Manuscript Archives & Rare Book Library

OF EMORY UNIVERSITY

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Benny Andrews Papers
go on exhibit, p. 3

Emory's literary traditions, p. 7
As news of Emory's acquisition of the Salman Rushdie archive spread, I received the following note of congratulations from Seamus Heaney, another writer whose papers are also in Emory's Manuscript, Archives & Rare Book Library:

"When John Keats compared a stack of books to a garnering of 'the full ripened grain', he could have been thinking of Emory's Manuscript, Archives & Rare Book Library. This is one of the world's most important word-hoards, and the acquisition of Salman Rushdie's papers—the gleanings of yet another 'teeming brain'—is further cause for rejoicing in the work being done here and the work that will be done by scholars and writers in the future."

Whether you know Emory's Manuscript, Archives & Rare Book Library as MARBL, as Special Collections, or as (per Heaney's term) a word-hoard, I hope you share his excitement for the extraordinary collections being assembled at Emory and for the extraordinary work they make possible.

With this newsletter we plan to bring you news from MARBL—glimpses inside newly acquired collections, news of discoveries and fresh insights coming out of Emory's research collections, and stories about the innovative teaching and research they support. A library is as much a cultural resource for the university and the wider community as an art gallery, a museum, a theater, or a concert stage. We welcome students, scholars, and all who have an intellectual curiosity and want to learn more about the remarkable stories documented in Emory's collections.

I invite you to enjoy this inaugural issue of Manuscript, Archives & Rare Book Library, to subscribe, to visit the library, and to attend the wide range of exhibitions, lectures, and readings held throughout the year.

Welcome to the word-hoard,

Stephen Ennis

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

FLANNERY O'CONNOR LETTERS

IN 1955, SOON AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Other Stories, Flannery O'Connor received a letter from a reader in Atlanta who had recognized that her stories were, as she put it, "about God."

"I am very pleased to have your letter," O'Connor wrote back. "Perhaps it is even more startling to me to find someone who recognizes my work for what I try to make it than it is for you to find a God-conscious writer near at hand... You were very kind to write me... I would like to know who this is who understands my stories."

Thus began a near-weekly exchange of letters that continued for nine years, until O'Connor's death from lupus at the age of thirty-nine. Her correspondent was Elizabeth Hester, a thirty-two-year-old single woman who worked as a secretary in Atlanta.

From her Baldwin County home, O'Connor comments in these letters on the events of the day: on the Cuban missile crisis, the civil rights movement, the advance of her own debilitating disease, and her chickens and peafowl. During the years of their correspondence, O'Connor completed The Violent Bear It Away and some of her most enduring short stories.

In 1987 Hester made a gift to Emory of all 274 of the letters O'Connor had written her under the condition that they remain sealed for twenty years. This spring Emory opens this remarkable nineteen-year correspondence in May of this year. O'Connor's final letter (top, left) was written just days before her death on August 5, 1964. Betty Hester in an undated photograph (above, used with permission of W.A. Sessions).
Andrews worked tirelessly to promote the inclusion of African American artists in major American museums such as the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Andrews believed passionately in fostering a supportive environment in which young artists could develop their talents, and his work with students at all levels demonstrates this commitment. His dedication to advocacy and education. Andrews believed passionately in fostering a supportive environment in which young artists could develop their talents, and his work with students at all levels demonstrates this commitment. His devotion to education extended beyond the classroom, as is best exemplified by his work with prisoners. In the early 1970s, Andrews began teaching an art class at the Manhattan House of Detention, known as “The Tombs.” From that single class grew a major art program in the New York prison system that became a model for similar programs throughout the country. The exhibition includes photographs and letters that document Andrews’s passion and dedication as well as the ways in which he inspired his students.

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In a recent interview, Rushdie recalled the moment while writing *Midnight's Children* when he suddenly discovered the voice that he would employ to relate the story of his protagonist, Saleem Sinai. “I’ve always remembered it as the day I became a writer,” he said. The progress of his writing and such moments of creative discovery are fully documented in the journals that Rushdie has kept for the past thirty years.

Turning the pages of these journals, one often comes upon sketches that Rushdie has doodled in the margins while gathering his thoughts. In one, he draws the published book he is then writing and even sketches his own dust jacket author photo, long before he has finished writing the novel itself. (See cover.)

In recent years Rushdie has composed at the computer; therefore, arriving with the traditional, paper-based archive were four computers from which library preservation and systems staff are now working to recover the texts of Rushdie’s writings, journal entries, and his most recent email communications. By taking steps now to stabilize and preserve these fugitive and imperiled writings, the library will be able to ensure that students and scholars have access to an equally full record of Rushdie’s writing life in recent years.

Even as the Rushdie archive allows us to turn our gaze inward on Rushdie’s own life and work, it also points outward to a wide literary circle. Of great interest to future biographers and to students of world literature will be the many hundreds of letters from a worldwide community of leading contemporary writers. Among the many authors represented in the Rushdie archive are Anita Desai, Nadine Gordimer, Günter Grass, Vaclav Havel, and this past year’s Nobel Laureate for literature, the Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk.

As Deepika Bahri, director of Emory’s Asian Studies Program, notes, “The Salman Rushdie archive will be a durable and generative resource for generations of scholars.”
Literate societies dominated the cultural and social life of the original college campus at Oxford from its earliest days through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. Early college records suggest that the first of these, Phi Gamma, was organized at a meeting on March 7, 1839. Phi Gamma was so popular that a plan was developed to divide it and start a second society that could make debates and literary discussions livelier and more competitive. The Few Society was organized in August 1839. Weekly debates, declamations, orations, and essay readings were the primary activities of the two literate societies; each also participated actively in the annual Commencement celebrations with distinguished guest speakers, intersociety debates, and parades.

Each of the two classically designed antebellum literary society halls, which stood facing each other across the college’s green, set aside a large area on the main floor for use as a library. Inventories of the societies’ libraries around the time of the Civil War show that the two groups together held around 4,000 volumes while the college’s own library numbered fewer than 2,000. In 1898 the college occupied Candler Hall, its first building specifically designated as a library. In 1901 the literary societies acted together to place their libraries in Candler Hall and augment the holdings of the college library.

Original literary society minute books and other records held by the Emory University Archives date from 1839 to 1937. They document debate topics as well as other matters ranging from policies on loans to the building of new structures. These records, combined with the personal papers of nineteenth-century alumni found among the library’s publications. These records, combined with the personal papers of nineteenth-century alumni found among the library’s publications. These records, combined with the personal papers of nineteenth-century alumni found among the library’s publications. These records, combined with the personal papers of nineteenth-century alumni found among the library’s publications. These records, combined with the personal papers of nineteenth-century alumni found among the library’s publications. These records, combined with the personal papers of nineteenth-century alumni found among the library’s publications. 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These records, combined with the personal papers of nineteen...
I would guess that 99 percent of undergraduates in U.S., U.K., and European universities never darken the doors of their special collections libraries. Indeed, if they even know the location of such uninviting rooms, they may look upon them from the outside as alien inner sanctums inhabited by a strange cadre of four graduate students and cadaverous old professors—a view inimitably universalized for them by Yeats: “All shuffle there; all cough in ink; / All wear the carpet with their shoes.”

In the larger scheme of an alma mater’s or a nation’s concerns, manuscripts do not matter much. If such indifference to manuscripts by the university-educated public is a scandal, it is one of our own making: universities and research libraries traditionally exclude undergraduates from the magic of manuscript use and fail to educate them about their intellectual and cultural importance. The good news is that the seeds of a minirevolution within the larger digital revolution have sprouted in a few U.S. and U.K. universities. One liberating effect of the digital revolution has been the democratization of scholarship. The time has come to take the further step, of democratizing access to manuscripts. Emory’s plan with the Salman Rushdie manuscripts is not to put them in glass cases but rather in the trained hands of undergraduates, as is done with the manuscripts of Yeats, Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney, Carol Ann Duffy, James Dickey, Langston Hughes, and others in our archives.

In 1975 I brought a group of thirty undergraduate students to England for a six-week course, Literature and a Sense of Place. Our travels took us to D. H. Lawrence country in Eastwood. I had written in advance to the archivist at Nottingham University to acquire many of Yeats and Lady Gregory with the assistance of the literary critic Richard Ellmann. When Ellmann died in 1987, we established the Ellmann Lectures, which were inaugurated by Seamus Heaney; and when Heaney donated the manuscripts of his lectures to the library, we were inspired to continue collecting in the contemporary period. Gradually, the teaching mission of the collections has been emphasized as much as the research mission. For the past twenty years, thousands of Emory undergraduates have enjoyed being brought early to the feast of archival research. Some of these students receive internships to assist with receiving and cataloging archival materials and to hone their research skills, which enhances their competition for graduate fellowships. (You can imagine the impact on an interview committee of a undergraduate who knows the Hughes/Plath archive inside out.)

The authors who have chosen to place their archives and collections at Emory have been greatly attracted by the University’s teaching mission and by the accessibility of their materials to students as well as scholars. They have enjoyed being a part of a unique “living library,” where writers in the prime of their careers place their works, give readings, visit classes, assist students with their projects, and return periodically to add new manuscript materials. Salman Rushdie, for instance, has joined us to teach at Emory for five years.

My vision is of a special collections library where manuscript and print materials would be married to sophisticated digital technology in a new environment for teaching and research. Such a library would have a formal reading room and an informal lounge and browsing room where undergraduates and seasoned scholars could meet. It would have seminar rooms integrated into the heart of the collections as well as ample exhibition space and an adequate auditorium for readings and lectures. This high-flow, high-use building would serve the intellectual life in all its private and public forms. And over the entrance would be carved in block capitals, “MANUSCRIPTS MATTER.”

(Excerpted from an address first delivered at Manuscripts Matter: Collecting Modern Literary Archives, a conference held at the British Library in October 2006, and first published in the Three Higher Education Supplement, December 1, 2006.)