Meet Me at the Fair!

Each February Bancroft curators and staff turn out in sizable numbers at the California International Antiquarian Book Fair. Booksellers from far and wide assemble to offer samplings from their incredibly rich and varied stock of books, manuscripts, printed ephemera, pictorial works, and numerous other formats that are the core of their specialized trade.

The California Fair alternates between Los Angeles and San Francisco, but the latter venue—in our own back yard—now attracts the largest gathering of antiquarian booksellers in the world. The items on display never fail to astonish and mesmerize, but equally important are the opportunities for Bancrofters to chat with booksellers, private collectors, and other bibliophiles. The conversations help keep us all connected throughout the remainder of the year, and give us the opportunity to identify new collecting areas and to remind the trade and collectors of our older specialties.

Without doubt the booksellers bring their most outstanding wares to display. But those who know Bancroft are good about alerting us in advance of things they think will interest us. At the same time, we invariably meet booksellers new to us, so there are always plenty of surprises.

We at Bancroft frequently emphasize that we are responsible not only for collecting individual books, manuscripts, and other items, but also for collecting collectors and booksellers. There is no more fertile ground than the Book Fair to encourage this. We have always urged our Friends to join us at the Fair if they possibly can. Not only is it enormous fun, but it is highly educational, and frequently dazzling. We also recognize that the special interests of our individual friends make them very good scouts for things we might not otherwise discover.

In February this year we had a special example of how important having a Friend at the Fair can be. Bob Hirst, Curator of the Mark Twain Papers and General Editor of the Mark Twain Project, made an appointment to meet me on Saturday morning. My task was to introduce him to booksellers likely to have worthwhile Mark Twain material. Moving from booth to booth can be time-consuming, because there is much to see, but there is even more to discuss, especially if you are introduced as the Curator of the Mark Twain Papers. Indeed at virtually every booth we visited, Bob found items of potential interest to Bancroft. A good two hours after he arrived, we finally completed our first pass along a single aisle of booksellers and found ourselves at Bancroft’s exhibition and table (a generous space provided to major research libraries by the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America).

There we found Kimo Campbell, a member of the Council of the Friends of The Bancroft Library, looking at our display of publications. I introduced Kimo to the Bancrofters on hand and when he spoke with Bob Hirst, he immediately asked if Bob had seen an original Mark Twain letter offered by a bookseller from London. Indeed Bob had seen such a letter and had already committed us to buying it. But Kimo was pretty certain that wasn’t the letter he had seen. He urged us to start down a new aisle while he went back to see if he could locate the place where he’d seen the letter. A few minutes later he came back to us and said he had indeed located a second letter. He guided us to a London specialist in autograph material whom we...
It wasn’t biblical in proportions, and it didn’t do nearly as much damage as it might have, but it did serve, in more ways than one, as a wake-up call. About 4:30 in the morning of Monday, March 5, a sprinkler head in the fire suppression system burst on tier 9, in Bancroft’s “attic,” space used to store supplies as well as to stage incoming archival collections while they await processing. This released a steady stream of water which dripped down over cartons with an unprocessed collection, then puddled underneath the shelving, and eventually found its way through the floor and into ventilation ducts.

At the same time, it set off a flow alarm that brought the Berkeley Fire Department to the scene along with campus emergency personnel. Unfortunately, since the flow alarm is indistinguishable from a fire alarm, and they found no evidence of fire, they assumed that Bancroft had had a false fire alarm. It was not until just over two hours later, when Bancroft staff member Wayne Silka came in at 6:45 a.m. to begin his normal routine of checking the building that the water was discovered. By that time it was standing two inches deep in the offices of the Mark Twain Project and in the Library Systems Office directly beneath and had begun to seep through the ceiling of the Heller Reading Room.

Wayne immediately set standard Bancroft security procedures in motion, calling me and other Bancroft staff, the Library Security Office, Barclay Ogden, Head of the Library Conservation Department, and campus facilities management staff. After the sprinkler system was shut down, it took about twenty-five Bancroft, Library, and campus staff just over three hours to vacuum up the standing water and bring in dehumidifiers and powerful fans to dry the building out, a process that continued for several days. About fifty cartons of archival materials waiting for processing were damaged, although in most cases the waxed surface of the cartons preventing water from reaching more than the outside edges of the documents they contained. Thanks to contingency arrangements with local frozen food storage facilities, these damaged cartons were freeze-dried the same day. This is a crucial step in recovering from water damage. If water-soaked materials are not frozen within 48 hours, fungus and mold create irreparable damage to the paper. Over the past several months, as time and staffing in the Library Conservation permit, we have systematically removed these materials from cold storage in order to treat them as necessary. In most cases no conservation work has been needed at all.

About three weeks after the first sprinkler head burst, a second one failed, on tier 7. Fortunately, the leak was discovered almost immediately, and little damage was done. At this point we appealed to Ron Coley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Business and Administrative Services, for help. It was clear that if sprinkler heads continued to burst at this rate, Bancroft’s collections would be seriously at risk. A little research revealed that the sprinkler heads in the Doe Annex, the building that houses Bancroft, were almost thirty years old and at the end of their useful life. Vice Chancellor Coley needed little convincing that it was time to replace all of the sprinkler heads, which would cost approximately $50,000. Fortunately the campus was able to fund the replacement with deferred maintenance funds.

Gillian Boal, Conservation Unit, offers invaluable assistance to help rescue Bancroft materials.

There is an object lesson here. One of the University of California’s most precious possessions, the collections of The Bancroft Library, are housed in an aging and outdated facility that, even worse, is considered seismically unsound. The Doe Annex, designed by the distinguished San Francisco architect Arthur Brown, was opened in 1950. It is now over fifty years old. Its mechanical infrastructure (electrical wiring, plumbing, heating, and ventilation) is of the same vintage and now impossibly antiquated. Moreover, it was designed as generic library space, a smaller replica of the Doe Library, with a core of 9 tiers of book stacks surrounded by four floors of offices. Tiers 3, 5, and 7 are not tied in to the structure of the building; they simply rest on the stanchions holding up the book shelves on the floor below. In the event of a major earthquake they will come tumbling down.
History 7B: 
Undergraduates Explore Bancroft Collections

Once a year, over six hundred undergraduates descend on the UC Berkeley library, hunting for primary sources. Professor Leon Litwack’s History 7B course, “United States History from the Civil War to the Present,” gives them the opportunity to do their own historical investigations, guided by assignments from graduate student instructors.

Students soon experienced the difference between the Bancroft and other campus libraries when they placed their backpacks in lockers and registered at the front desk. One student responded that having to sign on made her feel “like I was a potential criminal, but I know it is for the protection of the material.”

Students seemed a little disappointed that the room looked so mundane—no piles of musty books or dim lighting. Patrick Sharma, a freshman researching Mexican-American immigration in the 1930s-1940s, said, “For its magnitude as a research library, the actual size of the Bancroft work area seemed small. I guess it’s the academic equivalent of seeing an NBA basketball court on TV and then seeing how relatively small it appears in person.”

When senior Yasmin Golan first used the Bancroft for a history class, she was surprised to discover that her request brought her “a huge book of Richmond City Planning from the 1930s which must have been 3x4 feet. When the librarian brought it to my table, everyone stared. I was so embarrassed by my find, I blushed.”

Yet despite the fact that reality did not always correspond to expectations, the students began to have fun once they had sources in hand. Freshman Hung-tzu Lin researched Helen Hunt Jackson’s work with native Americans: “when I held an original letter for the first time, it was thrilling beyond belief knowing that it was the same piece of paper the author once held in her hand.”

Working in the Bancroft with old documents gave many a sense of respect for the material. “Just the environment in The Bancroft Library made me handle the archives more carefully…than with any other books. It made me feel good that I have the privilege to deal with some very old historical records,” freshman Lidia Mai said after studying documents related to lynching of African-Americans.

Freshman Maggie Nguyen’s research of Chinese immigrants on Angel Island led her to “personal letters of normal people. For example, this guy was writing to his sister on the East Coast, discussing the Chinese Exclusion Act. I was surprised how these letters could be obtained by the library,” she said. While using annual reports of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, freshman Lynda Phan saw “very dedicated people” and got a sense of “the work required in doing intensive research.”

Freshman Kavita Goswamy said after the experience of writing about interracial marriages between Asian-American field laborers, “I now have so much respect for the textbooks that we read that talk about the primary source letters, newspaper articles, songs, and/or interviews the author unearthed. Really, it’s a remarkable feat.”

The History 7B students left the Bancroft with renewed respect not only for the work of professional historians but also for the work of the staff people at the Bancroft. Sharma spoke for many others when he offered “thanks to staff for their patience and assistance.”
Appraising a Successful Year:
The Annual Meeting of the Friends, April 7, 2001

On Saturday April 7, 2001, the Friends of The Bancroft Library gathered in the Heller Reading Room to celebrate its Fifty-Fourth Annual Meeting. The approximately ninety members of the Friends and guests in attendance enjoyed a preview of Bancroft’s new exhibit, “PROTEST,” selections from the Free Speech Movement (FSM) Collections. Charles Faulhaber, James D. Hart Director of The Bancroft Library reported on many new acquisitions and a litany of programs, symposia, and activities at Bancroft, and Victoria Fong, Chair of the Council of the Friends, offered inspirational remarks on the fundraising activities and contributions of the Friends during the past year. The Hill-Shumate Undergraduate Book Collecting Prizes were awarded to David Weinreich (first place) and Ken Chen (second place), for their collections of books on the classics and modern poetry, respectively. The H.H. Bancroft award was presented to recently retired director of the Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) Willa Baum, for her fifty years of leadership and service. The group adjourned the Annual Meeting to hear a fascinating presentation by David Nasaw, author of the acclaimed biography, The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst. Nasaw spoke at length about the research process involved in writing a detailed biography of such a mythic figure, and the role that The Bancroft Library played as the major repository for the Hearst Papers.

Sylvia C. McLaughlin, Sue Warburg, John Briscoe, and Felix Warburg share a pleasant exchange amid the Friends luncheon.
The Gwendolyn Brooks Papers

When I first proposed to the Bancroft Collections Committee back in February, 2000, that we acquire a substantial portion of the Gwendolyn Brooks papers, the group was evenly split between those who didn’t know who she was and those who were supremely excited.

Former U.S. Poet Laureate and Berkeley English Professor Robert Hass puts it quite simply, calling Ms. Brooks “one of the most important African American poets of the twentieth century… the first major figure to emerge after the Harlem Renaissance…. I can think of Berkeley graduate students working in modern poetry, in African American poetry, in women’s writing, and in urban studies for whom the opportunity to work on her papers would be an enormous boon.”

After contributing hundreds of poems to various periodicals, Gwendolyn Brooks gained national recognition in 1945 with A Street in Bronzeville, her first book of poetry. This led to a flurry of awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Her second book of poems, Annie Allen (1949) garnered more awards and was recognized with a Pulitzer Prize in 1950, the first Pulitzer ever awarded to an African American writer.

President Kennedy asked her to read at a Library of Congress poetry festival in 1962, she became The Library of Congress poetry consultant in 1985, and in 1994 she was named the Jefferson Lecturer, the highest humanities award given by the government of the United States. During this period, she published volume after volume and maintained a voluminous correspondence with aspiring young African American poets.

Her creative work is more than enough to guarantee her a lasting place in the history of American letters, but she has also been enormously influential as a mentor to other writers and as a champion of poetry as a means of expression open to every level of society.

The papers being offered contained a cross section of Ms. Brooks’ varied and various activities. There were manuscripts of poems and essays, files of correspondence, drafts of speeches, notes, annotated clippings, family papers and photographs, as well as citations, awards, plaques, and personal documents. The correspondence included many familiar names in modern American literature: Ted Berrigan, Arna Bontemps, Eldridge Cleaver, Robert Creeley, as well as 50 years of correspondence with her publishers. Bancroft’s Collections Committee, listened, saw the great research potential, and approved the acquisition by acclamation.

But there was a problem. The collection was being offered to us by a highly respected dealer in New England and had passed through other antiquarian dealers. I wanted to know if Ms. Brooks was aware that 26 cartons of her personal papers were being offered for sale. The dealer traced the provenance of the collection and reported that the material had been recovered from the basement of her home in Chicago after she sold it. She did not know that it was in the market; so Daphne Muse, a friend of both Ms. Brooks and Bancroft, joined me in drafting a letter to her explaining our concerns. With our encouragement, the dealer worked with Gwendolyn Brooks to sort things out.

After a few months, we learned that the purchase could go forward and that Gwendolyn Brooks would be very pleased to have her papers at Bancroft. The price would be somewhat higher than the original proposal, but the additional monies would go directly to her. When we revisited the question in the Collections Committee, there was unanimous agreement that the arrangement was fair and honorable and that we should proceed.

So now we have a bill to pay. Bancroft Friends have already received a letter asking for support for this purchase and we hope that the reaction will be favorable. It has been a long-standing goal of the Library to build on its holdings of contemporary literary manuscripts. It is significant of course that Gwendolyn Brooks is an African American writer, but that does not suffice to explain Bancroft’s interest in her. She is a first-rate writer, speaking an American voice to an American audience. Gwendolyn Brooks continues to have a major impact on our literature, and Berkeley scholars will be working in this archive for many decades to come as her role is assessed and reassessed.

—Anthony Bliss, Curator
Rare Books and Literary Manuscripts

Postscript.

Gwendolyn Brooks died in Chicago on December 3, 2000. She was 83.
Bancroft’s 500,000th Book: Mendeleyev’s Introduction to the Periodic Table of Elements

The publication in St. Petersburg, Russia, 1868–1871, of Dmitry Mendeleyev’s masterful textbook on chemistry introduced his seminal conception of the periodic relationship among the nuclear elements, laid out neatly as what we now know as the Periodic Table. The original edition is extremely rare, with no copies recorded in the National Union Catalog, nor in the OCLC and RLIN bibliographic data bases. The two copies recorded in United States libraries (University of Michigan and New York Public Library) were both incomplete, and that at Michigan was reportedly discarded. Thus the complete copy donated in Spring 2001 by Kenneth and Dorothy Hill is an acquisition of major significance and one eminently suited to mark two occasions: the 500,000th book added to The Bancroft Library, and the 30 millionth book acquired by the University of California.

On Monday, May 7, 2001, University of California President Richard C. Atkinson presented an honorary citation to Kenneth and Dorothy Hill for “longstanding generosity to libraries of the UC system.” In his remarks, President Atkinson pointed out, “The University of California library collection is surpassed in the United States only by that of the Library of Congress. Generous donors like Kenneth and Dorothy Hill are helping to make the collection an unequalled resource for scholars and researchers who work with original documents to expand and advance knowledge.”

The commitment of the Hills to teaching and research at the University of California has long extended beyond the borders of any individual library or campus. Kenneth and Dorothy Hill have assisted with the purchase of numerous books and manuscripts for the libraries at UC Berkeley and UC San Diego. They donated two major collections to the UC San Diego library, one on early Pacific exploration and discovery and the other on early meteorology.

The Hills also have endowed fellowship funds that provide annual study support to UC graduate students and in 1993 endowed the position of the University Librarian at UC Berkeley.

In presenting the Mendeleyev work, Kenneth and Dorothy Hill have provided new access to a landmark in the development of science, a major addition to The Bancroft Library’s strong collections of history of science and technology. The work is a two-volume textbook of chemistry written by Dmitry Ivanovic Mendeleyev (sometimes transliterated Mendeleev). Mendeleyev was born in 1834, and was the Russian chemist who developed the periodic classification of the elements.

Mendeleyev was the 17th and last child of the director of the gymnasium at Tobolsk. In 1855 he qualified as a teacher, winning a gold medal for his academic achievements. In 1859 the government sent him for further study to the University of Heidelberg. His study of molecular cohesion was begun at this time, and while at Heidelberg he attended the celebrated Karlsruhe conference (September 1860) and made valuable contacts with French chemists and with the Italian chemist Stanislao Cannizzaro, whose insistence on the distinction between molecular and atomic weights influenced Mendeleyev considerably.

Mendeleyev returned to St. Petersburg in 1861. Since he could not find a textbook that met his needs, he set about writing his own: the result was The Principles of Chemistry (1868–70), a classic textbook.

In writing the book, Mendeleyev explored deeply the properties of elements as he devised a way of classifying them. Mendeleyev’s formulation of the periodic law, which permitted the observation of the relationships among the elements that previously had been studied only in isolation. The periodic table of elements had gaps, which Mendeleyev predicted would be filled by elements not yet discovered; three were discovered within 20 years, and they possessed the properties he had predicted. In time the table became a cornerstone of modern understanding of radioactive decay and atomic theory.

Mendeleyev died in 1907, and saw his text book go through many editions, but without doubt, his most significant and lasting contribution was the creation of the periodic table. The two-volume work of the first edition includes the first published version of the periodic table, a fold-out that looks remarkably like the periodic table most of us have come to know.

—Peter E. Hanff
Special Projects, The Bancroft Library
A Hardyan Pursuit, or, The Frustrations of Scholarship

Among the Bancroft’s excellent collection of Thomas Hardy materials is a letter of 9 September 1911 sent by Hardy to F. Outwin Saxelby, an enthusiastic literary amateur, who was proposing to publish A Thomas Hardy Dictionary, consisting primarily of an alphabetically organized guide to the “Characters and Scenes of the Novels and Poems.” Hardy knew nothing about Saxelby, and his customary cautiousness about public references to himself left him with little enthusiasm for the projected volume, but since there were no solid grounds for objecting to its publication he had simply insisted, in his earlier correspondence with Saxelby, that he not be represented as having authorized the book in any way.

What the letter in the Bancroft shows is that Hardy subsequently decided to take a precautionary look at the proofs of the Dictionary and in so doing questioned “a few statements” here and there and specified changes that should be made to the preface and to the dedication to himself. The book itself appeared late in 1911, austerely dedicated (“To | Thomas Hardy, O.M. | By Permission | This Book Is | Respectfully Inscribed | By | The Author.”) and containing in addition to the actual dictionary a map of Hardy’s fictional Wessex, an extensive bibliography, and lengthy plot-summaries of the novels and stories. In fairness to Saxelby, it must be said that his summaries were serviceable, that his bibliography was impressively full and accurate for its date, and that the very absurdities of his dictionary (e.g., its recourse to such entries as “Aunt,” “Wife,” and “Baby, A” in order to accommodate characters left unnamed by Hardy himself) testified to the earnestness of his striving towards comprehensiveness.

That the Bancroft letter, though signed by Hardy, is otherwise in the hand of an amanuensis strongly suggests that it was not for him an especially important document, and I confess to having myself regarded it as a relatively trivial item when, in the heady days of the late 1960s, I first visited the Bancroft as a newcomer to the Hardy field, eager to see as many of his manuscripts and related documents as I possibly could. The next time I came, some time in the mid-1970s, my examination of the letter to Saxelby was altogether closer and more careful. I was by this time co-editor (with Richard Purdy, the distinguished Hardy bibliographer) of the seven-volume Clarendon Press edition of The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, and the main purpose of my visit was to check against the originals of the Hardy letters in the Bancroft the typed transcriptions that Purdy and I had prepared on the basis of the photocopies the Library had kindly supplied. But there was also a secondary purpose. Richard Purdy had established that the Bancroft’s Saxelby letter had formerly belonged to his deceased friend Howard Bliss—creator during the nineteen-twenties and -thirties of much the finest Hardy collection ever in private hands—and that Bliss had placed it with the set of proofs of the Dictionary that Hardy himself had corrected. Those proofs had somehow disappeared, but since the letter was in the Bancroft it seemed reasonable to think that the proofs were there also. I duly checked the Bancroft’s catalogues, but while they listed a copy of the Dictionary itself, they contained no reference to the proofs.

Puzzled but relatively undismayed, I turned to the one other obvious possibility. I knew that the bulk of Bliss’s collection had been sold at two Sotheby sales of 23 June 1959 and 29 May 1961, that all the lots from the first sale and all but one lot from the second had found their way (via the New York dealer Lew Feldman) to the University of Texas at Austin, and when I went to check the numerous Hardy letters at Texas I was quietly confident that I would find the Saxelby proofs there as well. Disappointed again, and not knowing where else to look, I abandoned the search for some years. One day, however, a friendly manuscripts dealer happened to give me a little package of papers relating to Howard Bliss’s dealings with Lew Feldman subsequent to the two Sotheby sales, and from them I discovered that early in 1963, after the two sales, the Saxelby proofs were still in Bliss’s possession and being described by him as bearing “pencilled corrections by T.H.” and as having had “inserted” into them “a letter written out in Emma Hardy’s copy-book handwriting and signed by T.H.”, pointing out to Saxelby the necessity for certain alterations.” Bliss was wrong about the handwriting, but the information was otherwise authentic enough, and the likelihood that the proofs and the letter had remained together was greatly strength-
ened by the discovery that Feldman, after making a deal directly with Bliss for the remainder of his collection, had not on this occasion sold everything on to Texas but split the material up among four different purchasers—the Bancroft being one.

I was in Berkeley again shortly afterwards—inspecting for the MLA’s Committee on Scholarly Editions one of the magnificent volumes of the Mark Twain Letters—and although I ran out of time in which to visit the Bancroft myself, I asked for another check to be made and received the same reply as before: that there was indeed a regularly catalogued copy of Saxelby’s Dictionary on the shelves (PR | 4572 | S39 | 1911) but no sign of any proofs. It was not until some years later, when I was working on an edition of Hardy’s public utterances and wanted to list the Saxelby proofs as one of several instances of his silent involvement in other people’s writings, that I suddenly had an inspired glimpse of what the humdrum solution to the mystery might be. A long-planned research trip to California afforded an early opportunity to test my theory, and shortly before arriving in Berkeley for a brief visit to the Mark Twain Project in the late fall of 1999 I asked if the Bancroft’s known and catalogued copy of the Dictionary could be taken off the shelf and closely examined. I heard no more, but upon my arrival at the Bancroft a triumphant Peter Hanff put into my hand a solidly cased dark green volume that proved upon inspection to contain the bound-up page proofs that Hardy had corrected in 1911, that Saxelby had proudly preserved, that Bliss had somehow obtained and subsequently sold, that someone in the Bancroft—ignoring the “FIRST PROOFS” stamped on the half-title and indeed on the spine—had incorrectly catalogued some time in the 1960s, and that I should have cottoned on to far, far earlier than I actually did.

Hardy’s pencilled corrections, while not especially numerous, turned out to be always characteristic, often interesting, and occasionally significant. He greatly simplified Saxelby’s original dedication to “The Greatest Living Master of Our English Language.” He introduced into the Preface a specific statement to the effect that “Mr. Hardy” had not authorized the book and took no responsibility for its contents. He corrected or expanded occasional bibliographical details, altering to “reprints,” for example, what Saxelby had misleadingly referred to as the second, third, and fourth “editions” of Tess of the d’Urbervilles, and dismissing authorship of the 1882 stage version of Far from the Madding Crowd that seems in fact to have been primarily the work of J. Comyns Carr. Most importantly, perhaps, he read through the narrative summaries and pencilled in one or two adjustments, quite slight in themselves, that nevertheless significantly clarified his own view of crucial plot developments in two or three of the novels.

It might be too much to claim that this long-mislaid set of the Saxelby proofs constitutes a major Hardyan document, but it is most certainly an important and interesting one. Curiously enough, Saxelby’s volume retrospectively gains in stature from these revelations of Hardy’s direct enhancement of its accuracy and usefulness. Hardy himself, however, never warned to the Dictionary, and when Saxelby suggested in 1926 that it might be reissued Hardy effectively killed the idea by telling Sir Frederick Macmillan that it would need extensive updating and was in any case “rather a useless book, being a compilation of commonplace ingenuity, for which I imagine there would be little demand.” The Humanities Press of New York in fact reissued the 1911 first edition by photo-offset in 1962—just as Howard Bliss was beginning to negotiate the final dispersal of his collection—but the Dictionary has never until now been viewed as belonging in the mainstream of Hardy studies, let alone as a project in which Hardy himself might have been a secret (if irritated) sharer.

—Michael Millgate
University Professor of English Emeritus,
University of Toronto. His most recent book, just out, is Thomas Hardy’s Public Voice: The Essays, Speeches, and Miscellaneous Prose.
Librarians Celebrate Oral History Series

As hundreds of younger colleagues looked on, four retired library educators received their oral history manuscripts during the Coulter Luncheon on November 12, 2000, at the California Library Association’s annual meeting in Santa Clara. The honorees comprise the first group interviewed in 1998 and 1999 for the Library School Oral History Series, a ROHO project to document the history of UC Berkeley’s former School of Librarianship (later School of Library and Information Studies). The school trained thousands of librarians during its seventy-year history.

The four narrators were between 85 and 90 years old at the time of interview. Together they represent 160 years of professional experience as librarians and educators.

Grete W. (Frugé) Cubie graduated from Berkeley in 1935 and earned her Certificate in Librarianship in 1937. After serving in the San Francisco, Sacramento, and Oakland public libraries, she taught cataloging at the library school, along with Anne Ethelyn Markley, from 1947 to 1975. Of the push towards automation in libraries, Mrs. Cubie said in her interviews:

“They are not and cannot be given equal weight under the system we have at Berkeley, which produces distinguished departments manned by distinguished people. Nobody ever tests—do people teach well? Does the head of the department come and visit classes of these people, ever? It just doesn’t happen.”

The late Fredric J. Mosher (represented at the luncheon by his wife, Evelyn V. Mosher) came from Chicago’s Newberry Library to lead the library school’s instruction in reference service from 1950 to 1981. His interests centered on rare books, fine printing, and the history of books and libraries. Long an advocate of intellectual freedom, Professor Mosher was interviewed on the findings of the Fiske report (1956) on censorship in California libraries.

“The report indicated that most public librarians thought intellectual freedom was a great idea, but that in practice most of them selected books with the idea in mind of [avoiding] controversial materials,” he said. “Most California librarians were actually real censors of their library collections. [They] were so intimidated that they ruled out any materials that would lead them into trouble.”

Flora Elizabeth Reynolds graduated from Berkeley in 1934, took an M.A. in Latin in 1935, and completed a Certificate in Librarianship in 1936. She headed the Sausalito and Mill Valley public libraries before serving as head librarian of Mills College from 1955 to 1976. She talked in her interview about the career advice given students by the school’s founding director, Sydney B. Mitchell, in 1936:

“He did say that in academic libraries you would find the ceiling very low if you were a woman, that most faculties were made up mainly of men who preferred to deal with men rather than women. So if you would like to advance administratively, it was advisable to go into public library work.”

Asked how she and the other students received that news, Ms. Reynolds said: “It was the way things were. We accepted it.”

The Library School Oral History Series now includes more recent interviews with Fay M. Blake, Robert D. Harlan, and Patrick G. Wilson. Last year, Berkeley’s Class of 1931 Oral History Endowment chose the oral histories of Cubie, Reynolds, and Wilson for support as part of its Source of Community Leaders Series on distinguished Berkeley graduates. The individual volumes are available for study in The Bancroft Library and in the Department of Special Collections at UCLA.

—Laura McCreery
Senior interviewer in the Regional Oral History Office.
From the Regional Oral History Office

New Directions: Richard Cándida Smith

Richard Cándida Smith joined the Berkeley faculty in July as professor of history and director of the Regional Oral History Office, and already he's putting new ideas to work.

“I plan to build on ROHO's outstanding record by making the oral history program the nucleus for a Center for Living History,” he says. “The new center will combine research, classroom education, collection development, and dissemination. We'll continue existing work while initiating and developing several large-scale projects, possibly in collaboration with other parts of the campus.”

One of Cándida Smith's priorities is to launch an academic program where undergraduates can learn practical skills required to organize and conduct research projects. He hopes that, eventually, graduate students will apply to Berkeley with the idea of working with the center and Bancroft as they develop their dissertation topics. He will invite scholars from around the world as visiting faculty.

“I feel strongly that no activity in the university should be divorced from teaching,” he says. “Classroom and mentoring situations push researchers to share their ideas with an educated, interested public.”

In his own teaching Cándida Smith has observed that oral history has practical benefits for students. “Oral history gives them a feel for the connections between everyday life and the larger political, economic, and social changes that occur,” he says. “It also allows them to create original historical sources that others can use, teaching them that scholarship is not just a question of going to the library. Oral history encourages students to think creatively about how to integrate their own backgrounds, interests, and experiences into what they are learning.”

Cándida Smith comes to Bancroft from the University of Michigan, where he was professor of history and director of the Program in American Culture. Before going to Michigan, he was associate director of the oral history program at UCLA. He also is a former president of the Oral History Association.

Though he has been away for some time, Cándida Smith is personally quite familiar with California and western history. He was born in San Francisco, as was his wife, Katherine, and their two sons. He also has a granddaughter here. His family has lived in the state for many generations, and one son is now a student at Berkeley. He attended Berkeley himself for three years in the 1960s before going to UCLA to complete his undergraduate work.

“Returning to the Bay Area has been a great personal pleasure, particularly renewing my ties to this campus,” he says. Cándida Smith is especially interested in exploring the personal aspect of history, using oral history accounts to deepen our understanding of the past. “Some historians worry about whether oral accounts provide accurate information,” he says. “They often neglect what I believe these accounts can offer—factual information about past events and relationships not available in other sources.

“Oral histories also provide evidence about how different groups of people have formed and shared their own understanding of the past,” he says. “This information can be very important for interpreting the choices people have made.”

Cándida Smith points out that today, as in the past, people create and sustain a shared imaginative life whenever they gather and converse, be it at the kitchen table, the tavern counter, or university hallways. “These informal collective understandings permeate every decision groups make and form the background for every interview,” he says. “Oral history accounts are both personal and social, providing evidence for reconstructing the past concerns and conflicts of different communities. Oral history allows for recovering ideas that were important but which might not be documented in print.”

Launching the Center for Living History will require extensive planning as well as creation of a permanent fund to support core staff and activities. With the cooperation of campus departments and teaching programs, the center will offer academic courses to undergraduates and graduates, teaching oral history research techniques and analysis of oral history archives.

Two oral history courses will be offered next spring, one of which Cándida Smith will teach. He plans to offer a summer institute in oral history in the near future. Finally, in order to have the research speak more loudly and clearly to a larger audience, he plans to publish and disseminate the oral and living history to the larger community using digital publishing and CD-ROM technologies.

“ROHO and the new center that will form around it will provide a model to scholars all over the world by showing how to make oral sources and personal testimonies even more relevant to research, education, and public culture,” he says.

—Camilla Smith, Editor, Bancroftiana with Laura McCreery, ROHO
Rare Book Cataloguer Retires


Prior to his arrival at The Bancroft Library, Patrick had worked as a rare-book cataloguer at Washington University Libraries in St. Louis. There, for a time, he worked under the direction of Bill Matheson, who soon left Washington University to head Rare Books at the Library of Congress. Matheson gave a glowing recommendation of Patrick, and Bancroft was able to hire him as our rare-book cataloguer.

Patrick provided a far broader professional contribution to Bancroft than simply that of rare-book cataloguer. He helped analyze the special bibliographical side-files that the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections had developed, and he proposed more uniform methods of handling the resulting records. He worked on special projects, such as the cataloguing of the rare books acquired from the Library at San Simeon of William Randolph Hearst, and many years later the records of the Tebtunis papyrus manuscripts.

Despite his training in the classics and the highest level of bibliographical cataloguing, Patrick assessed the general operational needs of The Bancroft Library, and was an early advocate of our use of records derived from cataloguing created by the Library of Congress. To make such records more appropriate for Bancroft (which until then had handled all records as original cataloguing), he pointed out that a principal editor could adapt such records by adding appropriate bibliographical details of the sort needed at Bancroft.

With Patrick designated the quality-control cataloguer, a new team of “Copy Cataloguers” commenced adapting LC cataloguing for modern trade books. This approach resulted in far higher volume of cataloguing at considerably less cost, and all the special access points Bancroft wished to provide were incorporated into the process. By the early 1980s, when the University Library began to explore use of computer-based cataloguing, Bancroft was positioned to take advantage of the new technology. Patrick retained the role of principal Bancroft cataloguer to assure an appropriate level of control and consistency in the records as they were converted to machine readable form.

Patrick, by this time active in the Standards Committee of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries, spoke widely on the mechanisms we used to assure a reasonable level of detail and quality control throughout the project.

In the last several years, Patrick once again had opportunity to go back to his earliest professional roots by assisting with the NEH-funded project to process and conserve portions of our major papyrus manuscript collection. To use his knowledge of classical Greek and Latin and to be working once again with early manuscripts proved far more satisfying than Patrick anticipated. In this specialized area we hope to continue taking advantage of Patrick’s knowledge and abilities even beyond his retirement.

—Peter E. Hanff
Deputy Director

Vivian Fisher

The Bancroft Library’s long-time curator of microforms and related formats, Vivian Fisher, died on May 8. Officially, Vivian retired on October 1, 1991, but she continued working on projects at Bancroft so frequently that we made a staff badge for her. After joining Bancroft in 1950, Vivian was appointed to head microfilm operations. Her remarkable expertise, gained during her many years as curator of Bancroft’s microforms, sound recordings, and motion picture collections, benefited scholars and colleagues during her long tenure.

Vivian was also an outstanding reference specialist with respect to the Bancroft manuscript collections, including the extensive microfilm holdings created for Bancroft at the Archivo General de Indias (in Spain), the Archivo General de la Nacion (in Mexico), the Public Record Office (in Great Britain), and selections from the National Archives (in the U.S.), all bearing on the development of the geographic areas encompassed by Bancroft’s collections documenting the development of Western North America.

Vivian’s final project for The Bancroft Library was her translation of the diary of Esteban José Martínez of his voyage in 1779 to supply Alta California. The original manuscript was purchased by Bancroft in 1993. We were fortunate that Vivian undertook what proved to be a challenging conversion of the text into readable English, for the diary reflects the specialized vocabulary of an eighteenth-century Spanish navigator. Vivian was putting the last touches on the translation at the time of her death. When the book is published by The Bancroft Library in the Spring of 2002 it will represent a fitting memorial to Vivian Fisher.

—Peter E. Hanff
Deputy Director
New Mark Twain Letters—Again

Peter Hanff (“Meet Me at the Fair”) mentioned Kimo Campbell’s recent generosity in helping acquire two hitherto unknown letters by Mark Twain. One cannot say too much about Kimo’s sharp eyes, let alone his generosity, so we thought the Friends might like to see one of the letters he spotted for us. Clemens dated it simply “September 6” but the year was certainly 1900, when he and his family rented Dollis Hill House in Willesden, just outside metropolitan London. (The mourning border was for their daughter Susy, who had died on August 18, 1896.) One of the striking things about this letter is the way it helps us piece together the puzzle of Clemens’s life at the time. Even now we scarcely know who Stanley W. Ball was. But the letter itself (as well as the “Duplicate” which Clemens says he lost on the way to the “train station” that morning!) declined an invitation to speak at the opening of a new reading room at Kensal Rise, part of Willesden’s public libraries. Although Clemens says he will “not be able to assist” them, the “Chairman & Vice Chairman” of the Kensal Rise Library Committee must have changed his mind, for he did in fact speak at the opening on September 27. Stanley W. Ball and “Mr. A. Dunn” are identified in the official program as having given to the library some “36 Photographs of local views.” Arthur Dunn was the local photographer who took the photographs, about which Clemens said, on September 20, “I have not seen finer photographs than those six pictures of Dollis Hill & the family.” Copies of the photographs are in the Mark Twain Papers, and we are—thanks to Kimo Campbell’s help—a little further along in understanding their context and the circumstances of Mark Twain’s speech at Kensal Rise.

—Robert H. Hirst
General Editor, Mark Twain Project

BOOK FAIR from page 1

had not previously met. I introduced Kimo and Bob to her, and when she learned of Bob’s specialty she asked if she could take notes as he identified the context of the letter. Furthermore, she brought out still another Mark Twain letter from her portfolio.

Bob was able to provide considerable information about where Mark Twain was at the time each letter was written and something of the circumstances. The bookseller busily recorded Bob’s comments. At that point, I asked Bob if he’d be interested in having either letter offered to Bancroft on approval (approval offers are made to give the potential buyer time to analyze the significance of the document or book and to assess the coffers).

“How about both?” Bob asked.

The bookseller generously agreed to write up an approval invoice when Kimo Campbell quietly said, “Actually you don’t have to offer them on approval.” He then wrote a check to the bookseller, and handed the letters to Bob Hirst as a gift.

Such generosity is astonishingly gratifying, and we certainly don’t expect our friendly scouts to do more than show us items they think might be of interest, but Kimo was so pleased to learn that what he had scouted out for us was important to the Mark Twain collection that he gladly bought them for us. We hope that other Friends will want to continue helping us in our scouting at future Book Fairs. You can truly do this “without cost or obligation.” If you would like to join us in the hunt, please let us know and we’ll try to get passes for you so that you can accompany us to the Fair.

—Peter E. Hanff
Deputy Director
Fall 2001 Calendar

EXHIBIT
August 26–December 20
California Culinary Culture: Sampling the Collections of The Bancroft Library
Materials include cookbooks, photographs, menus, letters and documents, oral history transcripts, and ephemera on cooking and food preparation from the 1850s to the present. Reception: Friday, December 7, 4–6pm

LECTURE
Sunday, October 7, 2:00–5:00pm
Napa Valley Museum
The Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) will celebrate the completion of forty-two oral histories and honor the interviewees of the Knoxville District/McLaughlin Mine Oral History Project. • Reservation required.

RECEPTION
Tuesday, October 16
University Club, 800 Powell Street, SF
A joint meeting with The Roxburghe Club and the Colophon Club. An evening of food, conversation, and a lecture by noted graphic artist and printer David Lance Goines. Reservation required.

ROUNDTABLES
An open, informal discussion group, the Bancroft Roundtable features presentations by Bancroft staff and scholars. All sessions are held in the Lewis-Latimer Room of The Faculty Club at noon on the third Thursday of the month.

September 20
Rebecca Solnit, Author
Eadweard Muybridge at The Bancroft Library

October 18
Robert Bringhurst, Author
Contemporary Implications of Native American Manuscript Tradition

November 15
Ethan Rarick, Author
Reflections of the Legacies of Governor Pat Brown

December 20
Readings from The Bancroft Library
Bancroft staff members will entertain guests with choice readings from our varied collections.

The Council of the Friends of The Bancroft Library
2000–2001

Alfred W. Baxter
Anthony S. Bliss
John Briscoe
Kimo Campbell
Lucy Campbell
Robert Chlebowski
Gifford Combs
Russell Ellis
Ann Flinn
Victoria Fong, Chair
Peter Frazier, Treasurer
Wade Hughan
Katharine Johnson
Connie Loarie
Allan Littman
Ian Mackinlay
Arlene Merino Nielsen
Richard Otter
Terry O’Reilly
Bernard Rosenthal
George L. Saywell
Camilla Smith
Charles Stephenson
Stephen Vincent
Craig Walker
Sue Rayner Warburg
Thomas E. Woodhouse, Vice Chair
Charles B. Faulhaber, Secretary

BANCROFTIANA
Number 119

IN THIS ISSUE
Undergraduates Explore Bancroft
Page 3

THE Gwendolyn Brooks Papers
Page 6

NEW DIRECTIONS AT ROHO: Richard Candida Smith
Page 11

THE FRIENDS OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY