



Foreword to "Forming Harvard's collection of incunabula"

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Foreword

James E. Walsh recently celebrated 50 years of distinguished service to the Houghton Library, to Harvard University, and to the world of scholarship. His many friends and colleagues joined in festivities to mark this anniversary and to honor a lifetime of achievement. On this occasion we also had before us another example of his prodigious energy and knowledge. These same festivities also marked completion of James Walsh's Catalogue of Fifteenth-Century Printed Books in the Harvard University Library. This Catalogue, begun in his retirement from the Houghton Library in 1988, now fills five large volumes.

As a result of this latest accomplishment he is now an accepted bibliographical eponym. "Walsh" has come to represent Harvard in the world of incunabula studies. Walsh now joins such distinguished names as Goff, Mead, Oates, Rhodes, Sack, Hubay, Madsen, and Collijn, a select group of men and women who have examined collections of fifteenth-century printed books and offered the results of their observations for the benefit of other scholars.

Clearly James Walsh never retired, and even more clearly, never intends to. I am especially pleased, therefore, that work continues now on a Houghton Library project to update the electronic catalogue records for fifteenth-century printed books in HOLLIS. Information collected in the five printed volumes will be made accessible electronically in Harvard University's on-line public catalogue. Rare book cataloguer David Whitsell and his assistant Damian Konkoly are working with James to transform his collected knowledge about these books into electronic records.

As a result of his efforts in cataloguing these books James is in the unique position to write the story of the collecting of fifteenth-century printed books at Harvard University. "Forming Harvard's Collection of Incunabula" is the fascinating result. In the broad sweep of history and in the carefully chosen details about the books and about the individuals who brought them to Harvard, James reminds us of a proud past and an obligation to continue in this tradition. I am pleased that the Harvard Library Bulletin is reprinting "Forming Harvard's Collection of Incunabula" in order to reach an audience interested in Harvard's libraries. It is a fitting tribute to generations of librarians and donors. It is also a fitting tribute to James Walsh and provides clear evidence of why he is regarded with such deep affection, respect, and gratitude.

William P. Stoneman
Librarian of the Houghton Library