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The Social Life of Libraries

Paolo Mangialfico

A few months ago I decided to see for myself what all the fuss was about, so I signed up for an account on Facebook (facebook.com), the social networking site used by almost every college student in the country. I joined the Duke community on Facebook and began to set up my profile. Curious to see if any of my library colleagues were already in Facebook and would consent to being one of my Facebook “friends,” I typed “Bostock” into the search box and was surprised to find seventeen groups at Duke matching the name of one of Duke’s new library buildings. Would you believe Bostock Groupies R Us (9 members)? How about Bostock Is Better Than Home (22 members)? Bostock Study Group, the Bostock Bunch, even Club Bostizzel and Club Bostock (117 members!). I even found a student-sponsored library sleepover event called Bedstock (“because it’s not like we don’t spend enough time in the library,” 11 participants).

Club Bostock’s introductory page reads:

Honestly, it was only a matter of time. This is formal recognition of the resurgence that has taken place in studying interest. The opening of Bostock has either improved your grades or improved manners in which you can procrastinate. Club Bostock, your friendly campus club that has no cover charge, open later than the other spots, and you don’t have to worry about no damn A.L.E. [Alcohol Law Enforcement]

If you answer “yes” to the following questions, then you are probably a frequent clubber at Club Bostock.

1. Do you find yourself borderline excited to go to Bostock?
2. Can you run into half of your friends walking through the lobby?
3. Have you ever spent more time socializing then actually studying?
4. Can you spot finer females/males at Club Bostock than Club 9?
5. Have you had an evening where you don’t even have that much work to do, but you find some assignment worthy of a trip to Bostock?

If some of these questions have struck a cord [sic] with you, then you are clearly one who frequents Club Bostock.

The library has suddenly become cool! What’s going on here?
The Social Life of Libraries

Bostock’s popularity among students indicates that the vision we’ve had in designing and renovating our library buildings—more inviting spaces for connecting people with people as well as connecting people and ideas—has been realized. OK, so maybe these Facebook groups are not exactly focused on academic pursuits, but amid all this socializing there must be some studying going on and some conversations and collaborations that are conducive to better scholarship.

A few years ago the former head of Xerox PARC (Palo Alto Research Center—the research and development arm of Xerox) and a colleague wrote a book called The Social Life of Information, in which they examined the importance of social networks between individuals and groups for the creation and effective use of knowledge. One of the anecdotes they include in the book is about a study of Xerox copier repair staff and how they learned and shared information about how best to do their work. An anthropologist, Julian Orr, followed the copier repair representatives around and noted patterns in their behavior. Most of the time these reps were working on their own at customer sites. Yet Orr found that the reps were remarkably social, getting together on their own time for breakfast, lunch, coffee, or at the end of the day—sometimes for all of the above. This sociability wasn’t simply a retreat from the loneliness of an isolating job. At these meetings, while eating, playing cribbage, and engaging in what might seem like idle gossip, the reps talked work, and talked it continuously. They posed questions, raised problems, offered solutions, constructed answers, and discussed changes in their work, the machines, or customer relations. In this way, both directly and indirectly, they kept one another up to date with what they knew, what they learned, and what they did.

It turned out that the social networks connecting these workers were an effective way for them to learn and improve themselves and each other and were satisfying and fun for them, too. Xerox had provided these workers with plenty of training and documentation and gave them procedures for using these resources when they were working by themselves away from the office. Yet Orr’s findings contradicted Xerox’s assumptions of how workers would acquire and use information most efficiently:

Time spent together would, from the process perspective, be non-value adding. … But, as Orr showed, the reps … were critical resources for each other. The informal and extracurricular group helped each member to reach beyond the limits of an individual’s knowledge and of the process documentation.

Eventually, Xerox gave a two-way radio to each of its field workers so they could confer with their peers quickly and easily. The company also set up a database called Eureka, where the reps could write up tips they wanted to share with their colleagues and comment on tips posted by others. Through a rating and review system, tips deemed to be most useful rose to the top, and the people who submitted them built social capital and recognition among their peers, reinforcing a process that was both productive and socially rewarding.

Yet underlying each of these services is a culture and set of functionality that encourages participation and fosters a sense of community. At Amazon, you can post reviews, create lists, engage in discussions, or just read what other users of the site have posted. Wikipedia, on its surface, is an encyclopedia, but underneath is a huge community bubbling with discussion and debate, where issues are getting hashed out and ideas and texts are being refined. At LibraryThing, you can organize your personal library, read or write reviews, find out about books liked or disliked by those who share your tastes, and even swap books when you’ve finished reading them.

At the Duke Libraries, we’re starting to experiment with some services like this, too. In spring 2007 we’re conducting a pilot of Connotea (connotea.org), a “social bookmarking” tool similar to the popular del.icio.us service, but designed for academics. To use it, you sign up for an account to create your personal “library” of citations in the system and add a Connotea button to your Web browser. Then, when you find something on the Web you want to keep track of for future reference (a journal article, catalog record,
At the Duke Libraries, we’re starting to experiment with some services like this, too. In spring 2007 we’re conducting a pilot of Connotea (connotea.org), a “social bookmarking” tool similar to the popular del.icio.us service, but designed for academics.

In collaboration with Duke’s Office of Information Technology, Arts & Sciences Information Science and Technology, and the Center for Instructional Technology, the library is also exploring other “social software” tools that might provide a platform for online collaborations between Duke students and faculty.

Or any web page, you click the button to add the citation to your Connotea library.

The system will pull in whatever information about the reference it can (for journal articles, for example, it usually is able to pull in the title, author, journal issue and a few other fields of metadata) and then allow you to add your own description (both keyword “tags” and descriptive prose, if you’d like) and comments on the resource. You can choose to keep your citations private and use them just to aid your own ability to find the resources again later, or you can share them with other users of the system. If you do share (and most users do), Connotea can then identify patterns in the kinds of things being cited and how they are described and use these to recommend other items you might want to look at.

When you’re browsing citations others have entered, you can use a “copy” link to add a citation to your own citation library in one click and then add your own description or comments if you wish. You can sort your library of citations by descriptive terms, the date you have entered, the number of groups (say, a project team for a course, a study group on a particular topic, or just a social group). In their personal or group pages, users can set up blogs and discussion boards, deposit files to be shared (including multimedia files they want to podcast), and work on collaborative projects in these shared spaces. Any of the items in the system can be tagged with descriptive terms, and as with Connotea, Elgg will highlight similarly tagged items and lead readers in directions pointed out by their colleagues. Each user has a “dashboard” page where they can subscribe to syndicated feeds from any of their friends or shared groups (or external news sources or blogs) and be notified whenever there are updates.

The library is also launching a number of blogs written by library staff. The blogs will create new avenues for sharing information with the Duke community about library services and academic resources and, perhaps more importantly, offer the community new ways to engage us in conversations. Readers will be able to subscribe to the blogs via e-mail or RSS (a standard protocol for syndication of news and blogs) or just to read them on the Web. Each page will have a comment forum that invites discussion or suggestions from library users. And it’s not too hard to imagine a day soon when the library catalog itself might be more like Amazon or LibraryThing, a place where you could add your own annotations, descriptions, reviews, and ratings of library resources both for your own use and to be shared with others in the community. The catalog could offer recommendations of books you might want to read, based on reviews or reading patterns of other scholars in the field, or allow you to search inside the book or read excerpts from it before you head to the stacks to find it.

We hope these services and others like them will help Duke scholars find resources and work with each other in more efficient, interdisciplinary, and collaborative ways. And let’s not forget fun. The developer of LibraryThing recently wrote in his blog about the philosophy behind the site:

Why not be fun? The library itself is fun. . . . The catalog is a condensed representation of that fun. It’s not the books, but it has a lot to say about them, and it can be the springboard for so much more. I enjoy reading and thinking about books. I want to remember what I read, much as I want to remember my vacations. I want help finding new ones. I want to put my books out there for all to see. I want to express myself about them. I want to find people to talk about our books. I might even want to date someone who reads the same things I do.1

The Bostock Facebook groups and library buildings full of students are evidence that the libraries at Duke are successful spaces for social as well as solitary learning. We’re now hard at work making sure that the online services we provide are as effective at supporting research and collaboration—and as fun—as our physical library spaces are.

Notes
Welcome to the Duke Summer Reading Book Selection Committee.

Started in 2001, the Duke Summer Reading Program offers a shared experience for incoming Duke undergraduates. From *The Palace Thief*, Ethan Canin’s collection of novellas, to Khaled Hosseini’s NY Times best-seller *The Kite Runner*, the selections have been varied to match the many interests of the students who will read and discuss them.

First-year students discuss the selection during orientation, but the reading program also features a campus visit by the author and/or subject of the book for a public conversation. Other events related to the summer reading program have included panel debates on bioethics (*My Sister’s Keeper*) and visits to journalism seminars by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Tracy Kidder (*Mountains Beyond Mountains*). Faculty members who work specifically with first-year students in the focus, writing, or first-year seminar programs are invited to weave the selection into their syllabi and plans for the semester.

During the summer before freshmen take up residence on Duke’s East Campus, they receive a copy of the reading selection chosen for their class and information about participating in a discussion of the book during orientation. Although many of the students view this as their ‘first academic assignment,’ the program organizers have a very different perspective.

The selection committee and others involved in the program are thinking broadly about the intellectual growth and mental shifts that occur during an undergraduate’s four years at the university. And they’re keeping in mind that some of the most transformative experiences take place outside the classroom. Late night conversations in the dorms or dining hall or passionate arguments in a tent in K-ville create both meaningful memories and moments when students begin to examine their values and ideals. Fostering these informal, peer-to-peer exchanges is at the heart of the Duke summer reading program.

To further empower the first-year students to engage each other in conversations about significant issues, First-Year Advisory Counselors, themselves students, convene and lead the discussions of the summer reading selection. This differs from the practice at other institutions where faculty lead the discussions in similar programs. At Duke, sophomores, juniors or seniors, matched with 8–10 first-year students, find their own time and place. Some groups talk over a bowl of queso in the ‘dillo, while others find a nice shade tree where they try to beat the late August North Carolina heat. The
Every year the committee considers entering the process looking for a certain type of book with a theme that we might deem worthy of further exploration by our students. And, annually and unanimously, the committee members decide that they’d rather look for the best book. That’s not to say that theme is recommended through this process, albeit some with more care than others. No title is discarded without some discussion, even those that are recommended every year!

“I’ll fall on my sword to ensure this is the assigned reading this year,” declared a faculty member at the second meeting of the book selection committee this year. Members reviewed the initial list of approximately seventy nominations at their first meeting, which occurred between Thanksgiving and winter break. Although the next four weeks would be the prime reading time for committee members, this particular faculty member felt certain that she had already found the winner. Two weeks later, several students on the committee countered her passionate endorsement, arguing that, while the book had merit (after all, it had just been included on the NY Times list of required readings for 2007), it would not capture the interest of typical Duke freshmen. Don’t anoint it just yet, they cautioned; there may be better options.

So what makes a book the right choice? The committee considers points ranging from readability and story line to number of pages and topic. What is missing from the consideration, at least at the beginning of the process, is the theme that the committee is ‘hunting’ for. Every year the committee considers entering the process looking for a certain type of book with a theme that we might deem worthy of further exploration by our students. And, annually and unanimously, the committee members decide that they’d rather look for the best book. That’s not to say that theme and messaging don’t enter the selection conversation; they certainly do, but not until the list gets much shorter and the options become more clear.

This is when we start talking seriously about connections that could be made with the book during discussions and throughout the year. This year, more than any other, this conversation has seemed especially relevant. Following a media firestorm in which a gamut of social and campus culture issues have surfaced at Duke, we are asking ourselves how the summer reading program might engage students in conversations that could contribute to improving our campus culture. We have agreed to keep this question in mind as we go through the process. Subsequently, the word ‘opportunity’ has come into our conversation regarding several of the books we’re considering.

Speaking from experience, I can say that the process of selecting the book moves along beautifully. That doesn’t mean that we don’t occasionally have dueling books! The most hotly contested selection was The Kite Runner, which was a last-minute winner over Dead Man Walking. Last year’s selection of My Sister’s Keeper was fiercely debated, too. Mountains Beyond Mountains, on the other hand, was the easiest pick—no other titles came close that year.

The more we read, the more evident it becomes that some titles are rising to the top while others are falling quickly from the list of nominations. Each committee member volunteers to read several books (the number varies depending on the committee member’s regular responsibilities and work load between meetings) and then reports back to the larger group. Based on this report, a book is either removed from consideration or remains on the list for additional reading by other members of the committee. It is conceivable that a book could be removed from consideration after having been read by only one committee member, while those that emerge as contenders are eventually read by the entire group.

The thirteen members of the committee (3 students, 3 faculty members, 4 university staff, and 3 adjunct faculty) are trusted to keep the goals of the program at the forefront of their thinking as they prepare their comprehensive reviews. Some committee members have had to veto an all-time personal favorite because they realized that the book

Past Selections of the Duke Summer Reading Program

• 2004  Mountains Beyond Mountains by Tracy Kidder (2003)
• 2003  Savage Inequalities by Jonathan Kozol (1991)
• 2002  The Palace Thief by Ethan Canin (1994)
just wasn’t the right fit for the program. This is easy for some, harder for others, but in the end the group has always come together around the final selection.

While the list is being narrowed to the finalists, I am working behind the scenes to determine the availability of books, authors, and peripheral resources for hypothetical selections. One book we’re considering this year is out of print, so while there are still fourteen other options on the list, extensive conversations with press outlets and publishers are already taking place to determine the feasibility of a book that only has a one in fifteen chance of being chosen. It wouldn’t be very prudent of the committee to pick a book that wasn’t available for purchase on a mass scale, just as it wouldn’t be a good idea to pick a title that wouldn’t appeal to an 18-year-old college-bound student.

When the list has been narrowed to 3-5 finalists, these titles are publicized to the broader Duke community for feedback. Not to be mistaken for a vote, this is a chance for those not on the committee to offer their thoughts on the books still on the table. Last year when this step was added to the selection process, the committee received more than a thousand unique visits to its website in a one-week span and several hundred insightful comments about the books that were on the short list. It was a great barometer for the committee to make sure they were on track in thinking about the issues presented in the finalists and how these would resonate with the broader Duke community.

In our first year, The Palace Thief was an early reject, only to be resurrected later in the process and ultimately selected as the program’s inaugural pick. Other selections have been unanimous after a quick process, while some have been made only after multiple votes and even impassioned speeches of support from committee members. This year the selection process seems to be moving at a rapid pace, but it is likely that the committee will debate the final few titles thoroughly.

As the summer reading program has become more firmly established at Duke, campus interest in the books being considered has grown. In the first couple of years, no one cared (or knew) about the book selection process. Now, it’s a hot topic of conversation and is often scrutinized pretty closely. But one thing is certain: The process flows like a good book, with unexpected turns and twists, ups and downs, undeniable tension and joy, but ends, just as it should, in a way that everyone understands and ultimately accepts.

Ryan Lombardi is Associate Dean of Students and Chair, Duke Summer Reading Program.

Postscript—
On 8 March the Duke Summer Reading Selection Committee announced that it had chosen The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South by Osha Gray Davidson as the “freshman read” book for the Class of 2011. The other finalists were The Omnivore’s Dilemma by Michael Pollan, What is the What by Dave Eggers and Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin.

Best of Enemies describes the history of the civil rights movement in Durham by focusing on the friendship between C.P. Ellis, a one-time KKK member, and Ann Atwater, a civil rights activist, and their work to bridge the racial divide during school desegregation. The book is currently out of print, but the publisher, the University of North Carolina Press, is doing a special reprinting of the paperback edition for Duke that will include an inset letter from President Brodhead. The reprint should be available by May.
Editor’s Note: David Lee Miller, professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of South Carolina, spent several days in February at Duke’s Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, examining the library’s 1609 edition of Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene. Miller was also at Duke to attend a conference, “Producing the Renaissance Text: Current Technologies of Editing—In Theory and Practice.” What follows is a slightly revised version of the paper Professor Miller presented at the conference.

BUILDING A SPENSER ARCHIVE—ONE SCAN AT A TIME

DAVID LEE MILLER

In the late 1990s, a team of American researchers persuaded Oxford University Press that the time had come for a new scholarly edition of the works of Edmund Spenser. The players were Joseph Loewenstein (Washington University), Patrick Cheney (Penn State), Elizabeth Fowler (University of Virginia), and me. From the beginning we imagined our goal as a digital archive from which various physical texts might be derived: a hardcover library edition, a classroom text, a paperback of the hardcover library edition, a classroom and perhaps a classroom text for American high schools and modern books, but unless Google knows something we don’t (and they may), that’s nowhere near achievable for the present. What OCR can do, though, is identify what counts as a character or as a word, and combine scans into a virtual copy text consisting entirely of the immaterial text.

DIGITAL COPY TEXT

Given what we know about early modern printing practices, there’s really no reason for any single copy of a given edition to serve as copy text. The crucial unit of analysis for textual editors is not the book. Nor is it the page. It’s the “forme”—that layout of pages set up together and locked within a chase to be printed on a sheet, which will then be folded and cut. The ideal copy text for any edition would be one containing the final, corrected state for every forme. But in the early days of printing, proofing was often done on the fly, with corrected and uncorrected sheets combined indiscriminately in any given copy sent to the binder.

The result is that the ideal copy may or may not exist on a shelf somewhere between one set of covers. Charles Darwin created a facsimile of the Shakespeare first folio by cherry-picking the images of corrected (and well-inked) pages from various existing copies; his example takes on a new interest now that we can store high-resolution digital scans of existing copies on a server. Why not follow Hinman’s lead by recombining scans to create a virtual copy text consisting entirely of corrected forms?

The biggest obstacle is to get enough copies scanned—the process can be quite expensive—but it does seem reasonable to expect that over time most copies of most early witnesses will be digitized. Our goal for Spenser is to collect TIFF scans of as many copies as we can. This will cost a lot and take a long time, but sooner or later it will happen—and long before it does, we will have witnesses enough to compose our virtual copy text.

DIGITAL COLLATION

This goal of collecting scans will have other advantages as well. One of the purely practical obstacles to editing a book like The Faerie Queene has always been the difficulty of collating multiple copies. Over a hundred copies of the 1590 edition are thought to survive, but they are scattered all over the world, and each copy takes three or four days to collate. Until recently no one, not even the editors of the Johns Hopkins Variorum edition, had ever collated more than three or four copies. The team of Japanese scholars who prepared the text for the recent Longman edition were able to collate a dozen, but to do it they had to work from microfilm and photocopies. This method carries inevitable limitations—for instance, it’s difficult to recognize where a copy may have been “improved” by some earlier owner or seller taking a hint from the previous line lists the “Tigre cruell,” with both cruels in the rhyming position. Sure enough, in the Faults Escaped list I’ve found other instances in which a copy was “improved” by some earlier owner or seller taking a hint from that source. But you can’t tell this sort of thing from microfilm. You have to go into the Bodleian and look at page 85 of Malone 615, in which you will see the correction that has actually been pasted in over the uncorrected state, which can still be seen if you lift the flap of paper on which the correction has been printed.

Even very high-resolution scans will never completely replace the occasional need for first-hand examination of the physical evidence. They will, however, reduce that need, since they capture so much more data than any other kind of image. And, what may prove most valuable in the long run, they hold out the possibility of making such first-hand examination more efficient by telling us where to look. Optical character recognition may someday be sophisticated enough to do preliminary collations of early modern books, but unless Google knows something we don’t (and they may), that’s nowhere near achievable for the present. What OCR can do, though, is identify what counts as a character or as the space between characters. Computer science students working with Joseph Loewenstein and Keith Bennett at
The Hypertext Environment
Not Only Offers A Larger Quantity and Variety of Annotation Available With a Mouse-Click. It Also Offers the Prospect That Our Conference Organizers Refer to as the “Continuously Revised Online Edition.”

Hypertext Commentary, or “Oh What an Endless Worke Have I in Hand!”

This topic may quickly provoke the reflection that sometimes limits are a good thing, since they force an editor to be both selective and concise. This is one reason—one of many—that it’s good to have the interplay between digital editions and hard copy derivatives: the economics of the book require distillation where those of the internet solicit a “jousance” of proliferation. Still, the hypertext environment not only offers a larger quantity and variety of annotation available with a mouse-click, it also offers the prospect that our conference organizers refer to as the “continuously revised online edition.” Such continuous revision needn’t always entail expansion, but it will certainly invite editors to imagine their texts as a set of portals leading into a virtual encyclopedia of contexts and specialized studies. Indeed, if there’s going to be a Spenser Encyclopedia—a superb reference work—why shouldn’t its entries be placed online and linked to a hypertext edition?

Of course that’s only the beginning. Can we get an audioclip of Seamus Heaney reading his favorite passages from The Faerie Queene? What about specialized studies of everything Elizabethan, from architecture to zoology? And if Google is going to put the entire public domain online, why shouldn’t we be able to create a digital simulacrum ofSpenserian intertextuality, with direct links from a given passage in The Faerie Queene to its tributaries in Virgil, Ovid, Chaucer, Ariosto, Tasso, and the Bible?

Collaboration

One of the more attractive features of digital projects as a form of scholarship is that they require extensive collaboration: sociologically they are the antithesis of the monograph. They push us to build partnerships across disciplines, forcing humanists and computer scientists to explain themselves to each other and to work with the library and the school of library science. And they regularly give rise to new possibilities for collaboration, since every obstacle is an opportunity to involve another specialist. The Spenser Project has formed mutually beneficial working relationships with Early English Books Online and with the Wordboard project at Northwestern, and it has brought different schools and departments at Washington University and at the University of South Carolina into collaboration on specific tasks.

Most recently, I was discussing with Joseph Loewenstein how to annotate certain lines of The Faerie Queene, and it emerged from the discussion that we have different notions of how Spenser’s syntax works. I consulted with a specialist in our linguistics program, and the next thing I knew we were drawing up a grant proposal and designing a curriculum that would enable graduate students to pursue advanced study in literature and linguistics aimed at the formal analysis of syntax in The Faerie Queene. Add the advances in theoretical linguistics over the last few decades to the kinds of flexible and sophisticated concordancing made possible by programs like Wordboard, and you can see how new studies of early modern syntax might be created to extend and educate our intuitions as editors and close readers. Syntactic analysis can also be used to create a tag set and add to our textual transcriptions a markup layer that will flag significant features, providing a basis for further study and a useful model for corpus-based linguistic analysis.

Teaching

In various ways, the kinds of collaboration I’ve been describing can be extended into the classroom. Joseph Loewenstein started a few years ago talking about the “bench humanities,” and with the help of our new project director Amanda Gailey, also at Washington University, he has followed through by creating a Spenser course with a lab component. Students in the lab worked on XML markup of various texts, studying the markup language and the TEI guidelines, debating the kinds of questions that come up when you try to design a tag set, and in the end successfully encoding substantial chunks of the transcriptions provided to us through our working arrangement with Early English Books Online. Another XML workshop is planned for this summer at Washington University, which will in turn provide the model for a course next year in the honors college at South Carolina.

Meanwhile I’ve been experimenting with editorial commentary as a way of teaching The Faerie Queene. Exercises in preparing commentary on a specific passage give first-time students a chance to think directly about a fundamental question: what and how much do they need to know in order to read the poem? Students preparing commentary have to look closely at the language of a selected passage, think seriously about whether mythological references are decorative or functional, ponder the importance of historical references and literary allusions, and figure out for themselves and each other what exactly counts as “comprehension” with a text as complex as Spenser’s. Instead of writing individual term papers, they work in small teams to construct their own commentaries on various episodes complete with a critical introduction explaining their editorial decisions, and they present their work to their peers at the end of the semester. I think this procedure sometimes works better than a more conventional combination of essays and exams to give undergraduate English majors a sharp and memorable sense of Spenser as a writer.

The Immaterial Text

It’s a commonplace of the new bibliography to emphasize the ways in which the printed text itself was always a collaborative product, not an immaculate conception of the authorial mind for which print is merely a necessary evil, an imperfect, accident-prone source of what editors sometimes still call “corruption.” But there’s nothing commonplace about
the endless particularity of the material text, and about all the ways it can call attention to the circumstances of its making and its circulation.

My first experience collating a copy of the 1590 Faerie Queene took place at the Ransom Humanities Center in Austin, Texas. I got very excited the first time I found a previously unrecorded variant. It was so . . . factual. One such variant I found on signature X4 of the Pforzheimer copy. This variant was unrecorded in part, I’m sure, because it doesn’t occur in the text at all: look at the upper left-hand corner of the ornamental box that frames the “argument” to cantos x. See the difference between the image from the Pforzheimer copy, on the left side of your handout, and the one from the Stark copy, on the right? These ornamental boxes are made up of separate pieces fitted together; in the Pforzheimer copy, one of these pieces is turned the wrong way. If you look even more closely, you can see that the piece forming the entire left-hand side of the box has been replaced.

This is a fact. What it means, I can’t yet tell you. I don’t imagine the “furniture”—the wood blocks and wedges that hold the type in place—was loose, because I haven’t found evidence of other movement on the page. I assume, then, that for some reason the chase must have been opened, whereupon pieces fell out or were removed, and one of them was put back wrong. To figure out why, you have to look at what else in the forme has been changed, and if you find any changes you have to see whether they coincide with this one—that is, whether they occur in all the same copies. I’m still collating, still gathering my data, so I’m not ready to say what it means. Instead, let me tell you something else. After noticing this discrepancy, I started going around the border with a magnifying glass to locate the breaks between the pieces it’s made of. And while I was doing that, something else entirely leapt into view.

It was a hair. A single strand of hair, as white as the page itself, rooted in the weave of the paper and spiraling up into view as if it had sprouted there. It had been invisible to the naked eye, but loomed so large in the magnifying glass that I felt a small, momentary shock, and pulled back. I had been reading Philip Gaskell’s account of how sheets of paper were made by pouring a paste of pounded rags over a fine mesh screen and pressing the water out, but now suddenly the details became real to me in a completely different way. This happened. More than four hundred years ago, an actual person (Giles the paper-maker?) pressed the sheet from which this page was folded and cut. Maybe he scratched his beard, and the hair is his, or maybe it was there in the rags, left over from some former owner with a more obscure itch. But there it was, and there it had probably been for the last 413 years, not the least bit allegorical until I and my amazement happened along to seize upon it—figuratively speaking, of course—and subject it to bemused scrutiny.

I have spent many long hours since then, whole days in fact, staring with fascination at the variously smudged and discolored surfaces of page after page in copies of The Faerie Queene, and I’ll be doing it again next week right in the rare book reading room down the hall. What makes this looking so fascinating is not, however, just the minute particularity of each single page. In fact, it’s only now and then that I look directly at a single page. Most of the time I’m staring into a mirror, and this mirror is angled toward a second mirror which is angled toward the open book. That’s with my left eye; my right eye, meanwhile, is trained on a computer screen displaying a high-resolution digital image of the same page from my control text; or I might be using a printout of the scan. This is a variation on the technique known as optical collation, developed by Randall McCloud of the University of Toronto. The set of mirrors I use was developed by Carter Hailey of the University of Virginia.

What I see at such moments is the smudged outlines of the letters, bits of foreign matter embedded in the paper, water stains, the texture of the weave, the tears and scraped places. But for all its magnification of physical detail, this image is wholly immaterial: it exists neither on the page of the book to my left nor on the computer screen to my right. Its location is the visual cortex, where the images from my binocular vision are stereoscoped (or “collated”) with such precision that even small discrepancies seem to float up off the page, occupying a different depth of field. It’s a very useful thing for editing, but it’s also a visionary experience. I see both the material object and the ways in which it differs from itself, for of course the whole purpose of collation is to take into account the fact that there is not one material text but many, no two of them quite identical.

I guess I’m telling you this because even though so much of the value and the interest of editing, these days, come from new technologies, new forms of collaboration, and new ways of constructing the physical object, there’s still a part of the process that is quite personal, indeed almost incomunicable, involving no technology more sophisticated than a pair of mirrors on lamp stands and no collaboration more extensive than that between your right and left eye. It is, as I said, visionary. In one way you’re a bit like Arthur after he wakes from his dream, staring at the “pressed grass” where Gloriana lay beside him—I never realized that this could be an allegory of the printing press. But in another way you’re like Arthur before he wakes, peering intensely into your own mind to behold there the likeness of The Faerie Queene. That’s a stereoscopic effect technology can’t explain, but for me it’s still the reason to edit the text.
WHERE DID ALL THE EVILS GO?  
Michael Allen Gillespie

F o u n d in a fading photo on the title page of Ron Rosenbaum’s recent book, Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil, a small child peeks out at us. Who is this child? A victim of the Holocaust? An image of all that was lost? Or perhaps a shattered survivor who lived on haunted by the ghosts of those who died? No, it is something worse, a photo of baby Adolf, as innocent as any child who has “not yet bitten of the apple.” There is no hair combed carefully into place, no steady glint in his eye, no narrow mustache above an unsmilng lip, no arm extended in salute, and no indication of future deeds so horrible as to beggar the imagination. Just a small child, filled with all the promise that youth has to offer. The question at the heart of the book is captured in this photo. It is a question posed not merely by the victims of the Holocaust or the millions killed in Hitler’s war, but by our very humanity. Is there a humanly comprehensible path from that small child to the gray and brooding figure searing his course across our history? And if there is, how can we ever use the word “humane” again? Might our difficulty in coming to terms with the possibility of “radical” or “ultimate” evil not be connected to our difficulty in believing in evil in all of its lesser forms? The existence and variety of evil was certainly not a question for the High Middle Ages. Aquinas and Dante, for example, knew what evil was, described its forms and degrees, and laid out the appropriate punishments and remediations. Judas, the medieval moral equivalent of Hitler, was in this way clearly connected to the baby who, according to Augustine, conspicuously sucked at its mother’s breast. For these thinkers, there is no problem with how we get from the child to the monster. Medieval Christianity had a moral map that was complex, rooted in tradition and revelation, reflected in civil and canon law, and embedded in creation. Yet by the middle of the seventeenth century, the points on this map had largely been erased.

Rosenbaum’s personal search takes him not only to piles of crumbling newspapers and letters, to distant towns and lost places in all corners of Europe, Israel and North America, but also into the pages and the living rooms of nearly all the world’s most famous Hitler scholars. What he discovers there is quite disturbing. Although they are all ardent foes of Hitler and everything he stood for, they fundamentally disagree about his moral character. For some, such as Emile Fockenheim, Hitler is evil incarnate, utterly inhuman, the epitome of absolute evil. In stark contrast, others such as H.R. Trevor-Roper (author of The Last Days of Hitler), argue not only that he was not evil but that he was in fact an idealist, horribly misguided, to be sure, but an idealist nonetheless, who sought to do good. There was not evil will at work in Hitler, they maintain, only (terribly) faulty reasoning. There are some, such as Robert Waite, who try to steer a middle course between these two extremes, but this proves difficult, for while they describe a path from here to there, they are almost all forced to admit that at some point that path is profoundly ruptured, that it passes through an unutterable abyss, an anomaly of such magnitude that it is difficult to say how the human being who entered it is related to the inhuman being who comes out the other side.

If we accept Rosenbaum’s account, we seem compelled to choose between one of two impossible alternatives: either Hitler was not evil or Hitler was not human. This dilemma is particularly troubling because for many years Hitler has been the only absolute in our moral map that always flashed “Forbidden!” Do not enter here!” And our certainty of his evil has been just about the only thing that has given us the resolve to defend the cause of humanity. Apartheid, ethnic cleansing, and the like evoke not merely disapprobation but action because, at some level, we see in them the reappearance of that malignant spirit we imagine to have possessed Hitler. If we doubt that Hitler was evil, how can we sustain any notion of evil or find any ground for moral judgment or action? And if we are left with only silence in the face of this question, how can we not conclude that we are lost on an infinite moral sea, beyond good and evil?

Nietzsche believed that such a fate was inevitable, for the death of God and the collapse of everything built upon that God were already well underway, even if most Europeans had not yet recognized that fact. He was equally convinced that the consequence of this “greatest event” would be the collapse of European morality, centuries of brutal war, and the advent of a world in which everything is permitted. Was he right? Is this the source of the difficulty we face when we consider the question of evil? Are we at heart already entertaining that “uncanniest of all guests,” nihilism? While it is tempting to leap to such a conclusion, it might behoove us to ask a preliminary question, not whether the absence of a point of absolute evil on our moral map is the result of a creeping atheism and nihilism, but how it came about that all the lesser points of evil were effaced. Is there a moral equivalent of Hitler, was in this way clearly connected to the baby who, according to Augustine, conspicuously sucked at its mother’s breast? For these thinkers, there is no problem with how we get from the child to the monster. Medieval Christianity had a moral map that was complex, rooted in tradition and revelation, reflected in civil and canon law, and embedded in creation. Yet by the middle of the seventeenth century, the points on this map had largely been erased.
John Hope Franklin Wins Prestigious Kluge Prize

On 15 November 2006 the Library of Congress announced that John Hope Franklin and Yu Ying-shih were the winners of the 2006 John W. Kluge Prize for the study of humanity. John Hope Franklin is James B. Duke Professor Emeritus of History at Duke; Yu is an emeritus professor of East Asian studies and history at Princeton.

The Kluge Prize rewards lifetime achievement in the wide range of disciplines not covered by the Nobel prizes, including history, philosophy, politics, anthropology, sociology, religion, criticism in the arts and humanities, and linguistics. The monetary value of the prize is $1 million, which professors Franklin and Yu will share.


Commenting on John Hope Franklin, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington said, “Dr. Franklin is the leading scholar in the key area in the professional study of American history in the second half of the 20th century. The transformation he has helped bring about will share. His autobiography, Mirror to America, was published in 2005.

Dick Gordon and the Story behind The Story

Dick Gordon will talk about how The Story unfolds and why we listen when he speaks at the 26 April annual dinner meeting (see “Events” for details) of the Friends of the Duke University Libraries. Gordon, who premiered The Story in February 2006, had lost been heard on National Public Radio as the host of The Connection from 2001 until 2005. Prior to going to The Connection, Gordon was a senior correspondent, backup host, and reporter for the CBC’s national current affairs radio show. However, Gordon has spent much of his career as a war reporter, covering conflicts in Kashmir, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, as well as unrest in South Africa, Mozambique, Pakistan, India and the Middle East. He is the recipient of two Gabriel Awards and two National Journalism Awards, and has been nominated twice for the Astra Award for excellence in reporting.

Exhibits

The Perkins Gallery and the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library Gallery are both closed due to the ongoing renovation of Perkins Library.

Events

14 April

Director Jim Sears, author of Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Hal Call Chronicles and the Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation, will discuss the history of the Mattachine, an early gay activist organization. Beginning at 1:30pm, and again after the program until 4pm, those attending the event will be able to examine materials from the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library that relate to the history of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. 2:30pm, Perkins Library Rare Book Room

20 April

“The Oboe Revealed,” a demonstration by Joseph Robinson, Artist-in-Residence at Duke and from 1978-2005 Principal Oboe of the New York Philharmonic. This is the final performance/conversation in the 2006/2007 Rare Music series, co-sponsored by the Duke University Musical Instrument Collections and the Duke University Libraries. 4:00pm, Perkins Library Rare Book Room. The program will be followed by a reception. Limited reserved parking on the Chapel Quad for this event.

26 April

Annual Meeting and Dinner of the Friends of the Duke University Libraries. The guest speaker will be Dick Gordon, host of The Story, which is produced at WUNC and distributed to public radio stations across the country by American Public Media. 6:00pm, Doris Duke Center at the Sarah P. Duke Gardens. Tickets are $60. For more information, contact Mary Walter at mary.walter@duke.edu.

For more information about these events, call (919) 660-5816 or send a message to ilene.nelson@duke.edu. Individuals with disabilities who anticipate needing reasonable accommodations or who have questions about physical access may also call (919) 660-5816 or send a message to ilene.nelson@duke.edu in advance of the programs.
Duke Reads—Together

Duke alumni and friends now have their own virtual book club, thanks to the leadership of Rachel Clancy, director of Alumni Education and Travel for the Duke Alumni Association, and the sponsorship of the Duke Libraries and other campus organizations. Called Duke Reads, the program will be announced formally to alumni during Reunions Weekend, April 13 & 14.

Over the course of the 2007–08 academic year, seven different members of the Duke community will lead discussions of seven books. The discussions will take place on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, September through November and January through May, from 7:00–8:00pm, Eastern time, in the format of a book club-style discussion.
Seeing Japanese Popular Culture through Anime

After your first random fifteen minutes of any (non-dubbed) anime you’re bound to be overwhelmed by its otherworldliness. You will encounter a different gravity, an unlikely atmosphere, an unexpected moisture. Tangible one moment, it melts into a strange texture the next. Once caught by its ocular excess and sonic gestalt, your sense of the imaginable future is radically changed. The growth in Western audiences for anime over the past decade testifies to the addiction these worlds induce… Dive in—things become viscous, shiny, loud. This is the appeal, the fascination, the allure of anime.

—Philip Brophy from his introduction to 100 Anime, British Film Institute, 2005

Introducing Anime

Anime, pronounced an’-ta-ma’, describes a Japanese animation style as well as the films created in that style. Unlike American animation, which is predominantly a children’s medium, anime, with richer and more challenging story lines, is the major form of visual entertainment in Japan. Anime also differs from Western animation in its use of sophisticated cinematic effects such as panning shots to create background motion and shifting the visual focus from background to foreground. The artistic rendering of anime characters—their large eyes, tiny mouths, and wildly colored hair, instantly recognizable—further distinguishes the style from Western animation. Another hallmark of anime is its relationship to other media, including video games and manga (Japanese comics and print cartoons). It’s quite common for anime to be based on a manga or even a video game—and vice versa.

The first anime to appear on U.S. television was Astro Boy, which aired in the 1980s on NBC at about the same time that anime broke into the U.S. film market with Akira (1989), directed by Katsuhiro Otomo.1 Anime was firmly established in the U.S. by the 1990s when the television series, Sailor Moon, began airing. These early successful forays into American homes and theaters were followed by the arrival of blockbuster anime feature-length films like Hiyo Miyazaki’s Spirited Away (2001) and Howl’s Moving Castle (2005).

The Genesis of the Duke Libraries’ Anime Collection

In 2002 the Freeman Foundation made a four-year grant to the Libraries’ International Area Studies Department (IAS) to expand its support of undergraduate education and teaching in Japanese Studies. Professor Tomiko Yoda of Asian and African Languages and Literature (AALL), and Kristina Troost, the head of IAS and librarian for Japan and Korea, worked in collaboration to build a collection of manga and anime. Professor Yoda uses these resources in “Topics in Japanese Anime,” a course she teaches regularly to capacity enrollments. Professor Yoda recently related these observations about her class and its relationship to the Libraries’ collection:

Anime has offered me both opportunities and challenges as a teacher. It is the first cultural medium produced in Japan that has been almost instantaneously subtitled/dubbed and distributed in the U.S. The availability of diverse anime titles allows me to organize undergraduate courses, in which I teach students with no background in Japanese language, under a large range of specific themes. I have never taught a material that so many students express such powerful personal interest in.

In the Duke classrooms today, we have a generation of students who grew up in the U.S. and around the world—including China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, England, Brazil, Mexico—watching various anime series on television. Part of the challenge of teaching anime lies in the fact that my course has tried to treat not only anime films but also TV anime that can span 13 to 26 episodes per season, and some titles go on for multiple seasons. I assign selected episodes from these series. But without the library’s willingness to collect these long and expensive series (which also poses some cataloging and shelving challenges), I would not be able to handle TV anime series.

Professor Yoda continues to recommend new anime titles for addition to the Libraries’ collection, which currently includes almost two hundred DVDs. And while anime are readily available for purchase, the Libraries still encounter various challenges in acquiring them. One is sorting out series and the titles belonging to each. Another is deciding whether to buy the Japanese DVD release of an anime, which will not play on North American DVD players, or to wait for several months, if not longer, for the U.S. release. If a title has been requested for use in a class, the Libraries may decide to import it from Japan and then purchase another copy when the anime becomes available in the U.S.

And then there is the question of language. Some fans prefer the original Japanese voice acting with subtitles because they feel they are experiencing the film more nearly as the creator envisioned it. However, in recent years serious fans in increasing numbers have begun to prefer English dubbing—especially as Western producers spend more money to add a high-quality English language track.2 Most currently released anime DVDs come with both options: original Japanese language track with optional English subtitles and a dubbed English track.

So, delve into the marvelous, otherworldly realm of anime, at Duke or another library near you.

Darette Pachtnor is the Film, Video & Digital Media Librarian at the Duke University Libraries

Finding Anime Titles at Duke’s Lilly Library

Go to the Duke Libraries’ online catalog: <http://www.lib.duke.edu/online_catalog.html>

Choose “advanced search”—limit the format to “film/video”—use subject keywords “animated films japan” or “animated television programs japan”

Links to Anime Resources


Notes


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If you prefer, you can use the mailer inserted in the center of the magazine to make and send your gift.

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