

[The speakers at the twentieth anniversary dinner were Herman W]

Source: *The Yale University Library Gazette*, Vol. 58, No. 3/4 (April 1984), pp. 112-121

Published by: Yale University, acting through the Yale University Library

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40858837>

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The speakers at the twentieth anniversary dinner were Herman W. Liebert, Librarian Emeritus, and President A. Bartlett Giamatti. Their remarks follow.

MR. LIEBERT:

Pride goeth before a . . . President. But not for long. I *am* proud of the Beinecke Library, created and continued for twenty years by the generosity of the whole Beinecke family, and many other donors; by the dedicated labor of its staff; and by the love for books of everyone concerned.

It all began nearly sixty years ago, on Alumni Day in 1924, when Chauncey Brewster Tinker told the gathered graduates that Yale could not be a true university without a great collection of books and manuscripts. "There are," he said, "three distinguishing marks of a university: a group of students; a corps of instructors; and a collection of books; and of these the most important is the collection of books." That is no less true today.

Until then, little attention had been paid to rare books. The few incunabula were kept in the librarian's desk and visible only by earnest solicitation. But with the opening of the Sterling Library in 1931, Tink's hopes were realized in a separate rare book room, of which he was the first and only Keeper. Mrs. Harkness had meanwhile given our Gutenberg Bible, with publicity not only for Dr. Rosenbach but also for the cause of rare books at Yale.

Tink was the dedicated apostle. In his two great courses, *The Age of Johnson* and *Nineteenth-Century Poets*, he brought his own rare books to class and put many undergraduates in touch with such objects for the first time. He made generations of book collectors, and the end of them is not yet. Several of us are here tonight.

I well remember the great change made by the Sterling Library, whose foundations were noisily driven down right opposite my freshman rooms, and I watched while the boxes of books were moved from the old library in Linsly-Chittenden Hall down High Street to the new building.

I also remember Linsly-Chittenden for another reason. I was already a Johnson collector when I came as a freshman, and I quickly went to the library. It was my first encounter with a card catalogue. I went to the drawer for Johnson, Samuel, and found many books I wanted to see. There were no directions for requesting books, so I unscrewed the rod holding the cards in their tray, removed several,

took them to the circulation desk and asked for them. The presiding divinity was Miss Emily Hall, whose majestic presence was consummated by an imposing poitrine. She was struck dumb by the sight of a catalogue card out of its tray, and her look suggested a launching of Jovian thunderbolts. Then her natural kindness prevailed. She took pity on such ignorance, seized the errant cards, led me, if not physically at least emotionally by the ear, back to the tray, put the cards *firmly* in their places, screwed the rod in *tight*, and then explained the use of call slips. I have been dutifully filling them out for more than fifty years, and I never do so without thinking gratefully of her.

There was, of course, very little money for rare books. The Library Associates, set up by Frank Altschul after Tink's speech, levied dues of one dollar a year, but Frank established the Altschul Fund, and Tink used an old-boy network of alumni and former students to appeal for help whenever a desirable item came up for sale. He was seldom refused, and when he was, he bought it himself.

The University Librarian when Sterling opened was Andrew Keogh, who served from 1916 to 1938. He was an able administrator whose sweeping reorganizations put the library on a sound footing, but he also did much for our rare books. He encouraged and assisted Alexander Cochrane in forming the Elizabethan Club library. The cores of the following collections, though extended since, were added during his tenure: Conrad, James Fenimore Cooper, Fielding, Franklin, Hardy, Heine, Judaica, Meredith, Ruskin and Shaw. Keogh also taught, with Carl Rollins and Theodore Sizer, an unforgettable course in the art of the book, alas in 1931-32 only, so I was lucky to participate. Keogh's twenty-two years as librarian deserve to be remembered thankfully.

Greater things were ahead. Jim Babb became University Librarian in 1945 and served for twenty years. These were the years of greatest growth of rare books at Yale. His wife Peg is with us tonight.

To do justice to Jim's achievement would exceed my allotted time. He was a collector, not just of books, but of collectors of books. I can identify thirty outstanding collectors whom Jim attracted to Yale—three of them converted from Harvard and others with no previous Yale connection. He also brought together a staff that shared his creed, each of us with a special responsibility, and most of us collectors. It was a winning team dedicated to a common purpose.

During the fifties all of the special collections of rare books in Sterling were outgrowing their space. Jim was already on good terms

with Ed Beinecke and his brother Fritz. Out of this flint and tinder sprang the flame of a new library exclusively for rare books.

Ed started as a book collector, not with Stevenson, but with Johnson and Boswell, inspired by Tink. But in 1929 Ed was struck by the power of Stevenson's *Father Damien* and began his great collection, now here, the printed catalogue of which occupies six volumes. It was prepared, over fifteen years, by the Grolier Club librarian, George McKay, who progressed so slowly that Ed always referred to him as "Old Molasses."

Ed also collected other things: glass, china, flowering plants. He had a single watchword for all his collections, and it is an ideal one: "Only the best." He did not hesitate to brush aside the second rate, nor did he hesitate at any price for the finest. Fifty years have shown how right he was.

A big step came in 1955, when we were able to buy eight fine illuminated manuscripts, including one huge folio with 162 superb miniatures and other decoration. It contains half of the *Morte d'Artur* and dates from the late thirteenth century, only about eighty years after the epic was supposedly compiled. We took a deep breath and paid \$20,000 for it. It was a great bargain, but even more important for another reason: it seduced Ed into a love for illuminations.

Ed not only bought individual items for us, he also proposed endowed funds providing permanent income for books and manuscripts. Jim Babb was well aware of criticism that rare books were getting more attention than current books and periodicals. Indeed, Whit Griswold, then professor of history, organized the Friends of the Sterling Library Stacks, to counter the emphasis on rarities.

Jim never ran from a fight, but he was a wily strategist. When Ed and Fritz proposed an endowed fund for books, Jim persuaded them that the income should be used for new books and journals for Sterling. That fund remains, thirty-five years later, I believe, Yale's largest single endowment for general book purchases, and from that moment Jim had his answer to anyone who complained about our rare book collections.

Ed then decided that a new, separate rare book building was needed. As the eldest Beinecke, he encouraged the other members of his family, all well nurtured from the green stamp cornucopia, to join him in giving Yale the finest building, with the best protection and facilities, that money could buy. "Build the most beautiful building you can and never mind the cost," he told the architect, who followed both injunctions.

The building of the library was not without its difficulties. When we started to move the books into the central glass tower, the architect objected. "The books are all different colors," he said. "I wanted all blue books." I pointed out that the books had to stand on the shelves by their call numbers, regardless of color, and that I thought all blue books was a pretty corny idea anyway. In his Lyndon B. Johnson library at Austin, the architect had his way: its glass tower contains the presidential papers, all in bright red slipcases with the presidential seal in gold on the spines. The effect is rather like the red and gold front of a Woolworth store.

In 1962, we moved over 400,000 volumes into Beinecke, as well as an unknown number of manuscripts. (Counting manuscripts, when a one-page letter and a 500-page manuscript text each count as one item, is a mug's game.) Today there are over 500,000 volumes in Beinecke and the holdings of manuscripts are proportionately greater.

The opening of the library naturally stimulated much interest. It also stimulated the Beineckes. One would think that the gift of a building, of funds to buy books, of other funds for expenses, would have earned the donors a rest. Not the Beineckes.

What the new building did was to inspire in Ed an iron determination to get the finest books and manuscripts for *his* library. He telephoned or visited every few months to ask whether there were any books we wanted. I kept a list in my desk of desirable items we could not afford. I always included one or two we could manage to spare, to satisfy a natural desire to cross something out. I don't think I fooled him one bit; he always said no to those items.

It was during that time that Ed bought us more than twenty-five illuminated manuscripts of surpassing beauty and scholarly value. That so many manuscripts of such rank were assembled in the eight years before 1970 illustrates not only the generosity of the donor, but also his zealous pursuit and faultless taste.

Later books were not neglected, so long as they were of major significance. Among them were the first complete Bible in English, the Coverdale Bible; the first edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, making Beinecke one of only three libraries in the world with all of the first five editions; the prayer book in which Sir Thomas More wrote his prayer before his execution; over 300 tracts by Luther and his contemporaries; about three hundred incunabula; and many others.

Ed also encouraged his family to make gifts, and every one of them responded magnificently. One of the most creative uses of Beinecke

money was the five-year program for identifying, transferring and re-cataloguing really rare books from the Sterling Library stacks to the Beinecke Library, by which 42,500 volumes were moved out of the reach of the thieves who were prowling through libraries large and small.

Sometimes Ed carried the ball farther than I dared to expect. Our good friend and donor Hans Kraus issued in 1964 a catalogue of 140 papyri, of which Yale already had a strong collection. I picked out, with eager faculty help, a few of the most important, and when Ed, who had seen the catalogue, telephoned about it, I read him my list. "Yes, I think we should buy them," he said, and my heart sang. Then he added, "Find out what Hans wants for the whole catalogue." I did, and they are now all at Yale, as well as other papyri given by Hans.

Ed was not formally educated in the scholarship of books and manuscripts, and would be the last to claim he was. He had what was better: unerring natural taste. I remember sitting with him in a dealer's office with half a dozen illuminated manuscripts before us. He glanced at the descriptions, then carefully examined each manuscript. Four of the six he put to one side, two on the other. "We'll take these four," he said, and they were by far the finest. He did not need explanations or advice; he knew top quality by instinct.

Besides that taste, he had a wonderful sense of humor. After one of his visits, I walked with him to his car. We passed the courtyard with its sculptures, too modern for Ed's taste or mine. A family of sightseers was looking at them, and as we came by, the father said loudly, "I wonder what damn fool paid for that stuff." I held my breath, but I should have known better. Ed walked over, put out his hand, and said, "*I'm* the damn fool who paid for those."

Two years before his death, he had a fainting spell and was rushed to the hospital, where he quickly recovered consciousness. Soon one of the doctors said, "We've got your blood pressure down below 100," and Ed replied, "Gosh, Doc, it must be time to sell."

I hope this gives you some impression of his generosity and his personality. He was direct, contemptuous of guile, impatient with pretense, anxious to see results, thoughtful always of others, warm in his friendships and a great deal of fun. He was like a father to me. One anecdote I cannot repeat without fear of breaking down. At Christmas a year before he died, he wrote me, saying how pleased he was with progress during the year, and added, "It was a lucky day for me when I met you." That was the size of the man.

His younger brother, Fritz, was also a close friend. It was only in

the early 1950s that he became a serious collector, specializing in the Spanish Southwest and early California. In twenty years he formed the best collections in his fields, and one of the best in other Western Americana, especially the Mexican War, Texas and the Lewis and Clark expedition. Thoughtful always of the needs of scholars, Fritz gave many parts of his collections during his lifetime and also endowed, by gifts and bequests from himself and his wife, the future growth of the collection. Their son Bill has continued to be a devoted supporter of Yale. Among his gifts are two books printed by Colard Mansion at Bruges at the time Caxton learned the printing trade there.

Fritz survived Ed by only a year and a half, and with him the elder generation of three devoted brothers ended. But family benefactions continued. Ed's son, Edwin J. Beinecke, Jr., also a collector, carried on his father's intentions with gifts both for books and for expenses. It was an example of filial devotion of which his father must have been proud. His early death was tragic.

Walter Beinecke, Jr., son of the third brother, has formed the greatest collection of Sir James M. Barrie, now at Yale. There are no printed books to add, but he annually gives us manuscripts and letters of significance. Bless the donor who does not stop buying after he has given away his collection.

His sister, Mrs. Carl Shirley, is an active and discriminating collector of American children's books. Her current interest in her growing collection is much too intense for her to part with it, but she and her husband give the library generous financial support.

I think it is safe to say that no other family has bred so many serious collectors, and that no other library has ever had so much help from so many members of one family.

Great as their beneficence has been and continues to be, it is not alone sufficient to make a great library. Another component is staff. At every level, its responsibilities are willingly and expertly carried out, as readers' testimony proves. I salute the staff, past and present. The third component is our Library Associates, and this is their night.

The ten years after I retired were difficult for my successors, through no fault of theirs. The oil crisis raised costs astronomically. Rare book prices skyrocketed. It was hard to make ends meet. Ed, Jr., came often and generously to the rescue. But acquisitions were fewer; book dealers, without whom no library can flourish, offered their wares elsewhere; donors were understandably less active.

Nevertheless, some great acquisitions were made, among them the

1608 first edition of *King Lear*, the Ezra Pound archive, the Marinetti collection, the Norman Pearson bequest, to mention but a few. Yale is indebted to the four directors, Louis Martz, Stephen Peterson, Donald Engley and Lawrence Dowler, for bringing the library through those hard times.

Preparing for these remarks, I reviewed all the acquisitions noted in the *Library Gazette* from 1962 to date, making lists only of major items or collections, and of major donors other than the Beineckes. I ended up with 24 collections and 28 donors, and I pictured your boredom as I read what would have resembled a telephone directory.

I faced, I realized, what Ralph Franklin did in selecting nineteen names to frame tonight's invitation, but I lacked the wit to solve the problem so subtly as he. He made four of the names serve double duty: "Eliot" for George and T. S., "Johnson" for Samuel and James Weldon, "Wright" for Richard and Lyle, "More" for Sir Thomas—and just plain "more."

I hope you will approve, with relief, my decision to present no list of individual names. Our pride in the growth of our holdings, splendidly represented in the handsome exhibition catalogue, and our gratitude to all donors, in funds or in kind, are unspecified, but unlimited. It is a great constellation in which every star counts. And we have already received some handsome gifts to mark this anniversary. Stay tuned for our twenty-fifth.

Fifteen months ago, two developments brought a quickening. Yale's finances eased, and after a long search a new director was appointed. What Ralph Franklin has already accomplished seems like magic, but it is in fact the result of skill, sweat, a warm personality and a devotion to the Beineckes' wish that the library should always stand in the front rank. As we look ahead to the end of the century, the future is bright. I repeat the last prayer of Father Paul Sarpi for his country, "Esto perpetua [May it last forever]."

Let me say just a few final words. American libraries are under almost insurmountable inflationary pressures. We at the rare book end of things must not assume, by some patrician pretense, that we have no concern with ordinary books and periodicals. If libraries do not grow in all kinds of books, the whole chain of knowledge by which man can know and build upon the past will be interrupted, and then we might as well move back into caves and hunt each day for our supper.

It almost happened once before, when, through the Dark Ages,

only a few dedicated humanists preserved, in their laboriously made manuscripts, the thought of classical times.

Today, that battle must be fought all over again. The two great libraries at Alexandria were destroyed, not only by war and by Christian sectaries, but also by the indifference of those who just stood by and watched it happen.

Libraries are our fortresses against ignorance and repression, and if we do not man their ramparts, we shall lose the battle. All of us—librarians, dealers, collectors, treasurers, presidents and trustees of institutions, friends like us of libraries everywhere—must not fail to keep faith with the book. If we keep that faith, we shall preserve the light of such a candle as, by the grace of God, shall never be put out.

PRESIDENT GIAMATTI:

After the songs of Apollo, the words of Mercury are harsh. Indeed, all the Apollos who have preceded me in singing the praises of rare books and of the Beinecke Library—Mr. Lewis at the dedication in 1963, Mr. Liebert this evening twenty years later, and all those in between, particularly Mr. Martz—leave me feeling keenly the anxiety of such influences, indeed leave me feeling more superfluous than usual. I do, however, know certain things.

I know how important the vision of the three Beinecke brothers was. I know how central the Beinecke Library is to the University. I hope that the members of the Beinecke family who are with us this evening know how magnificent has been and is this benefaction and how the library bearing their name, known throughout the world as a resource for scholarship and learning, fittingly stands at the center of Yale with great Yale buildings bearing other great Yale names like Harkness and Sterling.

I first encountered the Beinecke Library in the early spring of 1962 when it was still a vision represented by a remarkable hole in the ground. As a graduate student I would come especially on warm spring evenings with my infant son to inspect the site, solemnly pronouncing to him and a guard on the progress of this remarkable endeavor. One forms attachments to new buildings in the most oblique and unceremonial ways, and my and my son's way was to believe our regular inspections at dusk were part of that quintessential civilizing act, which is to build a new citadel for the keeping and sharing of the central artifact of our Western culture, a book.

My personal relationship with the Beinecke Library matured. It passed from a purely individual relationship to a more mixed one of individual and institutional attachments. I came to teach another generation of graduate students in the very library whose creation as a graduate student I had witnessed. I was privileged to teach for a number of years, including the last time I ever taught, a course on Renaissance mythography in the Beinecke Library, using those splendid volumes it possesses in such plentitude with my students. To be able to do research, to encourage research, and to know that the research will flow in so many directions from the commerce there with the rare materials—book or map or manuscript in its authentic, historical circumstantiality—is one of the profoundly formative experiences I have had in all my time in this grand university.

The Beinecke Library forges an intimacy between the reader and the artifact that can occur nowhere else. The Beinecke Library forges that intense intimacy because it is the home of the original. It is the place where we bring together, for ourselves and others throughout the world, versions of our origins, those examples from various times and in various forms of the radical human capacity to start anew and afresh on the labor of making civilization continuous.

Every book is such a fresh start, such a wellhead of our common life. The book is an incredible invention. It is at once beautiful in various ways, easily portable and uniquely potent as a conveyor of the life of the mind. It has also become the symbol of our human capacity to order and to create and to bear culture. In the preface to a very rare, early edition of his *Genealogy of the Gentile Gods* that I first read in the Beinecke, Boccaccio says of his own labors, "Satis enim mihi rescribere." "It is enough for me to rewrite, to write down again." In profound and enduring ways, our civilization is an act of rewriting, or writing down again—in manuscripts and books, and in great universities.

Thus central to the individual act of rereading and rewriting and to the larger institutional act of remembering and researching is the library, where the solitary mind makes those intimate and civilizing connections with what is made by all the minds collected. And when one knows, as in the Beinecke Library one knows at every moment, that one is in connection with original, authentic, primary material, then the association is even more intimate and the centrality of the library's mission to our common life more focused and crucial.

It is because of what I have called the intimacy of the relationship each of us has with a book, and especially a book or manuscript that

is rare because it is as close to the distant and primary act of the imagination as it can be, that I have burdened you with some remarks avowedly personal this evening. Our Beinecke Library has the massive centrality to Yale University's mission because it nourishes individual hopes and talents in slow and steady or rapid bursts of individual discovery, as well as because it collects those rare and seminal acts of the imagination that make us human. Its collections connect in myriad patterns and it is never static. The scholars of the world, as well as the Yale student, of whatever age, who hungers for the life of the mind, look to us for our Beinecke Library.

We cherish what our Beinecke Library means; we are unshakably committed, in a compound of affection and awe, to what it is; we hold it in trust for the human civilization that, in so many ways, the University serves. To those who have given books, and those who use them; to the librarians all whose efforts and professionalism animate the library; to the Library Associates and Mr. Van Sinderen, wise collectors who have done so much for Yale, not the least in their act of collecting and hosting us upon this most auspicious day; and to the Beineckes, those with us and those who are not, I bring the greetings, the affectionate regards and the congratulations of the entire Yale community, and I bring particularly the staunchest expressions of admiration and support from one who is the library's nearest neighbor and whose pleasure and pride it is to gaze upon its noble countenance from my window every day.