

RARE BOOK SCHOOL

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Dear friends of RBS,

In the winter of 1417, Gian Francesco Poggio Bracciolini discovered a copy of Lucretius's *On the Nature of Things*, a daring philosophical treatise in verse that had been almost entirely lost to humankind for more than a thousand years. The result, according to Renaissance scholar Stephen Greenblatt, was to cause the world to swerve. Poggio—scribe, bibliophile, and scholar—had the manuscript carefully transcribed; in time, its ideas did much to shape the vision of Galileo and Darwin, Montaigne and Jefferson, Freud and Einstein.

In mid-October of this year, Greenblatt's book on Poggio and the effects of his discovery, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (2011), was named a National Book Award Finalist. Five days later, the much-anticipated exhibition, "Lost and Found: The Secrets of Archimedes," opened at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. The significance of the Archimedes Palimpsest was revealed more than a century ago, but only in the last dozen years have the thirteen texts beneath this Byzantine prayer-book been fully recovered: new speeches by the classical Athenian orator Hyperides, a lost commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, and, most important of all, seven treatises of Archimedes, including unique copies of his *Stomachion* and the revolutionary *Method of Mechanical Theorems*.

These exciting events delightfully remind us of three vital truths concerning our bibliographical heritage: the far-reaching value of our surviving textual record for humane society; the profound need for expertise in preserving and interpreting the library and archive; and the indispensability of patronage in supporting humanistic endeavor. Poggio's St. Bernard-like rescue of Lucretius—and of Cicero, Quintilian, Statius, Vitruvius and others—from the snows of oblivion could never have happened had he not been educated by two of Florence's most prominent scholars and subsequently enjoyed sure and steady support during fifty years of inquiry, conservation, and publication.

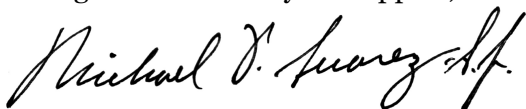
The riches of the Archimedes Palimpsest would never have been so completely and elegantly retrieved, were it not for the generosity and vision of its great owner-patron. For a dozen years, this anonymous Maecenas has supported a project that utilizes traditional codicological description and analysis, even as it deploys innovative digital-imaging and post-processing techniques to reveal the precious 'undertexts' that lay hidden for eight centuries. Such a remarkable achievement is only possible when authentic intellectual passion and learned expertise are sustained by the largesse of women and men who recognize how material our textual heritage is for human understanding.

Thinking about these instances of momentous restoration and recovery—object lessons in the ways that material artifacts play an essential role in making meaning—is surely heartening. Yet, such examples must also remind us how tenuous and fragile is the future of our textual inheritance. If we are to confer the legacy we have received on future generations, then those entrusted with its preservation, interpretation, and public mediation must be educated to the highest standard.

Rare Book School, an international center of excellence in bibliographical education, needs your financial support to continue its mission. Thanks to the generosity of our friends, the skillful teaching of our superlative faculty, the great labors of the RBS staff, and the dedication of our students, we've had a marvelous year. Our courses were enrolled to 99% of capacity. We ended the fiscal year in the black, generating a small surplus, much of which will be directed toward scholarships. We reached our annual fund goal and 145 first-time benefactors became RBS Friends. This summer, RBS was twice featured in nationally-syndicated news media: first, on NPR's Weekend Edition, and then on the front and back pages of the Metro section of *The Washington Post*. Yet, there is still a great deal to be done.

We rely on your patronage to help us provide the highest quality intellectual and professional development for librarians and collectors, archivists and bibliographers, book historians and antiquarian booksellers, advanced specialists and passionate amateurs. Annual giving by the Friends of RBS strengthens and sustains our work of education, advocacy, and outreach. I ask you please to help us with a year-end gift. With your munificence, Rare Book School will continue to make a major difference in the bibliographical community. We labor not merely for ourselves, but for the generations to come.

With great thanks for your support,



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P.S. The enclosed brochures (one for you, the other for a friend) showcase our exciting 2012 summer courses, including two new offerings. Preparations for 2013 have already begun. M