

30th Anniversary of Nota Bene: Recollections from Susanne Roberts



June 1, 2017

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the much-loved publication [Nota Bene: News from the Yale Library](#) [1]. Launched in the spring of 1987, one of its aims was to “encourage the fullest possible use of the Yale Library’s collections and services,” according to University Librarian of the time, Millicent D. Abell (Nota Bene, Volume I:I, 1987).

Nota Bene’s founding editor was Susanne Roberts, Librarian for European History, who took on the challenging task of establishing and managing a publication, in spite of her already substantial workload. Little did she know, this would become a nineteen-year commitment! She retired from the role in 2006, after guiding the newsletter through almost two decades of changes, with an expert eye and rigorous editorial standards. Read on as Sue shares a few recollections of her years as editor.

"Launched in 1987, the library’s newsletter grew out of University Librarian Penny Abell’s desire to “extend communication with the Yale community...to foster general awareness of the library’s great strengths...of library services and scholarly information activities” and to encourage the greatest possible use of these resources. The first steps beyond this concept were finding a title and developing a graphic identity for this new publication. The former emerged from a contest among library staff; the winning entry was *Nota Bene*: advising readers to “Take note!” of what is going on here. The title in turn helped shape the newsletters image and content. Designer John Gambell, now the University Printer, created a simple but elegant design, evocative of old books with double columns and an index finger pointing at important items.

The content was left to me. Though I had never done anything like this before, I found quickly my stride with the help of colleagues and librarians eager to publicize their new or existing collections and services. My goal and delight was to report of ‘news’ but also to link newsworthy acquisitions and events to the physical and artistic aspects of the great library that is Sterling Memorial Library. Indeed to the whole encyclopedic (for its time) intellectual program of the library designed and built by James Gamble Rogers and completed in 1931.

Looking back over the issues of those decades, I see these goals in play and remember the fun of it all. It was a wonderful way to get to know and work with people all over the library system and also the university: reference librarians, collection builders and preservers, printers, photographers, curators, cataloguers and other specialists. Working with students also afforded a lively and enriching experience as well as a new set of friends. Bringing

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together disparate aspects and users of the library brought me great satisfaction.

Seeing and discovering the rich and unusual collections both satisfied and developed my curiosity. The Beinecke's accession of the Spinelli archive 1988 (covered in *Nota Bene*, III:1, 1989) presented the opportunity to hold the will of the famous sixteenth-century artist, writer, and historian Giorgio Vasari in my hands and started me on a research path in this rich and extensive archive that continues to nourish my retirement."

Susanne Roberts

Source

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Links

[1] http://elischolar.library.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1077&context=yul_nota_bene