

FROM POETRY TO VERSE: THE MAKING OF MODERN POETRY
September 2005 - February 2006

CASE 1 FROM *POETRY TO VERSE: THE MAKING OF MODERN POETRY* / CITY LIGHTS
POCKET POETS SERIES

Romantic notions of poets as solitary creators suggest that poems come into the world uninfluenced by outside forces. Though it is true that a poem can be written at any time or place – jotted down on scraps of paper or carefully constructed on a computer – the literary genre of poetry cannot exist on its own. Poetry needs an audience of interested readers or listeners, publications that reach this audience and disseminate poetry to it, and above all people – publishers, editors, scouts, sponsors, critics, in addition to poets – to create, distribute, support, and promote poetry. This process brings together individuals with very different personalities and responsibilities, united in their devotion to an art form that is as enduring and essential as it is changing and challenging. “Little” magazines (so-called to distinguish them from mass-market, commercial ventures, rather than because of physical size) and small press publications are at the center of this network.

“From *Poetry to Verse: The Making of Modern Poetry*” focuses on the role of poetry magazines in shaping poetry over the 20th century and into the 21st. Drawing on records in the University of Chicago Library’s modern poetry collection of the journals *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, *Chicago Review*, *Big Table*, *Verse*, and *LVNG*; the papers of individual poets, editors, photographers, and organizations such as David Ray, Layle Silbert, and The Poetry Center of Chicago, the exhibition chronicles the joys and frustrations of this world and those who inhabit it. The desire to discover and nurture hitherto unknown poets, and develop an audience for them, drives poetry magazine editors to undertake a highly risky endeavor and persist in the face of daunting economic odds. Some, like *Poetry* magazine, survive to become near-legends, and even short-lived journals often exercise a lasting influence on the poetry of their time. As a result of editors’ courage and conviction, poets such as T.S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Gwendolyn Brooks, Louis Zukofsky, Allen Ginsberg, John Ashbery, and Seamus Heaney are well known and widely read today. The manuscripts and correspondence, journal issues, broadsides, books, photographs, and promotional materials on view illustrate the many steps and hands that contribute to the “making” of modern poetry.

Just as “From *Poetry to Verse: The Making of Modern Poetry*” celebrates poetry journals and the editors behind them, “City Lights Pocket Poets Series, 1955-2005” testifies to the importance of small presses and their publishers in securing a place for emerging, often unconventional writing. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who launched the Pocket Poets Series in 1955, shared the goals set by Harriet Monroe 40 years earlier when she founded *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*: “to find the new voices and give voice to them.” Donald A. Heneghan’s comprehensive collection of Pocket Poets publications illustrates the influence and impact of Ferlinghetti’s vision. We are very grateful to him for allowing us to show this 50th anniversary exhibition, originally produced for The Grolier Club, New York City, in conjunction with “From *Poetry to Verse*.”

A poetry exhibition, like poetry itself, is a highly collaborative activity. “From *Poetry to Verse: The Making of Modern Poetry*” highlights several recent University of Chicago poetry archival acquisitions that are part of a renewed collecting initiative. We thank Robert von Hallberg, Professor, Department of English Languages and Literatures; and Danielle Allen, Dean of the Humanities Division, for their encouragement and support. The exhibition was organized as a group effort. We functioned as an editorial team, making individual selections and coming together to shape a coherent whole. Kerri Sancomb served as our chief “production” editor. And, like the editors, publishers, and poets we honor, we will feel our work has been successful if it creates new audiences for poetry.

Sebastian Hierl
David Pavelich
Sandra Roscoe
Alice Schreyer

CASE 2 *POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE*

Harriet Monroe founded *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* in Chicago in 1912. A poet herself, Monroe felt an acute need to establish a journal to champion contemporary poetry. According to Monroe’s famous Open Door policy, *Poetry* eschews “entangling alliances” with any single cause or movement and publishes the best work being produced, “regardless of where, by whom, or under what theory of art it is written.”

Monroe secured funds from Chicago businessmen and civic leaders, and solicited poems from well-known, and unknown, writers. Foremost among responsive poets was the young, brash Ezra Pound, whose work she admired and who became her first “foreign correspondent.” Among the many distinguished poets whose early works were first published in *Poetry* are Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, and Elizabeth Bishop.

Joseph Parisi, editor of *Poetry* from 1983-2003, noted that instead of failing after Monroe’s death in 1936, *Poetry* has become one of the most successful journals in literary history. Poets continue to look to *Poetry* as a genre-defining publication. After a 25-year absence from writing poetry, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet George Oppen wrote to editor Henry Rago, “I appeared in *Poetry* in 1930 – during the editorship of Harriet Monroe.... I have printed nothing since that time. This is a sort of exhumation, if it should turn out so.” *Poetry*’s offices now receive over 90,000 submissions every month.

Since 1936, *Poetry* has been shepherded by a succession of influential editors, including George Dillon (1937-1942), Karl Shapiro (1950-1955), and Henry Rago (1955-1969). Each brought a different personality to the journal, but each retained Monroe’s ecumenical spirit.

Poetry is currently enjoying one of its most active moments in the journal’s long history. With poet Christian Wiman as the current editor, and with a generous financial gift from Ruth Lilly in 2002, *Poetry* is still fulfilling Monroe’s aspiration of creating an “entrenched place, a voice of power,” for poetry.

CASE 3 *CHICAGO REVIEW*

Chicago Review was launched in 1946 as a quarterly published by students at the University of Chicago. Its mission, stated in the foreword of the first issue, was to “present a *contemporary standard of good writing*,” to publish new and innovative writing of all genres, including fiction and criticism. In particular, *Chicago Review* was founded to provide “young writers of promise,” as well as established writers, an outlet to correct the “exaggerated utilitarianism” reigning at universities in post-World War II America.

Chicago Review contributes to the University’s mission: to create new knowledge by advancing research and educating students. Throughout its rich history, *Chicago Review* has provided many would-be editors with the experience of publishing a significant literary review and helped many fledgling writers to find their wings.

Starting with contributions by students and faculty at the University of Chicago, the *Review* achieved national reputation in the early 1950s with F. N. “Chip” Karmatz at its helm. In a show of excited optimism, Karmatz had his final issue, “Changing American Culture,” printed in a run of 22,500 copies. The extravagant printing costs endangered the *Review*’s very existence. Without the financial support of the University at moments like these, the promising enterprise would have sunk.

Chicago Review returned to national prominence in the late 1950s, when Irving Rosenthal and Paul Carroll published excerpts from *Naked Lunch* by rebel novelist William Burroughs, as well as works by Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and others. Newspaper columnists and University officials began a heated debate about *Chicago Review*’s editorial direction. The ensuing controversy led to upheaval at the University and to the creation of *Big Table*, an independent magazine, by the editors of the *Review*.

Since those turbulent years, the *Chicago Review* has established itself as one of the most respected literary reviews in the country. *Chicago Review* has discovered and published the works of some of the most influential writers of our time (Philip Roth, Susan Sontag, and Philip Levine all made early appearances), and special issues like the recent one devoted to Christopher Middleton set high standards for the critical reappraisal of crucial authors.

CASE 4 Big Table

The early history of *Big Table* is inseparable from that of *Chicago Review*. The first issue of *Big Table*, published in March 1959, was originally assembled as the Winter 1959 issue of *Chicago Review*. The explicit language and subject matter of William Burroughs’ *Naked Lunch*, however, led to schism. Editors Irving Rosenthal and Paul Carroll ultimately resigned and launched an independent journal. An excited telegram arrived from Kerouac: “Call it BIG TABLE.”

Though free of trustees and faculty advisors, Rosenthal and Carroll were not free of controversy. Following the mailing of the debut issue of *Big Table* in March of 1959, Chicago postmaster Carl Schroeder banned the magazine on charges of obscenity.

The ensuing trial, taken on by the Illinois chapter of the ACLU, led to a landmark ruling in favor of the magazine. In September 1960, Judge Julius Hoffman declared that *Big Table* was not obscene and ordered all issues to be released. The ruling was a milestone in the battle against obscenity and government-sponsored censorship of the press.

Big Table was also plagued with factional squabbles and editorial mishaps. Denise Levertov wrote to Carroll, "I am more & more reluctant to be associated with the 'beat' poets.... I admired the *force* of *Howl*.... Later... I saw what a deliberate and synthetic piece of 'spontaneity' it was." For his part, Robert Duncan was "outraged" and withdrew his work from *Big Table* when Carroll decided to publish work that Duncan did not submit for publication. Duncan's written complaint was co-signed by poet Robin Blaser, publisher Donald Allen, and artist Jess Collins.

Big Table's success in court was followed by its final issue. Published from his home on nights and weekends and lacking financial support, Paul Carroll lost the energy to publish the journal beyond the fifth issue. "I live like monk," wrote Carroll to Robert Creeley, "9-5 hack editorial job, then home to edit *BT* at nite."

Despite its short life, *Big Table* was instrumental in printing landmark postmodernist poems such as Allen Ginsberg's "Kaddish" and John Ashbery's "Europe," and by doing so established itself as an innovative and influential literary magazine.

CASE 5 *VERSE*

"I think it is time we had a journal which will try to bridge the strange gap between English and American poetry," wrote poet Richard Wilbur to Henry Hart in 1984. From its conception, *Verse* was founded as an international magazine. *Verse*'s editors – reflecting Harriet Monroe's "Open Door" policy – strive to present a "non-partisan" selection of the world's innovative lyric poetry.

Two Scots, Robert Crawford and David Kinloch, and one American, Henry Hart, founded *Verse* in 1984. First published in Oxford, England, the magazine's finances were cobbled together from American and British sources. Unlike *Poetry* or *Big Table*, *Verse*'s funds have been predominantly institutional and its editors have had academic careers. Because of this, *Verse* has had a curiously nomadic existence, migrating from university to university as its editors assumed new positions at institutions on both sides of the Atlantic.

In 1995, editorship of the increasingly dormant *Verse* was transferred to Brian Henry and Nancy Schoenberger at the College of William and Mary, with Andrew Zawacki serving as U.K. Editor. Schoenberger left the journal after only three years, but Henry and Zawacki oversaw a revival and remain coeditors today. Among the distinctive and

aesthetically disparate poets published in *Verse* since 1995 are Charles Bernstein, Louise Glück, Charles Simic, and Robert Pinsky, among many others.

In its time, *Verse* has participated in a number of watershed moments in literary history and technology. Its editors have assembled special issues on such varying groups as the experimental Language poets, the New Formalists (who write in traditional poetic forms), and prose poets, to name just a few. E-mail has been the primary mode of communication between editors and poets who are often living on different continents. In this sense, *Verse* is a testament to the potential of communication technology to facilitate an international approach to the making of contemporary poetry.

Anchored by the passion of its current editors Brian Henry and Andrew Zawacki, *Verse* is firmly established in the ranks of the most respected and resilient literary magazines in history. Henry explained the journal's prime motivation in a candid e-mail to poet Jennifer Moxley in 1998. "Why do I edit *Verse*? Why do I write poetry? These are things I do because I love doing them."

CASE 6 *LVNG*

LVNG is a free journal of poetry, prose, and visual art. Michael O'Leary and Jay Sullivan published the premiere issue of *LVNG* in the fall of 1990 while students at Kenyon College. The journal's unusual name is a combination of classical typography and college rock. It derives from a song by the rock band Dinosaur Jr. entitled "The Lung": "No way to collapse the lung/ breathes the doubt in everyone."

Joel Felix, a poet from Detroit, and Peter O'Leary joined Peter's brother in editing *LVNG* in 1991, and the journal relocated to Chicago where Peter pursued graduate studies at the University of Chicago's Divinity School. The combination of these editors' distinct sensibilities created a publication of stylistic juxtapositions ranging from experimental poetry to Biblical translations.

Perceived by the editors as participating in a gift economy, *LVNG* exists to encourage a free exchange of publications and poetry in order to diversify its community of readers and writers. It is not uncommon to find issues of *LVNG* in coffee shops, book stores, even the occasional doctor's waiting room. *LVNG* strives to surprise people with poetry.

Initially conceived as a vehicle for the writing and artwork of friends, the magazine developed in the 1990s into a publication of national reputation. Today, *LVNG* seamlessly interweaves the work of young writers with contributions from influential poets of previous generations. At the same time, the journal actively promotes the work of Midwestern writers to dispel the widespread notion voiced by *Sulfur* editor Clayton Eshleman in a 1998 letter to *LVNG* that "very little of substance" has come out of the region.

Editors Michael O'Leary, Peter O'Leary, and Joel Felix continue to publish *LVNG* in Chicago. Among the many important contributors are Leslie Scalapino, Ronald Johnson, and Devin Johnston.

CASE 7 DISCOVERING NEW VOICES

The successful literary editor, like a successful antenna, is receptive to new and ambient communications from the field. By the same token, the editor must be skilled enough to discern the best writing from the hundreds, sometimes thousands, of submissions received every month.

The ritual is often the same: young poets seal their poems in envelopes and apprehensively drop them into the mailbox. “Dear *LVNG*,” wrote poet Peter Valente in 1998, “I’ve enclosed the following poems for your consideration.”

The nature of submission letters is as various as the poets themselves. Some, like Wallace Stevens, are self-deprecating. “My autobiography is, necessarily, very brief,” wrote Stevens to *Poetry* in 1914, “for I have published nothing.” In contrast, Marianne Moore’s first letter to Harriet Monroe was arresting for both its assertiveness and its brevity: “Gentlemen: I enclose verses.”

Many poetry submissions include biographical information, statements of aesthetics, or chatty gossip. Christian Bök’s submission to *LVNG* acted as both personal introduction and a defense of his art.

Those few poets selected by editors as the best of the crowd may, like poet James Dickey, find themselves suddenly successful. Appearances in literary magazines can lead to book publications – Dickey’s first collection *Into the Stone and Other Poems* was published in 1960, months after his letter to Paul Carroll. As Dickey made clear, it is often the simple encouragement of seeing one’s poems in print that leads to more and better writing.

Magazine editors discover and foster the new voices of each historical moment. By selecting and assembling these works, editors put forward their unique vision of what poetry can and should be for their generation.

CASE 8 LITERARY SCOUTS

For poets and editors, the life of letters is also their social life. Editors of poetry journals constantly benefit from the advice of poets, who have the privilege of casual reconnaissance. “[Robert] Duncan took me to meet H.D. for lunch today,” wrote Denise Levertov to Henry Rago at *Poetry*. “She seemed a wonderful old lady.” Over drinks or at poetry readings, poets can easily survey the best work of their peers and send word back to the editor.

As “foreign correspondent,” Ezra Pound was formally responsible for introducing European poets to *Poetry*. To give stature to Monroe’s new project, Pound secured poems by Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, winner of the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature, for the December 1912 issue of *Poetry*. He also discovered and fostered writers as diverse as Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, and Robert Frost.

However, tensions often develop between literary scouts and editors. Pound could be scathingly critical of Monroe's choices. In November, 1912, he wrote to object to one traditional, lyric poem: "MY GORD! but this stuff of Mrs Van Rensselaer's is twaddle." Always bombastic, Pound chided Monroe for being too cautious and overly conservative. Ultimately, Pound proved too volatile a person for Monroe, and his correspondent position was given to another poet, Richard Aldington.

Allen Ginsberg provided similar advice to Irving Rosenthal, editor of the *Chicago Review*, and to Paul Carroll, editor of *Big Table*. Although his name was not added to the masthead as a "correspondent," Ginsberg's communiqués from the front included reviews of other journals, commentary on young writers, and postal addresses where poets could be reached.

Any writer, not just the iconoclasts, can perform the role of "literary scout." The one-time suggestion, the off-hand remark, and the referral of friends are all functions of the scout that are assumed daily in routine correspondence. In that way, literary journals often map constellations of actual literary communities as well as new "movements" or aesthetic theories.

CASE 9 EDITORIAL SELECTION

"Perhaps it is inevitable that the Editorial mind should grow stilted," mused Harriet Monroe to William Carlos Williams in 1913, "if you see evidence of it in *Poetry*, 'please punch my face in order to save my soul,' as Ezra says."

Year by year, poets follow different routes, affected by greater societal and cultural changes. Editors assume the daunting task of steering their journals along this constantly swerving road. They select, by policy or simple taste, whose work gets published within the pages of their magazine. A magazine's continued relevance depends on the editor's refusal to "grow stilted."

For some magazines, the editor's discernment and personality determine the texture of the publication. At *Poetry* and *Verse*, one or two editors (and the occasional guest editor) make all decisions according to their specific interests and preferences. The decision to accept or reject a submitted manuscript rests solely on them. They may reject it on grounds of poor quality; they may embrace what George Dillon called the "really interesting new upstart," or dismiss her for her audacity.

At journals such as the *Chicago Review*, the selection process follows cooperative rules of decision-making. This could potentially lead to drawn-out discussion and less editorial risk-taking. In a rejection letter from 1961, staff member Jonathan Aaron wrote one poet, "The *Review* is looking for what some would call more 'conventional' poetry, but which I would call more 'disciplined.'" Unlike use of the singular "editor," the collective use of the word *Review* suggested a unified, programmatic decision.

Yet group editorships also have the potential to create exciting diversity between the covers of a single issue. The editors of *LVNG*, for example, may have a "tendency to

argue over all things poetic,” as Joel Felix quipped to Peter O’Leary in 2001, but the differences in their selections contribute to the overall eclectic character of the journal.

CASE 10 EDITORIAL INTERVENTION

Because poetry critically depends on details like capitalization, punctuation, and line breaks, any editorial change to a poet’s text is a serious undertaking. While some poets express their gratitude for constructive suggestions or changes to their work, others perceive such actions as unforgivable violations.

Early in the 20th century, Harriet Monroe and her contemporaries commonly altered manuscripts to fit their standard or taste. Marianne Moore, when editing *The Dial*, famously made an enemy of Hart Crane by editing his poem, “The White Menagerie.” Moore was stubborn about her editorial prerogative. “Hart Crane complains of me? Well I complain of *him*,” she would later say.

In 1914, Wallace Stevens was an austere insurance executive who described himself to Monroe as an “overblown bloom” because of his large physical stature. Since he had published nearly nothing, he allowed Monroe to radically rework his poem “Sunday Morning.” As their relationship evolved, Stevens remained receptive to Monroe’s suggestions, though he didn’t always follow them.

Sometimes, poets who originally reject editorial changes eventually capitulate. James Merrill, who initially declined to have “Accumulations of the Sea” published in *Poetry* without the concluding section, later resubmitted it, acknowledging that he had come to agree with the suggested changes.

In more recent times, poets have become less willing to rewrite their work to please an editor, and editors are less inclined to intervene. Sometimes this is an editorial stance, and sometimes it is born of necessity. Unlike Harriet Monroe, most current editors need to have paying jobs and only labor over literature at night.

Many of today’s editors instead focus on selecting the most resonant and innovative work – already close to perfect – to assemble a publication that, in the words of the editors of *LVNG*, “consolidates the communal imagination necessary for poetry to thrive.”

CASE 11 NURTURING POETS

Harriet Monroe saw *Poetry* as a means to nurture poets by creating an audience for their work and paying for the poetry she published. Since very few magazines paid for poetry, Monroe’s position was unique and greatly appreciated. “Thank you very much for my check,” wrote Langston Hughes in 1926. “Such things come in very handy when winter time’s approaching and overcoats are to be purchased.”

Monroe also established a variety of competitive prizes for poetry. The prizes enhanced the poets’ reputations while providing them a brief financial windfall. In the 1930s, over one-third of *Poetry*’s operating expenses were used for these purposes. *Poetry* prizes

since Monroe's years have included the Young Poets Prize and the current Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, established in 1986, from the Poetry Foundation.

Perhaps more importantly, editors encourage poets with their appreciation and thoughtful critique of poets' work. Because of their unique position between the poet and the public, editors are frequently the first readers of a poet's new work. In 1925, H.D. wrote to Monroe, "I really do appreciate your interest and you have from the start, been a help to my sometimes weary Muse."

But constructive feedback is not always positive feedback. When confronted with rejection, poets may simply take their poems elsewhere. Some, however, revise, re-evaluate their practice, and return to the editor, as if returning to a teacher. This willingness can bring profound results. In 1954, Frank O'Hara wrote to Karl Shapiro at *Poetry*, "I wonder if these poems have that 'translation' quality you remarked to me about in the past? During the last year I've spent a lot of time translating in an attempt to clarify my idea...."

With a guarantee of publication, authors can experience a renewed sense of purpose. Paul Carroll's interest in the progress of William Burroughs's infamous *Naked Lunch* served as the carrot before Burroughs's proverbial mule. Allen Ginsberg wrote to Carroll at *Chicago Review* in 1958 that, "The long mss you're publishing is finished, in messy sections & fragments, and he's been ... assembling it for you." Nurturing writers necessarily involves this level of personal concern about the healthy gestation of literature.

CASE 12 THE FINANCIAL SIDE

"\$3000 for [*Big Table*]! Wow! You must be a millionaire. I could run 20 issues of *Origin* for that money! And will," Cid Corman, editor of *Origin*, boasted to Paul Carroll in 1960. "Ferlinghetti will foot a large part of the *Origin* bill.... [and] be sole distributor and seller of the mag."

It takes money to publish a poetry magazine, and it takes energy, inventiveness, and endurance for a magazine to survive the slings and arrows of a fickle marketplace. To some editors, the market for poetry seems rarefied indeed. Corman continued to Carroll, "You should know by now that there aren't more than a 1,000 people in the USA... that have any real concern for poetry, and 3/4s of them are poets." Some journals, like *LVNG*, recognize the difficulty of selling issues and ignore the market economy all together.

Historically, the most common source of income for poetry magazines was subscription sales. Editors built their subscription base and were inventive in identifying new pockets of potential readers. For the years 1931-1935, for example, subscription income accounted for nearly half of *Poetry*'s operating costs, an average of \$4,000 per year.

More recently, *Verse*, *Chicago Review*, and other publications have thrived with funding provided by academic institutions. University or college support varies from free office space to financial contributions and free distribution. The university benefits, too, from

the added publicity a popular literary journal can bring. As Andrew Zawacki of *Verse* wrote to Dean David Lutzer at the College of William and Mary, magazines extend the school's name, "well past educators and high school seniors and into the circle of contemporary critics, poets, and writers, where it gains for the College a further and higher recognition and respect."

Grants and donations from foundations or private individuals also make their way into magazine coffers. Small sums go a long way with small magazines: *LVNG* was granted \$2,000 from the Fund for Poetry, a substantial fraction of printing costs for an issue. But large sums go even further. The most monumental gift in the history of poetry publishing was the \$100 million donation to *Poetry* by pharmaceutical heiress Ruth Lilly in 2002, which ensures *Poetry*'s existence in "perpetuity."

CASE 13 POETS ON POETS

As the metaphor "Big Table" suggests, literary magazines serve as textual gathering places for writers to meet and exchange new experiments and new theories of writing. Strong opinions proliferate. Often this leads to poetic alliances; sometimes it leads to poetic warfare.

Through the medium of prose, vying schools of poetry do battle in the pages of "little" magazines. Book reviews and essays provide the chance to make attacks on other factions, but they also give poets a public opportunity to buttress and celebrate the efforts of their allies.

For instance, Robert Creeley's review, "Olson and others: some orts for the sports," argued that fellow Black Mountain poet Charles Olson was the "central" figure of poetry in the 1950s at a time when he was not universally acclaimed, or even widely known. Such bolstering resulted in greater attention to Olson's oeuvre by both poets and critics alike.

In private correspondence, poets and editors are more likely to express candid and uncensored opinions about the work of their peers. "[Frank] O'Hara I like here," Creeley wrote in a 1960 letter to Paul Carroll about *Big Table* 5, "flat and common yet delicate, a little sophisticated you dig but can afford it like they say."

Frequently, one editor will write to another to praise or criticize the latter's editorial choices. Robert Bly, poet and editor of *The Sixties*, wrote Paul Carroll to call Beat poems in *Big Table* 4 and 5, "some of the worst hogwash ever invented." Although Bly would later find common ground with the Beat writers in their protest of the Vietnam conflict, they would never meet on aesthetic grounds.

Judgments made by poets often carry greater weight among fellow writers and editors than those of professional critics. Because they affect who gets published and who drops away, the opinions of poets create a changed canon of contemporary poetry.

CASE 14 ACADEMIA: POETRY

The relationship between the University of Chicago and *Poetry* began with the magazine's founding and has flourished ever since. At times, intellectual and artistic energy flowed seamlessly between the two institutions.

The University is home to a perennial pool of poets, critics, and scholars, and University community members have frequently served as staff at *Poetry*. Professor of theology and literature Henry Rago was editor at *Poetry* from 1955-1969. In a radio program called *Conversations at Chicago*, history professor James Redfield said of Rago, "He thought of *Poetry* as a kind of clearing house for the modern poetic imagination." Morton Dauwen Zabel and Hayden Carruth, both poets and students at the University, also served as editors, while professors Elder Olson and Richard Stern were enlisted as staff members.

In similar fashion, students and faculty have frequently contributed their writing to *Poetry*. The University's Poetry Club, for example, was established by 1917 and included students who were published in early issues of the magazine. Among club members were Yvor Winters, Jessica Nelson North, and Pearl Andelson Sherry. The Poetry Club published its own periodical *The Forge*, edited by George Dillon, which announced that it "answered the call of that large scattered group of young poets." Dillon later served as editor of *Poetry*, 1937-1942.

The University Library is, of course, home to *Poetry*'s archive for the years 1912-1961 and to a considerable collection of books from the *Poetry* offices. Harold H. Swift, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University, first suggested to Monroe that she consider donating her papers and library to the University in 1931. Swift offered \$5,000 to create an endowment, the income from which would be paid to *Poetry* as long as Monroe remained editor. Afterwards, it would be used to support the growth of the Harriet Monroe Modern Poetry Library. Monroe replied that a bequest to the University would be "the most appropriate of any possibilities."

CASE 15 ACADEMIA: *CHICAGO REVIEW*

Artists have always balked at attempts to impose limits on their expression. Though universities and other institutions offer financial support, ranks of eager students, and resources such as libraries and university presses, these privileges do not always come without a price. At root, university administrations own – and can control – the products they finance, though they protect academic freedom and exercise this control very sparingly.

The 1950s were the years of the civil rights movement and artistic innovations such as abstract expressionism, and American poetry was experiencing a similar radical change in the "Beat generation." The reputation of Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac had grown so much that, in 1958, Irving Rosenthal and Paul Carroll dedicated two issues of *Chicago Review* to "San Francisco writers."

Kerouac characterized the new writing to Carroll as, "poetry returned to its origin, in the bardic child, truly *oral* as Ferling[hetti] said, instead of gray faced Academic quibbling."

Prominent among contributions in the Autumn 1958 issue were excerpts from William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* that featured graphic descriptions of heroin use.

In a scathing front-page column in the *Chicago Daily News* entitled "Filthy Writing on the Midway," syndicated journalist Jack Mabley attacked the University for publishing writers who were evidently, "young, intellectual, need baths, and have extreme contempt for the less fortunate...." "I abhor public circulation of vulgarity and coarseness," complained Mabley.

The mails brought a similar wave of complaints from concerned parents and the University's financial supporters. Businessman William Block related a story to University president Lawrence Kimpton that the young daughter of his colleague brought *Chicago Review* home one night. "They apparently without knowing its contents decided to do some reading at the table, that is the dinner table. They were rather completely shocked."

Mabley's column and general public scrutiny led to administrative action. Fearing for the future of the University's finances and reputation, the administration demanded that the next issue be "of a non-controversial nature." In addition, it required that *Chicago Review* be subject to annual faculty appraisal and increased faculty oversight. If these conditions were not met, the *Review* would be discontinued.

Rosenthal wrote to Robert Maynard Hutchins, former president of the University. "I am willing to suppress it...if it means the magazine will not be killed.... Or should I fight?" Rosenthal and Carroll, along with several members of the editorial team, ultimately resigned in protest and went on to launch *Big Table* as an independent literary magazine. Kimpton was able to write back to Block, "we got rid of the whole Board of Editors and have re-established the magazine under firm faculty direction."

CASE 16 ACADEMIA: *CHICAGO REVIEW*, & *VERSE*

Universities can be fertile literary environments, providing access to established poets, critics, and mentors, and contributing important financial backing. But more importantly, universities provide the opportunity for young writers to meet their peers, fellow students whose interest in writing develops in parallel – or sometimes in utter disagreement – with their own.

Students and their writing respond and grow when a campus buzzes with literary activity. In his memoir "Real America," poet Charles Simic wrote fondly of his time as a student at the University of Chicago, "I had all these great friends: poets, would-be writers, painters. And I would see the guys and... go out afterwards, stay up late, and talk about poetry."

The presence of a literary journal on campus energizes student writers, who are stimulated and encouraged when their first pieces are accepted for publication. Philip Roth, for instance, published one of his earliest stories, "The Day It Snowed," in *Chicago Review* in 1954. Some journals, like the University of Chicago's *Aubade*, publishes work

exclusively from “students and other community members.” In contrast, *Chicago Review* and *Euphony* (founded in 2000) attempt a blend of local and national efforts.

Students also develop their critical faculties when they act as staff and editors for university journals. *Chicago Review*, entirely brought into being by student staff, includes more than ten editors and associate editors for poetry and fiction. Similarly, although faculty members now edit *Verse*, it offers assistantships and internships where students can learn publishing and editorial skills. Both Brian Henry and Andrew Zawacki began as students at the College of William and Mary before becoming editors of the magazine.

When professors and other campus community members get involved with a university publication, whether as contributors or as advisors, a fuller and richer literary scene is realized. University of Chicago professors Robert von Hallberg, Richard Stern, and Mark Strand are certainly animators in this sense, and will always be associated with the literature at the University.

CASE 17 CREATING AN AUDIENCE: *POETRY*

In taking as the motto for her magazine Walt Whitman’s “To have great poets there must be great audiences,” Harriet Monroe set out to make *Poetry* a space in which she could give poets the same recognition that museums, concert halls, and theaters had given to artists, musicians, and dramatists.

Early efforts at outreach were motivated by both the desire to create a broad audience for modern poetry as well as the practical need for subscriptions to ensure the continued existence of the magazine. When Yeats toured the United States in 1914, he agreed to be the guest of honor at a fundraising dinner sponsored by *Poetry*.

The dinner garnered much attention from the press, not all of it pleasant. A *Chicago Tribune* article called the event the “first great spring roundup of the corn fed poets of the middle west.” Vachel Lindsey, Carl Sandburg, and Arthur Davidson Ficke were doubly slammed by a second headline, which read, “Noted Irish Verse Maker to Mingle with American Contemporaries of Lesser Fame.”

In 1955, *Poetry* established its first Poetry Day. The occasion, in honor of Robert Frost, provided both an opportunity to introduce the public to Frost’s poetry at a modestly priced reading, and to raise money for the magazine at a dinner and auction. More recently, Poet Laureate Ted Kooser was selected to mark the 50th anniversary of Poetry Day in 2004. Fanny Butcher, in a 1961 column in the *Chicago Tribune*, called Poetry Day “one of the most exciting literary events in the country.”

Setting priorities following the 2002 financial gift from Ruth Lilly, the Poetry Foundation decided to focus on expanding the audience for poetry, remaining faithful to founding editor Harriet Monroe’s goal. Initiatives include *American Life in Poetry*, a free, syndicated column about contemporary poetry for newspapers and online publications, and *Poetry & Children*, which creates resources to expand the teaching of poetry in schools.

CASE 18 CREATING AN AUDIENCE: POETRY READINGS

“Poetry readings are part of the long biography of poems, part of the distribution from poet to readers, and readers to readers.” Critic Peter Middleton’s description of contemporary poetry readings emphasizes the importance of such events to the history of poetry as well as of individual poems. Literary magazines are the published products of poetry’s living culture, but readings are its heartbeat.

Poetry readings range in character from the lavish to the low, low budget. When he visited the University of Chicago in 1955, a seated William Carlos Williams read his poems in the imposing setting of Rockefeller Chapel to a crowd of 700. Most readings, however, take place in bookstores, coffee shops, and cramped apartments. “The big fancy ball reading interests me not at all,” wrote Cid Corman to Paul Carroll, “I’d be quite content with 25, let alone 75, listeners. And I prefer it informal.”

Similarly, established poets may earn much of their income from readings and lectures, while others won’t get paid at all. In 1954, Edith Sitwell asked for “\$500 and expenses” for a reading sponsored by *Poetry*. Six years later, Robert Creeley (then living in Guatemala) had to cancel his *Big Table* reading because Carroll couldn’t guarantee payment. “God knows I would come if it were possible... but we have 4 kids as you know....”

Readings are a method of reaching new audiences and exposing the public to contemporary poetry, yet readings also allow poets to test works in progress, to put them on the runway and see if they fly or fall. “The long biography” of any poem will likely include revisions made after a dismal or ineffective performance. Thus, recordings of readings frequently show stumbles and mistakes, rough “drafts,” and poets prefacing a piece with a preemptive, “This is a new poem.”

CASE 19 CREATING AN AUDIENCE: POETRY READINGS

The Poetry Center of Chicago was established in 1974 by Paul Carroll, former editor of *Chicago Review* and *Big Table*. It has three guiding principles: “to promote and develop the public’s interest in poetry; to stimulate and encourage young poets; and, to advance the careers of poets by offering them professional opportunities.” Following these principles, the Poetry Center of Chicago brings emerging and local poets, as well as nationally and internationally renowned poets, to Chicago audiences.

Fulfilling its mission to stimulate and encourage young poets, the Poetry Center is working with the Chicago Public School District to open the world of poetry up to students. Since 2001, thousands of students have participated in the Hands on Stanzas program, in which Chicago poets are hired to be in residence at public schools. The poets lead the reading and discussion of published poems and coach students in the writing and presenting of their own work. At the end of the year, the Poetry Center publishes an anthology; nearly 7,000 students have been published. In addition to introducing students to poetry, the program aims at improving the confidence, motivation, and vocabulary of participating students.

CASE 20 VOL. I, NO. 1

“One of the distinguishing marks of the ‘little magazine’ is that it should be not only little, but short-lived.”

T.S. Eliot to Karl Shapiro, 19--?

Literary magazines – or “little” magazines, as Eliot called them – are often identified with innovation and contention. It is within the pages of these magazines that literary history is written. New poets are presented to a small, critical audience. New movements are championed, and old movements are challenged. By publishing the works of unknown, sometimes radical authors, these magazines risk failure and often happily accept it.

The ephemeral nature of literary magazines has long been another of their defining characteristics. It is not unusual for a literary magazine to publish only one or two issues before collapsing under financial strain, lack of distribution, or the editor’s exhaustion. No matter how many issues are eventually published, however, every new title has a first issue, a “Volume 1, Number 1.” It is perhaps the only common denominator among them.

The means of production for literary magazines are as diverse as the editors, poets, and publishers who produce them. Some publishers feel poetry should be presented in the elegant garb of fine printing; others seize innovations in office technology to produce their magazines: hand press, offset, mimeograph, photocopy, and laser printing have all been used. Some journals – like the early issues of *Verse* and *LVNG* – are simply stapled together.

Literary magazines provide a snapshot of the literary landscape for specific times and places. The Council of Literary Magazines and Presses estimates that currently there are approximately 600 active literary magazines in the United States. This estimate does not account for hundreds of local magazines and online journals. The great spectrum of literary magazines includes those that enjoy university funding and those that are fiercely independent. By exploring them, a reader can gain insight into the poetics and politics of a historical moment.

CASE 21 SPECIAL ISSUES & ANTHOLOGIES: *POETRY*

Harriet Monroe stated explicitly that *Poetry* would “keep free of entangling alliances with any single class or school.” Instead, *Poetry* has promoted *all* significant movements, from Vorticism to New Formalism.

Imagism was one of the first modernist movements associated with *Poetry*. Imagist poets endeavored to present clear, concise images in spare language, emphasizing the “sequence of the musical phrase” over traditional meter. Ezra Pound defined an image as “an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.” He was largely responsible for promoting imagist publications in *Poetry* and edited the 1914 anthology *Des Imagistes*. At one time or another, poets as divergent as William Carlos Williams, D.H. Lawrence, and H.D. were collected under the umbrella term “imagist.”

On Pound's recommendation, poet Louis Zukofsky guest-edited an issue of *Poetry* for February 1931. Subtitled the "*Objectivists*" 1931, Zukofsky gathered work from as far afield as England and hesitantly gave the grouping a name: "objectivists." To define his poetics, Zukofsky included two essays, "Program: 'Objectivists' 1931" and "Sincerity and Objectification," in which he echoed tenets of imagism. "Writing occurs which is the detail, not mirage, of seeing, of thinking with the things as they exist, and of directing them along a line of melody."

Over the past nine decades, *Poetry* has published a number of anthologies and special issues. Monroe edited the first anthology, *The New Poetry*, in 1917. Her purpose was to bring modern poetry to a wider audience, and nothing published before 1900 was printed. Monroe included Midwestern poets like Edgar Lee Masters and Vachel Lindsay, but she was also "hospitable to the adventurous," formally radical poets like T.S. Eliot and H.D.

The most recent *Poetry* anthology, edited by Joseph Parisi and Stephen Young, was published in 2002. Covering poems published between 1912-2002, Parisi and Young credit *Poetry's* success to the diversity of its contributors and the "first principles" of its founder. Yet they direct equal attention to editors such as Karl Shapiro and Daryl Hine, whose personality quirks and differences in editorial approach drew the borders and legends on the map of modern poetry.

CASE 22 SPECIAL ISSUES & ANTHOLOGIES

Special issues and anthologies have a particular power to direct the attentions of readers, poets, and critics, whose binoculars are constantly scanning the literary landscape for the next crucial movement. For a field where it is often difficult to see the forest for the trees, anthologies act as promotional tools for all poetic agendas, from the traditional to the avant-garde.

Anthologies and special issues, which perform similar functions, preserve and sometimes enhance the reputations of individual poets. However, special issues typically feature new work, attempting to create a coherent whole out of disparate elements. Anthologies most often collect previously published works and thus play a deeper role in canon formation.

The majority of poets who are included in special issues may never achieve lasting renown, but their work is forever captured as contributing to a significant historical moment. In contrast, some poets experience a surge in popularity and critical acclaim that proves their work, in Brian Henry's words, "will shape the future of American poetry."

A theme-based issue may read as a catalogue raisonné of the achievements of a particular school – for instance, the Black Mountain poets, investigated by *Chicago Review*. Or, editors may wish to draw readers' attention to a particular poetic form; *Verse's* prose poetry issues highlight works in prose by poets such as Maxine Chernoff and Gustaf Sobin while reinforcing the magazine's emphasis on poetic experimentation.

Special issues may also be assembled on the basis of nationality. These collections must be made with an editorial eye that is open to all schools, all practices, because they imply that the selected poets are a panoramic representation of a country's national literature. *Verse*, for example, has successfully represented the global poetry community by producing special issues of Scottish, Latino, Australian, Canadian, Slovenian, French, and Chinese poetry.

In the end, not all poets approve of the effect of anthologies on poetry. In his refusal to be featured in Harriet Monroe's anthology *The New Poetry*, William Butler Yeats was emphatic, and a touch misanthropic. "I detest anthologies," he wrote. "Your anthology will simply be an excuse for a lot of people not to buy the American editions of some of contributors, they will get enough to talk about at dinner parties from your anthologies."

CASE 23 SPECIAL ISSUES & ANTHOLOGIES
[No Text]

CASE 24 THE ARCHIVE

Poetry journal editors and curators perform strikingly similar roles. Each identifies new and emerging talent worthy of "collecting" – for curators, within an institutional setting; for editors, in a publication. Curators develop collections that preserve a significant documentary record and make it accessible; editors produce journals to disseminate works they believe to be of value and interest. Both must decide what is appropriate for their collection or publication, make selections according to the program they have established, and promote the results. Private collectors, too, play an essential role in assuring the survival of often-fugitive publications. The work of collectors, curators and editors participates in the creation of culture and history by determining what will be available to current and future audiences.

These activities come together in the archives of poetry journals. For poets and poetry journal editors, an archive assures permanence far beyond the lifetime of the publication. Even if the magazine "dies," an archive will keep its vision alive and allow it to be studied by future generations. Curators select and develop archives because of their potential to support teaching, learning, and scholarship. When the archives of a number of journals exist in one place, interrelationships and influences are revealed that further enrich understanding.

Over the years since it arrived in 1936, the *Poetry* magazine archive has supported the work of countless biographers, editors, literary critics, and historians. It has also inspired generations of students who learned to appreciate the process of creating and producing literary works, and who came to love poetry through their encounters in the Library's vast modern poetry collection. Many of the materials on view in this exhibition have been "archived" quite recently; in fact, a major purpose of "From *Poetry* to *Verse*" is to introduce the archives to researchers and suggest the many ways they can be mined. Exhibitions, and the publications produced to accompany them, thus contribute to the understanding of "the making of modern poetry."

Poetry archives foster the goals shared by Harriet Monroe and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Future researchers will find “new voices” in the archives of poetry journals, and, by collecting and preserving them, curators and academic institutions “give voice to them.”