Alice Roberts will be our guest speaker for the Cadbury Research Library annual lecture, building on last year’s stimulating talk by playwright David Edgar, who enthralled his audience with a humorous account of his times in the theatre business.

Also on a theatre-related theme, it was a pleasure to welcome the Trustees of the Noel Coward Society last autumn. We are looking forward to working with them to increase access to the Noel Coward Collection held in the CRL. The collection includes a fascinating variety of correspondence with some remarkable people from every facet of Noel Coward’s life, from Julie Andrews to Basil Rathbone, Jacqueline Kennedy to Lawrence of Arabia.

During 2013 we received some wonderful new additions to our collection. Among my favourites are the letters of Vera Holme Manley (1890–1968). Vera, the sister of Jamaican Premier Norman Manley, was an eyewitness to the Russian Revolution. Her collection vividly describes the unfolding situation as she was experiencing it.

The CRL holds rich resources relating to the lives of those who lived, worked and died during the First World War. We have been working with BBC West Midlands to promote the importance of saving archives and memorabilia about all aspects of the War as we approach the centenary. We have been lucky enough to receive a donation of a painting of soldiers who were based at the First Southern General Hospital which operated from the University buildings between 1914 and 1919. To find out about all our new acquisitions please look at the accessions pages on our website.

This year sees the start of a project to create online access to our Islamic Arabic manuscripts from the Mingana Collection, in collaboration with the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. It is a pleasure to welcome Josefine Frank who will be working on cataloguing these significant manuscripts online. We are also exploring for the first time the thousands of papyri fragments we hold as part of the Rendel Harris Collection. Our Conservator, Marie Sviergula, has spent many hours painstakingly conserving these fragments, so it will be great to learn more about them.

I am looking forward to an interesting and varied year as we explore the best of our collections. I do hope you will be able to join us for our talks and lectures (details on the last page). The Cadbury Research Library team is, as always, on hand to welcome you to use our public reading room to research and enjoy the wealth of collections we hold.

Sue Worrall
Director of Special Collections

Editor’s introduction

Welcome to the second edition of the Cadbury Research Library’s Newsletter. We hope you will enjoy reading about what we have been doing and will join us at some of our public talks and exhibitions over the next few months, full details available on page 4 and the University’s events pages. This year we are participating in the University’s Life and Death themed Arts and Science Festival with The Art of Anatomy exhibition and talk. We have also made available over 100 images of anatomy from our history of medicine collections on our Flickr page. Please do have a look, there are now nearly 2,000 images to browse and we are gradually adding more and more, spurred on by the popularity of the site which has received over 190,000 views to date – a great way of increasing access to our collections for both research and general interest.

Sarah Kilroy, Head of Conservation and Programming
Josefine Frank, specialist in Islamic art and material culture, has recently joined the CRL as part of a project to make our Islamic manuscripts from the Mingana Collection available for research online for the first time.

Josefine has just completed the British Museum’s Curatorial Diploma through the HLF funded ‘Future Curators’ traineeship, a training programme that led her to co-curate the exhibition Qalam: the art of beautiful writing at BMAG, to which the CRL was the major lender, along with the British Museum. Here she shares the highlights of her traineeship.

The training programme is a unique opportunity to spend six months working within a specialist curatorial department at the British Museum. Then trainees work at one of the Museum’s partner institutions; one of which is Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery. I spent six months in the Middle Eastern Department at the BM, before transferring to BMAG where I had the opportunity to apply the skills I had learnt to curating a major exhibition, Qalam: the art of beautiful writing, together with Dr Rebecca Bridgman, Curator of Islamic Art at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (2 November 2013–16 January 2014) which attracted over 30,000 visitors.

The exhibition of Arabic calligraphy explored its continued aesthetic appeal across different countries, cultures and languages. The most rewarding part of creating a display is seeing the visitors’ reactions – the look of pride on people’s faces when they see something as special as a Qur’an fragment from the roots of Islam in the 7th century. The training programme gave me practical, hands-on experience, including exhibition design and installation, loan administration, object interpretation and above all collections care and management. Receiving the British Museum’s Curatorial Diploma at the end of the programme has given me a platform to further my career path in this niche area.

One of the highlights of my traineeship was working closely with the 3000 Middle Eastern manuscripts that form the Mingana Collection from the Cadbury Research Library. I was spoilt for choice when selecting objects to borrow for the Qalam exhibition. I feel very privileged to work first hand with such an important collection and am delighted to be able to continue to work with the collection in my new role at the CRL making the catalogue of Islamic manuscripts available online on a website called Fihrist.

‘Fihrist’, means index or catalogue in Arabic. The site is a joint project with Cambridge and Oxford Universities with contributions from partner institutions holding major collections of Middle Eastern Manuscripts, including The British Library, The Wellcome Institute, SOAS, The Royal Asiatic Society, Manchester University and St Andrew’s University, providing a searchable interface for basic manuscript descriptions www.fihrist.org.uk

If you like browsing images from the collections we now have over 1800 images on Flickr available to view on the Cadbury Research Library’s Flickr page
Ancient Greek Papyri Project

Our conservator Marie Sviergula has recently completed a project to improve the storage of our collection of over 3000 papyri fragments from the Rendel Harris Papyri Collection. These fragments, which are now available in their entirety to researchers, were acquired by Dr James Rendel Harris in Egypt in the winter of 1922–23. Most of the papyri are Oxyrhynchus material (from an archaeological site in Egypt) with the majority falling within the Christian era. When the Selly Oak Colleges merged with the University of Birmingham the collection came into the Cadbury Research Library along with other complimentary papyri in the Mingana Collection of Middle Eastern Manuscripts. Enoch Powell, who was a classicist and a Professor of Greek in his early career, catalogued a small quantity of the literary papyri in the collection in 1936 and a subsequent tranche were then catalogued by a team of international researchers in the 1980s. Now Professors Thomas Wayment and Lincoln Blumell from Brigham Young University in the USA are subjecting the remaining 3000 fragments to intensive research for the first time. We look forward to working with them and finding out what secrets the fragments hold.

New CRL Student Volunteer Bank

A warm welcome to our new student volunteers: Zennat Bolia, Jodie Carpenter, George Dibble, Rebecca King, Alina Qazi and Lucy Rowland. Come and meet them at our public events including this year’s Community Day on 7 September in the Great Hall.

In November last year the CRL launched a new initiative to provide volunteering opportunities to University of Birmingham students who have shown a keen interest in our collections. To complement the more formal internships which run each summer, we now have 8 student volunteers who assist with promoting the collections in a variety of ways: helping with tours of the CRL, assisting at outreach events, researching new accessions to the collections and contributing to our Twitter feed.

Volunteering with the CRL provides hands-on work experience, allowing students to build key skills while working with heritage collections. Volunteers also receive training in handling of rare books and manuscripts.

A range of opportunities are on offer throughout the year and students can opt in to experiences which suit their interests, as well as fitting with their other commitments. In turn the CRL benefits from the support and broad skill base which students of different disciplines and experiences are able to provide and, most importantly, we are able to get a fresh perspective on the collections.

CRL Conservator, Marie Sviergula

Would you like to teach seminars using original archives or rare books?

Please get in touch with Martin Killeen
m.killeen@bham.ac.uk

CRL Student Volunteer

Lucy Rowland, CRL

Special Collections, Cadbury Research Library, Muirhead Tower, Lower Ground Floor, Birmingham B15 2TT
The Art of Anatomy Lecture

Professor Alice Roberts explores the fascinating relationship between anatomy and art. Followed by book signing in Muirhead Atrium

Date: Friday 21 March
Time: 1.10–1.50pm
Venue: Muirhead Lecture Theatre LG15
Part of the University’s Arts and Science Festival 2014
To book: special-collections@bham.ac.uk

What’s on at the Cadbury Research Library

Keep up to date with forthcoming events at www.birmingham.ac.uk/events

Exhibitions in Muirhead Tower Atrium – weekdays 9am–6pm

The Art of Anatomy
Date: 4 February – 6 June
Anatomical art selected from the CRL collections by Professor Alice Roberts, broadcaster, author, clinical anatomist and Professor of Public Engagement in Science. The fascinating progression of depictions of dissections of the human body from the time of Vesalius (1543) onwards.

Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies: 1964–2002
Date: 10–29 June
Exhibition drawn from the archives of the groundbreaking Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), one of the biggest influences on the development of cultural and media studies around the world; curated by Dr Kieran Connell, History and Cultures.

From Lancashire to China: a Weaver’s Tale
Date: 1 July – 16 October
The story of the extraordinary life of Lucy Mellodey (1870–1930) a cotton weaver from Lancashire, who in 1899 swapped work in the mills for 28 years in the interior of China as a missionary.

Exhibitions in Main Library Foyer – open daily

Lewis Carroll’s Alice
Date: 7 January – 31 March
Illustrations from Lewis Carroll’s much-loved Alice books.

New Accessions to the CRL
Date: 3 April – 31 May
Highlight from recently acquired collections at the Cadbury Research Library.

Joseph Chamberlain Centenary Exhibition
Date: 2 June – 27 July
2 July 2014 marks 100 years since the death of the University’s founder. Exhibition examining the beginnings of the University through the Joseph Chamberlain Collection.

Catch items on loan to exhibitions at other venues

Faith and Fortune: Visualising the Divine on Byzantine and Early Islamic Coinage
Venue: The Barber Institute of Fine Arts
Date: until 30 November

In the Temple of the Self: the Artist’s Residence as a Total Work – Europe and America 1800–1948
Venue: Villa Stuck Museum, Munich
Date: until 2 March

Shakespeare’s Top Ten Characters
Venue: Nash House, Stratford-upon-Avon
Date: until December

History of Hospital Infections
Venue: UOB Medical School foyer
Date: 17 February – 31 August

Free talks

For all talks please email to reserve your place special-collections@bham.ac.uk

Behind the scenes: the hidden life of Henry Reed
Henry Reed (1914–1986) was a poet, critic, playwright, radio dramatist, translator and journalist. Mark Eccleston, Archivist at the Cadbury Research Library, explores Reed’s fascinating life-story both as a public figure and as a private man.

Date: Thursday 13 February Time: 1.10–2.00pm Venue: Cadbury Research Library

The Fabric of Nature
‘I profess to learn and to teach anatomy not from books but from dissections, not from the tenets of Philosophers but from the fabric of Nature.’ William Harvey, 1628.

Anatomical art viewing and handling session with Martin Killeen, Rare Books Librarian.

Date: Wednesday 21 May
Time: 5.30–6.30pm
Venue: Cadbury Research Library