

Angry Comments (Before the Internet): Examining the Annotations of Early Printed Books at the Beinecke Library



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This semester, the Sterling Memorial Library Exhibits Corridor features the research of four exceptional Yale students. Eve Houghton, a junior at Davenport College, is displaying excerpts of her research on manuscript reader commentary in early printed books.

As a curatorial assistant for early modern books and manuscripts at the Beinecke Library, Houghton has spent a considerable amount of time exploring the stacks. Recently, she has become increasingly fascinated by the annotations scrawled in the margins of early printed books. The authors of these commentaries often span generations. "For me," says Houghton, "annotations provide a reminder that readership communities aren't necessarily fixed in time and place." Her research primarily focuses on angry readers who leave behind unfriendly or disrespectful annotations, as these comments provide significant insight into readers' emotions and reactions to the texts.

Throughout her research, librarian Elizabeth Frengel and early modern curator Kathryn James provided Houghton with mentoring and support. The two guided Houghton as she developed her ideas and explored the Beinecke's extensive collections. Find out more about Houghton's research by visiting her display in the Sterling Memorial Library Exhibits Corridor, on view through April 30.

Story by Hilary Purrington

Source

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