**Darwin at 200 – Still Going Strong**

*Dorothea Widmayer ’52, Professor of Biology, Emerita*

On the 200th anniversary of his birth, Wellesley acknowledged the significant influence of Charles Darwin (1809-1882) with a display devoted to him, his work and the work of others who wrote about origins of species and inheritance. Selected from the library’s remarkable collection of Darwiniana, the nineteen books exhibited in *Before and Beyond Darwin* were originally published over a span of 103 years (1798-1901). The central attraction of the exhibition, *On the Origin of Species by means of natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life*, published 150 years ago (1859) has been identified “as the most important biological book ever written.”¹ In this book, Darwin laid out evidence for the fact of evolution and his proposal that its driving force was natural selection. It was an exciting treat to see these valuable contributions to science displayed in four cases in the Crozier Reference Room of Clapp Library. Pre-1859 publications of others, which gave a taste of ideas “in the air” about change in the organic world, were featured in one case. Included were two volumes by Erasmus Darwin, Charles’ grandfather, an eminent physician and natural philosopher whose writings suggested evolutionary “transmutation” and as mechanism, acquired characteristics. Other volumes were by Lamarck and by Chambers, suggesting the possibility of mutability and one by Mivart questioning mutability and a role for natural selection.

At age 22, Darwin set off on a five years’ voyage (1831-1836) around the world as the naturalist aboard H.M.S Beagle. Captained by Robert Fitzroy, the Beagle was to survey the coasts of South America. Volumes related to this voyage, which changed

¹ Bidart’s tutelage paid off. Eleven years later, Chiasson’s ascension in his field might be described as meteoric. In addition to his Wellesley professorship, he has authored two volumes of poetry (*The Afterlife of Objects* and *Natural History*), serves as poetry critic for both the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times Book Review*, won a 2008 Guggenheim Fellowship (among other honors), and was recently appointed poetry co-editor of the prestigious *Paris Review*.

Chiasson considers *The Paris Review* special in “the sympathy it extends to writers,” and is already hard at work with his assistant, Hannah Braaten ’11, assessing submitted poetry.

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**W**ith his curly Byronesque locks and cherubic face, Dan Chiasson appears born to be a poet. In actuality, though, it was not until age 25 that the Wellesley Assistant Professor of English considered writing poetry seriously. While pursuing a PhD at Harvard in the nineties, Chiasson decided to drive out to Wellesley to audit professor Frank Bidart’s poetry workshops. He considered Bidart “one of the greatest American poets,” and set great store by Bidart’s opinion of his work.

“Outside of class he would read my work,” explains Chiasson. “I would drive my new poems over to his apartment, slide them under the door, and wait on pins and needles for a phone call … If he said a poem worked, I could relax. If he told me it didn’t, I would go into a frenzy getting it right.”

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**Professor and Poet Dan Chiasson to speak April 23rd**

*Diane Speare Triant ’68*
Wishing for Rainbow’s End

As a new feature, the Steering Committee is listing titles that the library wishes to acquire to support the curriculum and research, items which fall outside the budget, and also some which would greatly enhance our special collections.

The following 3-volume additions to the Lives of Victorian Literary Figures series each cost $495. They are needed to complete this multi-volume title which began publication in 2003. These titles support research on Victorian literature.

Lives of Victorian Literary Figures, Part III: Elizabeth Gaskell, the Carlyles and John Ruskin. 2005

The following titles support research in English literature and add holdings on women writers:
The Works of Lady Caroline Lamb 2009. 3 Volume Set. $495.
Varieties of Women’s Sensation Fiction, 1855–1890. 2004. 6 Volume Set. $875.

These titles – a vocal score facsimile and a database of digitized sound recordings – support studies in music.

The following databases focus on the work of Congress and support research on a wide range of topics relating to governance and public policy. Adding them would increase the scope of the library’s holdings, enhance researchers’ access to their content and would permit withdrawal of the original print reports, thus providing valuable shelf space for new acquisitions.

For Special Collections:
(Expensive, prices determined by antiquarian market.)
A much-needed complement to Origin of Species:
Charles Darwin. Descent of Man, 1871.
The next major work in the history of science after Copernicus (just acquired):
Kepler, Johannes. Astronomia nova, 1609.
For the French Department:
Montaigne, Michel, de – Essais de Messire Michel seigneur de Montaigne, 1580.
A famous atlas of the world, with much-prized maps:
Ortelius, Abraham. Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1570.
To support teaching Reformation studies:
Institoris, Heinrich. Malleus Maleficarum, 1487, or later editions.
16th century German Reformation broadsides with woodcuts.
16th-17th c. miniature Protestant Bibles.

Anyone wishing to help in the acquisition of these titles should contact Kristina Grinder at 781-283-2872 or kgrinder@wellesley.edu or in the case of the rare books, Ruth Rogers at 781-283-3592 or rrogers@wellesley.edu.
His selection process for publication of a poem is simple: “I want to be surprised,” he says. “Simply that. I want my head to be turned.”

Chiasson, a native New Englander from Vermont, describes the style he aims for in his own work as “surprising but not gimmicky.” In his poems, he often adopts the voice of others, even speaking in the persona of animals as metaphor. In Natural History – which was selected a New York Times Notable Book – a circus elephant’s voice exudes pathos:

“How to explain my heroic courtesy? I feel that my body was inflated by a mischievous boy. Once I was the size of a falcon, the size of a lion, once I was not the elephant I find I am. My pelt sags, and my master scolds me for a botched trick ...”

The Wellesley College Library can take partial credit for giving inspiration to Chiasson’s elephant. “Before I had a job here, I would slink into the library anonymously and sit in the big beautiful Saarinen chairs and look out at the lake,” Chiasson explains. “I wrote most of Natural History in this library. It’s the intangibles about a place that bring it to life, and this library has some wonderful intangibles.”

Chiasson has a third volume of poetry forthcoming in the fall. Its title, Where’s the Moon, There’s the Moon, was inspired by his son, Louis. “When he was about two, he would run from window to window in his bedroom saying, ‘Where’s the moon?’” recalls Chiasson. “Then, when he found it, he would exclaim, ‘There’s the moon.’ … [These] little dramas of time – hide and seek, tick and tock – are the foundational artifacts of human life, and poetry is just a development out of them.”

For the spring semester, Chiasson is teaching English 120 (which includes analysis of “the very best poems in English”) as well as serving as a Guggenheim Fellow. “The fellowship has allowed me some time, a small sliver of time, every day to just kind of drift,” he says. “I may work during that time; I may waste that time. But the time is there, and it’s crucial.”

You are invited to hear Dan Chiasson speak on “The Poetry Does Not Matter”: April 23, 2009, Clapp Library, Lecture Room, 4:30 p.m.

Calendar

April 23, 2009
Dan Chiasson
Lecture on Poetry
Margaret Clapp Library
Lecture Room
4:30 p.m.

May 7, 2009
Authors on Stage
Presenters: Robert Pinsky, Peter Canellos & Robert Goolrick
Coffee and pastry: 9:45
Program: 10:30
Wellesley College Club
For information call 781-894-8134

June 13, 2009
Reunion Sale
Notecards & Postcards
Margaret Clapp Library

Library Exhibitions:
April 1 - May 15, 2009
Classics of Victorian Literature
Special Collections
Margaret Clapp Library, 4th floor

June 2 - July 17, 2009
The Impact of Print: Landmark Books in the History of Ideas
Crozier Reference Room
Margaret Clapp Library

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The Margaret Clapp Library, 1909 - 2009
Micheline Jedrey, Vice President for Information Services and College Librarian; Ruth R. Rogers, Special Collections Librarian

At the Laying of the Cornerstone

Here shall the walls be wrought
And the stately fabric gleam,
A court for the kings of thought
And the emperors of dream...

So begins the poem, written by Katharine Lee Bates, to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone of the new library building on June 5th 1909, a very special occasion in the history of the Library. Beginning in 1897, librarians had been detailing the inadequacy of the library in College Hall—“the menace to the health of the students due to overcrowding and insufficient lighting and ventilation.” Plans were developed for a separate, expanded library building, designed to accommodate 90,000 volumes and 240 readers. In 1901, the Trustees appointed a committee to begin the process of securing the approximately $250,000 needed for construction. In 1905, following months of correspondence, Andrew Carnegie agreed to provide $125,000 of funding if the college could raise an equivalent amount. In 1907, after receiving many contributions both large and small, including from students who used their ingenuity to raise the needed dollars (‘Shoes polished here for the benefit of the library fund!’ ‘Papers copied!’ ‘Mending done!’), a generous bequest cleared the way for construction to begin. The completed building, now the Margaret Clapp Library, was formally dedicated on June 14th, 1910.

Celebration planning for the 100th anniversary of the Margaret Clapp Library is underway. On the afternoon of Wednesday, October 21st, festivities will include a Friends of the Library sponsored Book Collecting Prize, gift giveaways, toasts, refreshments, and a birthday cake. A comprehensive exhibition in honor of the event will provide a retrospective look at the last century of the building, its people, and its functions. Drawing on archival photographs, letters, architectural models, old equipment, everyday objects, and a video loop, the multi-media display will enliven the Library lobby and the Crozier Reference Room. In culmination, we will unveil the specially commissioned 100th anniversary poster, created by renowned graphic designer and illustrator Lance Hidy. Complementary copies will be given out to attendees, and a deluxe inkjet printed edition on watercolor paper will be available for purchase, signed by the artist. Poster sale proceeds will support the Library in its second century.
Celebrating Other Treasures: Micheline Jedrey and Ruth R. Rogers

Alice B. Robinson, ‘46, Professor of History, Emerita

Along with celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Wellesley College Library, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of Micheline Jedrey as College Librarian. In her twenty years she has overseen the transformation of the Library, moving from ledger books and the card catalog to the age of electronic resources and digitization.

Mich came to Wellesley in 1987 as Associate Librarian for Technical Services, arriving just as the Library was embarking on the implementation of an integrated library system to replace the paper-based procedures for acquiring, cataloging and circulating materials. Her initial job was to oversee this migration and to ensure a smooth transition, for both the Library staff and the College community, to these new methods for identifying, ordering and providing access to library materials.

In these two decades, Mich has led numerous projects with a similar focus—integrating new technologies and enhancing the ways in which library services and resources are delivered to the community. Today faculty and staff can quickly link to a vast collection of information resources, including other library catalogs, government publication databases, electronic journal articles and e-books. Among these resources are valuable additions such as the Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals and Web of Science, funded by the Friends of the Library. It remains the job of the Library’s outstanding staff to ensure that students and faculty alike are able to, in Mich’s words of 20 years ago, “. . . turn this nearly overwhelming array of ‘facts’ into knowledge.”

In 2000, Wellesley was the first college to receive the Excellence in Academic Libraries designation from The Association of College and Research Libraries. Mich deserves much of the credit. Beginning in 1995 she has been instrumental in the planning and execution of the master plan for the six waves of interior renovations of the Margaret Clapp Library, with the final phase now complete. They have made the building efficient, user-friendly, and very attractive.

During her years at Wellesley, Mich has balanced her full-time position with a home life that includes her lawyer husband and their son and daughter, now adults. Mich speaks appreciatively of her “super colleagues”, and of the consistent support the college has given both to herself and the Library. Her appreciation is reciprocated by all who know and work with her. Mich is a warm and personable leader. All of us thank her for her twenty years as our Wellesley College Librarian.

The photo above is of Special Collections Librarian Ruth R. Rogers at work. She is pictured with the Nuremberg Chronicle, published in 1493, great in size and a great treasure. Since coming to us in 1991, Ruth has turned the old Rare Book Room with its locked door into a welcoming, busy place.

Preparing for and hosting almost 50 classes a year, with the help of her colleague Mariana Oller, is the most time-consuming of Ruth’s activities. Acquisitions work comes second, a recent purchase being the long-sought 1566 edition of Copernicus, De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium. Third and crucial is the ongoing maintenance and preservation of the collections. Frequent exhibitions come next, followed by consulting with faculty and students about their research.

Ruth also lectures both within and outside of the College about Wellesley’s Special Collections, including artists’ books, of which there are close to
Like a fire spreading out of control, the current financial crisis has moved swiftly and with devastating impact. Faced with a range of difficult decisions triggered by the College’s projected budgetary shortfall, we are at a particular moment in the Library’s history. I am reminded of another moment of consequence in the Library’s past—the burning of College Hall (which occurred nearly 95 years ago, on March 17th, 1914) when over 5000 precious and irreplaceable volumes from our collections were lost.

As Librarian Ethel Dane Roberts recounts in A Brief History of the Wellesley College Library [1936], “On the morning after the fire the Library presented a strange scene. Lines of students had passed along the books and other things as they were removed from the burning building, and books, clothing, pictures, statues and odds and ends of every description had been put through the window in one of the [library’s] basement rooms, where willing hands worked all the next day sorting and distributing them… This room was not the only scene of activity, however. The Library was one of the busiest places on the campus.” In the midst of this catastrophe, the Library was the center of calm and continuity on campus while, at the same time, rapidly adapting to the new challenges by providing temporary classrooms and study spaces, serving as the repository for other types of information such as the mounted specimens of birds and a collection of minerals that were displaced by the fire, and operating as the “Bureau of Information” where dislocated College Hall students could provide information about their whereabouts so that frantic enquiries from their parents could be answered. The resiliency of the Library nearly a century ago is a powerful symbol for us today.

Though the physical devastation of a fire is not an outcome of the current financial situation, some could see the necessary reductions to services and resources as having an equivalent destructive impact on the Library. We could try to hunker down and hold fiercely to our current ways of doing things, or we can view this as an opportunity to think creatively, crafting cost-effective strategies that take full advantage of emerging technologies and new tools for information discovery and acquisition. We choose to see this time as a period of renewal, drawing upon the strength of our history while looking ahead to our future. I have confidence that the changes we will make will not threaten our ability to continue to sustain the fundamental elements of Wellesley’s academic mission—providing the information resources and related services that promote student learning and support teaching and faculty research.

2,000. A serious collector and promoter of this contemporary multi-media genre, Ruth organized ABC: the Artists’ Books Conference, held in June 2005 at the College, and published the related exhibition catalog, Resonance and Response. The conference and book fair were featured in the Friends’ 2005 Spring and Fall Newsletters.

With the goal of inter-departmental collaboration, Ruth created “Papyrus to Print to Pixel,” a course that explores the evolution of written communication technology over 5,000 years. She co-teaches it with Katherine McCanless Ruffin, Book Arts Program Director, who instructs the lab content. The course received the Apgar Award for Teaching Excellence at the College, and has inspired several students to pursue related graduate studies.

Ruth brings creativity and a light-hearted touch to her serious scholarship. An example is the exhibition she mounted for Reunion 2007, called “In Praise of Wellesley Men.” The playful title was useful in drawing attention to the remarkable number of gifts of rare books presented to the Library by husbands, fathers, sons, faculty, and friends in honor of Wellesley women.

Speaking of men, Ruth has two sons, who are in their early twenties. Her husband is a letterpress printer and graphic designer, so she says there is a “seamless flow between professional and personal interests.”

Wellesley is fortunate to have Special Collections Librarian Ruth Rogers enlivening that fourth floor locked room.
Time to Renew?

Please use the form below and make your check payable to: Wellesley College.
Mail to: Wellesley College, Friends of the Library, Margaret Clapp Library,
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____Supporter $500  ____Young Alum $15
Donor $250

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Proceeds to benefit the Wellesley College Library.

POSTCARDS

Vintage photographs from Clapp Library Archives

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To request information from Friends of the Library:
Call 781-283-2872 or visit www.wellesley.edu/Library/Friends
Darwin’s life forever, were gathered in another case: a book from Fitzroy’s official account of the voyage, volume 3 of Darwin’s geological observations from his trips inland, and Part 1 of Lyell’s Principles of Geology, a book which greatly influenced Darwin’s ideas about change through time. Darwin’s Autobiography and a sketch, made when he was 28, of a branching tree of life with the inscription, “I think”, were also included.

After the Beagle trip, Darwin married his cousin, Emma Wedgwood, and soon retreated from London to Down House in Surrey. Here, for the rest of his life, he worked over his notes, experimented, and shared his ideas with his trusted scientific friends. In 1858, Darwin, to his dismay, received a short manuscript from Alfred R. Wallace, a British naturalist working in Indonesia, who independently had formulated a theory of evolution by means of natural selection and sought Darwin’s views. Darwin, urged by his friends, prepared his own short paper and both papers were delivered at a Linnean Society meeting. These events prompted Darwin to publish, in 1859, a longer abstract, the first edition of On the Origin of Species. This appeared in another case along with a later publication by Wallace describing his observations in Malaysia and Malthus’ Essay on Population, which influenced Darwin’s thinking about selection and overpopulation. Here also were two later books in which Darwin began to explicitly include Man in his writings about evolution: The Descent of Man and The Expressions of Emotion in Man and Animals.

Two other later publications by Darwin describing his extensive studies on insectivorous plants and adaptations in orchids were shown in another case. Also here was a book by Galton, the founder of the Eugenics Movement, a tribute to Darwin by Asa Gray, his American champion, and a copy of Mendel’s 1901 studies on plant hybridization and genetics, results and ideas first reported in 1865 about which Darwin knew little.

Emily Buchholtz, Gordon and Althea Lang ’26 Professor of Biological Sciences, was curator and Special Collections Librarian Ruth Rogers helped select the books displayed. Photographs and personal objects added interest. Among these, to honor Darwin’s mother and his wife, was a piece of Mrs. Durant’s Wedgwood china from the College Archives.

Most books on display were first editions and most had been donated to the library by the Durants or their friends, the original Friends of The Library, or by alumnae. The curator loaned her own first edition of The Descent of Man.  