MUSIC MAKES A PLACE AT GEORGETOWN

Music's place at Georgetown, while an honored one, has not been particularly prominent. The library has long had modest collections of books on the history of music, biographies of composers and musicians, and recordings in various formats. The Special Collections Division could point with pride to a copyist's manuscript, dated 1825, of the opening two movements of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and, more recently, to brief manuscripts written by Aaron Copland and William Grant Still as well as printed scores autographed by Ferrucio Busoni, Percy Grainger, and R. Nathaniel Dett.

From the library's point of view, all that changed remarkably late last December, when University President Leo O'Donovan, S.J., signed an agreement with Leon Robbin (L '22) whereby Mr. Robbin's extensive collection of musical manuscripts and letters written by composers would ultimately come to reside in Lauinger Library. In 1990 Mr. Robbin presented to the university an eighteenth-century copy of a manuscript by Palestrina, bound with an as yet unidentified manuscript Requiem. That manuscript was joined, on the occasion of the signing of the agreement, by autograph manuscripts by Gioacchino Rossini (1826, with a presentation inscription) and Gaetano Donizetti (1816 and not dated).

The Robbin collection comprises approximately 350 musical manuscripts in all, among which are examples by Schubert and Beethoven, together with a similar number of letters written by composers, including a sizable number by Gabriel Fauré. Thanks to the collecting acumen and generosity of Mr. Robbin, music's place in the library will be a prominent one indeed.
SURVEYS IMPROVE LIBRARY SERVICES

This March the library distributed a number of surveys designed to identify needs of users of the Lauinger Library and the Blommer Science Library. Based on the findings of similar surveys distributed in 1994, the library has implemented a number of changes, including the following:

1. **More quiet study areas have been added** to those already in place in Lauinger Library. The Science Library also designated certain areas for quiet and others for quiet discussion. These changes were made because the surveys indicated nearly 40% of students found the libraries too noisy at least half of the time.

2. **New procedures, equipment, document suppliers, and reciprocal arrangements** with other area libraries were implemented to improve Interlibrary Loan turnaround time and performance.

3. **Barrier ropes** were put in place to help channel traffic flow at the Circulation Desk; surveys indicated confusion about how people waiting to check out books should queue.

4. **A new series of classes**, “Drivers’ Education for the Information Superhighway,” was begun in the Fall semester. Both the Reference and Science surveys showed an interest in opportunities to learn how to use electronic resources effectively. The “Drivers’ Education” classes focused on electronic resources, including CD-ROM databases; online catalogs such as LOCIS (the catalog of the Library of Congress) and WorldCat (a catalog of hundreds of libraries throughout the United States); the Georgetown University Library Gopher; Mosaic and the Worldwide Web; and Lexis-Nexis. The libraries also hosted for faculty a “Showcase of Electronic Resources” during which these resources were demonstrated and questions were answered.

5. **Titles** which were available only at the Serials window have been moved to the Reserve Desk, increasing the number of hours those titles are available. Additional staff now ensure that periodicals are returned to the shelves as quickly as possible.

6. **Larger television monitors** were purchased for the Audio-Visual Learning Resource Center to provide better viewing conditions.

7. **Computer workstations in Government Documents** were reconfigured to permit more efficient access to the CD-ROM databases.

8. Many people recommended **specific books and periodicals for addition to the library’s collections**. These suggestions were passed on to the Collection Development Department for handling.
PRESSING ON IN THE LINE OF DUTY

This past President’s Day Sarah Booth Conroy featured in The Washington Post a remarkable letter from President George Washington to Dr. William Thornton. The original document is at Georgetown, a gift in the early nineteenth century from Mrs. Adelaide Talbot. Since that time other generous donors have added greatly to the library’s collection of presidential autographs. The most recent benefactor is Henry L. Heymann of Washington, D.C. His splendid gift includes autograph letters by John Quincy Adams, James Buchanan, Calvin Coolidge, Ulysses S. Grant, William Henry Harrison, Abraham Lincoln, James Monroe, Franklin Pierce, and John Tyler. Two of the letters in particular reveal strikingly the trials and tribulations of presidents in office.

November 25, 1822:
James Monroe finds himself in debt and marks his letter “private and confidential”:

It is an object of much interest to me to borrow a sum of money, provided it can be obtained of an individual, on ample security in real property...

... The property consists of 3,500 acres of land with many slaves, within a few miles of the university near Charlottesville, Virg., & with valuable improvements upon it... my long absence from, & neglect of my private affairs, the losses thereby sustained, & other causes, have subjected me to some debts... I would not have my name brought before any bank, nor would I wish it to be mentioned, except in confidence, to a party presumed to be willing to make such a loan, & to no connection, or friend.

June 3, 1844: John Tyler shares his doubts with Representative Charles J. Ingersoll of Pennsylvania over passage of the treaty to annex Texas, considered his greatest achievement:

Should the Senate act definitely on the Treaty in time to enable me to throw in a response it is my present purpose to do so... if a select committee could be created and that committee concurs in a report and resolution which would enable me to keep alive the negotiations it might be well... I confess myself to be almost in despair, but I will still press on in the line of duty.

THE YEAR OF THE LIBRARY

As we noted in the last issue, the academic year 1995-96 will mark two major anniversaries for the library: the 200th year since its founding, and the 25th in the present Lauinger Library building.

Work has already begun on preparing a revised and expanded edition of Special Collections at Georgetown, scheduled to appear in early 1996. The new edition will feature descriptions of more than 75 significant collections of rare books, manuscripts, and graphics acquired since 1989.

QUOTABLE

“The true university of these days is a collection of books.”

—Thomas Carlyle
Fulton Oursler, Jr. (C'54), longtime Library Associate and Library Advisory Council member, has presented an extraordinary collection of modern literary material. The archive reveals much about the affairs of Reader's Digest and Mr. Oursler's role as its book editor. Among the correspondents are Neil Armstrong, Ray Bradbury, Will Durant, Billy Graham, John Hersey, Eric Hoffer, Charles A. Lindbergh, Cornelius Ryan, Carl Sagan, Leon Uris, and Barbara Ward. There are original typescripts, with manuscript corrections, by Theodore H. White, Warren E. Burger, and Arthur Ashe, all on the subject of “What America Means to Me.” Letters and manuscripts by James A. Michener abound, especially regarding his book on South Africa, The Covenant, which he wrote at the Digest’s suggestion.

Oursler was also the editor of Alex Haley, and the archive includes important material about Roots. In a six page letter of July 29, 1969, Haley discusses the book. He was concerned that the first chapter of his magnum opus was 200 pages long and asks guidance of Oursler. Haley then describes what he expects Roots to be:

"I'll tell you what it is; it is one of the most powerful books of our time. It is the book that is going to do, in this present social problem we have, something comparable, I hear, here and there (when I have described the book in some detail to persons equipped with knowledge to discern such), to what Uncle Tom's Cabin did in another time . . .

In another letter, dated June 17, 1976, he reminisces about the book’s origin and his indebtedness to Reader’s Digest:

"I'm sure a hundred times my thoughts have flashed back gratefully to that day in 1966 when at Mrs. Wallace's request, there in the Guest House a dining table of you editors gave me sympathetic ears as I just poured out my passionate want to try and cross that ocean, genealogically-speaking, exploring the very few, very slender phonetic clues that I felt I had within a story that my Grandma had drilled into me in my boyhood. And you collectively agreed upon an editorial sheer gamble to help me . . .

In previous years Mr. Oursler donated to the library the papers of his distinguished father, also an editor at Reader’s Digest and the author of The Greatest Story Ever Told. The two archives constitute a wonderful record of part of the American literary scene for almost the whole of the century, and they also form an institutional history of Reader’s Digest, one of the nation’s most successful publishing ventures."
HOLIDAY PARTY
Fun was had by all on December 8 as Library Associates and staff members celebrated the season at the annual Holiday Party. More than 150 people filled historic Riggs Library’s elegant main floor, enjoying festive food and drink and the wonderful singing voices of the Georgetown Chimes. The party is the library’s way of saying “thank you” to all the Associates and friends who continue to offer their support throughout the year. As usual, this was a time for catching up with old friends and making new ones along the way.

EXPLORING THE LABYRINTH
Despite freezing snow and sleet, more than 50 Associates bravely gathered on February 15 to hear Dr. Martin Irvine, Associate Professor of English, and Dr. Deborah Everhart, Humanities Computing Specialist, lecture on “Labyrinth: Medieval Studies and Humanities in the 21st Century.” Irvine and Everhart created the Labyrinth Multimedia System to further work in Medieval Studies, and they demonstrated and described how they developed this pioneering electronic information resource. The lecture was followed by a reception where the speakers were available to answer additional questions from those attending.

A CHRISTMAS SURPRISE
An unexpected telephone call in early December led to the Christmas-week gift by Rev. George Zahn of a small group of rare books, most by or about the Venerable Bede, including one printed in Paris in 1545. Our Christmas cheer was doubly heightened, however, by the presence in the collection of a fine copy of the Rheims New Testament (1582), the first printing of the Bible for Catholics in English, and a sumptuous Canon missae pontificalis (Rome, 1745), in large folio with numerous engravings and decorations. The gift was made in memory of the donor’s grandparents, Samuel and Nellie Evans, Washingtonians whose family burial plot is in Holyrood Cemetery in Georgetown.

IN MEMORIAM
We note with sadness the deaths in recent months of two Library Associates and very special friends of Lauinger Library, Daniel James and Kenton Kilmer. Both were generous in donating books and papers, and both will be remembered gratefully by generations of scholars to come.
A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

We thank all those friends of the library who have donated books, manuscripts, or other library materials since December, 1994. Among them are:

- Wolfram U. Drewes  
  Group of fine prints by Werner Drewes and others

- Patricia G. England  
  Walt Whitman’s American Bard  
  (Lime Kiln Press, 1981) and other books

- Ralph J. Katrosh  
  Eighteenth century Burmese palm leaf manuscript of a grammatical text

- Rev. Paul F. Liston  
  Group of fine prints and books

- Morris J. MacGregor  
  John Taylor Arms print

- Edith S. Mayfield  
  Literary and historical manuscripts, including many of Civil War interest

- Henry I. Nowik  
  Collection of periodicals with contributions by, or comments about, Australian novelist Patrick White

- Roderick S. Quiroz  
  Group of prints by Prentiss Taylor

- John B. Rackham  
  Group of twentieth century American fine prints

PRESERVATION AND TECHNOLOGY FUNDS ESTABLISHED

Preservation of library materials and keeping up with advances in library technology are problems that beset all libraries, and Georgetown is no exception. But at year’s end members of the Associates took the initiative in addressing these needs.

✔ Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Randolph Biddle sent in a generous contribution towards establishing a special fund for the preservation of special collections.

✔ Library Advisory Council member Wilbert B. Dubin also gave generously to support the creation of a technology fund.

We can only repeat something Mrs. Biddle wrote in making her and her husband’s gift: “Hopefully, others so inclined & more affluent will follow suit.”