The Michael H. Bruno Offset Lithography Archive

Gary G. Field

One of the most historically important sections of the RJPGAC is that devoted to the process of offset lithography. This should come as no surprise: our holdings include materials from the original 1925 research laboratories of the Lithographic Technical Foundation (LTF), then based at the University of Cincinnati. The relocation of this laboratory to Chicago in 1944 established an expanded foundation upon which groundbreaking research flowed. The lithographic process underwent the transition from a temperamental craft to a dominant industry. The research leader during the 20 years the research laboratories of LTF spent in Chicago was Michael H. Bruno, a Yale-educated chemist.

Mike’s research management philosophy encouraged individual initiative, a style which attracted researchers who relished the opportunity to use their scientific training and creative instincts to understand the science of lithography. They also had practical understanding and were able to explain how to implement new insights into the practices of the lithographic industry. A solid scientific foundation had already been laid by Robert F. Reed at the University of Cincinnati, but it was the work at Chicago which expanded and cemented the industry’s research-based practices.

The always-practical applications outcome sought by researchers naturally led the LTF staff to learn about the lithographic industry and its practices. This is why we now have such a rich collection of lithographic trade magazines in the RJPGAC.

He was known around the world as “Mr. Lithography”

Our holdings include the US journals National Lithographer (from the 1890s) and Modern Lithography, the UK’s Litho Printer, Litho Week and Offset Printer, and Australia’s The Australian Lithographer. The small offset or duplicator process was also covered: we have Offset Duplicator Review. These journals focused primarily upon the business and market aspects of the litho printing industry, but they also contained a rich collection of technical articles of considerable interest.

Naturally, the lithographic research of PATRA/Pira, FOGRA, UGRA and other research institutes around the world were of great interest to LTF. The diverse lithography-related papers presented at TAGA and IARIGAI conferences and printed in their proceedings, are all held within the RJPGAC.

Other materials from the LTF/GATF Wadewitz library that we acquired were the fundamental scientific texts upon which lithography was based. These disciplines included: surface chemistry, sensitometry, polymer science, azo and diazo chemistry, anodic oxide films, water-soluble gums and resins, adhesion, colloidal dispersions, metallurgy, dye and pigment dispersions, and even, as a possible research tool, radioactive tracer techniques.

The fundamental science texts from the LTF/GATF library were sometimes 40 or 50 years old and outdated. We did, however, place a selection of key scientific books in the offset lithography archive as a reminder of how it took the understanding of several fundamental sciences to crack the mysteries of offset lithography.

Initially, we called our trove of offset lithography materials the “LTF Offset Lithography Archive”. We have renamed this portion of our collection the “Michael H. Bruno Offset Lithography Archive” to recognize Mike’s importance. He was known around the world as “Mr. Lithography”.
From the Desk of Gary Field

by Gary G. Field  Emeritus Professor, Cal Poly Graphic Communication

RJPGAC Bookplates

The first bookplates designed to identify books donated to the RJPCAC have been generated and are in the process of being affixed. The bookplate design is derived from the collection sign we have placed at the various RJPGAC locations throughout the Graphic Arts building.

The initial batch included about ten names and were generated in quantities of either 15 or 60. These were produces on-demand printer on self-adhesive label material. In some cases, a longer run via the flexo process is planned. These are intended for the large donations: the LTF/GATF Library (Wadewitz Library), Frank Preucil, George and Susan Kinney, Richard Fisch, and Fred Billmeyer.

The bookplates identify a book as part of the RJPGAC holdings but, more importantly, serve as a permanent marker of the book's source. A book from the personal library of a donor serves, in some way, as a bond between the donor and future reader. Unlike most manufactured items, books often incorporate a personal touch. Side notes, in particular, offer interesting insights or reactions from the original owner. We delight in donations of this type as, to some degree, they convey the spirit of the owner.

Honoring Individuals

In the last newsletter, we featured the Richard S. Fisch Imaging Science and Technology sub-collection within the RJPGAC. An entire room is devoted to this collection, most of which came from the personal library of Dick Fisch.

This newsletter features an article about the Michael H. Bruno Offset Lithography Archive, a section within our Resource Room, a heavily used room housing a key part of the RJPGAC. Mike Bruno spearheaded the research team which is usually credited in turning the offset litho process into today's dominant print manufacturing method.

In order to more fully honor Dick and Mike's contributions, and to inform present and future students of the people behind the names, we have produced small posters to be mounted in the locations of the books and journals associated with their names.

The wording on each of the posters reads

Richard (Dick) Fisch obtained a BS in Physics from New York University and an MS from Columbia University. While studying, he worked on color measurement for the Technicolor Corporation.

Dick joined the 3M Corporation in 1961. He was Division Scientist and served as the coordinator of combined Printing and Publishing Systems and Image Reproduction Division’s Color and Image Analysis Center.

In the course of his work, Dick obtained 29 US Patents on aspects of color photography, photoset imaging, silver recovery, color proofing and substrate addendum. He also authored over 60 technical papers, 23 for the Technical Association of the Graphic Arts (TAGA), and served for many years on photography and graphic arts standards committees.

Dick served as President of TAGA for an unprecedented three terms, established a searchable database for all TAGA papers, and compiled a 500-page TAGA abstracts reference book. He was an avid collector of imaging and color science books, most of which are shelved within this room.

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A Note From the Chair of the Graphic Communication Department

A lot of progress has been made in the Raymond J. Prince Graphic Arts Collection. Many thanks to Gary Field for all of the work that he does to keep everything organized and accessible. He is a valuable asset to the department for whom we are eternally indebted. As you have gathered from his contribution to this newsletter, the collection remains alive and well. Many volumes of periodicals, books, and materials arrive continuously to add to the collection. Most recently, we received a wonderful donation of books and ephemera (beautiful prints of typographic, historical and print-oriented framed artwork) from Susan and George Kinney, former owners of Castle Press in Anaheim, California. Upon the receipt of the collection, there was a strategic initiative to acquire a railing system to place within the department where such pieces could be displayed and/or relocated. Fortunately, Mr. Prince and Ms. Kinney donated the funds to purchase the railing system. This is fantastic and has eliminated the quagmire of bureaucracy required to hang and display artwork on the walls of the academy. Now, we—as a department—can do what we wish. So, I have enclosed some pictures of the works as they are displayed in various classrooms and labs. The faculty, staff, and students have benefited greatly from the donation and we are forever grateful to have received such a wonderful and fulfilling gift that will inspire the future workforce of our industry. Anyone who finds themselves in SLO are always invited to drop by and look at the collection. Just let us know. We would love to have you here.

Cheers to all,

Ken Macro
Inquiries about potential donations
Please contact the Graphic Communication department before shipping any material. Department staff will then work with you to determine the most appropriate disposition of the material.

We will need an inventory of books to be donated in order to determine if duplicates exist.

Contact for potential collection donations:
805.756.1108
Ken Macro, GrC Department Chair • kmacro@calpoly.edu
Dave Cohune, CLA Advancement • dcohune@calpoly.edu

Transfer of ownership
To transfer ownership of the archival materials to Special Collections and Archives, donors must sign a deed of gift. The deed of gift includes a brief description of the material donated and can be customized to address the individual donor’s needs. The donation becomes official once it is reviewed, approved, and counter-signed by the Director of Special Collections and Archives.

RJPGAC donations
To contribute to the RJPGAC fund, please send checks payable to Raymond J. Prince Graphic Arts Collection to Dr. Ken Macro, Graphic Communication Department, One Grand Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407-0381.