

A trove of hand-bound leather covers, rag pages and woodblock illustrations from the Seaverns Collection.



Horse Tales

Period equine books find a home in cyberspace
By Leslie Macmillan

THE WEBSTER FAMILY LIBRARY AT THE CUMMINGS SCHOOL HAS MORE than doubled its holdings through a simple act of a man who genuinely loved horses. The library is now home to more than 7,000 equine books, a bequest from the late John A. Seaverns, who “fell in love with horses during a job he had cleaning out stables when he was 18,” says Alyssa Freden, who is helping to catalogue the collection.

Most of the books were published in the 19th and 20th centuries and cover every aspect of horsemanship, from racing, hunting, riding, breed histories and equestrian art to descriptions of horse-drawn carriages and farriers. The oldest dates back to 1571. The most valuable is worth more than \$10,000. There are several rare treatises on horsemanship, including one from the 16th century, the Duke of Newcastle’s *A General System of Horsemanship* (1743). With their hand-bound leather covers, rag pages, woodblock illustrations and titles like *Romance of the Road*, the books are a pleasure—and a treasure—to leaf through in this digital age.

It is an interesting irony then that these equine classics are moving

to a very high-tech home—cyberspace—as the library undertakes the massive project of digitizing the collection. Through an agreement between the Boston Library Consortium and the Open Content Alliance, some of the books—those no longer subject to copyright laws—will be hosted by the Internet Archive and available to be indexed by any search engine.

“Digitization makes the collection more valuable,” says Margret Branschofsky, director of library services and information technology at the Cummings School. She hired a cataloguer, Freden, an avid rider who teaches dressage.

Freden says she’s already cataloged more than 2,040 of the books. She’s also blogging about her cataloguing adventures. A recent entry: What do show jumping and Bullmastiffs have to do with one another? (Answer: nothing, except they were the topics of the last two books she read from the collection.)

So far, the most downloaded books are about English country roads, says Freden. At 255 downloads, the hottest book, published in 1922, is *The Brighton Road: The Classic Highway to the South*, in which the author, Charles George Harper, describes and illustrates the riding path south of London.

Educational Services Librarian Betsy Like still recalls receiving the books shortly after Christmas in 2002. "There were 230 boxes of books. We tried to unpack them as quickly as we could. That's all we did for two weeks."

The cataloguing and digitizing is expected to take up to two years. Every week, 40 volumes are shipped to the Boston Public Library, where they are manually scanned, page by page.

The painstaking work is beginning to pay off, in the form of emails and downloads from around the world. The librarians recently received an email from a man in England, who thanked them for putting the books online: "They will be of the greatest help in my research. It was a wonderful present on what otherwise has been a wasted day."

For those still addicted to the tactile, the collection is available to anyone who wishes to peruse the real volumes, carefully arranged on custom-built shelves in the Webster Library.

However, the librarians know that they will reach their greatest audience in cyberspace. As Branschovsky says, "The real value of putting them online is so the world can see them."

Leslie Macmillan is a writer in Tufts' Office of Publications.

LEARN MORE

Seaverns Collection wiki page:
<http://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/display/JohnASeavernsEquineCollection/Home>

In the blogosphere:
<http://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/display/JohnASeavernsEquineCollection/Cataloger%27s+Blog>

LOVE THAT CAT



Too bad the same can't be said for Fido. No similar protective properties were found for dogs or other pets.

Here's some news that's sure to make you love your cat even more. A report in the *Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter* says your kitty is lowering your risk of dying from a heart attack.

People who don't own a cat are 40 percent more likely to suffer a fatal heart attack than those who have a feline friend, according to research presented at the 2008 American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference. An analysis of 4,435 patients in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Study found that cat owners are less likely to die from all cardiovascular diseases, including stroke, yet the difference was statistically significant only for heart attacks.

LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM HELPS ALUMS WHO HELP OTHERS

Tufts University has created a new initiative that will help all undergraduates, graduate students and those with professional degrees to pay off their student loans if they work in public service or at a nonprofit organization after graduation.

The Tufts Loan Repayment Assistance Program, known as LRAP, is aimed at encouraging alumni to pursue careers that may not necessarily be lucrative, but serve the public good. Graduates in fields such as teaching and health and veterinary care in regions lacking medical resources would be eligible.

"Every student who graduates with a loan worries about how to pay it off," says Tufts President Lawrence S. Bacow. "We would like alumni to be able to pursue their passions—to do what they really want to do—without being unduly focused on the need to retire a student loan. It is especially appropriate for Tufts to make this commitment, since as an institution, we seek to encourage a spirit of public service in our students."

The number of awards will depend on the total number of applicants and the funding that is available, as well as an individual's income and level of indebtedness. The program is being funded annually with \$500,000 from the Omidyar–Tufts Microfinance Fund, which was established with a \$100 million gift from Pierre Omidyar, A88, the founder of eBay, and his wife, Pamela Omidyar, J89.

Applicants will need to reapply each year for assistance. Alumni must complete an application form as well as submit documentation that includes a pay stub and a tax return. Application materials and other information about the program are available at <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/LRAP>. Alumni must currently be repaying education loans or be in a grace period. Anyone who is on a deferred payment plan, has defaulted on a loan or been delinquent is not eligible.

The goal of the new loan program is not to cover the entire debt for a small group but to help as many alumni as possible with a portion of their debts. The average debt for a graduate of the Cummings School is \$127,000.