

# access

*A Newsletter from the University at Buffalo Libraries*

Winter 2005-2006

## **Celebrating "Collecting" and UB's Rare Book Treasures**

This Fall, the UB Libraries showcased seventy years of "imaginative collecting" in a magnificent rare books exhibition presented in the Special Collections Research Room, Capen Hall. Some of the University's greatest treasures, long locked away, were brought into the light for the public to see and experience. The exhibit celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the founding of UB's original Lockwood Memorial Library in 1935 (presently Abbott Hall), as well as Thomas B. Lockwood's "princely gift" to the University of his now priceless rare books collection. "Rare Books: An Exposition" was curated by John Edens, Interim University Archivist, and Assistant Director of the Libraries for Technical Services. Many members of the staff of Special Collections and Central Technical Services also contributed to the exhibition and events.

UB's remarkable rare books collection evolved from the enlightened and loving collecting of such major benefactors as Lockwood, Julian Park, Peter Boyd Bowman, George Nathan Newman, Richard Lee, Robert Hoe, and many others. Michael Basinski, Poetry Curator, describes the collection as "luminous, unique books." Volumes exhibited span from the dawn of printing with a book of the poetry of Publius Papinius Statius printed by Aldus Manutius in 1502, to the marvelous art volumes created by the Kelmscott Press, including the Kelmscott *Chaucer* (1896) and *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems* by William Morris (1892), to such landmarks of culture as the first edition of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859). Lockwood's philanthropy extended to the establishment of an endowment that supports the continued acquisition of rare and unique material for UB's Special Collections.

President John B. Simpson, speaking at the exhibition's opening reception, noted that while UB's rare books are a "timeless" resource, these "volumes are very much alive." Recognizing the potential of digital technologies to augment access to rare and fragile collections, President Simpson quoted Norman Cousins who referred to "a delivery room for the birth of ideas where history comes alive." Also attending the reception was Thomas Baker, Executive Director of the Oishei Foundation. A generous grant from the Foundation supported an extensive project to catalog the rare books and, as a result, make the UB volumes known to the worldwide scholarly community. Diane Ward, Principal Poetry Cataloger, Central Technical Services, managed the cataloging project and poignantly expressed her awe at being surrounded by these irreplaceable treasures: "To walk amongst aisles of rare books yearning to be cataloged is a dream made real... and I will always feel blessed to have been a steward for these prized possessions . . . and to share with the University community the treasures that for so long lay hidden."

The Libraries plan to continue celebrating our treasures by producing posters of reproductions of original watercolours from a unique volume that is the only copy known in the world. Intrigued? This book will be featured in a forthcoming **access**.

The graphics reflect the art of major book illustrators of the late nineteenth century, Walter Crane and Arthur J. Gaskin. Upper: *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne; with sixty designs by Walter Crane. Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1893. Illustration of Bellerophon on Pegasus. Lower: *Stories & Fairy Tales* by Hans Christian Andersen; with 100 pictures by Arthur J. Gaskin. London: George Allen, 1893. Illustration for "The Wild Swans." Both volumes are from the Thomas B. Lockwood Collection.



# UB Libraries Annex—A Twenty-Year Dream Now Under Construction



For more than twenty years, the UB Libraries have planned for an offsite, high-density book storage Annex. Over the past two decades, several sites for the facility have been considered and some even reached the design stage. This fall, construction commenced on an approximately 16,000-square-foot building to store up to 1.5 million volumes of low-use materials. Located on Rensch Road in Amherst, close to the UB North Campus, the building is being constructed by Savarino Construction Service. Some UB computing activities and equipment will also be relocated to the Annex facility thereby creating a security back-up for essential computing resources and data.

Designed by Carmina & Wood, PC Architecture and Engineering, Buffalo, the Annex will provide high-density shelving up to 30-feet high to house and protect carefully selected low-use materials, such as long runs of older journals and historical sets that are now readily accessible in digital format to students, faculty, and researchers. The architects have followed general guidelines that major institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Cornell universities have developed for annex facilities. In addition to the shelving core, the plans include a document delivery center, as well as a public reading room where anyone can use physical volumes housed in the Annex. Records for all books relocated to the Annex will be included in the UB Libraries' online catalog. Materials can be requested using an online form for delivery to campus locations, or individual journal articles can be electronically transmitted to a requestor's workstation.

Costs of offsite storage facilities have been calculated to be ten percent of the expense of traditional on-campus library buildings. Capacity is also impressive: while traditional library shelving can house 75,000 volumes in 10,000 square feet of space, up to over a million volumes can be placed in the same amount of space using high-density storage methods. Growth of our 3.5+ million volumes collection requires up to two miles of additional shelving each year. Widespread predictions that digitization and the Internet would significantly reduce the growth of physical library collections have not come to fruition. Karen Senglaup, Director for Access Services, and manager of the Libraries' Annex project, expects materials to begin to be transferred to the Annex this Spring.

Stephen Roberts, Acting Associate Vice President for University Libraries, is looking forward to opportunities the Annex presents to the University: "the subsequent move of low-use research materials to the Annex will allow us to repurpose an impressive amount of centrally located space. Besides providing room to conveniently present traditional materials, space will finally be available to create areas that address the study and learning needs of a modern campus. We anticipate providing flexible, attractive space for quiet and group study; expanded Cybraries; hands-on computer classrooms; and convenient, updated service stations."

Follow the progress of the UB Libraries Annex at:

<https://library.buffalo.edu/annex/>



## Transformations

It is challenging yet exciting to assume leadership of the University Libraries as we are poised to experience the culmination of major initiatives, some of which have been envisioned for years. Our talented staff and their professional commitment to promoting access to information, as well as to providing resources and services that support UB's multifaceted mission, make me proud. I believe that we have created an organization that is responsive and facile. Many of you know that I enjoy fostering innovation through adoption and adaption of new technologies. Today, digital resources, more powerful and customer-driven library systems, and educational technologies are changing the landscape, culture, and even the general perception of the nature of libraries.

You may have noticed the steel beams of the Libraries' Annex, rising next to Sweet Home Road near the 290 overpass. Much more than a huge, off campus, physical building, the Annex will allow the Libraries to reallocate space on campus and create increasingly effective hubs of information access and academic and social interaction. Our staff's behind-the-scenes planning, processing, and organization of services, now underway, insure that the Annex will be a successful and valued asset to UB.

Our forthcoming new library system, ALEPH, is scheduled for its appearance this summer. ALEPH brings enhanced user empowerment and interaction, connection to all SUNY libraries/collections, and vibrant deployment of web-based content.

I am increasingly in awe of the incredible treasures in our Special Collections. The major Rare Books exhibit this past Fall brought to light some of our magnificent and unique holdings. We believe that through digital technologies, we can augment the research and teaching potential of many of these special materials, making them accessible to everyone, known throughout the world, formatted to allow detailed and extensive use, and even transformed into dynamic teaching tools. We are already planning a significant redesign of our Special Collections Research Room to foster scholarly investigation, and creation, access to, and use of the resources housed there. Applied technology is making it possible both to preserve rare, one of a kind items, and simultaneously make them more available to students and researchers at UB or on the Internet. Addressing this goal, we have introduced UB*digit* UB digital collections

I invite you to become engaged in our transformations and, along with us, make new discoveries in our Libraries.

**Stephen Roberts**  
**Acting Associate Vice President for University Libraries**





## Mail Art: Pushing the Envelope of Contemporary Culture

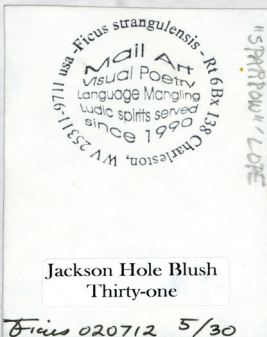
"BARON" recently donated a significant collection of mail art to The Poetry Collection, augmenting the strong holdings of cultural ephemera in our Special Collections. Mail art embraces the U.S. Postal Service as its communications medium along with such techniques and conventions as rubber stamps, collage, visual and concrete poetry, "artistamps," handmade papers, and copy art. Its inception can be traced to the anti-art revolution sparked by the Dadaists and Marcel Duchamp's transmission of his ideas by postcard. It mushroomed into a worldwide mail art or Correspondence Art Network in the 1950s, led by Ray Johnson, founder of the New York Correspondance School. Mail art aims to democratize art by circumventing the elitism of established critique, gallery, exhibition, and sales conventions. Proponents freely create, distribute, and share their art through the mail and in counter-culture fanzines. The character of mail art depends not on technique or form, but on the method of presentation and distribution. With its emphasis on communication, it creates a powerful intimacy forged in a spirit of generosity and collaboration. Its circumvention of the art establishment frees it to push culture beyond perceived boundaries in directions that challenge our perceptions and objectify generally suppressed attitudes and ideas. As Jeanne Marie Kusina succinctly states in an article in the journal *Contemporary Aesthetics*, mail art destroys the "division between the famous and the fan as they are drawn into mutual participation in the artistic process." Founder Ray Johnson viewed mail art "more like fireworks than precious objects in a sanctuary of art."

Residing in Cleveland on Euclid Heights Boulevard, an address conjuring memories (for some) of the crowd-pleasing Euclid Beach amusement park that succumbed to urban development in 1969, "BARON" deposited a vast collection of mail art he received generally from the 1990s to the present. He chose The Poetry Collection because of its growing reputation for collecting, cultivating, preserving, and curating mail art and other ephemera representative of popular and underground culture. His collection joins holdings by other major figures in mail art, also termed "Network Art" or "Correspondence Art," including "The Sticker Dude" (Joel Cohen), "The Spitter" (John M. Bennett, a librarian and Curator of the Avant Writing Collection of the University of Ohio) and Luc Fierens, who resides in Belgium. "BARON," like many mail artists, prefers to be known simply by his moniker.

Besides the actual envelope or container art, mail art also aims to "test" and "tease" the U. S. Postal Service by mailing three-dimensional objects, and by trying to get their own created rubber stamps, or "artistamps," officially "cancelled." The act of mailing as well as the actual object become part of the art experience. Mail artists also engage in active exchange of "trading cards," like that of *Ficus strangulensis* (a retired organic chemist), illustrated at left. Exhibitions of mail art are now frequent, but they are governed by egalitarian rules stipulating that all work received is shown, no fees are charged, and no work is returned.

The Internet has been fully embraced by mail artists. The function of the Internet to create distance-independent communities was quickly harnessed to further democratize and extend these art networks. Virtual mail art can be augmented by unedited interviews, artists' commentary, interactive responses and conversations, as well as exhibitions on Web sites. The Poetry Collection and the Educational Technology Center are presently developing a digital collection of mail art representative of our holdings, to be offered via the UB*digit* platform.

Examples of UB's mail art collections presented here are indicative of major trends and aims of its artists. A missive to John M. Bennett proclaims "The Address is the Art." An envelope from Vittore Baroni mailed to John M. Bennett ("The Spitter") in 1989 depicts "BAT" artistamps objectifying the credo "Break Art Taboos."





## "Hos Geldiniz" from Turkey

*Barbara von Wahlde, Associate Vice President for University Libraries, sends all **access** readers a cheerful "merhaba" (hello) from Turkey. Barbara is spending the academic year as a University at Buffalo "Exchange Scholar" in Istanbul and Ankara. She recently sent us some informal news to share with you about her activities .*

The Turkish phrase, 'Hos Geldiniz' (welcome) personifies my experiences in Turkey, and my exposure to its culture, language, higher education practices, along with the collegiality, knowledge, and support offered to me by Turkish academic librarians. I've settled into my little flat on the Maslak campus of Istanbul Technical University (I.T.U., pronounced "E Too"). I.T.U. is a large public university with ties to UB and other SUNY educational programs. Also here are Professor Stuart Chen, UB Department of Structural & Environmental Engineering, and James Bennett, a jewelry maker and a professor of fine arts from SUNY New Paltz. I've been able to attend some of their seminars and public lectures which range from safe bridge structures to creative jewelry design. On one of my first evenings here, I enjoyed a dinner hosted by the UB alumni club president in Istanbul, Zeynep Uluer. At a conference in Istanbul on the Ottoman and North Atlantic Empires, I met UB Professor Donald McQuire, Classics Department. The conference included fascinating lectures by scholars from the U.S., England, and Turkey.

Here in Istanbul traffic is terrible and drivers are aggressive. I'm thankful not to be driving and instead to be using buses, the Metro, and the dolmus (a shared mini-bus system which you can hail like a taxi). The cultural life of this city is rich and varied. Museums are glorious, including a just opened exhibit of Picasso paintings never before loaned. Parks and palaces abound, music is everywhere, and of course there is the Bosphorus and the Old Town (Sultanahmet, home to Topkapi Palace and the Aya Sophia Byzantine church).

At I.T.U., I'm working with the library director, Ayhan Kaygusuz, who manages the many libraries in the I.T.U. system. We have discovered much in common as we explore the similarities and differences between Turkish and American university libraries. He has been my guide on all things Turkish. With him, I have attended a meeting of the Ankos Steering Committee, an organization that brokers electronic resources for academic libraries, and a meeting of the Innovative Library Initiatives Group. We also visited the American Consulate, now in a fortress type building and located at a distance from its original site after 9/11 and bombings in Istanbul. In December, I'll offer a workshop on information fluency for I.T.U. staff and other area academic librarians. There is great interest in teaching students to select and evaluate information resources whether provided by libraries or Google. The use of subject specialists in American libraries is envied.



I am fortunate to have been here, already, during two important national days that resonate with the Turkish people. October 29th is celebrated as the day when the Turkish republic was founded; and the 10th of November marks a national remembrance of Ataturk and his role in the war of independence. Lectures, music, folk dancing and other events added to the celebrations.



Bilkent University Library, Ankara

In January, I will move to Ankara and Bilkent University, a private university with UB connections. Teaching there is in English. One of my assignments at Bilkent will be to assist in the search for a new library director. A smaller, more manageable city, Ankara shares an attribute with Buffalo—its distinction of being a "20-minute city" due to the ease in moving around. One of the greatest archaeological sites in the world is nearby, Hattusas, now an open air museum and associated with the Hittite civilization.

In closing for now, I'd like to emphasize my constantly growing recognition of the universality of professional commitment, the desire to learn about new models and to improve library services, which are hallmarks of our profession.

*Barbara von Wahlde*  
Istanbul, December 2005.

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Bottle art mailed via the U.S. Postal Service to "BARON" from "Ficus strangulensis," 2000.

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