

The Oaks News

A monthly bulletin from Dumbarton Oaks

In Memoriam Edward L. Keenan

Edward L. Keenan died on March 6, 2015. Known as “Ned” to intimates and colleagues, he served as the sixth director of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, from 1998 to 2007, and as the fourth consecutive to be appointed from the ranks of Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Keenan’s multifarious contributions to Dumbarton Oaks include a thoroughgoing capital renewal project that resulted in a five-story library, a central heating and cooling plant, and a building for the gardening staff, as well as renovated quarters for administration, facilities, security, the museum, publications, and most other departments. With equal measures of pride and melancholy, Keenan joked that the library would likely be the last built in North America. Keenan’s projects and acquisitions brought the research center into the twenty-first century, and fellows, staff, and directors of the institution will benefit from his foresight for countless decades to come.



Read more about Ned’s life and career [here](#).

New Rare Book Acquisition

An Eighteenth-Century Example of Nature Printing



The Rare Book Collection recently acquired a first edition of *Botanica in originali pharmaceutica das ist: Lebendig officinal-kräuter-buch*, published in 1733 by Johann Hieronymus Kniphof (1704–1763). As a fascinating experiment in capturing the likeness of a plant through the process known as nature printing, the book is important both to the history of plant illustration and that of printing

practices. Kniphof's work involved coating plants with printing ink and printing directly from the plant onto paper by means of a press. This made for a very limited print run, due to wear and tear on the specimens, a drawback that Benjamin Franklin turned into an advantage by using nature prints on currency to stymie counterfeiters.

Read more about the new acquisition and nature printing [here](#).

Left: A plate from Johann Hieronymus Kniphof's *Kräuter-buch*

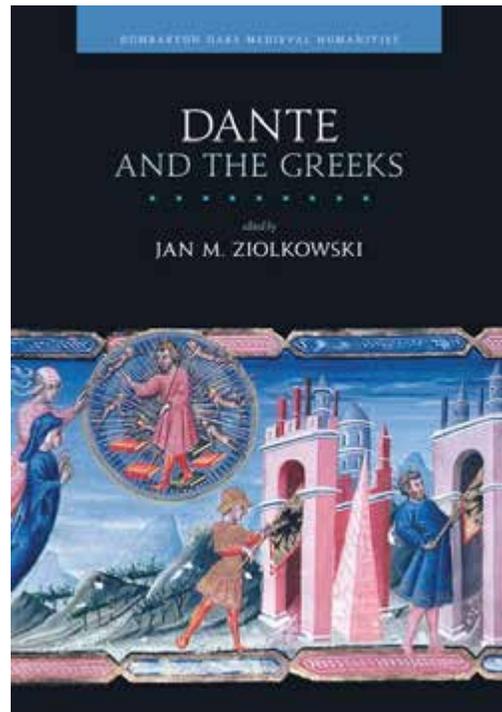
New Publication

Dante and the Greeks, edited by Jan M. Ziolkowski

Although Dante never traveled to Greek-speaking lands in the eastern Mediterranean, and his exposure to the Greek language was limited, he displays a keen interest in the cultures of Greece, both ancient and medieval, pagan and Christian. Bringing together cartography, history, philosophy, philology, reception studies, religious studies, and other disciplines, the essays in *Dante and the Greeks* tap into knowledge and skills from specialists in the medieval West, Byzantium, and Dante.

Jessica Salley spoke with Ziolkowski, Director of Dumbarton Oaks, about the origins of the project and his interest in Dante.

***Dante and the Greeks* came out of an interdisciplinary symposium that was held at Dumbarton Oaks in 2010. What was the impetus for hosting the symposium?**



One of my roles at Dumbarton Oaks is to serve as a catalyst for the institution by encouraging interactions of our programs with the broader humanities. Every day I pass the plaque to the left of the main entrance, which refers to Byzantine and Medieval humanities. My approach to the relationship is to get the two fields together as much as possible in mutually beneficial ways.

This particular symposium facilitated conversations among three fields that I respect greatly: Medieval Studies, Dante scholarship, and Dumbarton Oaks' own very strong and distinguished tradition of Byzantine Studies. To a degree, the symposium and volume hark back to earlier times when people framed questions more broadly across fields.

Read more about Dante and the Greeks [here](#).

Teaching Fellows' Day

Byzantium's Eastern Frontier



The Post-Doctoral Teaching Fellowships in Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks are part of an innovative program to support the work of early-career scholars through academic appointments that bridge their research on an institutional project with teaching experience at local universities. Over the past four years, the Teaching Fellows have held annual conferences attended by students from D.C.–area universities. Centered on a single topic, these conferences introduce students to research and resources at Dumbarton Oaks through scholarly presentations and gallery tours.

This year, over eighty participants from seven universities convened in the fourth floor of the Fellowship House, where four speakers presented on “Byzantium’s Eastern Frontier.”

Read more about the talks [here](#).

Above: The participants of the fourth annual Teaching Fellows' Day.

I Tatti Exchange: Anatole Tchikine

In December 2015, Anatole Tchikine, Post-Doctoral Fellow in Garden and Landscape Studies, spent a week at Villa I Tatti as part of Dumbarton Oaks' staff exchange program with its sister

institution in Florence. Tchikine's project was to investigate the cultural, archaeological, and topographical contexts of a rare manuscript in the Dumbarton Oaks collection, entitled *Descrizione della Villa Pliniana*. An annotated edition of this work—which is to include a transcription of the original text, an English translation, and an introduction by the distinguished architectural historian Pierre du Prey—is planned to be published by Dumbarton Oaks in the [Ex Horto](#) series of classic and rare texts on garden history and on the philosophy, art, and techniques of landscape architecture.

Read more about the project [here](#).

ICFA Oral History Initiative

The Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives Oral History Initiative is now available [online](#). ICFA launched its Oral History Initiative in 2011, with the support of the Dumbarton Oaks Archives (DOA). Interviews focus on individuals related to ICFA's holdings, whether they participated in fieldwork or research projects documented by the collections, or managed the department's diverse collections over the years.

Read more about the initiative [here](#).

From the Archives

Music Room Leitmotifs at the New Fellowship House



Artworks were recently installed at the new Dumbarton Oaks Fellowship House on Wisconsin Avenue. As part of this project, five commissioned panels were set into the black granite above the buffet counter of the fourth-floor conference room. The designs of these painted panels are details taken from the beams of the Dumbarton Oaks Music Room ceiling. The intent in choosing these Music Room details was twofold: to employ abstract imagery that would harmonize with the

contemporary, clean conception of the Fellowship House, and to simultaneously reference the well-loved tradition of the historical Dumbarton Oaks.

Read more about the panels [here](#).

Above: Music Room Leitmotifs installed at the Fellowship House.

Good Ink

Early-Career Musician Fellow Caroline Shaw and the a capella ensemble Roomful of Teeth, who performed at Dumbarton Oaks in October, were featured in “[the goings on about town](#)” in the March 17 issue of the *New Yorker*.

Greenhouse Specialist Melissa Brizer and Gardener Luis Marmol [shared their expertise](#) with the *Washington Post* gardening columnist Adrian Higgins in January.

The [homepage](#) of the Georgetown Business Improvement District features the cherry blossoms of Dumbarton Oaks, front and center.

Staff Accolades

Director of Byzantine Studies Margaret Mullett delivered the inaugural Harvard Medieval Material Culture Lecture on March 9, in Cambridge. She presented “Byzantium on the Move: Mobile Empire, Traveling Textiles” to a full house.

Gardens Return to Regular Season Hours



The Dumbarton Oaks Gardens return to regular season hours this month. From March 15 to October 31, the gardens will be open daily from 2 to 6 p.m., except for Mondays and federal holidays.

For more information about visiting Dumbarton Oaks, including admission prices and Season Passes to the gardens, see [here](#).

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