NEW EXHIBITION: “THE GLOBAL BOOK”  
By Michael Taylor

A new exhibition in Special Collections invites viewers to consider books as one point of departure for exploring our shared global heritage. On display through the end of August, the exhibition features a colorful selection of materials from various world cultures and historical time periods.

How do books’ physical attributes reveal cross-cultural influences? Have the same creative impulses emerged in places hundreds of years and thousands of miles apart? Can juxtaposing one book with another tell us something about each that we cannot get by looking at just one? These are a few of the questions that the exhibition raises.

Among the materials on display are examples of manuscript illumination from medieval Europe and the Middle East that show how widespread this art form was. Several items, including a selection of illustrated bindings produced in Japan, Europe, and the United States, explore the topic of East-West cultural exchange.

Three hornbooks, used to teach American children to read in the days before cheap textbooks, are paired with a Quranic writing board, which served a similar function in Islamic schools in some parts of Africa. Also exhibited are three reusable writing surfaces—a Roman wax tablet, a writing board from nineteenth-century India, and an electronic “Boogie Board” with LCD screen. Modern innovations, it turns out, are not always as innovative as we think.
Director’s Letter

Spring is a time for new beginnings and new opportunities. In Heritage Resources, we are continuing to grow and change in ways that enhance our mission to bring quality research and teaching opportunities to staff, faculty, students, and the broader community. We do this by acquiring, preserving and making available archives, manuscripts, and books that will provide evidence of the past long into the future.

Over the past six months, I’ve also had an opportunity for personal growth and development through a sabbatical devoted to writing on archival topics. The outcome of this labor is a book entitled Advancing Preservation that will be available through the Society of American Archivists in 2019. This dedicated time for research and writing has once again reminded me of the joy I take in the field of archives and special collections, and the work we do every day. I am deeply grateful to my staff who assumed extra duties in my absence, and to Margaret Fast who took on the demanding role of acting director.

Upon my return, I was pleased to find two excellent exhibitions in place, both curated by our new Special Collections Librarian, Michael Taylor. The first, The Global Book, is described in more detail in these pages. The second, Bound to Please, offers an informative overview of the art and craft of book binding in the 19th century with examples from our own collections. With Michael on our team, I look forward to expanding and refining our rare book collection and featuring these new resources in our Special Collections research room, in the classroom, and through our excellent public programming opportunities.

We also recently concluded negotiations for two important new donations. We are honored and pleased to include the papers of Chuck and Dee Robinson of Village Books in our archival holdings at the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies. Their legacy as community activists and independent booksellers is remarkable, and their papers will tell their unique story to interested researchers. We also acquired a large collection of over 400 underground “comix” and graphic novels from Kate Tate, in memory of her late husband Frank L. Waynewood. This donation represents a new genre of collecting for us that will certainly offer exciting new opportunities for teaching, learning and research.

~ Elizabeth Joffrion, Heritage Resources Director

Upcoming Events & Programs

♦ NEW EXHIBITION: "The Global Book" invites viewer to consider books as one point of departure for exploring our shared global heritage. Available for viewing now through August 2018, Monday-Friday from 11:00am-4:00pm in Special Collections.

♦ Spring 2018 Heritage Resources Distinguished Speakers Chuck and Dee Robinson will give a talk about the history Village Books (the locally-owned bookstore they founded in 1980), and as part of its legacy, their decision to leave the historical records of that business to the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies. Thursday, May 24th at 4:00pm in Special Collections.

♦ Summer 2018 Fly Fishing Speaker Art Lingren will share photographs and stories of his passion for fly fishing, fly tying, and more. Wednesday, July 11 at 2:00pm in Special Collections.
Among Heritage Resources’ holdings are items and collections reflecting ways in which different groups and individuals have sought to inspire and effect lasting social change. Recently processed and available through the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, the papers of Robert E. Hughes document the remarkable work, commitment and achievements of a Methodist minister and life-long civil rights and social justice activist.

Born in Gadsden, Alabama, Robert E. Hughes (1928 -2012) was appointed the first Executive Director of the Alabama Council on Human Relations, and was deeply involved in the South’s civil rights struggle. In 1960, Hughes served jail time for refusing to reveal information about other activists; he was briefly expelled from the North Alabama Conference of the Methodist Church in consequence, and reinstated on condition of accepting an overseas transfer. Hughes and his wife Dorothy served as missionaries in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) before returning to the U.S. with their family in 1966. Following his years abroad, Reverend Hughes embarked upon a 27-year career with the Department of Justice’s Community Relations Service (CRS). In 1975, he was appointed a Mediator with the CRS’ Northwest Regional Branch, based in Seattle, Washington. Papers housed at WWU relate primarily to Hughes’ work for the CRS in the Pacific Northwest from the mid-1970s onwards, with compelling documentation both of human rights concerns and related activism and responses in the region.

The collection documents a range of social concerns including the rights of indigenous peoples, policing and justice issues, race-related conflict and efforts to combat white supremacist and the militia movement. In addition to materials from Hughes’ work with the CRS, the collection includes substantial files from his post-retirement activism. The Robert E. Hughes Papers were donated by Mrs. Dorothy Hughes and are open to the public for research: for more information, please contact cpnws@wwu.edu.
Nor can the West take full credit for inventions that actually originated elsewhere. Though Johannes Gutenberg is often regarded as the father of printing with moveable metal type, Korean printers hit upon the same idea almost eighty years earlier, as one item in the exhibit reveals. Visitors will also learn about an early technique for producing illustrated books that was used in Germany and Japan, despite no communication between these cultures.

Books, in the end, are not just about texts, but also art and design. Come and learn about how the visual cues they contain can help us make connections where we may not have seen them before.

One exhibit case features items from the library’s prominent Mongolian Studies collection. A number of recent acquisitions of materials from other parts of Asia, including two Buddhist sutras and an original palm leaf manuscript, round out the exhibit.

Questions? Contact Michael Taylor, Special Collections Librarian, at (360) 650-3097 or Michael.Taylor@wwu.edu.

All images are from “The Global Book” exhibit, SC.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our volunteers and student employees for all they do in support of Heritage Resources. We would also like to thank the many individuals, families, and organizations who have made generous monetary gifts and contributions of collection materials. To donate to Heritage Resources, please email beth.Joffrion@wwu.edu or phone 360-650-3283. Donations can also be made online or by mail to the Western Foundation, MS-9034, Western Washington University, 516 High St, Bellingham, WA 98225-9034. Please designate your contribution to Western Libraries and identify “Heritage Resources” as the program you wish to support.