



Welcome to Scriptorium

InterAmerican Campus Library

Newsletter

This Fall issue of our newsletter is dedicated to books. Are there other things we can write about? Sure, but none better than books. *General Editor*

The History of Writing

part III

History of the alphabet

The history of the alphabet starts in ancient Egypt. By 2700 BCE the Egyptians had developed a set of some 22 hieroglyphs to represent the individual consonants of their language, plus a 23rd that seems to have represented word-initial or word-final vowels. These glyphs were used as pronunciation guides for logograms, to write grammatical inflections, and later, to transcribe loan words and foreign names. However, although alphabetic in nature, the system was not used for purely alphabetic writing. The first purely alphabetic script is thought to have been developed around 2000 BCE for Semitic workers in central Egypt. Over the next five centuries it spread north, and all subsequent alphabets around the world have either descended from it, or been inspired by one of its descendants, with the possible exception of the Meroitic alphabet, a 3rd century BCE adaptation of hieroglyphs in Nubia to the south of Egypt.

The Semitic alphabet

The Middle Bronze Age scripts of Egypt have yet to be deciphered. However, they appear to be at least partially, and perhaps completely, alphabetic. The oldest examples are found as graffiti from central Egypt and date to around 1800 BCE. This Semitic script did not restrict itself to the existing Egyptian consonantal signs, but incorporated a number of other Egyptian hieroglyphs, for a total of perhaps thirty, and used Semitic names for them. So, for example, the hieroglyph *per* ("house" in Egyptian) became *bayt* ("house" in Semitic). It is unclear at this point whether these glyphs, when used to write the Semitic language, were purely alphabetic in nature, representing only the first consonant of their names according to the acrophonic principle, or whether they could also represent sequences of consonants or even words as their hieroglyphic ancestors had.

Descendants of the Semitic abjad

This Proto-Canaanite alphabet, like its Egyptian prototype, only represented consonants, a system called an *abjad*. From it can be traced nearly all the alphabets ever used, most of which descend from the younger Phoenician version of the script.

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INTERAMERICAN CAMPUS LIBRARY HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday - Thursday
8:00 am - 9:00 pm

Friday
8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Saturday
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Holidays (library closed)
January 13-15, 2007
March 1, 2007

Short Story Contest “Las Americas”

The Library and Student Life department at the InterAmerican Campus have teamed up for the 3rd consecutive year to sponsor a short story contest during the month of October. “Las Americas” contest was created to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month at the IAC Library, says founder of the contest Lilia Menes. This particular event invites registered students at Miami Dade College to submit their short stories in Spanish or English. Every year a jury is composed of faculty members who are fluent in both languages to judge the best three short stories. This year’s judges were Dr. Manuel Santayana, Prof. Sergio Bezar, and Dr. Ofelia Hudson. It was difficult to select the best short stories among so many, argued one of the judges, but at the end we all agreed on the same selections and prizes.

There were many short stories entered in the competition in Spanish and English. The first and second place were stories written in Spanish, while the third place was an English one. The three winning stories are:

1. *La Carcel* by Richard Paez
2. *El Muchacho y El Caracol* by Rachel R. Alfonso
3. *Scaro the Great* by John Demapan

[Click on each story to read it!](#)



The Library announced the winning stories in a ceremony that took place on November 2, 2006. All of the writers as well as other guests (students and faculty members) filled the Library’s reading room to join in this literary celebration. Lilia Menes and Prof. Bezar made comments on each winning story by highlighting their descriptive and narrative strengths. The first prize story was read aloud by one of the audience members. Selections from the second and third place stories were read aloud as well.

The InterAmerican Campus Student Life department donated the prizes for the 3 winners. All writers received a diploma in addition to gifts and certificates from Cheese Cake Factory and Barnes & Noble.

Notable Books of 2006

The Reference and User Services Association, a division of the American Library Association, has been selecting a list of 25 outstanding fiction, non-fiction, and poetry books since 1944. Published books are selected based on their exceptional literary merit; ability to expand the horizons of human knowledge; ability to make a specialized body of knowledge accessible to the non-specialist; and their promise to contribute significantly to the solution of a contemporary problem. This selection is only for adult readers.

This year’s list includes titles such as:

Fiction-

- Veronica* by Mary Gaitskill
The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh
The Hummingbird’s Daughter by Luis Alberto Urrea

Non-Fiction-

- Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* by J.M. Diamond
The Assassins’ Gate: America in Iraq by George Packer

Poetry-

- American Sublime* by Elizabeth Alexander
Streets in Their Own Ink by Stuart Dybeck

For more information, please visit: <http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/>

rusaprotools/rusanotable/notablebooks.htm

A Library in a Perfume Bottle?



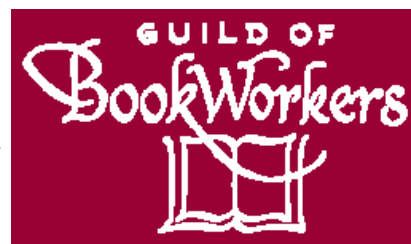
The New York perfume artist, Christopher Brosius, unveiled the “in the library” scent in perfume and home-spray version. Isn’t that wonderful? Christopher’s many scents are based on his memories of fun and loving places. For this particular scent he thought of one of his favorites: “English novels, Russian & Moroccan leather binding, worn cloth and a hint of wood polish.” The smell of books has always been evocative of the start of any journey. Who hasn’t deeply breathed in while opening a book to get that incomparable feeling of enjoyment and calm that it alone provides? Many e-book readers have always noted the smell of a book as one of the main differences between reading a print or electronic book, as well as touch and other sense evoking characteristics. Now, at least those of us forced to read online will have the pleasure of fooling our senses by spraying a room with a bit of the “in the library” perfume before engaging in our cyber readings.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.cbihateperfume.com/CBinthelibrary.html>

100th Anniversary of the Guild of Book Workers

In October 12-14, 2006, New York City hosted the 100th Anniversary of the Guild of Book Workers. The GBW was founded in 1906 to “establish and maintain a feeling of kinship and mutual interest among workers in the several hand book crafts.” The Guild still believes, as did its founders, that there is a responsibility among civilized people to sustain the crafts involved with the production of fine books. Its members hope to broaden public awareness of the hand book arts, to stimulate commissions of fine bindings, and to stress the need for sound book conservation and restoration.

For more information and exhibition, please visit: <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/byorg/gbw/>



Richard Ballo Received the FPA Award

The Florida Publisher’s Association (FPA) selected local writer, Richard Ballo, for the “President’s Pick” award for this year’s FPA Book Award. FPA was created in 1983 and its mission is to provide the book community with an opportunity for education and networking as well as political advocacy.

Richard Ballo won this prestigious award with his book *Life Without Lisa*, where he recounts, in a personal diary style, his journey from the time of his wife’s death from cancer through the five years that followed.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.flbookpub.org/>

Librarian of Congress Appoints Donald Hall Poet Laureate

James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress, announced the appointment of Donald Hall as the new Library’s 14th Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry. Hall has published 15 books of poetry among which one finds

“Exiles and Marriages” (1955) and “The Best Day, The Worst Day” (2005). He has also published several children’s books such as “Ox-Cart Man” (Caldecott winner), and other books of prose and essays on poetry. In addition, Donald Hall has received various awards for his poetry among which are the Lenore Marshall/Nation Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Award and the Ruth Lilly Prize for Poetry.

The Library of Congress (LOC) Poet Laureates engage themselves in various duties while on appointment and also get free time to work on personal projects. Hall will be in charge of the many literary and cultural festivals sponsored by LOC.

For more information on Donald Hall, please visit: <http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/264>



Small Books have Big Followers

The world of miniature books is a big one with collectors who hold thousands of copies ranging from a few inches to just millimeters. The world smallest book, according to *The Guinness Book of Records*, is 0.04 in² (1mm²). It is the children's story *Ole King Cole!*, and 85 copies were published in March 1985. The pages can only be turned using a needle.

Contrary to popular belief, miniature books have been around for a many years. According to some accounts, this type of book was published since the time of ancient Babylonians, who used tiny cuneiform tablets for legal documents and transactions. During the 19th century there was an explosion of publication of miniature books and in 1832, while it was illegal to disseminate information about birth control, Charles Knowlton anonymously published his scandalous *Fruits of Philosophy* in miniature form so it could be easily hidden.

In the United States, miniature books are considered those which do not exceed 3 inches in height and width. In other countries, the size limit is 4 inches.

Miniature books are published in every conceivable topic. However the most popular ones are religion, dictionaries, rhymes, and children's literature.

Most miniature books exhibit no distinction from their larger counterparts. These tiny books have all the parts of a regular book and many are unabridged editions.

Visit the following sites for more information about the big world of small books.

Miniature Book Society: <http://www.mbs.org/>

Indiana University, Lily Library collection of 16,000 catalogued books: <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/miniatures/>

Vamp & Tramp, Booksellers: <http://www.califiabooks.com/miniature/index.html>

Texas A&M University Libraries Exhibition: <http://library.tamu.edu/cushing/onlinex/mbooks/books.html>

Miniature Books



Catalog Your Personal Library Online

Book lovers: you can now catalog your book collection online and have complete access to it anytime, anywhere. This long-awaited online private catalog will help you determine if a book is in your collection, or how many books on the same subject you currently own before you make your next purchase. *LibraryThing* is now on beta (created in August 2005) and joining is free. This online catalog allows you to add books by entering titles, authors, or ISBN numbers. LT then searches the Library of Congress, Amazon.com, and over 45 world wide libraries, and returns with precise book data. Users can then edit the books in their catalog, tag them with their own subjects, and use the Library of Congress (academic) and Dewey Decimal systems (school and public libraries) to organize their collections.

LibraryThing
What's on your bookshelf?

Your profile, moreover, connects you to everyone else on *LibraryThing*. If you want, you can tell people all about yourself and your library, or it can be completely private. One can always find people who share one's

reading interests and connect to them through groups, forums, book clubs, etc. With over 95,000 subscribers and more than 6.7 million books, one can always find reading friends.

This catalog can also be added to your personal blog and most importantly it can be searched from your cell phone so that the next time you are buying or borrowing books, you can first find out if you already own it.

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- Over 6.7 million books have been cataloged
- Users have applied over 9.1 million tags to their books

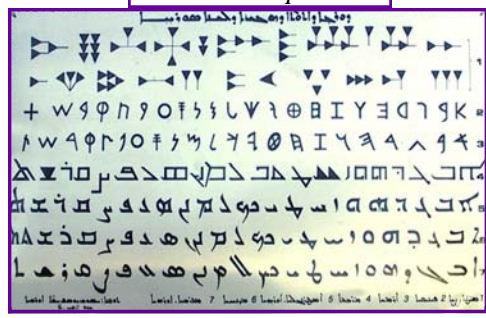
The Aramaic alphabet, which evolved from the Phoenician in the 7th century BCE as the official script of the Persian Empire, appears to be the ancestor of nearly all the modern alphabets of Asia:

- The modern Hebrew alphabet started out as a local variant of Aramaic. (The original Hebrew alphabet has been retained by the Samaritans.)
- The Arabic alphabet descended from Aramaic via the Nabatean alphabet of what is now southern Jordan.
- The Syriac alphabet used after the 3rd century CE evolved, through Pahlavi and Sogdian, into the alphabets of northern Asia, such as Orkhon (probably), Uyghur, Mongolian, and Manchu.
- The Georgian alphabet is of uncertain provenance, but appears to be part of the Persian-Aramaic (or perhaps the Greek) family.

The Aramaic alphabet is also the most likely ancestor of the Brahmic alphabets of India, which spread to Tibet, Southeast Asia, and Indonesia along with the Hindu and Buddhist religions.

Greek is in turn the source for all the modern scripts of Europe. The alphabet of the early western Greek dialects, where the letter eta remained an *h*, gave rise to the Old Italic and Roman alphabets. In the eastern Greek dialects, which did not have an /h/, eta stood for a vowel, and remains a vowel in modern Greek and all other alphabets derived from the eastern variants: Glagolitic, Cyrillic, Armenian, Gothic (which used both Greek and Roman letters), and perhaps Georgian.

Aramaic Alphabet



Letter names and sequence

It is not known how many letters the Proto-Sinaitic alphabet had, nor what their alphabetic order was. Among its descendants, the Ugaritic alphabet had 27 consonants, the South Arabian alphabets had 29, and the Phoenician alphabet was reduced to 22.

The letter names proved stable among many descendents of Phoenician, including Samaritan, Aramaic, Syriac, Hebrew, and Greek alphabet. However, they were abandoned in Arabic and Latin. The letter sequence continued more or less intact into Latin, Armenian, Gothic, and Cyrillic, but was abandoned in Brahmi, Runic, and Arabic, although a traditional *abjadi order* remains or was re-introduced as an alternative in the latter.

Graphically independent alphabets

The only modern national alphabet that has not been graphically traced back to the Canaanite alphabet is the Maldivian script, which is unique in that, although it is clearly modeled after Arabic and perhaps other existing alphabets, it derives its letter forms from numerals. The Osmanya alphabet devised for Somali in the 1920s was co-official in Somalia with the Latin alphabet until 1972, and the forms of its consonants appear to be complete innovations.

Alphabets in other media

Changes to a new writing medium sometimes caused a break in graphical form, or make the relationship difficult to trace. It is not immediately obvious that the cuneiform Ugaritic alphabet derives from a prototypical Semitic abjad, for example, although this appears to be the case. And while manual alphabets are a direct continuation of the local written alphabet (both the British two-handed and the French/American one-handed alphabets retain the forms of the Latin alphabet, as the Indian manual alphabet does Devanagari, and the Korean does Hangul), Braille, semaphore, maritime signal flags, and the Morse codes are essentially arbitrary geometric forms. The shapes of the English Braille and semaphore letters, for example, are derived from the alphabetic order of the Latin alphabet, but not from the graphic forms of the letters themselves. Modern shorthand also appears to be graphically unrelated. If it derives from the Latin alphabet, the connection has been lost to history.

Here is the URL of a very excellent and complete article on this subject, with numerous links to further sources of information: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_alphabet

***InterAmerican Campus Library
Mission***

627 S.W. 27th Ave
Miami, FL 33135
Room# 1116

Phone: 305-237-6058
Fax: 305-237-6127
E-mail: ilibrary@mdc.edu

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Libraries have knowledge
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Today!

The InterAmerican Campus Library develops, maintains, and provides access to print and electronic resources that support the courses offered by the campus. The library houses a reference collection, a circulating collection, an adult basic reading collection, many popular books and magazines, numerous audiovisual materials including popular and educational videos as well as a full range of electronic indexes, databases and full-text periodicals.

The library will always have a librarian at the Reference Desk to help students, faculty, administrators and staff with any inquiries. Librarians also offer personalized tours of the facilities and customized in-class library instructions for groups and individuals. To consult a librarian, please call 305-237-6236.

We are on the Web:

http://www.mdc.edu/iac/learningResources/library/library_index.asp

Quote of the Quarter

So please, oh PLEASE, we beg, we pray, Go throw your TV set away, And in its place you can install, A lovely bookshelf on the wall.
From *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl (1964)

Staff Directory

Marta Cosculluela (marta.cosculluela@mdc.edu) Library Director.....	7-6170
Erick Dominicis (erick.dominicis@mdc.edu) Faculty Librarian.....	7-6230
Paul Tisevich (paul.tisevich@mdc.edu) Faculty Librarian.....	7-6088
Maria Alvarez (malvarez@mdc.edu) Associate Instructor.....	7-6224
Lilia Menes (lilia.menes@mdc.edu) Associate Instructor	7-6244
Circulation Desk	7-6058
Reference Desk	7-6236



Scriptorium is made possible thanks to the collaboration of those who work at the InterAmerican Campus library. In this issue, there are articles by Paul Tisevich, and Erick Dominicis.

Are you interested in collaborating? Contact us at 305-237-6230 or erick.dominicis@mdc.edu