The James Joyce Museum at the University at Buffalo
An International Destination for Research and Discovery

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Learn more about plans for the new James Joyce Museum at the University at Buffalo.
Bringing the World to Buffalo

The University at Buffalo Libraries provide bold resources for students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends across all three campuses. One of our major points of pride is that UB is home to the world's largest, most comprehensive and most prestigious collection of materials by and related to James Joyce (1882-1941), the acclaimed Irish author widely recognized as perhaps the most influential writer of the twentieth century.

The first installment of the James Joyce Collection came to UB's Poetry Collection in 1950; thanks in large part to Oscar Silverman and Charles Abbott, and by virtue of a gift from Margaretto F. Wickser, made in memory of her husband, Philip J. Wickser, an arts patron and book collector. The gift consisted of the Libraria La Hun's 1949 exhibition Exposition en Hommage à James Joyce, a substantial body of manuscripts, family portraits, Patrick Tuohy's portraits of Joyce and his father, letters, newspaper clippings, and Joyce's personal library, received as it had been packed for storage after Joyce left Paris to flee the Nazi occupation. It also included some personal effects, such as his canes, glasses and passports. B.W. Huebsch, Joyce's first American publisher, donated two more installments in 1951 and 1953.

In 1959, hands-on negotiations and a financial commitment from Constance and Walter Stafford secured another major consignment: the purchase of Joyce materials from Sylvia Beach, proprietor of the famous modernist bookstore Shakespeare and Company, and publisher of the first edition of Ulysses. Walter Stafford, MD '44, taught neurology and served as associate dean of academic affairs in the UB medical school. These items included manuscripts and production materials pertaining to Ulysses, Beach's business records and her personal Joyce collection. The Staffords, along with Mrs. Spencer Kittinger, helped to fund the purchase of another component after Beach's death in 1962. A final installment arrived in 1968—the acquisition from Maria and Eugene Jolas of corrected materials pertaining to Finnegans Wake. Maria and Eugene Jolas edited the magazine Transition in Paris, which published Joyce's writing.

The Best in Letters: The James Joyce Collection at UB

James Joyce's literary accomplishments are known and loved by millions, particularly his most highly regarded publications, including Dubliners (1914), A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916), Finnegans Wake (1939) and Ulysses (1922), perhaps the single most important English-language novel of the past 100 years. His experimental prose, syntax and narrative structure, compounded by his prolific use of literary, mythical and religious allusions, make James Joyce one of the most highly researched literary figures of all time.

As a result, UB's James Joyce Collection has long been a destination for literary scholars far and wide. The collection—thoughtfully and meticulously gathered, curated and cared for since the arrival of the first archive pieces in 1950—offers more than 10,000 pages of Joyce's working papers, notebooks, manuscripts, photographs, correspondence, portraits, publishing records and personal artifacts, as well as the author's private library.

Supplementing the archive is a complete set of first editions, including most issues and states of every book published by Joyce, translations, a large number of his magazine appearances and virtually all significant criticism. Together, these materials document practically every aspect of Joyce's artistic life and provide unmatched glimpses into his writing process and literary relationships.

But what truly distinguishes this Joyce Collection is that it is housed within UB Libraries' Poetry Collection, which serves as the library of record for 20th- and 21st-century Anglophone poetry. Founded in 1935, the Poetry Collection is comprehensive in its collection of first and other bibliographically significant editions, small-press literary magazines and journals, broadsides, anthologies, criticism and reference. The Poetry Collection also holds more than 170 archives and manuscript collections from a wide range of poets, presses, magazines and organizations, including literary giants William Carlos Williams, Helen Adam, Robert Duncan, Robert Graves, Dylan Thomas, Jargon and Wyndham Lewis. And it serves as a regional repository for many Western New York publishers and arts organizations. Finally, it includes substantial collections of artwork, audio recordings, ephemera, photographs, visual poetry and zines, making it one of the largest poetry libraries of its kind in the world.

As an active research center for the study of modern and contemporary poetry, the Poetry Collection has endless reach. The collection:

• provides materials to a wide range of scholarly publications;
• welcomes visiting researchers from around the globe;
• supports UB undergraduate and graduate students' education;
• supplements numerous exhibitions worldwide with loaned materials.

Recognizing that art does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is always historically and culturally situated, the Poetry Collection's complete holdings offer remarkable insight into Joyce's significant role in the larger artistic and social milieus of the 20th and 21st centuries, and further differentiate UB's unmatched James Joyce Collection.

The James Joyce Collection at UB is unparalleled and demands to be shared with a wider world audience as a cornerstone of literary study and discovery. That is why UB now is working to ready its incomparable Joyce Collection for a higher calling, with plans to place it in a new home—a landmark exhibition space—and to attract an eminent James Joyce scholar to serve as its curator. The UB Libraries also is finalizing new strategies for the collection's preservation, for obtaining future acquisitions to add to its considerable holdings, and for increasing visitor engagement with these valuable materials.

We've set our sights high, aiming at academic and scholarly excellence and becoming a model for the best in research, higher education and library studies. We are committed to raising our standards—and securing financial support—to garner the global attention and appreciation this rare resource deserves.

A Bold Vision with Boundless Benefits

"Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age." —James Joyce, “The Dead,” from Dubliners

Headling these words, UB Libraries has a bold vision to secure the James Joyce Collection's future preservation and growth, while inviting the broader world in to explore the literary life and works of Ireland's native son and one of literature's most influential and celebrated figures.

Making this vision a reality will have a tremendous impact on the University at Buffalo, on Western New York and the world.