
IN JCB

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE JOHN CARTER BROWN LIBRARY

History vs. the Past

THE PAST is an “ocean of events that once happened,” explained the renowned Polish philosopher, Leszek Kolakowski, in remarks delivered last year after he was awarded the Kluge Prize (\$1 million) by the Library of Congress. Those past events, he said, are “reconstructed by us on the basis of our present experience—and it is only this present experience, our present reconstruction of the past, that is real, not the past as such.”

Kolakowski spoke the obvious truth, but he should have emphasized the selectivity of that reconstruction of elements from the past, since the infinite detail and totality of the past, as of course he knows, can never be reconstructed. The writing of history is a process of highly selective reconstruction of features of the past. Confusion occurs sometimes when we use the word “history” to mean not just historical writing but also as a synonym for the entirety of past happenings.

“History was made today,” some reporter somewhere probably wrote when the Boston Red Sox won a world series, but the game itself did not make history; the reporter, in writing about the game, “made” history (although probably not enduring history). From the infinite number of past happenings, the trillions and trillions of events occurring daily, only articulation in words, i.e., spoken or written human commentary, can create what we call “history.”

Without human utterance, whether on paper or oral, the past is silent and chaotic. If we are mute, the past is mute. The past doesn’t itself speak; it must be evoked, and that evocation is inescapably selective in the extreme. No picture speaks for itself, either; like the past as a whole, it must be commented upon and interpreted to become “history.”

In an incidental remark, Virginia Woolf advised a young writer: “Nothing has really happened until you have described it.” That is the essential truth.

What we witness at the JCB every day are scholars sifting through the plenitude of the *recorded* past, both texts and images, manuscripts and print, to construct “history”—art history, literary history, ethnohistory, and so forth. The books they are using were earlier efforts to articulate something about the times, about past happenings. There is, then, in fact,



Inscription on the Caspersen Wing of the Library: “Speak to the past and it shall teach thee.”

layer upon layer of commentary as events recede into the past.

The JCB's motto, "Speak to the past and it shall teach thee," dates back to 1910 at the latest, and is a variation of a verse in the book of Job (12:8), "Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee." That motto needs a complement—"Only the word transforms what happened into history"—lest it be thought that the past can teach of itself without the intermediation of the articulated word.

Fellowships

AT THE JCB, the narrators of what happened in the Americas between 1492 and ca. 1825 are often our research fellows. These days we are appointing approximately thirty fellows a year, more or less our upper limit. They come for periods ranging from two months to ten months and we almost always have eight or ten, or more, in residence at any one time.

"Short-term" fellowships are for periods of four months or less (two months is the minimum) and will include a stipend of \$1,600 a month in 2005–06. These fellowships are entirely endowed by generous patrons of the Library. In some cases, the endowments have nicely burgeoned and the original gift is now adequate to cover fellowships for more than one scholar. We list all of these named endowments below, including some that are new in the past year.

The Library also offers "long-term" fellowships, which extend in time from four months to ten months, and will carry a stipend in 2005–06 of \$4,000 a month. These awards, of which we offer only about six or seven a year, are *in the process of* being endowed. Hitherto, the stipends of our long-term fellows were entirely derived from generous annual grants made by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, totaling about \$175,000 a year. That arrangement will be changing in the course of the next few years.

Two years ago the Mellon Foundation and the Library agreed that it was in the Library's interest to convert the Mellon Foundation's cash grants into a permanent endowment, and the Foundation awarded the Library a \$1 million challenge grant for this purpose, to be matched dollar for dollar. According to the plan, when the Mellon gift is matched, the



Library will have \$2 million in new endowment, from which we will draw at 5.25 percent or less about \$100,000 a year.

We are elated to announce here, with the deepest gratitude to the donors, that the Mellon challenge was quickly met, through the gifts and pledges of three JCB Board members, or former members: R. David Parsons, Jane Gregory Rubin, and Donald L. Saunders. New named long-term fellowships will be established at the JCB in recognition of these three gifts.

JCB named funds for short-term fellowships are as follows: Alice E. Adams Fund, Jeannette D. Black Fund, Helen Watson Buckner Fund, Maria Elena Cassiet Fund, Ruth and Lincoln Ekstrom Fund, Marie L. and William R. Hartland Fund, Paul W. McQuillen Fund, Barbara S. Mosbacher Fund, Touro National Heritage Trust Fund, Alexander O. Vietor Fund, and the Charles H. Watts Fund. Together these funds have assets at current market value of \$1.8 million, which at a spending rate of 5 percent generates about \$90,000 a year, 15 percent of which is assigned to administration of the program and 85 percent for stipends. The Library draws additional funds for the support of short-term fellowships from certain other more general endowments, particularly from the assets of our Center for New World Comparative Studies. A few short-term fellowships, too, are supported by annual gifts, such as the Reese Fellowship for bibliographical research and the JCB Associates Fellowship.

Support for long-term fellowships, then—in addition to what we thankfully continue to receive in ongoing grants from the NEH—comes now from the J. M. Stuart Fund and the InterAmericas Fund recently established by Jane Gregory Rubin, and shortly will come as well from the R. David Parsons and Donald L. Saunders Funds.

All of the above is mere dry framework and has nothing to do with the actual scholarship of our fellows. But endowment is the essential infrastructure for the support for learning that we provide, along with the Library's collection, the Library's plant, and our admirable staff.

The Endowment Campaign

ENDOWMENT IS, in fact, the lifeblood of the JCB. Lacking the benefit of admission fees, such as museums are able to collect, or the revenue from tuition that schools ingest, we depend primarily on endowment to fund our annual budget of \$2.5 million. That dependence is only partly alleviated by gifts and grants and by the small earned income we eke out from the sale of publications and images. To maintain the JCB as it is, and to underwrite growth in any area of our programs and activities, we must continually add to our endowment. The current market value of the JCB endowment is substantial, \$43 million, but the Library's responsibility as the guardian of an irreplaceable world treasure requires investments of at least that amount.

We have quietly begun a campaign for new endowment, which will be formally announced to our Associates in late April. Our goal is \$7.5 million, over \$3 million of which has already been raised, mostly from contributions by the Library's Board of Governors. Finding the additional \$4.5 million we know will not be easy. We will be turning to the JCB's Associates and other friends, hoping for a torrent of gifts and pledges, which can be payable in increments over four years. Needless to say, contributions of any amount will help the cause.

To anticipate somewhat the forthcoming Campaign literature, we are hoping to endow two curatorial positions; to reinforce fellowship endowments and research programs in general; to fund information technology, which includes continual development of online resources and the regular revision and improvement of our

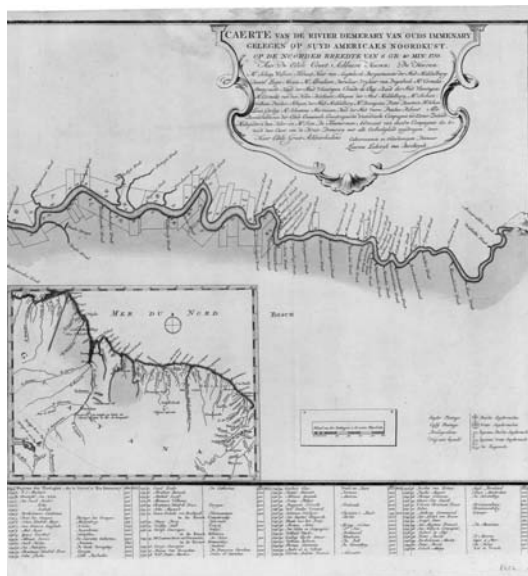
website. We are hoping as well for new funds for publication projects, for acquisitions, and for public programs, such as lectures, conferences, and exhibitions.

The Board of Governors of the Library sees this campaign effort as absolutely necessary if the JCB is to continue to do its work effectively and to maintain excellence in all of its endeavors.

A Change in Leadership

RECIPIENTS OF this newsletter were notified last fall that the present Director and Librarian of the JCB will retire in the course of 2005, after a successor has been appointed. Norman Fiering came to the JCB in the summer of 1983 and will have served for twenty-two years. This institution has been blessed by the stability that comes from finding directors who were willing to sign on for the long haul: John Russell Bartlett, 33 years; George Parker Winship, 20; Lawrence Wroth, 33; Thomas R. Adams, 25.

It is a job that should be approached with some humility. The past of the JCB is long and venerable, and must be honored. And because the institution is relatively small, with no elaborate hierarchy and hardly any layers of management, the director is an active participant in most of the JCB's projects and programs. He



A recently acquired chart showing the course of the Demerara River in Guyana and the properties along it with the names of owners. Amsterdam, ca. 1740. The Library continues with avidity to build its Dutch in the Americas collection, which has few rivals.

has a strong impact on the well being of the institution, for better or for worse.

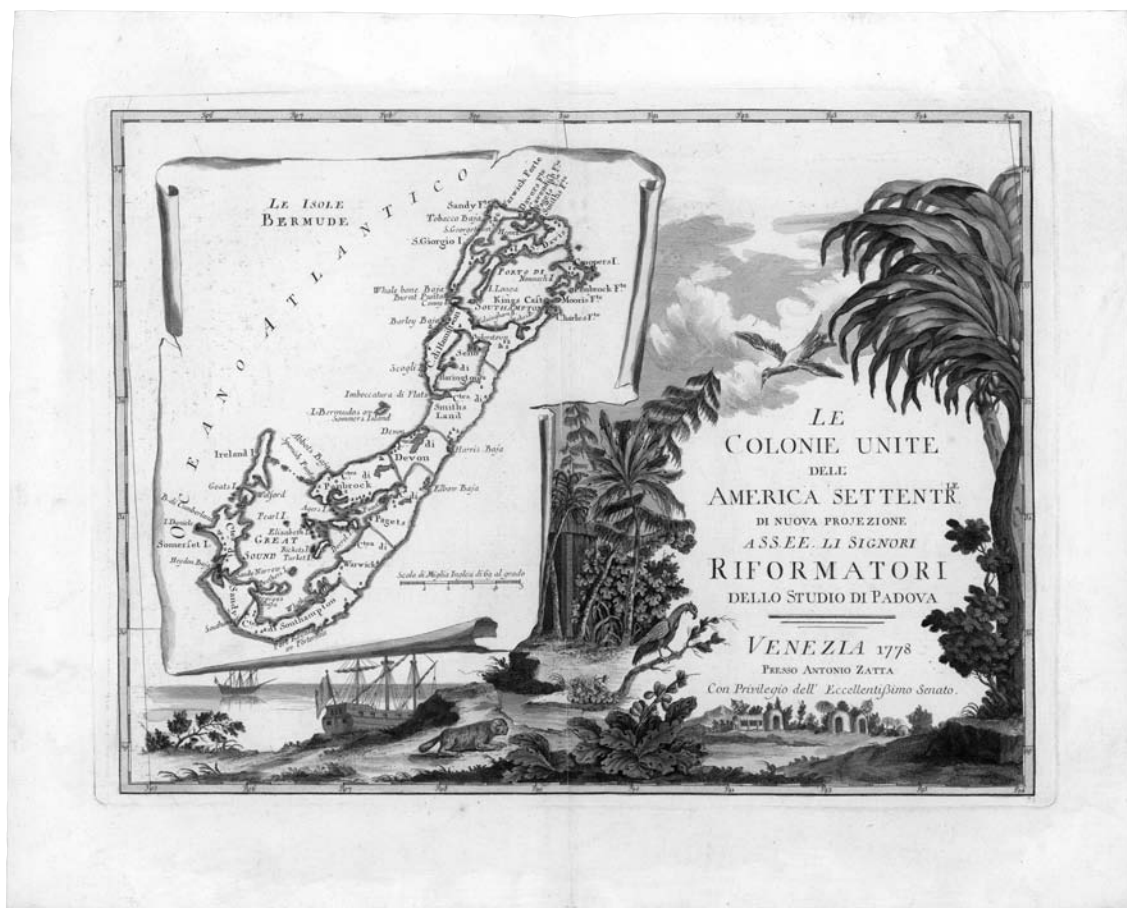
The title “Director and Librarian” was introduced only in 1983 (it was formerly simply “Librarian”) and represents a real bifurcation of the structure of the JCB: half library, with the need for proper professional care and organization of thousands of precious books, maps, and manuscripts; and half center for advanced research, with a mission quite different from that which guides the work of the trained librarians on the staff. These two functions can meld nicely, but the “director and librarian” must span this division and others.

As of this writing, a search committee—made up of JCB Board members, Brown University faculty and administrators, and a couple of faculty members from outside institutions—is engaged in the task of finding a new director who will keep the JCB on a steady, upward course.

The Board of Governors

THE DIRECTOR AND LIBRARIAN is in a partnership with the Library staff, part of whose job is to make him look good (as the relationship was described recently). He is also in partnership with the Board of Governors, which, in accordance with the 1901 contract that brought the Library to the Brown campus, is charged with the “care, oversight, and management” of the institution. This responsibility the JCB Board fulfills exceedingly well, always with wit, intelligence, business acumen, and generosity. Periodically we like to list in this newsletter the names of the members of our esteemed Board, since the membership regularly changes. On the Board in 2004–05 are:

José Amor y Vázquez, North Providence, Rhode Island; John R. Bockstoe, South Dartmouth, Massachusetts; T. Kimball Brooker, Chicago, Illinois; Vincent J. Buonanno, Chicago, Illinois; Finn M. W. Caspersen, Gladstone, New Jersey; George D. Edwards, Jr., Pound Ridge,



An addition to the Library’s unsurpassed holdings of editions and translations of the Abbé Raynal’s *Histoire philosophique et politique* (1770). The title page of an Italian excerpt, with fourteen double-page, hand-colored maps.

New York; Angela Brown Fischer, Newport, Rhode Island; Artemis A. W. Joukowsky, Providence, Rhode Island; Gilbert C. Meister, Jr., New York, New York; Andrew Oliver, Chevy Chase, Maryland; R. David Parsons, Atlanta, Georgia; Jean René Perrette, London, England; Robert S Pirie, New York, New York; France Gagnon Pratte, Montreal, Quebec; David Rumsey, San Francisco, California; Beatrice Dávila de Santo Domingo, New York, New York; Donald L. Saunders, Boston, Massachusetts; and Clinton I. Smullyan, Jr., New York, New York. By hallowed tradition, the President of Brown University, Ruth J. Simmons, sits as chairman of the Board. The Count of Orgaz, from Madrid, is a member-elect, who will join the Board formally on July 1, 2005.

Among other good qualities, it is a Board that never loses sight of the Library's *raison d'être*, which is to acquire books, maps, and manuscripts.

Acquisitions

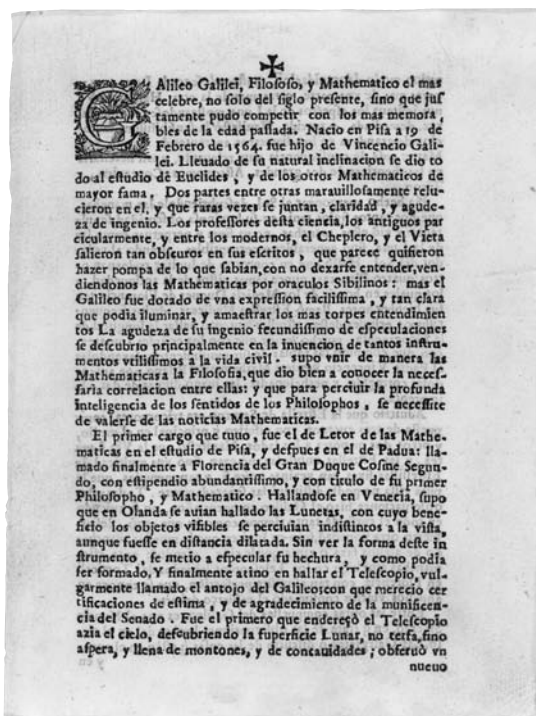
WE WILL MENTION here, very briefly, just four items acquired in recent months—works in Swedish, English, Spanish, and Italian.

Johan Classon Risingh, *Itt utbtogh om kiöphandelen, eller commercierne* (Stockholm, 1669). The author was the last governor of the Swedish colony in Delaware in the seventeenth century, and the work is considered to be the first important Swedish contribution to economics. Risingh speculates that the hammocks of the American Indians could be usefully manufactured out of cotton, and he discusses the impact on Europe of the gold and silver introduced from the Spanish colonies in Mexico and Peru.

G. Foster, *The Seat of War in the West Indies, Containing New & Accurate Plans of The Havana, La Vera Cruz, Cartagena and Puerto Bello... Also of San Augustin* (London, 1740). A single sheet combining eight separate charts, two views of fortifications in Havana and Vera Cruz, and a great deal of descriptive text. Engraved by Emanuel Bowen, one of the leading London

engravers of the period, the piece was intended to educate the English reader on the details of the military contest between Spain and England at the time, culminating in the so-called “War of Jenkins’ Ear.”

Juan Vazquez de Acuna, *Galileo Galilei, filósofo e matemático* (Lima, 1650). This tiny work, just four pages in length, gets attention because it was printed in Lima only seven years after Galileo’s death. The great scientist may have been condemned for heresy by the Roman Catholic Church, but in Lima there was a group, nonetheless, who wanted to know about him. The opening page of this work is shown below.



Abbé de Raynal, *Storia dell' America settentrionale* (Venice, 1778–1779). The JCB’s collection of contemporary editions and translations of Raynal’s famous *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les des deux Indes* (1770) is probably the most complete in the world. Although the Library owns other editions in Italian published at the same time, we lacked this excerpt with beautiful hand-colored maps.

The Archive of Early American Images

A BOOK WITH pictures generally commands a higher sale price than would be the case if that same book had been published with no pictures, although many other factors go into establishing market value. Certainly, some of the most valuable books in our period have no illustrations at all. It is obviously true, too, that for some kinds of historical research, illustrations add nothing of value.

However, in recent years there has been a noticeable increase of scholarly interest in what we have learned to call the “representation” of the New World. The word “representation” is wonderfully neutral and comprehensive, encompassing not only graphics but also text, and making no claims whatsoever about the verisimilitude of a depiction. Even the simple word “picture” suggests an image close to the reality, which is not true of “representation.”

Hardly a day passes at the JCB without some scholar inquiring about what representations might exist of cities and towns, Native Americans, wars and battles, African slaves, clothing and dress, ports and harbors, various celebrated personages, plants and animals, mills and mines, or whatever.

With reference in particular to images of the Americas dating from before ca. 1825, no librarian in the world has hitherto had the capacity to respond to such queries with any foundation beyond personal recollection of what she or he may have happened to have noticed in some obscure volume. That deficiency exists because no one has ever attempted to compile a comprehensive guide to illustrations of the Americas from the time of Columbus to the death of Bolívar. It is truly terra incognita.

Although illustration at the time was relatively uncommon, there could be as many as 10,000 such representations buried in old volumes, including map cartouches, while maybe no more than 500 get used and re-used, in monographs, textbooks, documentary films, and so forth. Frustrated by this condition, and by our own inability to be of effective assistance to historians searching for images, two years ago we began to compile a computerized database of images of the New World found in books in the JCB collection, with each image



Images such as this engraved title page from Charles de Rochefort, *Histoire naturelle et morale des îles Antilles de l'Amerique* (Rotterdam, 1658) are full of iconographic content that requires analysis and decoding.

accompanied by full bibliographical and descriptive information. It can be presumed that this Library has a more complete collection of such images than any other institution in the world.

With the aid of a grant from the Ahmanson Foundation, and drawing also upon receipts from ongoing sales of our six-volume publication, *European Americana*, the work has moved along rapidly. This Archive of Early American Images (AEAI), as we call it, now has online approximately 2,500 representations of different aspects of the Americas, and we will be opening the site to the public in mid-May 2005. Our goal over the next two years is to have as many as 6,000 images in the database. Ninety percent of these images have had no circulation whatsoever from the time the book in which they first appeared was published, 200, 300, 400, or 500 years ago.

The AEA I can be reached through the Library's website (JCB L.org) by clicking on “Online Resources” on the main menu, and once the Archive site is open, images may be located by use of multiple points of access—date, author, title, subject, place, engraver, creator, etc.

Links

THE LIBRARY'S website is the advertisement through which most people these days are first introduced to the institution. Printed brochures and the like are becoming increasingly quaint, and useless. (It should not be a surprise that one of the goals of our \$7.5 million Endowment Campaign is to amass more capital for the support of Information Technology.)

Most websites have "links" that instantly connect the viewer to other sites with similar interests or purposes. We list five "affiliated organizations" on our links page, and what they are is revealing about the JCB. (By its links you shall know it.) These five are the Forum on European Expansion and Global Interaction (FEEGI); the Hakluyt Society; the John Russell Bartlett Society; the Society for the History of Discoveries; and the Independent Research Libraries Association, of which the JCB became a member only last year.

All of these connections run deep. John Carter Brown (d. 1874) was virtually a charter member of the Hakluyt Society, which is based in London and founded in 1846, and the director of the Library serves as one of the two official representatives of the Society in the United States. The Forum on European Expansion was founded by a group of scholars gathered at the JCB in April 1994 for that purpose. The tenth anniversary meeting of FEEGI was held at the JCB in February 2004.

The John Russell Bartlett Society, the premier bibliophiles group in Rhode Island, was also founded at the JCB in 1984. It awards the Margaret B. Stillwell Prize for undergraduate book collecting in the state, and has other programs. The Society for the History of Discoveries held its second formal meeting at the JCB, in October 1962, and came to the JCB again in 1986 for a memorable joint meeting with the Hakluyt Society.

The Independent Research Libraries Association (IRLA), with twenty members—including the American Antiquarian Society, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Huntington Library, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Morgan Library, and the Newberry Library—facilitates discussion among its members of the common concerns of these institutions, such as preservation, finances, research, security, public programs, and so forth. The JCB will be hosting the annual meeting of IRLA members this June.

The Wednesday Lunch

LECTURES, MEETINGS, and conferences at the JCB are ordinary occurrences, expressions of the obligation we have to disseminate research findings, promote understanding of the colonial past, and contribute to the training and development of scholars. Most of the time, we actively promote such events, either to special constituencies or to the public at large.

Yet the most enduring, fundamental, and sacrosanct of such programs, the Wednesday Lunch, we hardly promote at all. It has been said that if the JCB were a religion, the Wednesday Lunch would be its central ritual. For the past twenty-two years without interruption, summer and winter, every Wednesday, JCB research fellows and other scholars in residence gather for lunch in a private dining room on campus, and on most of these occasions a twenty-minute paper is presented (we call it an informal "chat").

Anywhere from 25 to 50 people usually are present because in addition to our research fellows the luncheon attracts some Brown faculty members and graduate students, JCB staff members, lay people from the local community, and miscellaneous visitors. The sheer regularity of the Wednesday Lunch is the principal bonding agent of our revolving intellectual community and creates a sense of stability throughout the year, although individuals come and go. The lunch is buffet, reservations are not needed and it is *never* cancelled (except for about three weeks in the Christmas – New Year holiday period).

As noted, we do not promote the event. A week in advance of a scheduled talk, if there is to be one, we send out an announcement of the speaker and the topic to those who have asked to be notified. Other than that, the luncheon rolls on from week to week without fanfare.

Some Forthcoming Events

APRIL 21 (THURS.) TO APRIL 23 (SAT.)

Anglo-America in the Transatlantic World, a conference celebrating the publication by Johns Hopkins University Press of a three-volume collection of essays with that name, under the general editorship of Jack P. Greene who is assisted by the following volume editors: I—Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas; II—Robert Olwell and Alan Tully; III—Eliga Gould and Peter Onuf. Registration required.

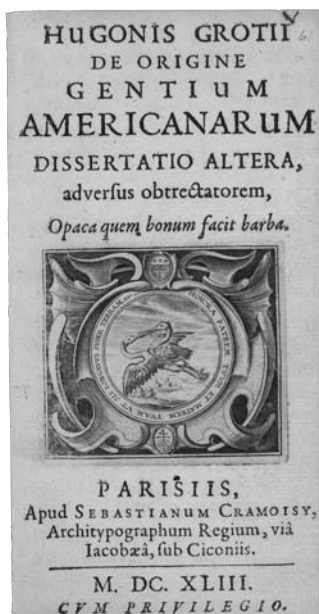
JULY 11 TO AUGUST 12, 2005

“British and Indigenous Cultural Encounters in Native North America, 1580–1785.” A National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for college teachers, under the leadership of Prof. Scott Manning Stevens, SUNY, Buffalo, and the following additional faculty: Prof. Mary Fuller, MIT; Prof. Peter Mancall, University of Southern California; Prof. Anne Marie Plane, University of California, Santa Barbara; and Prof. Donald Grinde, SUNY, Buffalo.

Exhibitions

JANUARY TO MAY 2005

“Whence Came the Indians? Early European Theories on Native American Origins.” Prepared by Dennis C. Landis and Richard Ring.



The great theorist of international law, Hugo Grotius, was also a speculator on the question of the origin of the Indians, the subject of the current exhibition at the JCB. This pamphlet, printed in Paris in 1643, was a reply to a work on the same subject, critical of Grotius's ideas, by Johannes de Laet.

MAY TO SEPTEMBER 2005

“Imagining America/Imaging America: Celebrating the Public Launch of the Archive of Early American Images.” Prepared by Susan Danforth, Heather Jespersen, and Leslie Tobias-Olsen.

SEPTEMBER 2005 TO JANUARY 2006

“Spanish Historical Writing about the New World, 1493 to 1700.” Originally prepared by Angel Delgado-Gomez in 1992. Revived and revised on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the publication of *Don Quijote*.

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