Friends of Cambridge University Library, thank you.

Established in 1980, Friends of the Library is celebrating its 40th year.

The Friends are part of the very fabric of the Library. The Library’s work in providing students and researchers with an exceptional environment for study, and sharing our collections with the world, simply would not be possible without the support of our engaged, passionate, generous community of Friends.

In particular, thank you for supporting:

• Acquisitions the Library could otherwise not afford
• Conservation of items of outstanding importance
• Free public exhibitions to share the Library’s collections
• Digitisation of items so they can be shared across the world through the Cambridge Digital Library

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Introduction
Laura Greenfield, Deputy Director for External Engagement

This year we celebrate 40 years of the Friends of Cambridge University Library. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support over that time, with a particular thank you to the dedicated group who have been involved since the founding of the Friends in 1980.

It is always a pleasure to meet Friends of the Library, who are a unique mix of readers, former and current staff, and visitors who have used the Library in all sorts of guises. This year we’ve asked a few Friends to share their own stories, on pages 16-20, as well as including articles about some of the work which has been made possible with the support of the Friends.

It is a particular pleasure this year to pay tribute to Dr Gordon Johnson, who stepped down in 2019 after a long and successful tenure as President of the Friends. As many of you will already be aware, we have made some governance changes in line with similar Friends groups across the University, and have now transferred the volunteer leadership of the Friends to the University Library Advisory Board, a longstanding committee which provides strategic advice across the Library’s services. We were delighted to thank current and recent members of the Friends Committee with an Afternoon Tea in the Librarian’s Office last summer, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them again for their dedication and leadership of the Friends. The events programme and other much-loved elements of the Friends, including, of course, the Bulletin, will continue.

We are, in fact, delivering our most vibrant events programme to date, with 45 events as part of The Rising Tide: Women at Cambridge programme. Friends are warmly welcome at all Library events, and every season we make sure there is an exclusive event for members of the Friends. Programmes can be collected at the Library and the events calendar viewed at https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/using-library/whats. We are able to communicate via our email list much more frequently than by post, so please do sign up to the email list by contacting friends@lib.cam.ac.uk, if you haven’t already.

Please also save the date for the summer party this year, which will take place on Tuesday 7th July 2020 and will include a lecture by the Deputy Director for Research Collections, Mark Purcell, on the heritage and history of the wonderful Giles Gilbert Scott building on West Road: “The ‘new’ library: a controversial masterpiece”.

For the first time this year we have created the Friends Bulletin alongside the Annual Report of Cambridge University Libraries, and we are enclosing both here. I hope you will find this of interest; please let us know any feedback at friends@lib.cam.ac.uk or in writing to the Friends Co-ordinator Jennifer Broadway.

Thank you, as ever for all your support and dedication on behalf of everyone at Cambridge University Library.
“IT IS ALWAYS A PLEASURE TO MEET FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY, WHO ARE A UNIQUE MIX OF READERS, FORMER AND CURRENT STAFF, AND VISITORS WHO HAVE USED THE LIBRARY IN ALL SORTS OF GUISES.”

LAURA GREENFIELD, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AT THE LIBRARY
The Martin Stone collection: more than a century of rare French poetry books

The Library acquired the personal French poetry collection of avid rare books collector (and rock guitarist) Martin Stone, with the help of funding from the Friends.

Martin Stone focused on purchasing illustrated books, first editions and rare works by authors now long forgotten. The collection of French poetry contains 225 books.

Irene Fabry-Tehranchi, French Specialist at the University Library, said: “As soon as we saw the list we realised how important the collection was: it contains major items. It shows the history of French poetry, including less well-known poets and writings by many women poets. It adds a huge amount to our research collection. It’s also an illustrated collection, with a lot of very visually striking books.”

The oldest work in the collection is *Odes et ballades* by Victor Hugo, published in 1841; the most recent item is *Sept* written by Andrée Chedid and illustrated by Erik Bersou, published in 2009. Most of the collection was published between 1881 and 1970. We can see two peaks: the last decade of the 19th century and the interwar period. These were the zenith of two important poetic movements, respectively Symbolism and Surrealism.

Many books from the Martin Stone collection are special, numbered copies, printed on beautiful paper such as Imperial Japan paper and Japanese Nacre paper. Another sign of the great care put into these editions is the illustrations. The collaboration between a writer and an artist can be seen very clearly in the collection.

Autographs are a major and unique feature of the books in this collection. These include not only the authors’ signatures, but also their dedications to the first owner of the copy.

Three highlights from the collection:

- *Demain* by Dorothea Tanning (1964). This jewel of a publication is 11cm x 11cm, printed on Japanese Nacre paper, and is illustrated by beautiful abstract creations by the author and artist. Only 60 copies were published. It amazes every person who looks at it.
- *Les Soliloques du pauvre* by Jehan Rictus, the original of 1897 and a later illustrated edition. This work is striking for its use of a poetic popular language, a literary slang, following the wanderings and thoughts of a destitute man. The 1903 edition is copiously illustrated by Théophile Alexandre Steinler. The copy in the collection includes photographs taken in Steinler’s studio and letters by the author and illustrator.
- *Kanou en Noz* by Xavier de Langlais. Its poems are neither written nor translated in French. These ‘Songs of the Night’ published in 1932 by Skeudennet Gantan are one of the books written by the fervent militant for the promotion of Breton (a Celtic language spoken in Brittany).

The favourite item of Fabry-Tehranchi, translates
Poèmes
DE
Jean Lorrain
Gabriel Pierne
literally as ‘Notebook of curious person’: *Cahier de curieuse personne* by Lise Deharme (Paris: Éditions des Cahiers Libres, 1933). It is a first edition, number 12 of 300 copies. This work is a collection of early poetry by Lise Deharme, a prolific female French Surrealist writer who hosted many Parisian Surrealist salons. Man Ray described her house and salon as, ‘a rambling affair, filled with strange objects and rococo furniture’ (Man Ray. Self Portrait, 1963). This edition contains a portrait of Deharme drawn by Valentine Hugo, a French Surrealist artist best known for her illustrations of Éluard’s work.

Many books in this previously private collection have their pages uncut, meaning they have not been read, but have been collected as artefacts. Readers now have the opportunity to open their pages, since all books are available for study in the University Library Rare Books Reading Room.

Fabry-Tehranchi added: “It’s an exceptional acquisition that we’re really delighted to have thanks to fundraising from the Friends. The collection complements not only what we have in the University Library, including another highlight, the Chadwyck-Healey Liberation Collection (1944-1946), but also in the colleges across the University. We are seeing a real interest in French Collections.”

Read more about this collection on the Library’s European Languages Blog: https://europeancollections.wordpress.com/

“AS SOON AS WE SAW THE LIST WE REALISED HOW IMPORTANT THE COLLECTION WAS: IT CONTAINS MAJOR ITEMS. IT SHOWS THE HISTORY OF FRENCH POETRY, INCLUDING LESS WELL-KNOWN POETS AND WRITINGS BY MANY WOMEN POETS.”

IRENE FABRY-TEHRANCHI, FRENCH SPECIALIST AT THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
Friends funding helped purchase this collection.

c. 300,000 items in the Library’s French collections.
A previously unknown book, heavily annotated by the Elizabethan Cambridge scholar Gabriel Harvey, provides insight into historic reading habits, and political and religious upheaval in the 16th century in England and France.

Born in Saffron Walden in 1551/2, Gabriel Harvey became a notable Cambridge scholar and fellow of Pembroke College, notorious for his copious annotations in the margins of his books. Until this recent discovery, 155 books were known to survive from Harvey’s library, 15 of which are held in Cambridge libraries.

This acquisition by the Library, with the help of funding from the Friends, is important for a number of reasons. Liam Sims, Rare Books Specialist at the University Library, said: “Early printed books, through their bindings, annotations and other marks of ownership, can tell us a great deal about how their previous owners engaged with them, physically and intellectually. Harvey’s annotations take us into the mind of an Elizabethan scholar, offering a unique record of an English analysis of recent French history, extending our knowledge of one of the most conspicuous and fascinating early modern annotators.”

The previously unknown volume was published anonymously in London in 1575 under the title A mervaylous discourse vpon the lyfe, deedes, and behaviours of Katherine de Medicis. The work was a bestseller in Europe, purporting to expose the perverse character and wicked practices of Catherine de’ Medici, or the ‘Black Queen’ as she has sometimes been called.

Harvey’s annotations are copious; single words, long passages, underlining and more. One of the more interesting facets of his markings are the letters and symbols he uses, which require decoding to be fully understood today. For example, passages in the printed text which deal with legal affairs are marked in the margins with the letters ‘J.C.’ for the Latin ‘juris consultus’. Astrological symbols are used too; we see references to war marked with the symbol for Mars.

Sims said: “Until it was acquired by the Library in 2019, this book from Harvey’s library was not known to exist, likely having remained unseen in private collections for many years. Bringing it into a publicly accessible institution means it can be shared – physically and digitally – with a wide range of people, from visiting school groups in the Library, learning about 16th-century England, to researchers on the other side of the world who can access it through the Cambridge Digital Library.

“The Friends generously contributed both to the purchase price of this acquisition and, significantly, to its digitisation. Making books available to those not able to visit the Library in person is a key part of improving access to our (historic and newer) collections.

“It is good to think of the book as ‘coming home’; Harvey was a scholar at the University of Cambridge and may well have acquired the book during his time here. This book offers an opportunity for librarians and scholars to extend our conversations about what reading has meant in the past, and what it means today.”
“UNTIL IT WAS ACQUIRED BY THE LIBRARY IN 2019, THIS BOOK FROM HARVEY’S LIBRARY WAS NOT KNOWN TO EXIST, LIKELY HAVING REMAINED UNSEEN IN PRIVATE COLLECTIONS FOR MANY YEARS. BRINGING IT INTO A PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE INSTITUTION MEANS IT CAN BE SHARED – PHYSICALLY AND DIGITALLY.”

LIAM SIMS, RARE BOOKS SPECIALIST AT THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Friends funding helped purchase this book and paid for the digitisation to share it with the world.
Rare mathematical manuscript authored by Indian chess genius discovered

Funding generously donated by the Friends of the Library has been used to secure a rare mathematical teaching manuscript entitled Juggutcowtook Culpvullee, also known as Jagat Kautuka Kalpavalli.

The manuscript, dating from 1821, is a collection of mathematical and logic problems, given in their original Sanskrit (the language of ancient India with a 3,500-year history) with an (Indian) English translation.

Works on mathematics, especially those aimed at teaching, are rare. The manuscript is also very unusual in having illustrated English explanations of the exercises.

The manuscript contains striking, well-executed black and white, and grey-wash, illustrations. The binding is a contemporary Indian binding, in reddish leather, with a floral design. The Sanskrit calligraphy is of a high standard. The problems are intriguing, and require diligence to solve.

The manuscript had been in a family library in the United Kingdom since early in the 19th century. The connection to the East India Company provides an important reflection of colonial history, as well as an early example of Indian English.

By all accounts the author Triveṅgaḍācārya was a remarkable figure. His name occurs in a number of contemporary sources, mentioned by members of the East India Company as a local chess master, capable of beating all opposition, whether playing by western or ‘Hindustani’ rules. In chess circles, he acquired fame beyond India.

Triveṅgaḍācārya was not only a master of chess. He also created an Indian version of Snakes and Ladders, 'Heaven and Hell'. His account of its invention was reported in 1831, and a copy he produced, with a beautifully painted board, is in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Triveṅgaḍācārya produced two versions of the Juggutcowtook Culpvullee (that we know of), alike but not identical. The other copy is in Edinburgh University Library. It is likely Triveṅgaḍācārya produced at least these two copies to present to members of the East India Company, the new British rulers in Poona, to demonstrate to the British the value of Indian traditions in the science of mathematics.

Triveṅgaḍācārya is a worthy subject for further study of his own.
Friends funding helped purchase this book and paid for the digitisation to share it with the world.

1821 Sanskrit manuscript.
A backstage look at the work of the Conservation and Collection Care Team as they prepare and protect items for public display, as part of the University Library’s exhibition programme.

The Conservation and Collection Care team consists of 17 talented professionals from around the world. In addition to preparing items for exhibitions, the team provides exceptional professional support to the University in caring for its world-class collection of books, manuscripts and archives – making them accessible for research and teaching today, and preserving them for future generations. The team train emerging conservators and host tours of the Conservation Studio, including tours for Friends.

Rachel Sawicki, Exhibitions Conservator at the University Library, said: “The Library’s collection contains some of the rarest and finest examples of books in the world. We are very fortunate to have such a large and well-equipped studio right here in the building, which ensures that these treasures are properly cared for and protected for the future. The ability to work closely with the Library’s wonderful teams of specialist librarians and curators is a real advantage, allowing us to offer our expertise in materials and construction techniques, whilst also learning about the history and provenance of objects from our colleagues.”

The conservation and mounting process for exhibition items

The main responsibility of an exhibitions conservator is to examine every object selected for display. Through identifying damage and potential vulnerabilities, mitigation strategies are put in place to ensure that every object remains protected and supported during the length of an exhibition.

- The first task is to decide whether any remedial conservation is required in order to make it stable for display. This commonly results in paper repairs, leather consolidation, or simple surface cleaning to make objects look their best for their moment in the spotlight. In some cases, objects cannot be displayed without major intervention, which can mean rebinding, flattening, or consolidation of media.

- The second task is working within the design specifications for the show in order to produce mounts that carefully support objects, whilst also making them interesting to view. The best cradle-maker in Cambridge is part of the conservation team at the Library and she designs mounts and showcases that enhance the beauty of the objects.
The third task is lighting design, which is a major challenge: taking into account the stability of each object, whilst balancing low lighting requirements against the visitor experience.

Added Sawicki: “Some of the items that have stayed in my mind over the past 12 years include a time when I assisted with the installation of a stunning 14th-century French breviary, which was expertly conserved and rebound by a former Head Conservator here at the University Library. Seeing the skill and incredible craftsmanship of a Book Conservator at the top of their game is something that inspires me to keep learning and advancing my own set of conservation skills.

“An object which gave me goosebumps during installation was a tray of numbered wooden balls (known as marbles) which were used to conscript Australian men into military service in Vietnam, the impact that this object had on people’s lives was really momentous for me.”

**Conservation of a tennis dress**

One of the star items of the exhibition, *The Rising Tide: Women at Cambridge*, is a Newnham College wool tennis dress from the 1880s. As this type of conservation is not within the University Library team’s area of specialism, the team worked with specialist textile conservator Karen Horton.

Karen spent several weeks working alongside the team, stabilising and infilling areas of loss throughout the dress due to moth damage. Wool is particularly susceptible to damage and moths are drawn to the colour green due to the dyes and mordants used. Karen used a minute curved surgical needle which allowed her to stitch the dress in a flat position, as textiles must be supported on a table due to their fragility when being conserved.

Karen designed a custom Edwardian-shape mannequin, and additional padding was added to perfectly support the tiny corseted and bustled tennis dress. Underpinnings in the form of a long petticoat were added to replicate the original undergarments that would have been worn in the late 19th century. The underpinnings further support the fragile skirt.

Sawicki said: “In addition to my love of anything handmade, I have always been fascinated by human culture and I took a first degree in history and archaeology. I was so thrilled when I discovered that I could have a career that combines all my interests. Conservators are really privileged to be able to handle, examine, and conserve such valuable, beautiful, rare and interesting objects from the past. I really love my job and often spend my free time making bookbinding models so I can learn more about the book structures in our wonderful collections here at the Library.”

The Conservation and Collection Care team share their projects and technical skills on the Library’s social media channels. The team also enjoy hosting tours of the studio for Friends of the Library, so do get in touch if you’d like to meet them. See page 27 for details.
What does the Library mean to you?

Our Friends are a wonderfully eclectic community. We spoke to three of the Friends to ask about their relationship with and affection for Cambridge University Library.

Pat Aske

Pat has been a Friend of the Library for 20 years. Her relationship with the Library began in 1972 when she started her very first job, at the Library.

“The Library has been a big part of my life. I feel this really strong loyalty and bond towards the University Library for giving me that wonderful start as my first job. The friends I made when I worked there remain my closest friends now. It’s meant such a lot to me.

“There’s so much expertise amongst the staff, and everything about it is inspiring. Now that the Library is bringing the collections more to the fore with all the wonderful exhibitions, that’s helping enormously, I think.

“I think there’ll always be a core group of people like me who’ve known the Library for a long, long, time. In the old days, in the seventies when I started at the Library, the perception amongst townspeople was that they wouldn’t be allowed anywhere near it, definitely not through the doors. It’s moved with the times and has become friendly and accessible. People no longer have the idea that the University Library is somewhere they’re not allowed to go, that’s the big change. They probably could have gained access before, but it didn’t seem that way. Now the Library has opened its doors and made people feel more welcome. I think people should take advantage of this and really get to know their Cambridge University Library, because it’s on their doorstep and it’s really special.

“I enjoyed the buzz around the big exhibition, The Rising Tide. The exhibition really is brilliant. I could see that everyone involved in it was so enthusiastic and excited about it, all the work that’s gone into it from academics and the staff. I think it’s raised the profile of the University Library. The expert talks for the Friends are something I really treasured so I am excited to see them starting up again, with a wonderful opportunity to learn about historical printing.

“I think people should become a Friend of the Library because it is a welcoming place and it’s just a wonderful institution with the most fabulous collections, and the Friends’ membership contributes to all of it. People will also personally benefit from expanding their own knowledge.”
“THE LIBRARY HAS BEEN A BIG PART OF MY LIFE. I FEEL THIS REALLY STRONG LOYALTY AND BOND TOWARDS THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY FOR GIVING ME THAT WONDERFUL START AS MY FIRST JOB. THE FRIENDS I MADE WHEN I WORKED THERE REMAIN MY CLOSEST FRIENDS NOW. IT’S MEANT SUCH A LOT TO ME.”

PAT ASKE, FRIEND OF THE LIBRARY
Professor Eric W. Nye first joined the Friends back in 1990, while on sabbatical in Cambridge from the University of Wyoming in the Rocky Mountains, and is also a founding member of the Library Patrons. He and his wife, who is a geologist and a Cambridge PhD, also at Wyoming, are both lifetime members of the Friends.

“A lifetime membership is just the beginning of your relationship with the Friends. It’s really been the last six years that we have grown more involved, and the programme itself has expanded dramatically in that period. It’s much more active, with more interesting meetings, exhibitions, and special events, that are just fabulous for the University Library.

“The Friends get outside the box. They think of new ways to connect people. You feel like you’re behind the scenes when you’re a Friend of the Library. The formalised events that get us together outside of working hours, when we can meet other Friends, create a wonderful fellowship. It’s the sort of thing that Cambridge is famous for: producing this sense of fellowship with your colleagues and your fellow researchers.

“The Friends’ projects are always interesting – things that I would never have dreamed of. In my own work, as a literary historian, the Rare Books Room and the archives are the most important parts of the University Library. I write about the Cambridge Apostles in their early years, and many of those records, if they’re not in the colleges, will be in the University Archives. The Rare Books Room at Cambridge is vastly superior to anything I’ve ever seen.

“I’m an amateur book binder as well, and conservator and restorer of old books and papers, and I visited the conservation department, which most scholars probably take for granted, or aren’t even aware of. The expertise in terms of the physical book in the Library is unmatched. The Library has got some amazing people doing restoration and preservation of bindings and papers and old artefacts. Without this kind of work, that whole element of our scholarly enterprise would be in peril. They’re very advanced in their use of technologies: I met some scientists who were doing a project for the UL in multi-spectral imaging, a technology that I investigated using in my own manuscript studies.

“Being a Friend of the Library is a way to respond with gratitude for all that the Library does for us. Gratitude is such an indispensable part of our human existence, and I think when we feel grateful, we want to act, and we want to do something for the people who have been so beneficial to us.

“One last thing, Will Hale, in the Rare Books Room, runs a choir of library staff, and every year at Christmas they sing carols in the Library’s entrance hall. It is such a cool experience – it’s even on YouTube! I think we often consider librarians in a certain way, but when you get to know them as part of the Friends you find all sorts of dimensions that really impress you!”

View the performance on YouTube: https://youtu.be/1DH1ztVR9ug
“THE LIBRARY HAS GOT SOME AMAZING PEOPLE DOING RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION OF BINDINGS AND PAPERS AND OLD ARTEFACTS. WITHOUT THAT KIND OF WORK, THAT WHOLE ELEMENT OF OUR SCHOLARLY ENTERPRISE WOULD BE IN PERIL.”

PROFESSOR ERIC W. NYE, FRIEND OF THE LIBRARY
Sally Dore

Sally is part of the Library’s volunteer leadership: a member of the University Library Advisory Board, offering particular insight from the Friends.

“I had used the Library as an undergraduate, but not hugely, because I’d used my departmental library and college library. I’d been in and I remember the old tearoom, which was famous (at least as far as undergraduates were concerned!) for its cakes and which had a glassed corner that was full of smoke, because that’s where the smokers were. It’s only since I started using the Library again as a person of rather more mature years for some research, that I really appreciate it as both a historic and a working library, and that’s why I joined as a Friend. The Library is special: in its scope, its history and its holdings.

“I’m always someone who enjoys knowing more about things: how things work behind-the-scenes, special talks and tours. The exhibitions are so interesting and it’s one of the main areas the Friends support. As a reader, one wouldn’t necessarily think about the whole spectrum of what the University Library contains, and the exhibitions are brilliant at revealing things that people didn’t even realise were there. I remember one that had items of Soviet ephemera such as chocolate bar wrappers and cigarette packets – who would imagine things like that would be part of the collections? But they can tell so much in the right context.

“The way I see my role on the University Library Advisory Board is a dual one: to bring the perspective of the Friends to the Board’s discussions, and to bring an external perspective of what the Friends might aspire to. So bringing my knowledge of other organisations and what they do, and suggesting possible ways that the Friends of the Library might evolve in the future. This could be new benefits, live-streaming talks for those that aren’t in Cambridge, and working with other relevant societies such as local history groups.

“I think the Library is developing hugely and the Friends will grow and develop as well and I hope that perhaps we can also reach beyond Cambridge staff and alumni to others who want to support something that’s important in the cultural life of the whole nation. It would be fantastic if the Friends could talk about the Library to other people they know who might be interested, as one of the best ways to encourage support is by ‘word of mouth’. There’s great scope for developing the Friends and volunteering opportunities over the next few years.

“The Library is something that is both 600 years old and embracing the digital environment, and by being a Friend, you can contribute to every aspect of it. It’s a chance to support the Library in being an absolutely exceptional institution.”

“THE LIBRARY IS SOMETHING THAT IS BOTH 600 YEARS OLD AND EMBRACING THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT, AND BY BEING A FRIEND, YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO EVERY ASPECT OF IT.”

SALLY DORE, FRIEND OF THE LIBRARY
TELL US YOUR STORY

If you’d like to be featured in future Friends’ communications please contact us on friends@lib.cam.ac.uk
Special collections and projects

Friends of the Library support everything the Library does. This a selection of recent collections and projects, in addition to the main articles within this Bulletin, specifically made possible by the Friends of the Library.

**Medieval Japanese manuscripts digitisation**

Cambridge University Library purchased a rare and historically important collection of manuscript documents (monjo) that once belonged to the Kōfukuji Temple in Nara, Japan.

Three medieval documents, dated 1256, 1261, and 1335, are written on the reverse side of Buddhist scriptures. Today the documents give us valuable glimpses into the concerns of medieval Japanese culture.

The Kōfukuji monjo were purchased with the support of the Arts Council England / Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund, and they were digitised with the help of the Friends of Cambridge University Library.
Old Church Slavonic book (1648)

Abbot Nathanael of Kiev (compiler), *Kniga o vere edinoi istinnoi pravoslavnoi* [Book on the one true Orthodox faith], 1648. This exceptionally rare book of Orthodox liturgy and theology in Old Church Slavonic is an exciting addition to the collection of early Slavonic books found across collegiate Cambridge. This is one of only six recorded copies worldwide. The digitisation of this rare book will now be possible with the generous support of the Friends of Cambridge University Library.

Digitisation of Boccaccio annotated by Herle

The beautiful humanist edition of Boccaccio’s most famous work and one of the earliest with illustrations; the 101 woodcuts scattered through the text are copied from the 1492 incunable edition. As well as being important in its own right, this copy has remarkable annotations by the Elizabethan spy William Herle (d. 1588/9). This book offers an insight into his early life.

Notebook with drawings from the Franco-Prussian War

Cambridge University Libraries acquired a notebook of 47 drawings by an unidentified soldier, dating c.1880, now held as manuscript Additional 10300. Most drawings are of battle scenes and military events involving the French army through the 19th century, but the author also copied and put into colour other kinds of images, such as those relating to colonial exploration narratives. More research on the notebook will reveal the visual sources available to the artist.

Souvenir of India photo album (1870s)

Souvenir of India, is a rare accordion-fold photograph album containing 12 albumen prints showing domestic scenes, probably dating from the 1870s. It has pencil captions beneath each image (written over fainter pencil captions) but the photographer is unknown. A similarly titled album of the same size and number of prints has been credited to the pioneering French photographer Jean Baptiste Oscar Mallitte (1829-1905). We would welcome any assistance in identifying the album’s creator. The prints are of high quality and would be of considerable interest in the field of visual culture. This acquisition reinforces an existing strength in historic photographs of the Indian subcontinent.
F. Brunetta, *Heures romaines* (1890)

The Brunetta *Heures* was bought by the Library, with Friends funding, as an example of the 19th century interest in medievalism, which is a growing area of research. The Library is actively acquiring material that relates to this area, which includes printed books made in imitation of medieval manuscripts. Only a handful of copies of Brunetta’s *Heures* are known, and the colouring of this copy is by far the most elaborate and skilful, including silver and gold illumination. It appears to be a presentation copy to the editor and publisher, P. Blanchard.

Palm leaf manuscript presented to educationist Gladys Croft

It is with thanks to Friends funding that Cambridge University Library has been able to acquire an unusual and charming item executed in the style of traditional palm leaf manuscripts. This manuscript was presented by the people of Batticaloa, in modern day Sri Lanka, to the educationist Gladys Croft on the eve of her departure for England. Croft served as Principal of Vincent Girls’ High School between 1922 and 1948, when British colonial rule in Ceylon ended. She was awarded an M.B.E. in 1949 for her educational work and contribution to social services.

The school’s curriculum when she arrived is described as ‘narrow’ and standards ‘low’. Croft is credited with introducing games and sports, the Girl Guide Movement, and Domestic Science, in spite of opposition from ‘the forces of conservatism’. The number of pupils during her tenure grew from 84 to 365.
Digitisation of papyri

The generous support of the Friends has enabled Cambridge University Library to digitise 28 Coptic papyri and 300 unidentified fragments. Collected by Cambridge Egyptologists Sir Herbert Thompson and F.W. Green, the papyri include Biblical texts dated to 6–7th centuries CE, a dialogue between Cyril of Alexandria and the monks Stephen and Anthimus and a homily on fasting from St John Chrysostom, plus one of the earliest Coptic papyri in the Library’s collections.

The papyri all required extensive conservation treatment before digitisation, which was carried out by the Library’s papyrus conservation specialist and was funded by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust. Digitisation will bring these precious and important manuscripts to an international audience, raising the profile of the Library’s papyri collections, and will enable reconstruction of further documents from the unidentified fragments.

Siegfried Sassoon, autograph manuscript entitled ‘Merciless Music’

The University Library holds the world’s most important collection of Siegfried Sassoon manuscripts, and continues to build on its strength in this field. Sassoon’s reputation was forged as a poet in the trenches of the First World War, but on return from active service in 1918 he found himself unsure of his vocation. One outlet for his energies was journalism: in the early post-war years he served as literary editor of the Daily Herald and contributed occasional reviews and articles to other periodicals.

This year the Friends have supported the purchase of a previously unreported example of Sassoon’s music criticism, an account – entitled ‘Merciless Music’, and largely disapproving – of a recital given by the Italian pianist and composer Ferruccio Busoni. It probably relates to a performance given in March 1921 which was recorded in Sassoon’s journal simply as ‘Busoni recital – Exasperating performance’. Sassoon was interested in Busoni’s music, and mentions him a few times in his journal. The review may have been written for publication, but no reference to it is found in Sir Geoffrey Keynes’s bibliography of Sassoon, so it was perhaps never printed, or was published anonymously or under a pseudonym which has yet to be identified. Held in the Department of Archives and Modern Manuscripts as MS Add.9750/307, it gives a valuable insight into Sassoon’s literary activity in the period between the war poems and his later prominence as a memoirist.
The Friends’ community

The Friends are a unique community of supporters.

Events

Save the date: Friends’ Summer Lecture and Party on July 7, 2020.

Don’t forget to sign up to the mailing list for all the latest information on all upcoming events, including exclusive events for Friends: email friends@lib.cam.ac.uk.

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Contact us

We always want to hear from you, with your stories, feedback, questions, and if you’d like to recommend a new Friend. Contact us on friends@lib.cam.ac.uk or call 01223 765362.

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