

PREFACE TO SPECIAL ISSUE
THE BOOK AS ART, LITERATURE AND HISTORY

BY ROBERT G. SEWELL, EDITOR

This special issue of *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* reflects the wide range of approaches to the study of the book and the wealth of activities at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey concerned with the book arts. All of the articles in this issue are based on lectures given at Rutgers within the last two years.

Barbara Shailor, a classics and medieval scholar, has contributed a revision of her “farewell lecture” at Rutgers on the occasion of her stepping down as dean of Douglass College to accept the position of director of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Her paper documents the strange career of Otto Ege, a collector of medieval manuscripts and a seller of medieval manuscript leaves to institutions and individuals. She envisions a recompilation of the scattered manuscript leaves into a digital database.

Elaine Showalter, renowned feminist literary critic, spoke at the Fifteenth Annual Louis Faugères III Bishop Lecture on the occasion of her generous donation of books by and about Victorian women authors to the Rutgers University Libraries. She describes how and why she collected these books which were the basis for her groundbreaking 1977 book, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. She shares her joy in collecting books for both their content and materiality. A bibliography of her donated collection accompanies this article.

The final section of this issue is devoted to lectures given at the annual New Jersey Book Arts Symposium. A paper by Barbara Balliet, a university administrator and historian, looks at the stereotype of the nineteenth century, American, middle-class, “stay-at-home” woman depicted in nineteenth century illustrations, and documents that many middle-class women were engaged as workers in the illustration industry which ironically projected this stereotype. Michael Joseph, the co-founder of the books arts symposium and rare book librarian, deconstructs the very notion of the physical book and sees the book artist as a philosopher who stops time as she or he reveals the very temporality of the book itself. Judith Brodsky’s discerning insights into these two papers follows. In a paper I contributed, I draw on my work

in Japanese studies, and the history of printing to examine one of the great curiosities and accomplishments in world printing, the printing of one million Buddhist prayers on strips of paper that were rolled up in one million miniature, wooden pagodas in eighth-century Japan.