

## An Extraordinary Manuscript

In 2017, President Thomas Sullivan generously allocated \$100,000 to the University Libraries to support acquisitions in the humanities. At the recommendation of College of Arts and Sciences faculty from the departments of History, Romance Languages, Religion, and English who specialize in medieval Europe, Special Collections was able to purchase an extraordinary sixteenth-century manuscript which the specialty bookseller Les Enluminures had just put on the market.

*Les roys de la très crestienne maison de France* (*The Kings of the Very Christian House of France*), written in French, is an illuminated manuscript on parchment that probably originated in northern France, possibly Paris, between 1500 and 1525. It lists each king and the dates and key events of his reign, beginning with legendary King Pharamond and ending with just a heading for Louis XII, who ascended to the throne 1497-1498. The dealer's description compares our manuscript to the only other known copy, held by the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and suggests that with its elegant script, decorated initials and red velvet binding, our copy may have been made for a person close to the royal family.

The faculty members who recommended the purchase believe that the stunning manuscript has enormous potential for teaching and research at UVM. They regularly use our collection of medieval manuscripts as teaching tools, and see this very accessible manuscript as a great addition. It is tailor-made for a seminar that Charles-Louis Morand-Métevier will be teaching next spring on royal chronicles in the late medieval/Renaissance period. It will also be a good building block for a TAP course that Sean Field hopes to teach in 2019, "Medieval History through Manuscripts." At the same time, UVM will be participating in a program sponsored by Les Enluminures, "Manuscripts in the Curriculum," that will bring a curated collection of manuscripts to campus for use in several courses.

Special Collections Director and Rare Book Curator Jeffrey Marshall and Charles Briggs will teach a seminar designed around our manuscript holdings, including the new *Les roys de la très crestienne maison de France*.

Several UVM faculty members plan to begin work on an edition of the manuscript text. Collating our copy with the one at the Bibliothèque national de France would allow the production of a critical edition. In the future, Special Collections will add the manuscript to our Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts digital collection.



Faculty members Ann Clark (Religion), Jenny Sisk (English), Charles Briggs (History), Charles-Louis Morand-Métevier (Romance Languages), and Sean Field (History) visited Special Collections to examine the manuscript.

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## 2018: The Year of the Big Move

As this issue of *Liber* goes to press, just over a year of construction activity at the Billings Library has ended with the award of a certificate of occupancy from the City of Burlington. The space looks great, and we are busy packing for a move in early August.

The Billings Library project was funded entirely by a long list of generous donors. We offer our grateful thanks to Jack (UVM 1964) and Shirley Silver for the substantial donation that allowed us to make the project a reality. To recognize their generosity, UVM has named our new space the Jack and Shirley Silver Special Collections Library.

We are grateful to everyone who worked on the renovation project. Schwartz/Silver Architects, Inc. of Boston designed the project and ReArch Co. of South Burlington served as project coordinator, with Steve Rowe as superintendent. At UVM, Kate Coffey in Facilities Design and Construction was the project manager, assisted by construction specialist

Dan Williams. Library facility manager Scott Miller did an extraordinary job of keeping information flowing and helping us make good decisions in a timely manner.

The second level of Billings, once home to Cook Commons and the Round Room, is ready to house our reading room, book and manuscript collections, offices, work areas, exhibit cases, and a conference room. On the third level, we will hold classes and events in the Marsh Room and present exhibits in the Apse. Students will once again be able to study in the North Lounge. The Center for Research on Vermont, the Humanities Center, and the Miller Center for Holocaust Studies will have offices on the fourth floor.

We plan to open the doors on August 6. We invite you all to stop by to do research, attend an event, or view an exhibit. A Billings Library rededication ceremony on the afternoon of October 5 will be open to the public.

## Much Appreciated Gifts

We are grateful to be the recipient of a generous gift and a bequest in memory of longtime members of the Friends of Special Collections, Phyllis P. McSparran and Eleanor Angell.



Tait and Phyllis McSparran with friends.

Phyllis and her husband, D. Tait McSparran, met as students at UVM in the early 1950s. After living in Germany for several years, where Tait served in the U.S. Army, the McSparrans settled in Pennsylvania. Phyllis later earned a master's degree

in Special Education, and worked as an Educational Diagnostician at the Carbon Lehigh Intermediate Unit to design specialized learning programs. Although they did not return to reside in Vermont, the McSparrans never forgot their time at UVM. Tait's gift in memory of Phyllis is supplemented by a match from the Pfizer Foundation.

Eleanor Angell was a member of the Friends since at least 1984, the year she moved to Burlington after a 38-year career with the Sterling-Winthrop Research Institute in Rensselaer, New York. She had earned a degree in chemistry from RPI in 1946 and was the leader of the Technical Writing and Auditing Group of Sterling-Winthrop's Analytical Chemistry Department when she retired.

The grandniece of UVM president (1866-1871) James B. Angell, Eleanor maintained a deep interest in genealogy, especially her Vermont ancestors. For a great many years, Eleanor attended most of our public events in Special Collections, and it was always a pleasure to see her cheerful countenance in the audience.

We will put both gifts to good use in pursuit of our goals to acquire, preserve, and make accessible Vermont research materials and rare books.

# Internship Program Report

For the last several years, Special Collections librarians have been developing an internship program that provides UVM students with opportunities to expand their experience beyond the classroom. Special Collections was pleased to host two undergraduate interns during the 2017-2018 school year, Carolyn Balparda and Tiger Britt. Carolyn is a History major who expects to graduate next year, and Tiger received his degree in Anthropology and Classical Civilizations this June. Carolyn and Tiger plan to pursue careers in museums and other cultural heritage organizations, so they were excited to gain experience working in Special Collections.

Carolyn and Tiger, who received credit for their internships through College of Arts and Sciences courses, worked on a variety of projects under the guidance of librarians and archivists Prudence Doherty, Jeffrey Marshall, Chris Burns, and Erin Doyle. Carolyn updated our heavily used UVM building information and photo files and spent a month arranging and describing small manuscript

collections. Among other projects, Tiger drew on his Classics background to add new items to the UVM Libraries' medieval and renaissance manuscripts digital collection. He also worked with Chris Burns to test and evaluate transcription software that might be used by staff and students to make handwritten correspondence more accessible. They shared their findings with librarians and teaching faculty at the end of the semester.

Special Collections has a long tradition of providing internships for graduate students in library and information science. Our most recent LIS intern was Mary Albee, who graduated from UVM in 2010 and received her graduate degree from Simmons College in 2018. Mary is currently working as an archivist at Vermont PBS on their fiftieth anniversary project, "From the Archives." At Special Collections she organized and described the extensive papers of Mary Jean Simpson, who was UVM's dean of women from 1937-1955. After she completed the project, Mary shared her impressions about Simpson.

## Mary Jean Simpson: A Trailblazing Woman

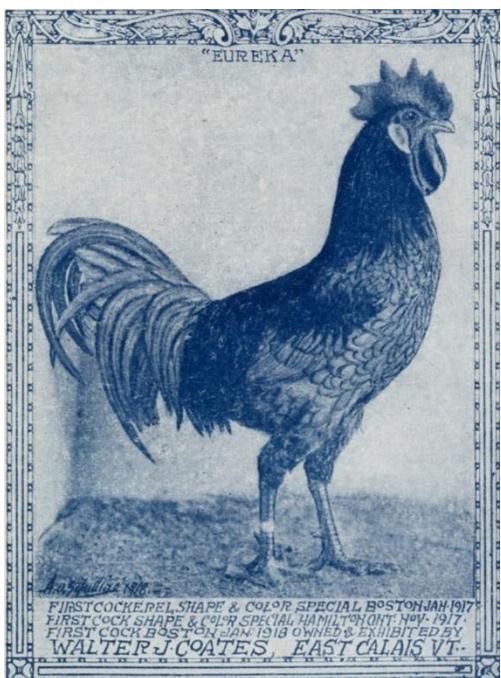


Last spring, I had the opportunity to finish processing the three separate collections that comprise the Mary Jean Simpson Papers. As a graduate intern studying Archives Management, with an interest in the history of women in Vermont, I was excited to embark on this project, as I knew relatively little about Simpson. As I worked my way through the collection materials, I was amazed at the scope of her involvement in numerous Vermont state committees and her engagement in civic affairs. I was particularly interested to learn about Simpson's role as Bill Clerk of the U.S. Senate from 1926-1933, as she was the first woman ever appointed to the staff of the Secretary of the Senate. This achievement is well documented throughout the personal series of her papers, in both newspaper clippings and correspondence.

Later, Simpson served the YWCA as financial secretary, then headed the Women's Division of the Civil Works Administration and was a director for the state of Vermont in the Works Progress Administration. She resigned in 1937 to become UVM's third Dean of Women—although she took a pay cut to do so. Historian Constance McGovern recounts that President Guy Bailey offered her the position at a salary of \$2,100, plus a \$400 living allowance. Her WPA supervisor promised Simpson a salary of \$4,000 if she stayed, but she took the UVM job anyway.

Simpson's papers document that she began her work as an advocate for the women of UVM by advocating for herself. In a letter she penned in response to the job offer, she clearly states that accepting the position would mean a decrease in her salary, and that she hoped within a few short years the university would be able to match her current rate of pay. From her time as an undergraduate student at UVM, to her trailblazing role in Washington D.C., to her long-held position as the Dean of Women, Simpson emerged as a leader who broke barriers by advocating for herself and the women who were her colleagues and students.—*Mary Albee*

## Spotlight on Vermontiana



The year book includes numerous tributes to prize chickens, including Coates's award-winning Eureka, who received firsts at shows in 1917 and 1918.

With thousands of items on our shelves, we often rediscover interesting items collected by our predecessors. Recent email reference questions led us to two intriguing volumes, both with connections to Calais, Vermont.

J. Walter Coates is well known for his contributions to Vermont literature and poetry and the numerous publications of his Driftwind Press. Among his many occupations, Coates ran a poultry business, specializing in Blue Andalusians, a breed characterized by dramatic blue-laced plumage and tremendous laying power. As the secretary of the Blue Andalusian Club of America, Coates was responsible for the club's distinctive 1919 year book. Published by the eccentric J. Howard Flower at the Solitarian Press in Hartland, Vermont, the entire volume—text, illustrations and advertising—is printed in blue ink. With numerous testimonials from breeders and egg producers, the year book demonstrates that club members were quite successful in “booming the breed” between 1914 and 1919.

An inquiry about the papers of Robert Stowell (also Stoel) led us to a small but very rich journal that Stowell kept from 1947-1953. Stowell was an instructor in English at the University of Vermont who purchased the old town poor farm in Calais. In the journal, he meticulously kept track of his repairs to the house and buildings, the success of his vegetable and flower gardens, produce canned, birds observed, local expeditions, and expenses. The journal provides a detailed look at one effort to lead a more self-sufficient life in rural Vermont.

### New Special Collections Web Site [specialcollections.uvm.edu](http://specialcollections.uvm.edu)

As part of a major upgrade to the UVM Libraries web presence, Special Collections has a new web site. With significantly expanded content, we designed the new web site to help students, faculty and researchers more easily find information about our collections, services, policies, and procedures. The new web page launched in January 2018, and this summer we are updating it to reflect our new location in the Billings Library.