

Welcome for the Rare Books and Manuscripts 50th Anniversary Preconference
Association of College and Research Libraries
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I am honored to welcome you to the University of Virginia and to this meeting, which marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Preconference. The late John Cook Wyllie, formerly the University's librarian, and before that our manuscripts curator, was one of the founders of the preconference when it first met here in 1959.

Let me also welcome Michael Suarez, who will succeed Terry Belanger as director of the Rare Book School and University Professor. Michael comes to us from Fordham University, where he is the Kavanaugh Professor of English Literature, and from the University of Oxford, where he is Fellow and Tutor in English in Campion Hall. We are delighted that Michael is coming to Virginia. I will have more to say about Terry Belanger later.

About the University

Not all of you have visited the University of Virginia before, or know its history. In 1779, when the United States was a decidedly iffy proposition, the newly-elected Governor Thomas Jefferson presented to the Virginia General Assembly a "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge." This bill, which Jefferson had drafted in the prior year before he became governor, proposed the establishment of a tax-supported state-wide system of education that would be free to all. In its broad outline, it resembled bills that Jefferson had submitted as early as 1774, while serving as a member

of the House of Burgesses. Jefferson's vision was for a secular, public institution or system of education that would be (as he wrote elsewhere) "the bulwark of the human mind in our hemisphere." He believed that citizens in a democracy must be educated. Freedom required the dissemination of knowledge to the people – a concept crystallized later in his life when he described our democracy's "important truths, that knowledge is power, that knowledge is safety, and that knowledge is happiness."

The General Assembly declined to pass Jefferson's bill of 1779, as well as a similar bill submitted in 1780. Actions to endorse a system of public education for Virginia began in 1796, when public common schools were partly approved, and continued in pieces until 1819, when the General Assembly finally approved the first part of Jefferson's grand plan. On October 6, 1817, Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe (then the President of the United States) assembled 150 or so yards east of where we are meeting today to lay the cornerstone for the first building of Central College, the precursor of what became the University.

Thomas Jefferson's Design for the University

Jefferson's vision for this new university was an American invention derived from English and French villages and universities. Instead of an agricultural or commercial village (or a hospital, one of his models), this was to be an "academical village." He designed its buildings to face onto a Lawn, the village green. It was not a cloister, like its European antecedents, but an arrangement of buildings open at its lower or south end to a seemingly endless expanse of rolling green hills or mountains, which perhaps represented "the illimitable freedom of the human mind."

At the head or north end of this academical village stood the Rotunda, with the University's library housed in its dome, and classrooms and laboratories on the lower floors. Jefferson made the library the heart of his new university. He located it at the most important spot, because he regarded the library as the essential instrument for the democratization of knowledge.

The University opened in 1825, with 123 students and eight faculty members. These first faculty members came from Europe. Their average age was 22 or 23. Jefferson chose them because he saw in each the hope of the Enlightenment's taking hold in the relevant disciplines within the University and in our society.

Jefferson's design fostered close associations between faculty members and students. Faculty members and their families lived in pavilions spaced along the Lawn's eastern and western sides, with students living in rooms between them. Additional student rooms and "hotels" or dining houses formed the outer ranges or back streets of this village. Students attended classes in the ground-floor rooms of the faculty members' houses. The Lawn formed the social commons. In this design, Jefferson anticipated our current understanding that students learn both in and outside the classroom.

Jefferson as Bibliophile

Jefferson loved books. His collections are particularly interesting because they reflect his reading habits, his love of Classics and history, and his thoughts on education. In his lifetime, Jefferson amassed five book collections.

He inherited his first collection from his father. It burned in 1770, when the family home at Shadwell caught fire. He then assembled a library for his new home, Monticello. In 1814, after the British burned the Library of Congress, Jefferson sold this collection, by then some 6,700 books, to Congress to form the core of the new Library of Congress. A year later, he wrote to John Adams that "I cannot live without books," as he started a new collection, which he called his "retirement library." This collection was sold at auction after Jefferson's death to pay off debts. Late in his life, he collected books for another small library at Poplar Forest, his retreat 60 miles south of Charlottesville.

Jefferson's grand achievement as a bibliophile or collector was the fifth collection, assembled for his new university. This collection, totaling nearly 7,000 volumes, was the product of Jefferson's collaborations with trusted representatives dispatched to Europe to acquire what Jefferson considered the titles essential to the education of an American. Letters and even newspaper advertisements listing titles desired for this library brought gifts of books and book collections.

When Jefferson died on July 4, 1826, the books destined for the Rotunda were still stored in Pavilion VII. He did not live to see them placed on the shelves within the circular, domed crown of his University. Others did, however, and the collection came to be a cherished University and national treasure. When the Rotunda caught fire and burned in 1895, students and faculty mobilized quickly and went to the Rotunda to save what they could. Some threw volumes out the windows. Others formed a human chain to pass salvaged books in one direction and buckets of water in the other. Some

portion (no one knows how many) of the books survived the disaster. Most of those that are known are now in our Special Collections Library.

My Work in the Library's Manuscripts Collection

One significant reason for my becoming a literary scholar and lover of books and libraries was my experience working in the Alderman Library while a student here.

Anne Freudenberg, Associate Curator of Manuscripts, hired me when I was 18, during my first year as a student. I continued to work in the Library until I finished graduate school nine years later. Although they were never my formal teachers, Anne Freudenberg, John Wyllie, and Kendon Stubbs taught me much of what I value. They, and especially Ms. Freudenberg, were my models and my most essential teachers in my undergraduate years.

The Library has over the years acquired both books Jefferson owned (these from his various libraries) and copies of the fine arts books he selected for the Library here. Of the 130 fine arts titles he selected, we now hold all but 19. Among many others, one of my jobs as a student was to locate and recover books that had belonged to Jefferson. Some were in the Library's stacks, and had only to be identified by Jefferson's distinctive way of attaching his initials to the signatures on the first pages of quires or gatherings marked T or J. Others were more exotic. Occasionally, I traveled to meet with descendents of people, including slaves, who had connections to Jefferson and Monticello. I especially recall one trip with Anne Freudenburg and (if my memory is correct) Kendon Stubbs. We were in search of Jefferson papers in the possession of a man who lived in a log house at the end of a dirt road deep in the country. As we drove

up, we saw the man sitting on his front porch holding a shotgun. Perhaps wisely, my superiors sent me ahead to open what turned into a remarkable conversation. Our host told us that he recalled having a box of old papers from Monticello, but he'd used them to stuff the chinks in the logs in his house. Luckily, not all our quests turned out this way, and even this man, whose vision was largely gone, was able to read to us from the family pages of his Bible and explain the relationships of his own family and the families at Monticello.

Responsibilities of the Modern Research Library

To oversimplify, a library is a repository for information. Its mission is to preserve and make that information available. In our time, books, journals, papers, or other archival records, whether material or electronic, remain the tools for freedom and empowerment on a scale unimagined in the past. These holdings are basic to teaching, learning, and research. Today's libraries have complex responsibilities, and rapidly changing technologies make fulfilling those responsibilities all the more challenging.

Research libraries and their archives enlarge these missions because their often vast holdings matter so profoundly to our identity as a nation and a member of the global community. With regard to national heritage or the cultural record, university libraries in particular must be sure these assets remain available and accessible to each generation of students, scholars, and the public. And as professional librarians know well, the artifact as well as the means of access must be preserved.

In addition to serving faculty members and students, the research university must meet its broader responsibility to provide public access to its library's resources

and to the resources of other libraries. In this era, special collections librarians in all of your institutions work with and provide digitized rare books, manuscripts, and other materials so that anyone with access to a computer can use these digital surrogates. Some scholars will always need to see and analyze originals, of course. One might argue that every student ought to experience the distinctive patina, feel, and aroma of old books and papers, if only because they enhance the lifetime love of books that every student deserves to learn before finishing college. For most purposes, however, the digital surrogate will suffice. Increasingly, not all digitization is done in libraries. Much is done in specialized centers, and the aggregate efforts will make a real difference to scholarship in the future. Much remains to be done, but I commend you for opening up your collections to the world.

Books are still important and will remain important even though technology has changed and will continue to change how we publish and disseminate research. Special collections will become increasingly multi-media; we will (although I hope not soon) receive fewer written manuscripts for our collections. We must preserve not just the content, but also the machinery to display it.

Once the province of advanced graduate students and our faculties, research has become in our time important in university education at all levels. Most major universities now seek to provide research experience for every undergraduate student, as do many liberal arts colleges. This kind of research experience has become commonplace in the sciences. The demand for it is growing now in the social sciences and the humanities. What more exhilarating experience could a humanities

undergraduate have than to work directly with primary sources in our special collections? The experience need not be the kind of research that my library job provided for me, but my sense is that all students should have the opportunity to discover and expand their intellectual horizons by way of independent research and the direct relations with primary materials and faculty members that this research entails. Libraries provide the raw materials for explorations of kinds possible only by direct confrontations with primary materials.

Finances

All of what we must do is expensive. The University of Virginia is suffering from the economic turndown, just as all of our institutions are. Even before the current economic crisis, U.Va. was on its way (not necessarily by choice) to becoming what one might call a privately-funded public university. We are about two-thirds through the current capital campaign and have raised nearly \$2 billion of our goal of \$3 billion. The library's portion of that goal is \$100 million, a target that it will meet and surpass. These are big goals. Our twin obligations to afford both access and quality demand nothing less than big goals.

In truth, most contemporary public universities can no longer depend on their states to finance their operations. We are not alone in seeking and securing philanthropic support. This year, U.Va. will receive less than seven percent of its operating budget from the state. Large endowments are essential to providing income to fund operations. Public universities are rapidly developing financial expertise of kinds that once only our private or independent peers required. Here, in 1998, we

created the University of Virginia Investment Management Company (UVIMCO) to pool our numerous foundations' monies for management as one endowment and to provide investment management expertise for a broad range of University entities. In this recession, we have learned truths that private universities must have learned long ago, including that regardless of how carefully endowments are invested, equity values fluctuate with the economy. Equity losses have occurred in recent times in all the major universities. As the economy begins to come back, we must work harder than ever to build larger endowments and to manage them wisely for both good times and bad.

Barring some dramatic change in public finance, my own state will never again provide sufficient funds for the University's normal operations, and even more clearly it will not be able to finance our more ambitious goals, no matter how important they may be. Endowment revenue now supports many of our library's general acquisitions expenditures and some operations as well. Almost universally, libraries in public institutions rely on endowment income for special collections acquisitions. The reasons are many, not least among them the difficulty of explaining to legislators or governors each year the complexity of funds required to meet each of the modern university's needs or obligations. Try to explain to busy lawmakers why \$250,000 of state funds are required to acquire, for example, a collection of 19th-century letters and digital journals, when the Sciences need better laboratory space. That just won't work. Great universities have their own missions, independent of their obligations to serve the state's immediate purposes, and in more than one sense, university libraries define the public interest as surely now as they did in Jefferson's time.

Librarians and especially special collections librarians have unique and promising roles in securing the assets, monetary and material, that build future strength in libraries. Some raise money directly, or in partnership with development officers. Others find gifts of valuable papers or other materials. In many instances, collections are preserved rather than destroyed because of collaborations between archivists and faculty members or other researchers. Here's an example: working with special collections librarians here, Ernest Meade, now a professor emeritus in our music department, persuaded the composer and pianist John Powell to give his papers to U.Va. The collection turned out to be much more than the record of one life in music. Among other unexpected or perhaps collateral treasures, one cardboard box of letters, musical scores, typescripts, and miscellaneous bits and pieces, contained also a first edition of Ezra Pound's first book, *A Lume Spento*, a key first edition that the Clifton Waller Barrett Library's otherwise comprehensive collection did not have.

Every special collections library has its areas of strengths and its specialized collections and priorities. To the extent that we can share our strengths, each of us will be stronger. I call on you to collaborate as much as you can, and I thank all of you here who share your treasures. You do important work by enabling the creation and dissemination of new knowledge.

Thank you to Terry Belanger

Terry Belanger started Rare Book School (RBS) at Columbia University in 1983. He moved RBS's affiliation to U.Va. in 1992, when he became University Professor and Honorary Curator of Special Collections.

RBS was an important addition to the University. Terry's work has brought both new dimensions to intellectual life here and great distinction. The MacArthur Foundation's honoring Terry with one of its "Genius Awards" brought recognition to Terry, to RBS, and to the University.

Terry has helped to educate a generation of bibliophiles and book specialists by bringing world experts to U.Va. to teach and to study together. Under Terry's leadership, we established the RBS Foundation and its board. The board has been instrumental in guiding RBS, and its members are essential to RBS's future growth and success. To all the board members, I extend my thanks.

We owe Terry our gratitude for his vision for RBS, for his contributions to our knowledge of the history of books and printing and related subjects, and for his dedication to the work we all love.