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Winter Newsletter 2000

Laurie M. Deredita
Connecticut College, lmder@conncoll.edu

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2000 Friends of the Connecticut College Library Winter Newsletter

SHAIN LIBRARY EXHIBITION: ARTISTS' BOOKS FROM
THE SCUOLA INTERNAZIONALE DI GRAFICA DI VENEZIA,
NOVEMBER 13-DECEMBER 13.

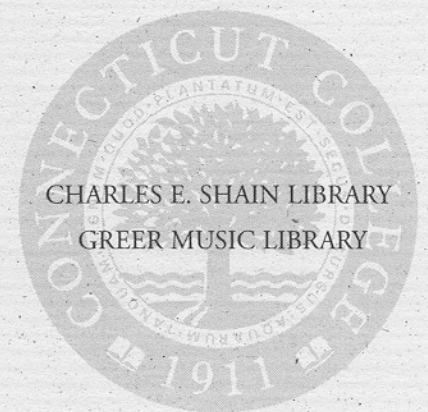
Venice was once a major European center for printing and the other book arts. Today it is home to one of the world's centers for teaching printmaking, the Scuola

Internazionale di Grafica di Venezia, where the disciplines and methods of the printmaking arts are preserved and the history of printmaking is studied from early woodcuts through movable type to modern computer applications. Student artists at the Scuola learn to apply printmaking techniques through every step of the process while working with skilled artisans and bookbinders.

Artists' books are books made by artists. They take the form of a book, but their emphasis is usually on artistic expression rather than on text. The specimens on display in Shain Library are hand-made, limited editions, created by students and faculty at the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica di Venezia, which is located in a palace on the Grand Canal in the Santa

Croce neighborhood of Venice. The image of the school's facade on this page of the *Newsletter* is from a silk-screened print based on a photo-etching.

Connecticut College in Venice is currently offering a Fall Semester Program at the Scuola di Grafica, and Connecticut College in New London has been fortunate to have Matilde Dolcetti, the artistic director of the Scuola, as a visiting professor of art during this semester. She is teaching two courses at Connecticut College, "Print Workshop: Relief and Intaglio Processes" and "Drawing: Exploration of Imagery Through Process." Professor Dolcetti has brought with her from Venice sixteen exquisite examples of her own work and the work of the students in her course "Artists' Books and Bookbinding," which will be on display in Shain Library from November 13 to December 13. There will be a closing reception on December 13, from 4 to 6 P.M. in Shain Library to which all members of the Friends of the Library are cordially invited to see the exhibition and to meet Matilde Dolcetti.



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

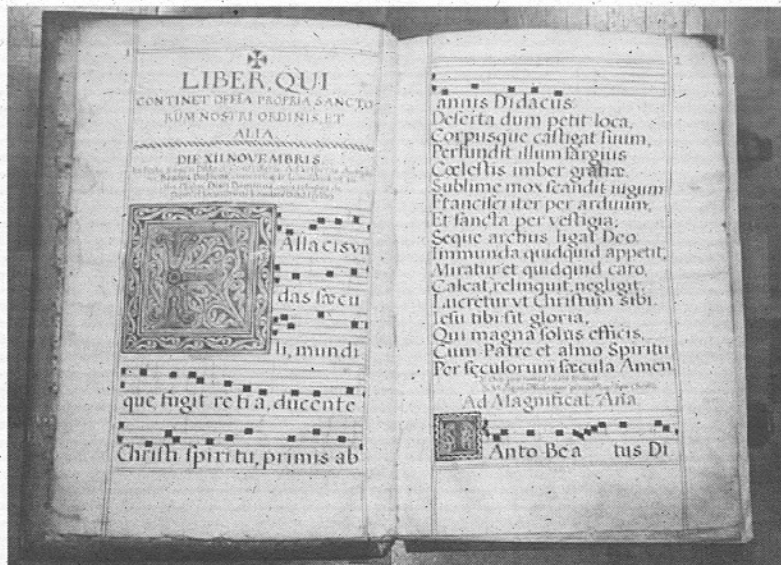
Charles E. Shain Library
Greer Music Library
Connecticut College
270 Mohegan Avenue
New London, CT
06320-4196

Telephone (860) 439-2654
E-mail: lmder@conncoll.edu

Special Collections
Home Page:

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

November 2000



THE SAN DIEGO CHOIR BOOK IN CYBERSPACE

One of the treasures of Special Collections is a large and venerable medieval-looking manuscript of Spanish origin with a mysterious history that began in Valencia and ends in New London, Connecticut. But thanks to a collaboration between a scholar of medieval manuscripts and a technology-savvy Connecticut College student, what was once just a dusty, antique curiosity has begun a new journey to a virtual life in cyberspace.

When Alice Schroeder '91 was completing her degree as a Medieval Studies major at Connecticut College she did an independent study with Professor of History Fred Paxton. She approached Mary Kent, the Special Collections Librarian at that time, for permission to study the medieval holdings at the library. Her research brought to her attention a manuscript volume from Spain which had come into the possession of the library in the 1920s as a gift of Cornelia Kissam Palmer. Alice was so fascinated by this volume that she continued to work on it long after her independent study was completed and over the years devoted countless hours of research into its origin, contents, iconography and date. She had the volume photographed page by page so that she could study the facsimiles. Her husband built a wooden cradle to support the heavy manuscript when it was open. Along the way, Alice decided to call the volume the San Diego Choir Book, because of the nature of its contents and after the Franciscan monastery which was once its home. Until this time the book had been called a Psalter and is labeled as such on the spine, although this is a blatant misnomer since it does not contain any psalms.

In October 1999, Brenda Johnstone '00 was in the Palmer Room on an assignment for the English Department when she happened to see the Spanish manuscript lying open on a table in its wooden cradle. Brenda, too, was immediately fascinated by the volume with its vellum pages, beautiful lettering, illuminated initials and miniatures. Like Alice, Brenda was a Medieval Studies major but additionally a person whose talents include exceptional technical skills. She immediately felt that the images of the pages belonged on the Web, and she asked permission to return with a digital camera. It then fell to Laurie Deredita, Special Collections Librarian, who knew about the interest of both women in the Spanish manuscript, to get them together. This collaboration between

traditional scholarship and Internet technology resulted in the San Diego Choir Book Home Page.

Seymour de Ricci, in his *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada*, suggested that 1653 was the probable date of the origin of the Spanish manuscript. The colophon itself says 1453 but the page shows clear physical evidence that the original date was cut out and another date on a matching piece of vellum crudely inserted in way that could fool no one. It is not clear why or when this was done, although from the vantage point of the year 2000, the earlier date makes the book appear more valuable.

Coincidentally, 1453 happens to be the generally accepted date when Gutenberg was working on the production of the first printed book made with movable type in Europe. Valencia, home of the Franciscan monastery of San Diego where the Choir Book was written, is also the city where the first book in Spain was printed in 1474.

It was left to Alice to figure out the real date of the manuscript. By doing a very careful reading of the text and research into the liturgical history of the chants in honor of various saints and other religious figures, she was able to establish chronological

parameters for the probable date of the Choir Book. From this evidence she concluded that the book was written no earlier than 1728 and no later than 1807. In her article, Alice also traces the history of the Franciscan Convento San Diego de Alfara del Patriarca where the Choir Book was written and resided for so many years. The convent, constructed in 1599, met its inglorious end as a match factory after the secularization of many religious buildings in Spain in the 19th century. The contents and furnishings of the Convento were sold off, and the San Diego Choir Book was most likely among the 64 books that appear in the inventory.

The full story of the San Diego Choir Book may now be found in Alice's article by clicking on the link from the Special Collections Home Page. To accompany the article there are wonderful digital images, with close-ups, of all of the pages of the Choir Book, photographed by Brenda in the Palmer Room and then optimized for the Internet using Photoshop 5.5. The Choir Book itself may be examined in the Palmer Room by contacting Laurie Deredita, who will also be delighted to demonstrate the San Diego Choir Book Home Page.



Students in Palmer Library examining a page from the San Diego Choir Book.

(Courtesy of Connecticut College Archives)

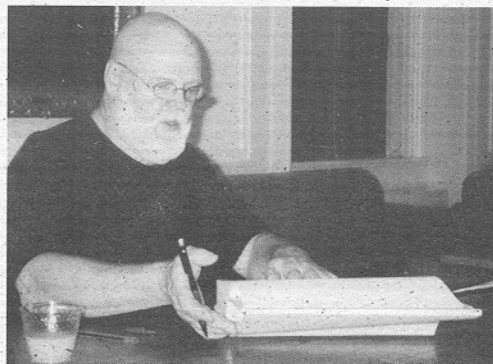
END OF YEAR MESSAGE FROM LEE HISLE

As 2000 draws to a close, and as I near the end of my first year as Vice President for Information Services and Librarian of the College, I would like to thank you all for your continuing support of Special Collections through the Friends of the Library.

This has been an exciting and eventful year for Special Collections. We have had a number of interesting exhibitions, starting with *Leonard Baskin and the Gehenna Press* and ending with *Artists' Books from the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica di Venezia. Early Scenes of New London*, which featured postcards from the library's historic postcard collection, ran from late June to early August, coinciding with OpSail's spotlight on New London. *The Craft of Barry Moser* was timed to be shown when famed illustrator Barry Moser came to Connecticut College to deliver the third annual Sound Lab Foundation Lecture. *Echoes: Etched Poems, Poetic Etchings* celebrated the cross-Atlantic and cross-genre artistic collaboration between graphic artist Stoimen Stoilov and poets William Meredith and Richard Harteis.

In addition to the Sound Lab Foundation Lecture, the Friends of the Library sponsored a well-received lecture by Linda Lear '62, author of *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature*, on the value of archival sources in undergraduate education. And in May, I met many of you for the first time at a gathering for the Friends of the Library in the Palmer Room.

Friends of the Library contributions helped to purchase the magnificent limited edition of the Pennyroyal Caxton Press *Holy Bible* designed by Barry Moser and displayed in Shain Library at the time of his lecture. Each year the Friends provide \$500 in scholarship aid to a deserving alumnus in graduate library school. Their contributions pay for the printing of the *Friends of the Library Newsletter*, provide for refreshments at Friends events and will help us continue to add to Special Collections as well as to support events planned for next year to celebrate the achievements of some of our notable alumni authors. Your support of our work and your friendship and encouragement have meant a lot to me and will help us continue our work in the future. If you have not been a member of the Friends of the Library, I hope you will join us as a supporter of the book arts at Connecticut College. If you are a member, I thank you for your dedication and encourage you to continue to support our future with your membership.



Barry Moser at book signing after Sound Lab Lecture

THIRD SOUND LAB FOUNDATION LECTURE

When the Sound Lab Foundation Lecture was delivered by Barry Moser on September 16, the Ernst Common Room was filled with enthusiastic fans of the well-known illustrator. The title of his lecture was *There Was a Time*, a penetrating retrospective look by the artist at his own career and how he came to be a wood engraver and illustrator of books. It was also an homage to the late Leonard Baskin and his profound and lasting influence on Moser's work. Moser illustrated his lecture with many slides of his work and afterwards signed copies of the Viking Studio trade edition of the Holy Bible. The Sound Lab Foundation lecture series is co-sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

ECHOES: ETCHED POEMS, POETIC ETCHINGS

The Shain Library exhibition *Echoes* was launched on October 17, with an evening party to celebrate the artistic collaboration between Bulgarian-born artist Stoimen Stoilov and American poets William Meredith and Richard Harteis. Many Friends of the Library attended. The event opened with a short address by Lee Hisle followed by a recital from memory by William Meredith of two of his poems. Pianist Pat Mitchell provided music and song. The exhibition consisted of dynamic pairings of poems and etchings, as well as display cases filled with examples of Meredith and Harteis publications and photographs of their visits to Bulgaria. The exhibition in the lobby of Shain continued until November 6, when it went to the Hudson Park Branch of the New York Public Library.

PLEASE JOIN THE FRIENDS OF THE CONNECTICUT COLLEGE LIBRARY!

Your 2001 membership, new or renewed, may now be sent in with the enclosed card and envelope. Membership has many benefits including borrowing privileges at Shain Library and Greer Music Library for those who contribute at the \$50 level and above, invitations to all Friends events and a subscription to the *Newsletter*. The Friends of the Library has been a support to us since 1945, and we count on your help in 2001.

Laurie M. Deredita, The Friends of the Connecticut College Library