"He loved the Sea": David Syrett, His Historical Contributions, and His Books

As noted in the last issue of PageDown, in April 2006 Professor of History Elena Frangakis-Syrett donated to the library a large collection of books and journals belonging to her late husband, Queens College Distinguished Professor of History David Syrett. The collection, which is now catalogued, consists of 529 titles and 325 issues of four major journals. Each of these has an attractive color bookplate featuring the 1798 Battle of the Nile, in which the British forces defeated the French under Napoleon. This article is the result of two interviews with Prof. Frangakis-Syrett.

Born to an old New England family, Professor David Syrett “loved the sea, knew all the sailors’ knots, and had good navigational abilities.” In a lifetime of research, writing, and teaching, his 12 published monographs (two more in press) and 90 journal articles marked him as a world-renowned authority on naval and maritime history. Among his peers, he was “considered the most active author in naval history of his generation,” proficient in Anglo-American naval history of the 18th and 20th centuries. “His knowledge of two distinct periods was considered one of his main strengths, lending greater authority to his writings.”

Professor Frangakis-Syrett remarks that her husband was well aware that “strategy through the effective use of water and finances was a fundamental part in the formation of the British Empire in the 18th century and winning the Second World War in the 20th century.” That is, a maritime power must turn the oceans to its advantage and at the same time utilize new technology, efficient administration, and effective intelligence.

In writing history, historians must be aware of as many factors as possible that determined decisions by such leaders as Winston Churchill. In his work on intelligence, David Syrett “contributed to changing the dynamics of how we do research and view the past.” “His ability to understand the 18th and 20th centuries enabled him to evaluate issues such as intelligence and how it evolved through time from human to technological intelligence.”

Perhaps the “jewel in

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Richard Wall
Drama Bibliographer

**ALLEN COLLECTION LIBRARY DEBUTS AT ROSENTHAL LIBRARY**

The library is pleased and honored to announce the gift from the Drama, Theatre & Dance Department and Harriet Allen, Professor Allen’s widow, of the Ralph G. Allen Memorial Collection, some 1,400 books that greatly enhance our holdings in drama and theatre.

Professor Allen, a member of the Drama Department from 1982 to 1999, explored in his professional career a unique combination of interests in classical European theatre, from which he produced many translations and adaptations, and American popular entertainment, especially the low comedy of 20th-century burlesque. One might say he did much “primary research” as a young man attending burlesque performances in his native Philadelphia.

From these visits and friendships with the comics, he accumulated a large personal collection of classic sketches and jokes. These served him well when he wrote the Tony-nominated book for the hit revue, *Sugar Babies*, which opened on Broadway in 1979 and ran for three years. His continued devotion to both academia and popular entertainment is reflected in many other writings, such as the scholarly source book, *Theatre and Drama in the Making*, and the article, “At My Mother’s Knee and Other Low Joints.” Those who had the privilege of hearing him speak or lecture will recall Professor Allen as a delightful raconteur.

Works in the Allen Memorial Collection represent a wide range of materials in the disciplines of drama and theatre: biographies and autobiographies; criticism and theory; histories, period and general; plus books on the craft and technique of theatre—acting, directing, design, and management. Above all, the Allen Collection is rich in its holdings of individual plays and anthologies ranging from classical Greek and Roman to modern.

Books in the Allen Collection have been integrated into our existing holdings in drama and theatre, and each has been identified with a special bookplate. They are available for borrowing via general circulation policies. Thanks to the Drama Department and Mrs. Allen for this generous gift to Rosenthal Library.

**Irwin Stein, QC ’41**

**First student hire and great friend of the Rosenthal Library**

It is not an everyday occurrence that a long-time library supporter turns out to be part of the early history of the college library. Major Irwin Stein, with whom we have corresponded for years, emailed us in 2002 that he was the first student hired in the Paul Klapper Library. Dr. Charles Gosnell, the first chief librarian at the college, who later became New York State Librarian, hired the 16-year-old in 1937 for a job paying 50¢ an hour. Mr. Stein, who graduated from Ft. Lauderdale High School, applied to QC after his family returned to New York, hoping that President Klapper would welcome the diversity he provided as a Floridian.

Although tuition was free, he had to earn money for books and other expenses and took a job in the Klapper Library. He remembers using wooden planks on a couple of barrels as a circulation desk when school started on October 11, 1937. After working in the library for two years he found a better-paying job outside the college and continued to work between 30 and 60 hours a week. He applied for a job on *The Crown*, the student newspaper, and was elected to its business board. (see artwork)

President Klapper was able to hire outstanding scholars to the faculty, many of them refugees from Europe. One of the superb professors whom Mr. Stein remembers fondly was Banesh Hoffman, a Rhodes scholar and Einstein biographer. He encouraged Mr. Stein, who excelled in mathematics, to apply for a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford.

Although Mr. Stein did not win that scholarship, he remembers touring Oxford University as a GI at the end of WWII, and seeing Oxford’s Queens’ College Library. He proudly announced to the guide that he had worked in the Queens College Library in New York. The guide responded: “Oh, yes, and I believe there is also a Queens’ College at Cambridge University, but of course, Oxford’s is THE Queens’ College.”

Mr. Stein eventually chose social work and pursued a successful career in that field. He continues to support the library and hopes that there will be many more Queens College alums who will remember the library and participate in the helping process.

**“He Loved the Sea”**

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the collection of his books and journals are several dozen publications of the Naval Records Society in London, founded in 1894, and influential in history around the world. A few of these titles are “somewhat unique” in the United States and constitute the only copies in CUNY. Among the titles are David Syrett, *The Battle of the Atlantic and Signals Intelligence: U-Boat Tracking Papers, 1941–1947* (2002), and John B. Hatendorf, *British Naval Documents, 1204–1960* (1993). The collection is also rich in East Asian and Japanese monographs and material relating to the Pacific Theatre in World War II.

Since Professor David Syrett’s books were an “extension of him,” Queens College is indeed fortunate to have his library.

Rolf Swensen,
Professor, Bibliographer for History

**Staff Profile: Ken Rosenberg**

When it comes to trouble-shooting problems ranging from creating Microsoft Word templates to photocopy enlargement, Ken Rosenberg, one of our dedicated and longtime college office assistants, is Rosenthal Library’s very own walking and talking help manual.

“Ask Ken” is a refrain that is constantly heard at our Reference Desk, as well as throughout the library, since Ken usually knows the answer to that pesky question that might take too long to look up on a help screen.

How does Ken know the answers to so many questions? “I spend a lot of time at the Reference Desk, so I listen the first time it comes,” he says. “I find out who knows the answer, if I don’t. When I hear the answer a few times, I remember it.” If anything is wrong on the third floor, Ken is usually the first person to ask. He says he has

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Music Library News: Generosity In Abundance!

The Library is happy to report that we are the recipients of a recent cash donation, a bequeathed personal music library of a professor emeritus, and a slew of iPods. In December 2006, Aaron Copland School of Music Professor Raymond Erickson donated $5,000 to the Music Library for the reference collection. This generous gift will be used to add important reference and research tools to the Music Library’s reference section, including critical editions of music scores, reference books, and facsimiles of music manuscripts. Professor Erickson’s donation will help maintain and improve the collection so it can better serve all of our patrons.

This past fall, Professor Emeritus Sol Berkowitz passed away and bequeathed his extensive personal library to the Music Library and Aaron Copland School of Music. Berkowitz, who studied at Queens with Karol Rathaus, composed hundreds of pieces in all genres, especially orchestral and chamber works, and taught music theory, orchestration, and ear training at the School of Music for almost 50 years. He was also the co-author of *A New Approach to Sight-Singing*, the leading text of its kind since 1960.

While Professor Berkowitz will be sorely missed by friends and colleagues, his bequest to the Aaron Copland School of Music and Queens College, which includes books, scores, CDs, LPs, and his personal documents, will celebrate his life and legacy. The faculty of the School of Music and Queens College Libraries will be working to move the collection and incorporate it into the Music Library over the coming months.

The Music Library began circulating iPods as audio reserves in August 2006, following the School of Music’s donation of 21 30G iPods to the Music Library in the Spring. Each iPod contains the audio files for the four required listening exams for music students and circulate for one week. The program has been so successful that the School of Music donated 15 more 30G iPods for the listening exams in December, and five 80G iPods for the Music Library’s DVD collection. The School of Music has installed iPod docking stations in its small classrooms, which allow faculty to incorporate sound and video examples into their classes through the iPod and classroom computers.

We are grateful to our colleagues in the Music Department for enriching the Music Library.

Jennifer Oates
Head, Music Library
Bibliographer for Music

Profile

“developed a reputation” for resolving technical glitches. To be sure, librarians, students, information assistants, faculty, and interns alike ask Ken for his life-saving help and expertise. He is ubiquitous.

Ken has been with us since 1996, when he began work as a part-time student aide in the Media Center. After graduating with a major in Economics and History, he became a full-time staff member and has been on board with us for over ten years. In addition to being a font of technical expertise about computers, networked printers, and audiovisual hardware, Ken has also worked in reference, reserve, and bindery, making him a well-versed and well-rounded staff member in library services. He supervises our information assistants and support staff in our reference workroom, ensuring that daily operations run smoothly.

Now, Ken is enrolled in the Graduate School of Library & Information Studies, where his knowledge of library and information studies is enriched because of his background at Rosenthal. “I like finding things and doing research, and I had already been working here for the past five to six years,” he says in regard to furthering his education. In his Database Construction course, Ken has put theory into practice by building a database to manage various groups of donors, including the Friends of the Library. He is also indispensable to the Friends and helps them organize, publicize, load, and cart trucks of books to the semi-annual book sale.

Not only do we like asking Ken technical and operational questions (because he knows the answers), we also like his approachability, humor, and personal charm. His student aides are from all around the globe, and Ken converses with them in the foreign language phrases they have taught him. He is easygoing and extremely patient, qualities that make working with him joyful and rewarding. We are proud of Ken Rosenberg and how much he helps us with everyday business in serving the college community.

Lisa Flanzraich
Editor, PageDown

Come to our Semi-Annual Friends of the Library Book Sale

Imagine the smell of fresh-brewed coffee wafting through the air of the *Books & Bytes Café* in Rosenthal Library’s lobby! Then picture students, instructors, staff, and visitors sashaying through rows of free-standing wooden shelves of books, mining for that fascinating nugget to read on the bus, after dinner, or before bedtime. You are at the semi-annual Friends of Library book sale, where buyers browse through a feast of books with ease according to their own personal taste and interest. Sponsered, organized, and staffed by our wonderful Friends of the Library volunteers, the semi-annual book sale, which takes place every November and April, has become a venerable tradition attracting newcomers and repeat customers alike.

Lois and Janet Aflerbach, Edith Dressler, and Sheldon Aaronson, who form part of our loyal team of volunteers, are all committed to raising money for the library and finding good and new homes for donated books. Lois, who is a natural-born organizer as well as a retired QC librarian, likes to categorize the books. “It has to be organized,” she says. Countering the notion that the physical book will be soon be replaced by a digital version, Janet says that students still want to “have a book” in their hands. Edith, a retired QC Library Administrative Assistant, volunteers because she “likes the contact with students and the other volunteers.” Sheldon, a retired biology professor, likes to make money for the library. “It’s a bargain,” he says. “Where else can you go?”

Bridge Kiely, a Graduate School of Library & Information Studies student and one of our hard-working information assistants, is a recent first-time peruser. She bought gifts for friends, Bel Kaufman’s *Up the Down Staircase*, and a history book on female CEOs. “It’s affordable,” she says. I stopped there on the spur of the moment.” She tells that “she’ll keep an eye out for it” in the spring. Dan Kelman, a political science and urban studies major, looks for presidential biographies. Dan says that he is “always in the library.” He is a senior and has frequented the book sale during his academic career. “It’s a great way to find a bargain.” Professor Cindy Bell, Aaron Copland School of Music, is also a steady book sale customer. She buys biographies, books on natural history, or subjects “she doesn’t know anything about.” “I love reading,” she says, “and spending fifty cents. The book sale is addictive.”

Stay tuned for the Spring Book Sale, April 16–19, 2007 (Monday–Thursday, 9 am–5 pm) during National Library Week. For more information, contact Ken Rosenberg at 718-997-3799, or email him at kenneth.rosenberg@qc.cuny.edu.

Lisa Flanzraich
Editor, PageDown
Thanks to the good will and generosity of many artists and collectors over the years, the library’s art collection—ranging from paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs to sculpture and works in mixed media—is a key ingredient in creating Rosenthal’s ambience.

Many of the art works on display are donations accepted from artists or collectors with ties to the library and the college. Some were given in recognition of exhibitions presented by the Queens College Art Center, others by artists in appreciation of the library’s support of their work; still others express the donors’ tributes to favorite artists and regard for the cultural mission of the library and the college.

Paintings and prints by Lynn Leinwohl (MFA ‘82) and Joseph Pecsenke, a drawing by Cynthia Hawkins, photographs by Mariana Yampolsky and Eva Fuka, a mixed-media work by Gian Carlo Pagliasso of the Italian group Arte Debole (whose exhibition was curated by Professor Peter Caravetta, European Languages & Literatures) recall past Art Center exhibitions. Fuka, Yampolsky, and Leinwohl added pieces to work that was purchased for Rosenthal by the New York State Percent for Art program.

Donations inspired by Art Center exhibitions have also brought to the libraries an important series of colored lithographs, *Self-Portrait in Symbols,* by the American Surrealist Federico Castellón, given by his widow Hilda Castellón to mark an exhibition curated by Professor Emeritus Jerald R. Green, then the Art Center’s Curator of Spanish and Latin American Art. A painting by the late QC Professor Louis Finkelstein (Art) given by his widow Jane Culp, also an Art Center artist, complements an early one donated by him years before. A bronze bust of Finkelstein installed nearby is a tribute by his longtime colleague and friend, the late QC Professor Richard McDermott Miller. Years after showing her gyotaku (Japanese fish) prints in the Art Library, Esther Kirchevsky donated a pencil drawing of Aaron Copland for installation in the Music Library, in the School of Music named in Copland’s honor.

Artists’ appreciation of the library and the college has also brought us paintings and prints by the late QC Professor Herbert Aach (Art) and James Li (BA ’00), and sculpture by Frances J. Scherer and Bruce Kueffer (the bust of Aaron Copland in the Music Library). Through the generosity of an artist’s family, we have received paintings by Theresa Zezzos Fulton (Art). Other collectors contributed paintings by Dennis Ashbaugh and prints by Leo Marchutz and Adam Wurtz.

At Queens College we are proud of our friends. You can help by becoming a friend of the Library today! If you are already a friend, please share this newsletter with a friend or colleague. We thank you for your donation.

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Suzanna Simor
Coordinator of Art and Music
Library Services
Director, Art Center

EXHIBITS | EVENTS
Memorial Exhibit of Photographs by Dr. Theodore Cohen, curated by Professor Leo Hershkowitz (History) through May 31, 2007, Barham Rotunda

Friends of the Library Spring Booksale
April 16–19, 2007 National Library Week
Mon.–Thurs., 9 am–5 pm, Main Lobby

Light to Dark: Paintings and Works on Paper by Margery Edwards
April 17–July 30, 2007
Queens College Art Center, Rosenthal Library, 6th floor.

Gallery Talk by the exhibition curator, Jeanne Wilkinson
Thursday, April 19, 5–6 pm
Reception, 6–8 pm

The Urban Redtailed Hawk
Jeffrey Kollbruner, Curator, Summer 2007, Barham Rotunda

Lisa Flanzraich, Editor, with the Library Publications Committee:
Dr. Robert Shaddy, Rolf Swensen, Richard Wall (Chair)
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Photos: Nancy Bareis

We’d like to hear from our readers.

Please address your suggestions or comments about PAGEdOWN to Chief Librarian Dr. Robert Shaddy at robert.shaddy@qc.cuny.edu.

And watch for our next issue.