

RARE BOOK SCHOOL

114 Alderman Library · University of Virginia · Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4103
www.rarebookschool.org · oldbooks@virginia.edu · 434-924-8851

February 2011

Dear Friend,

Amid the recent unrest in Egypt, groups of young people surrounded the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and several libraries in Cairo, banding together to protect their nation's inheritance. Working with younger members of the military, they successfully diverted fellow protestors during the day, and kept vigil at night to secure the treasures within from would-be looters. "The library is safe thanks to Egypt's youth," said Ismail Serageldin, Director of the Alexandrina. The courageous example of these young men and women might well lead us to reflect on what we ourselves are willing to do for the preservation and future vitality of our cultural legacy.

Perhaps more than ever before, the bibliographical arts are under threat. Only two of the top forty English Literature Ph.D. programs in America require any bibliographical training. Most library science programs now focus on information studies and IT systems to such an extent that in-depth study of physical books and manuscripts is scarcely to be found.

Rare Book School at the University of Virginia keeps the history of books alive. More than 300 students will take our courses this year. They will study bibliography and book history; they will immerse themselves in codicology and text encoding; they will acquire skills in paleography, rare book cataloguing, and special collections librarianship.

By considering the complex and fascinating relationships between materiality and meaning, RBS students develop experientially-based understandings and analytical abilities. When teaching is rooted in a carefully mediated student encounter with the material object, historical sensibilities and technical insights largely unattainable in the ordinary classroom are marvelously realized. A sense of wonder is awakened. The "pastness of the past" is powerfully conveyed. The matter at hand is presented in three dimensions; learning itself becomes a memorable event.

Please help RBS ensure our bibliographical future by contributing to the Friends of RBS. With your support, RBS will continue to be at the vanguard of bibliographical education. No less than the youth of Egypt, we are entrusted with the mission of protecting our nation's inheritance. Since 1983, Rare Book School has made an essential contribution to rare book education. Won't you stand fast with us now?

Yours sincerely,



Michael F. Suarez, S.J.
Director