Welcome to Rare Books

This exhibit highlights specific features of twenty different Rare Books or documents in Hofstra’s Special Collections
This is an introduction to rare books and documents. Twenty items have been selected to show different aspects of book arts and changes in the creation of the written word over the course of history; from the different fonts that were used or the skills that were required to create each item. Also included are highlighted words that are associated with books. They are defined at the end of this exhibit.
In the beginning...
You may have heard of the Gutenberg bible. It was printed c.1454. Before this, however, bibles were created by hand and illustrations highlighted the text. Each book was a unique book. Each of the pages within the book are called a leaf.
1. Illuminated Manuscript leaf, French c.1440.

In this leaf of an illuminated manuscript note the blue coloration, the use of **gilt**, and the beautiful **calligraphy**. The most expensive pigment was ultramarine blue, derived from the semi-precious stone lapis lazuli mined in the mountains of Afghanistan.
2. La Sainte Bible, 1772.

This item is quite large at over a foot and a half long by a foot wide and quite heavy as well. Bibles were among the first items printed because the only people who could read were clergymen.

The covers of this book are vellum.
4. *The Treasures of Mount Athos, modern rendition.* This volume has beautifully illustrated versal letters.
5. *Wine a Poem, 1709.*

Printers of this time period often used “f” for “s” which was customary and not considered a misprint.
This volume has large *versal* letters and uses small columns within the text.

This book has *historiated* letters. The leather binding was done at a later date most likely for a second owner. This is thought to be the first book about court tennis.
8. *Hamilton’s Vases, 1814.*
This volume has a painting on the *fore edge* of the *text block* and has *gilt* which covers the painted portion.
This handwritten item is a legal document. One copy was probably filed in a County Clerk’s Office within a volume and the other was held by the slaveowner.

May y 3 day 1783
I say Recieved of John Fanning £
Sum of all Demand. Upon any account
I Have on him for a Negroman called
Prince I say I say Recieved by me
[signature]
10. Gazetteer of the Seat of War, 1813.
“Gazettes” were official government bulletins that were circulated among the population. They were the forerunners of today’s newspapers. This gazette, which is printed on one side only, gave out comprehensive information about the War of 1812.

Original horn books were made of animal horn as the overleaf (as it was transparent) and had a wooden back. Many horn books used religious texts (a psalm or passage from scripture) to teach children to read. The bottom portion of the item is a handle so that children can hold the item.
12. Miniature books in German, 1907-1908. These books have very small typeface and size. They measure less than two inches. German printers experimented with miniature type after the Gutenberg bible was printed. The miniature books didn’t gain popularity until much later.
13. Walt Disney’s *Pinocchio*, 1950. The brand name “Disney” makes this miniature book appealing to young children. At this time, children are thought of as a “consumer” group.

This book has a cow hide cover. This is a special press or **limited edition**. These editions, sometimes called deluxe editions, were used by book publishers to entice high end consumers.
15. *Little Prudy’s Sister Susie* and *Little Prudy’s Cousin Grace*, 1876.

When books were first published they were costly and most people could not afford them. Many books were serialized first in newspapers, or they were inexpensively made using board or buckram bindings. These titles were created specifically for children.
16. *The Thousand and One Nights*, 1962. This volume is considered the first serialized story. It was a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales collected as one story. There have been many times in book history when the serialization of stories has been extremely popular. Charles Dickens is famous for his “*Pickwick Papers*” which was published in 1836 in England in 19 installments.
17. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, 2003. This is a pop-up book which uses the art of paper engineering to create scenes which illustrate the text. Pop-up books, movable books and pull-down books have a very rich history and date back to the 13th century.

This volume is designed to fit into a pine box sleeve and has a camouflage cover. There are pieces of shrapnel embedded in the pages. It tells the story of a soldier at war. This is an artist’s book which is a work of art created in the form of a book.
This text is re-created as a play, using annotations and “director” annotations to supplement the traditional story. The cover of the volume is green velvet and the pages include costuming instructions as well. It is also an artist’s book.
This book has extremely fragile pages which reflect the theme of the text – the fragility of life. It is an artist’s book.
Definition of highlighted words:

**Artist's book** - are works of art that utilize the form of the book and they are often published in small numbers.

**Buckram** – is a stiff cotton (occasionally linen or horse hair) cloth with a loose weave, often muslin.

**Calligraphy** – is a visual art related to writing. It is the design and execution of lettering.

**Fore-edge** – is the vertical edge of the book opposite the spine, where the pages are unconnected.

**Gilt** – thin layer of gold applied with a brush.

**Historiated** – an enlarged letter at the beginning of a paragraph or section of text, that contains a picture.
Leaf - is a single sheet in a book.

Limited edition - an edition of a book limited to a specific number of copies.

Misprint - an error in printed text.

Overleaf – in books indicates that something is on the other side of the page you are reading or is a covering on the page.

Serialized – is a novel or story that is published in sequential pieces called installments.

Text block- the inside pages of a book; the block of paper formed by the cut and stacked pages of a book.
**Typeface** – is the overall design of lettering; the design can include variations, such as extra bold, bold, regular, light, and italic.

**Vellum** – is prepared animal skin or "membrane," typically used as a material for writing on.

**Versal** – relating to a style of ornate capital letter used to start a verse, paragraph, or manuscript.
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