

Guide to the Bookplate Collections at the Grolier Club Library

Grolier Club Bookplate Collection, ca. 1896-present (11 boxes)

The Grolier Club Bookplate Collection is an “artificial collection” compiled by Club librarians from ca. 1896 to the present day. Most of the bookplates were (and are) acquired through donations from Grolier Club members, bookplate designers, and bookplate collectors. Club librarian Ruth S. Granniss actively solicited donations during her tenure (1905-1944). After her retirement, George L. McKay continued to build the collection on a more limited scale. After 1956, there was no significant activity until Charles Antin solicited donations for an exhibition of members’ bookplates in November 1976 by the Committee on Modern Fine Printing. The Grolier Club Librarian continues to add individual and small groups of bookplates to the collection as they are received from members and others. Larger collections of bookplates, when compiled by a single individual or corporate body, are cataloged by the present librarian (and some of her predecessors) in the spirit of “respect des fonds.”

Scope and Contents

The collection consists of over 4,200 bookplates, dating from ca. 1700 to the present. It also includes correspondence from 1895-1977, as well as approximately 700 signed proofs donated by notable engravers of the 20th century, including Edwin Davis French and Sidney Lawton Smith.

Organization and Arrangement

Bookplates are arranged by designer where possible, by owner, or by type. There are two series of correspondence, one representing the collecting efforts of Grolier Club librarians, the other relating to the 1976 exhibition by Charles Antin and the Grolier Club Committee on Modern Fine Printing. Wherever possible, large donations of bookplates have been kept together. Examples include the donation of proofs by the widow of E.D. French in the 1920’s, a collection of several hundred bookplates compiled by Beverly Chew and left to the club after his death in 1924, a collection of angling bookplates donated by D.B. Fearing in 1918, and a small group of bookplates donated by Mark Samuels Lasner ca. 2014. Grolier Club bookplates are included in this collection and may be found under “G” in the “Bookplates by Owner” series.

Series include “Bookplates by Designer,” “Bookplates by Owner,” “Advertisements,” “American Bookplate Society,” and “Proofs by designer.” Two small boxes of catalog cards (probably prepared by Ruth S. Granniss) accompany the collection. These provide cross-references where both owner and designer are known. Thomas Proctor bookplate added to box 11 in June 2013 after it was found framed in the club. Also see below under “Members Bookplate Exhibition.”

Montclair Art Museum Bookplate Collection (5 banker's boxes + extensive card file)

A collection of approximately 7,200 bookplates formerly owned by the Montclair Art Museum and curated for several years by Edith Anderson Wrights. The plates are neatly filed in alphabetical order, and there is an extensive card catalogue for the access points of bookplate owner, bookplate artist, and subject. The bookplate owner catalogue has further subdivisions into armorial, anonymous, and stock. The subject catalogue is further subdivided into iconography. Also accompanied by Wright's annotated list of the Smith-Corona disks which hold an electronic version of the database. These disks were reformatted to .rtf files in April 2016, and the electronic files are available to researchers upon request. Gift of the Montclair Art Museum, April 2010.

PDP Collection

Bookplates are also found among the Grolier Club's collections of Prints, Drawings and Photographs (PDP).

- Andreini Collection of Engraving, E. D. French's Bookplates (Boxes 33-34)
- Andreini Collection of Engraving, E. D. French's and Sherborn Bookplates and Misc. Sherborn and E.D. French Items 1890s-1910 (Box 35)
- Exhibition Announcements, Ruth Granniss Invitations and Cards, Bookplates, European Ephemera (Box 65)

Individual Collections

The Grolier Club has several discrete collections of bookplates donated by individuals, which have been cataloged separately. Some of these include:

- ***Spencer Van B. Nichols Bookplate collection, ca. 1700-1947. (3 boxes).***
A collection of approximately 1000 bookplates, correspondence 1921-1923 (one folder), and proofs (one envelope) collected by Spencer Van B. Nichols. Nichols was a Grolier Club member from 1919 until his death in 1947. American bookplates are particularly well represented in the collection: designers include E. D. French, W. F. Hopson, L. S. Ipsen, A. N. Macdonald, and J. W. Spencely. Bookplates are organized into various categories are arranged alphabetically. Some categories include: armorial, duplicates, foreign, France, and French (bookplate designer).
- ***Stuart B. Schimmel collection of letters and proofs relating to personal bookplate, 1960-ca. 1970. (1 box).***
A collection of letters and proofs relating to the wood-engraved bookplate designed by Reynolds Stone (1909-1979) for book collector Stuart B. Schimmel (1924-2013) in 1961. Includes proofs in a variety of sizes, colors, and papers; some signed and

dated by the artist. Letters are primarily addressed to Schimmel from Stone, and remark on the bookplate's appearance, printing method, and printing costs. Collection also includes a photograph of Stuart Schimmel in his library (1970s?) and a copy of an article from an unidentified journal entitled "Reynolds Stone," by Ruari McLean, with a photographic reproduction of Schimmel's bookplate. Also includes letter from Caroline Schimmel to Grolier Club Director, Eric Holzenberg, dated 5 Feb. 2013, explaining that Stuart Schimmel did not like Stone's proposed bookplate as much as he had hoped and disliked the red color. Gift of Caroline Schimmel, February 2-15

- ***William H. Helfand Bookplate Collection, 1776-1993 (bulk 1897-1993) (3 binders)***

A collection of over 400 medically-themed bookplates from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, collected by Grolier Club member, William H. Helfand. The bookplates feature a variety of medical and scientifically themed images, including but not limited to: snakes, syringes, mortar & pestles, naked women, naked children, laboratories, skeletons, and others. Older specimens feature more classical themes. Several artists feature prominently in this collection, including Michael Fingenstein, Enrico Vannuccini, Walter Cole, Anton Pick, Henry-André, and others.

The bookplates were arranged by the archivist into four series delineated by size, due to the type of enclosures used to display the bookplates. The series are as follows: Series I: 8x10; Series II: 5x7; Series III: 4x6; Series IV: 3x5. Within each series, the bookplates are arranged alphabetically by the person or corporation indicated on the bookplate because that is the category for which there was the most information. The Grolier Club Library holds excel spreadsheets that can provide further searching and browsing capabilities, including information on artists and engravers, which can be accessed by contacting The Grolier Club Librarian. Gift of William Helfand, December 2012

- ***Caral Gimbel Bookplate Collection, ca. 1700 to 1929 (bulk 1890-1929) (1 box)***

A collection of approximately 195 bookplates assembled by Caral G. Gimbel and dating primarily to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The collection is particularly strong in bookplates owned by women collectors, as well as bookplates of German and Eastern European origin. Most of the bookplates are pictorial, although several armorial plates are included as well. Some of the artists represented include Jay Chambers, Edwin Davis French, Katherine Merrill, A.N. Macdonald, and Howard Pyle.

The bookplates were collected when Gimbel was a young woman, almost certainly before her first marriage in 1935. A few bits of correspondence indicate that at least

some of the bookplates were acquired through exchange with members of various national Ex-Libris societies. Gift of Alva Greenberg, November 2014

The bookplates were removed from their original container in the order in which they were found and placed within acid-free folders. The original clamshell box was retained. There is also a spreadsheet indicating (when known) the name of the bookplate owner, the artist, the date, and the folder number. The data is based exclusively on transcription: there was no attempt to match names to authority files, or to identify owners and artists identified only by initials. Some of the data is missing or incomplete.

- **Sloane, Robert R. (compiler). Bookplate scrapbook, ca. 1890-1910. *Rare Book Collection* \ *62.2\ S634\ 1800\ Folio**

Scrapbook album containing 220 bookplates, primarily armorial and primarily English and Irish from ca. 1800 to 1910, pasted on leaves; another approx. 80 duplicate bookplates in envelope inside back cover of scrapbook; several of the bookplates are from members of the Rylands family ironmasters and manufacturers of Lancashire, England, including Thomas Glazebrook Rylands (1818-1900) and his sons John Paul (1846-1923) and William Harry (1847-1922).

- ***Maria Gerard Messenger Collection of Women's Bookplates, 17th century to 1930s (18 small boxes housed in 2 banker's boxes).***

A collection of approximately 2,100 women's bookplates and book labels assembled by the philanthropist Maria ("Minnie") Gerard Messenger (1849-1937) of Great Neck, Long Island in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The collection represents women book owners from the sixteenth century to the 1930s, and includes women from North America, England, France, Germany, the Low Countries, and Spain, and other locations. Included is a group of approximately 125 bookplates designed for women by primarily women artists.

The bookplates are arranged alphabetically by owner's name. Each plate is mounted on a sheet of card stock measuring 19 x 15 cm (7 ½ x 5 ¾ inches). Some mounts have identifying information inscribed in ink. A group of approximately 125 plates designed for women by primarily women artists is housed separately in a leather box (as received) and has no discernible arrangement. Included in this group is Marie Gerard Messenger's bookplate designed by E.D. French. A group of five bookplates was enclosed separately in an envelope when the collection arrived to the Grolier Club and was rehoused by the archivist in a box labeled "Miscellaneous."

This collection was digitized in 2017 thanks to the support of a 2016-2017 Digitization Funding Award from METRO (Metropolitan New York Library Council)

The digitized bookplates have been added to METRO's freely accessible online repository, Digital Culture of Metropolitan New York DCMNY (<http://dcmny.org/>) and the Digital Public Library of America (<https://dp.la/>).

- **Members' Bookplates Exhibition**

On Nov. 16, 2016 to Jan. 14, 2017, the Grolier Club exhibited a collection of members' bookplates, both past and present, curated by Alex L. Ames and Mark Samuels Lasner. Approximately 50 plates from historic members and 50 plates from current members were exhibited. The historic plates were pulled from existing Grolier Club collections, along with a small handful that were purchased from a bookseller for the show. The current members' bookplates were donated to the Grolier Club Library following the exhibition. There is an excel document in the Grolier Club Library that contains a list of the historic plates included in the exhibition, along with the original collection from which they were pulled. The current member bookplates were kept together and added as a separate series to the Grolier Club Bookplate Collection, ca. 1896-present.

Reference Collection

The Grolier Club has a small reference collection relating to the history of the bookplate (Class number 60-69). Although not comprehensive, we aim to collect major works published in this area, as well as some more specialized items. Some of the books in the reference collection may also include original bookplates.