

# COLLECTORS, COLLECTIONS, AND SCHOLARLY CULTURE

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Neil Harris, Moderator



American Council of Learned Societies

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## Contributors

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**Jean Strouse** is a writer. Her recent biography of J. Pierpont Morgan, *Morgan: American Financier* (Random House, 1999), won the New York Society Library Special Award for Biography and was a finalist for The New Yorker Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her 1980 biography of Alice James (Houghton Mifflin) won the Bancroft Prize in American History and Diplomacy and the Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship Award. She serves on the Executive Councils of PEN and The Authors Guild, and on the Advisory Council to the ACLS-supported *The Correspondence of William James*. She is a Trustee of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and President of the Society of American Historians.

## Introduction

Neil Harris

*Preston and Sterling Morton Professor of History,  
University of Chicago*

Welcome to the ACLS public session on Collectors, Collections, and Scholarly Culture. I'm Neil Harris and I will be serving as moderator this morning.

Before introducing our speakers, I'd like to say a few words about the larger subject of collecting, confining myself mainly to this country. Collecting, as Tom Tanselle noted in a recent *Salmagundi* essay, has become an increasingly absorbing subject for historians, anthropologists, psychologists, and economists, not to mention innumerable non-academics who flock to flea markets, fairs, and shows of various kinds, subscribe to journals and newsletters, buy and sell on e-bay and other Internet sites, and constitute something of a scholarly subject in themselves. There is, in addition, the considerable television audience—tens of millions—for both the British and American versions of Antiques Road Show, an audience which seems to include in its ranks, as do these other categories of collectors, some academics as well. The culture of collecting, as an obsessive pastime, merits discussion on its own terms, and reflects a range of attitudes and imperatives that comprehend both nature and nurture.

But today's symposium subject appears to be somewhat more exclusive than that, and is meant to reflect a special aspect of collecting, not so much collecting as a scholarly subject but collecting as a scholarly object, collecting as it has contributed to, reflected, and even shaped the character of scholarship itself, principally, though I suspect not entirely, through the purchase and donation of manu-

scripts and printed materials. There is, in some quarters, a sense of foreboding about this relationship as we look to a future in which books and manuscripts no longer enjoy the primacy that have been theirs over the last five hundred years. The digitizing of records, the increasingly electronic form of transactions and communications, and the spread of computer usage constitute shifts of practice that have received a great deal of attention, although not necessarily from those concerned with the future of scholarly collecting. It might be useful to remember that one hundred years ago the explosion of printing which was nurtured by growing wealth and new technologies, stimulated some private collectors to take action themselves to allow future generations of scholars to document the character of daily living. The best example I can cite, although it is hardly the only one, is the John Johnson Collection at Oxford, which some of you may know, an extraordinary miscellany of ephemera including broadsides, bus and laundry tickets, menus, store receipts, business cards, letterheads, bills, and public notices, that collectively give us entry into the life of Victorian England. There have been some counterparts to Johnson in the United States, like Belle Landauer, whose collection of trade cards is in the New-York Historical Society; and, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, William M. Ivins and A. Hyatt Mayor, who headed its eclectic and capacious Prints Department, going after printed materials and ephemera in which no one else seemed interested. And there have been other, unsung heroes who as collectors, librarians, or curators, recognized the need to change generic definitions and amass the stockpiles to fuel the observations and the research of later generations.

This spirit of openness toward scholarly possibility that has animated a number of collectors in the past is also linked to the very institution that has hosted us, the Library of Congress. You have probably heard and seen a good deal in the last couple of days about the Library's ongoing celebration of its history, but much more can be said. The Jefferson Building, site of the Haskins Lecture and reception last night, is simultaneously the most elaborately decorated public building in this country and the most complex and heroic tribute to the culture of the written word ever constructed in the United States. Decoding the allegorical murals, mosaics, and

sculptured works, and analyzing the building's decorative exuberance, have generated a whole series of texts in themselves. But the origin of the Library as such, the impulse to make it something more than a narrow reference collection for a legislative body, was supported by a narrowly-won Congressional debate which raised questions still relevant to policy makers today, about the connections linking collecting, scholarship, public need, and public funds.

The second birth of the Congressional Library, as many of you know, took place after the first, rather limited collection, was destroyed in the fire that consumed the Capitol building in 1814. Jefferson's offer to sell his personal library to the government, an offer reflecting both his concern that there be a great library in Washington and his financial needs, touched off waves of partisan bickering and fascinating reflection, well documented by historians of the library. There had earlier been opposition to Congress spending any money at all on a library; why did legislators have to appropriate funds for books, when there were so many other pressing wants, a New England newspaper had mused. But the collection that Jefferson had assembled was, in fact, something other than just a group of useful books, a great prize but also one of apparently dubious value to a pragmatic Congress. A passionate bibliophile, while Minister to France Jefferson spent his summers poring over possible purchases, and had standing orders with booksellers throughout the world. He had accumulated many thousands of books, some of them extraordinarily rare. He was asking \$25,000 for the entire collection, and the ensuing debate was partly over money, partly over politics, and partly over policy, and included considerable contention over the uses of the humanities. By turn Congressmen accused Jefferson's books of being arcane, subversive, useless, and expensive, charges which sound down the corridors of time in attacks on humanistic enterprise. One legislator declared, rather memorably, that the books were in "languages which many cannot read, and most ought not to." Newspaper columnists had a field day satirizing the highly varied and specialized subjects covered by Jefferson's collection—something like the title trove brought back from the annual meeting of the MLA by journalists pretending to be shocked and scandalized.

Naturally enough, another side put forth its own views. Many defended the purchase as a public gesture that was both noble and appropriate, and castigated their opponents with as much vitriol as they had received. Ultimately, proponents of the purchase argued, what wasn't there that the lawmakers of a democratic republic might not need, one day, to consult, as they debated the national welfare? Future generations would blush, warned one journal, at the narrow-mindedness displayed in the debate.

As you all know, Congress did purchase the collection, but the results were uncomfortably close—only ten votes separated the two sides, reflecting the intense political partisanship of the day. And, alas, much of the Jefferson collection so bitterly contested was burned to ashes in a fire some decades later. But it is reassuring that, despite the cautionary notes and the controversy, in the end the Congress endorsed a broad and welcoming view of scholarly collecting, and subscribed to the notion, in practice rather than through a clearly expressed policy, that their own library should, in essence, become the national library. It is a national library, moreover, that is probably unique in having more than half its holdings in languages other than the language of its host country—English—although not, as early objections put it, in languages that most of us should not speak. The cosmopolitanism and international character of the collection, and the work of the Library staff who, for more than a century, have pioneered the development of cataloguing procedures and copyright agreements, have proven immensely beneficial to scholars throughout the world. From somewhat unpromising beginnings, in a political culture that lacked sympathy for the research needs of the scholarly community, a great collection did emerge, to be enriched, starting in the mid-nineteenth century, by a series of private gifts and by private collections, of extraordinary importance, which the Congress did agree to purchase. Whatever shortcomings many of us may feel exist in government policy toward humanistic scholarship, the nurturing and maintenance of this great library is a reminder that at some moments, at least, there has been official recognition of the importance of the larger scholarly enterprise, and a spirit of generosity about its nurturing.

Scholars in this country have reason to be thankful for a series of private collectors as well, whose gifts to historical societies, universities, and museums have made possible a whole range of investigations and the training of specialists in various languages and disciplines. Absent the archives and rare book collections in our great university libraries, it is hard to imagine how, without extremely expensive and time-consuming travel, humanistic studies would have been effectively pursued in this country during the last 100 years. One can mention, at a minimum, such names as Wilmarth Lewis, Paul Mellon, Mary Hyde, Arthur Altschul, and Arthur Houghton. The desire to counter geographical determinism was also a powerful argument employed by congressional supporters of public institutions like the Library of Congress. The oceans, they pointed out, may have been powerful insulators from foreign attack, but they placed American scholars at a significant disadvantage in a variety of fields. This issue, incidentally, was among those that led to the very creation of the American Council of Learned Societies and once supported a dedicated grants program: travel to foreign conferences and seminars. Again, technology in our own time has reduced some of the cost and distance, but even today the landscape of scholarly inquiry has been shaped, to a surprisingly large extent, by the obsessions and generosity of collectors, some of whom, to be sure, were scholars in their own right. One thinks of George Bancroft, Francis Parkman, William Hickling Prescott, and George Ticknor, for example. Nearly every campus in America bears some mark of the passion for collecting of such individuals, to say nothing of the names of others whose libraries would become bywords for research: Huntington, Morgan, Folger, Clark, Lenox (a basis for today's New York Public), Crerar, and Newberry—these last two founders of libraries rather than collectors themselves. Within the American field itself, figures like Jared Sparks, Hubert Howe Bancroft (who sold his library to Berkeley in 1905), William Clements at Ann Arbor, William Robertson Coe at Yale, and John Carter Brown of Providence (whose son bequeathed his library), made an extraordinary impact upon scholarship. And they did so, in part, by buying up at auction, and through other means, collections which were not intended to go to institutions or permanently serve

scholarly purposes: those of Beverly Chew, Robert Hoe, Frederic Halsey.

I have focussed so far on individual collectors. But the relationship between individual and institutional scholarly collecting in the United States is itself a fascinating if complex story. Several of the shrewdest and most effective university faculty and administrators of this century achieved some of their celebrity by recognizing the significance of private collectors and channeling their energies toward the growth of great academic libraries—Harry Ransom at Texas, Gordon Ray at Illinois, Herman Wells at Indiana, Chauncey Brewster Tinker at Yale, Franklin Murphy at Kansas and UCLA. Not invariably philanthropic in their broader sentiments, or even necessarily sympathetic to the cause of education, often eccentric in lifestyle or values, collectors have occasionally been led, by their passions, to underwrite larger causes. Once a significant collection has been formed, and the collector indicates some interest in its going to an institution, the challenge is to get sufficient endowment to support effective cataloging, research, conservation, and maintenance. And this is a challenge that many institutions have effectively met.

Private collectors, then, have done far more than simply supply scholars and researchers with raw material for their work. They have also helped fund the very institutions that employ scholars, drawn to such a pursuit, in many cases, through a fascination with object accumulation rather than older associations or raw enthusiasm for the pursuit of knowledge in itself. Some students of library history have indeed argued that collectors often forced rare book programs onto universities, their private passions rather than careful central planning driving these holdings forward. Emulation and envy, as well as professionalization, were key factors in dispersing the ideal of aggressive collecting as a university function, along with competition for star faculty and development strategies. Motives and techniques can be seen as mixed, and indeed some here may wish during the discussion to address the tensions attending the pursuit of specialized and expensive collections.

Individual collectors, like any other group, have not been universally beneficent. Some of them have attached difficult conditions to

use of their collection. Quite a number of them have obtained their materials unfairly or illegally. Others have driven values so high that forgery becomes an appealing trade. And others still have competed with educational and research institutions and, after purchase, have occasionally broken up significant collections, in the interest of profit or, as disappointed suitors might contend, pure mischief. Still, the overall impact of private collecting on scholarship has been overwhelmingly positive, with private desire and social gain co-existing. Many collectors rescued from oblivion materials that otherwise might have been trashed, looted, thrown away, or that might have simply deteriorated. And again, aided by gifts and benefactions, institutional collecting at great research libraries, spear-headed by remarkably creative and energetic figures—like Lyman Draper, Reuben Thwaites, Herbert Putnam, William Poole, Justin Winsor, Ainsworth Rand Spofford, Harry Lydenberg, Robert Vosbergh—created extraordinary opportunities for research in almost every part of the United States. In particular, the willingness of legislatures in states like Wisconsin—not among the wealthiest—to appropriate funds for the support of major research libraries—in effect, to buy rare and specialized materials—has been impressive.

But it is now time to let our three speakers address the subject of collecting and scholarship themselves. We are grateful for their presence here today.



## Rare Book Collections in the Age of the Library Without Walls

Anthony Grafton  
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I would like to begin with a text. The passage that follows comes from *In Plato's Cave*, the autobiography of Alvin Kernan. It describes his experiences as a scholar in Princeton during the late 1970s and 1980s:

More and more, like many older scholars, I stayed in my study in the library, surrounded by millions of books in the stacks and by the isolation of the place where faculty and students working at home on their word processors came less and less. What a pleasure to walk from floor to floor of Firestone, seeing only a librarian here or there or another of the library rats like myself . . . The books printed since about 1875 on acid paper may have been disintegrating, the backs falling off volumes that had been glued together rather than sewn, the pages scribbled on and highlighted by students writing papers. But it was a great research library with eighteenth-century books and first editions of the American and British novels. When I needed Johnson's *Dictionary* (second printing) or the eighteenth-century *Journal of the House of Commons*, they were there, their weathered covers shabby and dried, but the rag paper, the ink and the printing perfect still.

This vivid passage is cast in an elegiac tone. Professor Kernan speaks of the world of print culture as one which is passing—which may already have passed into history. In his view, the great treasure houses of books—the Library of Congress, the major university libraries, the Huntington, the Newberry, the Morgan, the Folger—have become ghost ships, magnificently built and equipped, brightly illuminated, but sailing with skeleton crews and few if any passengers, to destinations impossible to predict. Kernan sees this condition as both tragic and unavoidable. It has come about because of forces too large to resist or alter: the entry of new groups into the university as students and teachers, the rise of new methods in the humanities, and the development of new working instruments—above all, the personal computer.

Professor Kernan's elegy leaves me worried. Like anyone who spends his or her working days in America's great libraries, I know that much of what he says rings true. Twenty-five years ago, when I arrived at Princeton, the cramped metal carrels that line the library's stacks formed the cells in a vast, industrious hive. In September and October, carrel lights went on as seniors burrowed into the library to research and write their theses and graduate students prepared for general examinations. Only in June did the bulbs finally go out. Nowadays, the once-bright windows of these steel boxes, behind each of which two or more students pounded away on their portable typewriters, generally remain dark. Students do their writing—and, increasingly, their research—on computers.

Skills in using books have declined. Princeton's chief librarian recently met a graduate who had received her degree, in a literary field, with highest honors. This student never realized, in four years at Princeton, that the library had two electronic catalogues: one for books and journals published before 1980 and the other for those published after. The second catalogue had sufficed to meet her needs. Even while working in the stacks, she had not noticed that it did not list the bulk of the library's printed holdings. Stories like this could be multiplied—not to denounce our students, most of whom are very bright and work very hard, but to confirm the sense that our great vessels may be heading into fields of icebergs.

As a historian, however, I find myself less worried than provoked by Professor Kernan's vision—provoked to take a look into the past. To think about the situation of the great American collections now, I would begin by thinking about that of the Vatican Library in the age of its foundation, the fifteenth century, and after. If you visit the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana nowadays, it seems a straightforward, ongoing scholarly concern, populated by an erudite staff and visitors from around the world—a busy, polyglot place, always humming with activity, and very much part both of the larger world of Vatican City and the still larger community of international scholarship.

The library's origins were very different. It was created by Pope Nicholas V, in the middle of the fifteenth century, as part of a larger effort to restore the cultural luster of the papacy and the economic health of the city. Rome, which had once had a million or more inhabitants, had become a wasteland, torn by feuding barons. Sheep grazed on the Forum, as they would until the twentieth century. The papacy had little prestige; it was merely one among several warring Italian powers. Nicholas' predecessor, Eugenius IV, had actually been chased out of the city by a mob not long before.

Facing these immense practical difficulties, Nicholas built fortifications, restored churches, and created what he envisioned as the greatest library of his time, which he hoped would be used by "the entire papal curia." The pope's motives were mixed. Like the robber barons of late nineteenth-century America, Renaissance princes collected books and commissioned works of art in the hope of gaining cultural prestige. Nicholas looked back to the Ptolemies—the founders of the ancient Alexandrian library—as his models. Like them, he and later popes collected manuscripts and printed books in the gentle spirit in which Vince Lombardi managed the Green Bay Packers. The Ptolemies confiscated books from the ships in the harbor at Alexandria. Similarly, Pope Leo X, having borrowed a unique manuscript of Tacitus from the monks at Corvey, sent them not the original but a copy of the printed edition of it he had sponsored, along with a papal indulgence—and kept the manuscript itself in Rome, where it remains. During the Thirty Years' War, even more brutal tactics brought the great library of the Protestant

Electors of the Palatinate to what is still its home in the Vatican. The Vatican Library was meant, from the start, as a treasure-house: that explains why two of its original four rooms, the ancestors of all modern special collections, were closed to the public.

But ancient books could also serve very practical purposes: they provided important information on many technical areas, from astronomy to architecture. Nicholas, who hoped to see Rome rise again as a new urban paradise, a splendid setting for papal ceremonies and a fortress against the enemies of the church, envisioned his library as part of his arsenal—the place where the scholars who worked for him could consult the great ancient manual of architecture by Vitruvius and many other complementary texts. One of the first scholars to work systematically in the library was Leon Battista Alberti, the humanist and builder who advised Nicholas on architectural and urban questions. He did substantial research in the Vatican as he compiled his own treatise *On the Art of Building*—the first modern work to compete with Vitruvius. The carefully guarded treasure house, in other words, was also a site of serious and directed intellectual work.

The library's open rooms also had a third function: they provided a space where Roman and foreign scholars, dignitaries and intellectuals could find common intellectual ground—where they could meet, not only to examine books, but also to discuss them. The library was one of the centers of good talk in all of Italy, the land *par excellence* of civil conversation. Cultivated tourists like Michel de Montaigne could enjoy a morning's book chat as they saw rare manuscripts. And more erudite foreigners—some of them known to be Protestants—discussed corrupt texts and historical problems, collated manuscripts, and examined inscriptions in constant dialogue with local experts.

Though the Library functioned at a high level for almost two centuries, as a repository of the rare and wonderful, an arsenal of powerful knowledge, and a meeting-place for the learned, it gradually fell into decline. Great families like the Barberini collected more zealously and effectively than most seventeenth-century popes. New forms of intellectual inquiry, based more in the museum and the botanical garden than in the library, challenged traditional human-

istic scholarship. Hip visitors to mid-seventeenth-century Rome, even the most learned of them, took as much interest in Athanasius Kircher's Museum in the Collegio Romano and in the city's magnificent new public spaces as they did in the Vatican Library, or more. In an age of religious war, finally, the old policy of relative openness made way for suspicion, short hours and closed doors. The Library became a backwater, not to revive until it could serve the needs of a new scholarship and a new intellectual community in the later nineteenth century. A great collection, one designed to serve many different purposes, the Vatican still passed from conception to old age in less than two hundred years. And for almost two hundred more its treasures slept, largely undisturbed—and largely unused. Nicholas' dream all too soon became a nightmare.

Like the Vatican, the great American libraries were created to serve diverse purposes—in some ways, not dissimilar to those the original Vatican Library served. They offered cultural prestige to baronial families like the Morgans, who not only created great libraries of their own but also assembled what became the core collections of the major public and university libraries (J.P. Morgan's nephew Junius actually worked as a librarian at Princeton, and left it his own superb collection of manuscripts and rare editions of Virgil). They made it possible for scholars to carry out new forms of intellectual work, like the philological and historical brands of literary study that dominated in most English and Classics departments from the arrival of the new German methods on these shores in the late nineteenth century until the middle decades of the twentieth. And they provided a space, if not for civil conversation in the old sense, at least for intellectual sociability of a sort. Princeton's Firestone Library, for example, was designed by the great librarian and Jefferson scholar Julian Boyd to civilize the students who used it. He firmly believed that if students worked every day and met their teachers in the library, in front of thousands of colorful bindings, they would be somehow softened and humanized by the influence of the books. The same noble—if implausible—plan underlay the creation and decoration of splendid reading rooms in Cambridge, New Haven, Chicago and Berkeley.

Firestone was created half a century ago, Sterling, Butler and Widener some decades before that. All of them embody the same three purposes: intellectual prestige, the facilitation of certain styles of scholarship, and civil conversation. And all of them have become antiquated, at least to some extent. Few students arrive at universities from houses in which oak shelves bend under heavy quartos. The drive to collect books, though it still infects a few students, may never again reach the epidemic proportions of the 1920s. And even the richest libraries may never again mean what libraries did in earlier ages of glamorous collectors and dealers. Intellectual work has also changed. Social scientists often make little or no use of books: they find their data over computer networks, and read the most exciting new work in pre-print form, or appended to e-mails. Even humanists make far fewer appearances in rare book rooms than they did in the heyday of great editorial projects and the history of ideas—partly because they can read many of the same texts in a variety of electronic forms without ever leaving their offices.

Sociability, too, has changed. Computers bursting with e-mail messages have, in many universities, replaced personal visits and office hours. Faculty are, notoriously, pulled away from their home campuses—by the opportunity to spend leaves elsewhere, by the need to carry out professional tasks on boards, by their engagement with disciplinary colleagues around the world. Students, too, are increasingly pulled out of the library by the need to interview for fellowships, jobs, and internships—often at exactly the time, their third and fourth undergraduate years, when they would once have become most deeply engaged in library work. No wonder, then, that so many one-time beehives now look deserted and barren. One can see why some fear that the great American libraries have run their course, even more quickly than the great Roman one.

But new needs brought the Vatican back to life. And new uses may also bring the great libraries back. The challenge scholars and librarians now face is to identify the new needs and devise the new uses of the next century. And some successes at this task are already clear. As the information landscape students must negotiate becomes more complex, librarians at many centers have established that they, and they alone, can offer systematic guidance and instruction. Only

they know both traditional and cutting-edge research techniques; only they can show how the two forms of work complement and strengthen one another. Fast computers and accessible counselors have brought many bodies back, if not into the stacks, at least into the reading rooms.

In the world of rare books and manuscripts, one relatively new field of scholarship shows special promise. The history of books and readers—an interdisciplinary study, pioneered by historians like Robert Darnton and Roger Chartier, bibliographers like Donald McKenzie and editors like Jerome McGann—seeks to work out how individual texts were produced and consumed, in particular times and places, by particular individuals. Students from many different disciplines find this new perspective both helpful and appealing. And the only way to teach it is, quite simply, to make students sit and examine the primary sources—literary manuscripts, books with manuscript annotations, and many others—in, so to speak, the flesh.

The experience of examining such documents—not as treasures only, but as historical sources and literary provocations—proves impressively infectious. In my own undergraduate and graduate courses, students who started with no prior knowledge have spent weeks examining early typography, grinding through eighteenth-century French pornographic novels, transcribing Mrs. Thrale's notes in her copy of the *Tatler*—and ultimately produced results that went beyond anything in the secondary literature. This form of teaching—especially when carried out in seminar form, within a department of special collections—gives students access to magnificent objects. It introduces them to forms of intellectual work that appeal to a generation more deeply conscious than any previous one of the modes of marketing and reception. It even offers a new kind of learned sociability.

In time, this and other new forms of scholarship, intelligently reconfigured for teaching, can induce students back to sail in our great literary vessels. They may not come in the same numbers as a generation or two ago, and they will not use the library in the same ways. But if we build new structures and make them attractive, they will ultimately come. The lights no longer go on in the old carrels.

But they still shine in the eyes of a bright student who is shown for the first time to learn, from crabbed notes in an eighteenth-century handwriting, how differently our ancestors read texts, and wrote them.

The history of books is only one of several new fields largely based in departments of special collections, all of which can provide their own characteristic ways to introduce students to the treasures libraries hold, and to show them how to interpret these in wider contexts. There is no reason to be overconfident about the future of our collections. But there is also no reason to despair. The ghost ships will attract new crews—if we who steer them now equip them, rig them and sail them as imaginatively and as richly as we should, and as they deserve. If we show imagination, passion and skill, our great special collections can revive as quickly as they have declined.

## The Library and the Scholar: A New Imperative for Partnership

Deanna Marcum

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*Council on Library and Information Resources*

Great libraries and great collections are synonymous. Last night, we dined in the Library of Congress, the largest library in the world. The titles that find their way to the stacks of the Library of Congress are selected from the thousands of works that are submitted annually for copyright deposit, and thereby represent a cultural snapshot of a record that is accumulated year after year. The special collections of the Library of Congress and those of every major university library in the country contain materials that have moved from the hands of private collectors to a more public repository, manuscript materials of important individuals that have been solicited by curators and librarians, and literary works of important authors who have formed a bond with a particular institution. These, plus the special formats of information—photographs, moving images, recorded sound—form the rich tapestry of primary sources we have come to expect from our great libraries. Institutions such as the American Philosophical Society and the American Antiquarian Society have collected comprehensively in certain subjects and time periods, and they have built those collections without regard to research fads or political pressures. They have simply gone about their important work on behalf of society, and for this, the scholars who use their collections are deeply grateful.

Collections, traditionally, have been built in two ways:

- Zealous collectors build comprehensive collections in a specialized field or document an era by collecting all known knowl-

edge related to that period. In either case, when they can no longer manage the size of the collection, or when they cannot exercise reasonable control over the collection, they turn it over to a repository for safekeeping.

- Librarians and bibliographers assume responsibility for different subject areas and studiously collect the current literature in those fields, with an eye toward having collections available to subsequent generations.

Many of the great collections we find at the Library of Congress, the University of Michigan, or the Newberry Library were born of the zeal of an individual collector. Consider the Peter Force collections at the Library of Congress. Like the Jefferson Library, the Peter Force Library was purchased for \$100,000 by an act of Congress after the Jefferson collection was partially destroyed in 1851. Peter Force, a Washington printer and publisher, had assembled what was surely the largest private collection of printed and manuscript sources on American history in the United States. Force acquired incunabula, manuscripts, pamphlets, personal papers, and maps—all documenting early American history. When Congress purchased the library in 1867, the Library of Congress became the owner of a comprehensive, well-documented collection that had been intelligently assembled.

A more limited example is the complete set of McGuffey Readers, assembled by Maude Blair, a Detroit school teacher. Miss Blair donated the 195 separate editions of the readers, primers, and spellers to the Library of Congress in 1937. She had diligently sought each of these editions and bought them in varying conditions, but they constitute a complete set.

Many university and independent research libraries have similar stories to tell. Their most prized historical collections have been given or sold by individuals who cared deeply about a particular body of knowledge. Often, the descriptions of the materials are as valuable to the archival institution as the materials themselves. More often than not, the descriptions prepared by the donors are the only finding aids for these rare and special materials.

Today, libraries and archives typically acquire special collections by purchasing them, and the asking prices have escalated dramati-

cally. Two high-profile collections offered to the Library of Congress—the Martin Luther King papers and the Leonard Bernstein collection—illustrate this point. Both families view the collections as financial assets and the conditions set for deposit are closely connected to how the families expect to continue to derive income from the collections. Increasingly, libraries find that significant numbers of families and private collectors view collections in a similar way, and few libraries have budgets to accommodate their requests.

Even when the collections are “free,” they are not without problems. The University of Michigan recently accessioned the papers of its last president, James Duderstadt. Dr. Duderstadt is an engineer and a technology enthusiast. Not surprisingly, his papers came to the archives in the form of multiple hard drives. Since a hard drive contains only an alphabetical list of software applications and files, it is very difficult for the archivists at Michigan to appraise the contents of the collection. Many trivial e-mail reminders sit next to files documenting policy decisions—all as undifferentiated bits.

These examples illustrate two types of challenges that libraries and archives face today in building special collections. Both challenges—the trend toward information as a commodity and the explosion of research material in digital form—have important (and not unrelated) implications for scholarly access in the future. This presentation will focus on the second challenge—the development of digital collections—and some of the fundamental issues that managers of those collections are facing. In considering these issues, it will become clear that the survival of the digital scholarly record will depend on new forms of partnership between scholars and the librarians who have traditionally served as the custodians of scholarly output.

Digital collections take several forms:

- **Reformatted collections.** Many research libraries have converted important portions of their special collections to digital form. This reformatting has increased access to materials that previously were not readily available. The digital collections have extended the reach of libraries to profoundly different audiences. Instead of making collections available only to their

students and faculty, research institutions have made their materials accessible to the K-12 audience, liberal arts colleges, and international educational institutions, as well as to independent scholars and the inquisitive public. Research institutions have had an opportunity to take their materials out from their locked cases and present them to much wider audiences. But in so doing, they have had to find ways to fund the digitizing and to place special collections in context for new audiences.

- **New scholarly resources.** An excellent example of what I mean by new scholarly resources is ACLS's new program to stimulate the production of electronic texts in history [the ACLS History E-Book Project]. The project encourages well-known historians to take advantage of technology to create a new type of monograph—one that allows the author to combine different kinds of materials to create an educational experience for the reader. The possibilities for bringing many types of historical evidence to bear on a single topic are exciting indeed, but we have not yet determined how these “experiences” will be preserved and made available to subsequent generations of students and scholars. Whose responsibility will it be to manage these electronic resources and maintain them over time?
- **“Custom” materials.** Many faculty members are creating their own resources for use by their students. They are, in essence, publishing “books” for a particular group. The library may not even know of the existence of these materials if they have not been acquired or processed. Do we care if they pass into oblivion more quickly than they were created?

To answer these questions, we must understand the evolving role of the library. Libraries have traditionally been physical places—massive limestone or brick structures with commanding arches and windows. They have inspired a great many students to pursue scholarly careers. They have been the site of significant scientific and humanistic discoveries. This is not simply a nostalgic view—read any number of scholars' biographies and find references to the

influence of the library as a symbol of open access to knowledge. It is a powerful story. But, how does digital technology, with its ability to transcend time and place, change the role of the library, and by implication, the relationship of the library to the scholar?

Perhaps the single most important fact is that in the electronic world, libraries do not own collections, especially journal collections. Access to the content of journals is provided to authorized users for finite periods by legal contracts. This arrangement raises serious questions about how journals will be retained for access over time. Libraries cannot preserve what they do not own, and publishers have traditionally not been in the preservation business. In some disciplines, scholars themselves have taken control of the scholarly output in their fields. They have created repositories into which authors deposit both their refereed and non-refereed works, but there are usually no plans for long-term retention of such collections. Typically, libraries make decisions about preservation after they acquire published materials. In the dynamic digital world, in which the very notion of “publishing” is in flux, who is responsible for preservation of these materials? Much work has yet to be done to establish the conditions and responsibilities for preservation in the digital environment. In this new world, we must think about access and preservation separately. While we have lauded the possibilities for extending access, we are much less certain what it takes to ensure that digital information will be accessible five, ten, or twenty years from now.

Separating access and preservation is difficult after we worked so hard to combine these activities. When the National Endowment for the Humanities announced its Brittle Books program, there was much fanfare among both scholars and librarians alike, and there was great excitement about joining in the cause of preservation and access. NEH recognized that millions of nineteenth-century books were crumbling on library shelves. Under this new program, though, materials that could no longer be used because of their poor physical condition were microfilmed and given new life for scholarly use while also being preserved.

To be sure, not everyone was thrilled by microfilm. Digital technology was just emerging, and the futurists were telling us that

soon anything could be digitized, that there would be universal access to everything. Wasn't it a waste of money to settle for microform, especially since we knew that scholars intensely disliked using microfilm, and students avoided it all together?

Even those who showed little enthusiasm for microfilm recognized that the brittle books problem was so urgent that it demanded immediate attention, and that the best available technology—microfilm—would have to do. We took comfort in the connection between preservation and access while we waited for other technologies to develop. Now digital technology is very much with us. NEH as well as other funding agencies are bombarded with proposals to digitize important collections. The reason: to provide access.

Indeed, the greatest advantage of digital technology is that it has dramatically increased access to information. Libraries, archives, historical societies, and museums are all digitizing collections to make them widely available on the World Wide Web. And so is everyone else—from faculty in today's most prestigious institutions to elementary school children. In a society that praises "new voices," the Internet is a wonderful forum for all who have a contribution to make.

Still, the challenge of preservation in this new context is even greater than it was for brittle books, because unless the preservation of digital information is considered at the point of creation, there is little chance that such information will remain available in the future. Microfilming promised a life span of at least an additional 100 years for books and journals printed on acidic paper. Today, no such promise exists for preserving digital information. Moreover, the storage media for digital information present their own preservation problems. Much digital information is housed on magnetic tapes and disks, and we know from experience that magnetic media are short-lived. A whole generation of folklorists is now agonizing about ethnographic tapes collected in the 1960s and 1970s that are disintegrating on the shelves of library and folklore institutes around the country. As the faculty who recorded the voices and music of distinct cultures approach retirement age, they realize that the information they gathered may never be used for the creation of future knowledge, but will instead turn to flakes of celluloid if action is not taken to rescue this information soon.

The challenges posed by analog audiovisual materials presage some of the challenges presented by digital technology. With each evolution in media, from print to analog audiovisual to digital, we have had less time to decide what to save and to implement effective preservation. Establishing common systems of cataloging, searching, and retrieval has become more complex and urgent, as has addressing copyright issues. Librarians alone cannot resolve the issues of preservation and access in the digital realm. Cooperation between librarians and scholars will become increasingly necessary in managing the collections upon which future research depends.

Scholars could make valuable contributions in the following areas.

- **Selection for preservation.** Although printed materials remain important in our libraries and archives, the documentation of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries exists in many different formats. Television broadcasts, recorded sound, film, and photographic images hold increasing importance for scholars, but libraries have not perfected procedures for incorporating these materials into their collections. Moreover, the cost of acquiring and maintaining research materials in numerous storage formats has become prohibitive for many institutions. Even more important, many Web-based resources are fundamentally different from regular published materials. They cannot be “acquired” by libraries, but faculty creating or identifying these materials can help alert the librarians to Web resources that should be preserved for future research and instructional purposes.
- **Collection building.** Scholars and librarians have become too isolated from one another. Librarians, trying heroically to tame new technology so that it can be applied to scholarly and instructional purposes, need to turn their attention to the truly important question of what constitutes a research collection in the twenty-first century. They can answer that question only in consultation with faculty. Scholars must realize that they also have responsibilities for defining and nurturing collections for subsequent students and scholars. Imagine, fifty years from

now, trying to explain the development of the World Wide Web or the history of changes in scholarly communication in the twentieth century. Where will our students go to find the source materials for such subjects?

- **Establishment of electronic archives.** Librarians have carried the responsibility for preserving the intellectual record. Such preservation will be enormously difficult in the future unless librarians, scholars, and publishers work together to create trustworthy archival repositories of digital information.

The collaboration I have called for is urgently needed. Digital information resources are short-lived. Creators of the material and scholars in the field are best qualified to identify important materials, and librarians are the best hope for the long-term survival of such materials. I hope my remarks will stimulate this desperately needed collaboration.

## The Collector J. Pierpont Morgan

Jean Strouse

*Author, Morgan: American Financier*

One day at the end of 1909, Pierpont Morgan came across a receipt for a bust of the infant Hercules by Michelangelo, for which he had paid £10,000 (about \$50,000). He sent the bill to his librarian, Belle da Costa Greene, with a note asking where the sculpture was. “This bronze Bust is in your library,” she wrote in green ink across the receipt, “and faces you when sitting in your chair. It has been there about a year.”

Not surprisingly, the “infant Hercules” turned out not to be by Michelangelo, and is now on display at the Morgan Library as probably seventeenth-century Flemish. That Morgan failed to recognize an object he saw every day had to do with the pace, style, and nature of his collecting. He had a “good eye” and a lifelong, sensuous appreciation of the visual arts, but he was not a scholarly connoisseur who studied and fell in love with each object he acquired. Like Napoleon, who swept through Italy and Egypt taking cartloads of ancient art for France, Morgan set out to acquire as much as he could for America in a relatively short time, often buying entire collections en bloc. He once told a business colleague that his strength lay more in the consolidation of existing projects than in the promotion of new ones—an observation that also held true in the arts.

For the past hundred years there have been wildly conflicting assessments of Morgan’s financial career. His admirers called him “the Napoleon of Wall Street,” a modern Medici Prince, and the “financial Moses of the New World.” On the other hand, critics regarded him as the “boss croupier” of Wall Street, a “great financial

Gorgon,” and “a bull-necked irascible man” with “fierce intolerant eyes set just close enough to suggest the psychopathology of his will.” (That last is a combination of two quotes, from John Dos Passos in the 1930s, and E.L. Doctorow in *Ragtime*, 1975.)

Morgan’s second career as a collector of art gave rise to equally conflicting assessments. For years he kept most of his collections at his house in England, since the US Government imposed a twenty percent tariff on imported works of art. (In 1909, some of Morgan’s friends in the Senate sponsored a bill that changed the law.) Bernard Berenson, who toured Morgan’s London residence in 1906, described it to Isabella Stewart Gardner as looking like “a pawnbroker’s shop for Croesuses.”

And Roger Fry, who worked as an assistant curator of paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art when Morgan was president of the Museum, said, memorably, that “a crude historical imagination was the only flaw in his otherwise perfect insensibility [to art].” (One problem with that delightful summary judgment is that Fry delivered it years after Morgan died, and said quite the opposite on a trip he took through Umbria with “the great man” in 1907.)

On the positive side, Wilhem von Bode, the director of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, who occasionally advised Morgan about purchases, called him “the greatest collector of our time.” And Bode’s student William R. Valentiner, who became the Met’s first Curator of Decorative Arts under Morgan in 1908, called him “the most important art collector I ever met.”

That people could have such contradictory appraisals of Morgan derives in part from his resolutely reticent nature. Neither introspective nor articulate, he was—as Henry Adams said of Theodore Roosevelt—“pure act.” He never said anything to explain what he did in the financial world, left very few reflections on his collecting, and posted “no trespassing” signs all over the place. He burned hundreds of letters he had written to his father twice a week, every week, for thirty years. He kept a white enamel plaque over the mantel in his study that said, in blue Provençal script: “*Pense moult, parle peu, écris rien.*” His silence acquired considerable renown. After he attended a dinner in his honor in Chicago in 1908, the *Tribune* ran the headline: “Money Talks But Morgan Doesn’t.”

I will quickly sketch the broad outlines of his life, and then concentrate on his collecting and his library. Morgan was born in Hartford in 1837 into the upper echelons of American society—both sides of his family had come here before the Revolution. One of his maternal ancestors, James Pierpont, was a founder of Yale whose daughter married Jonathan Edwards. On the Morgan side, his grandfather was a founder of the Aetna Insurance Company in Hartford. Morgan grew up in Hartford and Boston, then moved to London with his family in 1854, when his father, Junius Spencer Morgan, joined an Anglo-American merchant bank. Pierpont went to school in Switzerland and to the German university at Göttingen. The account books he kept during these first years abroad reflect his tactile, visual sensibility and mandarin tastes—the beginnings of what Neil Harris has wonderfully called “a lifetime of organized self-indulgence.” The young Connecticut Yankee in Europe bought leather boots, kid gloves, colognes, a beaver hat, flowers, novels, and history books, as well as parasols, jewelry, and furs for his female relatives and friends. In France he noted the entrance fees at Versailles, Napoleon’s tomb, the Gobelin tapestry factory, the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts, and the Louvre. Early one winter in Rome, at age 19, he spent a month wandering alone through churches, galleries, and ruins, buying mosaics, perfumes, bronze vases, and reproductions of famous sculptures. By the time he started work in 1857 as an apprentice banker in New York, he was fluent in French and German, and familiar with more cultures than most Americans would ever see.

In the middle of the nineteenth century there was not enough capital in the US to build enormously expensive railroads. For the next thirty years, Morgan and his father, working together in New York and London, funneled European capital to the emerging American economy—effectively presiding over a massive transfer of wealth from Europe to the United States. After his father died, Morgan continued the work on his own, acting—before there was a Federal Reserve—as the country’s unofficial central banker. He was what we would now call a workaholic, and struggled all his life with depression. He attributed his periodic “nervous” breakdowns to overwork, and consequently built long periods of Euro-

pean travel into his annual routine—he once said he could do a year’s work in nine months but not in twelve. What he most wanted to do, when he got out from under the obligations of banking, was explore foreign cultures, looking at cities, landscapes, libraries, museums, galleries, architecture, and art.

Just as there was not enough money in the US at mid-century to fuel its explosive economic growth, there was little “high” art available either. (The critic Robert Hughes has described early nineteenth-century America as breathing “thin aesthetic air.”) In the decades after the Civil War, as the American culture of enterprise turned to the enterprise of culture, affluent Gilded Age travelers crossed the Atlantic in record numbers, and in a mood of ebullient aesthetic nationalism took it upon themselves to build public museums and bring culture home.

Morgan was a founding trustee of the American Museum of Natural History and an early patron of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the 1870s, like most of his collecting contemporaries, he lined the walls of his house with academic paintings of the Barbizon and Dusseldorf schools—mostly landscapes and narrative genre scenes depicting worlds far removed from modern industrial America. At the same time he assembled a “gentleman’s” library that included standard leather-bound classics, but also the beginnings of a serious reference collection on art, several of the volumes that were kindling nineteenth-century interest in medieval subjects, some original literary and historical manuscripts, and a copy of John Eliot’s Indian Bible—the first complete Bible printed in North America, in 1663, in an Algonquin dialect.

The death of his father in 1890 brought Morgan an inheritance of about \$15 million, equivalent to roughly \$225 million today. It was partly this substantial increase in his means that led him to expand the scope of his collecting, but other factors also played a role. By the 1890s, the center of world finance had shifted from London to New York, and economic necessity was bringing great European collections onto the market as aristocrats long on ancestry but short of cash sought to trade with Americans who had the reverse problem. Moreover, the rise of scholarly connoisseurship and new techniques for authentication encouraged American collectors—

including Morgan, Isabella Stewart Gardner, Peter Widener, Benjamin Altman, and Henry Clay Frick—to move away from academic salon paintings into more rarefied realms.

Having spent his professional career importing financial capital for the emerging American economy, Morgan turned in the last 20 years of his life to importing cultural capital as well. Essentially, he was stocking America with the great art and literature of the past. He built a private library next to his brownstone on East 36th Street to house his collections of illuminated manuscripts, drawings, and rare books. He was president of the Metropolitan Museum from 1904 to 1913. He gave important individual objects and entire collections to the Museum during his lifetime, encouraged his friends to do the same, underwrote other major acquisitions, and established the Met's archaeological expeditions in Egypt. He also fostered the study of ancient civilizations at his own library, and at Princeton and Yale. In addition, he was a prominent patron of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Botanical Garden, and the American Academy in Rome, which reflected his interest in fostering American study of classical traditions. And he supported a number of individual artists, including members of the expatriate American colony in Rome and the photographer Edward Sheriff Curtis, who was documenting the lives of the vanishing American Indian.

As is evident from this account, Morgan never confined himself to an artistic category, a specific period, a single scholarly adviser, or a uniform aesthetic. Acquiring on an imperial scale in the last years of his life, both for his own collections and for the Metropolitan Museum, he seemed to want all the beautiful things in the world. There was what the French cultural critic Jean Baudrillard has called “a strong whiff of the harem” about this kind of collecting—a sense of intimacy “bounded by seriality,” a wish to stand alone surrounded by exquisite objects like the “sultan of a secret seraglio.”

There was also a charged relationship to the past and future. Ownership of art, like intense romantic love—another Morgan specialty—is inherently transitory. As Morgan appropriated treasures of the world's great civilizations, he seemed to be engaged in a drama of rescue, gathering works that had been widely dispersed and

giving them orderly new contexts under his own name. Inscribing himself into the lineage of art, he was following in the footsteps of Medicis, Chigis, Hapsburgs, Bonapartes, pharaohs, popes, and kings. The objects he acquired would be housed in American galleries and museums, and they would be known as “Morgan’s Gutenbergs,” the “Morgan Apocalypse,” the “Morgan Fragonards”—at least until someone else acquired them. The fleeting nature of possession probably enhanced its potent appeal.

We could talk about turn-of-the-century collecting as hegemonic or as a prime example of cultural imperialism—which it certainly was—but I would prefer at this point to quote a passage from an obscure Henry James novel called *The Outcry* (1911), which features a rich American collector clearly based on Morgan. The title refers to England’s outcry over the sale of its cultural treasures to wealthy Americans. A gifted young art critic in the novel declares that this west-bound traffic “deprives me of my rest and, as a lover of our vast and beneficent art-wealth, poisons my waking hours. . . . Precious things are going out of our distracted country at a quicker rate than the very quickest—a century and more ago—of their ever coming in.” His friend Lady Grace—the acute Jamesian observer at the story’s moral center—points out that England’s precious things don’t really belong to England: “I suppose our art-wealth came in—save for those awkward Elgin Marbles!—mainly by purchase too, didn’t it? We ourselves largely took it away from somewhere else, didn’t we? We didn’t grow it all.”

Morgan said in his will that he wanted his collections made “permanently available for the instruction and pleasure of the American people,” and that “lack of the necessary time to devote to it has as yet prevented my carrying this purpose into effect.” In a little over twenty years he had spent about \$60 million on art (roughly the equivalent of \$900 million today). With the exception of the books, manuscripts, and drawings that remain at the Morgan Library, the collections are now, as he requested, dispersed. After he died, his son gave about 7,000 objects to the Metropolitan Museum, and about 1,500 to the Wadsworth Atheneum. Frick purchased some of the best items from Morgan’s estate, including the Fragonard room, Rembrandt’s portrait “Nicolaes Ruts,” eighteenth-century French

furniture, gorgeous clocks, enamels, and dozens of Renaissance bronzes. I confess to feeling comically propriety about these objects—I want everyone to know they were Morgan’s before they were Frick’s—but Morgan himself apparently did not. Having assembled his collections with an extravagant passion for twenty years, he made no explicit provision for their future: beyond the vague injunction to his son (whom he didn’t even like) about making them available to the American people, he simply opened his hands and let them go.

As I mentioned earlier, Morgan worked with dozens of dealers and scholars in his Napoleonic acquisition campaign. One of his most important early advisers was his scholarly nephew, Junius Spencer Morgan—a Princeton graduate (Class of 1888) and a connoisseur of rare books, manuscripts, drawings, and prints. There is, unfortunately, little surviving correspondence between Morgan and this erudite nephew, but on the eve of the twentieth century, as machine presses and automated typesetting spread the printed word to much of the world, the two men began to assemble a record of the physical history of the book. Morgan’s collections eventually documented an evolution that began with Egyptian, Greek, and Latin papyrus rolls, went on to the medieval vellum codex and the first volumes printed with moveable type by Johann Gutenberg, to later literary first editions and masterpieces of fine binding, printing, and illustration. The Latin Bible produced by Gutenberg in Mainz around 1455 is universally acknowledged to be the greatest monument in the history of printing. Morgan acquired his first Gutenberg Bible in 1896—a fine copy printed on vellum—for about \$13,000. There are 49 surviving copies of Gutenberg’s Bible in varying states of completeness. Between 1896 and 1911, Morgan acquired three of them, making his library the only institution in the world to have so many.

Beyond the “lifetime of self-indulgence” that found its fullest expression in collecting was his larger project: to harvest “the best” of the world’s cultural past for the American future. In stocking US institutions with great works of literature and art, he was establishing historical records here, setting scholarly standards, and marking directions for future research. By 1902, he owned more literary

materials than his Madison Avenue study could hold, and commissioned Charles F. McKim to build a library for them. As the building neared completion late in 1906, Morgan decided that he needed a librarian to manage his collections, and hired a young clerk working at the Princeton University Library named Belle da Costa Greene.

Small and slender, with dark hair and olive skin set off by light green eyes, Belle Greene had extraordinary intelligence and vitality. She said that she was 22, that her middle name came from her Portuguese grandmother, Genevieve da Costa Van Vliet, and that her mother, originally from Richmond, Virginia, had supported the family by working as a music teacher in Princeton. Over the next several years, as Belle presided over rare books of hours and autograph manuscripts at “Mr. Morgan’s Library,” she added an insouciant sense of style to the august tone of the place. “Just because I *am* a librarian,” she reportedly announced, “doesn’t mean I have to *dress* like one.” She wore couturier gowns and jewels to work.

Morgan didn’t really care what he had to pay for important works of art—he once said that the most expensive words in any language were “*unique au monde*.” But Belle tried to keep the market in reasonable line with value. She disciplined dealers who asked too much or offered less than top-quality items, and directed her patron’s voracious eclecticism into systematic, scholarly channels. Belle walked off with the best items at European auctions, where she was usually the only woman in the house. Her one aim, she told Morgan a few years after settling in, was to make his library “*pre-eminent*, especially for incunabula, manuscripts, bindings and the classics.” She thought that their only rivals were the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale, but hoped “to be able to say some day that there is neither *rival* nor *equal*.” No young American library could surpass the great European repositories of culture, but Morgan and Belle Greene in a relatively few years secured individual masterpieces and scholarly collections of exceptional quality and range.

Far more voluble and articulate than the man she called (behind his back) her “Big Chief,” Belle gave offhand glimpses of their shared sensibility—describing an exhibition of his medieval illuminated manuscripts as radiating color and light, an effect that emphasized “the luxury and gorgeous barbaric beauty of the Church in the early

days.” Many people suspected that she was Morgan’s mistress. Asked about it, she is said to have responded, “We tried”—but all the evidence suggests not. She had love affairs or serious flirtations with many of the world’s leading art scholars, and learned everything these men had to teach—her most important, long-term affair was with Bernard Berenson. But the chatty, intimate tone she took with her lovers is entirely different from the voice in which she addressed Morgan. She alternately worshipped and railed against her autocratic “Chief” to others, but treated him with fond, often reverent, respect.

And every piece of information she gave out about herself was false. Belle was actually 26 when she started to work for Morgan, not 22, but forty years after the end of the Civil War she had a far more compelling reason than feminine vanity for obscuring the facts of her life. Her real name was not Belle da Costa Greene but Belle Marion Greener, and she was the daughter of the first black man to graduate from Harvard.

A distinguished lawyer and scholar, Richard Theodore Greener graduated from Harvard in 1870, served as dean of the Howard Law School, Secretary of the Ulysses S. Grant monument, and US Consul in Vladivostok under Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt. Belle’s mother was African-American as well but very light-skinned, and at some point around the turn of the century she and her husband split up. Mrs. Greener and her children eventually dropped the -r at the end of their name, invented the da Costa/Van Vliet lineage to explain their exotic looks, and “passed” as white. On the strength of her own intelligence and initiative, Belle moved into an elite, cosmopolitan world that excluded virtually everyone of her race, and with Morgan’s patronage created for herself an independent, heady, precarious life that few women of her time, black or white, could have imagined.

Morgan left no indication that he knew of her background, but once she took charge of his library, I’d like to think he would not have cared. Although he had a reputation as an imperious snob, he turns out to have been surprisingly meritocratic in his choices of people, drawn more to ability, energy, and new ideas than to credit line or pedigree.

In the decades after Morgan's death, Belle stayed on to manage the collections for his son, Jack. After Jack gave the library with its contents and endowment to New York City in 1924, she served as its first director. Known as "the soul of the Morgan Library," she retired in 1948 and died two years later.

## ACLS Occasional Papers

1. *A Life of Learning* (1987 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Carl E. Schorske
2. *Perplexing Dreams: Is There a Core Tradition in the Humanities?* by Roger Shattuck
3. *R.M. Lumiansky: Scholar, Teacher, Spokesman for the Humanities*
4. *A Life of Learning* (1988 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by John Hope Franklin
5. *Learned Societies and the Evolution of the Disciplines* by Saul B. Cohen, David Bromwich, and George W. Stocking, Jr.
6. *The Humanities in the University: Strategies for the 1990s* by W.R. Connor et al.
7. *Speaking for the Humanities* by George Levine et al.
8. *The Agenda for the Humanities and Higher Education for the 21st Century* by Stephen Graubard
9. *A Life of Learning* (1989 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Judith N. Shklar
10. *Viewpoints: Excerpts from the ACLS Conference on The Humanities in the 1990s* by Peter Conn et al.
11. *National Task Force on Scholarship and the Public Humanities*
12. *A Life of Learning* (1990 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Paul Oskar Kristeller
13. *The ACLS Comparative Constitutionalism Project: Final Report*
14. *Scholars and Research Libraries in the 21st Century*
15. *Culture's New Frontier: Staking a Common Ground* by Naomi F. Collins
16. *The Improvement of Teaching* by Derek Bok; responses by Sylvia Grider, Francis Oakley, and George Rupp
17. *A Life of Learning* (1991 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Milton Babbitt
18. *Fellowships in the Humanities, 1983-1991* by Douglas Greenberg
19. *A Life of Learning* (1992 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by D.W. Meinig
20. *The Humanities in the Schools*
21. *A Life of Learning* (1993 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Annemarie Schimmel
22. *The Limits of Expression in American Intellectual Life* by Kathryn Abrams et al.
23. *Teaching the Humanities: Essays from the ACLS Elementary and Secondary Schools Teacher Curriculum Development Project*
24. *Perspectives on the Humanities and School-Based Curriculum Development* by Sandra Blackman et al.
25. *A Life of Learning* (1994 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Robert K. Merton

26. *Changes in the Context for Creating Knowledge* by George Keller, Dennis O'Brien, and Susanne Hoerber Rudolph
27. *Rethinking Literary History—Comparatively* by Mario J. Valdés and Linda Hutcheon
28. *The Internationalization of Scholarship and Scholarly Societies*
29. *Poetry In and Out of the Classroom: Essays from the ACLS Elementary and Secondary Schools Teacher Curriculum Development Project*
30. *A Life of Learning* (1995 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Phyllis Pray Bober
31. *Beyond the Academy: A Scholar's Obligations* by George R. Garrison et al.
32. *Scholarship and Teaching: A Matter of Mutual Support* by Francis Oakley
33. *The Professional Evaluation of Teaching* by James England, Pat Hutchings, and Wilbert J. McKeachie
34. *A Life of Learning* (1996 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Robert William Fogel
35. *Collaborative Historiography: A Comparative Literary History of Latin America* by Linda Hutcheon, Djelal Kadir, and Mario J. Valdés
36. *New Connections for Scholars: The Changing Missions of a Learned Society in an Era of Digital Networks* by Douglas C. Bennett
37. *Information Technology in Humanities Scholarship: Achievements, Prospects, and Challenges—The United States Focus* by Pamela Pavliscak, Seamus Ross, and Charles Henry
38. *Report of the President, 1986-1997* by Stanley N. Katz
39. *A Life of Learning* (1997 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Natalie Zemon Davis
40. *The Transformation of Humanistic Studies in the Twenty-first Century: Opportunities and Perils* by Thomas Bender, Stanley Chodorow, and Pauline Yu
41. *Computing in the Humanities: Summary of a Roundtable Meeting*
42. *A Life of Learning* (1998 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Yi-Fu Tuan
43. *Wave of the Present: The Scholarly Journal at the Edge of the Internet* by Christopher L. Tomlins
44. *The Humanist on Campus: Continuity and Change* by Denis Donoghue et al.
45. *A Life of Learning* (1999 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Clifford Geertz
46. *A Life of Learning* (2000 Charles Homer Haskins Lecture) by Geoffrey Hartman
47. *The Humanities and the Sciences* by Jerome Friedman, Peter Galison, and Susan Haack
48. *Collectors, Collections, and Scholarly Culture* by Anthony Grafton, Deanna Marcum, and Jean Strouse