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A Legal Miscellanea: Volume 1, Number 1

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A LEGAL MISCELLANEA

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE JACOB BURNS LAW LIBRARY

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1 SPRING 2004

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS FOCUS: NEW ACQUISITIONS

Coutumes d'Anjou et du Maine (1486)

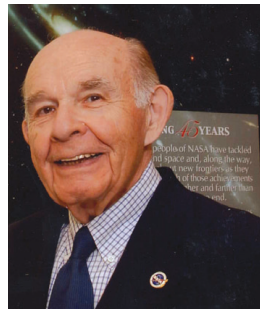
Among the most important and exciting of our recent acquisitions is *Coutumes d'Anjou et du Maine* (Paris, 1486). Acquired at the December, 2003, Sotheby's (New York) auction of the inventory of the late eminent bookseller H.P. Kraus, this book is a significant addition to the Law Library's French Collection. It is the first incunable (a book printed before 1501) purchased for Special Collections which is also a coutume, and as such is one of the very earliest compilations of regional French customary laws.

Although it is a "second edition" (the first, of which only a single copy survives, was printed in Angers c.1476), *Coutumes d'Anjou et du Maine* is a work of extreme rarity; it is one of only two recorded copies in the United States, and the only complete copy. The third known copy is in France at the Universite Catholique (Angers).

The elegant simplicity of this book, with its rubricated initials and paragraph marks, vies with its importance as a landmark in French legal culture. Scattered early marginalia add to its intrigue and appeal as a research source. It is gracefully bound in later red morocco with gilt edges, marbled endleaves, and morocco slipcase.

Coutumes d'Anjou et du Maine is a stunning addition to our French Collection. For more information about this book, or for an illustrated brochure describing the French Collection, please see the contact information in the box at the bottom of page 2. ❁

DEMBLING GIFT MARKS START OF LAW LIBRARY ARCHIVE



The generous gift of Paul G. Dembling, Esq. (J.D.'51) has established the Jacob Burns Law Library's first archival collection. Mr. Dembling's professional papers spanning fifty years (1942-1992) provide researchers at the Law Library with an inside legal perspective on the development of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration from its predecessor, the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics. Also prominently featured in the Dembling papers are significant materials treating issues of government procurement. Soon to be available online at our Special Collections

website (www.law.gwu.edu/burns/rarebooks/archives.htm) is the video oral history which Mr. Dembling filmed at the time he donated his papers to the Law Library.

Paul Dembling, the principal architect and author of the National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958, served NASA in a number of capacities. He was the first Chairman of the NASA Board of Contract Appeals, and later General Counsel and Deputy Associate Administrator. His rich and varied Washington legal career included the General Counsel post at the General Accounting Office, a fifteen-year partnership (and later senior counsel relationship) with the law firm Schnader, Harrison, Segal and Lewis, and a long association with the Law School as a professorial lecturer in law, teaching courses such as The International Law of Air and Space, and Legal Protection Against Technological Hazards. Mr. Dembling's many contributions to his profession include service to the American Bar Association as Chairman of the ABA Model Procurement Code Coordinating Committee, and Chairman of the Public Contract Law Section, as well as long and distinguished service to the Federal Bar Association.

Archival processing of Paul Dembling's papers is complete, and the collection is ready for use by researchers. For access to the Dembling collection, or any questions regarding the collection, please see the contact information at the bottom of page 2. ❁

WELCOME! ❁

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *A Legal Miscellanea*! In its pages you will find articles about the Law Library's collections and services, highlights of new acquisitions, notification of library events and exhibits, as well as exploration of issues of interest to researchers and bibliophiles. *A Legal Miscellanea* debuts as a semi-annual publication, with issues

appearing in the spring and fall semesters.

We at the Law Library look forward to hearing from you. Please see the contact information in the box at the end of this newsletter to communicate with us regarding use of the collections, or with your comments, suggestions, or questions.

Enjoy!

Interested bibliophiles often ask how the Law Library selects and purchases its books, and sometimes are surprised to find that, for most purchasing, it's not quite as simple as trotting to the bookstore to scan the shelves and pick up a few interesting titles.

For new titles, libraries have purchasing avenues not available to individual buyers, making life for a professional book buyer simultaneously intriguing (the smorgasbord of available books) and frustrating (how many of these can we afford?). For the Law Library, discovering new book titles is mostly via receipt of what are known as "title slips." These are stacks of individual index card sized pieces of paper, each containing one title with author, publisher, price and a short "blurb" describing the book. These slips are issued by a jobber, normally by subscription with the library. The optimum outcome for the jobber is receiving the order for a title; it is not unusual to be notified about a title by more than one jobber, and in that case the choice of purchasing source is influenced by cost,

discounts, the jobber's track record, and other balancing factors.

Other sources for new titles include advertisements mailed by publishers, e-mail notifications, new book announcements in professional journals, book reviews, references in newspapers and just plain serendipity.

INSIDE THE LAW LIBRARY: HOW DO WE BUY BOOKS?

After selection, the title is ordered by the Acquisitions Department and can arrive anywhere from one day to six weeks later (or longer) depending upon the vendor and current availability. Books generally are paid for upon receipt; return is possible if the book is damaged or not as represented (for instance, reprints not represented as

such; a children's book turns out to be masquerading as a legal title; etc.).

By comparison, purchase of rare and antiquarian materials is simple, although time often may be of the essence. Many antiquarian booksellers issue regular catalogues, and purchases are made directly from the bookseller via phone or e-mail. It is important to respond rapidly, since other buyers may find these same, often one-of-a-kind books attractive, and beat you to the dealer. Internet book purchasing sites, such as Advanced Book Exchange, are also important for locating out-of-print and antiquarian books. Auctions, both domestic and European, also provide an excellent venue for acquiring rare materials, and bidding can be accomplished either live via telephone or by sending written bids to be submitted by the auction house as the lot comes up for sale.

However, there still are times when we run down to the bookstore to pick up a few books... ❁

THE FRIENDS OF THE JACOB BURNS LAW LIBRARY

If you received this newsletter in your mail, you probably also received a Friends of the Jacob Burns Law Library brochure. Introduced in the beginning of 2004, the Friends group was formed to bring together supporters of the Law Library to contribute to the growth of its collections and participate in the activities of the Law Library. Individual, law firm, and corporate affiliations are available. Friends are eligible for Law Library access and borrowing privileges, and

receive invitations to receptions and other library events, as well as mailings of *A Legal Miscellanea*.

Interested? To receive a Friends brochure, or for more information about the Friends of the Jacob Burns Law Library, please contact the Office of Law Advancement at (202) 994-6117.

We cordially invite you to become a Friend, and look forward to welcoming you to the Law Library community. ❁

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A LEGAL MISCELLANEA

For information on the topics covered in this newsletter or other questions, please contact Jennie C. Meade, Bibliographer/Rare Books Librarian, at jmeade@law.gwu.edu or (202) 994-6857.

The Jacob Burns Law Library, 716 20th Street, NW Washington, DC 20052