

# CHECK IT OUT

SPRING/SUMMER  
2016

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES  
SINCE 1998

WESLEYAN  
UNIVERSITY

## NOTES FROM SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES



From *The Floral Magazine*  
(London: L. Reeve, 1864).

COURTESY OF  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES.

**O**n February 18, 33 people dropped in for “Passion and Power, Prints and Text: German Books in the Age of Dürer,” an open house in Special Collections & Archives held in conjunction with the “Passion and Power: German Prints in the Age of Dürer” exhibition at the Davison Art Center. More than 20 15th- and 16th-century illustrated German books were on display. Among the highlights were a leaf of the Gutenberg Bible (Mainz, ca. 1455), the Nuremberg Chronicle (Nuremberg, 1493), and a very scarce romance by Hermann von Sachsenheim, *Die Mörin* [“the Moorish woman”] (Strasburg, 1512). The complete list can be found here: [tinyurl.com/SC-A-PP-openhouse](http://tinyurl.com/SC-A-PP-openhouse).

The exhibition “Signs of Spring: A Garden of Books” in Special Collections & Archives opened to a March snowfall.

From the 1568 edition of Thomas Hill’s *The proffitable arte of gardening*, the earliest gardening book published in England, to Shawn Sheehy’s *A pop-up culinary herbal* (Paperboy Press, 2013), a great variety of gardening books bloomed in Olin Library. Many of the books in the exhibition were collected by Harriet Baldwin Davison, an avid gardener. The garden books were given to Wesleyan in 1930 by Mrs. Davison and her husband, George Willets Davison (Class of 1892).

In commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, Special Collections & Archives hosted an open house showcasing rare, illustrated, and unusual editions of the Bard on April 21. Among the delights on view were all four folios (1623–1685, the earliest collected editions of the plays), Ireland’s 18th century forgeries, splendidly designed fine press editions, and irreverent artists’ books. (Full list at [tinyurl.com/SCA-SH400](http://tinyurl.com/SCA-SH400).) The event was part of ArtFarm’s Shakespeare400 events.

— SUZY TARABA, DIRECTOR, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES —

## WESLEYAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT AVAILABLE ON WESSCHOLAR

**T**welve oral history interviews of Wesleyan community members, including faculty emeriti and administrators, have now been completed. Transcripts and recordings have been deposited in Special Collections & Archives, and Leith Johnson, university archivist, has worked to make the transcripts available on WesScholar at [wescholar.wesleyan.edu/oralhistory/](http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/oralhistory/). A link to the collection of memoirs will also be available from the Wasch Center website.

The set includes an extensive interview with Bill Firshein, Daniel Ayres Professor of Biology, Emeritus, who passed away in December. In this interview, Firshein related a whole complex of matters having to do with his Wesleyan career—his work as a scientist, his Jewish identity, his relationship with the administration, his colleagues, his hobbies and avocations—a rich and irreplaceable personal account. Another treasure in our collection is an interview with Bob Rosenbaum, who just completed his 100th birthday celebration in November. Should anyone undertake a history of the last 50 years of Wesleyan, and going forward, these oral histories will be invaluable resources. And if no such history emerges, the oral histories will be even more important for the detail they contain and the perspectives they represent.

Heather Zavod and Christine Foster, freelance writers who have contributed to *Wesleyan* magazine, are working on a new set of interviews this year, thanks in part to funding from the Friends of the Wesleyan Library and the library. The new participants are Jelle DeBoer, John Driscoll, Rick Elphick, Dick Buel, Duffy White, and Allan Berlind.

— KARL SCHEIBE, DIRECTOR, WASCH CENTER FOR RETIRED FACULTY —

## HUMANITIES OPEN BOOK

— Grant Recipient —



## WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY RECEIVES GRANT TO DIGITIZE WESLEYAN PRESS MATERIALS

**I**n mid-December, Wesleyan University received word that it had been awarded a grant under a joint project sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation called the Humanities Open Book Program. This Open Book program is part of the NEH agency-wide initiative called The Common Good: The Humanities in the Public Square. The purpose of the Open Book grant is to make out-of-print titles previously published by academic presses widely available in an open access (free) e-book format. The \$100,000 grant that Wesleyan received will be used to digitize select titles in the areas of dance and theater that were previously published by Wesleyan University Press but are no longer in print.

The NEH grant proposal, coordinated by Betsy McCormick, associate director of corporate, foundation and government grants, was a collaborative effort with Suzanna Tamminen, director of Wesleyan University Press; Diane Klare, interim university librarian; Susanne Javorski, art librarian; Alec McLane, music librarian; and Francesca Livermore, digital projects librarian, that began in late April 2015. At that time, based on the scope of the grant, the team met to determine how to best gather titles for consideration. With Tamminen’s assistance, Javorski and McLane then contacted the faculty chairs in the theater and dance departments respectively to determine which out-of-print Wesleyan University titles published by Wesleyan University Press the faculty would consider to be core, foundational titles in those two areas of scholarship. Wesleyan is well-known for its arts programs in theater and dance, so the decision to focus on those areas within the wide range of Wesleyan University Press titles that were possible choices enabled the committee to select titles still in continued demand in those two disciplines, even though they are no longer available for purchase. Ultimately, 18 titles were selected to submit with the application, which was due June 30, 2015.

The grant funds will be used to digitize these books and make them available via a Creative Commons License with the purpose of enhancing the role and demonstrating the significance of the arts and humanities in public life as well as in scholarship. With increasing focus on digital humanities in the arts, the ability to offer these Wesleyan University Press books openly will increase their reach to new readers, teachers, and students, allowing for new intellectual pursuits as well as provide additional insight into the role these works have played in sculpting society on a global scale. The books will be digitized in a format that will be compatible with any e-reading device, ensuring their broad dissemination. Over the next year, the work on digitizing these titles will commence, with a target date of completion and online availability by sometime in 2017.

— DIANE KLARE, INTERIM UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN —



- ▲ Photograph of a dig in Tennessee, Wesleyan Museum Records, Special Collections & Archives.
- Correspondence, Wesleyan Museum Records, Special Collections & Archives.

## CURATING THE PAST: STUDENTS REINTERPRET WESLEYAN'S ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY COLLECTIONS

For the eight students in Wesleyan's Museum Collections course, readings, discussions, and independent research provided a broad overview of museology, ethical considerations surrounding maintaining and displaying cultural artifacts, and practical applications of exhibition and collections management. These typical classroom experiences were complemented by adding a project-based component to the course: students were tasked with curating an exhibit. The course, which took place within the Wesleyan University Archaeology and Anthropology Collections, offered students a uniquely hands-on experience. The Archaeology and Anthropology Collections consist of more than 30,000 archaeological and ethnographic artifacts from around the world. Relatively recent donations of ethnographic collections from the American Southwest, and archaeological assemblages from Wesleyan faculty and student-excavated sites in Middletown, add to the substantial legacy collections that once filled the former Wesleyan Museum (1871–1957).

As the students discovered, those legacy collections make for exciting sources of research. Ryan Moye '16 reflects, "One of the pieces I'm interested in working with—an Etruscan oil lamp—has been included in a greater narrative concerning the evolution of pottery technique, but the underlying story behind the significance of these lamps to the individual has yet to be explored. I think it's possible to talk broadly about cultural significance of an item at an individual level, rather than simply focus on the mundane intricacies of technique."

Applying a holistic approach that is relied upon within museum work, students were responsible for all aspects of exhibition development. They collaborated to conceptualize exhibition themes and subthemes, focusing on their likely audience. The class selected topics surrounding collecting at Wesleyan with subthemes that speak to the cultural implications of historical collections and potential future interdisciplinary uses of the artifacts.

Since no exhibit is ever complete without ample amounts of research, students visited Special Collections & Archives where University Archivist



- ▲ 1868.384.1 Shark tooth weapon; Gilbert Islands; donated in 1868 by Dr. Simeon Shurtleff, M.D.
- ◀ 2003.5.17 Hopi ceramic cowboy hat curio (made-for-tourist folk art); Hopi mesas, Arizona; collected in 1927 and donated in 2003 by Professor and Mrs. Carey Melville
- 914.2340.3 Early Christian oil lamp (circa 5th-6th century CE); Carthage, Tunisia; donated by Professor Karl P. Harrington in 1914

Leith Johnson introduced them to archival collections that could be used to enhance the artifacts. Records pertinent to the Wesleyan Museum and some of its original collectors, like local Middletown residents and Wesleyan faculty and student societies and missionary organizations, provided students with an illuminating backdrop of 19th- and 20th-century collecting priorities and practices. Jodi Almengor '17 states, "The opportunity to work with Special Collections & Archives was instrumental to our curation of the exhibition. The archival research led us to develop a deeper understanding of Wesleyan's history of collecting and allowed us insight into how collecting practices have evolved over the last century and a half. Reading the handwritten descriptions of our objects in the archival documents, written by former Wesleyan university faculty and students, instilled in me a sense of pride."

The resulting exhibition marks just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the research and learning opportunities that the Archaeology and Anthropology Collections have to offer the Wesleyan community. Ryan Moye continues, "I feel that the material we're working with holds untapped potential as storytelling tools." Indeed! The student-curated A Curious Case of Collecting at Wesleyan exhibition opens in May 2016 in the Olin Library Campbell Reference Center.

— JESSIE COHEN, ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS MANAGER —

## FRIENDS OF THE WESLEYAN LIBRARY

On April 13, 2016, in the Smith Reading Room, the Friends had the special honor of hosting the Wasch Center Lecture "Thoughts on Citizenship" by former Wesleyan President Colin Campbell, who is also chairman emeritus of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. He spoke to a full audience about historical aspects of citizenship and how to educate future good citizens. The Campbell Reference Center in Olin is named in honor of President Campbell and his wife, Nancy Nash Campbell. Interviews that Suzy Taraba, director of Special Collections & Archives, will conduct with President Campbell about his tenure at Wesleyan (1970–1988) and with Mrs. Campbell, will be deposited in SC&A.

The next day, April 14, 2016, Jim Brogan, vice president of the Miniature Book Society (MBS) and publisher of *The Microbibliophile*, a bimonthly journal



▲ Colin Campbell;  
Diane Klare;  
Richard Adelstein;  
Karl Scheibe

Retired Faculty and emeritus professor of psychology, and Richard Adelstein, Woodhouse/Sysco Professor of Economics, both graciously agreed to provide leadership for the Friends as chair and vice chair respectively in 2008, and continued in those roles for so many years. They have been crucial in advocating for the library in the Wesleyan community, strengthening ties with alumni and the larger community, and providing wise counsel in Board discussions. Adelstein stepped back from the Board in June 2015, and Scheibe is leaving the Board this spring. We are deeply appreciative of all they have done and continue to do for the library.

— JENNIFER HADLEY, FRIENDS OF THE WESLEYAN LIBRARY —

Please e-mail me at [libfriends@wesleyan.edu](mailto:libfriends@wesleyan.edu) or visit [wesleyan.edu/libr/friends](http://wesleyan.edu/libr/friends), if you would like to join the Friends, become active with the Board, or sponsor special projects.



◀ Maria Pisano's The four elements (Plainsboro, NJ: Memory Press, 2002), miniature tunnel books.  
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PHOTOGRAPH BY REBECCA GOLDFARB TERRY '19.

about books and the book arts, gave a talk about the history and making of miniature books (those three inches and under) entitled "A Collection in a Shoebox" to the annual Friends meeting. This was part of the series "A World in the Palm of Your Hand: The Art of Miniature Books," organized by Sally Grucan, head of cataloging. A cornerstone of the series is the glass-cased MBS traveling exhibit of historic examples and modern masterpieces which Grucan installed in the lobby of Olin Library on April 12, just in time to delight WesFest visitors. The exhibit will be on display through May 24. Grucan's interest in miniature books grew out of her 1:12 scale dollhouse miniature collection, which included micro miniature books, and was cemented by winning an online auction of miniature books published from the 1960s through the 1980s, a time when fine small presses were flourishing. She is now focusing on contemporary artists' books in miniature. In conjunction with Brogan's talk, she and Suzy Taraba prepared an open house in the Davison Rare Book Room allowing 54 visitors to enjoy examining highlights from Wesleyan's own collection of miniature books.

As the current academic year closes, the Friends would like to thank several key members of the Board who are stepping down from their active roles with the Friends. Diane Klare, who has served as interim university librarian since fall 2014, will be returning to her head of reference duties. Although busy shepherding the library through an external review and strategic planning in the past two years, she always made time to support Friends' endeavors. The Friends are very grateful that Karl Scheibe, retiring director of the Wasch Center for

AS OF MARCH 2016, special donations to the Friends of the Wesleyan Library for 2015–2016 have been dedicated to the following people:

IN MEMORY OF  
Shirley Feldman,  
Ted Hoey,  
Eugene Klaaren,  
Rabbi Harold S. White '54

and

IN HONOR OF  
Margery May,  
Karl Scheibe



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If you would like to contribute to the work of the Friends through membership or specific donations towards our digitization, preservation and archival projects, creative fellowship program for students, or events, please e-mail [libfriends@wesleyan.edu](mailto:libfriends@wesleyan.edu) or visit [wesleyan.edu/libr/friends](http://wesleyan.edu/libr/friends).