A stimulating discussion at our fall Advisory Council meeting has encouraged me to reflect on the principles that have guided our acquisition practices.

Our collecting philosophy is rooted in our history. More than 50 years ago, Harry Ransom sought to establish an institution that resembled a “Bibliotheque Nationale” for the state of Texas. Due to its relatively late start, however, Ransom believed it would be difficult for the University to build a strong collection of early printed books, the traditional collecting focus of libraries that were well established and well endowed. Instead, he plunged into the collecting of modern literature, territory in which few institutions had set foot and competition was still sparse. In 1958 Ransom purchased the T. E. Hanley library—with its manuscripts of Beckett, Joyce, Lawrence, and Shaw, among others—and this library became the foundation for an ever-growing collection of twentieth-century literature.

To this day, the Center’s acquisitions are guided by Ransom’s primary goals: to purchase entire collections, to collect both major and minor writers, and to collect manuscripts as well as rare books. Ransom believed that literary study should begin with the trail the author leaves behind: the journals, outlines, false starts, the hundreds of changes. This material tells the story of a work, its evolution to a final form. Furthermore, Ransom deliberately broadened his scope beyond literature, collecting materials related to art, film, the performing arts, and photography.

The Ransom Center has become best known for acquiring writers’ archives, and this has been our primary collecting focus over the past 20 years. We have collected the archives of Mailer, Stoppard, DeLillo, and others who are among the most notable voices of their generations. We also believe it is important to build strength among our collections by acquiring archives that support one another. Many figures in our collections corresponded with one another or influenced or worked with each other. And we put a premium on acquiring archives of new talents whom we believe will become the stars of their era.

When the late photographer Richard Avedon visited the Center in 2003, he noted that one of the great beauties of our collections is their interconnectedness. Rather than collect disparate highlights, the Ransom Center acquires materials that build upon and contextualize one another, providing a rich opportunity for students and scholars to gain a deeper understanding of our cultural heritage.
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Recent Acquisitions

The Ransom Center has acquired the papers of Jayne Anne Phillips, whose most recent work, Lark and Termite (2009), was described by author Tim O’Brien as “by far the best new novel I’ve read in the last five years or so.” Known for her poetic prose and acute studies of family relationships, Phillips has published six highly regarded novels and story collections over the last three decades.

Born in West Virginia in 1952, Phillips published her first story collection in 1976. The publication of Black Tickets in 1979 prompted Nadine Gordimer to call her “the best short story writer since Eudora Welty.” Phillips is also the founder and director of the Master of Fine Arts program in Creative Writing at Rutgers University, Newark.

The extensive archive contains manuscripts in multiple states for Black Tickets, Machine Dreams (1984), Shelter (1995), Motherkind (2000), and Lark and Termite, as well as dozens of short stories and essays, some never published. Papers related to Lark and Termite, for example, include several files of documentary material concerning the Korean War and at least 14 drafts of the novel itself.
Don DeLillo’s new novel, *Point Omega*, is scheduled for publication in February by Simon & Schuster.

Sebastian Barry was awarded the James Tait Black Prize for fiction for *The Secret Scripture* (Faber and Faber, 2008).

David Mamet’s new play, *Race*, opened in December at the Ethel Barrymore Theater in New York City.

Alan Furst’s novel *The Spies of Warsaw* was released in paperback in June by Random House.

Jayne Anne Phillips’s novel *Lark and Termite* was a finalist for the National Book Award.

Tom Stoppard was awarded the Praemium Imperiale from the Japan Art Association.

Robert DeNiro was honored by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Phillips’s school records, early writings, family photographs, notebooks, business documents, and correspondence will be of great value to scholars interested in the writer’s life, writing process, family relationships, and publishing history. Correspondence files reveal Phillips’s associations with many writers of her generation, including Raymond Carver, E. L. Doctorow, Ellen Gilchrest, Nadine Gordimer, John Irving, and Tillie Olsen, among others.

Phillips visited the Ransom Center for a behind-the-scenes tour in September 2009, just days before the arrival of her archive. Her Recommended Reading can be seen in this issue of *Ransom Edition* on page 5.

Other recent acquisitions include:

- Correspondence between John Steinbeck and his publisher Pascal Covici, documenting the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939).
- The full archive of Andre Dubus (1936–1999), one of the writers credited with resuscitating the American short story in the 1970s and ‘80s.
- The correspondence files of Matthew Bruccoli (1931–2008), a scholar best known for his work on F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway and for publishing the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. The collection includes correspondence from Edward Albee, Umberto Eco, Alan Furst, Seamus Heaney, James Jones, Doris Lessing, Harold Pinter, John Updike, Richard Yates, and dozens of other writers.
- A collection of letters written by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (1929–1994) to fellow editor Ray Roberts during her years at Doubleday.
Ransom Center
Now Accepting Applications for Fellowships

Learn more about the fellowships and the application process and watch videos of previous fellows at www.hrc.utexas.edu/fellowships.

The Harry Ransom Center is now accepting applications for its 2010–2011 research fellowships in the Humanities. The application deadline is February 1, 2010.

About 50 fellowships are awarded annually by the Ransom Center to support scholarly research projects in all areas of the humanities. Applicants must demonstrate the need for substantial on-site use of the Center’s collections.

All applicants, with the exception of those applying for dissertation fellowships, must be post-doctorates or independent scholars with a substantial record of scholarly achievement.

The fellowships range from one to three months, with stipends of $3,000 per month. Also available are $1,200 to $1,700 travel stipends and dissertation fellowships with a $1,500 stipend.

Collection of Italian opera libretti now accessible through database

A major collection of Italian opera libretti is now accessible through an online database at the Ransom Center.

The collection of 3,421 items was donated in 1969 by the New York rare book dealer Hans P. Kraus. The collection consists primarily of texts of Italian opera, but also includes Italian cantatas, serenatas, oratorios, dialogues, and Passions. The collection, which dates from the seventeenth through the twentieth century, documents musical performances by Italian, French, German, and Austrian composers performed in numerous Italian cities, Vienna, and elsewhere.

Significant individual items in the Kraus libretti collection include the first edition of what is generally considered to be the earliest opera, Ottavio Rinuccini’s La Dafne (Florence, 1600), written and performed before 1597. Also present is the first edition of Rinuccini’s L’Euridice, produced in Florence in 1600 for the marriage of Henry IV of France with Maria de’Medici, and the earliest opera for which music is preserved. Other important works include Ludwig van Beethoven’s Fidelio (Rome, 1806), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Il Flauto Magico (Milan, 1886), and Il Don Giovanni (Florence, 1818).

Learn more about the database at www.hrc.utexas.edu/ransomedition
Recommended Reading

The Blue Flower
Penelope Fitzgerald (Flamingo, 1995)
Fitzgerald attended Oxford on scholarship and raised three children before she began writing concise, elliptical novels at sixty. Her masterpiece, 225 pages in 55 chapters, concerns a few years in the young life of Novalis, the German poet and philosopher, known in 1790s provincial Saxony as impoverished young nobleman Friedrich von Hardenberg. Fitzgerald follows his harrowing love affair with the doomed Sophie von Kuhn, an ordinary adolescent to whom “Fritz” is unofficially engaged when she is 13 and he 23. The narrative subtly opens into glorious and revelatory questions on life, genius, purpose; Fitzgerald’s use of telling detail is magical, impossible, exhilarating. The Blue Flower is not “about” its story; it is the flower itself.

They Came Like Swallows
William Maxwell (Harper, 1937)
Maxwell unraveled his own half-remembered childhood to write this novel of his mother’s death, when he was seven, in the 1918 flu epidemic, thus assuring his own psychic survival and his evolution as an American master. The points of view of son, brother, husband, circle one another like constellations composed of the same darkness, shot through with transformation.

The Stories of Breece D’J Pancake
Born and raised in Milton, West Virginia, Pancake published many of these stories in The Atlantic before ending his own life at 26 in 1979. Deft, tone-perfect, layered with striations of dark and light not unlike the Appalachian ground he evokes, Pancake’s stories, in their masterly evocation of a misunderstood place and time, comprise no less than an American Dubliners.

Fat City
Leonard Gardner (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969)
Gardner’s only book, a study in hope and anguish published in 1969, concerns “retired” boxer Billy Tully and beautiful, callow young fighter, Ernie Munger. Set in the bars, buses, gyms, and transit hotels of gritty, fifties’ era Stockton, California, Fat City is a perfect document, mapped and studied, the dialogue memorized, by generations of writers. The well-known film (written by Gardner for John Huston), only approaches the spare timelessness of Gardner’s prose.

Stop-time
Frank Conroy (Viking Press, 1967)
Published in 1965 as autobiography rather than memoir, Conroy’s prose remains translucent, subtly clarified, conveyed with such emotional authority that every measured line is punctuated with an implied and musical silence. Stop-time is a text on control, pitch, and tense, the past as present and the present as past. The writer reclaims the lonely, brilliant boy whose acute perceptions set him apart, whose crazy, absent father leaves him the library that will become his lifeline. Conroy, an accomplished jazz musician and mentor to dozens of writers as Director of the University of Iowa’s Writer’s Workshop, prevailed. His timeless American account of growing up is a classic.
**February 9–August 1, 2010**

**Making Movies**

Featuring items from the Ransom Center’s extensive film collections, *Making Movies* reveals the collaborative nature of the filmmaking process and focuses on how the artists involved—from writers to directors, actors to cinematographers—transform the written word into moving image.

Highlights include original scripts, storyboards, production photos, and call sheets, in addition to screenplays from *The Third Man*, *North by Northwest*, and *Shakespeare in Love*, and costumes from *Gone with the Wind*, *An Affair to Remember*, and *Taxi Driver*.

Become a member now to receive an exclusive invitation to the red carpet premiere of *Making Movies*.  
[www.hrc.utexas.edu/redcarpet](http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/redcarpet)

**¡Viva! Mexico’s Independence**

The year 2010 marks the 200th anniversary of Mexico’s independence from Spain and the 100th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution, pivotal events in Mexico’s struggle for self-governance. In collaboration with the University’s Graduate Studies program and the Consulado General de México en Austin, the Ransom Center showcases original materials from its collections that illuminate these historic touchstones.

The exhibition features such rarities as the original 1529 document appointing Hernán Cortés Captain General of New Spain; unpublished letters exchanged between the ill-fated Ferdinand Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico and his wife, Carlotta; original documentary photographs of the Mexican Revolution along with period broadsides illustrated by José Guadalupe Posada; and artistic responses to the long history of Mexico’s conquest and revolt.

[Univision](http://www.univision.com)  
[ViaNovo](http://www.vianovo.com)
Discovering the Language of Photography: The Helmut Gernsheim Collection

This exhibition presents two complementary and interweaving narratives—the history of photography as told through the collection’s imagery and the history of the collection’s formation and methodology. The Gernsheims assembled a peerless collection, most predominantly in the area of nineteenth-century British photography, and many highlights will be on display alongside works by unknown or lesser-known artists who improved or exploited the then relatively new invention of photography. The exhibition will explore key moments in the history of photography, important technological and ideological shifts in the process of picture-making, and narratives that guided the Gernsheims’ collecting interests.

Julia Margaret Cameron, Alethia, 1872.

2010 PROMOTIONAL SPONSORS

The Ransom Center would like to give special thanks to our 2010 promotional sponsors.
Preserving Born-Digital Materials

Gabriela Redwine

For many contemporary writers, the computer has become the writing environment of choice. The Ransom Center received its first disks nearly 20 years ago as part of the Christine Brooke-Rose papers; 39 of the Center’s collections now contain a hybrid of both paper and born-digital manuscripts, letters, emails, proofs, research notes, and other materials. The disks in the Center’s collections range from formats still in use today, such as CDs and DVDs, to media such as 3 ½-inch disks, which were common until the late 1990s; 5 ¼-inch disks, which first debuted in the late 1970s; and even 8-inch disks, which were introduced in 1971. Hardware in the collection ranges from a 28-pound “portable” computer from ca. 1983 to a 1999 Macintosh PowerBook G3.
One of the Ransom Center’s largest and most complex collections of born-digital materials can be found in the Michael Joyce papers. Joyce, a professor of English and media studies at Vassar College, has published both print and hypertext works, including *afternoon: a story* (1987), which the *New York Times* referred to as the “granddaddy of full-length hypertext fictions.” *afternoon*, like many hypertext works, consists of interactive text windows connected by links. Readers choose different narrative paths by clicking on these links; literally thousands of different readings are possible.

The 2005 acquisition of Joyce’s collection marked the Center’s first deliberate engagement with born-digital literary materials published in electronic format. Preserving *afternoon* means finding a way to preserve not only Joyce’s computer files for the story, but also the software he used to create it and the operating system necessary to run that software. Researchers interested in experiencing Joyce’s *afternoon* files in their original computing environment might also conceivably want access to a Macintosh Plus, which is the computer Joyce used to compose the story.

Since 2005, the digital archivist at the Ransom Center has collaborated with Dr. Patricia Galloway and graduate students at the School of Information at The University of Texas at Austin to process the born-digital components of several digital-analog
hybrid collections. Processing projects completed since 2005 include a pilot project with the Joyce disks, as well as cataloging work on the born-digital materials in the John Crowley, Norman Mailer, Terrence McNally, Leon Uris, and Arnold Wesker holdings.

The content of the files in these collections ranges from correspondence—such as typed letters and emails—to manuscript drafts, personal documents, and even a file typed by McNally on June 20, 1988, documenting his first experience writing with WordPerfect.

The tracked changes and comments on a set of proofs, created in Microsoft Word, that writer Thomas Zigal exchanged with his editor at Toby Press provide
valuable insight into his creative process while writing *The White League* (2005). In the past, proofs would have been exchanged in hard copy through the mail. Word processing features, such as “track changes” in Microsoft Word, and the Internet have made it much easier to collaborate electronically. “It’s as good as marginalia in a hard copy ms., only using the newest technology,” Zigal wrote to Thomas Staley, the Ransom Center’s Director, in an email that included the proofs as an attachment. “[W]hat’s new is the editor and I didn’t send mss. back and forth in the U.S. mail, per the old days. We did everything by email attachment.”

Zigal’s explanation of the document illustrates the importance of communicating directly with authors about their born-digital materials. Talking with authors about their computer usage will be an important part of the Ransom Center’s future digital preservation work. Information about the types of hardware and software an author used to create the disks in his or her collection, for example, or whether an author has ever experienced a hard drive failure will be vital to figuring out how best to access and describe his or her files.

The Ransom Center’s digital preservation program continues to grow in anticipation of an increase in the amount of born-digital materials we will receive with future collections. Technology developed in other fields, such as computer forensics, promises to facilitate the capture of data from disks and improve the Center’s ability to preserve and provide access to its born-digital collection materials.

Poet, hypertext author, professor, and theorist Michael Joyce visited the Ransom Center in April 2009. Joyce’s papers, including 380 disks and a laptop, reside at the Ransom Center.

While at the Center, Joyce toured the stacks with archivist Gabriela Redwine and viewed the original manuscript of Gertrude Stein’s *Composition as Explanation* (1926)—two colorful cahiers and a stack of small, loose-leaf pages covered in her pencil scrawl—as well as drafts of poems by Ezra Pound from the Ransom Marcella Spann Booth collection. These texts, Joyce said, form part of the “deeply rich tradition of modernist literatures [that] made possible the ways we consider textuality and the computer.” He also sat down with Redwine to talk about the ongoing preservation of his own materials. Joyce’s computer files were the first born-digital materials to be accessed by a patron in the Center’s reading room.

MICHAEL JOYCE VISITS RANSOM CENTER

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For more photos from Michael Joyce’s visit and excerpts from his interview with Redwine, visit www.hrc.utexas.edu/ransomedition

FOR AN ACCOUNT OF MARYLAND INSTITUTE FOR TECHNOLOGY IN THE HUMANITIES ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR MATTHEW KIRSCHENBAUM’S EXPERIENCE USING THE JOYCE BORN-DIGITAL MATERIALS AT THE Ransom CENTER, PLEASE SEE “HAMELET DOC?: LITERATURE IN A DIGITAL AGE” IN THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AT HTTP://BUDURL.COM/HAMLETDOC
Walpole was one of the most prominent figures in literary London between the wars, exceptionally prolific and insatiably ambitious. By 1930 he had achieved a satisfyingly high profile: author of numerous popular novels, chairman of the Book Society, busy on numerous boards and committees, a devoted friend to the famous. Among these famous friendships, Walpole prized highly that with his fellow novelist, Somerset Maugham. The two men had known each other for over 20 years, Walpole rather in awe of the richer, cleverer, and more successful older man. For his part, Maugham had always regarded Walpole as a foolish fellow, although over time he had grown quite fond of him and enjoyed watching the spectacle he made of himself. Recently, however, the ruthlessness of Walpole’s self-promotion coupled with a notable lack of generosity—“he was mean as cat’s meat,” said Maugham—had begun to repel him, and when in 1929 he began work on a new novel, he was unable to resist the temptation of guying Walpole, portraying him as the protagonist, Alroy Kear, a conceited, third-rate writer who forwards his career by shameless flattery of the great and the good.

Cakes and Ale was published on September 30, 1930. A new novel by Somerset Maugham was naturally a noteworthy event; no one, however, could have foreseen the brouhaha that broke out over the envenomed portrait of Hugh Walpole, described by one commentator as “one of the most memorable literary dissections since Dickens’s treatment of Leigh Hunt as Mr. Skimpole in Bleak House.” Walpole himself, completely unsuspecting, had received an advance copy a few days before publication. On September 25, he notes in his diary that he returned from a visit to Cambridge in the morning, attended a meeting of the Book Society, and in the evening had gone with a friend to the theater. Arriving home after midnight, he had started to undress when he caught sight of Maugham’s book on his bedside table. Idly he picked it up and began to read. “Read on with increasing horror,” he recorded. “Unmistakeable portrait of myself. Never slept!” At 4 a.m., by now in a frenzy, he telephoned Maugham’s publisher, A. S. Frere, imploring him to stop publication. All the next day, “dreadfully upset,” Walpole spent calling on friends, desperate to know what was being said. Most did their best to persuade him he was imagining it, while others swore that Maugham was already strenuously denying the rumour. “But how can he,” wailed Walpole, “when there are in one conversation the very accents of my voice?… He has used so many little friendly things and twisted them round.”

When Walpole finally summoned the courage to write to Maugham, complaining of the cruel treatment he had received, Maugham professed astonishment. It had never occurred to him, he claimed, “that there was any resemblance between the Alroy Kear of my novel & you… I suggest that if there is anything in him that you recognise it is because to a great or less extent we are all the same.” In reply to this deeply disingenuous explanation (“Hugh was a ridiculous creature and I certainly had him in mind when I wrote Cakes and Ale,” Maugham admitted later), Walpole wrote that naturally he accepted Maugham’s word on the matter, although in truth he did nothing of the sort, and for weeks continued to agonize over the subject, rehearsing it again and again to anyone who would listen.

There are two collections at the Ransom Center—comprising letters, an unpublished diary, and the manuscript of a novel, Cakes and Ale—that shed a fascinating light on a bizarre friendship between a couple of twentieth-century writers, Hugh Walpole and William Somerset Maugham.
At the end of the year the fuss finally died down, and the relationship between the two men continued amicably, at least on the surface: when Walpole’s new novel, Judith Paris, came out the following summer Maugham sent him a jokey telegram of congratulation signed, “ALROY MAUGHAM.” And indeed, within a surprisingly short time Walpole succeeded in convincing himself that after all there was little similarity between himself and Alroy Kear, although of course he could understand how a popular and successful figure such as himself might appear “to a cynic and an uneasy unhappy man like Willie.” Yet despite these consoling arguments his standing in the eyes of the world never recovered from Maugham’s portrayal, and after the publication of Cakes and Ale there were few critics who regarded either the man or his work with much respect: Logan Pearsall Smith, in a wickedly apt metaphor, described the book as “the red-hot poker that killed Hugh Walpole,” and when in 1937 Walpole finally received his longed-for knighthood the wits all said it was a consolation prize for Cakes and Ale.

Admiration for the work, however, continued to spread. After Cakes and Ale “Maugham’s reputation as a novelist had no immediate parallel,” wrote Frank Swinnerton. “Within a few months of its publication all active novel-writers were considerably his juniors.”

Selina Hastings is a writer and journalist, the author of four literary biographies, including The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham, which will be published in the United States in May. At the Ransom Center, she was a Mellon Fellow during 2002–03 and was awarded the Dorot Foundation Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Jewish Studies in 2009–2010.

**SELINA HASTINGS’S SOMERSET MAUGHAM PICKS**

- *Mrs. Craddock* (1902) • *The Out Station* (1924)
- *Cakes & Ale* (1930) • *Of Human Bondage* (1915)
- *The Razor’s Edge* (1944)
During a recent visit to the Harry Ransom Center, Nancy Inman took the opportunity to view a favorite image of the Central Asian steppes as captured by photojournalist Eve Arnold, “I have traveled to the very steppes where this photograph was taken,” Inman said, “and Arnold captures so effectively the sense of the landscape and its people.”

The Ransom Center has long been recognized for its literary collections, but it is also home to one of the finest photography collections in the world, one that includes the world’s first photograph by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. This historic collection is enhanced by an active acquisitions program that has added major collections by photojournalist David Douglas Duncan and photographer Arnold Newman, among others.

Like the work of Eve Arnold, whose subjects ranged from veil-clad women in Afghanistan to Marilyn Monroe on a Hollywood set, the strength of the Ransom Center’s collections, Inman believes, lies in its diversity and range.

“From the Gernsheim collection’s first photograph to incredible images from the Russian photographs of the taking of Berlin, the superior work of David Douglas Duncan documenting the Korean War to the work of many fine art photographers too numerous to mention, they all demonstrate the breadth of the collections,” said Inman, who has served on the Ransom Center’s Advisory Council since 1997.

A priority of the current capital campaign is to seek the resources necessary to elevate the photography programs and services to a level commensurate with the quality of its collection. Thanks to the generosity of Admiral Bobby and Nancy Inman, their sons, Tom and Bill, and Advisory Council member Marlene Meyerson, the Center has taken a leap forward with the establishment of the Nancy Inman Curator of Photography Endowment.

Marlene Meyerson of Tesuque, New Mexico, concurs with Inman’s assessment: “The Ransom Center is recognized throughout the photography world as having one of the great collections,” she said. “It should continue to collect and safeguard this premier collection.”

Nancy Inman has traveled around the world but calls Austin home. Her husband, Admiral Bobby Inman, is acting dean of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin.

We posed a few questions to Nancy Inman regarding her family’s recent gift and her interest in photography.

Ransom Edition: What is your favorite photograph in the collection?
Inman: That is a difficult question to answer as the Ransom Center holds so many stunning images. Perhaps it is David Douglas Duncan’s photograph of the exhausted young soldier whose eyes reflect all the horror that he has seen, or Eve Arnold’s image of a Mongolian woman training a horse. I could go on for pages.

Ransom Edition: Why did you make this particular gift?
Inman: Our family made the gift because we believe this collection is a treasure. My wish is that the photography department will let the world know of these amazing photographic holdings. To our family it was indeed important, for we believe that such an investment is truly a gift to future generations.

Ransom Edition: As a photographer, what have you learned from studying the work of others? What photographers have inspired you?
Inman: My background is in the history of art and in studio art. I did not take up photography until we moved to Austin. I learned how the photographer’s eye is indeed that of an artist. You further asked what photographers inspired me—Stieglitz, Kertesz, Avedon, Ansel Adams, Diane Arbus, Walker Evans, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, David Douglas Duncan—and so many more. A fine photograph is, to me, as enjoyable as a superb painting.

Nancy Inman studies an Eve Arnold photograph.

Philanthropy at the Ransom Center

“Truly a gift to future generations.”
—Nancy Inman

Learn more about the capital campaign at www.hrc.utexas.edu/cultureunbound
This book presents Sanora Babb’s vivid firsthand accounts of the Dust Bowl refugee camps of the 1930s. The volume draws on the field notes the young writer took while visiting California’s migrant labor camps for the Farm Security Administration in 1938–39. Douglas Wixon assembles selections from Babb’s published articles and fiction, as well as amateur photographs taken by her sister Dorothy. On the Dirty Plate Trail offers an intimate view of the dispossessed farmers’ lives and the growth of labor activism in the agricultural valleys along California’s Highway 99, the “Dirty Plate Trail.”

In preparing this edition, Wixon consulted the Sanora Babb papers at the Ransom Center. Wixon is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Texas at Austin and recently curated an online exhibition about Sanora Babb on the Ransom Center’s website.

This volume, covering the years 1929–1940, is the first of a four-part series offering a comprehensive range of Samuel Beckett’s letters. At the core of this installment are Beckett’s letters to Irish art historian, poet, and critic Thomas McGreevy; the edition, however, also features correspondence with James Joyce, Samuel Putnam, George Reavey, Mary Manning Howe, Maria Jolas, and others. In these letters we see Beckett wrestling with aesthetic ideas, composing his works, and struggling to be published (Beckett’s translation of Rimbaud’s “Le Bateau ivre,” for example, was bounced from one little magazine in favor of a letter by Ezra Pound criticizing surrealism). Martha Dow Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck’s detailed editorial apparatus includes translations, explanatory notes, chronologies, and profiles of major correspondents.

In compiling this edition, the editors consulted the Samuel Beckett papers at the Ransom Center. Dow Fehsenfeld is an independent scholar and authorized editor of Samuel Beckett’s correspondence. More Overbeck is a research associate in the Graduate School at Emory University.

Kemper used the Myron Selznick papers, as well as the David O. Selznick collection, for personal correspondence and reflections on the brothers’ relationship and business interactions.
The conservation department of the Harry Ransom Center is responsible for the care and preservation of the Center’s collections. The work of conservators ensures that materials will remain accessible for research at the Center. This feature highlights repair and conservation work on collection items.

Treatment of the L’Éclair poster from the Harry Houdini collection

BEFORE The Ransom Center’s paper conservation department recently treated a large L’Éclair poster from its Harry Houdini collection. L’Éclair (“the flash”) was a newspaper in 1920 that was edited by French journalist Émile Buré. This poster appears to be an advertisement for the newspaper, with the lightning flash emphasizing the speed at which L’Éclair reported the news.

The poster arrived in the department folded to an eighth of its size, roughly 10 x 15 inches, and could not be easily opened without damage occurring because of the severe brittleness of the paper fibers. By slowly introducing moisture vapor, the paper became pliable enough to open safely to assess the extent of the damage and the full size of the poster (3-1/2 feet x 5 feet). After an in-depth examination of the poster and a consultation with Helen Adair, Associate Curator of the Performing Arts collection, treatment began.

AFTER Stephanie Watkins, Head of Paper Conservation, performed the treatment with the assistance of conservation graduate student Laura Bedford and paintings conservator and community volunteer, Nani Lew.

First, the dirt on the surface was reduced with finely grated eraser crumbs. Then the paper was washed on the Center’s recently acquired vacuum-suction table to remove inherent acidity and discoloration, a treatment step that takes several hours. After washing, the students toned pieces of Japanese paper using extremely thinned acrylic artist’s paint to match the brown background of the paper and the blue-black background color. After the inserts were colored and dried, they were fitted to each particular loss area. The poster was re-wetted to facilitate alignment of the small, detached fragments and to flatten folded-over pieces along the edge.

Once alignment was complete, the poster was adhered to a large sheet of Okawara Japanese paper with dilute wheat starch paste to hold all the tears and fragments in place. The Japanese paper is attached to a polyester fabric (Dacron), which is in turn attached to a large, thick Plexiglas sheet. The treatment is a wet process, and the poster dries flat under tension while attached to the Plexiglas. Once dry, only the Japanese paper will remain, which allows researchers to safely handle the brittle poster while viewing the striking graphic as it was originally intended.

Learn more about the conservation department at [www.hrc.utexas.edu/ransomedition](http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/ransomedition)
irked at my confusion—but then he
don’t play games with me, Paul. I’ve
you. When you needed me, I was th
ed, cuño. That’s not very good manners.”
’t know what you’re talking about, Ma.
’ve ever heard about was that gang ba
the one in the shoot-out on Canal Street.

eart that grandfather had fought in the battle. A
ory lesson, an organized group of loca
 with the carpetbagger police, a troop of
nyee sympathizers who had replaced the
ice force after the Civil War.

inking ignorance is going to help yo
en. I know your family has been White
 and I know you grew up around their
en your daddy died, he passed his colo
prised by his remark that I couldn’t cor
you’re trying to join the krewe of love
The Ransom Center has launched its new blog, Cultural Compass. Contributors affiliated with the Center give an insider’s look at the work and collections at the Ransom Center. The blog features a range of content from unique posts highlighting collection materials to updates on the latest happenings.

Read the blog at www.hrc.utexas.edu/culturalcompass.