



For Immediate Release

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William Noel to Head the Penn Libraries' Special Collections Center and Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies



Philadelphia—The Penn Libraries are pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. William Noel to Director of the Special Collections Center and Founding Director of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies. A distinguished art historian, Noel has groundbreaking experience in the application of digital technologies to manuscript studies. In addition to a long record of publication, he is especially well known for directing an international program to conserve, image and study the Archimedes Palimpsest, the unique source for three treatises by the ancient Greek mathematician (www.archimedespalimpsest.org). Noel comes to Penn from his post as Curator of Manuscripts and Rare Books at The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, a position he's held since 1997.

With Penn's new Special Collections Center poised to debut in 2013, Noel arrives at a pivotal moment in the Libraries' recent history. He will oversee the collections, research services and public programs of this important space. From its seat at the heart of Penn's campus, the 20,000 square foot facility will provide high quality reader spaces, specially designed for the use of primary resources by developing and mature scholars alike. It will be home to a digital media lab for experimentation in the digital humanities, expansive group study and seminar facilities, quiet reading lounges and a spacious exhibition gallery for the display of Penn's distinctive collections. "The location of this Center, the communities it will serve, and the treasures it will house," explained Carton Rogers, Vice Provost and Director of Libraries, "are truly emblematic of the Libraries' central role in the integration and dissemination of learning. I am excited to have someone with Will's experience and scholarly achievement to direct this extraordinary new facility."

Noel's background in manuscript curation qualifies him especially well to continue development of Penn's primary source collections, which are rapidly gaining international attention. Just last year, long-time Penn benefactors, Larry (C'53, WG'57) and Barbara Schoenberg, donated a landmark collection of Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts—287 titles in all—to found the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies (SIMS), an important branch of the new Special Collections Center. Rogers noted that, "Will Noel is one of the few working scholars today with the training, experience and vision to lead SIMS into the future and establish Penn as a destination for manuscript studies." Noel will steer the preservation and growth of this outstanding resource, orchestrate its integration with Penn's existing and broad

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Press Release

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William Noel to Penn's Head Special Collections Center (cont.)

primary source holdings, and guide the programs that will support scholarship in the many disciplines that draw on the Libraries' rare and unique materials.

After receiving his Ph.D from Cambridge University England in 1993, Noel held positions at Downing College, Cambridge University, as Director of Studies in the History of Art, and at The J.Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, as Assistant Curator of Manuscripts. A specialist in the fields of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman manuscripts, he's published extensively and been responsible for more than twenty exhibitions at the Walters on the art of the book. Noel has also published, with co-author professor Reviel Netz, a popular account of the story of the Archimedes Palimpsest and the project to extract its unique texts. That book, *The Archimedes Codex: How a Medieval Prayer Book Is Revealing the True Genius of Antiquity's Greatest Scientist*, has appeared in twenty languages and been awarded the Neumann Prize in 2009 from the British Society for the History of Mathematics. He's taught and lectured widely, is on the Faculty of the Rare Book School of the University of Virginia, is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of History of Art at Johns Hopkins University and was, in 2012, a TED speaker.

In recent years, Noel has attracted substantial funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities to build an extraordinary open access library of digitized manuscripts. That collection, known today as the Digital Walters, presents full digital surrogates and catalogs of illuminated Islamic, English, Dutch, Central European, Armenian, Byzantine, Ethiopian and Flemish manuscripts. This archive of high quality images and descriptive metadata is shared freely worldwide under a Creative Commons License and provides a model for the burgeoning digital archive of primary sources emerging on the Web. "We're excited about joining forces with Will Noel," said David McKnight, Director of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, a unit within the Special Collections Center. "His commitment to open access and the quality of his work in the Digital Walters are the ideal complements to our own efforts in digitization, which began and continue with the Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image."

McKnight and the other staff of the Special Collections Center have earned a reputation at Penn and beyond for helping faculty bring primary source material into the curriculum. At Penn, the use of rare and unique materials adds value to teaching and the experience of history and culture. "These are materials meant for use in the service of teaching and learning," noted Carton Rogers. "They're not cloistered artifacts or precious objects designed to adorn cases." This value pervades the planning of the new Special Collections Center and is closely held by the staff and by the donors whose generosity is creating an exceptional home for scholarship.

William Noel will take the reins of the Special Collections Center on September 4, 2012. For more information about Penn's Special Collections Center and the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies, visit www.library.upenn.edu/portal/learningcenters/specialcoll/. To learn about the Digital Walters, check out www.thedigitalwalters.org/ and to view Penn's Digital Library, see DigitalPenn at www.library.upenn.edu/digitalpenn/

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