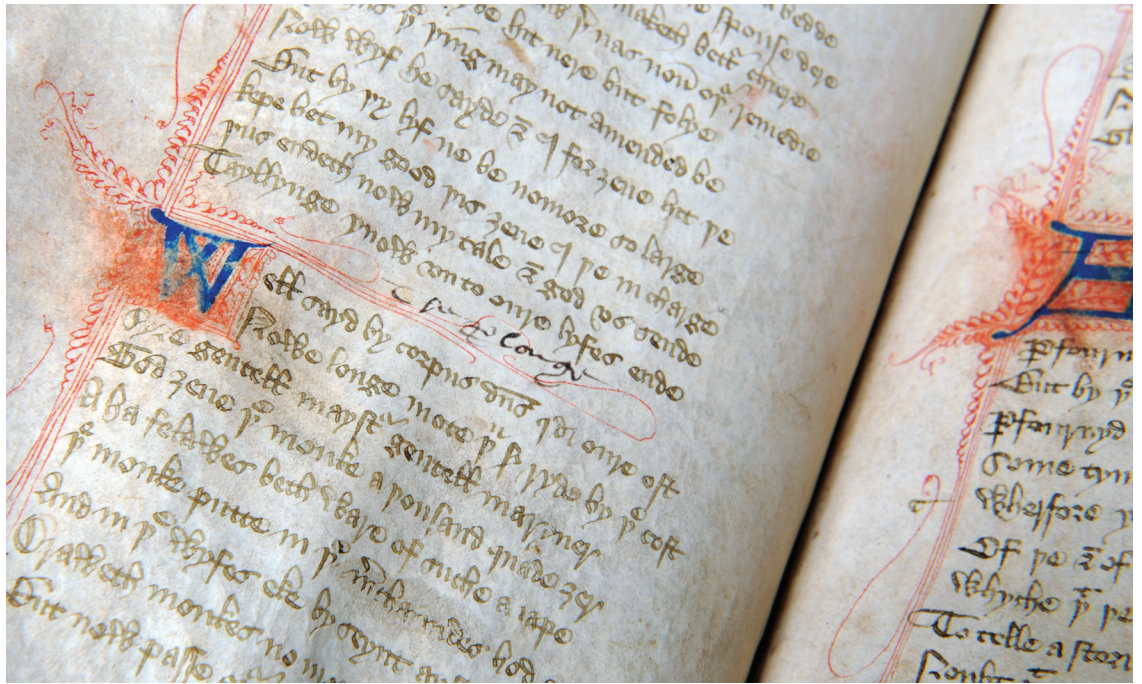


Library Society

Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, University of Chicago Ms. 564. Discovered by Professors Manly and Rickert, this mid-15th-century codex is one of 57 relatively complete manuscript copies of the *Tales* and one of only two containing a passage from the "Tale of Melibeus." It was given to the Library in 1931 by Martin A. Ryerson. (Photo by Dan Dry)



Journeys of discovery— From ancient Greece to medieval Canterbury to 21st century Chicago

The 2010-2011 Library Society Speaker Series began at the Quadrangle Club on October 13 with Professor **Christina von Nolcken** speaking on "Two University of Chicago Humanists and a Landmark Edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*."

Professor von Nolcken described the work undertaken by Professors John Manly and Edith Rickert as they published an eight-volume edition of the *Canterbury Tales* in 1940—the first to bring together all 83 medieval witnesses to the *Tales*. As she researched these UChicago faculty members and their work, von Nolcken relied extensively on the Library, and particularly the Special Collections Research Center.

Von Nolcken is Chair of the Committee on Medieval Studies and Associate Professor in English Language and Literature and the College.

On **February 16**, the Library Society will greet classicist **James M. Redfield**, the Edward Olson Distinguished Service Professor in Classical

Languages and Literatures, the Committee on Social Thought, and the College. Professor Redfield is best known for drawing on modern linguistics and anthropology in his study of ancient Greek texts.

On **May 11**, the Library Society will welcome **Mark Siegler**, the Lindy Bergman Distinguished Service Professor and Director of the MacLean Center for Clinical Medical Ethics. The MacLean Center was the first institution to focus on ethical issues in a clinical setting. Dr. Siegler combines an expertise in ethics with an active medical practice. His interests include doctor-patient relationships, end-of-life care, and organ transplantation.

Finally, the Library Society is pleased to be able to host a Members' Special Event on **June 15** that will feature a tour of the Joe and Rika Mansueto Library and the Special Collections Research Center renovations. Mark your calendar for each of these intellectual "pilgrimages."

lib.uchicago.edu/e/libra/

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
Library

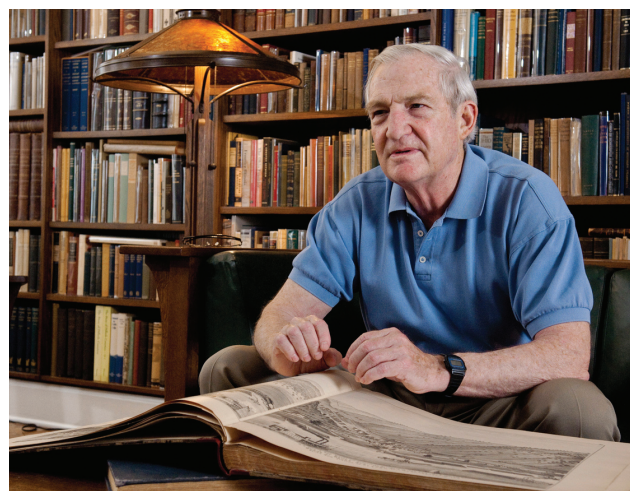
John Blew—navigating American history

John Blew's decades-long passion for collecting Americana began in 1990, when he learned of the University of Chicago's Returning Scholars Program through a radio ad. Enrolling in a morning American history course taught by Kathleen Conzen, the Thomas E. Donnelley Professor of American History and the College, he found himself captivated by the quality of the discussion and the Library sources that were studied.

The course used no textbooks, relying on original sources held by the Library instead. Fascinated, John soon began assembling a library of his own, collecting historical Americana, especially works on

the publications of the Federal Writers Project. He has also assembled a collection of illustrated historical state and county atlases and county histories, genres he first became aware of in Professor Conzen's class.

When asked to identify two favorite volumes from his library, John selected the *Illustrated Atlas of the Upper Ohio River Valley* (Titus, Simmons and Titus, 1877), which he said was the rarest and most beautiful of that genre, and *The Navigator* (Zadok Cramer, 1811), a work of great importance that identifies every island, sand bar, and rock outcropping for those manning flat boats and keel boats on what John calls "the expressways of that period, the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers."



John Blew explains the contents of one of his illustrated atlases in his home library. (Photo by Lloyd DeGrane)

the exploration, pacification, settlement and development of the vast lands west of the Allegheny Mountains. Those works became the subject of a 2002 exhibition in the Special Collections Research Center: *Collecting Western Americana: Books from the Library of John Blew*.

Mentored by Terry Tanner, proprietor of the antiquarian bookseller Hamill and Barker and authority on Americana, and guided by the influential bibliography *USiana*, John continued to shape his library, focusing on several facets of American history, including the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys and the Old Northwest, the Lewis and Clark expedition, Illiana and Chicagoana, Lincolniana, the Mormons, women's suffrage, African Americana and

John's Depression-era Federal Writers Project collection includes a complete set of first printings in first state dust jackets of the then 48 state guides (as well as those for Alaska, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia) of the American Guide Series. "They constitute the first comprehensive series of guides to the states, and their quality and depth are extraordinary," John explained. "They remain, in later reprints, widely used to this day (including by me)."

Leading dealers from the past in antiquarian Americana interest John as well, particularly Wright Howes, compiler of *USiana*. John recently acquired a portion of Howes' papers from his descendants, assisting his ongoing research on Howes' career as a Chicago bookseller and bibliographer. When he concludes his work on Howes, John hopes to edit an archive which he acquired of 20 years of correspondence between Ernest Wessen, a distinguished Ohio dealer and author of the important *Midland Notes* catalogue series (a complete run of which is in John's collection), and Joseph Dush, an Ohio lawyer and collector who was one of Wessen's key clients.

John's dedication to his library is manifest throughout his Chicago home, where nearly every wall in his living room, study and gallery is lined with fully stocked

A great boon for scholarship

Every year, the Library Society Steering Committee selects titles for purchase that are needed by researchers and would go unfunded without Library Society support.

A letter I received from Assistant Professor Christian Wedemeyer, who teaches the history of religions at the Divinity School, emphasized the importance of these acquisitions to current research. Professor Wedemeyer called the *Core Text Collection of Electronic Tibetan Texts*—purchased with funding from the Library Society—an "invaluable corpus of materials" and "a great boon to Tibetan and Buddhist studies at the University."

Professor Wedemeyer's letter was a heartening reminder that the Library remains a central resource for scholars and that the Library Society aids scholars in remaining on the forefront of research.

These acquisitions are funded from Library Society membership donations. If you have not yet renewed your membership or would like to support further acquisitions, please contact Barbara Palmer-Bostick, Library Development Associate, at 773-702-7695.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip M. Burno".

Philip M. Burno
Library Society Chairman

bookshelves. Building and using a working research library requires many qualities that John Blew has in spades: curiosity, passion and commitment. In addition, John points out, "It takes a really tolerant spouse." We are glad that both John and Joan are Library Society members and that John serves on the Steering Committee and has served on the Library's Visiting Committee.