

Introduction

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Session 12: Digital Reconstruction of Illuminated Manuscripts: The Ege Project

Sunday, May 7, 2006 1:30-3:00pm

Today's session focuses on the legacy of an avid book collector who became a manuscript evangelist (quoting Barbara Shailor) and a self-proclaimed biblioclast in the service of a greater educational ideal. Somewhat akin to Herbert Hoover's campaign slogan "A chicken in every pot, a car in every garage" Otto Ege's mission was to put a manuscript leaf, or a set of disparate manuscript leaves, in every library. Some of us find ourselves as custodians of these dubious gifts – boxes of dismembered books that are beautiful but horrible at the same time -- proud but also a bit ashamed because the creator of these curiosities was one of us. He was Dean of the Cleveland Institute of Art and Lecturer on The History of the Book at the School of Library Science, Case Western Reserve University. Today in 2006 we assemble to consider whether it is now possible to right a wrong – to digitally reconstruct illuminated manuscripts. Without further delay, I present The Ege Project.

Our first speaker is Dr. Yin Liu, Assistant Professor of English, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. Yin Liu received her PhD from the University of Alberta and now teaches medieval English literature and the history of the English language at the University of Saskatchewan. Her current areas of research are the Middle English romances, electronic text editing, and historical uses of literature in the Middle Ages. Her paper is entitled "A Human Technology: Leaves from the Ege Collection." Abstract: This presentation will serve to introduce the subject, to explain why a set of disconnected leaves from Latin MSS of little original literary value might

be of interest to a medievalist, to a scholar of book culture, to an art librarian or visual resources curator, and even to a member of the general public.

Our second speaker is Dr. Fred Porcheddu, Associate Professor of English, Denison University. Fred Porcheddu has taught in the English Department at Denison University (a residential Liberal Arts college in Granville, Ohio) since 1992. His chief academic interests are English and French literary and editorial history, medieval book production and provenance, antiquarianism, bibliomania, and scholarly eccentricity. His paper is entitled "Otto Ege: Teacher, Collector, and Biblioclast."

Abstract: The presentation will be devoted to how Otto and Louise Ege of Cleveland, Ohio constructed forty commercial portfolios of medieval manuscript leaves in the mid-1950s. The speaker will provide a general overview of the contents of the portfolios, the current locations of all the known portfolios, and some of the special circumstances of the portfolio owned by his college.

Our third and final speaker is Janet Catterall, Head of the Indigenous Studies Portal, University of Saskatchewan Library. Janet has an MA History, Michigan State University, and an MLS, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University. She worked in a series of academic libraries in the U.S. and then in natural language processing before accepting the position of Special Collections Librarian at the University of Saskatchewan in 2003. After specializing in digital initiatives in this capacity, she accepted an invitation to head the university library's newly emerging Indigenous Studies Portal in 2005. The title of her paper is entitled "Scattered Leaves: Preserving our piece of the Otto Ege puzzle." Abstract: This presentation will give a brief history of the library's involvement with the Otto F. Ege manuscript leaves portfolio and with the digital reconstruction project, outline the problems encountered and strategies adopted for the preservation and digitization of the manuscripts, and outline the library's future plans to promote and utilize the portfolio.

Reference: Barbara Shailor, "Otto Ege: His Manuscript Fragment Collection and the Opportunities Presented by Electronic Technology", The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries, Volume LX, pp 1-22

http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/news/archive_03/Journal_2003_Promotion.pdf