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Introductions, Part 2!

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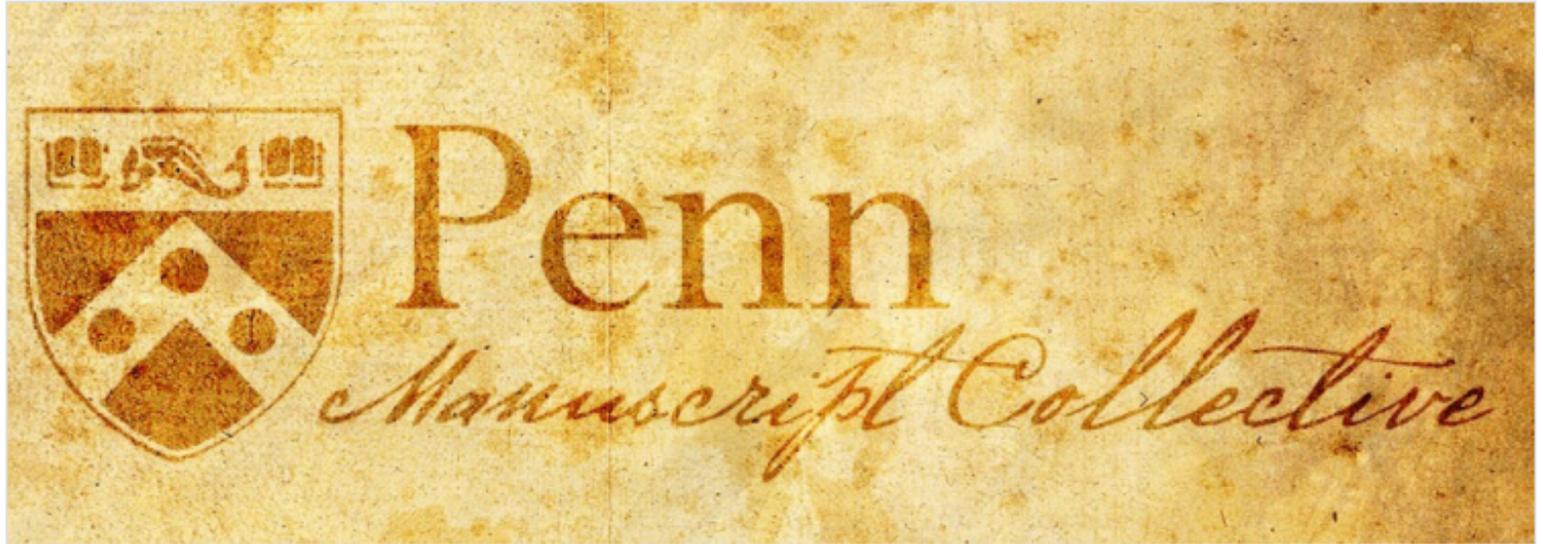
21 Friday Jun 2013

Introductions, part 2!

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Things have been moving along for John and me. We've been working hard to gather a collection of transcribed manuscripts to create a basis for what we hope to be an ongoing project for those interested in both manuscripts and paleography.

Following John's introduction, I would like to share with you a little bit about myself! My name is Nicole Williams, and I am a rising junior studying English and French. My focus when I came to Penn was to study Creative Writing and explore the world of writing journalistically. The first semester of my sophomore year, however, I took a class with one Peter Stallybrass called Cultures of the Book, which presented a much different side of English studies. As he has done with countless previous students, Professor Stallybrass ignited my interest in the study of rare materials. He showed us copies of Shakespeare's First Folio and the changes made in different editions of Hamlet as we read along in a modern day version. By combining the materials with the history surrounding them we were able to comprise a more complete version of the play.

THE

TRAGEDY

OF

HAMLET

Prince of Denmark.
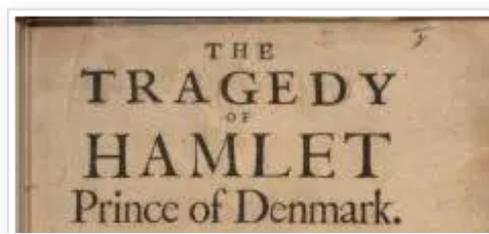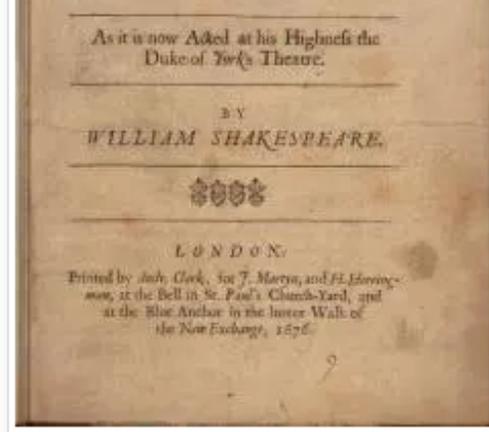
A version of *Hamlet* from the 17th century

Prior to this class rare materials were foreign to me. They were both intimidating and inaccessible, but Prof. Stallybrass, with help from the Rare Book and Manuscript Library's John Pollack, was able to show us that the library is open to all forms of interest and is happy to help you find what you need. During a visit to the Free Library of Philadelphia, my classmates and I were lucky to see a collection of correspondence from Charles Dickens, who the library was celebrating at the time. This correspondence was what led me to my final project: transcription of correspondence from Joseph Priestley. The correspondence particularly interested me because of what I was able to learn of the time, Priestley's life, and the surrounding gossip from just a few letters.
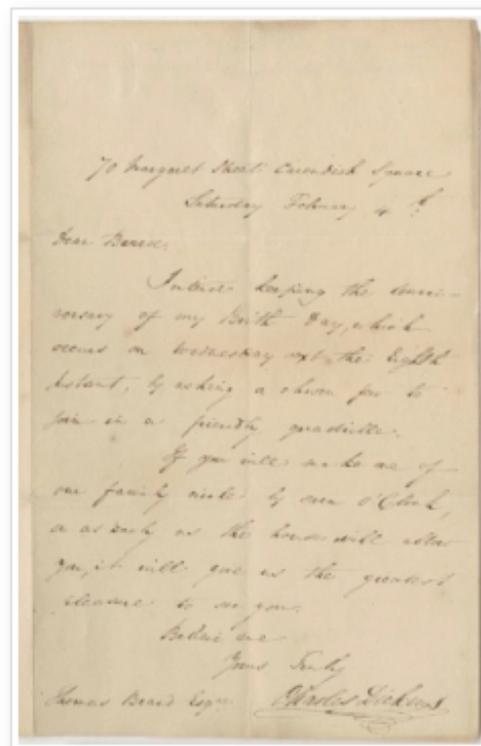
A letter from the Free Library's Dickens exhibit

Professor Stallybrass' class introduced me to John Pollack, who then introduced me to the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, where I began working in January and continue to do so. Here, I am constantly surrounded by people with deep

and continue to do so. Here, I am constantly surrounded by people with deep interest and knowledge of the information held in our massive collection, be their knowledge of the books, the authors, or the actual materials. Through this job, I met John Baranik, whom I found also shared my interest in the idea of transcribing correspondence.

This summer John and I hope to glean more of the same form of information from the John Rowe Parker Correspondence, a collection held in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library. We will transcribe and study these letters in order to grasp an understanding of the world of publishing in Philadelphia in the 19th century. Both the correspondence and the actual sheet music, from the Keffer Collection of Sheet Music, will give us a fully rounded view of the publishing scene at this time.

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