

# AUTHORS GUILD

Fall 2012/Winter 2013

**BULLETIN**



## **The Authors Guild (née Authors' League) Turns 100**

*1913: Winston Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt Take Office*

*The British Serial Rights Battle that Got Things Rolling*

*Franklin P. Adams to Gulielma Zollinger: The Initial Member Roster*

**Booktalk Nation Goes Live**

**Twinkie Offense? One Author's Inadvertent Brush with Fame**

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GUILD BULLETIN

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**Overheard**

"No reputable publisher will have his feelings hurt by the organization, so eminently in line with the methods of the age."

—From the first issue of *The Authors' League Bulletin*,  
April, 1913

FALL 2012/WINTER 2013

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**About the Cover**

The first Annual Dinner of the Authors' League, February 14, 1914, at the Biltmore Hotel in New York, photographer unknown. The original caption in the *Bulletin* noted that this event "was purposely made a serious sort of dinner, for the committee wished to have the League taken seriously ... now that it is over, and we have made an impression of earnestness, it is to be hoped that the next banquet may be more lively and amusing."

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# The Smithsonian Goes Digital

BY CYNTHIA COTTS

Visitors to Washington, D.C., have marveled at the free admission to the museums of the Smithsonian Institution since the first one opened in 1855. Less well-known is the Smithsonian Libraries' online catalog, which provides free access to a collection of about two million items. Smithsonian librarians have been digitizing rare books and scholarly articles that date back to the 15th century since 1996, and about 2 percent of the entire collection, or 32,000 items, can now be read in full text online.

"These collections belong to the American people," said Smithsonian Libraries Director Nancy E. Gwinn in a recent interview. "It's our desire to share them as much as we can."

Twenty years ago, you would have had to visit the Natural History Museum's library in D.C. to review its copy of *Ornithologie*, an 18th-century book containing hand-colored illustrations of birds. Now all it takes is a quick search on [www.sil.si.edu](http://www.sil.si.edu) to find the book's winsome illustration of an American eaglet.

The Smithsonian Libraries, which refers to itself majestically in the singular, is made up of 20 libraries, located mostly in D.C., as well as in Maryland, New York and Panama. The physical rooms where books are stored attract about 10,000 visitors a year, a number that has remained steady even as online traffic has increased exponentially.

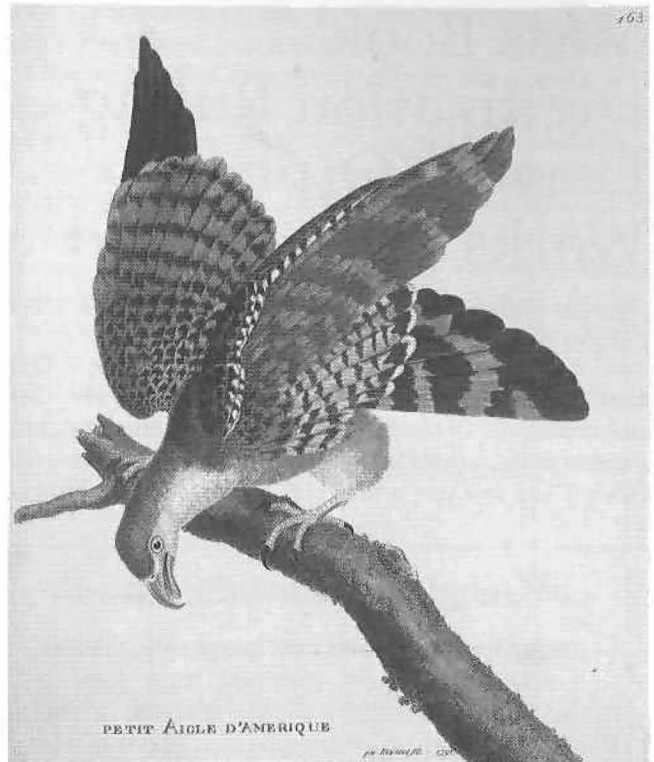
As is true for most institutions, the Smithsonian's Internet presence is both a public service and essential for survival. "The Internet," says Gwinn, "allows us to get the word out about the riches that we have."

The institution completed its first big digitization project in 2003, says Smithsonian Libraries Associate Director of Digital Services Martin Kalfatovic—scanning every page of a 20-volume set that documents the U.S. Exploring Expedition, a round-the-world sea voyage authorized by Congress in 1836. With a few clicks, visitors to the website from virtually any stop along the expedition route can now call up images of interest—like a drawing of 19th century peasants carrying Madeira wine in sheepskin bags on their backs.

Another major, and ongoing, project is the Biodiversity Heritage Library, a consortium of 14 natural history and botanical libraries that are working with

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Cynthia Cotts is a New York-based writer and editor.



*This hand-colored illustration of an American eaglet in François Nicolas Martinet's 18th-century book *Ornithologie* can be found in the Smithsonian's massive digital archive.*

the Smithsonian to place the entire historical literature of taxonomy online. The project has digitized more than 107,000 volumes so far, while a related site, The Encyclopedia of Life, aims to document every name that known species have been given over the centuries. For taxonomists, the sites are a godsend.

Scholars also use the Smithsonian's online catalog to review its collection of about 200 original catalogs from World's Fairs beginning in 1851. The catalogs include minutiae on subjects such as medicine, technology, art and the fur trade, but are not yet available in full text online.

"It's a wonderful way for historians to get a sense of a point in time," Kalfatovic said.

Non-scholars also use the Smithsonian's online system to access a wide range of digitized trade literature, including some 15,000 pages on sewing machines. Someone hoping to have her grandmother's sewing machine repaired, says Kalfatovic, might search the catalog and find a manual for a 1917 Singer.

Also popular is the Smithsonian's collection pertaining to the E. F. Caldwell Lighting Company, which produced custom light fixtures at the turn of the 20th century. The collection includes company archives, account books and trade literature—13,000 drawings

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and 50,000 photos. Some of it has yet to be scanned.

Two other digital collections get a lot of hits: a 10,000-page survey of pre World War I scientific instruments and an album of scientists' portraits, which attract publishers and students alike. After the Smithsonian made the portraits available on Flickr Commons, traffic to that collection increased by a factor of thirty, according to Kalfatovic.

### A Peek at the Rare Book Collections

The Smithsonian Libraries includes three rare book collections: the Cullman Library of Natural History and the Dibner Library of the History of Science and Technology, and a subset of the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum Library, in New York.

Rare books comprise about 10 percent of the Cooper-Hewitt's 80,000-volume collection, said head librarian Stephen Van Dyk. The main collection documents how objects are designed, manufactured, marketed and used; the rare book collection provides insight into the history of illustration and the evolution of the book as a designed object. The Cooper-Hewitt's rare volumes include design encyclopedias, illustrated natural histories, travel guides and do-it-yourself guides.

During a recent visit, Van Dyk showed off books of dizzying beauty, such as a catalog of ornamental art from ancient Rome and Greece. Van Dyk's personal favorite is *Kaigara Danmen Zuan*, published in 1912 by the art dealer Yoichirō Hirase. Bound with string, the book begins with realistic hand-colored drawings of shells and follows with a series of woodcut patterns that re-imagine the shell shapes as stylized abstractions. The Hirase book is an example of the age-old practice of basing design patterns on natural objects.

The Cullman collection documents historical efforts to identify all existing species, at the same time that it offers printed evidence of the spread of ideas, said Cullman head librarian Leslie K. Overstreet. A rare book's binding can be of equal interest as its content, she explained during a recent visit. For example, German botanist Hieronymus Bock's *Kreütterbuch*, a catalog of herbs published in 1587 with hand-colored woodcuts, would be less authentic without its binding of blind-tooled pigskin over wood. Those materials indicate a purchaser or owner in Northern Europe or Germany, Overstreet said, whereas a smooth calf binding would point to an owner in England.

The purview of Cullman authors can be very deep, such as seven volumes on the birds of Asia, or very wide, such as *Dell'istoria naturale*, an encyclopedic volume published in 1599 that is one of the earliest known examples of a natural history "cabinet of cu-

riosities." (In Renaissance Europe, a cabinet of curiosities was a private museum of unusual objects.)

The author, the Italian apothecary Ferrante Imperato, called attention to his authority by including a drawing of his home collection as the frontispiece. As Overstreet opened the book to the drawing, she pointed out the preserved fishes and mammals covering every inch of the room's vaulted ceiling and the stuffed crocodile hanging directly overhead.

At the Dibner collection, one can study the evolution of scientific citation, explained head librarian Lilla Vekerdy. One of the earliest scientific encyclopedias is a 13th century illuminated manuscript by a Franciscan monk who cited no sources, but clearly drew his knowledge from ancient Greece and Rome.

In the 15th century, humanists began to publish, says Vekerdy. These scholars asserted their authority by citing details about their sources, such as the title of the work and the author's name. One such encyclopedic work, a tome published in 1493, claimed to document the history of mankind since Adam and Eve.

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### *Hieronymus Bock's Kreütterbuch and a 16th century Italian manual of anatomy are among the 32,000 rare books available in full online.*

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A breakthrough in scientific scholarship occurred in 1543, when Italian professor of medicine Andreas Vesalius published his manual of anatomy. Copiously illustrated with woodblocks, it was the first anatomy book to combine observation and theory.

Vesalius persuaded the prominent Swiss publisher Johannes Oporinus, who also served as an editor, to print his work, and repaid his patronage in Renaissance tradition. Vekerdy carefully opened the book to the engraved title page, which depicts Vesalius in a teaching theater while Oporinus peers down from a balcony. The publication was funded by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who is profusely thanked in the introduction. Clearly, the demand for editorial acknowledgment is part of a long tradition in publishing.

### Maintaining a World-Class Collection

Running a top-quality research library is expensive. In 2012, the Smithsonian Libraries had an operating budget of about \$14 million. About 34 percent is allo-

cated for research staff and scholar support, 28 percent for new acquisitions and collection access and care, 18 percent for management, 16 percent (or about \$2.3 million) for digitizing and Web services, and 2 percent each for fundraising and exhibits.

The librarians spend carefully and selectively, Gwinn said, as the cost of conserving just half of the full collection would run to the millions of dollars. They also set aside money for acquisitions; system-wide, book and journal collections continue to grow at 2.9 percent a year. "You're always filling in gaps, from the Renaissance to yesterday," said Van Dyk.

About 71 percent of the libraries' funding comes from federal sources. About one-fifth comes from other sources, including gifts and grants; 10 percent is drawn from the libraries' trust. The goal is to increase gifts and grants in hopes of offsetting the decreased purchasing power of federal funding. The Smithsonian's recently launched "Adopt-a-Book" program allows individuals to help fund future acquisitions, or help to conserve a book in the existing collection.

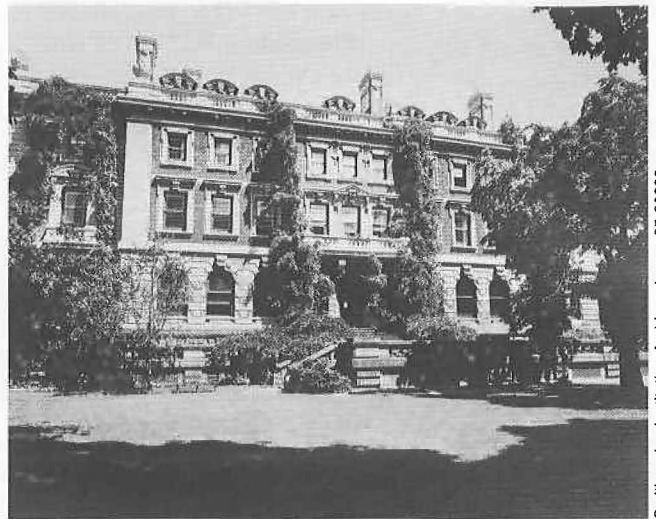
The institution seeks conservation grants from foundations, individuals and Smithsonian competitive programs. Sometimes the goal is to hire outside consultants to review an entire collection and determine appropriate preservation methods. Other times the focus is more narrow: The librarians are currently seeking a grant from the nonprofit Smithsonian Women's Committee to conserve two Cooper-Hewitt books containing lace patterns from 17th century Italy and embroidery designs from 18th century Austria and Germany.

### "Researcher's Paradise"

Dr. David Leslie Jr., a wildlife ecologist who teaches at Oklahoma State University, calls the online content of the Biodiversity Heritage Library "alarmingly wonderful." Over the past six years, he has been doing research that involves tracing the history of the names of species, and the biodiversity portal is his first stop in any search. "In the old days," Leslie recalls, "someone like me would apply for a travel grant to visit the libraries of the world, or would request a rare manuscript through an inter-library loan—a process which could take months."

Now Leslie can usually find the exact page he is looking for in a matter of minutes online. In a class this past fall on Desert Grassland Wildlife Ecology, he taught students how to use the biodiversity portal. "I'm just a little zoologist," he says. "I can't imagine what the Smithsonian online resources represent for everybody else."

A great deal, far and wide, it appears. Katherine



Smithsonian Institution Archives. Image 95-20296.

*New York City's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum is home to one of the 20 collections that make up the Smithsonian Libraries.*

Manthorne, professor of art history at The City University of New York, calls the Smithsonian Libraries "a researcher's paradise."

Through the Internet, the Smithsonian's holdings now reach a wide network of scholars, writers, collectors and hobbyists. Smithsonian librarians also collaborate with universities and other museums. For example, the Cooper-Hewitt library is a prime source for a two-year master's program in the history of decorative arts and design, which the library offers in partnership with Parsons The New School for Design.

The physical libraries are open to the public on a walk-in basis, and the reference service takes questions by phone and e-mail. Visitors to the rare book collections must make an appointment and present a driver's license or passport. Books can be borrowed through a standard interlibrary loan.

Smithsonian Libraries Director Gwinn and Deputy Director Mary Augusta Thomas have been known to answer the reference phone when staying late in the D.C. office. Gwinn recalls taking a call from Marlon Brando, in the days before digitization. The actor, who maintained a residence on the South Pacific island of Tetiaroa, wanted to know the title of a study published by the Smithsonian about Tetiaroa. He had once had a copy and wanted to obtain another.

At the time Brando didn't have enough information for Gwinn to track the study down. But now, it takes only a quick search of the online catalog to locate and download a PDF version of "An Ecological Reconnaissance of Tetiaroa Atoll, Society Islands."

Now that's customer service—and you don't have to be a celebrity to get it. ♦