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Dacus Library

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SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:

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- Manuscripts Acquired by Louise Pettus Archives & Special Collections

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## *Nunc Scripsi Totum, pro Christo Da Mihi Potum...*

While my job is filled with exquisite moments in which I luxuriate, nothing has been more gratifying than what transpired recently. As dean, I often get to make decisions about our various collections in conjunction with faculty. On very rare occasions, I get to make them after due diligence with those who may be using a specific collection. One such occasion occurred this fall.

For longer than I can remember, a cadre of faculty on Winthrop's campus have been hopeful of a teaching manuscript collection. Some of these faculty have even begun to collect items at their own expense. While I wanted more than anything to oblige this request, I could not, in good faith, spend funds on what I knew to be precious material only to bring it into an inhospitable Dacus climate. It isn't that Dacus is unique in this regard.

Our building is almost 45 years old. It suffers from all those maladies that buildings built that many years ago suffer from, not the least of which is fluctuations in temperature and humidity. And it isn't as if we have not done anything about this: we have done everything humanly and fiscally possible. But HVAC units as old as ours with conduits equally old just cannot maintain the required temperature and humidity ranges for fragile manuscripts.

But of course, the new and im-

proved Pettus can, with its museum-quality HVAC.

So the logical next step was to investigate what and where to buy. It isn't as easy as you might think. Scoundrels abound in every profession and those trafficking in manuscripts are especially egregious. I can say that with impunity since many of them are, well, librarians! We could not have done this, either, without the expertise of Dr. Jo Koster, medievalist extraordinaire, on Winthrop's campus.

Long story short, we found a supplier, and Winthrop now owns its first teaching medieval manuscript collection. Already the collection, purchased in September, has had a workout with more than a dozen audiences. The collection is, in short, extraordinary, covering art, music, law, the Bible, theology, science and liturgy. Furthermore, the range is as broad as the collection is varied, covering the 13th through the 18th Centuries.

I won't share everything about the collection since you must see it to believe it. But suffice it to say that our 21 pieces have something here for everyone. You cannot look at our collection and not feel an instant connection with those whose indefatigable love of knowledge and its transmission transcends our occasional indolent indifference to both.

At the head of this column is a quote from a copyist that I could



not resist including. I cannot vouch for its legitimacy but it serves nonetheless. A poor copyist who had toiled all day with a manuscript penned it in the margin at the end: "I have now written everything. For the sake of Christ, give me a drink!" It's safe to say that this conveys something of the intensive labor involved, not only in writing a book, but also in its transmission and preservation. Not to put too fine a point on it, it also underscores that Medievals, like us, were not always highbrow!

We hope in the future to add more to this collection as funds allow. If you think this is something you'd like to support, don't hesitate to give me a call. By all means, however, if you want to see these marvelous artifacts, do come see us. You won't be disappointed! — Mark Y. Herring

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**The Dacus Library of Winthrop University** was constructed in 1969 and named for the school's first librarian Ida Jane Dacus, who served from 1900 to 1945 and was also the first person in South Carolina to receive professional training in library studies. Today the facility houses over 500,000 volumes and provides extensive online resources to support the educational and research needs of the Winthrop academic community.



## **Friends of Dacus Library Endowment Fund Launched**

The Friends of Dacus Library Board voted unanimously on December 3, 2012, to establish the first official Friends of Dacus Library Endowment Fund, which is designed "to provide material support to the mission of the library of Winthrop University." The initial corpus of this fund was set at \$27,000.

Dr. Jack Weaver, chairman of the Friends organization, acknowledged the generosity that had made this move possible. "This is not the achievement of one person or even one group this particular year, but represents the contributions of many Dacus Library supporters over a number of years. We wish to thank all Friends for their part in launching our first Friends endowment. We hope those who take our place in the organization will build on this work," said Weaver. "So, again, thanks to past, present and future Friends."

Dean Mark Y. Herring noted of this precedent-setting development: "For the first time in the history of Dacus, the Friends have created a permanent endowment fund. Under the direction

of Dr. Ronnie Faulkner, Dacus liaison to the Friends, and the Friends executive board, the new Friends of Dacus Endowment has become a reality. It is a testament to this special group of friends and their persistent that we have arrived at this opportune moment. The letter of agreement will hopefully be finalized by the time you read this issue.

"So what does this mean for Dacus? It means that from now on Friends of Dacus will provide a never-ending future for Ida Jane. What I like so much about this endowment is that it not only will provide income in the near term, but it will also provide it in perpetuity. With this gift, we plan for the Dacus present, and for the Dacus that many of us reading this newsletter will not live to see. It is an exercise in faith that we provide for a future we will have no immediate part in.

"Expenditures will be approved by the Friends Board and made based on the recommendations from either the Dean, the members of the Friends of Dacus, or any library or faculty member of Winthrop. This is truly a team effort, and

together those now and those in the future will help build Dacus for many years to come. It will be a collaborative effort of current and new friends unlike no other time in Ida's history.

"But be sure you do not miss this part: *this is only the beginning*. While we have reached the threshold to begin an endowment, let's continue to combine our efforts to increase this fund each year. If we do that as often as we can, every year, we will build an endowment that will more than suffice to create a more effective Dacus. Let's push ourselves to six, and even seven, figure goal for this most important endowment.

"While I have called on G. K. Chesterton many times before to help me make a point, I cannot resist using him once again. Truly, this endowment enables us to 'aid the divine gift of language and letters to outlive us all.'"

