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**ILLUMINATED  
MEDIIEVAL  
MANUSCRIPT:**



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## That Sheep May Safely Graze...Mark Y. Herring

As this year comes to a close, we end on a high note. We have shared with you in several venues the success of our Friends Endowment (now near \$50K) and our desire to push it to twice that level. I am confident that, with your help, we can achieve that and more. We also shared our digitization grant progress. So, what's next?

With libraries, like the old woman who lived in a shoe, there is much to do. Our illuminated medieval manuscript collecting is ongoing, a picture of which is to the left of this column. If you haven't seen them, make an appointment to stop by the archives. They are a marvel, and not just because they date back, literally, hundreds of years. They are a marvel because they represent, symbolically, what it means to be a university. I've been asked by some why bother, so let me give you an idea of why.

These manuscripts are, of course, the painstaking efforts of a few who wished to preserve for others the knowledge of their day. That sounds a great deal like what librarians do, doesn't it? Not coincidentally, many who wrote out these manuscripts were librarians, either *de facto*, or by profession. Bear in mind that these efforts preceded iPads, iPhones, tablets, phablets, laptops, desktops—heck, these were even before typewriters. Oh, yes, and before electricity. Yet still a fevered few slaved, literally, hours over shaping these exquisite works,

for no other reason than to share knowledge. One scholar estimates it took 500 sheep to create one Bible. That gives you a real sense of what bookmaking and knowledge meant back then (and hence, my title, though it's only today that the animals may "safely" graze). It's mind-boggling to think that we currently have some books, the paper of which deteriorates in under 25 years. And yet, we can hold in our hands documents that have lasted ten times that long, even fifty times longer! So, preserving knowledge is one reason we collect rare, beautiful manuscripts.

But aesthetics are not everyone's cup of Earl Grey, so what else? Another reason to collect is to share these works with young people who carry in their pockets whole libraries. Honestly, students are left with mouths agape when they see these manuscripts. It gives them a new appreciation for our abundance, our embarrassment of book-riches. And, believe it or not, some of them come away with a newfound appreciation for the transmission of knowledge, of books, of libraries, and even librarians.

Yet a third reason to collect these manuscripts is our faculty. To date about a dozen faculty have used them in classes. Students studying law, religion, music, book-making, literature, history, politics and so on have made the short trip to Pettus to see these pieces that span the gamut of disciplines. I won't add

as a fourth the fact that these items enrich our city by being here because I understand that not everyone shares my excitement for such things. (Still, I'm counting it maybe half a reason.)

But there is a fourth, or fifth if you will, and it may be one of the more important ones. About a year ago, with the help of the Breslauer Foundation, which specializes in helping universities with manuscript acquisitions, we made a bid on a 15<sup>th</sup> Century book of hours. Unfortunately, we were outbid. A year later, that same manuscript appeared for auction as separate pages, and writing those words pains me. So, not only does our collecting serve as a teaching tool, but when successful, holds intact these marvelous productions, which might otherwise fall to merchant book-breakers.

If this is something strikes your fancy, please give us a call and we'll let you know how you can help. The Breslauer Foundation's assistance is contingent upon our making some financial effort, too. The more we can do, the better the outcome, now and in the future.

Libraries, as I'm sure all readers know, are more than "just books" though I never have understood how "just books" could stand as criticism. It's almost like calling someone "just a mother." Such phrases say more about the speaker than the subjects referenced.

Once again, thanks for all your help, and please, do come by Pettus and ask to see our manuscript collection.

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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 ENDOWMENT FUND GROWS**

On October 7, 2013, the Friends of Dacus Library gathered for an annual program presented by Winthrop alumnus and slave re-enactor Kitty Wilson-Evans. Kitty gave an impressive performance. Her program is recounted in the *Friends of the Library Newsletter* (Fall 2013) located at <http://www.winthrop.edu/dacus/friends/friendsnewsletter.htm>. At the same time, two special achievements of the year were recognized.

The first achievement involved the final merger of the Friends group and the Library Advisory Board. Members of the LAB, a fundraising and benefactor group appointed by the Dean of Library Services, were elected unanimously to the new Friends Board. The new Board consists of the following persons: Jane White (Chair), Janet Gray (Vice Chair), Joye Berman, Alice B. Coleman, Ronnie Faulkner, Doris Leitner, Kay McSpadden, Cindy Nigro, Paul Nigro, Joyce Plyler, and Ruth K. Webb.

The second achievement was the notable growth in the Friends Endowment Fund. Dr. Faulkner, secretary-treasurer of the organization, reported that the newly minted fund, started by the

Friends group on January 15 with an initial corpus of \$27,000, had reached \$41,137. By November 15 the fund had grown to \$49,503.

The Friends very first endowment fund continues to grow. The current phase two goal is to reach the \$100,000 level by the end of 2014. The way things are going, this is certainly an achievable target. As a part of this effort, the Friends are launching an expanded membership recruitment drive in order to bring educators and librarians from the following counties into the organization: Cherokee, Chester, Lancaster, Union and York Counties in South Carolina and a Gaston, Mecklenburg and Union Counties in neighboring North Carolina.

In a special mailing planned for January 2014, these area educators will learn what the Dacus Library has to offer them, including its 550,000 print books, 142,000 ebooks, 50,000 electronic journals, 12,000 volume juvenile collection, and many other resources.

All current members have been strongly encouraged to rejoin for the 2014 year, and, if possible, to make a contribution

to the Friends Endowment Fund. This alone will bring a boost in the growth of our endowment!

Library Dean Mark Herring expressed his appreciation for all the volunteer efforts and contributions that Friends have made in recent years. He was especially gratified by Friends "supporting us with [their] hard earned money. It means so much to us and we should say it often, in many different ways, so here goes: *Merci, Faleminderit shumë, Qagaasakuq, Danks, Grazie, Gracias!*"

"[There was] a time," observed Dean Herring, "when private universities, and only a handful of public ones, routinely asked for funds." That time, however, has passed. With frozen budgets and declining public financial commitments to higher education, it is becoming increasingly important to raise funds to support such functions as library services.

Friends are an important asset in the ongoing mission of the library in meeting the needs of students, faculty, and other users. As the Dean frequently observes: "The library supports not one student or one program, but every student and every program of the University."