

Washington Rare Book Group

P.O. Box 1851
Silver Spring, Maryland USA 20915

The WASHINGTON RARE BOOK GROUP

invites you to join us for a talk by

Prof. JOSEPH GWARA

United States Naval Academy
on "A gallery of grotesques: Woodcut initials in 16th-century English books"
at our annual lunch at the
FT. McNAIR OFFICERS' CLUB
at 12:00 noon on Wednesday, May 27, 2009.

Joseph J. Gwara is Professor of Spanish at the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis. His research interests include the textual transmission of fifteenth-century Spanish prose romances and especially the sentimental works of Juan de Flores, royal chronicler to Isabella in 1476. Since 2004, he has been engaged in a study of woodcut initials in sixteenth-century English books. His research earned him the first annual Katharine F. Pantzer Senior Fellowship in Bibliography and the British Book Trades from the Bibliographical Society of America (2008).

Professor Gwara's illustrated talk "A gallery of grotesques: Woodcut initials in 16th-century English books" presents a summary of his research to date, documenting and analyzing a single family of woodcut initials found in hundreds of early sixteenth-century English books: the grotesques. Consisting of distorted human faces, fanciful animals, or exotic foliage, the first such 23-letter ornamental alphabet was introduced into England by Wynkyn de Worde around 1502. Over time a handful of other printers added to the variety of designs, while still others re-used earlier sets. A complete inventory and longitudinal study of these initials has allowed him to re-date many early sixteenth-century English books, reassign others to different printers, uncover unsuspected business relations among printing houses, identify links between text and decoration, and document examples of French influence on English book design. This catalogue raisonné of the English grotesques demonstrates the ways in which even the most modest decorative features of early books can help answer fundamental questions about the English book trade.

The event will begin with a cash bar at 11:30 a.m., followed by lunch at 12:00 noon. The cost is \$25.00 per person. Places MUST be reserved in advance, and please note the names of any guests. Please send your check, made out to WRBG, to be received by TUESDAY, MAY 19, to Carol Clausen, 8315 N. Brook Lane, Bethesda MD 20814. If you have any questions, contact Carol at cclausen1@verizon.net or me at (202) 633-1176 or overstreetL@si.edu.

The lunch will also constitute the Group's annual meeting, including the election of officers for the coming year.

Leslie Overstreet

President, Washington Rare Book Group

Directions:

(Note: Heavy security measures are still in effect. All visitors will be asked for picture ID at the gates, and if you're driving your car will be searched. Please allow extra time for this.)

Ft. McNair is located on the District's SouthWest waterfront. The main entrances are on P St. SW between 4th and 6th Sts. A map is available at: <http://www.ndu.edu/info/visitingNDU.cfm>

The nearest Metro is Waterfront on the Green line: from the exit in the mall parking lot, cross M St. and walk down 4th for several blocks; follow 4th as it dog-legs to the left, and enter the Fort grounds at the first entrance gate on the right; follow the entrance road straight ahead and then counter-clockwise around the central field. The Officers' Club is sign-posted a fair distance down the channel side of the circle.

For those driving, continue along P St. and enter at the second gate, guarded by an MP. Your car will be searched, so please allow time for this delay. From the check-point, follow signs to the Officers' Club on the far (channel) side of the central field and park in the small lot just across the road from it or along the street leading to the War College building. (If the parking lot is full, there's a Visitors' Lot south of the swimming pool.)