History of Science Collections

The University of Oklahoma Libraries

History of Science Collections

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he History of Science Collections are a part of the University Libraries system and serve students, faculty, and scholars in the history of science. Holdings range chronologically from Hrabanus Maurus' *Opus de universo* (printed before July 20, 1467, the collections' oldest book) to current publications in the history of science.

The guiding principle in the development of this more than 85,000-volume research library has been to acquire every edition, including translations, of every book that has been published in science since printing's inception, as well as all scientific periodicals. While this goal has by no means been achieved, the collections possess first editions of most of the landmarks in history of science and, in many cases, all of the editions.

The Darwin materials illustrate the depth of the collections' holdings. They consist not only of all of the first editions of Charles Darwin's work but more than 430 editions and printings as well, including translations into many languages.

The collections emphasize not only depth in covering the publications of individual scientists but also the social and intellectual context of science, provid-

ing such supporting materials as science textbooks, popular works on science, encyclopedias, commentaries, dictionaries, bibliographical works, biographies of scientists, history of science journals, histories of science and of individual sciences, and histories of scientific institutions. There are also substantial collections of portraits of scientists and slides relevant to the history of science

Three major

purposes of the

History of Science

Collections

are to

preserve documents,

support research,

and use

the material in

teaching.

Major acquisitions have been supported by private funds and gifts. Named collections include those of the Alumni Development Fund, Henry Crew, Everette Lee DeGolyer, Sally Hall, James G. Harlow, Sr., Paul E. Klopsteg, L. D. Lacy, Jens Rud Nielsen, and Duane H. D. Roller.



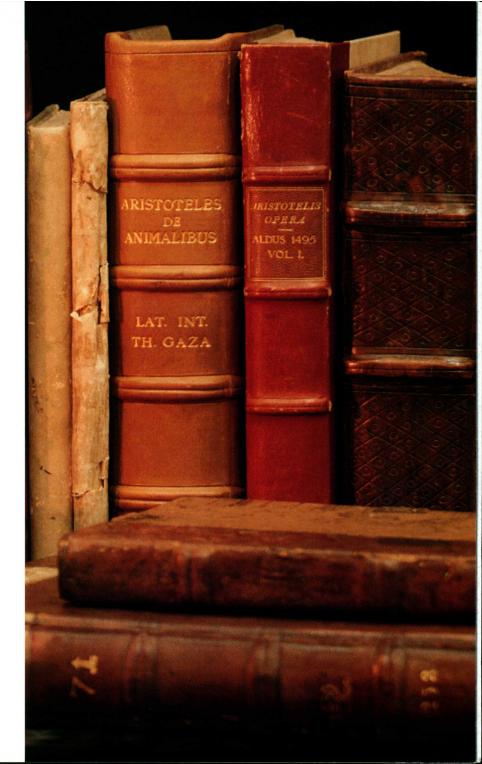


Preserving Documents



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collections' materials are housed in a very secure state-of-the-art facility that precisely maintains optimal conditions of temperature (55 degrees F.) and relative humidity (51 percent) around the clock. Staff members perform minor repairs, construct boxes for storage of delicate materials, and treat leather bindings with leather preservatives.



Supporting Research



he materials are preserved in order to be used, and a variety of people from all disciplines use the collections. The University of Oklahoma's history of science faculty members, graduate students, visiting and adjunct faculty, visiting scholars, and collections personnel actively use the research facilities.

Areas of particular research strength in the history of science department include modern development of the physical sciences; medieval science in both the Christian West and the Islamic East; histories of ecology, modern animal behavior, astronomy, geology, and the social sciences; development of disciplinary identification and methodology; and intercultural transmission of science. Resident graduate students in the history of science use the collections on a regular basis for class assignments and thesis and dissertation research.

University use is not limited to those directly connected with the history of science. Local faculty members in such other disciplines as history, English, the sciences, and library science find the collections a valuable resource. In a one-year period, visiting scholars from twenty-three states and nineteen foreign countries, including Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Korea, Liberia, Malaysia, Mexico, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Venezuela used the resources. Nor is use confined to scholars—the collections regularly serve undergraduate students and interested laypersons:





Using the Materials for Teaching



he collections began in 1949 when University of Oklahoma geologist and alumnus Everette Lee DeGolyer loaned 129 books from his extensive collection in the history of science. He promised to give these books and more to the University if it would establish a history of science program to assure that the books would be used in teaching.

The University agreed to the terms, and Duane H. D. Roller, a young Ph.D. graduate from Harvard University, was hired to teach history of science and serve as curator of the developing collections. The first course was taught in 1954, beginning the symbiotic relationship between what became the department of History of Science and the History of Science Collections.

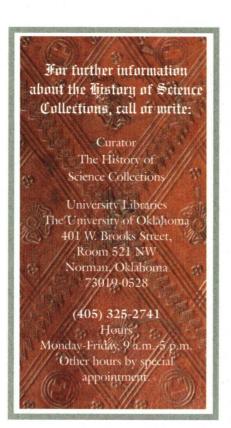
Both areas expanded while other donors added to DeGolyer's gifts, increasing the complexity of the curator's position. At the same time, a demand for additional courses in the history of science necessitated the hiring of additional faculty members. The first professorship in the history of science was established in 1954, a second in 1959, a third in 1964, and a fourth and fifth in 1967. President George L. Cross and Library Director Arthur McAnally were important supporters of the history of science. In 1971 a separate department of history of science was created with the support of President Herbert Hollomon, and in 1975 a sixth professorship was added. The unique interrelationship

between the collections, with its resources, and the department, with its teaching and research faculty, has been maintained since the original agreement with DeGolyer.

Today the department offers a broad spectrum of graduate and undergraduate courses in history of science. In addition to classroom demonstrations, the collections provide resources for undergraduate research projects, master's theses and doctoral dissertations.

Under the guidance of the curator and with endowment funding, the collections continue to grow. They remain a dynamic scholarly resource through the continued identification and acquisition of historical volumes and new secondary sources and reference books in history of science. One of the collections' recent acquisitions was Johannes Hevelius' (1611-1687) Selenographia, purchased in honor of the inauguration of President David Boren. Other special books recently acquired include a rare first edition of George Louis le Clerc, Comte de Buffon's (1707-1788) forty-four volume Histoire naturelle. These books join earlier acquisitions that include a first edition of Nicholas Copernicus' De revolutionibus (1543), twelve first editions of Galileo's works (with four works containing his own handwriting) and most of the works of Johannes Kepler, including his first book, the Mysterium cosmographicum, and his extremely rare book on the geometry of the snowflake. Editions of Euclid's Elements of Geometry include the first printed edition of this work (1482) as well as translations and interpretations in several different languages over a large span of time.







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