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## Summer Newsletter 2001

Laurie M. Deredita  
*Connecticut College*, [lmder@conncoll.edu](mailto:lmder@conncoll.edu)

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# 2001

# Friends of the Connecticut College Library *Summer Newsletter*

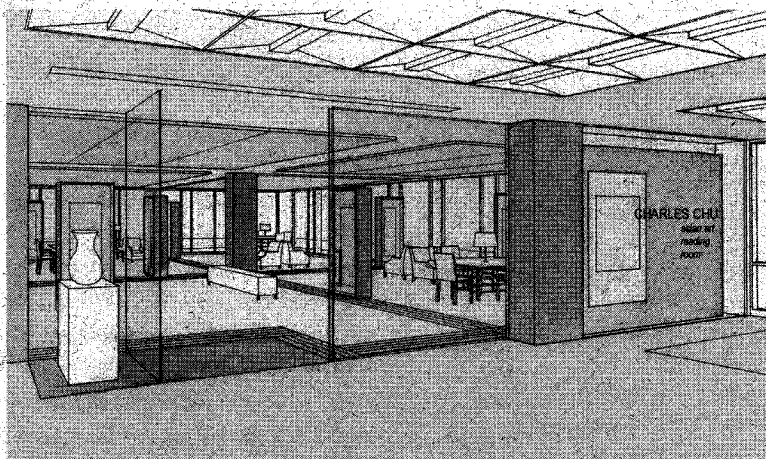
## CHARLES CHU ASIAN ART READING ROOM to be built in Shain Library

On the afternoon of June 2 during Alumni Weekend, the Palmer Room hosted an exhibition of a sampling of the scrolls and framed paintings from the Chu-Griffis Collection. Over 100 alumni and friends and admirers of Charles Chu gathered to view the temporary exhibit put together for one day only in the reading room of Special Collections. We are pleased to announce that in the future this popular annual event will move to permanent quarters on the Main Floor of Shain Library. During the summer a new room will be built in the space to the right of the main entrance, an area now occupied by a cluster of computer terminals, part of the reference collection and the old card catalog. In its place will be a glass-walled room, the Charles Chu Asian Art Reading Room, designed to serve as an exhibition space for the library's Chu-Griffis Asian Art Collection and as a quiet reading room for students. The room will also provide very accessible space near the front door for small lectures, readings and gatherings.

This wonderful enhancement to Shain Library has been made possible through the generosity of John and Heidi Niblack to honor Charles Chu, Emeritus Professor of Chinese at Connecticut College and long-time Friend of the Library. The new room will provide a home and exhibition space for the growing collection of Asian art that Professor Chu has given to the library. It will also house a collection of books dealing with Asian art; and, as its name implies, it will provide a place on the Main Floor for something that the library has lacked: quiet reading and study space. John F. Niblack, Ph.D. is the Vice Chairman of Pfizer, Inc. and President of Pfizer Global Research and Development; but he is also a serious student and

collector of Asian Art, hence his wish to support the renovation of Shain Library in this way.

The Chu-Griffis Collection of Asian Art has been one of the library's "special" collections since 1987 and was first exhibited in 1988, when it consisted



of only nine scrolls. Through the generosity of New London attorney Hughes Griffis and the Griffis Foundation as well as the contributions of many other friends and alumni, the collection has grown to over 150 items. The art works range in date from the 16th to the late 20th centuries with a strong representation of contemporary Chinese artists. The collection itself has been housed in the

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## "HOLY DETRITUS" exhibition

The first Special Collections exhibition of the 2001-2002 academic year will be "Holy Detritus: Illuminated Pages of Prayers from the Middle Ages and Later", a show displaying the library's collection of illuminated manuscript pages. Curated by Alice Schroeder, class of '91, the exhibition will include fragments from books of hours and breviaries, public prayer books and the San Diego Choir Book, which was featured in an article in the Winter issue of this newsletter. "Holy Detritus" will begin in September.

### READING ROOM *continued from page 1*

Palmer Room in Shain Library in custom-made cabinets but it has never had the permanent exhibition space that it deserves. The new Charles Chu Reading Room will solve that problem by providing specially designed freestanding cabinets to house a rotating display of scrolls and other items from the Chu-Griffis Art Collection.

In order to come up with an appropriate design for the new Reading Room, members of a selection committee defined a set of design criteria and presented a Request for Proposal to several recommended architectural firms. The selection committee consisted of Dr. Niblack, Professor Chu, Lee Hisle, Vice-President for Information Services, faculty members Abigail Van Slyck and Ann Devlin, Laurie Deredita, Special Collections Librarian, Steven George, Manager of Planning, Design and Construction, and Bachman Clem '01. It met in March to consider the presentations of two architectural firms and to make a recommendation to the Select Committee of the Board of Trustees. The winner of this architectural mini-contest was the Boston-based firm of Schwartz/Silver Architects.

The selection committee felt that Schwartz/Silver had developed a design that best met its criteria. The design goals of the Schwartz/Silver proposal include the following: to create a serene, beautiful environment; to maintain the openness of the space while creating coherence and unity; to create a distinctive character for the room while relating it back to the library; to foreground the presence of the art while retaining views to the surrounding trees; and to intrigue and attract passersby. By emphasizing simplicity, tranquility and elegance, the Schwartz/Silver concept implicitly references Asian design principles. Schwartz/Silver Architects is currently working on the Baton Rouge Cultural Arts Center, the Princeton University Humanities

Center and major renovations of the Boston Athenaeum and the Ames Free Library.

To accommodate the new Reading Room, a number of changes will be made to the Main Floor over the summer, including the rearrangement of the reference collection and the relocation of some of the computer clusters. The new room will occupy about 2500 square feet and provide more space for readers seated at tables with reading lamps or in comfortable lounge chairs. Softened lighting will be deployed not only for protection of the art but for the comfort of the readers. Construction of the Reading Room will begin in July, with the disruptive phase of the work taking place over the summer. The room will be available for limited use by the college community in the early fall, although the project will not be complete until later in the semester.

Shain Library was built in 1976, long before the arrival of the personal computer and electronic databases. Its book collection is outgrowing the shelf space in the building, and electronic equipment and the staff to support it have become more important than most people could have imagined 25 years ago. The stacks of Special Collections are now almost entirely full. Over the last two years, the Library Renovation and Expansion Planning committee, which consists of members of the Connecticut College faculty, library staff and students, has been meeting to determine the needs for an expanded facility that will incorporate the traditional research functions of a library with the requirements of information technology. It is hoped that an expanded and renovated Shain Library will include a larger Special Collections, located near the front of the main floor. The Charles Chu Asian Art Reading Room is the first step toward the new Shain Library.

The Friends of the  
Connecticut College Library

W. Lee Hisle  
Vice President for Information  
Services and Librarian of the  
College

Laurie M. Deredita  
Special Collections Librarian and  
Newsletter Editor

Susan Lindberg,  
Office of Public Affairs, Designer

Charles E. Shain Library  
Great Music Library  
Connecticut College  
270 Mohegan Avenue  
New London, CT

06320-4196  
Telephone (860) 439-2654  
E-mail: lmdr@conncoll.edu

Special Collections  
Home Page:

<<http://www.sc.conncoll.edu>>

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## RECENT ACQUISITIONS in Special Collections

One of the most enjoyable parts of the job of Special Collections Librarian is buying new books to add to the collections. Most of the time, the "new" books are not actually new, but all of them are bought with the purpose of broadening our existing collections of examples of fine printing or book design, works by certain illustrators or subject areas where we are already strong. The Special Collections librarians at Shain Library have been very fortunate to have at our disposal money from the interest on endowed funds established by generous donors. The Palmer Memorial Room Fund, for example, was established many years ago to honor a family whose name figures prominently in the history of Connecticut College and its library. Similarly, the collective contributions of the Friends of the Library have strengthened the growth of Special Collections for nearly sixty years. The recently established Brian D. Rogers Fund, established through the generosity of alumnus Mark Samuels Lasner '74, is now used to purchase books for Special Collections.

The income from all three of these funds, as well as a number of general library endowed funds, purchased the books that were featured in a "Recent Acquisitions" exhibition, curated by Charles Price and Laurie Deredita, that was displayed in the lobby of Shain Library from February to May of 2001. In 2000 the library purchased Barry Moser's Pennyroyal Caxton Press *Holy Bible*, one of the most important books printed in America in the 20th century. This year the library continued to acquire Moser titles. From the long list of Pennyroyal Press publications we added *An Alphabet* (1986) and *Goudy Greek* (1976), as well as *Leonard Baskin, 1922-2000* (Barbarian Press), Moser's moving tribute to his friend and teacher. Moser is also an important illustrator of children's books so we bought eight more examples of his books for children to expand the Gildersleeve collection. Barry

Moser's book of essays, *In the Face of Presumptions* (Godine, 2000), includes the speech "There Was a Time" delivered at the Sound Lab Lecture at Connecticut College last September.

Shain Library also has a growing collection of the work of Leonard Baskin, who was not only one of the most important American artists of the last century but a very important designer of fine books. Recently we acquired another example of the work of Baskin's Gehenna Press, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1970), an anti-slavery tract by John Woolman, originally printed in Philadelphia in 1754. Stephen Brook's *A Bibliography of the Gehenna Press, 1942-1975* (J. P. Dwyer, 1976), traces the history of the Gehenna Press from its founding during Baskin's student days at Yale until his departure for England. *Form & Content: The Art of the Book in the Pioneer Valley* (Warwick Press, 1987) has two wood engravings by Moser and Baskin.

Special Collections owns many examples from the Kelmscott Press, the private press of William Morris, which is considered to be the progenitor of all twentieth century private presses in England and America. Elbert Hubbard of East Aurora,

New York was one of the earliest followers of Morris in America. Shain Library has a small collection of examples of Hubbard's work at the Roycroft Press, so it was appropriate to acquire a copy of Jack Walsdorf's limited edition of *Elbert Hubbard: William Morris's Greatest Imitator* (1999), printed at the Yellow Barn Press in Iowa.

Robin Price is a printer and publisher of fine books from California who operates out of Middletown, Connecticut. Shain Library bought a lovely example of her fine letterpress work, a limited edition broadside in three colors with a background woodcut by Keiji Shinohara, featuring the Wallace Stevens poem, "The Plain Sense of Things." Stevens, who died in 1955, was a lawyer and vice president of a Hartford insurance firm as well as one of America's greatest poets of the twentieth century. He lived most of his adult life in Hartford and the broadside is a fundraiser for the Hartford Friends and Enemies of Wallace Stevens, an organization based at the Hartford Public Library. The Friends are raising money to create a permanent "Wallace Stevens Walk" along the two miles that he walked between his office and his home

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### JOHN LIENHARD to be Sound Lab speaker

John H. Lienhard is well known to Connecticut audiences of Public Radio station WSHU, as the author and voice of the nationally-broadcast program "The Engines of our Ingenuity." Using the record of history to reveal how art, technology and ideas have shaped human culture, Dr. Lienhard creates short episodes for his radio show on topics ranging from Civil War submarines to the invention of the bar code. He is the M.D. Anderson Professor of Mechanical Engineering and History at the University of Houston, and is known for his research in the thermal sciences as well as in cultural history. Dr. Lienhard published *The Engines of Our Ingenuity: An Engineer Looks at Technology and Culture* (Oxford University Press) in 2000.

The 4th Sound Lab Lecture will take place on Thursday, September 20, 2001, at 7:30 p.m. in the Ernst Common Room. After his talk, Dr. Lienhard will sign copies of his book.

## LEAR BOOK Collection created

Several years ago Linda Lear, a member of the Connecticut College class of 1962 and distinguished environmental historian at George Washington University, gave the college the extensive archive amassed during her research on the biography of pioneer environmentalist Rachel Carson. Linda's book *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature* (Henry Holt, 1997) is the definitive account of the life of the author of *Silent Spring* (Houghton Mifflin, 1962), a woman whose prescient warnings about the dangers of pesticide use sparked the environmental movement in the United States.

Recently Special Collections was the recipient of another of Linda's gifts, this time from her personal library. The newly created "Lear Collection" consists of about one hundred books relating to her Carson biography research that Linda purchased while writing *Witness for Nature*. The most unusual item in the collection is the 1928-1929 edition of the *Pennsylvanian*, the yearbook of Pennsylvania College for Women in Pittsburgh. Carson was a graduate of Pennsylvania College for Women, now called Chatham College, and the yearbook in the Lear Collection was her personal copy, bearing many inscriptions to her from classmates and teachers.

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS *continued from page 2*

at 118 Westerly Terrace. The Walk will have stone markers, each with one stanza from his poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird."

Also on display was the latest issue (number 20) of the journal *Matrix: a Review for Printers & Bibliophiles*. The review is an annual publication of the Whittington Press of Lower Marston Farm, Risbury, Herefordshire devoted to the subject of printing and the related book arts. The limited edition annual issues have been published since 1981. Each issue is a work of typographic art and contains interesting articles. Volume 20 includes the unfinished essay "Icones" by Leonard Baskin that he was writing at the time of his death in early 2000. Connecticut College has nearly the entire run of *Matrix*.

Connecticut College is home to the Sheaffer-O'Neill Collection, the large archive of the life and works of Eugene O'Neill formed by his biographer Louis Sheaffer. Every year the collection is used by our students and visited by scholars who come from all over to study this treasure trove of information about O'Neill and his period of American

cultural history. In addition to the primary research materials, Special Collections maintains a "Sheaffer" collection of books by or about O'Neill and continues to add new titles. During the last year we added *A Wind is Rising: the Correspondence of Agnes Boulton and Eugene O'Neill* (Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 2000) by William Davies King, *Eugene O'Neill: Beyond Mourning and Tragedy* (Yale University Press, 1999) by Stephen A. Black, and *O'Neill: Life with Monte Cristo* (Applause, 2000) by Arthur and Barbara Gelb. Both Professors King and Black relied heavily on research conducted in the Sheaffer-O'Neill Collection.

LUANNE RICE, best-selling writer of contemporary fiction and member of the Connecticut College class of 1977, will speak about writing and her Connecticut roots at a gathering sponsored by the Friends of the Library in the fall. Luanne, a Connecticut native with homes in Old Lyme and New York City, published her first novel in 1986 followed by seven others in quick succession. *Dream Country*, *Firefly Beach* and *Summer Light* were released in 2001. Several of her novels have been made into movies, including *Follow the Stars Home*, of which the paperback Bantam edition was on the New York Times bestseller list. The date for this event has not been set but it will probably take place in October. An announcement with date, time and place will be sent to the Friends of the Library in September.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN 2001!

Membership contributions to the Friends of the Library are one of the primary sources of financial support for the department of Special Collections. They enable us to purchase rare books and other materials and to support other ways of reaching out to the campus and regional community through public exhibitions, lectures and this newsletter. If you have renewed your membership, we sincerely thank you. We welcome new members at any time and urge readers to let us know of anyone in our area who would enjoy a formal association with one of the New London area's major cultural resources. Membership in the Friends of the Library at the Associate level (\$50) and above includes borrowing privileges at our excellent library.

The Palmer Room on the second floor of Shain Library is the reading room for Special Collections and is normally open weekdays until 5 p.m. (4 p.m. in the summer). Members of the Friends are invited to stop by when visiting the library, although if you are in the library specifically to use Special Collections resources, it is advisable to make an appointment in advance by calling Laurie Deredita at 439-2654.