

CHECK IT OUT

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

May 2007

NEWLY CATALOGED: GIFTS FROM JEAN AND BIFF SHAW

In Special Collections and Archives, Shari Swanson recently finished cataloging more than 80 books that are the gift of Jean and Biff ('51) Shaw. These books are a wonderful enhancement to our already strong collection of 19th- and early 20th-century American publications. The Shaw gift offers a fascinating look at the popular reading of an earlier generation of a local family. Included in the gift are biographies and memoirs, household manuals, religious titles, school books, and works on United States history, most for a popular audience.

A particular strength of the Shaw gift is its emphasis on books for young people. Kids are notoriously hard on their books, and it's uncommon to find children's books—at least those that have actually been read and played with by children—that are in excellent condition. Most of the Shaw books are exceptions to this rule. Their illustrations are clean and bright, often with bold graphics.

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WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY

FROM THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

“SIFTING AND WINNOWING”: HOW ACADEMIC LIBRARIES PROMOTE INTELLECTUAL DISCOVERY

*We could not for a moment think of recommending the dismissal or even the criticism of a teacher even if some of his opinions should, in some quarters, be regarded as visionary . . . We cannot for a moment believe that knowledge has reached its final goal . . . In all lines of academic investigation it is of utmost importance that the investigator should be absolutely free to follow the indications of truth wherever they lead. Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere we believe that the great state university of Wisconsin **should ever encourage the continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found.** (University of Wisconsin Board of Trustees, 1894)*

I believe that this statement is an eloquent endorsement of academic freedom that occurred during a controversial tenure case. It also clearly defines the main purpose of a college or university library. The library supports and nourishes the “sifting and winnowing” that is at the core of the academic enterprise. First-rate research can be achieved only when libraries have collections, and access to broader collections, from a wide variety of perspectives, sources, and formats. Librarians also teach crucial information literacy skills that support students and faculty in the increasingly difficult task of “sifting and winnowing” and evaluating the immense volume of available information. Undergraduates should endeavor to discover new ideas and to reinterpret old ideas, and not adopt passing intellectual trends or clichés. The Wesleyan faculty challenges students to explore

new ideas and to question conventional wisdom. Wesleyan librarians provide collaboration and support to assist both faculty and students in interpreting the information needed in their complex process of discovery and learning.

In preparation of the manuscript for my forthcoming book, I was amazed at how much the research process has changed on the one hand, and how much it has remained the same on the other just within the last decade. The researcher still must build a web of information and that process is clearly an art. Scholars, as always, must still make use of printed books available in the library stacks, but the Internet is also crucial for thorough research of a topic. In any case, certain conditions must prevail in an academic library in order for its users to “sift and winnow” information:

- In order to provide organization to the vast quantities of available information, librarians have devised complex subject classification schemes, Web gateways, indexes, and other ways to assist users to locate and interpret information more easily. The library must offer wide and varied traditional collections on open shelves. The library should be able to provide users with more than enough information, from widely different viewpoints, to support a research project. Librarians must also be available to show students (if they don't already know) how to make use of electronic social information networks for interactive learning. Unfiltered access

to the Internet is also a vital service to researchers.

- While libraries obviously support the college or university curriculum, users should always be able to find information that tests the conventional wisdom of the age. The issue of global warming is an example of a subject which is part of Wesleyan's curriculum. Library users will find all sorts of perspectives on global warming—and some of these perspectives will challenge views that are either taught in class or advocated by a guest lecturer. At an institution like Wesleyan, students and faculty are offered the opportunity to confront or produce alternative opinions by being exposed to a wide variety of opinion. Students may actually become “visionary” in the sense expressed by the University of Wisconsin in 1894.
- Efficient interlibrary loan services are crucial to provide researchers with materials held by other libraries. A colleague recently tested Wesleyan's ILL system to confirm my contention that no library can or should even attempt to own everything that is needed for research. This colleague replied that he received his interlibrary loan request within two days. It was exactly what he wanted, and he agreed that it was not something that the library should have purchased considering the efficiency of the interlibrary loan process. When we were discussing library journal cuts, another faculty member commented that as long as we have interlibrary loan, her research needs could be easily satisfied.
- Collections of primary resources beg for the “sifting and winnowing” process. Many undergraduate libraries do not have the wealth of primary resources that are available at Wesleyan. Primary documents are, of course, the raw material of scholarship. Four researchers might consult the same collection of primary sources and they may write four very different books or articles based upon their in-

dividual interpretations of them. The nature of primary resources is that they are subject to the views, opinions or prejudices of the reader. It is, therefore, crucial that undergraduate students understand the importance of studying primary sources before they have been interpreted by someone else in a monograph or in an article.

- Effective information literacy courses help students to navigate the wealth of available information. A student only has only so much time to “sift and winnow” through masses of data and information to recognize what is appropriate for a scholarly paper and what is clearly not.
- Librarians who understand and do their own “sifting and winnowing” are essential for the academic enterprise to be successful. Recently Sally Grucan, head of cataloging, presented her vision of the “Catalog of the Future.” Her presentation makes it clear how researchers “sift and winnow” information, and how the Internet has radically changed research habits.

Wesleyan's librarians and our ITS colleagues spend considerable amounts of time on issues such as these. We conduct Academic Technical Roundtables to promote pedagogy and the importance of the research process. The roundtables are essential for faculty, librarians, and ITS staff to gain a deeper understanding of how to offer the very best information services at Wesleyan University.

— BARBARA JONES, UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN



NEW RSS BOOK FEED

The Wesleyan University Library has made a RSS (Real Simple Syndication) feed for new items purchased for the libraries collections that include materials acquired in all formats. This feed is updated daily, adding records for new items that the library has received, with a built-in time delay to give the library adequate time to process the material. The feed is available as link in the library catalog or just point your favorite RSS reader to <http://ctwwweb.wesleyan.edu:7003/rss/newbooks.xml>. A number of RSS readers are available with both Web-based and desktop options available. If you do not currently have a favorite RSS reader, visit <http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/rss/readers.html> for more information about them. This feed does include a breakdown by category for those readers that are RSS 2.0 compliant, which allows quick sorting of the list by subject. For more information on RSS, you can visit <http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/rss/> or the Technology of the Month page on RSS at <http://blogs.wesleyan.edu/tom/?p=6>.

— STEVE BISCHOF, SCIENCE LIBRARIAN



Some of the children's books, even though they were probably produced in large editions, are very scarce today. *Lazy Charlotte*, *Lazy Harry's Home*, and *Cross Child*, are all typical, moralistic tales for children, as their titles clearly suggest. All were published by the New York firm of McLoughlin Bros., one of the most prolific publishers of juvenile literature during the period from 1858 to 1920. McLoughlin was best known for its early, consistent use of then new color printing technologies in its books for children. All of these titles are recorded in WorldCat in very small numbers. The Shaw copy of *Princess Dirty Fingers*, undated like many children's books then and now, but likely from the 1890s or 1900s, is the only copy recorded in WorldCat. It's a didactic tale about a little girl who never washed her hands, even after gardening. The dirt under her fingernails sprouts weeds, and she becomes known by the book's eponymous title. Naturally, other children are supposed to learn from this and be sure to wash their hands. With this book, particularly given its lively and enticing pictures, it's easy to imagine that, with some children, the lesson must have backfired. The striking cover image of this book adorns one of the Friends of the Library note cards that are currently for sale in Special Collections and Archives and the Library Office.

Although the Shaw gift is not physically kept together in the closed stacks, it is easy to pull the collection together virtually. Begin your search by setting the location limit of "Special Collections and Archives." Then enter the phrase "Biff Shaw" in the keyword box. This search strategy will produce a list of all the titles in the Shaw gift, fully cataloged. These books may be studied—or read purely for enjoyment—in the Special Collections and Archives reading room, during our regular open hours of Monday through Friday, 1 to 5 p.m. or by appointment. (Summer hours are Monday through Thursday, 1 to 5 p.m.)

— SUZY TARABA, HEAD OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND UNIVERSITY ARCHIVIST

FRIENDS OF THE WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

On March 6, 2007, the Friends of the Wesleyan Library hosted the Connecticut premiere of *Indies Under Fire: The Battle for the American Bookstore*, an award-winning documentary by Jacob Bricca '93, adjunct assistant professor of film studies at Wesleyan University. An audience of about 150 persons braved the bitterly cold night to view the film in Wesleyan's Goldsmith Family Cinema, followed by a fascinating discussion of the issues by director Bricca, Thomas Talbot '91, manager of Crawford-Doyle Booksellers in New York City and Stu Hecht, owner of The Book Vault in Wallingford, Conn. These two representatives from independent bookstore owners shared their perspectives concerning the issue of large chain versus smaller bookstores.

Bricca grew up in Palo Alto, California, and spent much of his youth at Printers, Inc., the local bookstore. When the owners announced that it would close in late 1998, Bricca made a video to capture the store's spirited defenders, including one employee who mortgaged his house in an effort to save the store. *Indies Under Fire* is the result of six years of research and filming, and is the first documentary study about the growth of "super-chain" bookstores and their devastating effect on independent bookstores, more than half of which have vanished during the last ten years. While he is clearly an advocate of independent bookstores, Bricca also was careful to present the issue from the viewpoint of the large bookstore chains—that they provide customers with much wider choice and excellent service. The audience left the event deep in conversation about their own book buying habits and the effect of different kinds of stores within their local communities.

Friends' membership support makes possible such dynamic events in order to spark lively dialogue concerning important issues related to books and information. We will update you in our next newsletter on how the Friends plan to begin a funded project to catalog the Nathan Comfort Starr Collection of Arthuriana, an important collection of 700 books and manuscripts that was donated to Wesleyan in 1981.

If you would like to participate in the Friends or contribute to its events and projects in support of Wesleyan's library resources, please contact me at 860-685-3897 or jthom@wesleyan.edu, or visit the Friends' Web site at www.wesleyan.edu/libr/friends. We also invite you to visit our ongoing book sale, on the first floor of Olin Memorial Library, outside the Smith Reading Room.

— JENNIFER T. HADLEY, SCORES & RECORDINGS/WORLD MUSIC ARCHIVES



LIBRARY RETIREMENTS

Ed Allen, head of acquisitions and collection development librarian, will retire at the end of June after 41 years of outstanding service to the Wesleyan University Library. Ed came to Wesleyan as bibliographer for the humanities in 1966, a position that is responsible for book selection in the disciplines that comprise the Humanities. He took a leave of absence from 1967 to 1968 during which he received his graduate diploma in librarianship at the University of London. After receiving his professional library degree, Ed returned to Wesleyan and resumed his position as bibliographer for the humanities. In 1970 Ed was promoted to head of acquisitions and collection development. In his new capacity, Ed became responsible for the wide range of complex technical and financial aspects of library acquisitions. He also has retained his book selection activities for the library primarily in the fields of languages and literature. Ed has been a librarian who has been especially dedicated to the development of the Wesleyan University Library system for over four decades, and he will be greatly missed by all of his colleagues among both librarians and faculty for the depth and breadth of his scholarly and practical knowledge of librarianship and, of course, for his marvelous wit and trenchant humor.

Shari Swanson has worked in Olin Library since 1981 during which time she involved herself in numerous complex cataloging projects that required her to learn the art of transliteration of several non-Roman alphabets such as Chinese, Greek, Hebrew, Japanese, and Russian. She also has been responsible for the electronic cataloging of several previously "hidden" collections such as the Schomberg Collection of Negro Literature and History, a vast collection of primary sources including newspapers, monographs, sheet music, pamphlets, and other materials on African-American life and culture

from the 17th through the early 20th centuries. As a result of Shari's complex and meticulous work with this microfilm collection, each title may now be easily retrieved in Wesleyan's online catalog by author, title, or by subject headings. Electronic access to the Schomberg Collection has made research in African-American studies much easier for both Wesleyan faculty and students. Needless to say, Shari will also be sorely missed in the library by all of her colleagues who have had the pleasure and privilege of working with her over these many years. In honor of her outstanding contributions to the Wesleyan University Library, Shari has just received the 2007 Support Staff of the Year award from the Connecticut Library Association.

—ALAN J. NATHANSON, BIBLIOGRAPHER/REFERENCE LIBRARIAN



LIBRARY DEPARTMENTAL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

OLIN LIBRARY, FRONT DESK.....	685-2660
REFERENCE AND RESEARCH	685-3873
CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT	685-3877
RESERVE OFFICE.....	685-3852
INTERLIBRARY LOAN.....	685-3876
ACQUISITIONS DEPARTMENT	685-3834
CATALOGING DEPARTMENT	685-3845
SERIALS DEPARTMENT	685-3888
ART LIBRARY	685-3327
PSYCHOLOGY LIBRARY.....	685-2770
PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT	685-3875
SCIENCE LIBRARY	685-2860
SCORES AND RECORDINGS	685-3898
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS/ARCHIVES	685-3864
WORLD MUSIC ARCHIVES.....	685-3826



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Check It Out is a publication of the Wesleyan University Libraries that has been published three to four times annually since 1998. Its purpose is to offer timely information to students, faculty, and staff of recent developments in library technologies and resources available at Wesleyan that will assist them in using the libraries in the most effective ways possible.

Articles are contributed by library staff members, and the publication is edited by Alan J. Nathanson, bibliographer/reference librarian, anathanson@wesleyan.edu, (860) 685-3869.