

Hogwarts in Minnesota

*The History, Description, and Impact of Special Collections
at Luther Seminary*

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A soft knock sounds on the door of the special collections room on the upper floor of Gullixson Hall—the 1950s-era limestone building that houses Luther Seminary’s library, archives, classrooms, and faculty offices. Today, the visitors are a confirmation class of middle school-age young people along with their youth pastor and a seminary campus guide. The door opens and the gaggle of kids begins filing in, a few still laughing from conversations begun on the stairs outside. A few paces into the room, however, the group quickly grows quiet, as they survey the floor-to-ceiling bookcases lining three sides and the angled rolling ladders for access to the top-most shelves, the triad of stained glass windows at the far end, and, along one side, the gothic arches and pillars. Suddenly, the eyes of a girl at the front of the group light up and her face breaks into a broad smile. “Hogwarts!” she exclaims.

Luther Seminary Library is fortunate to have a space that creates a magical, step-back-in-time ambience in which to house and showcase its special collections. The room reflects its contents. Its visual appeal has made it a fixture on the campus tour circuit, opening its door to visitors of all ages, and so the “Rare Book Room” is itself an important part of the story of special collections at the seminary. Therefore, this room is where we begin to relate the history, contents, and impact of special collections at Luther Seminary.

Background

Luther Seminary is the product of numerous mergers of immigrant Midwestern church bodies, all rooted in northern European Lutheranism. In 1917, three Norwegian Lutheran denominations merged and established Luther Theological Seminary in a stately brick building on its leafy campus in a quiet corner of Saint Paul, Minnesota. As the seminary grew, a second building opened in 1950 to accommodate classrooms, faculty offices, and the new seminary library. This new building was subsequently named Gullixson Hall to honor Thaddeus F. Gullixson, seminary president from 1930–54.

The modern library at Luther Seminary can be traced back to 1943 when the first professional librarian was hired to catalog and organize a collection of around three thousand books. Before mid-century, the library played only a marginal role in the theological education and formation of its male students. Prior to this time, books and journals were largely collected by individual faculty members in the course of their research, teaching, and travel. The faculty then made them available for loan to their students. Many of these books were standard, foundational texts of the Christian tradition and its Lutheran expression. Most were in Latin, German, Dano-Norwegian, Swedish, and a smattering of other European languages. Between the wars, as the transition to English took hold, they received declining use beyond the professors who owned them. As these faculty retired, many of these texts remained at the seminary, tucked away in various places. Later, they would become the core of Luther’s special collections.

History of the Rare Book Room

The top floor of Gullixson Hall is a mix of small classrooms and faculty offices, but in a corner just off the main stairway is a room originally designed as a meditation chapel and preaching laboratory. For a time, it was outfitted with broadcast equipment and served as an ad hoc, low-wattage radio station where students could practice conducting worship services over the airwaves. With the hiring of two professors from Latvia, this studio was also used to broadcast worship services in Latvian to the surrounding neighborhood, where a small community of Latvian Lutheran families, displaced as a result of World War II, had settled.

Since the chapel/classroom/studio was used only intermittently, when Norman G. Wenthe arrived as librarian in 1968, a vision began to take shape to transform the room into a space resembling a medieval scriptorium, where the library's oldest books could be shelved, consulted, and displayed appropriately. Eleven years later, this vision became a reality.

Until this time, these books, as well as some medieval manuscripts and codex facsimiles, had been shelved in various closets and locked-stack areas without proper environmental controls. Consequently, many of the books had begun to deteriorate and needed a "new home."

The development that provided this "new home" was the project to enlarge and remodel Gullixson Hall to make room for the merged library collections of Luther and Northwestern Lutheran theological seminaries, for it was during this major renovation that Librarian Wenthe undertook the work of creating the space necessary to bring the oldest books together in one place. He worked with architects, builders, wood craftsmen and stained glass artisans, seminary administrators and maintenance workers, and a donor to create the new Rare Book Room.

With a significant gift from Jeanne Preus Rost in honor of her parents—Dr. and Mrs. J. C. K. Preus—the Rare Book Room was dedicated on January 3, 1979 and became the home for the print special collections of the Luther Seminary Library.

In the Rare Book Room are Gothic arches, Celtic pillars, gargoyles, and floor-to-ceiling shelves (image 1). The angled rolling ladders that so intrigue visitors are the original ones used in the first seminary library. A large study desk with seating for four and drawers for flat



Image 1: Rare Book Room showing arch, ladder, etc.

storage was crafted by a seminary woodworker. An immigrant trunk and a hand-carved wooden chair with figures of lions on the back and arms are housed here. There are smaller items, too, which add to the room's ambience and represent the seminary's heritage: a model of an early hand-press, a ninth-century Norwegian wedding cup, and tall, ornamental candlesticks formerly used in the seminary chapel.

There is much about this room that draws the eye, but the focal point, which adds color and historical information, is the stained glass windows set in three lancet arches (image 2). The Rev. Wenthe consulted with Dr. Howard W. Winger, professor in the University of Chicago's Graduate Library School, to select five prominent early Reformation printers and one eighteenth-century Lutheran printer and use their printer's marks as designs for the windows. The designs are in the medieval manner, use antique English cathedral glass, and were crafted by John Salisbury of Gaytee Stained Glass Inc. (Minneapolis, Minnesota). The printer's devices of Jacob Van Liesveldt, Johann Petreius, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, Crafft Muller, Philip Ulhart the Elder, and Hans Lufft are depicted in circle medallions surrounding the central "master printer and his apprentice" scene (image 3).

Pre-1800 Collection

Luther Seminary Library has several named special collections honoring donors who collected in specific areas, but its largest special collection is often simply referred to as the “pre-1800 collection.” The four to five thousand volumes in this collection came to the library over many decades and in various ways. The most common paths have been: 1) former faculty who gave their books to the seminary or simply left them behind when they retired, 2) Lutheran clergy or laypersons with ties to the institution, and 3) area families who donated books passed down from a pastor in the family. Books from these three sources that reflect the Christian heritage and were published prior to 1800 are placed in this collection. As a Protestant Lutheran seminary, most of these pre-1800 books document the Lutheran tradition, from its initial publishing frenzy in the form of pamphlets (primarily sermons and polemical tracts) to later and more expansive works of translation, biblical commentary, and theological explanation. The largest single source of books in this group are from the library of F. A. Schmidt.

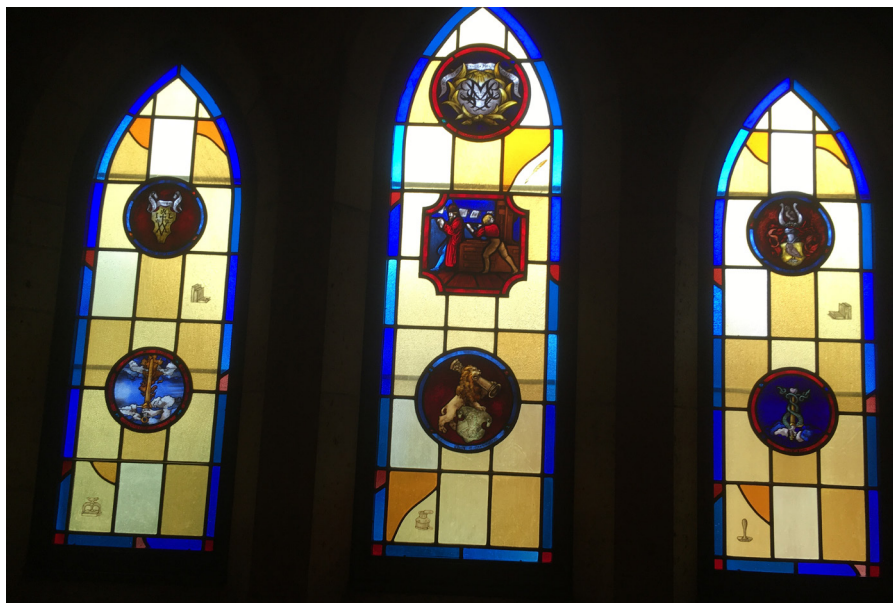


Image 2: Printers' windows.



Image 3: Master printer and apprentice (detail).

Dr. F. A. (Friedrich Augustus) Schmidt (1837–1928) taught at Luther Theological Seminary from 1890 to 1912. Even for that pioneering era in Lutheran education, Prof. Schmidt had an interesting career path. He was a product of a system of theological education grounded in the knowledge of ancient languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. German was his native language, and he learned English when he arrived in St. Louis, Missouri at age four. He acquired Norwegian as a student at Concordia Seminary, when he was asked to proofread issues of *Kirkelig Tidende*, a Norwegian-Lutheran church newspaper published in St. Louis. Familiarity with Norwegian likely contributed to his being offered a teaching position at Luther College (Decorah, Iowa) in 1861. As one of only two faculty members, he taught “religion, Greek, Latin, German, mathematics, English, penmanship, music, logic, and U.S. history.” His obituary in the *Lutheran Church Herald* notes that his chief interest remained theological studies and that, even in the early years of his career, he had acquired a large library (“Dr. Friedrich Augustus Schmidt” 1928, 679). In short, Prof. Schmidt was also a bibliophile.

Dozens of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century volumes from Schmidt's library attest the contours of Lutheran theological education in the nineteenth century. As a professor of dogmatics, representatives of the systematizing movement known as Lutheran orthodoxy (e.g., scholastic theologians the likes of Johann Gerhard [1582–1637], Abraham Calov [1612–86], and Johannes Andreas Quenstedt [1617–88]) figure prominently in this collection. It should be noted, however, that Pietism—the counterpoint movement that arose in the century following the early reformers and advocated most notably in works by Johann Arndt (1555–1621) and Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705)—is also included. Thus, faith both of head and heart co-exist on the shelves, providing a representative picture of the Lutheran polarities that influenced doctrine and practice in the succeeding centuries.

Perhaps the most surprising part of Schmidt's biblio-legacy is his collection of 187 parchment-bound volumes of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dissertations from scores of German universities. Where and how Schmidt acquired such a large quantity of dissertations is not known. Presumably, his interest in academic theology and his passion for collecting led him in this direction. Most are less than a hundred pages, so that each bound volume contains between fifteen and thirty dissertations. In an interesting study of German dissertations from this era, Armin Siedlecki (2005, 104) of Pitts Theology Library, Emory University, has pointed out that, unlike the dissertations produced today, the professor/advisor was the author of the content of the dissertation, while the student had the role of the respondent. While such materials are not often used by scholars today, they are valuable for tracing the course of scholarship over several centuries—a method that Schmidt himself likely used. At this writing, only about fifteen percent of the dissertation collection has been cataloged.

From 1987 to 2000, Terrance Dinovo served as curator of the library's special collections. Through Terry's efforts, financial support for the collections increased substantially. In particular, Terry was able to interest former Minnesota governor Elmer L. Anderson, a book collector in his own right, in underwriting the purchase of several items from the early decades of Lutheranism. Chief among them was the acquisition of a complete Luther Bible, printed in 1556 by Hans Lufft. With striking woodcut illustrations by Hans Brosamer and Georg Lemberger, it is one of the jewels of the collection. It is permanently displayed and always attracts strong interest among visitors.

Addressing the issue of environmental controls, in the mid-1990s Terry facilitated the purchase and installation of a modern HVAC system dedicated to the Rare Book Room. He also began outsourcing higher-profile items that required expert attention to professional conservators in the Twin Cities—a practice that has continued as funds allow. Nevertheless, there are many books in the collection that need some level of repair, but there is limited staff time to attend to them. As time permits, phase boxes are made in-house to stabilize books that are in the most serious state of disrepair.

Governor Anderson's generosity also made it possible to purchase a small collection of pamphlets written by Martin Luther. These are from the quarter-century following the posting of the Ninety-five Theses and represent genres typically employed by Luther (sermon, open letter, theological polemic, biblical exposition, etc.), as well as the work of prolific printers such as Melchior Lotter, Georg Rhau, Adam Petri, Johann Rhau-Grunenberg, and Friedrich Peypus. Finally, Governor Anderson made it possible to acquire a rare official edition of the *Confessio Augustana* and the *Apology*, written by Philipp Melanchthon (Wittenberg: Georg Rhau, 1531). The Augsburg Confession is a foundational document of Lutheranism—the first in the collection of confessions known as the Book of Concord. The title page indicates the text is in both German and Latin (“beide Deudsch vnd Latinisch”), but only the Latin is present in the volume, perhaps because the German translation by Justus Jonas was not yet ready at the time of publication (Richard 1907, 486).

The special collections also include two items printed before 1500. The oldest is a Bible handbook, *Mammotrectus super Bibliam* (roughly “mother’s milk on the Bible” or “Bible nourishment”), written by Franciscan John Marchesinus at the end of the thirteenth century (Venice: Franciscus Renner, de Heilbronn, and Petrus de Bartus, 1478). It is a fine example of the gradual transition from manuscript to print publishing. Typical of a manuscript, it is without a title page, and the text is printed in gothic type emulating script, with hand-drawn initial letters in blue and red marking the start of new sections. Its first page is illuminated with gold, blue, green, and red inks (image 4). *Mammotrectus* most likely served as a reference book, surveying the Bible and the four liturgical seasons, explaining difficult words and grammatical constructions, and providing an alphabetical index.



Image 4: *Mammotrectus super Bibliam* (detail).

The library's second incunable is a Latin Vulgate, *Biblia integra* (Basel: Johann Froben, 1495). Known as the "poor man's Bible," it represents one of the first efforts to create a portable, almost pocket-sized Bible. To accomplish this, Froben used an extremely small rotunda type, newly created and used primarily for Italian humanist texts. Froben's first edition was produced in 1491, but Luther Sem-

inary's second edition has the distinction of being the first printed Bible to include a woodcut illustration—a copy of a 1492 woodcut by Albrecht Dürer depicting Saint Jerome removing a thorn from the paw of a lion. The library's copy shows the indents at the beginning of chapters that were to have been drawn in by hand. This Bible was a gift from O. M. (Olaf Morgan) Norlie (1876–1962), pastor, professor, and collector of Bibles and many books by and about Norwegian Americans.

Named Collections

There are four named collections in Luther Seminary's special collections: the Carl Døving Hymnal Collection, the Jacob Tanner Catechism Collection, the Olaf Storaasli Manuscript Collection, and the Edward Sovik Collection.

As the Rev. Carl Døving and Dr. Jacob Tanner were friends and supported each other in their “hobbies” of collecting hymn books and Luther's *Small Catechisms* from around the world in hundreds of languages and dialects, it seems only fitting that both are shelved near each other in the Rare Book Room. The men were born in Norway and emigrated to the United States, where they became pastors, scholars, and leaders in the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America.

The Carl Døving Hymnal Collection

Carl Døving (1867–1937) left Norway at age sixteen to work with a missionary—the Rev. Nils Astrup—in South Africa. Seven years later, he emigrated to the United States, where he graduated from Luther College (Decorah, Iowa) and Luther Seminary. After ordination, he served churches in Minnesota, New York, and Illinois. The Rev. Døving “became especially interested in hymns and started collecting them in different languages in 1910, when he became a member of the hymn book committee of the Norwegian Lutheran Church” (Miller 1936, 12). For the next twenty years, he was in contact with missionaries around the world, asking them for hymn books in use in their respective mission outposts to supplement his collection. Therefore, his holdings are strong in hymnody as it developed in overseas missions, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries. Lutheranism is especially well-represented, as illustrated in the publications of its world mission societies, but other denominational mission activities are also included. In January 1934, when the Rev. Døving donated his remarkable collection to Luther College, it totaled approximately 1,400 volumes in 325 different languages and dialects. In 1951, the Døving Hymnal Collection came to Luther Theological Seminary on an indefinite loan and, in 1997, it was transferred formally to Luther Seminary.

In 1936, Døving was interviewed by Luther College student Frank R. Miller, who wrote, “In speaking about his hymns, Mr. Døving’s face lights up with joy. He says it is a great thrill to find a hymn and unheard of dialect and search through it diligently until he is able to recognize some familiar words or signs that will enable him to identify it” (Miller 1936, 12).

The Jacob Tanner Catechism Collection

Jacob Tanner (1865–1964) was a professor at Concordia College (Moorhead, Minnesota) and a professor of dogmatics for thirteen years at Luther Seminary before retiring and then being called back into service to teach at Waldorf College (Forest City, Iowa) until age 97. Over a thirty-year period, Dr. Tanner assembled a collection of Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism* with the assistance of the Rev. Carl Døving. “It was the intensive research work and the extensive correspondence carried on with every nook and corner of the globe in connection with the hymnal enterprise that made possible the marvelous collection of catechism-translations owned by Dr. Jacob Tanner of the Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn” (Hoppe 1933, 638).

In 1933, Tanner’s collection of Luther’s *Small Catechism*, translated into 121 languages and dialects, was exhibited in the Lutheran section of the Hall of Religion at Chicago’s Century of Progress, also known as the Chicago World’s Fair. By the time Dr. Tanner donated his collection to the Luther Theological Seminary Library in 1955, it had grown to include translations in 146 languages. This original collection included forty-one European translations, thirty-three from Asia, fifty-three from Africa, eight from the Americas, four from Australia, and seven from New Guinea. The *Small Catechism* was the first printed book published in a language native to what is now the United States—Algonquian—in 1648. The Tanner Collection includes a facsimile edition of the 1696 printing of that catechism. Many cate-

chisms were not printed separately but were combined with a hymnal to form a single volume. Some catechisms were printed as school-books. Those from China in this collection are not in book form at all but consist of individually-printed sheets tied along one side with string (image 5).

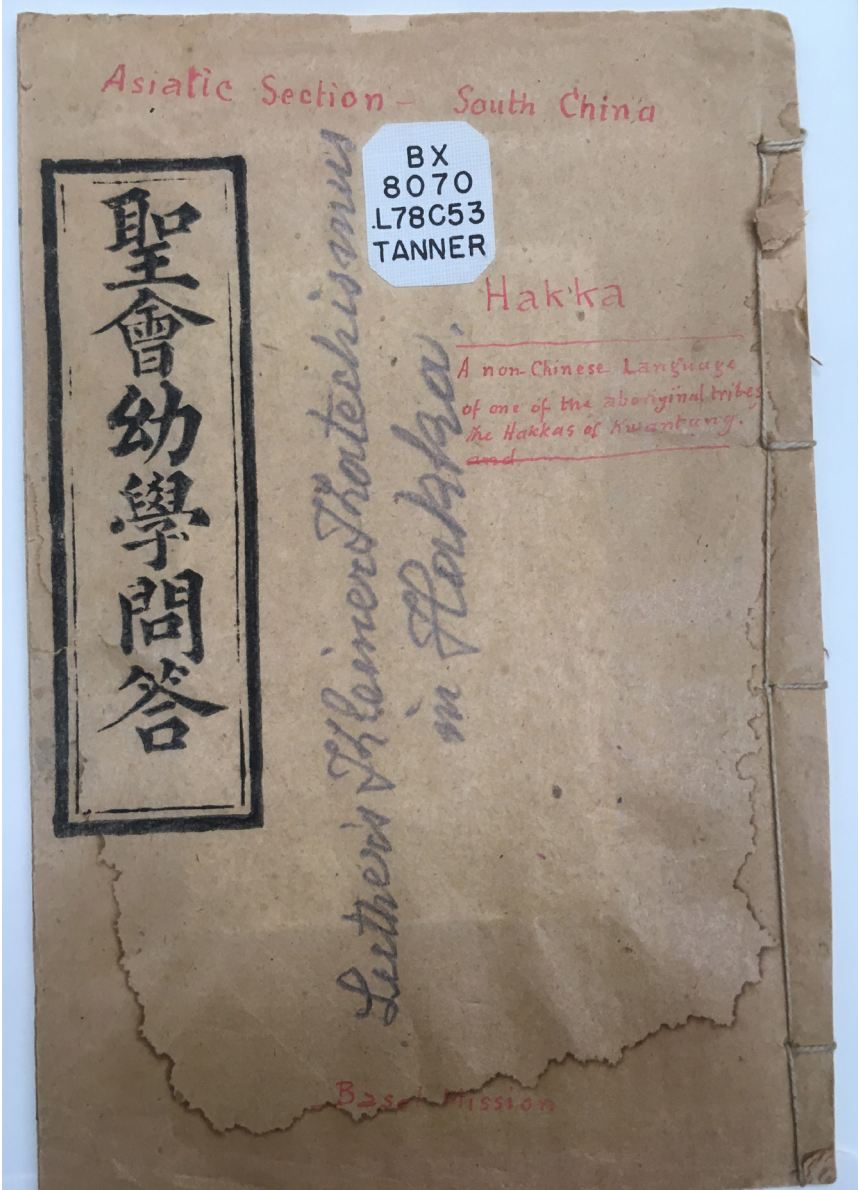


Image 5: Tanner Collection catechism from China.

Why did Dr. Tanner collect Luther’s *Small Catechism*? Perhaps because he was a “catechism” theologian “and feared that Seminary dogmatics had become more concerned with what other theologians of all denominations today were teaching, than what Lutheran dogmaticians meant by their historic statements” (Storaasli 1974, 45).

The Olaf Storaasli Manuscript Collection

Olaf K. Storaasli (1915–2006) was a New Testament professor at Luther Seminary. Dating from his time in graduate school at Princeton and Temple universities, he began collecting leaves from late medieval manuscripts and early printed books. Following his retirement in 1996, he gave his collection to the library. Approximately three-fourths of the 107 items in this collection are manuscript leaves representing books of hours, missals, antiphonaries, breviaries, Bibles, and psalters. Most are written on vellum, and a few are illuminated with decorative foliate borders in gold and color along the outer margins (image 6).

Of the printed leaves, several are from incunabula, two of the earliest being from a 1475 Bible (Augsburg: Günther Zainer) and from the *Summa confessorum* of Johannes Freiburg (Ulm: Konrad Dinckmut, 1484). The collection also includes several leaves from the well-known *Liber chronicarum* (Nuremberg Chronicle) printed in 1493 by Anton Koberger. These manuscript and printed leaves have been featured in several displays, the first in 1997 at a reception thanking Olaf and Lila Storaasli for their gift.



Image 6: Storaasli Collection manuscript leaf.

The Edward Sovik Collection

Edward “Ed” Sovik (1918–2014) was born in China to Lutheran missionary parents, graduated from St. Olaf College (Northfield, Minnesota) and attended Luther Theological Seminary before choosing a career in architecture. He was the founder and principal of Sovik, Mathre & Madson (now SMSQ Architects), based in Northfield, Minnesota. The firm specialized in church building projects, and Ed himself had both a professional and personal interest in the career of Sir Christopher Wren. In 2008, Ed gave his substantial library of books on church architecture to Luther Seminary, among which was a collection of books about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English ecclesiastical architecture with particular emphasis on the works and influence of Wren.

Of notable interest in this collection are a history of St. Paul’s Cathedral by Sir William Dugdale, published in 1716, and an elephant folio volume (76 x 57 cm), *The Works of Christopher Wren: the dimensions, plans, elevations, and sections of the parochial churches of Sir Christopher Wren: erected in the cities of London & Westminster* by John Clayton. Clayton spent ten years making measured drawings of all of Wren’s city churches and published them in this expansive volume in 1848. Both were featured in a special exhibit of items from this collection in 2009.

Impact of Special Collections

Special collections exist within the library’s participation in the mission of Luther Seminary to educate leaders for Christian communities. In its role as an educational partner, the library enables research and scholarship at all levels and stewards physical and digital collections, space, and services. The curation, organization, and preservation of its oldest and most historically significant materials have always been leading functions of special collections. More recently, however, their interpretation and integration with the curriculum have received increased attention. Thus, special collections at the library have contributed to the institutional life of Luther Seminary through their connection to students’ academic coursework and to

the wider seminary constituency via campus tours, special displays, and an offering in the seminary's Lay School of Theology program.

Programmatically, special collections have been driven primarily by the library staff, although they have benefited greatly by allies in the administration and on the faculty. When the transformation of the chapel/classroom/lab into today's Rare Book Room was proposed, the support of the presidents of Luther Theological Seminary and Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary (the two institutions had not yet merged) was vital and was generously provided. Individual faculty in Bible and Church history have been very receptive to holding class sessions in the Rare Book Room and, in the process, have stretched the library staff to discover more about the items in its care. The partnership between the library and Seminary Relations has been very fruitful with respect to scheduling and hosting tour groups—an activity that has remained consistently popular. The Center for Lifelong Learning initially approached the library about offering a course in the Lay School of Theology, opening a new avenue for special collections to be showcased for interested community members.

Coursework

The library's collection of facsimile editions of important biblical manuscripts has occasioned regular visits by Hebrew Bible and New Testament faculty and their students. The opportunity to see exact replicas of these manuscripts, either in photographic or typeset editions, has provided students a more complete understanding of the textual history of the Bible. Hebrew Bible classes will typically examine the tenth- and eleventh-century Aleppo and Leningrad codices, aided by seeing alongside both the library's eighteenth-century Esther Scroll and sixteenth-century Syriac liturgical codex. The instructor and the librarian discuss the evolution and use of scrolls and codices in the ancient world, the various writing surfaces employed, and the scribal traditions used in copying sacred texts. In terms of the practice of book-making, the Esther Scroll clearly displays how the panels of goatskin have been stitched together and how the skin has been ruled with a knife (image 7). The Syriac codex shows the paper leaves tied together with thick string and bound by wooden boards covered with a fabric resembling burlap (image 8).



Image 7: Esther scroll.



Image 8: Syriac codex.

New Testament classes often schedule visits to view facsimile editions of the great fourth- and fifth-century codices: Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, and Washingtonianus. Displaying them side-by-side allows their similarities and differences to be seen at a glance, particularly their use of continuous script with no breaks between words and sentences. In the case of Sinaiticus, which is a full-

size photographic edition, some of the insertions in the text and the margins by different scribal hands can be pointed out. The library's copy of Codex Alexandrinus is a relative rarity. Just 450 copies were printed in London by John Nichols in 1786, financed by the British Museum, which holds the manuscript. For this typeset folio edition, Nichols used a "noble" font designed by Joseph Jackson, a designer who specialized in oriental fonts. This manuscript uniquely places an enlarged initial letter of the first complete line of a paragraph into the margin. A smile of recognition typically crosses the faces of students who have studied Greek at picking out the run of the letter K, beginning the Greek word *kai* (and) indicating the breathless, urgent nature of Mark's narrative.

Campus Tours

Since the Rare Book Room is recognized as one of the most beautiful and classic spaces on campus, an in-person stop here is nearly always included for campus visitors, whether prospective students or donors, confirmation classes, senior groups, seminary board members, visiting lecturers, or other guests.

Although tailored somewhat for each group, a typical tour led by a library staff member would begin with the background of the room itself and then move to the stained glass "printers" windows with comments on the confluence of the relatively new occupation of printing that enabled the rapid spread of the ideas coming from the pens of Martin Luther and others, together fueling the movement for the reform of the church. On display below the windows is the 1556 Bible in Luther's German translation. The librarian would discuss the monumental event that was the 1522 publication of the New Testament, essentially opening the Bible to ordinary literate Germans unschooled in Latin. The complete Bible, finally available in 1534, led to another surge in demand met by a succession of printings. The Wittenberg printer, Hans Lufft, favored by Luther because of his careful work, was responsible for many of these, including the library's copy. His printer's device or logo—the upraised sword piercing the heart and driving out sin, represented by snakes—would be pointed out on the window (image 9). The increasingly popular use of woodcut illustrations to add visual interest would be shown in this Bible by the dramatic full-page woodcut of Eve being drawn out from Adam's side (image 10).



Image 9: Luther Bible with printer's device of Hans Lufft.



Image 10: Luther Bible full-page woodcut.

Attention might then shift to the other end of the bookcase, where the Esther Scroll is displayed. The tour leader would ask the group if they thought what they see is a book, which—following a scattering of yes or no answers—would lead to a discussion of the scroll versus the codex as differing formats for a book. Examining the scroll in more detail, the leader would explain that the interior or smooth side of the skin was the writing side. Flipping the scroll to its underside, the group could easily see the roughness of the exterior or hair side of the skin, unsuitable for writing. Looking at the text itself shows how the surface has been scored with a knife and how the letters run from right to left and hang from the line rather than rest upon it. Particularly for confirmation-age groups, the connection between the book of Esther and the Jewish festival of Purim would be highlighted—that the entire book is read or chanted, the heroes cheered and the villains scorned.

Typically a few minutes are reserved for questions. By far the most frequently asked is “What’s your oldest book?” This prompts pulling the 1478 *Mammotrectus super Bibliam* from the shelf, commenting that, in the first few decades after Gutenberg, there was the desire in many cases to make printed books resemble the manuscripts their readers would have expected and been familiar with. The colorfully hand-decorated and illuminated initial page of the *Mammotrectus* is a delightful example of this period of transition from manuscript to print.

Displays

In recent years, the library staff has hosted at least two open houses during the academic year. One takes place on or around Reformation Day (October 31st), when Lutherans commemorate Martin Luther’s nailing of the Ninety-five Theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. The other open house is during commencement weekend, when the library welcomes graduates and their families and friends on their self-guided campus tours.

During both of these open houses, a themed display of books and accompanying information provides visitors with a glimpse into the collections. Displays have also been mounted for other events or groups upon request. Topics showcasing items from the collection in these displays have included:

- Pamphlet literature in Reformation history
- Sixteenth-century printers as known by their printer's marks
- Early English Bibles (400th anniversary of the King James Bible)
- Music and hymnals of the Reformation
- Christopher Wren and English ecclesiastical architecture
- Family Bibles in America
- The medieval scribal tradition
- The Nuremberg Chronicle

Brainstorming ideas for future displays has recently begun again in anticipation of students and visitors returning to campus post-pandemic. One idea that has come to the forefront is a new display highlighting Bible “firsts” in the century following Gutenberg. In such a display, the library’s folio of the first complete Bible in Danish—*Biblia, Det er den gantske Hellige Scrift* (Copenhagen: L. Dietz, 1550)—and the first Bible in a Swiss low-German vernacular translation by Huldrych Zwingli and Leo Jud—*Die gantze Bibel das ist alle bücher alts vnnds neüws Testaments, den vrsprünglichen sprachen nach, auff’s aller treüwlichet verteütschet* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1545)—would be included. The first printing of the Zwingli/Jud translation (1531) contained a map, thought to be the first printed Bible to do so. Also, the previously mentioned Vulgate (1495), the first Bible to incorporate a woodcut illustration, would naturally have a place in the display. Since the 500th anniversary of Luther’s “September Testament” is drawing near (1522), the library’s facsimile copy, edited by Kenneth Strand (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1972), would be featured as well. Luther’s is the first translation of the New Testament into German based upon the original Greek.

Beyond its campus, in 2016–17 the library had the opportunity to collaborate with two large-scale exhibits marking the 500th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation by contributing items from its special collections to the Minneapolis Institute of Art for its “Martin Luther: Art and the Reformation” exhibit and the University of Minnesota Libraries’ exhibit, “Luther and the World Turned Upside Down” (image 11).



Image 11: Reformation anniversary exhibit – University of Minnesota.

Lay School of Theology Course

On several occasions, the library featured its special collections through a five-session course offered through Luther Seminary’s Lay School of Theology program. The course was entitled, “*Ad Fontes: the History of the Bible as a Book,*” and aimed to demonstrate the many format changes of the Bible through its history as a physical object, from fragments of papyrus or parchment—as evidenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls—to the handy, compact codex between plain or fancy covers so familiar today. The course typically discussed: the Bible in Bible times and the great Bible codices, St. Jerome and the Latin Bible, medieval Bibles, Gutenberg and the printing revolution, Martin Luther and the German Bible, William Tyndale and the English Bible, the Bible in America, and the Saint John’s Bible. For each session, pertinent items from special collections were displayed. The excellent *The Book: a History of the Bible* by Christopher de Hamel (London: Phaidon, 2001) was foundational for course content.

Summary: Special Collections as Touchstone

Special collections in theological libraries, in tandem with institutional archives, have the ability to foster a greater understanding and appreciation among students, donors, and others of the history of the school that has preserved and cared for them and the denominational tradition out of which they have come. The parchment-bound volumes lining the shelves of the Rare Book Room, most written in German or Latin, speak to the northern European origins of Lutheranism. In a corner of the room, the wooden steamship trunk decorated with an embossed metal acorn motif (image 12) points to the immigrant experience and how many of these books may have arrived in Minnesota with their pastor or professor owners. Seeing the carefully hand-lettered titles or title transcriptions by Carl Døving and Jacob Tanner of hymnals and *Small Catechisms* in languages and dialects from around the world gives evidence of the mission impulse among Lutheran churches.

The ability to personally view artifacts contemporaneous with ground-breaking ideas, movements, and figures within Christian history creates a deeper connection to that history. When students see Luther's marginal notes to the text of his Bible translation or



Image 12: Steamship trunk.

are shown his reordering of the books of the New Testament (including his disinclination to even assign numbers to the books of Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation), a more immediate sense of who Luther was and of the Reformation era in general is often the result (image 13).

Finally, there is the feeling of wonder and delight that special collections can create in the experience of the viewer. Historian Abby

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 cher gnade zu komen / sondern auch mit leib / gut vnd ehre / wie er sibet. Das im Christus ge...
 an hat / vnd folget also dem exempel Christi nach.
 Dis meinet auch Christus / da er zur letzte kein ander gebot gab / denn die Liebe / daran gla
 an erkennen solte / wer seine Jünger weren / vnd rechtschaffen gleybigen. Denn wo die werck on a
 vnd liebe nicht erans bricht / da ist der glaube nicht recht / da hassret das Euangelium noch
 ichte / vnd Christus ist nicht recht erkand. Sibe / nu richte dich also in die Bücher des neuen
 Testaments / das du sie auff diese weise zu lesen wissest.

Die Bücher des neuen Testaments.

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Euangelium S. Matthes. | Die Epistel an die Ebreer |
| 2. | Euangelium S. Marcus. | Die Epistel Jacobi. |
| 3. | Euangelium S. Lucas. | Die Epistel Jude. |
| 4. | Euangelium S. Johannis. | Die offenbarung S. Johannis |
| 5. | Der Apostel geschicht / beschrieben von S. Lucas. | |
| 6. | Epistel S. Paul an die Römer. | |
| 7. | Die 1. Epistel S. Paul an die Corinthher. | |
| 8. | Die 2. Epistel an die Corinthher. | |
| 9. | Epistel S. Paul an die Galater | |
| 10. | Epistel S. Paul an die Epheser. | |
| 11. | Epistel S. Paul an die Philipper. | |
| 12. | Epistel S. Paul an die Coloffer. | |
| 13. | Die 1. Epistel S. Paul an die Thessalonicher. | |
| 14. | Die 2. Epistel S. Paul an die Thessalonicher. | |
| 15. | Die 1. Epistel S. Paul an Timotheum. | |
| 16. | Die 2. Epistel S. Paul an Timotheum. | |
| 17. | Epistel S. Paul an Titum. | |
| 18. | Epistel S. Paul an Philemon. | |
| 19. | Die 1. Epistel S. Peters. | |
| 20. | Die 2. Epistel S. Peters. | |
| 21. | Die 1. Epistel S. Johannis. | |
| 22. | Die 2. Epistel S. Johannis. | |
| 23. | Die 3. Epistel S. Johannis. | |

Image 13: Luther Bible list of New Testament books.

Smith states, “[T]here is something irreducible about an encounter with the real thing” (Smith 2003, 174). This subjective experience is perhaps more significant than is often recognized and could plant a seed that may later influence a career decision or a desire to support the library or the institution. Mark Dimunation, the director of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division at the Library of Congress, writes, “In the end, the real measure of our own work will be what we have done to further the knowledge and appreciation of the collections that we have the great privilege to build and administer” (Dimunation 2006, 74). By building special collections and creating an enchanting space (but perhaps not quite so much as Hogwarts), where centuries-old books, manuscript leaves, and furnishings are interpreted by classroom sessions, tours, and displays, Luther Seminary has tried to do just this, advancing the knowledge and appreciation of the school’s institutional heritage and the Christian tradition, as well as fostering a sense of joy at seeing the past still alive in the present.

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