

University of Notre Dame Dept of Rare Books & Special Collections Notre Dame, Indiana, USA

www.library.nd.edu/rarebooks

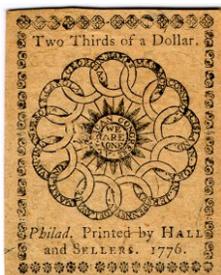
The Department of Rare Books & Special Collections at the historic University of Notre Dame contains +150,000 volumes; with some print items dating back as early as the 1460's. The library includes significant texts on Roman Catholic Church history, liturgy, law, and theology, as well as extensive collections of English and Italian literature, Irish Studies, and sports research materials. The department also houses medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, as well as a wide assortment of maps, currency, and historical newspapers.

As an important research center on campus, a high number of scholars seek access to materials every year and many classes and lectures are held within the department. With so many visitors, the library needed a solution that allowed students and scholars access to the centuries-old materials, while at the same time keeping conservation a high priority.

After reading an article from the University of Chicago, where an innovative digital seminar room had recently been constructed, the staff took a day trip to the campus to see it first-hand. Having a similar setup, they were impressed at how well the new equipment worked in conjunction with teaching with the rare and fragile materials, and decided that a high-resolution Visualizer was exactly what they needed for their library.



A WolfVision VZ-C32³ Visualizer installed over a viewing table in the new Digital Seminar Room within the University of Notre Dame's Department of Rare Books & Special Collections.



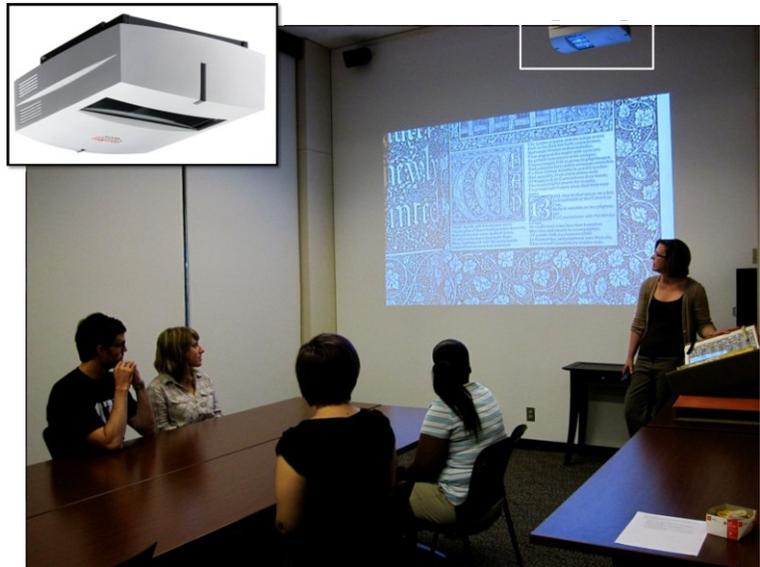
Two-thirds of a US dollar note. February 17, 1776. Designed by Benjamin Franklin. Reproduced from the original held by the Department of Special Collections.

Special Collections Librarian Tracy Bergstrom had this to say about the selection process: "One of the most important aspects when selecting hardware was color and textual fidelity to the original object. In the context of our classroom, students look back and forth between a rare book or manuscript and an enlarged image produced by the Visualizer. If any sort of distortion were to occur between the two, the effect would be diminished. In selecting the best equipment, we felt that the WolfVision model most advantageously rendered our materials to an audience."

The library installed a VZ-C32³ Ceiling Visualizer over a viewing table in a special classroom complete with a projector, seminar tables, and seating for up to 20 students. With the imaging functions of a WolfVision Visualizer on hand, scholars can reproduce the material in perfect image clarity as if they were reading the document directly in front of them. This new "Digital Seminar Room" has dramatically improved access to these sensitive materials while keeping multiple hands from touching them and thus reducing wear and tear on the precious pages. As a result, the library staff and curators were most pleased with the outcome:

"From our perspective, it allows us to cut down on the handling of rare and fragile items while simultaneously increasing the visibility of the materials.

Although our classroom has only been operational for one academic year, we have used it extensively and with a wide variety of materials including medieval bound manuscripts, American Civil War diaries and correspondence, coins and currency, and maps. In situations requiring students to see small details of an object, such as in the teaching of paleography, the Visualizer is instrumental in allowing groups of students to focus on intimate sections of a manuscript that would otherwise be inaccessible to group viewing."



Special Collections Librarian Tracy Bergstrom instructing a class on print history, viewing a copy of the Kelmscott Press's *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*.



Title page from a 1564 edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Reproduced from the original held by the Department of Special Collections of the University Libraries of Notre Dame.

So how has the reaction of the students and instructors been? Tracy Bergstrom is pleased to report, "Reaction to our new digital seminar room and its Visualizer has been universally positive. Requests to use our materials within the space have increased significantly, as knowledge spreads amongst faculty on campus of our new facilities." Professor Theodore J. Cachey, Jr. Chair of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Notre Dame adds, "In my graduate seminar last term the WolfVision Visualizer made it possible to examine and discuss with maximum efficiency title pages, illustrations and textual apparatuses of rare 16th century editions in our Zahn Dante Collection. I look forward to using the equipment in the future and to exploring further its capabilities in the support of teaching in the Department of Special Collections."