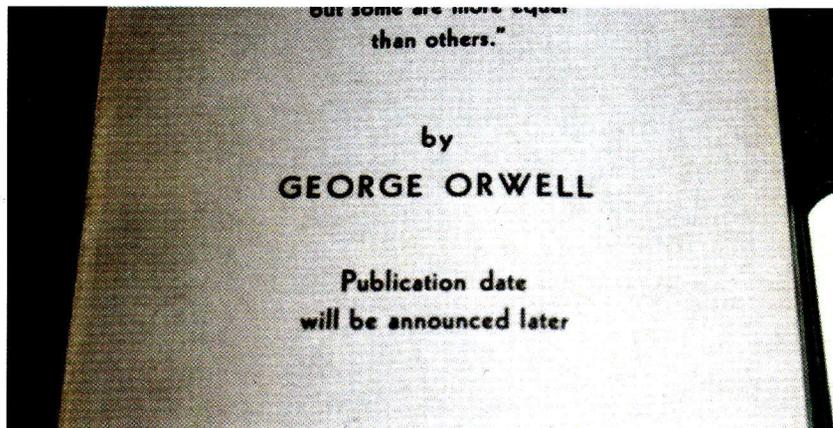


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RARE MANUSCRIPTS NOW ON DISPLAY IN ODUM LIBRARY

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by John Stephen

The titans of history have arrived on campus – well, their writings have, at least.

A collection of rare manuscripts is now on display at Odum Library. The wide-ranging compilation of books, documents and scrolls—the oldest dating back to 1250—is quite impressive. The collection includes works by Machiavelli, Aristotle, John Locke, Thoreau, Booker T. Washington and Ben Franklin, just to name a few.

Starting with the collection's grand opening on Feb. 26 and continuing throughout the semester, students will be able to touch and handle these manuscripts, but only under the careful watch of library staff. Right now, students can still see the documents, which are encased in glass displays on Odum Library's first floor.

The old manuscripts are divided by subject matter:

Politics – Includes Aristotle's "Libri Politici" (1543), John Locke's "Two Treatises of Government" (1694), Machiavelli's "Li Princeps" (1580), and a rare edition of the U.S. Constitution (1788).

Slavery and Women's Suffrage – Includes Booker T. Washington's "Up From Slavery: An Autobiography" (1901), Ben Franklin's "Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society Founding Document" (1787), and Susan B. Anthony's "History of Woman Suffrage" (1887-1922).

Literature – Includes Pope Innocent III's "On the Misery of the Human Condition" (1250), Thoreau's "A Yankee in Canada" (1866), and "The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer" (1687).

Religion – Includes a Koran manuscript handwritten in Arabic (18th century), Martin Luther's "Von der Babylonischen der Kirchen" (On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church) (1520), and Augustine of Hippo's "Confessions" (1491).

Math and Natural Sciences – Includes Newton's "The Mathematical Principals of Natural Philosophy" (1729) and Francis Bacon's "Of the Advancement and Proficiency of Learning" (1640).

Deborah Davis, VSU archives director, said that normally in the rare books world, you find only bits and pieces of writings. This collection features entire works, many of which came from European great house libraries.

"The thing that's amazing about these books is their condition is so perfect," Davis said. "We have rare books at Valdosta State – we have them in the archives – but they're not as beautiful as these."

This collection is currently on loan from The Remnant Trust, a nonprofit organization whose mission, according to its website, is to make rare documents, normally kept under lock-and-key in prestigious institutions, freely available to students, faculty and the general public globally.

In the past few years, through some generous donations, VSU has been expanding its own rare books holdings, Davis said. In celebration of the Remnant Trust collection coming to campus, the archives department is displaying early printed material on Odum's second floor. This material includes handwritten medieval manuscripts, 18th and 19th century lithographs and rare European maps.

Davis said the works in the Remnant Trust collection are valuable not only because of their monetary worth, but also because of the ideas they contain.

"These books have influenced history and have had an impact that is so far beyond what an individual (could) do," Davis said. "They're important because they're the main voices of our Western culture.

"I look at them and I imagine what the person who wrote this - if they're handwritten - what kind of conditions would they be writing this under? They would be in a castle or an abbey, and their work... lasted 500 years."
