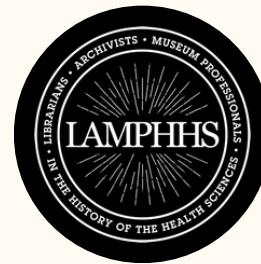


THE WATERMARK



Newsletter of the Librarians, Archivists
& Museum Professionals in the History
of the Health Sciences



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Submissions For the Watermark

The Watermark encourages submissions of news and stories about events, collections, catalogues, people, awards, grants, publications, and anything else of professional interest to the members of LAMPHHS. Please submit your contributions in a timely way to the editors, as e-mail attachments. Visuals should be submitted separately as jpgs with a resolution of at least 300 dpi if possible. Copyright clearance for content and visuals are the responsibility of the author.

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Cover Image

Illustration of Charles Julius Guiteau drawn by E. B. Duval. 1881-1882. Gift of Bert Hansen. From Oskar Diethelm Library, DeWitt Wallace Institute of Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medical College.

Editor's Message

Happy 2026 LAMPHHS Members!

We hope the Winter Issue of *The Watermark* finds you well; in it you will find information about the 2026 Annual Meeting in Buffalo, New York from June 3-4, 2026. Articles include information on attractions and dining in and around Buffalo by the Local Arrangements Committee, as well as a call for proposals from the Program Committee supporting their theme of alternative health care history. Additionally, there are calls for travel award applicants and publication award nominations. Be sure to mark your calendars and begin planning for a memorable meeting in Buffalo!

Important dates to note:

- Program Proposal submissions - February 15
- Recognition Awards nominations - February 28
- Publication Awards submissions - March 1
- Travel Scholarship applications - March 27

This issue includes a repository profile of the W. Bruce Fye Center for the History of Medicine at Mayo Clinic, as well as news updates from the Bernard Becker Medical Library at Washington University School of Medicine, the Oskar Diethelm Library at DeWitt Wallace Institute of Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College, the Massachusetts General Hospital, McGill University Libraries,

and the Claude Moore Health Science Library at the University of Virginia. Finally, this issue concludes with an insightful reflection from the 2025 International Association of Medical Museums and Collections Conference in Ingolstadt, Germany.

Readers might note the absence of book reviews in this issue. In the past year, *The Watermark* book review editors have seen fewer publishers send books to LAMPHHS for review, resulting in fewer book reviews in the works. Accordingly, the editors are encouraging LAMPHHS members to submit their own reviews of books they have read that were published within the last three years and relate to the history of health sciences or to library, archival, or museum practice.

Any member interested in submitting a book review should contact [Erin Torell](#), book review editor. Alternatively, if you have authored a book you would like to be reviewed in *The Watermark*, please contact [Arlene Shaner](#), associate book review editor.

We hope you enjoy the Winter 2026 issue of the Watermark! Thanks for reading and as always feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Watermark Editors

From the President

Happy New Year!

I hope you each had a memorable holiday season. Although the air outside is crisp and cold, the warmer months are on my mind as, yet again, this is the time of year when plans for the annual meeting take shape. This year, Buffalo, New York is our host city, with the meeting being planned for June 3-4, 2026. As Buffalo is my homebase, I am looking forward to welcoming many of you to Western New York for the occasion. June is typically a lovely month here, with an average high temperature of 73°F. My fingers are crossed, hoping for a rain-free, warm week.

This year's Program Committee, led by Brooke Fox and Howard Rootenberg, is working to introduce us to alternative viewpoints in health care's history. Meanwhile, the Local Arrangements Committee (LAC), which I have the pleasure of co-chairing along with Danielle Glynn, is planning a memorable Wednesday evening dinner, reviewing potential meeting venues, and conjuring up a bevy of fun, yet educational, local tours/sightseeing opportunities. Together, these committees hope to bring you an interesting, meaningful, and affordable experience!

Our Awards Committees are gearing up as well, with calls for nominations and applications being



Our Fearless Leader

sent to the listserv. This year, Lucy Waldrop is chair of our Travel Scholarships Committee, Mary Hague-Yearl is leading the Recognition Awards Committee, and Jason Byrd is chairing the Publication Awards Committee.

As always, sincere thanks to those who are serving on each of the above committees!

Want to learn more about our collective committee activities? Well, read on! This issue of the Watermark contains a welcome note from the LAC as well as calls for submissions, nominations, and applications. We hope what we have printed here will excite you, and convince you to submit a paper, nominate your colleagues, and ultimately, attend the meeting in June!

Keith C. Mages
LAMPHHS President



A view of Abbott Library, on the South Campus of the University at Buffalo.

Buffalo, Here We Come!

The 2026 LAMPHHS meeting will be held in Buffalo, New York on June 3 and 4, 2026. This marks the second time LAMPHHS (and AAHM) will be shuffling off to Buffalo, the first being in 1996. We on the Local Arrangements Committee hope you find this guide helpful as you begin to think about the forthcoming warmer months. We're looking forward to welcoming you to the "Queen City" in early June!

Buffalo History in Brief

Situated on the shores of Lake Erie, Buffalo is the second largest city in New York, with a population of round 280,000 people. The greater

metropolitan region of the city includes some 1.1 million citizens. Officially founded in 1832, the city was named after the region's Buffalo Creek, however the origins of the creek's name are unknown.

Originally belonging to the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, specifically the Seneca Nation, some believe the name comes from a mistranslation of the Seneca term for the basswood tree while others believe it was coined upon hearing the French term "beau fleuve," meaning "beautiful river" once applied to the region. Whatever its origins, today the name Buffalo most often elicits thoughts of the Buffalo Bills, Buffalo Wings, and of course, snow.

Buffalo's history revolves around its strategic location at the terminus of Lake Erie. During the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries, this location was an important nexus of international commerce and industrial production. What began as Native American lands and a French trading post would evolve into the "gateway to the west" with the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, linking the Great Lakes to the Atlantic. Buffalo became a major 19th-century city due to its shipping, grain, and steel operations. Despite facing economic hardships in the mid- to late-20th century, today, Buffalo is a vibrant mid-size city known for its friendly people, architectural heritage, and thriving arts scene.

Health Care History in Buffalo

For a city of its size, Buffalo has a surprisingly robust connection to important moments in the history of health care. We'll start with Buffalo Medical College (the forerunner to today's University at Buffalo), established in 1846 by several faculty-physicians including Drs. Austin Flint and Frank Hastings Hamilton.

Austin Flint, a Harvard Medical School graduate, was a well-known diagnostician, for whom "Flint's Murmur" is named. He was the founder of the Buffalo Medical Journal. Frank Hastings Hamilton, graduate of University of Pennsylvania's Medical School, was

an eminent surgeon who was consulted after the shooting of President Garfield in 1881. Flint and Hastings Hamilton would later be among the founders of the Bellevue Hospital Medical College.

Early graduates of the University included Dr. Cornelius N. Dorsette (1882), a formerly enslaved individual from North Carolina. Dorsette graduated from Hampton Institute before heading to Buffalo. He would go on to become Booker T. Washington's personal physician, a staunch supporter of the Black community, and a trustee of the Tuskegee Institute.

UB Faculty also contributed much to national medical advances.

Ophthalmologist Dr. Lucian Howe championed New York State legislation calling for the compulsory administration of silver nitrate to newborn infants to proactively treat ophthalmia neonatorum, a leading cause of congenital blindness. After being enacted in New York in 1890, similar legislation was passed throughout the country.

The 1901 Pan-American Exposition put Buffalo in the national spotlight. The Exposition grounds were lit with electrified lights, while the X-Ray machine, infant incubators, and electric ambulance spoke of healthcare's future. Unfortunately, the Exposition may be most well known as the site where President William McKinley was shot by Leon

Czolgosz. UB faculty Drs. Matthew D. Mann and Roswell Park, among others, attended to the President over the next few days. Despite some early hope, the President would succumb to his injuries on September 14, 1901. His autopsy would be carried out by another UB faculty member, Dr. Hermen Matzinger.

During the 1950's, Dr. Robert Guthrie developed reliable testing for phenylketonuria (PKU) and breakthroughs in implantable pacemaker technology were made by UB engineering professor Wilson Greatbatch. In the 1970s, the Prostate Specific Antigen was also discovered here, owing to the research of Drs. Richard Ablin and T. Ming Chu.

Although not a UB story, another important advancement in health care arose from the work of Buffalo native Elisabeth Coe Marshall, who in 1885 founded a model of home care nursing which would be reproduced across the country, known today as the Visiting Nursing Association (VNA).

Visiting Buffalo

Aside from perhaps the Buffalo Bills and snow, the first thing many people think about when Buffalo comes to mind is the food. Near the conference hotel are several places to check out, some walkable, others a short ride away. Of course, aside from food, the region offers plenty of things to see and do. Continue

reading to learn more about your options!

Restaurants

If you are craving chicken wings, you might wish to visit the Anchor Bar, where Buffalo wings originated in 1964. Another nearby venue, also known for quality wings is Gabriel's Gate, located in the Allentown district. If you want to enjoy some beef on weck, take a quick ride to Larkinville and enjoy Eckl's @ Larkin. For those craving a hearty Italian-American meal, head to historic Chef's for their signature spaghetti parmesan. More elevated dining experiences can be found at Bacchus Wine Bar, very close to the Hyatt Regency, which offers a nice selection of fine wines and elegant food. Similarly, Inizio provides excellent service and delicious cocktails and house-made pasta in its Elmwood Village location. Also in Elmwood Village is Mira, a newly opened Mediterranean restaurant which many enjoy. Finally, very close to the hotel is the International House, a food hall featuring a variety of restaurants including those serving Ethiopian, Filipino, Mexican, and Burmese cuisines.

Of course, there are many other excellent dining options in the area, these are just a few to get you started!

Downtown Districts

The conference hotel, the Buffalo Hyatt Regency, is conveniently located in the heart of downtown Buffalo. Situated within the city's Theater District, here you can take in a production in one of the city's many theater venues including the historic [Shea's Buffalo](#), [Shea's 710](#), [Irish Classical Theater](#), [Alleyway Theater](#), among many others.

As you make your way closer to the lake and into Buffalo's Business District, check out the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library's main branch, the [Central Library](#). Also be sure to enjoy the stunning [architecture](#) of some of Buffalo's historic buildings, such as the [Guaranty Building](#) and [Buffalo City Hall](#). If stopping by City Hall, be sure to visit the 28th floor's [observation deck](#)! Also in this region is Sahlen Field, home of the [Buffalo Bisons](#), a Triple-A affiliate team of the Toronto Blue Jays.

Nearby is Canalside. Built around the historic terminus of the Erie Canal, this is Buffalo's [waterfront](#). Here you can find the [Key Bank Center](#), a large event venue and home of the National Hockey League's [Buffalo Sabres](#). Also in this region is the [Buffalo Heritage Carousel](#), [Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park](#), and the [Explore & More Children's Museum](#).

Those interested in the [Underground Railroad](#) and African

American history may wish to visit the [Historic Michigan Street Baptist Church](#) in the [Michigan Street Corridor](#), just a 5 minute drive from Canalside. While there, check out the [Nash House Museum](#) and the [Historic Colored Musicians Club and Jazz Museum](#).

Elmwood Village

Still within the City of Buffalo, but outside of downtown, is [Elmwood Village](#). Here you can stroll and enjoy a wide variety of independent shops, restaurants, and bars. Favorites include [Thin Ice](#), [Second Chic](#), [Talking Leaves Books](#), and [Watson's Chocolates](#). If you are hungry while here, consider [Kuni's](#) for fresh sushi or [Saint Neri](#) for cocktails and caviar.

Delaware Park Area

Finally, while in Buffalo, you may wish to visit the Frederick Law Olmsted-designed [Delaware Park](#) and its many nearby museums and cultural sites. The recently expanded [Buffalo AKG Art Museum](#) (formerly known as the Albright Knox) offers a world-class modern art experience, whereas the [Buffalo History Museum](#) provides glimpses of Buffalo's heyday. Also in this area are the [Burchfield Penny Art Center](#), historic [Forest Lawn Cemetery](#) (burial ground of many of Buffalo's prominent citizens), and the [Richardson Olmsted Campus](#), site of the foreboding, H.H. Richardson-designed, Buffalo State Asylum and

current Richardson Hotel. Finally, not far from here, you can also visit the Darwin Martin House, one of Frank Lloyd Wright's intoxicating creations.

Further Afield

Regional fun doesn't stop at the Buffalo city border - nearby towns just a short drive away offer additional places to explore.

Southtowns

Sports fans might want to bid adieu to the home of the Buffalo Bills for the past 53 years, Highmark Stadium, in Orchard Park, about 14 miles south of Buffalo, and wave hello to the New Highmark Stadium across the street. Next to Orchard Park is picturesque East Aurora. This village is a favorite backdrop of romantic holiday movies (think Hallmark) and features a vibrant Main Street with Vidler's 5&10, the birthplace of the American Arts and Crafts Movement at Elbert Hubbard's Rocrocft Campus, and the home of Millard Fillmore, the 13th President of the United States.

Niagara Falls, USA and Canada

World famous Niagara Falls (New York) is located just 20 miles north of Buffalo (NFTA-Metro buses and Amtrak trains make this trip daily). Experience the raw power of nature at Niagara Falls State Park, walk among the cliff-side on the Cave of the Winds tour, or ride a boat

and brave the foot of the falls aboard the Maid of the Mist. Take some time to visit the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center and, just north of the city, Old Fort Niagara, first constructed by the French in the late 17th century!

You might consider bringing your passport to head over to the Canadian (Ontario) side of the Falls, including its lovely gardens and touristy Clifton Hill. Just north of Niagara Falls, Canada, is beautiful Niagara-on-the-Lake (NotL). A wonderful town with a distinct colonial charm, NotL features a variety of shops, an historic apothecary, and hosts the Shaw Festival which brings a variety of plays and musicals to the region throughout the year. NotL is also surrounded by a surprising number of vineyards.

Chautauqua County, NY

Located just over an hour south of Buffalo is Chautauqua County, a largely rural region of Western New York that, nevertheless, contains some surprising sites of interest. If you have the time to make the trip, consider spending some time at one of the region's many wineries. In the small city of Jamestown, visit the National Comedy Center, the Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum, and the Roger Tory Peterson Institute (Peterson was a noted naturalist, artist, and field guide creator).

Also in this region are two incredibly unique communities. Lily Dale, a spiritualist enclave founded in 1879, offers believers and skeptics alike a chance to connect with a vibrant community of mediums. Tour the assembly grounds, visit the small museum, library, and various gift shops or even attend a live mediumship reading at Inspiration Stump (these live-readings may only be available during the summer season).

No less charming, but founded in 1874 on very different principles, is the Chautauqua Institution located just outside of Mayville, New York on the shores of Chautauqua Lake. Beginning as a summer camp for Protestant Sunday school teachers, today the Institute (as it is known) boasts an impressive assemblage of Victorian architecture, beautiful gardens, and a nine-week summer season that offers literary and scientific lectures, an assortment of educational classes, as well as symphony, dance, opera, and theater performances. Even out of season, a visit to the grounds is recommended. The historic Athenaeum Hotel offers a pleasant homebase for an evening's stay, while the Smith Memorial Library and the Chautauqua Bookstore provide plenty of reading options for those who just want to sit a bit and take in the lovely scenery.

Conference Information

Lodging

The meeting's hotel is:

Hyatt Regency Buffalo
2 Fountain Plaza
Buffalo, NY 14202

Phone: +1 716 856 1234

Please stay tuned for more information regarding booking reservations through the negotiated conference rate.

Travel To Buffalo

Buffalo Niagara International Airport (BUF) serves the Western New York Region. From the airport, NFTA-Metro public bus transportation (\$2.00), rental cars, or ride share services can take you to the meeting hotel.

Additionally, downtown Buffalo is served by Amtrak trains. If coming by train, be sure to disembark at the Buffalo Exchange Street Station (BFX). The conference hotel is about a 20 minute walk from this station. The NFTA-Metro light rail or ride sharing can also get you to the hotel very quickly. Please note when taking the train: there is also a suburban stop in the Buffalo region, Depew Station (BUF). This station is approximately 15 miles outside of the city and much further from the hotel.

For those driving to the region, valet parking is available at the hotel for \$29.50 per night (with in and out privileges). Additionally, numerous parking garages are nearby, including the Owen B. Augspurger Ramp.

Getting Around Buffalo

Just outside of the Hyatt Regency is the Fountain Plaza station of the NFTA-Metro light rail system. To the west, the light rail will take you to Lake Erie and Canalside. To the east, it terminates at the University Station, the University at Buffalo's South Campus (this year's conference venue). As with the buses, the light rail costs \$2.00. Tickets for both can be purchased via phone, with the Token Transit app.

Unfortunately, the light rail does not extend to many other places one might consider visiting while in the region. For this, NFTA-Metro buses or ride sharing options would be necessary. The 20 bus travels up Elmwood Avenue, stopping near many sites of interest including the Elmwood Village area, the AKG Art Gallery, and the Buffalo History Museum.



Conference Venue

Thursday's LAMPHHS Meeting will be held at the University at Buffalo's South Campus in Buffalo's University District. This is the campus of UB's health sciences schools (excluding the medical school, which is closer to downtown) and is home to Abbott Library and the Robert L. Brown History of Medicine Collection.

Transportation to the venue will be provided via UB shuttles leaving from the hotel, but additional transportation to campus is available with NFTA-Metro buses and light-rail, as noted above. Parking on campus for non-affiliates is limited to the free park and ride lot (3435 Main St) NFTA-Metro University Station.

More specifics will be announced related to registration and our meeting venue in the future!



A view of 500 Pearl, and the adjoining Aloft Hotel, the setting for this year's dinner.

Wednesday Night Dinner

Our pre-conference dinner will be held from 6:00-9:00 p.m. on June 3rd at 500 Pearl, in the 1914 Room. This historic event venue (500 Pearl Street, Buffalo NY) is located just a 7-minute walk from the conference hotel and promises to be a pleasant setting for good food and camaraderie. The venue caters to a variety of dietary needs and is fully accessible via elevator.

As with the meeting venue, more specifics are forthcoming!

Tours

The Local Arrangements Committee is working to bring you a unique, fun, variety of experiences for this year's conference. We are working with local museums, libraries, and community organizations to bring you a diverse slice of Western New York culture.

Stay tuned!

LAMPHHS LAC Committee 2026

- Danielle Glynn, Connie Henke Yarbro Oncology Nursing History Center, Oncology Nursing Society (co-chair)
- Keith Mages, Robert L. Brown History of Medicine Collection, University at Buffalo (co-chair)
- Michelle Bass, Pennsylvania Hospital Medical Library, University of Pennsylvania
- James Bono, Department of History, University at Buffalo
- Nicholas Webb, Phillip Capozzi, MD Library, New York Medical College



Etching of a tea plant by Vintage Illustration, Canva Designs..

Call for Proposals

Librarians, Archivists, and Museum Professionals in the History of the Health Sciences (LAMPHHS) invites you to submit a proposal for its annual meeting in Buffalo, New York, June 3-4, 2026.

The concept behind this year's program is thinking beyond the boundaries of conventional health practices. Building on this idea, the Program Committee invites members to look beyond traditional ideas of healthcare and explore the often-overlooked world of alternative healing. We encourage you to review your collections with a new perspective, looking for stories, artifacts, and practices that highlight spiritualism, cultural medical traditions, faith healing, folk medicine, and other local health systems that are hidden in the records of midwives, physician assistants, pharmacists, social

workers, chaplains and other spiritual caregivers, and family caretakers. This theme opens up conversations about how communities have found wellness in many different ways, including groups such as Christian Scientists and Jehovah's Witnesses, and how allopathic medicine has responded to or included these alternative treatments. By exploring these connections, the conference aims to expand our understanding of what healing has meant in different times, places, and belief systems.

Session Formats: The Program Committee encourages submission of proposals that may include, but are not limited to, the following formats:

- **Traditional Conference:** Presentations: Speakers should expect to give a presentation of no more than 15 minutes followed by discussion.
- **Panel Discussion:** 60-90 minute session with a panel of 3 to 4+ individuals informally discussing a variety of theories or perspectives on a common topic. Please confirm participation with all panelists before submitting the panel proposal.
- **Special Focus Session:** 60-minute session designed to highlight innovative archives or museum programs, new techniques, and research projects. Audience participation is encouraged.

- **Workshops, Other Formats:** Have a format idea that isn't represented? Feel free to propose an alternative!

Please submit your proposal via the [submission form](#).

The deadline for submitting session proposals is February 15, 2026.

You must be a LAMPHHS member to submit a proposal. Not a member? Join for only \$25.00 at <https://lamphhs.org/>

If you have any questions, please email Howard Rootenberg at (howard@rootenbergbooks.com) or Brooke Fox (foxeb@musc.edu).

LAMPHHS Program Committee

- Howard Rootenberg, Independent Bookseller (co-chair)
- Brooke Fox, MUSC Waring Historical Library (co-chair)
- Michelle Marcella, Russell Museum, Massachusetts General Hospital
- Rena Selya, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
- Heather Stecklein, W. Bruce Fye Center for the History of Medicine, Mayo Clinic Archives



Travel Scholarship Call For Applications

The Travel Scholarships Committee is now accepting applications from members seeking funds to support their attendance at the 2026 Annual Meeting in Buffalo, New York on June 3-4, 2026.

LAMPHHS awards up to four annual conference travel stipends to members of the organization who are staff, volunteers, students, or early career professionals working for health science history museums, libraries, or archives. Early career professionals are those who have worked in the history of the health sciences field fewer than five years, although they may have been employed in the profession longer. The purpose of these awards is to encourage and support continued education and professional engagement for members working in the field.

Applicants should submit the following:

- a completed application form
- a personal statement (no more than 500 words) highlighting their interest in the conference, how attendance will benefit them, and why they need financial support
- a letter of recommendation from either their academic advisor (for students) or immediate supervisor (for staff/volunteers)

Applications are due to the chair of the committee by **March 27, 2026**.

For further information, please contact the committee chair, Lucy Waldrop (lucy.waldrop@duke.edu)

Travel Scholarships Committee:

- Lucy Waldrop, Medical Center Archives, Duke University (chair)
- Sarah Bush, Bernard Becker Medical Library, Washington University School of Medicine
- Rachel Jones Lopez, University of Alabama at Birmingham Libraries
- Ashley Stevens, Woodruff Health Sciences Center Library, Emory University

Seeking Nominations for Publication Awards

Librarians, Archivists, and Museum Professionals in the History of the Health Sciences (LAMPHHS) is seeking nominations for the Publication Awards. These awards will be presented at the 2026 LAMPHHS annual meeting.

Nominations can be in one of three categories:

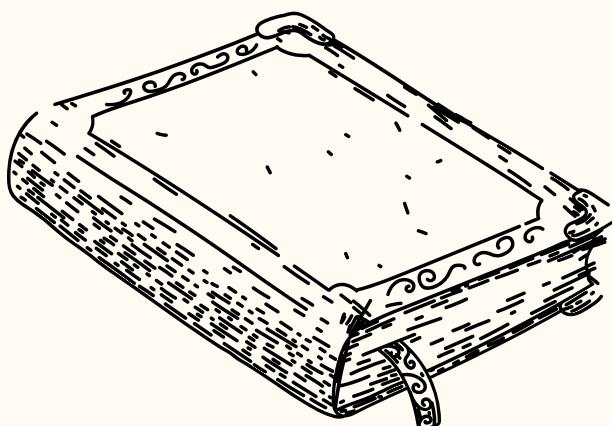
- Monographs published by academic or trade publishers for the LAMPHHS Best Monograph.
- Articles published in journals, trade, or private periodicals of recognized standing for the **LAMPHHS Patricia E. Gallagher Publication Award for Best Article**.
- Online resources produced predominantly by LAMPHHS members for the LAMPHHS Best Online Resource.

All nominations must meet the following criteria:

- Published within 3 years of the award date.
- Author(s) must be LAMPHHS member(s) in good standing for the past 12 months.
- The nominated monograph, article, bibliography, catalog, or electronic resource is related to the history of the health care sciences or works on the management of historical collections in the health care sciences.

Nominations that meet each of the above criteria will be considered by the Publication Awards Committee. The Committee will look for the following benchmarks of excellence when evaluating qualifying nominations:

- Quality and style of writing
- Contribution to the field
- Relevance to the profession



*Rare vintage book sketch hand drawn.
By pikepicture. Canva.*

Up to one Publication Award in each category will be presented at the 2026 annual meeting. Winners do not need to be present to win.

Each nomination should clearly identify the work being nominated, the author(s) of that work, and an address at which the designated nominee(s) can be contacted. Self-nominations are encouraged, and re-nominations are allowed if the publication date falls within the current three-year period. For electronic submissions, please include all relevant URLs. For printed nominations, one copy for each member of the publication awards committee will be required. Appropriate mailing addresses should be provided to nominators (or publishers) once a nomination to review a physical format is received.

The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2026. All nominations, along with any questions, should be sent to the 2026 Publication Awards Committee chair, Jason Byrd, at jbbyrd@uab.edu.

LAMPHHS Publication Awards Committee:

- Jason Byrd, The University of Alabama at Birmingham (chair)
- Gabrille Barr, Office of NIH History and Stetten Museum
- Brooke Guthrie, Duke University
- Beth Kilmarx, Boston Medical Library

Repository Profile

The W. Bruce Fye Center for the History of Medicine at Mayo Clinic is responsible for acquiring, organizing, preserving, and promoting the recorded memory of individuals and organizations which have shaped Mayo Clinic's unique culture and history, and for providing research tools and services to make such materials accessible to users.

About the Fye Center

Mayo Clinic honors W. Bruce Fye, MD and Lois B. Fye for their support of the W. Bruce Fye Center for the History of Medicine.

Dr. Fye joined Mayo Clinic as a consultant in the Division of Cardiovascular Diseases in 2000 and retired in 2014. When the Center for the History of Medicine at Mayo Clinic was founded in 2005, Dr. Fye served as its first medical director. Dr. Fye is a recognized leader in cardiology and medical history, having served as president of the American College of Cardiology and the American Association for the History of Medicine. He is the sole author of three historical books and more than one hundred historical and biographical articles. Dr. Fye's book *Caring for the Heart: Mayo Clinic and the Rise of Specialization* was published in 2014. His decades-long passion for collecting medical books resulted in a large personal

reference library that greatly aided his historical research. Since 2010, Dr. and Mrs. Fye have donated more than 16,000 books to Mayo Clinic.

Mayo Clinic Historical Suite

The Historical Suite includes a variety of exhibits featuring artifacts and archival materials documenting the origins, milestones, and evolution of Mayo Clinic.

The suite includes the final offices used by the clinic's founders—world renowned surgeons Drs. William J. (Will) and Charles H. (Charlie) Mayo.



W. Bruce Fye History of Medicine Library exhibit space.

Dr. Will's office is arranged as it was when he used it from 1928 to 1939. Family photographs and pictures of the Mayo family's riverboats are displayed along with other personal effects. Dr. Charlie's office contains original furnishings and family photographs. After his death, his son, Dr. Charles (Chuck) W. Mayo, also a Mayo Clinic surgeon, used the office until his retirement.



The Board of Governors Room, one-time heart of the Mayo Clinic where the Board conducted weekly meetings shaping the institution's future.

Open for Self-Guided Tours:

Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Volunteer guides are available from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm each weekday.

The Historical Suite is open to Mayo Clinic staff, patients and their families. It is not open to the general public, but a virtual tour is available.

Fye Travel Grants

The W. Bruce Fye Center for the History of Medicine offers annual travel grants to two researchers who wish to use Mayo Clinic archival and library resources. The W. Bruce Fye Medical History Research Travel Grant is available to physicians, historians, medical students, graduate students, faculty members, and independent scholars who are residents of the United States or Canada and live more than 75 miles from Rochester, Minnesota. Application information is available [on the library's website](#).

Historical Committees

Mayo Clinic's historical committees foster a lively sense of the past among all members of the Mayo community at the Minnesota, Arizona, and Florida campuses. The committees support the preservation and interpretation of the history of medicine and Mayo Clinic and serve as advisory bodies for exhibits, events, and collection development.

Archives

The Mayo Clinic Archives serves as the official repository for historical materials relating to Mayo Clinic. The resources maintained at its archival locations in Rochester, Minnesota; Scottsdale, Arizona; and Jacksonville, Florida are open to all members of the Mayo community, and upon approval, to others interested in the history of Mayo Clinic. Collections document Mayo Clinic's milestones, innovations, and discoveries, along with institutional events and culture. Collection highlights include the personal and professional papers of the Mayo brothers, records documenting the Nobel Prize winning discovery of cortisone, institutional newsletters, and a variety of audiovisual materials. Archives staff develop people and subject files, interpretive exhibits, and programming to highlight elements of Mayo Clinic's unique identity and accomplishments. Collection indexes and digital exhibits are available at

the [W. Bruce Eye Center for the History of Medicine Mayo Clinic Archives' website](#).

Research Support

Monday - Friday by appointment

For research questions and requests, please contact us at mayohistorysocial@mayo.edu or by [completing this form](#).

History of Medicine Society Lecture series

The History of Medicine Society at Mayo Clinic has been active since 1964, with internal and external presenters covering a variety of topics in medical history. The lectures are funded through the Edward C. Stafne, DDS History in Medicine Program. The program has recently expanded to include presentations hosted in Rochester, Jacksonville, and Scottsdale, as well as offering virtual attendance options. [See upcoming lecture schedules](#).

W. Bruce Fye History of Medicine Library

Operating in collaboration with the Fye Center, the W. Bruce Fye History of Medicine Library is one of fifteen libraries across the Mayo Clinic enterprise and is in the Plummer Building in Rochester, Minnesota. The collection houses several thousand volumes of rare medical classics (from 1479) and early journal literature (from 1665)

alongside a large collection of Mayo physician bound reprints. More recently published histories, biographies, facsimiles, and other support materials comprise the remainder of the collection of over 20,000 volumes.

The significant donation from Dr. Fye includes author inscribed titles, an evolutionary biology collection, and a Mayo Clinic history collection. Additional collection strengths include a dermatology collection donated by Oscar Gans, MD in the early 1950's. Gans' reason for the gift was: "In a troubled world, the Clinic was a good and enduring repository for books."

A favorite item in the collection is a first edition copy of Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*. Donated in 1962 by Erwin O. Strassmann, MD, the story of the gift was featured in [a Mayo Clinic Heritage film](#). The production of this film is a great example of the collaboration between all of Mayo Clinic's history and heritage teams.

The library is open by appointment for research, reference consultations, and tours for employees, visiting physicians, development guests, and external researchers. The library catalog is [available online](#) and additional contact information can be [found on our library LibGuide](#).

By Heather Stecklein, Head of Archives, & Emily Brown, History of Medicine Librarian, W. Bruce Fye Center for the History of Medicine at Mayo Clinic

Repository News

Bernard Becker Medical Library: New Digital Exhibit Explores the History of Hearing Aids

How Did We Get Hear? Historic Hearing Devices 1800-2000 is a new digital exhibit that explores the long history of hearing devices, from mechanical conversation tubes to electronic transistor hearing aids.



A 57-inch-long conversation tube, circa 1796. The receptor and earpiece are made of ivory, and the tube is rubber covered with red silk fabric.

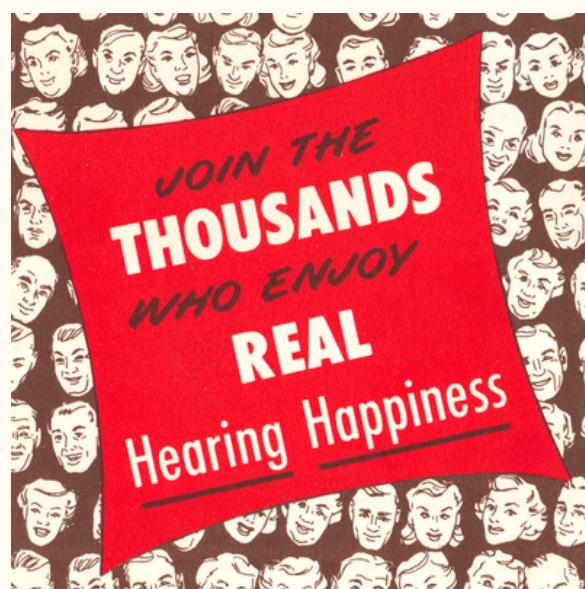
The exhibit draws on the archives and rare book collections held at Bernard Becker Medical Library at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. It features nearly 100 different hearing devices, as well as dozens of advertisements, photographs, and illustrations found in collections at Becker Archives and Rare Books.

The hearing aids we are familiar with today are both tiny, mighty, and the product of hundreds of years of scientific and technological



Otarion Electronics' Model Rx 880, a plastic binaural eyeglass hearing aid, 1967. This device used transistors, an electronic component invented in the mid-1900s that made the miniaturization of hearing aids possible.

development. *How Did We Get Hear?* examines the innovations and inventions that shaped the history of hearing devices, as well as some of the problematic beliefs and biases that influenced their development.



Part of a Radioear Corporation brochure, 1952. Advertisements in the mid-19th century often included negative attitudes towards deafness, such as suggesting that the deaf and hard of hearing could lead a fulfilling life only if they wore a hearing aid.

How Did We Get Here? was based on an in-person exhibit of the same name that was on display in Becker Medical Library from November 2022 to February 2023. The digital exhibit builds on the original exhibit, including additional content and many more collection items. To view our other digital exhibits, visit <https://beckerexhibits.wustl.edu/>.

By **Sarah Bush**, *Bernard Becker Medical Library, Washington University School of Medicine*

Oskar Diethelm Library, DeWitt Wallace Institute of Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medical College: Metropolitan New York Library Council Digitization Project Grant and New Omeka Exhibit



Illustration of Charles Julius Guiteau drawn by E. B. Duval. 1881-1882. Gift of Bert Hansen.

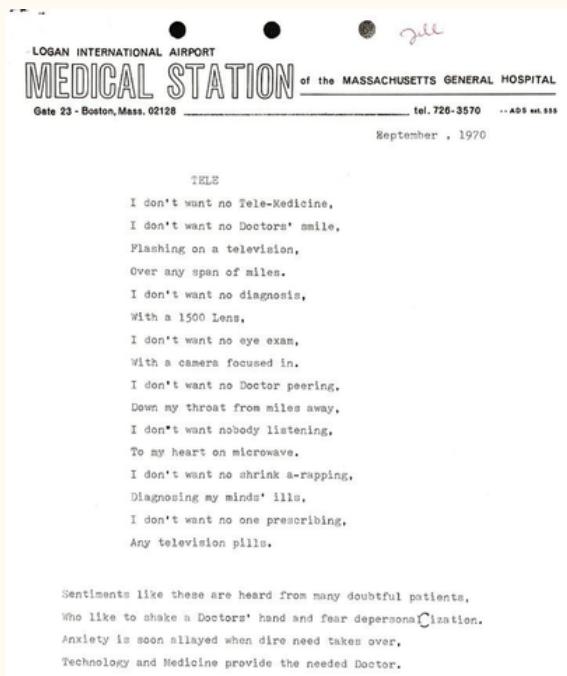
The Oskar Diethelm Library, part of the DeWitt Wallace Institute of Psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College, is pleased to announce it is the recipient of a 2025-2026 Digitization Project Grant from the Metropolitan New York Library Council. This grant will fund the digitization of the papers of Thomas Salmon, who was a leading figure in the field of psychiatry and mental hygiene, established the Ellis Island psychiatric service for immigrants under the United States Marine Hospital Service, and organized neuropsychiatric units for the Army and the Navy during the First World War.

In addition, during the past year the library released a new online Omeka exhibit entitled *Psychiatry, Insanity, and Religion in the Trial of Charles Guiteau*. This exhibit was made possible through the wonderful curation and assistance of Nick Brenner. Drawing on the library's unique collection of materials, the exhibit focuses on the events surrounding the trial of Charles Guiteau, who assassinated American President James Garfield in 1881. Some highlights of the collection include trial notes, pamphlets and popular media discussing the trial, materials written by psychologists about the trial, and correspondence between W. W. Godding and President Chester A. Arthur.

Massachusetts General Hospital: New Acquisition: Pieces of Telemedicine History

In 1967, Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) internist Kenneth Bird had an extraordinary idea: to examine patients over closed-circuit television. Already the head of Boston's Logan International Airport MGH Medical Station for several years, he and colleague Thomas Fitzpatrick opened a telemedicine clinic in the station in 1968.

Physicians could remotely examine patients and receive transmissions from diagnostic tools, and Bird coined the term "telemedicine" to describe this novel process. Though the clinic closed in the 1970s, telemedicine and its associated



This poem takes us on a journey from a patient's doubts to acceptance of the utility of telemedicine.

technologies have become only more visible and crucial in recent years following a boom in telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

So when Kenneth Bird's grandson Jonathan called to offer us the X-ray machine used at the Logan clinic, we at the MGH Archives and Special Collections leaped at the chance. Also in the collection: a blood pressure cuff and EKG machine, which transmitted data from the patient at Logan to MGH. These artifacts complement the MGH Telemedicine Center Records, 1968-1996 (AC01), which consist of news clippings covering the project, informational materials about Center activities, reports and studies for wide-ranging telemedicine projects, photos, and even a humorous poem



The physician, seated at MGH miles away from the airport clinic, examines the eye of a patient over closed-circuit television.

that reflects anxieties over the insertion of technology into the doctor-patient relationship.



Crew from MGH Buildings and Grounds drove the 20 miles to Bird's suburban garage to heft the estimated 300 lb. machine into their Ford Transit (which has over the years earned the nickname the "Sarah van" for museum colleague Sarah Alger's artifact transport requests)

By **Lucy Ross and Sarah Alger**,
Massachusetts General Hospital

The Osler goes to Abu Dhabi: The Golden Ink exhibit

On the last day of September 2025, two Osler Library manuscripts arrived in Abu Dhabi along with fifteen other items from McGill Libraries. Colleagues from McGill Libraries and the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT) had been meeting online since May 2024 to prepare for two events scheduled for early October 2025: 1) the installation and

opening of the *Golden Ink* exhibition at the House of Knowledge gallery in the Presidential Palace, Qasr Al Watan; 2) the meeting of the Fourth Abu Dhabi International Conference on Manuscripts at the Abu Dhabi Cultural Centre.

Background

Reflecting the importance given to this international venture when it was proposed early in 2024, the McGill-DCT Abu Dhabi collaborative group involved high-level individuals, including McGill's Trenholme Dean of Libraries, Guylaine Beaudry, and the Director of the Library Management Department at DCT Abu Dhabi, Fatema Al Tamimi. Although we met monthly as a team, the co-curators who remained in close communication between meetings were Anaïs Salamon (Head Librarian, Islamic Studies Library, McGill University Libraries) and Doaa Nounou (Senior Islamic Manuscripts Specialist and Curator, DCT Abu Dhabi).

After discussing a range of ideas in the first meeting, the working group forged a quick consensus to mount a travelling exhibition featuring manuscripts from both institutions. We also agreed that we would publish a bi- or tri-lingual catalogue raisonné for each instance of the exhibit. DCT decided to host an academic conference to coincide with the Abu Dhabi exhibit opening, for which McGill provided organizational support.

The final list of items on loan from McGill reflects the breadth of our holdings. The greater number came from Rare Books and Special Collections and the Islamic Studies Library. These include an example of *Kāra-Lāmah* from circa 1700 CE (RBSC Arabic Calligraphy 008); a bifolium from the *Qur’ān* in Kufic script from the 8th century CE (RBSC Arabic Calligraphy 195); a *Qur’ān* Calligraphic Album from the 19th century (RBSC Arabic Calligraphy 161); *Farrukh-nāmah-i Jamālī*, 1201 CE (RBSC folio BWL W58); a copy of *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah* from 1645 CE (RBSC RBD Arabic 0001); an 18th-century Commentary on *Ḥadīth* collection (RBSC Malay MS 1); a Prayer Calligram from circa 1800 CE (RBSC RBD Arabic 0037); examples of lithography; and a lacquer pen case, along with two reed pens and a brass pen tray.

Originally, RBD 415 (nibbing block) had been selected, but since it is made of ivory – one of the more heavily controlled materials worldwide – it would have required a CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species or Wild Fauna and Flora) export permit, which would have taken months to process. Hence, we removed it at the last minute but anticipate including RBD 415 when the exhibit comes to Montreal.

The Osler Library is represented by two manuscripts:

- Osler B.O. 7508, Abū Ja’far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ghāfiqī, *Kitāb fī al-adwiya al-mufrada*, 1256 CE. This work is a lavishly illustrated mid-13th-century herbal by famous 12th-century Andalusian physician and scholar, al-Ghāfiqī, whose knowledge of medicinal plants was considered unparalleled.
- Osler B.O. 7785/75, Manṣūr ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf Faqīh Ilyās, *Tashrīḥ-i badan*, 17th century CE. This is the earlier of two copies that the Osler Library has of this anatomy by late-14th-century Persian physician Manṣūr, which is famous for its multiple colour illustrations of systems of the human body.

As is our practice whenever items go out on loan, the manuscripts that traveled to Abu Dhabi are accessible in the Internet Archive collections of the Osler Library, Rare Books and Special Collections, and the Islamic Studies Library.

There was one extra step required for the Osler Library manuscripts that did not apply to the other McGill items. In accordance with the guidelines for the Osler Library, we secured the permission of the Osler Library Board of Curators to send B.O. 7508 and B.O. 7785/75 out on loan. When the library first opened, the guidelines agreed by the Curators – based on William Osler’s own instructions – stipulated that the

Curators approve any such external loans; this is a practice that continues for all books that are listed in the original catalogue and thus have a B.O. (Bibliotheca Osleriana – the original catalogue) number. This is more than a mere formality; it is an important way by which we maintain an active dialogue about how we are remaining true to the educational vision with which Osler established the library, while also ensuring the long-term preservation of its treasures. Given the state-of-the art exhibition facilities available at the Presidential Palace in Abu Dhabi and the precise care detailed for their transportation (described below), the curators agreed that lending these two manuscripts was an excellent opportunity to bring visibility to the Osler Library.

In addition to the items on display from the collections of the two main partners – McGill University Libraries and the DCT Abu Dhabi – the team secured loans of material from the Louvre Abu Dhabi, the Zayed National Museum, and the private library of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khaled bin Mohammed bin Zayed.

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Logistics

The logistics behind this collaboration were unlike anything previously undertaken at the Osler Library. Although much of our experience may be familiar to our colleagues in the museum world, it was full of novelties for employees of the McGill Libraries. Preparation began months in advance, when representatives from Cubic, the museum mount-making company contracted by DCT Abu Dhabi, traveled to Montreal to take precise



Our materials were packed in protective trays, custom-made to stack within crates that were themselves custom-made.

measurements of each item in order to start work on custom supports to be used in the exhibit. At around the same time, Rare Books and Special Collections colleagues worked with representatives from Total Fine Arts to create custom-fit enclosures to use during transportation.

The magnitude of the shipment of rare materials from McGill to Abu Dhabi justified sending two couriers (the authors of this piece, Anaïs Salomon and Mary Hague-Yearl) to share the responsibility of

accompanying the crates. The sealed and locked crates were transported by truck to Toronto, then loaded on a direct flight from Toronto to Abu Dhabi. All movement of the crates was finely choreographed and coordinated with fine arts movers in Canada and Abu Dhabi. We always knew where the crates were and had a team chat with real-time photos we took when we could, and to which we uploaded photos shared by the fine arts team when they were in zones of the airports to which we did not have access. As we watched our plane being loaded in Toronto and awaited confirmation that the crates were secure and that we could board our flight, we were able to match our contacts' photos with what we could see happening on the ground.

Moving rare books is always an operation that requires a great deal of planning, care, and attention to detail. Typically, our external loans have been to institutions within Canada, or at least within the same climate zone. In moving from Montreal to Abu Dhabi, the books left a library where the conditions were 45%RH and 18°C (64°F). When the containers holding the crates were loaded into the secure cargo bay in Toronto, the temperature had reached that day's local high of 25°C (77°F); when they were unloaded in Abu Dhabi, it was around 33°C (91°F), reaching nearly 40°C (104°F) by the time we arrived at the Presidential Palace, Qasr Al Watan. Needless to say, part of the contract with the fine arts movers addressed the need for climate

control throughout the move, and throughout the move, and the books were packed within wooden crates lined with materials that not only protected them from movement but also helped to maintain the climate conditions. It was to mitigate any shock or exposure to the differences in climate that the crates were to remain sealed for at least twenty-four hours after landing in Abu Dhabi and were only unsealed once they had acclimated in a locked room within the climate-controlled conditions of the Qasr Al Watan Library. At this time, we began our transition from courier mode back into our more usual roles as professional librarians.



The crates accumulated a number of security seals during their journey.

Collaboration and reinforcement

The days that followed consisted of working alongside the conservator as she added her comments to our condition reports, consulting with the conservation technicians from Cubic as they fine-tuned supports for each of our items, and accompanying the registrar and conservator to the gallery as the exhibit gradually took

shape. We were present at every stage when McGill Libraries materials were manipulated. We witnessed the light readings, the calibration of dataloggers. Each day, more cases within the gallery were filled until finally – and on schedule – the exhibit was ready.

One aspect of the installation that required special attention on our end related to the pages that would be shown. Both of the Osler Library manuscripts had recently been on display: the Al-Ghafiqi as part of our 2023 exhibit on Arabic medicine and the Tashrih-i-badan was on loan to the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto from 2022-2025, where several pages were highlighted in three successive exhibitions. Having shared information about what had been displayed, we worked with the conservator in Abu Dhabi to make sure that we selected pages from a



Getting the support just right for B.O. 7785/75.



The conservator checks the light levels after installing B.O. 7508, while the registrar records the reading using a phone (not visible).

part of the book that had not recently been shown and thus exposed to light for an extended period of time.

Final steps: exhibition opening

On October 6, a Press night was held allowing journalists to get a tour of the exhibition and meet with the co-curators. Several articles like those published in Art & Gulf Magazine, Arab News, or Khaleej Times promoted the exhibition and highlighted the one-of-a-kind collaboration between the DCT and McGill Libraries.

The exhibit was divided – physically and thematically – into four sections, each of which allowed the curators to explore in depth a unique theme. The first section of the exhibition, *Calligraphy: A Journey through Arabic Script*, explores the emergence of calligraphy as the highest visual expression of Islamic art and a central form of visual devotion, resulting in a dual purpose of the scripts: aesthetic and

functional. This section also considers the physical tools at the heart of the manuscript tradition: the reed pen (qalam), handmade inks, burnished papers, and layout guides that enabled proportional precision. The second section, *Embellishing the Written Word*, turns to the history of Islamic illumination and ornamentation. As Islam expanded from the 7th century onward, it engaged with a diversity of artistic traditions refining and reinterpreting them through a sacred lens. While illumination began with the Qur'an, its techniques and principles

extended to literature, philosophy, science, and poetry. After surveying regional styles, the section addresses the physical process of manuscript creation as a sacred art rooted in divine love, theological inquiry, and visual harmony.

The third section, *Treasure Troves in Manuscripts*, focuses on the scholarly tradition between the 8th and 14th centuries. Islamic societies became centers of scholarship where Arabic served as the common language for intellectual exchange. Manuscripts, the pillars of this



Two 13th-century McGill manuscripts on natural history are companions in the exhibit: (l) *Farrukh-nāmah-i Jamālī* from the Blacker Wood Library and the *herbal* of Al-Ghafiqi (B.O. 7508) from the Osler Library

tradition, were interactive and living objects that were read, copied, annotated, debated, and endowed. Knowledge was considered both a moral responsibility and a collective trust. This section also discusses systems of scholarly certification (*ijazah*) ensuring the integrity of transmitted knowledge and charitable endowments (*waqf*) offering further insight into the spiritual and communal role of manuscripts.

The last section, *Lithography: A Glimpse into the Future of Manuscripts Tradition*, looks at the emergence of lithographic printing at the very end of the 18th century. While this technique remained marginal in Europe, it met an overwhelming success in the Islamic world because it was envisioned as a natural extension to the multi-secular manuscripts' tradition. This section shows the profound and lasting impact of lithography on the Islamic book culture, and how its contributions increased literacy, supported the emergence of indigenous scholarship and literature, and facilitated the dissemination of foundational Islamic texts.

Lessons learned and looking ahead

For the Osler Library and our McGill peers, this has been an illuminating adventure. The Abu Dhabi exhibition and conference were only the first part of the collaboration between DCT and McGill Libraries. Although

Golden Ink is on display at the Presidential Palace through 7 April 2026, the planning of the Montreal exhibition is under way, and the publication of the Conference Proceedings is in progress.

Looking forward to the Montreal exhibit, our experience working with our DCT colleagues in Abu Dhabi provided an excellent model for us to follow. One of the challenges for us will be matching the standards set while working within a limited budget. Fortunately, the Friends of McGill Libraries – a group of whom joined us for the opening in Abu Dhabi – are fully committed to this project and appreciated the state-of-the-art facilities, which include exhibit cases and display screens acquired specifically for *Golden Ink*. The experience has invigorated our advocacy for hiring a conservation team and has given us valuable experience with display cases and data loggers that previously we had only examined in a catalogue. The responsibility that lies on us as we plan the Montreal installation of *Golden Ink* may be daunting, but we have come away with a renewed sense of what is possible, and with tremendous gratitude to our partners at DCT Abu Dhabi and to our colleagues here at McGill.

By Anaïs Salomon, Islamic Studies Library, McGill University and Mary Hague-Yearl, Osler Library, McGill University

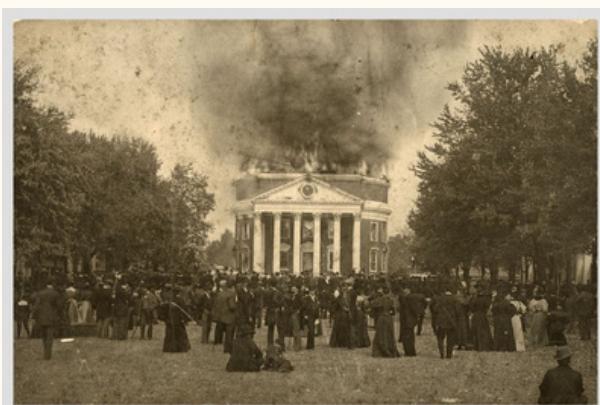
N.b. Portions of this piece will be published in the Osler Library Newsletter, No. 143 (Winter 2026).

“200 Years in Plain Sight: The Rediscovery of the University of Virginia’s Rotunda Library Books at the Claude Moore Health Sciences Library”

When classes commenced at the University of Virginia (UVA) in 1825, the library collection was located in the Rotunda, the architectural and intellectual centerpiece of Thomas Jefferson’s “Academical Village.” In 1895, a terrible fire ripped through the Rotunda, destroying many books belonging to the general collection. For 200 years, the long-held belief was that all books designated for the School of Anatomy and Medicine at UVA were destroyed in the fire. In March 2025, that rumor was proven false. During her weekly preservation sweeps of rare materials located in the rare book vault at the Claude Moore Health Sciences Library at UVA, archivist Amanda Greenwood discovered books that were thought lost to this infamous fire.

Previous research conducted by UVA alumni Samuel V. Lemley, Neal D. Curtis, and Madeline Zehnder, whose [blog](#), [scholarly article](#), and [database](#) describe the discovery of Rotunda Library books found in the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, led Greenwood to confirm that the books in the library’s collection were housed in the Rotunda before 1895. This discovery of surviving Rotunda books in a UVA library is not unique, as staff at the Arthur J. Morris Law Library and Small Special Collections have uncovered similar books in the past decade.

As of August 2025, Greenwood located more books in the vault that have the same titles as the texts listed in the Rotunda Library Online. While Historical Collections and Services cannot claim that these books were the same ones Jefferson purchased for the library in 1825, they do know that these books were housed in the Rotunda prior to the



(L) Rotunda interior, the Library (Photo courtesy of the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia); (R) The “Great Fire” of 1895. The picture, taken by Holsinger’s Studio, was doctored in 1895 to exaggerate the flames at the top of the Rotunda Dome. (Photo courtesy of the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia)



Books that survived the Rotunda fire belonging to the Claude Moore Health Sciences Library. (Photo by Lathan Goumas, UVA University Communications)

1895 fire. This project is ongoing, and the presence of these books in the Health Sciences Library helps them to understand a more complete history of UVA's early medical curriculum and the beginnings of the School of Medicine. Currently, the books are on display in Historical Collections as part of an exhibit created by Greenwood and Meggan Cashwell, PhD, Alvin V. and Nancy Baird Curator of Historical Collections.

For more information on Historical Collections and Services, please [visit our website](#).

By Amanda L. Greenwood, Claude Moore Health Science Library, University of Virginia

Photograph Note: Permissions for some photograph use has been obtained by the photographer, Lathan Goumas, UVA University Communications. The other photographs are free of copyright restrictions because of public domain use.



“Material Matters: Powerful Objects in Medical Museums and Collections”: Reflections on the 2025 IAMMC Conference

Focusing on “Material Matters,” the first biannual conference of the International Association of Medical Museums and Collections (IAMMC) challenged scholars, museum professionals, collections specialists, and others to dissect the power and thorny issues surrounding the research and display of medical artifacts and anatomical objects. How does a medical object exude “power,” and why? How does the materiality of an object shape its care or display? Are some specimens more sensitive than others regarding their display, interpretation, or preservation? Hosted by the German Museum of Medical History in Ingolstadt, Germany, this meeting, held from September 10 to 13, 2025, was a marvelous success for professional learning and engagement! As we were fortunate enough to attend, what follows are some of our reflections from this meeting.

A pest mask, Heine's osteotome, Sauerbruch arm, a skull of a child with cyclopia, and a Covid-19 lung wet specimen were among the objects on display at the German Museum of Medical History, where the opening conference reception occurred. The evening whetted our appetites for discussions of "power" as it related to the use, display, or materiality of objects. We meandered through the new *Powerful Objects* exhibit, curated by Professor Dr. Marion Maria Ruisinger, Museum Director, to consider the questions raised and the stories told by selected objects. The complexity of dealing with human remains and how these objects shape our understanding of medicine was the focus of the temporary exhibit *Heart of the Matter: Specimens in the Museum*



LAMPHHS President Keith Mages and Shelley McKellar attend the IAMMC "Material Matters" conference in Ingolstadt, Germany held September 10-13, 2025. (Authors' personal collection, 2025.)

that was guided by Dr. Thomas Schnalke, newly retired as Director of the Berlin Museum of Medical History at the Charité. Despite some of us shaking off jetlag, attendee excitement was palpable, mounting as the evening progressed, and the event brilliantly set the stage for an invigorating conference over the next 2½ days.

How "foreign" was this meeting for us? In comparing the IAMMC conference with recent LAMPHHS meetings, we argue that there were more similarities than differences. Based on shared concerns and practical challenges regarding collections use and care, the IAMMC conference discussions were neither unfamiliar nor unexpected, as the following three topics demonstrate.

(1) Managing Hazardous Materials:

In the opening conference paper, Ken Arnold, from the Medical Museion at the University of Copenhagen, shared his experience of removing picric acid—a highly explosive chemical that was historically used as an antiseptic and in medical preparations—from a museum object that involved multiple departments for its disposal. Manuel Kaiser, who tends the Bern University Hospital collections, raised the practical and ethical challenges of managing asbestos, notably the financial constraints to do so faced by smaller institutions. But wait ... "the key is not to panic" stated Peter Loockx, a researcher at

ETWIE, the Centre for Technical, Scientific and Industrial Heritage in Ghent, Belgium. His position was perhaps different than what we typically hear as the dominant approach, and this struck us as somewhat novel. Loockx argued for the historical significance of NOT removing toxic or hazardous substances, such as arsenic-based medicine, mercury compounds, volatile chemicals, narcotics, even asbestos, after weighing risks and values. Do not compromise safety but consider keeping (although containing) the asbestos in place for research posterity (historical value) if the danger can be neutralized. The issue of cost – to remove or not to remove – became a discussion topic.

(2) Items that may “Trigger” Visitors:

When are objects too sensitive for display purposes? Does posting trigger warnings for viewership mediate this issue, awarding choice (and not surprise) to visitors? Or does this mistakenly draw attention to, even glamorize, some objects? Tricky topics such as pregnancy loss and the powerful potential for emotional connection triggered by related objects serve as a case in point, argued Harriet Jackson of the Science Museum, London.

Even more contentious, William Hunter’s gravid uterus casts—11 life-size plaster cases depicting various stages of pregnancy and



The German Museum of Medical History in Ingolstadt, Germany hosted the 2025 IAMMC conference. (Courtesy of DMMI, 2016. Reproduced with permission.)

dissection of the uterus created in the mid-18th century—raises issues of consent, sexual violence, and graphic content for visitors. Working with the gravid uterus casts, Sophie Goggins of National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh and Nicky Reeves of the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, Glasgow reported their experience in navigating the fine line between sensitivity and sensationalism.

As part of the exhibit *Heart of the Matter* at the German Medical History Museum, the preserved specimen of conjoined human twins, dissected to reveal a rare congenital condition known as thoracopagus twinning, was displayed at the back of the exhibit, behind semi-walls. We wondered, would such an anatomical object ever be included in a North American display?

Michael Sappol of the University of Uppsala, Sweden reminded us that objects may illuminate difficult topics, such as disease,

malformation, violence, exploitation. Their use and display may draw criticisms of voyeurism and objectification. There is a risk with sensitive objects, not only for exhibition purposes but also collections research. At some institutions, this risk is shaping access decision-making. A controversial policy of restricted research access, as exemplified by the Museo Morgagni in Padua, seems misaligned with contemporary principles of open-access and responsible stewardship. This issue spurred debate.

(3) Partnerships and Collaboration:

“Co-creation projects” that emerged from varying partnerships and professional collaborations prompted creative re-imagining of our activities. Reports on exhibitions, oral history projects, publications and more were shared that highlighted teamwork amongst curators and collection managers within different repositories—as in the case of Hunter’s gravid uterus casts—as well as the group effort of public history and medical museum professionals and nurses—as in the case of the Dutch Museum of



Delegates attending the 2025 IAMMC conference traveled from North America, Europe, Australia and elsewhere. (Photo by Sabrina Wobker, 2025. Reproduced with permission.)

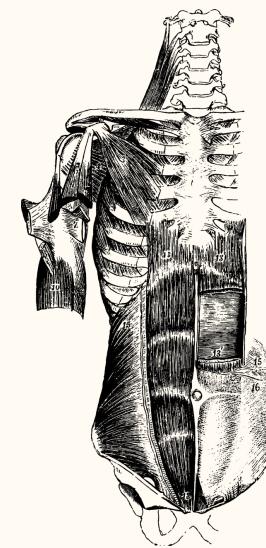
Nursing. Based on her “disastrous donation” experience in the United States, Rachel Lane shared her work on creating tissue donation guidelines and her collaboration with Anna Dhody of the Dhody Research Institute and Marianne Hamel of Jersey Shore Forensics. Artist, physician, and medical anthropologist Katharina Sabernig of Vienna, Austria showcased her innovative “Knitted Anatomy” initiative, where she creates large-scale anatomic models using knitting, with a goal of making anatomy more approachable and emotionally accessible. The IAMMC conference attracted more diverse presenters and attendees—such as artists, educators, patients, independent scholars, non-academics—in comparison to our LAMPHHS meetings. This noticeable range of participants and creative collaborations contributed to interesting discussions, both formally and informally, at this conference.

The IAMCC meeting engaged with many other “material matters,” in addition to the three topics highlighted above. Overall, what struck us was this: our LAMPHHS community is discussing issues and concerns that closely align with those in the IAMMC community. Should you be interested in expanded opportunities for learning and collaboration (English is the official language of the organization), please consider joining this group and possibly

attending the next conference planned for the fall of 2027. We hope to see you there!

- For more information regarding program content and presenters, see [the 2025 IAMMC Conference program](#)
- As an organization, the IAMMC is currently in the formative stages. Should you be interested in exploring membership, add your name to this [“Expression of interest IAMMC” form](#) or, to learn more, contact Dr. Mieneke te Hennepe, Curator of Medical Collections, Rijksmuseum Boerhaave in Leiden, Netherlands at mienekete hennepe@rijksmuseumboerhaave.nl.

By **Shelley McKellar**, Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, Western University and **Keith C. Mages**, History of Medicine Collection, University of Buffalo



*Vintage Anatomy Illustration Torso.
By Tom Chalky. Canva.*

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