



UCA PACIOLI, close friend and disciple of Leonardo DaVinci, drew the letter L introducing this paragraph early in the 16th century, only some 50 years after Gutenberg invented moveable type. Applying the principles of mathematics to typography and architecture, the original edition of the famous classic, *De Divina Proportione*, now has a proud home in the rare book collection of the Columbia campus's Main Library.

On the opposite page, a corner of *De Divina Proportione* is pictured at bottom left. At upper left is a facsimile copy of the Gutenberg Bible, a fine work which painstakingly has been reproduced from the original. The library also has a page from an original Gutenberg Bible. At upper right is a Dante, prized for its unusual binding of leather and metal. In the middle section of the picture, a Leonhart Fuchs herbal of 1542 is opened to one of the hundreds of its hand colored plates. At bottom center is a book from the famous Kelmscott Press, which William Morris started in 1891 because he felt printing craftsmanship was declining. At bottom right is a first edition of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, which features exceptionally beautiful binding and illustrations by the author.

A library, of course, has many parts, and the 10,000-volume rare book collection is only a small, though fascinating and important section of the University of Missouri-Columbia library, which is internationally known for its work in automation.

But a scholar often needs the original works. Although he may get the same information from a microfilm copy, who can deny that it is more useful, certainly more satisfying, to hold a gold embossed leather bound book of *The Moths and Butterflies of the United States* and see for himself the 100 color plates which include tiny scales from actual butterfly wings? In many areas, the student can get a better feel for the author's intent and the times in which he wrote from an original edition. Later editions might even be different.

So much for justifying a rare book collection — if indeed it really is necessary to justify authentic records of civilization and culture. A more interesting question, perhaps, is, "What makes a book rare?"

rare books

living tissue
of history's fiber



COMOEDIA DANTIS



the
history
of
Reynard
the
Foxe

VANITY FAIR

THACKERAY

Poor Richard, 1747.

A N

Almanack

For the Year of Christ

1 7 4 7,

It being the Third after
LEAP-YEAR,

and makes since the Creation

	Years
By the Account of the Eastern Greeks	7255
By the Latin Church, when \odot ent. \circ	5926
By the Computation of <i>W. W.</i>	5750
By the Jewish Rabbits	5696
	5508

Wherein is contained,

The Lunations, Eclipses, Judgment of the Weather, Spring Tides, Planets Mortious & mutual Aspects, Sun and Moons Rising and Setting, Length of Days, Time of High Water, Fairs, Courts, and observable Days.

Fitted to the Latitude of Forty Degrees, and a Meridian of Five Hours West from London, but may without sensible Error, serve all the adjacent Places, even from *Newfoundland* to *South Carolina*.

By *RICHARD SAUNDERS*, Philom.

PHILADELPHIA:

Printed and sold by *B. FRANKLIN*.



Lively scene from Dickens' Christmas Carol appears in the rare Nonesuch Press edition. Poor Richard's 1747 Almanack, shown at left, is another proud possession of the MU Library.

Age, obviously, is one criterion. Any book published earlier than 1650 (and some experts now are saying 1720) is considered rare. In the United States, an East Coast book is rare if it was published before 1800. And as publishing moved west, the cutoff date for rare books becomes later—1825 in Missouri, perhaps; 1850 for Colorado.

But age isn't all the rare-book answer, by any means. The child's Big-Little Books of the mid-thirties, those little 3½-by-4½-inch volumes that predated comic books, now are prized.

The first editions of any important author, a Dickens or a Thackeray, places the books into the special collection. Autographed copies sometimes can qualify, as can books owned by important men. The binding, illustrations, typography, original price, limited editions, publisher — any of these features might elevate the work into the rare-book category.

The oldest volume owned by the University is a 12th century German manuscript of vellum, bound in pigskin, which was written about 300 years before the invention of printing from moveable type. The manuscript, dealing with syntax and identified as parts 17 and 18 of Priscianus' *De Constructione*, still shows the guide lines made by the scribe to assure neat work and proper margins.

This book was specially purchased by the library as a rare book. But most of them make their way into the special collection via other routes.

There is no special budget for rare books. Some of them are purchased out of regular departmental budgets by faculty members who buy them for research or study purposes. In such cases, they just incidentally are rare.

Many in the collection were rescued from the general stacks by alert members of the library staff and faculty. In a 1.3-million volume library, such finds are made often, and many rare books undoubtedly still are in the stacks. There just isn't the time or manpower to ferret all of them out all at once. Last month a 1928, privately-printed copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* turned up.

But there is no more important source for rare books than gifts. Often these come through the Friends of the Library, a support organiza-

tion dedicated to helping the library.

One important gift was the Thomas Moore Johnson collection of philosophy by his son Dr. Franklin P. Johnson. A professor from the University of Chicago, Dr. Johnson retired several years ago and now lives in Osceola, Mo. Another gift of great importance was the library of the late Albert M. Keller, prominent St. Louis broker and civic leader. Consisting of some 1200 volumes, it included first editions of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and of works by Mark Twain, Joseph Conrad, Anthony Trollope, H. G. Wells, Sinclair Lewis, and Lewis Carroll.

As might be concluded from the above, the growth of the rare book collection on the Columbia campus, or anywhere else, for that matter, is necessarily slow. For many years, it grew without much planned collecting. And this, in some respects, turned out to be an advantage, since the library has some rarity or special imprint in nearly all areas of study. But a really distinguished collection needs to specialize, and the library has chosen to build collections in natural history (Leonhart Fuchs herbal of 1542 is one of the finest examples in the world), and private presses, featuring especially fine press work (such as Ashendene, Nonesuch, Limited Editions Club, Doves, Cuala, Daniel Merrymount, and Kelmscott).

Miss Lucille Cobb, the librarian in charge of the special materials section of which rare books is a part, would also like to see the specialization broaden into the areas of typography and the history of printing.

There's sound reason for this. This month Dr. Helmut Lehman-Haupt, one of the world's recognized experts on the history of books, joins the faculty of the School of Library and Informational Science. He will teach the history of books and printing and literature of the humanities. The author of many books and articles, Dr. Lehmann-Haupt has taught and consulted at a number of universities. Since 1962, he has been bibliographic consultant for H. P. Kraus, rare book collector and dealer.

His addition to the faculty should be a good omen for the future of the rare book collection. This is fine, because, as Dr. Lehmann-Haupt once wrote, rare books are the "living tissue of the fabric of history." □