

## Artifact Lab:

# Manuscripts in a Supposed “Age of Print”

Artifacts of Text Production and Exchange at the  
Free Library of Philadelphia Rare Book Department



*The Elkins Room at the Free Library of Philadelphia Rare Book Department.*

### Objectives

Study artifacts of manuscript culture from eighteenth and nineteenth-century Pennsylvania, and consider what they reveal about the continued relevance of manuscript production in a supposed age of print in Europe and the Americas. Contextualize the objects on view within the Free Library of Philadelphia’s rare book and manuscript collection, and consider the place of rare books and special collections in the public library environment. Apply Dr. Rosenbach’s Concept of Rarity to study of the document you have been assigned, and discuss the utility of primary sources in understanding religious, cultural, and intellectual history.

## Instructions

- 1) Prior to the class session, review the digital record of the object you have been assigned, so that you are familiar with the text contents (which are probably in German).
- 2) Find your assigned manuscript around the table in the Manuscripts Room.
- 3) Spend 25 minutes studying the object, applying Dr. Rosenbach's Concept of Rarity, and thinking about the document in the context of your readings using questions listed below. (Be sure to consult some of the print materials for contextual perspective.)
- 4) Prepare a few observations and reflections to share with the class. We will spend some time at the end of the Artifact Lab putting these pieces into conversation with one another, and with the readings.

## Object Assignments

- 1) **Alex** – FLP 713, “Haltet euch...” [Writing Exercise \(Vorschrift\) for Michael Musselmann \(Never be conceited \[Haltet euch nicht selbst für klug\]\) - Digital Collections - Free Library](#) ; FLP 146, Copy book of Catharina Landis, [Writing Exercise Booklet \(Vorschriften Büchlein\) for Catharina Landis - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)
- 2) **Justin** - FLP 1114, “Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ...” <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/6492>
- 3) **Therese** – FLP 1196, “Förchte Gott allein...” [Fear God alone \(Förchte Gott allein\) - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)
- 4) **Stephanie** – FLP 1115, “Bedencke Dass deine Edle Seele...” [Writing Exercise \(Vorschrift\) for Johannes Blanck \(Consider that your noble soul \[Bedencke, dass deine edle Seele\]\) - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)
- 5) **Caitlyn** – FLP 1038, “Demuth Ist Die schönste Tugend...” [Writing Exercise \(Vorschrift\) \(Humility is the most beautiful virtue \[Demuth ist die schönste Tugend\]\) - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)
- 6) **Karen** – FLP 678, “Achtet Euch...” [Writing Exercise \(Vorschrift\) for Georg Ackerman \(Praise \[Achtet\]\) - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)

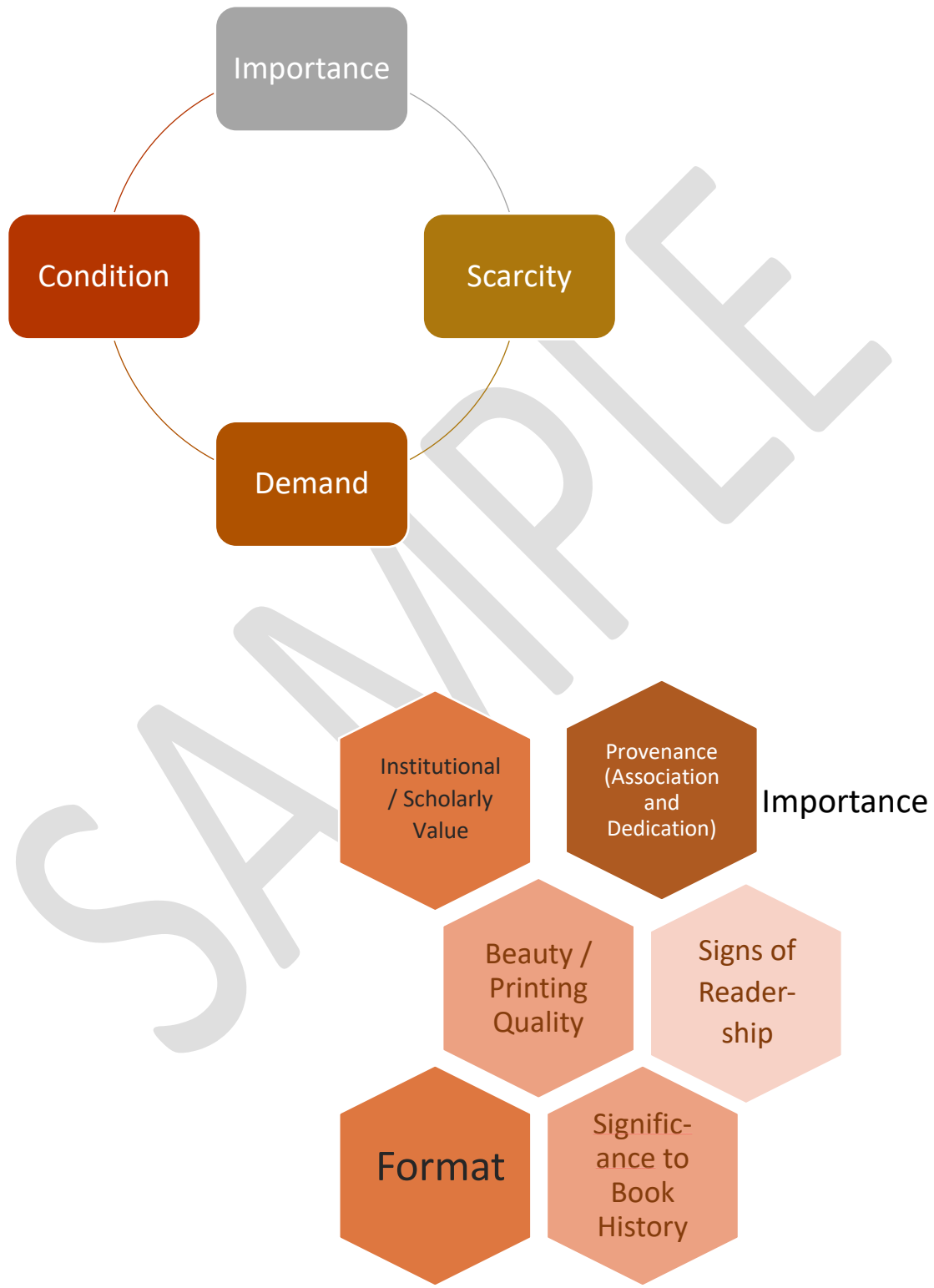
- 7) **Mike** – FLP 641, “Ich will Von...” [Writing Exercise \(Vorschrift\) \(I want to convert from my wrongs \[Ich will von meiner Missethat\]\) - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)
- 8) **Leigh** – FLP 632, “Welchem Aber Ihr...” [Writing Exercise \(Vorschrift\) for Gertraut Allerffer \(To Whom you forgive something \[Welchem aber ihr etwas vergebet\]\) - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)
- 9) **Beverly** – FLP 1225, “Welt hin Weg...” [Writing Exercise \(Vorschrift\) \(World, when I am tired of you \[Welt hin wen Ich bin dein Müde\]\) - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)
- 10) **Fisher** – FLP 1207, “Nicht Schämme” [Writing Exercise \(Vorschrift\) for David Herr \[Don't be ashamed \(Nicht Schäm Dich\)\] - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)
- 11) **Nancy** – FLP 1208, “Oh Herr stehe uns...” [Writing Exercise \(Vorschrift\) \(O Lord, stand by us \[O Herr stehe uns bei\]\) - Digital Collections - Free Library](#) ; PA Ger-R1, Fraktur artist's toolkit, [Fraktur Artist's Toolkit - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)
- 12) **Judy** – FLP 1049, “Gehet ein durch die enge porte...” [Writing Exercise \(Vorschrift\) \(Enter by the narrow gate \[Gehet ein durch die enge Porte\]\) - Digital Collections - Free Library](#)

### Questions

- 1) Using the diagrams and questions below, apply Dr. Rosenbach's Concept of Rarity to your document of focus. For questions you cannot answer with certainty, make some surmises. (Also, feel free to do some Internet searches in advance of the class!) Below are some specific questions.
- 2) What are the textual contents of the document?
- 3) What decorations appear on the document? What supplies and materials might have been used to create the piece?

- 4) What evidence of use appears on the document? For example, are their fold lines or other signs of display or storage that you can identify?
- 5) What is the condition of the document? Can you gather anything about the document's life over time? (Hint: some of the documents have conservation notes written on their mattes!)
- 6) Based on the readings you completed in *The Word in the Wilderness* and other sources, who might have made this document? For whom might it have been made?
- 7) Review some of the print sources also on view in the Manuscript Room. How can they inform the study of handwritten documents?
- 8) What does this document reveal about the interaction of print and script in the 1700s and 1800s?

# Dr. Rosenbach's Concept of Rarity



# Applying Dr. Rosenbach's Concept of Rarity

“Why age alone should be thought to give value to most collectible objects, including furniture, pictures, and musical instruments, I don't know. However, it is a great and popular fallacy. The daily prayer of all true collectors should begin with the words, 'beauty, rarity, condition,' and last of all, 'antiquity.' But books differ from other antiques in that their ultimate value depends upon the intrinsic merit of the writer's work. A first edition of Shakespeare, for instance, will always command an ever-increasing price. The same is true of first editions of Dante, Cervantes, or Goethe. These writers gave something to the world and to life—something of which one always can be sure.”

– Dr. A.S.W. Rosenbach, *Books and Bidders: The Adventures of a Bibliophile*, 1927

## Condition

How would you describe the condition of the artifact? (Excellent, good, fair, or poor?) Give detail below. Be sure to study both the binding and the interior contents.

## Scarcity

Based on your study of the artifact, how scarce would you guess this piece is? How would you go about confirming or modifying your initial assessment?

## Demand

What kinds of collectors and institutions do you think might be interested in a piece like this on the rare book market today? Do you think this kind of book has a high demand or a low demand?

## Importance

Review the characteristics of importance as described on the chart on the previous page. Do you think this piece is important?

What makes it important? What makes it less important?

What are the most significant questions you would want to follow up on in terms of better understanding this artifact? Where would you begin to launch further research?