Volume 23 Spring 2019

Library Society

Discovering Chicago's Rare Books with Elizabeth Frengel BY CATHERINE NIEHAUS



Elizabeth Frengel, Curator of Rare Books

N HER FIRST YEAR AS CURATOR OF RARE BOOKS in the Special Collections Research Center, Elizabeth Frengel has begun discovering the Library's diverse treasures and identifying opportunities to enhance its holdings. Frengel came to the University of Chicago Library from her position as Head of Research Services at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. At Chicago, she is responsible for building and caring for the collections, as well as engaging faculty, students, and donors with the Special Collections Research Center's materials, services, and programs.

With 340,000 rare books in Special Collections, Frengel has examined gems of historical importance and surpassing beauty. While delicately turning the pages of one of her favorites, an 1894 Kelmscott edition of The Tale of King Coustans the *Emperor*, Frengel notes the elegance of its inner design in contrast to the slightly worn condition of its exterior. Acquired with support from the Joseph and Helen Regenstein Rare Book Fund, this particular volume likely functioned as a press room or proof copy, or a remainder held by the press. "Such extra-textual components of the book can inform scholars' understanding of the production processes of the press," Frengel explains. Additionally, the work contains a handwritten note by Charles W. Howell on the front free endpaper stating that this copy survived the infamous fire at the Ballantyne Press in 1899. Such a

notation further reveals this volume's history and role as a complex cultural object rather than simply a textual conduit.

From handwritten notes to book illustrations, Frengel observes that extra-textual elements in the rare books collections often infuse works with layers of meaning and rich research value. For instance, Frengel was thrilled to see the Library become the new home of two exquisitely illustrated items documenting 16th century polar explorations, bequeathed by Eleonora C. Gordon, M.D.: a map and an Arctic expedition log supplemented with stunningly clean and detailed engravings depicting the crew's adventures with a sweeping sense of dynamism.

Since arriving at Chicago, Frengel has also had the opportunity to work with Graham School student Robert S. Connors, who generously donated to the Library nearly 400 rare volumes from the 15th to the 20th centuries. According to Frengel, "Acquisitions such as this are important to scholars studying the transmission of classical texts through time and across cultures." She is especially grateful to have received eleven incunable titles from the earliest period of European printing, including a 1475 edition of Augustine's *Confessions*.

Frengel plans to continue learning as much as possible about the immense collections of rare books at Chicago. She envisions helping to build collections through acquisitions in areas

This 1894 Kelmscott edition of *The Tale of King Coustans the Emperor* was saved from the fire at Ballantyne Press in 1899.



ΕΧΗΙΒΙΤΙΟΝ



U.S. Passport, 1951, Saul Bellow Papers, Special Collections Research Center, The University of Chicago Library

The Adaptations of Augie March

A Novel by Saul Bellow, A Play by David Auburn, A Production Directed by Charles Newell, An Exhibition by Special Collections and Court Theatre

Through August 30, 2019

Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery, The University of Chicago Library, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago, IL

AUL BELLOW'S 1953 MASTERPIECE, *The Adventures of Augie March*, launched his reputation as a novelist and established the future Nobel Laureate's literary renown. In 2015, Court Theatre commissioned the Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning playwright **David Auburn**, **AB '91**, to adapt *Augie March* for the stage. This exhibit showcases treasures from the Special Collections Research Center's Saul Bellow Papers in juxtaposition with materials generated by theatre artists working toward Court's May 2019 world premiere.

David Auburn



continued

such as classical texts in the early modern period, including Homer in print; Judaica; 19th-century literature; African Americana; and works that illustrate the history of the material text.

The Library looks forward to more energetic years of intellectual curiosity and thoughtful curation of rare books in the future.



A 16th-century Arctic expedition map bequeathed by Eleonora C. Gordon, M.D.

desiderata

Please consider a contribution to enhance our collections.

Librarians are seeking funding for a variety of titles that would be valuable resources for University of Chicago faculty and students. Below is a sampling of these items.

Crossings and Dwellings: Restored Jesuits, Women Religious, American Experience, 1814-2014. Edited by Kyle B. Roberts (Leiden: Brill, 2017). Eighteen essays explore the work and experiences of Jesuits and their women religious collaborators in North America following the Jesuit Restoration. **\$202**

Great European Stage Directors. Edited by Simon Shepherd. Bloomsbury, 2018. Vols. 1-8. Students in the Theater and Performance Studies program will find this encyclopedic volume useful in their research and study. **\$600**

Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther. Edited by Derek R. Nelson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). This encyclopedia provides in-depth coverage of the cultural, political, economic and artistic contributions made by Luther. It also considers Luther's legacy from a global perspective. **\$744**

Code Penal: Commentaires Images de Joseph Hemard. From an edition limited to 900 copies, this is number 850. Hemard (1880-1961) presents the official text of the French Code Penal with witty, and often mildly erotic, color pochoir illustrations. **\$850**

Philosophische und populärwissenschartlichen Schriften. Hermann von Helmholtz. Edited by Michael Heidelberger, Helmut Pulte and Gregor Schiemann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2017). This volume combines all of Helmholtz's publications, lectures, and speeches on scientific, philosophical, epistemological, and popular scientific topics. **\$2,224.52**

To support the purchase of one of these titles, please send a check for the full cost, payable to the University of Chicago, with the title in the comment field, to The Library Society, 1100 East 57th Street, Suite 180, Chicago, IL 60637. You may also call Catherine Niehaus at 773-702-7695.

THANK YOU for your generosity.

For additional titles in need of funding, please visit **lib.uchicago.edu/about/thelibrary/supportus/libsoc/desiderata**.

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