

# Teaching by the Book: The Culture of Reading in the George Peabody Library

Gabrielle Dean

First, there is a gasp or sigh; then the wide-eyed viewer slowly circumnavigates the building. In the George Peabody Library, one of the Johns Hopkins University's rare book libraries, I often witness this awe-struck response to the architecture. The library interior, made largely of cast iron, illuminated by a huge skylight and decorated with gilded neo-Gothic and Egyptian elements, was completed in 1878 and fully expresses the aspirations of the age. It is gaudy and magnificent, and it never fails to impress visitors.

The contents of the library are equally symbolic and grand, but less visible. The Peabody first opened to the Baltimore public in 1866 as part of the Peabody Institute, an athenaeum-like venture set up by the philanthropist George Peabody; it originally included a lecture series and an art gallery in addition to the library and the renowned conservatory. The library's collection was built with Peabody's generous bequest, augmented by book donations from community benefactors. These early acquisitions were oriented towards the "best works on every subject" so that the library would be "well furnished in every department of knowledge, and of the most approved literature."<sup>1</sup> The library was open "for the free use of all persons who may desire to consult it," although its materials did not circulate.<sup>2</sup> The Peabody became the de facto library for the new Johns Hopkins University when it opened up a few blocks away in 1876, and the librarians purchased books with their academic neighbors in mind. The collection, as it grew, reflected these local conditions.

This collection in its splendid house was the core of an undergraduate seminar I taught called "Read-

ing Culture in the Nineteenth-Century Library," which examined the intersections of the public library movement, nineteenth-century book history and popular literature in order to describe the culture of reading in nineteenth-century America. I designed this semester-long course with two complementary aims in mind.

First, I wanted to develop a new model for teaching American literature. Instead of proceeding from a set of texts deemed significant by twenty-first century critics, our syllabus drew from the Peabody's collections to gain insight into what was actually purchased, promoted and read in the nineteenth century. Moreover, there was no artificial separation between the texts we examined and their material contexts. My own research focuses on the print culture environments of American literature, but I have found it difficult in the past to present this history in my American literature courses due to the logistical constraints of the regular classroom. Studying the library's collections in the library itself, students had access not just to the words on the page but to the pages themselves—plus their illustrations, inscriptions and bindings. By extension, the physicality of the books was intimately tied to the physical features of the library space. The course offered students an "inside out" view of American literary history—one that originated in literature as it was read in its own time, and as represented by its material traces in the Peabody.

Secondly, I wanted to initiate new avenues of library use. The challenges that face many special collections outreach efforts are amplified in the case

of the Peabody. The Peabody is glamorous indeed, but it is located about 2.5 miles from the Hopkins Homewood campus where students in the arts and sciences, engineering and education are based. The 15-minute ride on the free campus shuttle is a stretch for busy undergraduates with back-to-back classes. Most of the Rare Book and Manuscript department's rare book class sessions take place in the main campus library, even when they involve books from the Peabody. Moreover, many researchers prefer to read digitized versions of books and periodicals rather than make a trip to the library; this phenomenon will increase as more and more "medium rare" books become available online. As a result, most of the Peabody's visitors are tourists, community groups and advanced researchers. So I designed this course to generate familiarity with and excitement about the Peabody, through the course itself and through its after-life, a student-curated exhibit of Peabody books to be displayed both in the main campus library and online. In short, I wanted the course to illuminate the Peabody from the "outside in"—to bring attention to the collection through a sharper sense of what this utterly amazing library meant to nineteenth-century readers.

### **COURSE DESIGN: A BALANCING ACT**

The course was cross-listed in English and the Program in Museums & Society. As an English course, it would need to provide insight into literary history and guidance in reading literature; as a Museums & Society course, it had to address issues related to material culture and institutional collection-building. It was also designated a "W" course, which meant it had to incorporate a certain amount of writing instruction, feedback and revision. Finally, there was the location issue: I wanted class to meet at the Peabody itself, despite the difficulty this would create for students. This variety of curricular needs and goals made planning rather tricky.

In view of the location issue—crucial to making the Peabody more visible from the "outside in"—I

set a weekly meeting schedule so students would have to travel as infrequently as possible. I also planned to shift to project-related class sessions in week 10 of our 15-week semester, so that students would have time in class to conduct research for their exhibits.

These scheduling adaptations, necessary as they were, put additional pressure on my goal to teach nineteenth-century American literature from the "inside out." I could not assume that students would have the background that would make this perspective intelligible. The benefit of teaching literature in the usual way is that students already know how to proceed: you crack open your anthology or reprint; you read, discuss and write about the assigned texts. Students might also have prior experience with the modes of interpretation native to this method—formal, historical or theory-based criticism. But an approach to literature that develops out of reading culture and the material book? That was likely to be unfamiliar. If I wanted to convey the impact on nineteenth-century reading practices of the inter-connected phenomena of increased literacy, increasingly cheap printed matter and public libraries, I was going to have to illustrate those changes against a historical backdrop.

So the course began with a whirlwind introduction to the material history of the book—from Sumerian clay tablets and papyrus scrolls, to parchment manuscript codices, to early printed books and engravings on paper. We then decelerated to spend several weeks examining the "everyday" reading of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: bibles, almanacs, chapbooks, grammars and other books for children, periodicals, gift books and cheap novels. Along the way, we read articles (these were on e-reserve, accessible through the course management system and the library website) about the early modern book market, "intensive" and "extensive" reading, and the history of child literacy.<sup>3</sup>

Having landed in the nineteenth century, we switched our focus over the next three weeks to

the history of libraries. Here the point was to show how nineteenth-century public libraries responded to and supported the spread of literacy and affordable reading matter, but also put certain restrictions on reading. Some historical background was again necessary: first, a summary of library history from ancient times to the present; then a look at eighteenth and early nineteenth-century social libraries, exemplified by some wonderful marked-up and dog-eared catalogues of mechanics, subscription and circulating libraries, along with books that had been featured in them. This class was taught by a guest lecturer with expertise in the history of libraries. Then we spent two weeks reading about the advent of the public library movement and some of the social dilemmas it stirred up. One such dilemma, about appropriate reading for young women, was illustrated with a brief examination of sentimental novels—a class of reading matter that did not pass muster in many public libraries even though it was wildly popular.

This background on public libraries set us up to investigate the Peabody itself in more detail over the course of the next two weeks. We ventured into the Peabody archives to learn how the library fit into the larger social mission of the Institute; this session was led by the Peabody Institute archivist and the head of our special collections department. We read about the Peabody's early collection policies. And we explored the building, to understand how the Peabody's architecture brought "new" technology to a socially progressive vision that was, paradoxically, grounded in the past. That is, both the building and the collection were oriented towards the cultural legacies that the founders wanted to pass on.

During this examination of the Peabody, students were encouraged to start thinking about their final projects—the task that took up the remaining five weeks of the semester. These last classes were largely devoted to project research, writing, peer review and individual conferences with me and with another curator, a specialist in the early modern pe-

riod, who advised them on pre-1800 items in their collections. For our last meeting, students gave short presentations on their exhibit projects.

### **ASSIGNMENTS: THREE COMPLEMENTARY PIECES**

The big unknown in the course design was the student-curated exhibit. Would we collectively create one exhibit, or would students make their own? Would the exhibit actually be installed by semester's end, or would students simply prepare the materials for it? How would the digital and physical versions of the exhibit relate? Weighing these options in conversation with the head of the Program in Museums and Society, I realized I would have to let students design their own final projects—collaboration on such a labor-intensive project requiring on-site research would be impossible in terms of scheduling. I also figured that a variety of topics would do a better job of "advertising" the Peabody to exhibit viewers. This decision led to the next: if students were going to build individual exhibits from scratch, there was no way we could also have the exhibit installed by the end of the semester. So students would create portfolios of exhibit materials in the spring, which I would then steer into readiness for display in the fall. I would make selections from their collections for the physical exhibit, and digitize images of their entire collections for a new exhibit platform that colleagues in the library were starting to put into place.

With these basic parameters in mind, I developed guidelines for the exhibit project and two complementary assignments. Given that the exhibit would require "practical" writing for a non-academic audience, I wanted one assignment to exercise academic writing skills. And I also wanted one assignment to be somewhat creative and personal—something that would help students approach the exhibit project with ingenuity and an individualized sense of "reading culture."

The assignment that addressed this last aim was a commonplace book—a reading diary. Stu-

dents would record each week a selection of passages from the assigned reading and add their own commentary. Since the keeping of commonplace books was an established practice in the nineteenth century, this exercise would help them understand historical reading practices and see their own reading practices in historical context. Of course, it was also intended to encourage students to do the reading and ask questions—particularly important tasks since our weekly meetings had to accommodate time for looking at books as well as discussion. As often happens with journal assignments, students did not document their command of the reading as much as I would have liked, but the ways they used the assignment to explore their own ideas were closer to the original function of commonplace books than I had anticipated. In keeping with our focus on books as material objects, I also asked them to consider carefully the forms of their books. One student wrote hers as a blog; two others chose to handwrite their entries to get the feeling for “old-fashioned” composition.<sup>4</sup> I collected their commonplace books twice during the semester and gave my feedback in letters, another kind of everyday writing practice in the period under study.

The grading criteria for the commonplace books were relatively relaxed; accordingly, I wanted the more academic assignment—with higher stakes in terms of grading—to be somewhat familiar while also targeting the largely unfamiliar course topics. The “Poe in periodicals” paper, due at mid-term, drew on student experience with the essay genre but also asked them to think about literary “content” in new ways. Students chose one of four magazine issues edited by Edgar Allan Poe, with multiple contributions by Poe.<sup>5</sup> They then read the print and electronic versions of their selected issue; the print versions were available to them in the main campus RBMS reading room for several weeks before the due date, and the electronic versions were accessible through ProQuest’s *American Periodical Series*

*Online*. After reading the magazines in these different forms and locations, students had to write an argument-driven essay comparing the two versions by, first, identifying important differences, especially in the pieces by Poe; then describing how those differences changed their experience of reading; and, finally, discussing the implications for contemporary libraries of these different textual states and readerly practices.

The final assignment—the exhibit project—switched the emphasis from the students’ own experiences reading historical materials to the reading experiences of nineteenth-century library patrons themselves. Each student created a book collection from the Peabody’s holdings focused on a topic that would have been meaningful to the Peabody’s readers in the first decades of its existence. Students then interpreted their collections through a set of materials, turned in and revised on a staggered schedule, and gathered together into a final portfolio.

First, students had to write a proposal outlining a topic and the historical grounds for the collection. Then they had to find visually appealing and intellectually representative books within the range of this topic; this involved some review of catalog search techniques plus several chaperoned practice sessions paging books from the closed stacks. In addition to the proposal, the portfolio elements included 1) a “finding aid”—a survey of the collection and a brief description of its historical context; 2) an exhibit brochure, which translated the finding aid research into a form that would appeal to a public audience; and 3) labels for each book in the collection of 12 to 20 items. Using actual finding aids and exhibit materials as models, we discussed the writing conventions governing each portfolio element and techniques that would make their collections—the result of their own recently acquired expertise—interesting to non-specialists. Through peer review, conferences and revision, we also looked at titling, item order and connections between items.

### IN THE END: SWEET SUCCESS (AND SOME SWEAT)

The final student collections were, in a word, fantastic. Each of the students interpreted the Peabody in light of her own interests and background knowledge—and each touched on an exemplary aspect of the Peabody’s collection. One student who fell in love with the children’s books we examined early in the semester created “Once Upon a Time: Fairy Tales in the George Peabody Library.” Her collection raised questions about the Peabody’s definition of its own readership: children were not allowed in the library, so why so many fairy tale books? Her research pointed to the deep connections between the Peabody and Hopkins—where the emerging discipline of anthropology may have encouraged Peabody librarians to buy books about international folklore. A philosophy major created “The Stewardship of a Republic: Ancient Rome and Baltimore.” Noting that “ancient Rome occupied a prominent place” in the American imagination in the nineteenth century, she assembled books that showed how the Peabody fed this interest both with specialized works for researchers and more general books for students and lay readers, and speculated that this interest developed because “the lessons of history were especially relevant to nineteenth-century Americans, looking for guidance for their unique situation in the world—a growing, independent power, in the hands of a broad populace.” A major in the Writing Seminars focused on a related phenomenon, the American interest in the nature of their new nation, in “Go West, O Pioneers! America’s Obsession with the Wilderness.” She illustrated what she was learning in another English class about American nature writing with books from the Peabody that demonstrated the many facets of this fixation: explorers’ accounts of the riches of the West, “souvenir” books celebrating the American landscape, travel guides for adventurous tourists and stories about “cowboys and Indians”

aimed at youthful readers. My one science major surprised us all by focusing not on science, but religion. For “Under One Roof: Religious Books in the George Peabody Library,” she looked at the changing definitions of and relationships between faiths from the seventeenth century through the early twentieth century, in holy books, theological tomes and texts for practitioners—not just the Christian and Jewish books that would have been used most often by local readers in this period, but books pertinent to Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. The Peabody’s ecumenical acquisition policies and multiple communities of readers, both scholarly and popular, led to a collection that, unintentionally, set an “interfaith” precedent long before there was such a thing as an “interfaith center.”

Launching any new class takes time, and it is especially true of a course that incorporates experimental methods and assignments! This course took several months to prepare. During the semester, I also spent many hours pulling representative books and working one-on-one with students. After the semester was over, I continued the work by shepherding their wonderful collections into forms tailored to the actual exhibits. Planning around a digital exhibit platform that was simultaneously under development put an additional variable into the equation; ultimately, I decided to photograph many of the students’ collections so that the digital exhibit will be ready to mount as soon as the platform is established.

Now that the groundwork has been laid, I am eager to teach the course again. I will do a few things differently next time: find a way to include a nineteenth-century “domestic” novel in the reading; keep the student collections smaller. And, if they are available, I will add to the roster of guest speakers by inviting my wonderful former students to tell us what they know. I want to thank them especially for their hard work, imagination and enthusiasm for learning “by the book.”<sup>6</sup>

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## APPENDIX 3.1

### Reading Culture in the Nineteenth-Century Library

Museums & Society / English 389.355  
 Spring 2010  
 Peabody Library, Thursdays 2-4:20

Dr. Gabrielle Dean, gnodean@jhu.edu  
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Reading takes place within a complex cultural context that requires literacy, the production and distribution of textual materials, and specific ideas about time and space. But because it is part of the everyday fabric of life, the culture of reading is hard to identify and define. In this course, we will recover one small piece of the historical culture of reading by investigating the relationship between reading and libraries in nineteenth-century America, with a focus on the George Peabody Library.

In the nineteenth century, the culture of reading was shaped by numerous social patterns. In order to account for this variety, our inquiries will draw from multiple subject areas, including American literary history, the history of the material book and the history of libraries. This interdisciplinary approach will provide insight into a crucial but often obscure feature of nineteenth-century American life.

In addition, this class will offer you first-hand experience doing research with rare books and manuscripts. Our examination of reading culture in the nineteenth-century library will culminate in a double exhibit: a *digital* exhibit of small collections that you curate individually, and a *physical* exhibit of selections from your collections to be displayed at the Eisenhower Library in fall 2010. Students will need therefore to balance traditional academic approaches with curatorial goals. Suggested prerequisites include a background or strong interest in nineteenth-century U.S. literature and/or history; research and writing skills; and an ability and willingness to work as a group.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Attendance and participation:** Attendance is mandatory because this is a discussion- and project-oriented class. If you need to miss class due to illness or some other unavoidable crisis, please let me know as soon as possible. If you are unable to reach me, contact a classmate. You are responsible for informing yourself of missed material and assignments, and for handing in work on time.

Participation is vital to your success in this course. We will operate as a seminar, so you are expected to add your voice to our conversations. Please come to class ready to think, question, brainstorm, discuss, investigate, and work cooperatively as part of a team.

**Readings:** Readings are accessible online (use link), via e-reserve (**E**), or will be circulated in class (**C**). Background readings, on e-reserve or regular reserve (**R**), are not required; I have provided them to help you pursue topics that you might find interesting or useful, especially for your final project. You should complete the week's readings before class so that you will be able to participate.

Please note that, as the semester progresses, our learning modality will shift from reading-intensive to project-based methods. In the last few weeks of the course, you will be creating your own reading lists.

**Writing assignments:** The three writing assignments for the course ask you to engage a range of styles, from the informal to the academic to the practical.

1. **Commonplace book.** A commonplace book is a collection of passages that a writer copies from other texts, adding commentary. Yours may take any form that you wish—a longhand journal, a set of loose sheets, a blog—and may be organized and embellished in any way you like. It should contain passages that you select from our readings, along with your own interpretations of and responses to those passages. In addition, I will give you four or five brief writing assignments to include in your commonplace book. More details to come. Due 2/25, 4/8 and 5/13.
2. **Magazine analysis.** You will choose an issue of a magazine edited by Edgar Allan Poe from the 1830s, read the whole issue, then write a 5-page argument-driven essay about it, addressing in part the different experiences of reading in print and online. More details to come. Due 3/12.
3. **Exhibit portfolio.** Your final project will consist of a portfolio of materials related to a small collection of rare books that you identify, research and prepare for exhibition. The portfolio includes an exhibit proposal, a finding aid for your collection, an exhibit brochure with a bibliography, and labels for the objects. More details to come. Due 5/13.

## EVALUATION

### **Participation 20%**

Regular attendance is the foundation of participation. Your participation grade will also be based on the amount of attention and active engagement you demonstrate in class, by asking questions, volunteering your ideas, discussing your classmates' ideas, and responding to my inquiries. If you are curious about your level of participation or would like guidance about how to improve, please ask me.

### **Commonplace book 20%**

Your commonplace book should contain thorough, thoughtful responses to the brief assignments; a

selection of passages that shows the breadth of your reading and your understanding of course topics; commentary that raises and pursues challenging questions; creativity and care in the form and organization of the commonplace book; and evidence of effort. You do not need to use formal, academic prose in your commonplace book, but you should pay attention to style and mechanics.

### **Poe in Periodicals essay 20%**

Your essay should make a clear and interesting argument, backing it up with persuasive evidence. Your essay's structure should help your reader follow your ideas, in both the overall organization of the essay and at the level of paragraphs and sentences. Style and mechanics count. Preliminary writing assignments will also affect your final grade.

### **Exhibit portfolio 40%**

Your proposal, finding aid, brochure and labels will be graded for the depth and accuracy of your research, your creative exploration of materials, and the quality of your writing, particularly how well you take care of your audience's needs. Only the final version of the portfolio will be graded, but I will take into account the attention you give to revision, as well as the feedback you provide to your peers.

You must complete all three of the course writing assignments to pass the class. **There are no examinations for this class.**

## CLASS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**Deadlines:** Unless otherwise noted, assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Late assignments will be accepted, but penalized.

**Ethics:** Collaboration with classmates is encouraged in this class, especially for the final project; we will discuss how to share work fairly and how to define your own contributions to a group endeavor. Regardless of whether you work on your own or with others, all work you do for this class should reflect your own efforts; any assistance you receive

or sources you use need to be acknowledged. Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to plagiarism, forgery, unauthorized collaboration, unfair competition, improper use of the Internet, reuse of assignments, alteration of graded assignments, and lying. If you have questions about this matter as it relates to this course, please consult with me. For general information on such topics as reporting academic misconduct and ethics procedures in the case of suspected misconduct, see “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” at <http://www.jhu.edu/~advising/ethics.html> and the Ethics Board website, <http://ethics.jhu.edu>.

**Conduct and esprit de corps:** Please show your respect for your classmates and instructor by silencing cell phones, MP3 players, etc. in class and by refraining from non-class related internet activity during class.

Many of us will be dependent on the JHU shuttle for transportation to Mt. Vernon, which may cause delays. Please let me know if you are going to be late for this or another reason. See the JHU shuttle page at [http://www.parking.jhu.edu/shuttles\\_jhmi\\_homewood.html](http://www.parking.jhu.edu/shuttles_jhmi_homewood.html) for more information.

Because we meet in the Peabody Library and will spend most class periods examining rare materials, we cannot have food or drinks in the classroom.

Please feel free to talk with me about your questions and ideas; drop by my Eisenhower office any time on Mondays, Tuesdays or Fridays, visit me at the Peabody on Wednesdays or Thursdays, or make an appointment via email. I’ve provided my cell number above but please use it only for last-minute notifications about a tardiness or absence.

I look forward to an interesting, productive and fun semester. Welcome!

### ***Week 1, January 28. Introductions.***

Introduction to the course. Overview of assignments and introduction to commonplace book assignment. Pre-modern reading culture and the “Gutenberg revolution.”

### ***Background***

Lotte Hellinga, “The Gutenberg Revolution,” from *A Companion to the History of the Book*, 207-219. **E**

### ***In class***

Manuscript pages, bibles, books of hours, chain books. Printer’s type, engraving plates. Introduce commonplace book assignment.

## **PART 1: READING CULTURE**

### ***Week 2, February 4. The history of reading.***

Reading as a historical phenomenon. Also: introduction to Poe in Periodicals assignment.

### ***Reading***

John Feather, “The British Book Market 1600-1800,” from *A Companion to the History of the Book*, 232-246. **E**

Stephen Colclough, “Readers: Books and Biography,” from *A Companion to the History of the Book*, 50-62. **E**

Steven Roger Fischer, “The ‘Universal Conscience,’” from *A History of Reading*, 253-305, focus on 255-262 and 266-292. **E**

### ***In class***

Bibles, almanacs, chapbooks, and other examples of “intensive” vs “extensive” reading.

### ***Week 3, February 11. Literacy and the invention of childhood.***

Literacy education and children’s reading.

### ***Reading***

Fred Lerner, “The Rising Generation,” from *The Story of Libraries: From the Invention of Writing to the Computer Age*, 154-167. **E**

A.-M. Chartier, “The Teaching of Literacy Skills in Western Europe: An Historical Perspective,” from *The Cambridge Handbook of Literacy*, 451-467, focus on 455-464. **E**

Go to Early English Books Online (EEBO) at



<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> and do a subject search for “readers” (no quotation marks). You should get a few dozen results. Choose 3 to read. Be sure to note bibliographic information so that we can find them again.

Begin reading an issue of one of the periodicals Poe wrote for and edited; see assignment description for information about how to access the magazine online.

### *In class*

Primers and children’s books.

### **Week 4, February 18. Rewriting reading.**

Commonplace books, gift books, periodicals and the circulation of text. Guest: Earle Havens, Curator of Early Modern Rare Books and Manuscripts.

### *Reading*

Lucia Knowles, “Commonplace Books” <http://www1.assumption.edu/users/lknowles/commonplacebook.html>

Earle Havens, “Eighteenth Century” and “Nineteenth Century,” from *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Book from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, 81-97. **E**

Go to Yale University’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library’s Digital Image Collection at <http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/digital-library/> and search for the keyword “commonplace book” (no quotation marks). You should get several pages of results. Browse and choose a few pages from a commonplace book to read. Be sure to note bibliographic information so we can find them again.

Isabelle Lehuu, “Leaflets of Memory: Giftbooks and the Economy of the Gaze,” from *Carnival on the Page: Popular Print Media in Antebellum America*, 76-101. **E**

Continue reading your issue of the Poe periodical.

### *In class*

Commonplace books, diaries and other manuscript books. Giftbooks, annuals and prize books.

## **PART 2: LIBRARIES FOR THE PEOPLE**

### **Week 5, February 25. Mechanics’ libraries, subscription libraries, circulating libraries.**

Quick summary of library history through the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Early “public” libraries. Guest: Elliott Shore, Director of Libraries and Professor of History, Bryn Mawr College.

### *Reading*

Wayne A. Wiegand, “Libraries and the Invention of Information,” from *A Companion to the History of the Book*, 531-543. **E**

Joseph Lawrence Yeatman, “Literary Culture and the Role of Libraries in Democratic America: Baltimore, 1815-1840,” *The Journal of Library History* 20.4 (Fall 1985): 345-367. **E**

Elizabeth McHenry, “An Association of Kindred Spirits’: Black Readers and Their Reading Rooms,” from *Institutions of Reading: The Social Life of Libraries in the United States*, 99-118. **E**

### *Background*

James Green, “Subscription Libraries and Commercial Circulating Libraries in Colonial Philadelphia and New York” from *Institutions of Reading: The Social Life of Libraries in the United States* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007): 53-71. **R**

### *In class*

Pictures and plans of libraries. Handbooks, manuals, periodicals, novels.

**Commonplace book part 1 due, in class, 2 pm.** Please see assignment description for information about what this set of writings needs to include.

### **Week 6, March 4. The public library movement.**

The origins of the public library and nineteenth-century Anglo-American ideas about social welfare.

### Reading

Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston, *Upon the Objects to be Attained by the Establishment of a Public Library*, [http://www.mcmillanlibrary.org/history/report\\_of\\_trustees.html](http://www.mcmillanlibrary.org/history/report_of_trustees.html)  
 Paul Sturges, "The Public Library and Reading by the Masses: Historical Perspectives on the USA and Britain 1850-1900," <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla60/60-stup.htm>

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851), chapters I and II. Please also read one other article in the electronic version of *The National Era* for June 5, 1851. VOL. V, NO. 23, which you can reach via the library catalog. <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=220224221&sid=1&Fmt=10&clientId=5241&RQT=309&VName=HNP>

Susan Warner, *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), chapter 1. <http://ufdcweb1.uflib.ufl.edu/ufdc/?m=hd1j&i=74739>

**Dr. Donna Campbell**, *Literary Movements: Domestic or Sentimental Fiction, 1820-1865* <http://www.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/domestic.htm>

### Background

Earle Havens and Pierre-Alain Tilliette, eds., *The Extravagant Ambassador: The True Story of Alexandre Vattemare, the French Ventriloquist Who Changed the World*. At GPL.

### In class

Novel serializations and reprints.

**Week 7, March 11. Space, gender and class in the public library.**

### Reading

Excerpts from William Frederick Poole, *Remarks on Library Construction*, 1884. Read at googlebooks:

[http://books.google.com/books?id=K46UkImxzy8C&dq=remarks+on+library+construction&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=tbDIQ9QSSo&sig=LL9e2o1gpgq5KBby9OkdmnzEATnQ&hl=en&ei=7ik5S8i5BZGHIAfWypSTBw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CAoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=K46UkImxzy8C&dq=remarks+on+library+construction&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=tbDIQ9QSSo&sig=LL9e2o1gpgq5KBby9OkdmnzEATnQ&hl=en&ei=7ik5S8i5BZGHIAfWypSTBw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CAoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=&f=false) 1-13.

Excerpts from Mary Antin, *The Promised Land*, 1913. Read at googlebooks: [http://books.google.com/books?id=NhwEAAAAYAAJ&dq=mary+antin+promised+land&printsec=frontcover&source=bn&hl=en&ei=0SU5S\\_LLAYuQlAfhkJyiBw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CBkQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=library&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=NhwEAAAAYAAJ&dq=mary+antin+promised+land&printsec=frontcover&source=bn&hl=en&ei=0SU5S_LLAYuQlAfhkJyiBw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CBkQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=library&f=false) 256-259, 337-355.

Abigail A. Van Slyck, "Giving: The Reform of American Library Philanthropy," from *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920*, 1-43. E

Alexis McCrossen, "'One Cathedral More' or 'Mere Lounging Places for Bummers'? The Cultural Politics of Leisure and the Public Library in Gilded Age America," *Libraries & Culture* 41.2 (2006): 169-188. E

### Background

John Willis Clark, *The Care of Books. An Essay on the Development of Libraries and their Fittings, from the Earliest Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, 1901. On googlebooks.

Donald E. Oehlert, *Books and Blueprints: Building America's Public Libraries*, 1991. At GPL.

### In class

Field trip to Enoch Pratt? Or, last questions regarding the assignment due tomorrow?

**March 12. Poe in Periodicals essay due, 5 p.m.**

Bring your paper to Gabrielle's office in Eisenhower Library (M-level, office #9) or email it to me.

**March 18. Spring break, no class.**

**PART 3: THE PEABODY LIBRARY****Week 8, March 25. Founding history.**

The origins of the Peabody Library and its collection.

Introduction to final project.

Guests: Cynthia Requardt, Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts, and Tracey Melhuish, Peabody Archivist.

**Reading**

George Peabody's founding letter, dedication address, excerpts from the annual reports of the Peabody trustees, and early librarian correspondence. **C**

Francis T. Barrett, "A Great Catalogue, being an Appreciation of the Catalogue of the Library of the Peabody Institute, Baltimore," *Library* 1894 s1-6: 69-73. **C**

John Dorsey, *Mr. Peabody's Library: The Building, the Collection, the Neighborhood*. **C**

**To look at**

"Desiderata" books, library plans and other samples from the archives.

**Week 9, April 1. Architecture and collections.**

The Peabody Library as "cathedral" and state-of-the-art engineering. Collections within collections.

**Reading**

Charles Belfoure, "Peabody Institute 1857" and "Peabody Institute 1875" in Edmund G. Lind: *Anglo-American Architect of Baltimore and the South*. **E**

Phoebe Stanton, "The Peabody," from James D. Dilts and Catharine F. Black, eds., *Baltimore's Cast-Iron Buildings and Architectural Ironwork*. **E**

David Farris, "John Pendleton Kennedy: A Finding Aid." **C**

**Background**

Mary Ellen Hayward and Frank R. Shivers, Jr., "The Reign of the Romantics, 1829-1878," from

Hayward and Shivers, eds., *The Architecture of Baltimore: An Illustrated History*, 98-149. **E**

**In class**

Pictures of and tour of the library. Discuss possible exhibit themes. Spend time researching project.

**PART 4: BOOKS AT AN EXHIBITION: COLLECTIONS FROM THE PEABODY LIBRARY****Week 10, April 8. Project research.**

Collection tools as stages of research: catalog entry, finding aid, exhibition catalog, scholarly article.

**Reading**

Wikipedia, "Pictures at an Exhibition" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pictures\\_at\\_an\\_Exhibition#Gallery\\_of\\_Hartmann.27s\\_pictures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pictures_at_an_Exhibition#Gallery_of_Hartmann.27s_pictures)

**In class**

Listen to an orchestral arrangement of Modest Musorgsky's 1874 piano suite called "Pictures at an Exhibition" and discuss the exhibition project. Look at finding aids and library exhibit catalogs. Spend time researching materials for your finding aid.

**Commonplace book part 2 due, in class, 2 p.m.****Week 11, April 15. Individual student conferences.**

Instead of meeting as a group this week, I will meet with you individually for 20 minutes. We'll discuss your exhibit proposal and the draft of your finding aid.

**Exhibit proposal and draft of finding aid due.****Week 12, April 22. Peer exchange.****In class**

Bring three copies of your finding aid, exhibit catalog and labels to class for peer review and discussion.

**Week 13, April 29. Student collection presentations.**

*In class*

Collection presentations. Should we make this open to the public?

**Week 14, May 6. No class. Exam period. Optional conferences.**

**Week 15, May 13. Final exhibit portfolio due. Final commonplace book due.**

**ADDITIONAL TITLES OF INTEREST ON RESERVE**

Matthew Battles, *Library: An Unquiet History* (New York: Norton, 2003).

Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920* (New York: Free Press, c1979).

Fred Lerner, *The Story of Libraries: From the Invention of Writing to the Computer Age* (New York: Continuum, 1998).

Konstantinos Staikos, *The Great Libraries from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, trans. Timothy Cullen (New Castle DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2000).

John Tebbel, *Between Covers: The Rise and Transformation of Book Publishing in America* (New York: Oxford, 1987).

**NOTES**

1. George Peabody, *Letter from George Peabody, Esq. to the Trustees for the Establishment of an Institute in the City of Baltimore* (Baltimore: John D. Toy, 1857), 5.
2. Peabody, 5.
3. Please see syllabus in the appendix for details. The syllabus included here reflects the original plans for the course; the actual schedule changed when the university closed for a week in February due to record snowfalls.
4. One student even chose to use loose sheets of unlined paper so that the ultimate “book” could be detached from its chronological composition and reorganized thematically.
5. The magazines were the *Southern Literary Messenger* II.1 (December 1835), *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine* V. 3 (September 1839) and V.4 (October 1839) and *Graham’s Lady’s and Gentleman’s Magazine* XVIII.4 (April 1841).
6. I would also like to thank Elizabeth Rodini, Associate Director of the Program in Museums and Society, for her support setting up the class. Heartfelt thanks also to my guest lecturers: Paul Espinosa, Peabody Library Assistant; Earle Havens, Curator of Early Modern Rare Books and Manuscripts; Cynthia Requardt, recently retired Kurrelmeyer Curator of Special Collections; Tracey Melhuish, Project Archivist, Peabody Institute; and Elliott Shore, *Constance A. Jones Director of Libraries and Professor of History, Bryn Mawr College. This class and the ensuing exhibit could not have happened without the help of Paul Espinosa and the rest of the rare books team, especially Amy Kimball, Heidi Herr and student photographer extraordinaire Julie DePasquale, and the collaboration of our conservation department headed by Sonja Jordan-Mowery.*