

Maine Women Writers Collection
Biennial Report, 2005 – 2007
University of New England Libraries



Introduction

MWWC thrives on the investments of time and wisdom by all who support the Collection. The state of the MWWC is good. We have set and maintained a strong pace, and found a good balance among all of our activities – and we are always tinkering with that balance. Roughly, the balance is between the necessary operations of record-keeping, materials processing, and acquisition-oriented activities (the “intake”) and the “outreach”: public activities, teaching activities, lectures, and more.

These activities fuel the quantity and quality of the materials we collect and bring new opportunities for publicity. With the correct fuel mix of exciting new materials and literary and scholarly contributions, the engine runs smoothly. The following is a synopsis of the MWWC activities over the past two years since the previous report.

Public and Academic Activities

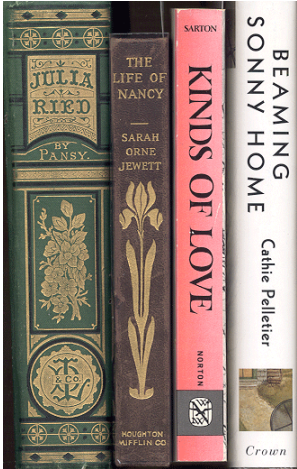
Academic Conference

Hosted by the MWWC in collaboration with the Charlotte Perkins Gilman Society, the conference was held June 15-18, 2006 with the theme “Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Then & Now.” This event also constituted the Fourth International Conference on Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Jennifer Tuttle and Carol Kessler are now in the process of editing a forthcoming volume of essays from the conference.

The next academic conference will be held in 2009 and will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the MWWC (1959). This conference will focus on past conference themes and speakers and future directions in scholarship.

MWWC Documentary

The 50th anniversary of the MWWC is the perfect goal for the completion of a long contemplated MWWC documentary film. This resource will document the history of the Collection and its activities.



Charlotte Perkins Gilman
courtesy of Smith College
Special Collections

Maine Women Writers Collection Biennial Report, 2005-2007
University of New England Libraries

We look forward to the assistance of many in perfecting a professional film that will serve the Collection for the present and future. Some film footage already exists, most precious a filmed conversation with the Parker sisters, Louise, Wilma, and Eleanor, about their experiences at Westbrook College and the MWWC. That will be combined with other film clips of events and still shots of collection material and, we anticipate, a fine script.

A Gathering of Writers

Four times a year, the MWWC hosts a series of creative writing workshops inspired by the heritage of Maine Women Writers. Directed by David Kuchta, Ph.D., this is our most successful and popular program to date. The Altrusa Club, a Portland based women's organization of professional women, has arranged a scholarship program for Portland high school students to attend the creative writing program.



Sandra M. Gilbert, Ph.D.

Lectures and special events

- Sandra M. Gilbert, "Modern Death, Millennial Mourning: The Challenge of Twentieth-Century Grief" (April 2, 2007; co-sponsored with the Department of English and the Women's Studies Program)
- "Ugly Ducklings," a documentary of a play by the same name by Carolyn Gage treating the problem of bullying of gay and lesbian kids (2006)
- "I Make Books," screening and discussion of the UNE-created film of Maine book artist Martha Hall for the UNE Core Connections Program at the University Campus (2006)
- Dava Sobel on her books *The Planets*, *Galileo's Daughter*, and *Longitude* (April, 2006)
- Susan Davis on Chansonetta Stanley Emmons (June, 2006)
- Kate Kennedy, "book launch" for *More than Petticoats: Remarkable Maine Women* (October, 2005)
- Dedication celebrating the placement of Cathie Pelletier's papers in the MWWC (September, 2005)
- Barbara White, Ph.D. on her book *The Beecher Sisters* (June, 2005)
- Lenora Blouin at the Portland Public Library on "Meeting May Sarton's Favorite Poets" (May, 2005)



Dava Sobel



Stained glass wreath
by Sarah Wyman Whitman

Maine Women Writers Collection Biennial Report, 2005-2007 University of New England Libraries

- Collaboration: "Handfuls of Lilies: The Art of Sarah Whitman," Boston Public Library Rare Book Room, 2004. An exhibit of books and other objects by the Boston artist Sarah Wyman Whitman. MWWC loaned our treasured Sarah Wyman Whitman stained glass wreath.

Perdita Huston Purple Starfish Award Program

In the spirit of Maine author and activist, Perdita Huston, whose voluminous collection MWWC holds, the Perdita Huston Purple Starfish Award is given annually to "an emerging young (under 30) Maine woman leader who inspires others with her transforming vision and action to create a vibrant, culturally pluralistic society, embracing equal rights and a healthful environment for all. The purpose of the award is to validate the vision embodied in the recipient's work, celebrate her emerging leadership, develop her skills—especially in empowering others, and make her life and work more broadly visible." The 2006 recipient was Portland's Yirgalem Madie; the 2007 recipient is Anais Tomezsko of Milbridge, Maine.



Perdita Huston

Society for the Study of American Women Writers Conference

Cally Gurley and Jennifer Tuttle brought the MWWC to the scholarly community, staffing a table display of MWWC promotional materials, including remote computer access to the Collection website. Attendees at this conference represent "ground zero" for the study of American women writers. (Philadelphia, PA, November 8-11, 2006)

Stanley Museum – MWWC Chansonetta Stanley Emmons (1858-1937) Collaboration

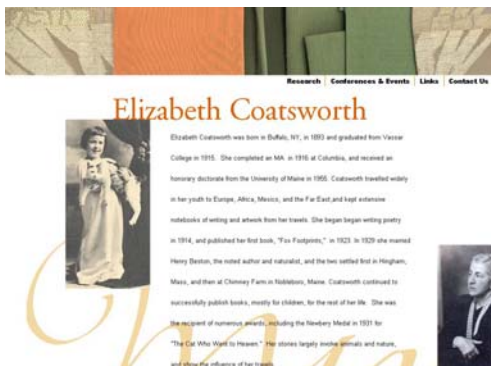
In 2006 the MWWC received a major, five-year loan of the Chansonetta Stanley Emmons photograph collection from the Stanley Museum in Kingfield, Maine. The purpose of this loan and collaboration is not only to provide significant materials for research but to facilitate the discovery of this near forgotten yet most important Maine woman.

MWWC Website redesign

The MWWC Website is the Collection's most important outreach tool. Our redesign program has chosen page colors, fonts, and graphics that lead seamlessly to two goals: the clear and readable transmission



Maine Women Writers Collection Biennial Report, 2005-2007 University of New England Libraries



of information content and the integration of illustrations with the content. The specialized integrated content of the new MWWC page design carefully blends directional and procedural information with links to the “Finding Aid” or the core of our information content, which then expands into individual web pages (linked from the Finding Aid listing) which highlight MWWC’s most significant authors. These pages are indexed by major search engines such as Google, bringing frequent inquiries to us that we would not otherwise receive.

NEASC Re-Accreditation

The MWWC hosted the opening reception welcoming the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) representatives during their re-accreditation visit to UNE on March 4, 2007. For this event, we created a display highlighting the Collection’s contributions to the research of UNE undergraduates and advanced scholars (attached).

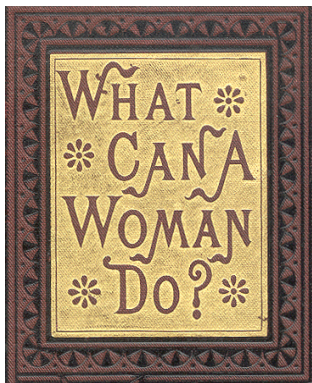
President Ripich’s Inauguration Reception

President Danielle Ripich invited MWWC to host her inauguration reception in June of 2006. Approximately 150 guests attended!

Research and Teaching Activities

Accessibility

Accessibility of Collection materials is crucial for efficient research: a primary function of the Curator and technical services librarians is to enhance accessibility to the materials through the library online catalog and manuscript listings, which are available both on the MWWC website and in paper form in the Collection. The listings correspond exactly with the sequential arrangement of the manuscript materials for efficient retrieval. The work of processing new collections is ongoing, as new collections are processed as units or interfiled with existing ones. The Curator fulfills many preliminary research requests via email, telephone, and fax, and through the mail; researchers with in-depth research needs work together with the Curator to plan efficient research strategies for a fruitful visit.



Maine Women Writers Collection Biennial Report, 2005-2007
University of New England Libraries

MWWC in undergraduate classes

Several instructors have used MWWC materials in their undergraduate courses. For some of these courses, the curator has visited to make a presentation.

English 222 – Old Age in Literature (Prof. Cathrine Frank), 2007

English 310 – Writing and Women's Health (Prof. Jennifer Tuttle), 2007

History 339 – Best Sellers and the Big Bad City (Prof. Elizabeth De Wolfe), 2006

Women's Studies 200 – Introduction to Women's Studies (Prof. Jennifer Tuttle), 2006

Research Support Grant Program

This program is designed to provide modest support to individuals pursuing research that requires or would benefit from access to our holdings. Grant recipients do primary research in the Collection facility, submit a brief report of that research, and provide a copy of all resulting publications to the MWWC.

The following is a list of grant recipients:

2006–7

Karen A. Weyler, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Scholarly edition of Sally Sayward Barrell Keating Wood's *Dorval*

Jennifer Putzi, The College of William and Mary

"Female Genius in the Correspondence of Elizabeth Stoddard and Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat"

2005–6

Rita Bode, Trent University

"Harriet Prescott Spofford, Writer and Friend"

Kelly L. Lankford, Grand Valley State University

"Josephine Peary: Beyond the North Pole"

2004–5

Janet Galligani Casey, Skidmore College

"Gladys Hasty Carroll and the Popularization of Rurality"

Ann M. Ingram, Davidson College

"The Culture of Flowers in Nineteenth Century America"

2003–4

Mary Chapman, University of British Columbia

"'Treacherous Texts': American Suffrage Literature, 1848-1945"



Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat
from the Collection

Maine Women Writers Collection Biennial Report, 2005-2007
University of New England Libraries

Denise M. Kohn, Greensboro College

Scholarly edition of *Christine: or The Trials and Triumphs of Woman*,
by Laura Curtis Bullard

2002-3

Kathrine C. Aydelott, University of Connecticut

"Maine Stream: A Bibliographic Study of the Critical Reception of
Sarah Orne Jewett"

Carrie J. Cole, University of Maryland

"The 'Social' Work of Women: Kate Douglas Wiggin and Women's
Charitable Speaking Engagements, 1895-1925"

Carolyn Gage, Playwright and Independent Scholar

"Lizzie Borden and Sarah Orne Jewett Play"

Susan D. Franzosa, University of New Hampshire

"Grey Days and Gold: A Biography of Kate Douglas Wiggin"

2001-2

Patricia Pierce Erikson, Salt Institute for Documentary Studies

"Women Authoring Space in the 'Public Sphere' of Discovery"

Rose Marasco, University of Southern Maine

"Margaret Jane Mussey Sweat 1823-1908" (photograph exhibition)



Kate Douglas Wiggin
with children

General Researchers

MWWC continues to host researchers at a steady pace over a long period of time and to attract inquiries and visits from the general and academic public. These requests inform us about the depths of the Collection, and show us how well or problematically the Collection is organized for access.

Student internship

During the spring semester of 2006, English major Brady Potter conducted an internship in the MWWC to fulfill her capstone requirement for the Minor in Women's Studies. It resulted in the project entitled: *Women Nature Writers in Maine: An Analytical Bibliography for the Maine Women Writers Collection*.

Healy Chair roles and activities

The three central charges of the Dorothy M. Healy Chair are to promote, develop, and encourage use of the MWWC; she is also expected to conduct scholarly research in the Collection. All of these

duties overlap, but below are some highlights of her work in each area:

Promotion:

- Directing the MWWC Academic Conference.
- Helping to organize and facilitate MWWC lectures and events.
- Serving as the “public face” of the Collection through introducing MWWC-sponsored events.

Development:

- Working closely with the Curator to plan, negotiate, and facilitate the MWWC’s new acquisitions.

Encouraging Use:

- Administering the Research Support Grant Program and the Chansonetta Stanley Emmons Research Grant Program.
- Attracting researchers by regularly announcing new acquisitions and publicizing Collection programs in scholarly newsletters and electronic listserves.
- Helping to supervise any student interns who work in the MWWC.
- Incorporating the Collection into the UNE curriculum (when possible) and working with other UNE faculty to facilitate their doing the same.

Scholarly Research:

Professor Tuttle is currently co-editing a book of essays from the most recent MWWC Academic Conference; she is also planning to edit a reprinted edition of Hortense Gardner Gregg’s *Camping for Girls*. When she returns from sabbatical, she intends to co-edit a reprint of *Ethel’s Love Life* with Jennifer Putzi. She also has recently been appointed a co-editor of *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*.

We are pleased to report that Professor Tuttle has been granted tenure and promotion to Associate Professor and will be taking a sabbatical during the academic year of 2007–8. In her absence, Professor Carol Farley Kessler will be serving as the Acting Healy Chair with a reduced list of duties.



From *Camping for Girls*
by Hortense Gardner Gregg

Curator roles and activities

The focus of the curator is to maximize the safe exposure of Collection materials and to promote their study. The overview of the work of the curator is to produce a map – if you will – of the Maine, New England, and American literary culture as it relates to women of the 19th, 20th, and later centuries through papers, photographs, artwork, artifacts, and material culture. The contents of dressing tables, button and shell collections, and artwork illuminate the literary material. The MWWC is truly a cultural resource that is an integral part of the cultural landscape in Maine, New England, and beyond.

Administratively, all purchases are recorded, whether book, manuscript, or equipment; significant book purchases are documented in the acquisitions records of the library catalog program as well as accessible to the world on the Internet via their catalog records. Loans in and out are documented on loan forms; manuscript materials cataloged on the MWWC database program, ReDiscovery, then that data exported to the UNE-MWWC website.

The Curator's activities include attendance and presentation at conferences and antiquarian book fairs, maintenance of relationships with book and manuscript dealers, and searching and being receptive to offers of new manuscript and book collections from individuals.

Acquisitions:

These have been two years of gifts: the Collection has continued to acquire unique manuscript material, and gifts have made up more than half the MWWC manuscript acquisitions. Here are some of the gifts, purchases and "in-house" collections awaiting processing.

- The Chansonetta Stanley Emmons photograph collection
- Linda Tatelbaum Collection – Maine writer and teacher
- Elisabeth Ogilvie Collection – celebrated Maine novelist
- Nancy Cushman Dibner Collection of materials on the Maine women's movement and the Maine branch of the N.O.W.
- Marie Donahue Collection – author and Jewett scholar
- Records of the Brush and Thimble Club – Kennebunk
- A. Carman Clark Collection – columnist, novelist, diarist, teacher

Maine Women Writers Collection Biennial Report, 2005-2007
University of New England Libraries

- Kate Flora Collection – fiction writer and A. Carman Clark’s daughter
- Celia Thaxter letters – extremely rare
- WCC Art Gallery Collection – our histories intertwine
- MWWC administrative material

Conservation

The Collection has “outsourced” its book conservation program, which is consistent, affordable, and professionally executed. Marnie Cobbs, Rare Book Conservator of New Hampshire, now works from our “book hospital” a few books at a time to restore irreplaceable books. About 20% of the damaged books have been repaired. Manuscript conservation is done as a part of the manuscript handling process unless there is damage beyond our abilities and then those items go out to Nina Rayer, Portland paper conservationist.

Facility Improvements

- The most notable facility improvement is just outside: the MWWC patio. We hope this Writers Garden, in memory of Louise Parker James, Katherine Woodman, and Constance Hunting, three loyal and inspiring friends who were lost to us in the last year, will welcome all to sit in tranquility.
- In 2006, after research and consultation with the Security Department, the Information Technology Department, the Telecommunications Department, and others, MWWC installed a state of the art Security System; the system is monitored by the staff of Cunningham Security, which has expertly coached us through the use and maintenance of the system.
- In 2006 the Manuscript Room was reconfigured with mechanically moveable compact shelving. After the installation of one final range in June, the storage capacity will have been expanded by 67%. We hope to utilize this strategy in the future for creating additional storage capacity in the processing area.

Volunteer work and internships

MWWC student intern, English major Jamie Thompson, spent this semester learning the ropes of a special collection. She returns this summer to continue her work.



Harriet Prescott Spofford
from Picture History

Volunteer work by Carol Farley Kessler, PhD: Dr. Kessler, a native of Portland, is Professor Emerita of English, American Studies, and Women's Studies at Pennsylvania State University's Delaware County Campus. We are extremely fortunate that she returned to Portland upon retirement and is enthusiastic about contributing her time, expertise, and insight to the Collection. A member of the MWWC Advisory Committee, Dr. Kessler has written substantial background/biographical notes and scope & content notes on Fanny Fern, Harriet Prescott Spofford, and Perdita Huston. She intends to continue this valuable work for the Collection in the future. She is an excellent scholarly advisor, and actively participates in Collection activities, including serving on the planning committee for the 2006 academic conference.

In conclusion, the staff of the Collection strives for excellence and the opportunity to serve its patrons — the primary focus of the work. The Collection is on a solid, visible, logical track as the UNE administration so beautifully fulfills its mandate to steward the Healy Endowment.

Among goals for the next two years are:

- To review and “clean up” the collections management database
- To process all the new material received and some longstanding backlog
- To partner with other literary venues for the best possible audiences for speakers