

A close-up look at the world's smallest book

March 25 2011, By Dawn Fuller

What did Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Joséphine de Beauharnais (the first wife of Napoleon Bonaparte) and Stanley Marcus of the Neiman Marcus department store dynasty have in common? All were enchanted with the miniature book.

That was just one revelation in this month's "50 Minutes – One Book" lunchtime lecture, sponsored by the University of Cincinnati's Archives and Rare Books Library. Mark Palkovic, head of the Albino Gorno Memorial Music Library, gave a talk on the world's smallest book, the Anton Chekov short story, "The Chameleon." Palkovic, who owns the world's smallest book, also showed the certificate from Guinness World Records that confirms that the .9 by .9 millimeter book – not much larger than a grain of salt – is indeed the smallest in the world. UC's Rare Books Collection also has a copy among the 300 miniature books housed in its collection.

Palkovic, who is also president of the Miniature Book Society, said that miniature books appeal to collectors, binders, printers and writers. But the discussion also revealed that miniature books could actually protect people from religious persecution when they could be easily hidden in a pocket. They could protect people from embarrassment as well, as some miniature books publish erotica.

Palkovic brought along some other miniature books from his personal collection, including a heart-shaped book with Benjamin Franklin's advice to his son about choosing a mistress.

Regardless of the content, Palkovic told the attendees that if they ever receive a miniature book as a gift, it's highly unlikely they'll ever give it away. "You might place it somewhere for safekeeping and forget where you put it, but you'll keep it," he said.

Kevin Grace, head of the Archives & Rare Books Library and University Archivist, said UC's miniature books collection has drawn student researchers from the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning (DAAP), the McMicken College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) Department of English, and students from the UC College of Business who have looked at the collection while exploring the publishing industry. The oldest miniature book that's housed in the Rare Books Collection is an almanac dating back to the 1830s.

Palkovic will be attending a Miniature Book Society Conclave in Dublin, Ireland this summer, where collectors from around the world will meet and share their love and enthusiasm for miniature [books](#).

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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