

Library Society

Two attendees at the *Transcending Tradition* opening event examine the exhibition on Jewish mathematicians in German-speaking academic culture.



PHOTO BY LLOYD DEGRANE

Treasure and Counterfeit, Censorship and Transcendence

After two successful events, the Library Society Speaker Series is well underway for 2012-13.

The Series began with a member's special invitation to the opening of the international exhibition *Transcending Tradition: Jewish Mathematicians in German-Speaking Academic Culture* on October 4 at the John Crerar Library. Library Director **Judith Nadler**, President **Robert Zimmer**, and Dean **Robert Fefferman** shared the stage with three visiting speakers: Professor Emeritus **Silvan Schweber** of Brandeis University, **Dr. Christian Brecht**, German Consul General to the Midwest, and Professor **Moritz Epple** of Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. Their remarks addressed the integration, flight and death of 19th- and 20th-century Jewish mathematicians in Germany, their tremendous impact on mathematics in Germany and worldwide, and their particular impact on the University of Chicago.

This international exhibition, and an associated exhibit of the University of Chicago Library's related special holdings, *Transcending Tradition: A Bridge from Germany to America*, runs **through December 18** at Crerar.

On **November 7**, the Library Society welcomed **Margaret M. Mitchell**, Dean of the Divinity School and Shailer Mathews Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Literature, in conjunction with a tour of the exhibition *Swiss Treasures: From Biblical Papyrus and Parchment to Erasmus, Zwingli, Calvin, and Barth*, on view at the Special Collections Research Center through December 14. Dean Mitchell spoke on "The University of Chicago's 'Archaic Mark' (ms792): A Remarkable Manuscript Treasure or a Modern Day Counterfeit?" Recalling 70 years of scholarly argument over the provenance of the miniature book, Dean Mitchell described the 21st-century

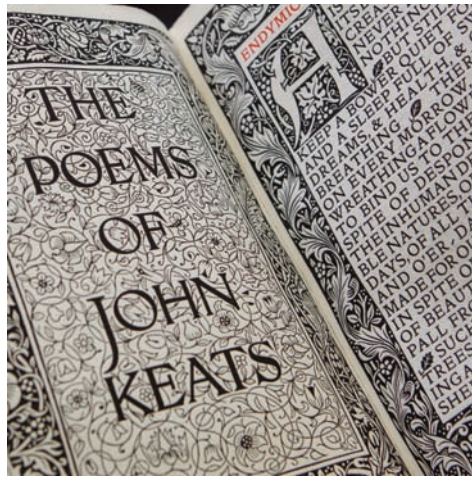
lib.uchicago.edu/e/libra/



Library Society Member Gives Gift of Keats



(Top, left to right) New Library Visiting Committee member Diane Adams looks on as Humanities Visiting Committee member Danette (Dani) Gentile Kauffman presents Judith Nadler, Director and University Librarian, and Alice Schreyer, Assistant University Librarian for Humanities, Social Sciences, and Special Collections, with an 1894 Kelmscott Press edition of *The Poems of John Keats* (right). This donation from the Gentile Family will support research and teaching by students of literature, printing, and the book arts. Gifts of rare books are one of the ways Society members support the Library. For more information on how to donate books, please contact Scott Perry at 773-702-8734.



An Electronic Special Collections?

By Stephen Stigler, Library Society Chairman and the Ernest DeWitt Burton Distinguished Service Professor, Department of Statistics and the College and Member, Committee on Conceptual and Historical Studies of Science

How far are we from an all-electronic library? This week I spent an hour in “Electronic Special Collections”—really just in my office on the web, accessing old texts on Google Books and at HathiTrust. I was seeking an answer to a bibliographical question about the first publication of the Method of Least Squares by the mathematician Legendre in 1805.

In a relatively short time I had viewed four copies of the work (and downloaded two entirely) and established that it was issued with three different title pages. One of the copies was from the New York Public Library, one was from the University of Michigan, the rest lacked such identification. Twenty years ago this would have required weeks of travel, a lot of luck, and even then it might not have been successful.

That may explain why no one seems to have noticed this multiplicity before, and why citations to the work are confused as to publisher and date. True, the sources I used were annoyingly clunky, and reading such texts on a screen grows wearying very fast, but in some ways we are in an exciting new world.

Nonetheless our Special Collections Research Center is very far from being obsolete. A very large proportion of our holdings are nowhere digitally available, nowhere so readable, nowhere so well curated. Casanova’s manuscript memoirs are available digitally courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale, but are only marginally legible and most less-famous manuscripts will never be accorded even that courtesy.

When you visit our library, keep in mind that some of what you see will be “in the cloud” in a few years, much will not, and the most important core of the library—its staff, services, and role in scholarship, will remain indefinitely.

Treasure and Counterfeit

Continued from front

and chemical techniques that she and her collaborators used to definitely expose the “Archaic Mark” as a late 19th- or early 20th-century forgery.

On **February 27**, the Library Society will welcome **Hillary Chute**, the Neubauer Family Assistant Professor in the Department of English. For her talk, Professor Chute will make a brief return from the East Coast, where she is spending a year on research leave as a visiting scholar at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Finally, the Library Society will be pleased to hear from **Marianna Tax Choldin**, the Mortenson Distinguished Professor Emerita for International Library Programs

at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. On **May 8**, Professor Tax Choldin will speak on censorship in the Russian context, a topic connected to her deep-rooted commitment to the free and rigorous inquiry that she has long appreciated at the University and promoted around the globe. As an active Visiting Committee member, a long-time supporter of the Library, and an alumna of the University of Chicago’s Lab School, College, Slavic Department, and Graduate Library School, Professor Tax Choldin has a decades-long history of dedication to improving library services and promoting freedom of information internationally.

PHOTOS BY JASON SMITH