FURTHER STUDY UNVEILS ORIGINS OF 13TH-CENTURY BIBLE

In the last issue of the Library Newsletter (no. 19, May 1996), Jordana Rubel '96 wrote about her work with Haverford's 1266 Hebrew Bible. Rachel Beckwith, Executive Library Assistant, took a more comprehensive look at this Bible for her graduate work in Art History. She recounts her scholarly study in this issue.

During the 1996 spring semester, I took a course in Bryn Mawr's Art History graduate program entitled "Medieval Art in American Collections." For this course, I chose to do my project on a medieval object in a collection that I could travel to as often as necessary—Special Collections here in Magill Library. The object was a thirteenth-century Hebrew Bible from Spain that was donated to Haverford College in 1890 by J. Rendel Harris, a Cambridge-educated Quaker who was a Professor of Biblical Languages and Ecclesiastical History here at the College from 1885 to 1893.

For my project, I focused on the codicological and artistic aspects of the Bible in order to gain more information concerning its provenance. The study of codicology is defined as the study of manuscripts as cultural artifacts for historical purposes. In other words, I knew that close examination of the physical attributes of the Haverford Bible would help me to narrow in on its place of origin. I also knew that the style of decoration in the Bible would allow me to make a more specific identification. And finally, the Haverford Bible contains a colophon (inscription at the end of the volume which identifies facts about its production) as well as several different owners' inscriptions throughout, all of which helped me to trace its travels and to learn more about the scribe who copied the Bible.

After close examination and careful study of the Haverford Bible, I was able to clarify questions of its provenance and its place in the historical continuum. The codicological features of script, type of pen used, number of sheets to a quire (sheets of parchment that are placed on top of each other, folded down the center, and then sewn together), manner of pricking the margins, and ruling technique clearly place it in the realm of Sepharad. The ornamental features of carpet pages, decorative panels at the ends of books, chapter markings, and micrographic masorah (the body of notes on the textual traditions of the Hebrew Old Testament compiled by the scribe) all confirm the attribution of this book to Spain.

It is quite clear that the Haverford Bible is not the product of an immigrant scribe (as many Hebrew
manuscripts were), but rather was actually copied in Spain. Furthermore, comparison with other Spanish Hebrew Bibles from the same period suggests the likelihood that the Haverford Bible was copied in Northern Spain, more specifically in Tudela, Soria, or Burgos. The city of Tudela is favored because of the unusual order of books following the Prophets, an order which is also found in another Medieval bible, the Dublin Ibn Gaon Bible from Tudela (1300). It is possible that the Haverford Bible was used as a model for the scribe who copied the Dublin Ibn Gaon since scribes were always working from a model or prototype. In any case, it seems almost certain that the Haverford Bible did not originate in Toledo, a city that produced many of today's extant Hebrew manuscripts.

After examining the colophon and owners' inscriptions, we can now speculate that the Bible remained in Spain until the expulsion of the Jews, at which time it made its way to Egypt. We know of three changes of ownership, one which occurred in 1714-15, one in 1755-56, and the last in 1890 when J. Rendel Harris purchased the Bible for Haverford College. Finally, after studying the SFAR-DATA database (a database that provides an entry for every extant Hebrew manuscript), it is clear that at this point, the 1266 Haverford Bible is the only known Bible that is signed by (or, for that matter, attributed to) the scribe Solomon, son of Moses.

Rachel Beckwith

HAVERFORD/EVANS ELECTRONIC FRIENDSHIP

Is it getting any easier to find a needle in a haystack?

If you have already been ensnared in the World Wide Web, it will come as no surprise to you that, in recent months, it has become increasingly easy not only to look into the catalogs of libraries around the world to know what those libraries hold, but also to read the contents of those holdings, all without leaving the privacy of your office. Johns Hopkins University's "Project Muse," University of Michigan's "JSTOR," and the textual databases at the University of Virginia are among a wide array of resources which make it possible for researchers to find and examine documents that would previously have been available only to those who could visit the holding library. In "libraryspeak," the concept is expressed as "access," and the goal is to make the greatest amount of information available to many people in many different places and circumstances.

In Spring 1996, Haverford's Special Collections mounted its first manuscript "finding aid" on the Web. "Finding aids" are listings or indexes that assist researchers in locating a particular letter, photograph, or other individual document which might be buried inside a collection of materials—such as the papers, scrapbooks, or account books of a particular family or organization. Many manuscript repositories have finding aids, but mostly they are available only to those who make their way to the locations where the manuscripts reside. With nearly 300,000 manuscripts among its holdings, Haverford College's Special Collections has many volumes of finding aids, ranging from handwritten cards from the early years to computer disks of recent vintage—but for most of them, you have to come to Haverford to use them.

The finding aid which we put on the Web last spring was a short biographical sketch of Quaker missionaries Eli and Sybil Jones (uncle and aunt of Haverford’s own Rufus Jones) and an index of the contents of their papers, which are rich with the story of the spread of Quakerism to developing countries at the turn of the twentieth century. The Jones collection was chosen because researchers world-wide have shown such interest in that particular collection.

Several years ago, J. Morris (Morrie) Evans ’43 brought to the Library some 2500 letters from his family’s archives, an archive that encompassed many generations of leaders in the Philadelphia Quaker community. We were delighted to receive the letters—but equally delighted to receive Morrie’s index, on disks, of the dates, authors, and recipients of those letters!! With funds from an endowment provided by Morrie to assist the College with managing Quaker archives, we were able to integrate these new letters into the Library’s online catalog, TRIPOD.

Over the next few months, again assisted by funds from the College’s JM & AT Evans Fund, Haverford’s Special Collections will be able to add significantly to the information about the Society.
of Friends on the Web. As with the Jones collections, the Evans/Cope/Morris families, which are encompassed in the letters acquired from Morrie Evans, are of great interest to researchers who seek to understand Friends’ participation in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century economics, reform, education, and science. So this collection of materials will be the next finding aid we will add to the Web. In the process, we will be investigating the feasibility of using graphic images to enhance user-friendliness and increase scholarly usefulness. Would it be helpful to you to view, from a desk in California, Thomas Pym Cope’s signature, or a sample of the zoological drawings of Edward Drinker Cope? This might happen. Stay tuned. Our Web page is under construction! It could get easier to find a needle in a haystack, or at least to find a Friend in Pennsylvania.

Emma Lapsansky

ILLUMINATING THE LIVES OF MEDIEVAL WOMEN

Once upon a time, the only medieval women we knew about were queens in castles and damsels in distress. Now, thanks to the work of social and economic historians in the last twenty years, we see the medieval landscape populated by all kinds of women: prosperous brewers, mothers teaching their children to read, recluses in saintly solitude, and trobadour singing songs of love. As I worked with Professor Susan Stuard and her students researching medieval women, I was constantly amazed and frequently overwhelmed by the quantity and variety of material being published. I wished repeatedly that there was a source that would pull all of these publications together. This wish became the inspiration for the Medieval Feminist Index.

This past summer Haverford College granted me five weeks to begin laying the groundwork for a bibliographic database about women, gender, sexuality, and family during the Middle Ages. I am indexing the articles in more than 200 journals and the individual pieces in essay collections that cover relevant topics.

A record from the Medieval Feminist Index includes the usual author, title, and source information, so that the user can track down the article. There are also more specialized categories like Geographic Area, Century, Primary Source (the original documents that form the basis of the study), and Illustrations that contain valuable information. When the researcher has the power to combine these categories in a computerized search, the results can be very finely tuned.

Clearly, indexing the flood of publications in this field is not a one-person operation. Emily Beal, a Haverford senior history major with a special interest in the Middle Ages, is entering data and researching questions two afternoons a week. I have also assembled via e-mail an advisory panel of medieval scholars with expertise in all fields relevant to women and gender, including area studies for the various geographic regions. Advisors have sent me recommendations for journals to be indexed, evaluated the database, and answered questions in their areas of expertise.

At this point, Emily and I are entering data for journals and essays published in 1995. We have more than 400 records and hope to finish 1995 publications before the new year. Once that data is entered, we will make the Medieval Feminist Index available for students and scholars to search over the World Wide Web. Emily and I will then turn our attention to material published in 1996 and plan as well to pick up the previous year (1994), before we begin on 1997 publications.

It is a pleasant paradox to think that the newest technology is being used to bring medieval women back to life.

Margaret Schaus
RELIGION AND DIVERSITY IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

How does one create a crisp definition of "New Age," a definition that clearly distinguishes this phenomenon from modern manifestations of "traditional" religions? How can teachers keep all students involved in the challenge of investigating diverse religious ideas and traditions without appearing to challenge their deeply-held religious beliefs? How can we keep students who have unpopular perspectives from feeling shut out of the educational exchange? How do we help students think both analytically and sympathetically about their own and others' religious traditions? How do we help students sort out the wheat from the chaff in the literature on religion and society?

These and many other questions were explored during the 1996 Summer Institute on Religion and Diversity in American Society. The Institute, supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, co-sponsored by the Haverford Department of History and the Library’s Quaker Collections, and directed by Professor of History Emma Lapsansky, brought to the campus more than three dozen participants and lecturers from some two dozen states.

The group was able to make good use of Tri-College library resources, and Reference Librarian James Gulick was lecturer/advisor on the subject of modern American religions.

Participants in the Institute—all of whom were college or university teachers—represented a number of disciplines. From sociology, American studies, religious studies, philosophy, history, and communications, the Institute drew a broad mix of perspectives and experiences. Daily discussions wove issues of recent scholarship and issues of classroom management into a seamless fabric, as it became clear that all the participants were deeply equally committed to both teaching and to scholarly pursuits. The result of the five weeks of lectures, seminars, field trips, and discussions was a collection of revised syllabi and a team-produced bibliography designed to assist in teaching students to think broadly and "culturally" about America’s complex religious traditions. Watch the Special Collections page on the Haverford College Web site for materials from the Institute.

Emma Lapsansky