and other programs beneficial to the Library and its constituency, from the Watts Professorship in the History of the Book to the newly-launched Hodson Fellowships. Only weeks before his death, he was paying close attention to both programs, eager to know how they would serve the JCB of the future. The Library is diminished by his passing.

—Michael T. Hamerly

The JCB Associates have increased their membership substantially in 2009, with 73 new enrollees! Please encourage your friends to join, and consider donating a gift membership as we approach the holiday season. Student memberships are especially attractive—for a mere fifteen dollars per annum, college undergraduates at Brown or any other university may join the Associates, receive all of our publications, and form what we hope will be a lifelong sense of engagement with this world-class collection.