Cartographic Collections at Yale

If readers need to locate a street in Birmingham, Alabama, identify a town in the south of France, find a likely site for tropical research, or work out the most level route for a bicycle trip through New England, where in the library do they go? To the Map Collection, of course! These are only a few of the recent questions which came to the staff of the Map Collection, located in rooms 706–710 in Sterling Memorial Library. That suite of rooms is not enough to contain all of the maps, which spill over into two caged areas and eight banks of map cases in the seventh floor stacks.

The Yale Library has collected maps and atlases from its earliest days. The Catalogue of the Library of Yale College in New Haven, prepared in 1742 by then President Thomas Clap, stated that certain of the 2600 items in the library fell into a section on geography. Listed were Mead’s Construction of Maps, a “new sett of maps by Mr. Moll”, treatises on geography by Cluver, Heylyn, Ptolomy, Strabo and Varenius, together with several atlases and charts.

Over the course of the following 245 years the Yale Map Collection has grown into one of the finest and largest map and atlas collections in the country. Originally maps were shelved along with books in the regular stacks. Maps finally came into their own with the building of Sterling Memorial Library. Its plans included a Map Room on the 6th floor (now the Bookplate Collection). It was a spacious room with handsome, specially built oak map cases. Seven glass roundels in the tall gothic windows reproduce maps by Allard, Blaeu, Muenster, and even an 1812 map of New Haven by Amos Doolittle.

Under the curatorship of Alexander O. Vietor (1942–1978), this space, originally envisioned as ample, was quickly outgrown. When Vietor took over, the collection numbered around 21,000 maps; he left it with over 160,000 maps, many of them extremely rare and of great scholarly value. It was also during this period that the Map Collection received thousands of maps in the greatest map giveaway in history after World War II when the Army Map Service distributed surplus maps to various research libraries. For some areas of the world these are still the only maps available.

Recently, the Map Collection was pleasantly refurbished, thanks to the generous donation of Robert A. Lawrence, with new map cases, large tables for map consultation, colorful comfortable chairs, better lighting and attractive draperies. It now holds over 200,000 map sheets—approximately 15,000 dated before 1850—and some 2500 atlases. Geographic and chronological coverage is comprehensive and includes maps from every corner of the globe, from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. Among earlier maps, the emphasis is on North America, the United States, New England, and the trans-Mississippi West, with special strength in maps showing the cartographic development of North America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Purchases and gifts continue to enlarge and enrich this part of the collection. Documenting the mapping of America by Americans in the nineteenth century is an ongoing concern. By the mid-point of the last century maps and atlases began to be printed on highly acidic paper, and they are now difficult to find in good condition. It is important to acquire and preserve these invaluable cartographic records before they crumble into dust. With the help of the Conservation Studio, Yale is doing just that.

Maps come in many sizes and formats, each calling for a different method of storage. But whatever their size or shape they constitute a unique source of information. A large reference section, including cartobibliographies, histories of cartography, and catalogs of major map collections, supports the use of the Map Collection.

The collection receives over 5,000 maps a year, most of them on deposit from government agencies such as Barbara B. McCorkle, Curator of the Map Collection
the United States Geological Survey, the Defense Mapping Agency (successor to the Army Map Service) and the National Oceanographic Service, but also through purchase and gift. Old USGS sheets or Coast Survey charts are not discarded when new ones are received; they are kept, thus building a visual record of cultural and geographic change. Successive sheets of an area undergoing rapid development graphically record, for example, urban sprawl wiping out orange groves, or the reduction of a shoreline.

Virtually any land area of the world can be found in the Map Collection at either of two scales, 1:2,500,000 (" = ca. 40 miles) and 1:1,000,000 (" = ca. 16 miles). The familiar USGS quadrangle maps, at roughly two inches to the mile, offer greater detail, but it would not be either possible or desirable to have maps at that scale for the entire world. The goal at present is to "cover the world at 1:250,000", or four miles to the inch, a scale suitable for most research needs. For many years the Map Collection relied on the old Army Map Service maps for this coverage. They are now badly out of date and a concerted effort is being made to update them. Unfortunately, the ages-old view of maps as political documents holds as true today as it did 500 years ago when sailors were advised to weight their charts with rocks and throw them overboard rather than have them captured by an enemy vessel. There are many parts of the world—Eastern Europe, some emerging African nations, coastal India—for which we cannot now obtain maps at the desired scale.

A selection of heavily-used world and regional atlases is kept in the Map Room for ready reference. The remainder of the Atlas Collection is shelved in room 706, but is available for any user. The collection includes a wide assortment of world, national, state and city atlases as well as historical and other thematic atlases. In keeping with the Map Collection’s strength in nineteenth-century American maps, the Atlas Collection is very strong in that peculiarly American genre, the nineteenth-century county atlas. Popular in the last quarter of the century, these atlases are treasure-houses of local information, with names of land-owners, business directories, and illustrations of homes and farms. A recent gift from an anonymous donor has greatly enriched this part of the collection: the cartographic archives of the Pennsylvania Railroad include 380 volumes of state, city and county atlases, most from the nineteenth century, covering the area served by the railroad. These will become important research tools.

The Library is committed to continuing and expanding support for the Map Collection. Two years ago the University Librarian formed a Map Resources Group to examine the status of maps at Yale. The group’s recommendations have far-reaching implications for increasing the visibility and accessibility of one of Yale’s important scholarly resources. The first step in implementing them has been the full-time appointment of the Map Curator whose position has been half time for the past nine years. The change brings an increase in hours that the collection can be open and the opportunity for the curator to develop new materials and services. The Map Collection staff is willing and eager to explain the organization, scope and use of the collection. It is open 10:00-5:00, Monday to Friday. —BBMcC
In the months ahead Yale's libraries will join research libraries everywhere in beginning the gradual transition to an online catalog from the drawers of cards that have guided readers to the collections for decades.

In 1862 the first card catalog in America for public use was introduced (at Harvard). A tremendous improvement over traditional book-form catalogs then in use, the card catalog allowed for easy addition of records for current acquisitions as well as improved subject access to library holdings. In its first year, 35,762 cards were hand-written for that first public catalog. For more than a hundred years, the card catalog remained the preferred means of access to catalog information for most American libraries, and a sturdy, useful, if labor-intensive, workhorse it has been.

Library collections and publishing output have grown immensely since that previous innovation. The number of new catalog cards filed in the Yale library system has grown to 1,000,000 annually (some 840 linear feet), filed in 185 catalogs in more than 35 buildings. Users of Sterling and other Yale libraries have witnessed the dramatic physical expansion of the cases housing the burgeoning catalog records. Old housing and finding methods are no longer adequate to deal with the increasingly large and complex mass of library records.

Computer technology enables even libraries of Yale's size to deal with this information explosion. After long study Yale has selected a powerful system developed and used by Northwestern University, the Northwestern Online Total Integrated System (NOTIS). NOTIS has also been adopted by such libraries as Harvard, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, and the Universities of Michigan, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania. In its local adaptation, known as Orbis (Online Research and Bibliographic Information System), this system will serve Yale as both its online union catalog and its circulation system, as well as performing a number of behind-the-scenes technical functions. In due course library users will have access in one place—the Orbis terminals—to information that now must be gleaned from several. Eventually it will be possible for faculty and students, working on personal computers in offices and homes, to use the catalog without coming to the library, and for longer hours than the library itself is open. The system will also increase flexibility in searching catalog records; one can hunt for works by key word or a combination of author and subject, for instance, in addition to more traditional approaches. Asking the computer to search for G. L. Kittredge's 1939 edition of Shakespeare's As You Like It will retrieve in seconds what now takes many minutes of flipping through cards to find.

In a library as large and as complicated as Yale's, computer development is a long and complex procedure, and a great deal of care is being devoted to making sure that training on the new system will be personalized and widely available and that the language and procedures of the system itself will be clear and jargon-free. An additional high priority is the provision of sufficient terminals for staff and public use in many locations throughout the library system. Planning is also focused on insuring against system failure through the provision of multiple back-up mechanisms.

Members of the Yale community interested in being informed about the integrated library system as it progresses may ask to be put on the mailing list to receive the System Automation Memo (SAM), or may address questions to Gerald Lowell, Associate University Librarian for Technical Services (432-1824). —5JS

Current Acquisitions Threatened
Over the years, outstanding collections have been gathered to the shelves of Yale's libraries through the diligence of faculty members, students, book selectors, alumni and friends of the university. The tides of material acquired have ebbed and flowed with Yale's own fortunes and larger world events.

Lately there have been threats to the breadth and depth of collecting which Yale faculty and students expect and for which Yale has a considerable reputation. First among these is the precipitous decline in United States currency relative to that of our principal trading partners, members of the European Economic Community and Japan. In 1986 the dollar lost fifty percent of its purchasing power against the Japanese yen, and in the past two years it has lost at least fifty percent of its purchasing power against European currencies. Since over sixty percent of titles acquired have been published in Western Europe, this is having a noticeable effect on library acquisitions.

Mitigating this trend have been the healthy increases in endowment income of the last few years and the university's support of the current year's general appropriation for book funds. So far the library has been able to protect serials subscriptions by expending reserves built up in endowments and diverting discretionary monies. Lately, however, book dealers and publishers have warned that price increases of about twenty percent can be expected in the coming academic year. Thus the library is now forced to limit its expenditures on both journals and monographs. Inevitably this will mean cancelling some journal subscriptions. Prices for serials have been rising far more rapidly than those for other
library materials, and for several years maintaining subscriptions and adding new ones has meant invading the portion of the budget usually reserved for books. Especially in the disciplines depending heavily upon serials, notably the sciences, journal prices have skyrocketed. The devaluation of the dollar has caused some of these increases, but pricing policies are also responsible. Some publishers have simply increased their prices to increase their profits. Many of these same publishers have identified which of their journals are of vital importance in their fields and have increased the price of these dramatically; they claim the price increases are due to the increased size of the journals. Some European publishers have established American institutional subscription rates which are much higher than prices charged to institutional subscribers elsewhere, and a small number of these publishers are forcing research libraries to purchase their products at the inflated American rate by strictly controlling distribution of their publications.

The cost of monographs has gone up as well, and the library will probably not be able to afford as many books as have previously been acquired. The acquisition of large sets of microform sources, newspapers, runs of serials, collections of papers, manuscripts, and books will be significantly reduced as well.

The library's responses to dollar devaluation and discriminatory and exploitative pricing are several; it is trying to hold the line on total expenditures on serials, to inform the faculty and the university administration of the problems, to seek additional funding, and to confront the publishers with its concern and its actions. Librarians are also writing directly to the sponsoring organizations, editors and reviewing boards of the journals with the worst price increases. Yale's point is that academic libraries cannot afford to let a single publisher or group of publishers monopolize the market for scholarly publications. Should research reveal illegal practices, legal advice will be obtained. Yale is cooperating with other major academic libraries in this matter. Selection officers will continue to solicit faculty advice during the year as they formulate policies and take action to protect the library's acquisitions program. As always, the faculty's concern and support will be instrumental in shaping the library's collections.

--- MAK

More on Bookplates

The description of the Bookplate Collection in the last issue of Nota Bene neglected to mention Harry D. Scammell, one of its distinguished recent curators. Harry came to Yale in 1963 to assist Warren Lowenhaupt, then Curator of the Bookplate Collection; at the same time, he was appointed Librarian of the new Geology Library. When Lowenhaupt died in 1968, he became Curator, a post he retained until his death in 1984.

Davenport College, where Harry was a resident fellow for 20 years, recently honored his memory and the breadth of his services to the Yale community by publishing Harry D. Scammell: A Recollection and Appreciation (ed. Richard C. Beacham, New Haven, 1987). Harry's contributions to the Bookplate Collection were numerous and important. He gave his own collection and worked to incorporate it along with several other large donations into Yale's holdings. He reorganized British and American bookplates and assembled complete works of individual artists like William Fowler Hopson, a New Haven engraver. He purchased valuable plates and arranged for donation of others. He displayed the treasures of the collection and enriched numerous exhibits on campus with carefully selected bookplates.

—SFR

Bookplate by William Fowler Hopson

---

Yale Audio-visual
Czeslaw Milosz’s 1944 poem “Ucieczka” (Flight), holograph (translated by Alexander M. Schenker)

Flight

As we were fleeing from the burning city,
I stopped and looked back from a country road
And said, “Let grass cover our footprints,
Let fire silence all the shrieking prophets,
And let the dead tell the dead their story.
As for us, we shall beget a new and angry tribe,
Free from joy and evil which slumbered back there.
Let’s go!” And a sword of fire opened our path.

Czeslaw Milosz Papers Acquired by Beinecke

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library recently acquired the papers of the Polish writer Czeslaw Milosz. A resident of the United States since 1960, Milosz has received such literary honors as the Neustadt Prize for Literature (1978) and the Nobel Prize in Literature (1980). Alexander Schenker of the Yale Slavic Department calls Milosz “one of the most significant literary personalities of the twentieth-century Poland and certainly her most outstanding living poet.”

Born in Lithuania in 1911, Milosz published his first volume of poetry, Poemat o czasie zastygym (A Poem on Frozen Time) in 1933. It was his second book Trzy zimy (Three Winters, 1936) established Milosz’s reputation as Poland’s most promising, yet most disquieting young poet.

World War II, which Milosz spent in Warsaw, fully justified the poet’s premonition of impending catastrophe and served as a backdrop for some of his most anguish and somber poems. After the war Milosz served as cultural attaché at the Polish Embassy first in Washington and later in Paris. In 1951, facing mounting political pressure, Milosz sought asylum in France, where he spent the next ten years as a free-lance writer, producing such major works as Zniechowanie umysł (The Captive Mind, 1953) and Traktat poetycki (Treatise on Poetry, 1957).

From 1960 until his retirement six years ago, Milosz taught Polish and Russian literatures at the University of California at Berkeley. A prolific writer, he has published many volumes of prose and poetry during his residence in the United States. His latest American book, Unattainable Earth, appeared in 1985.

The Milosz archive acquired by the Beinecke Library embraces all of the poet’s extant papers. While his pre-World War II manuscripts and letters have been lost, the remaining collection of materials is nevertheless large and varied. There are unpublished books, stories, essays and poems, and scores of letters, translations, notebooks and photographs. One remarkable item in the archive is Milosz’s holograph draft of his autobiography, Rodzina Europa (Native Realm, 1959).

At the Beinecke Library the Milosz papers will enhance Yale’s already extensive collection of modern literature. The library is especially rich in the literary archives of twentieth-century writers who lived as expatriates. For further information, please contact Vincent Giroud, Beinecke Library (432-2872) or Alexander Schenker, Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures (432-1303).

—CAS

Photographs in this issue of Nota Bene are by Michael Marsland.
Calendar of Major Library Exhibits

BEINECKE RARE BOOK LIBRARY

In Their Own Hands: Letters of the United States Presidents through December

DIVINITY LIBRARY

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions through December
Ecumenical Leaders Index Project through December
World Student Christian Federation through December

MEDICAL LIBRARY

English Forensic Medicine to 1878. through November
Selections from the Clements C. Fry Collection of Medical Prints and Drawings through January
Varieties of Medical Ephemera through January

STERLING MEMORIAL LIBRARY

The Opochinsky Collection of Music Manuscripts through December

In this letter to James Madison, George Washington expresses his concern about the future of the United States and the need for "a liberal, and energetic constitution, well-guarded & closely watched."

Nota Bene is published during the academic year to acquaint faculty, staff, and other users with the resources of the Yale libraries. Comments and questions may be directed to Susanne Roberts, Editor, Bibliography Department, Sterling Memorial Library (432-1762).

Contributors to this issue include Michael A. Keller, Barbara B. McCorkle, Susanne F. Roberts, Christa A. Sammons, Alexander M. Schenker, and Susan J. Steinberg. The assistance of R. Gay Walker and Conrad J. Jacoby is gratefully acknowledged.

Millicent D. Abell, University Librarian
Susanne F. Roberts, Editor

ISSN 0894-1351

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
New Haven, Connecticut
Permit Number 470

Yale University Library
P.O. Box 1603A Yale Station
New Haven, Connecticut 06520

Nota Bene News from the Yale Library