

Opening Remarks to the Exhibition: *Enlarging the prospects of happiness*

It is fitting that this exhibition follows on from the de Beer exhibit, since among Esmond de Beer's many honours and achievements he served for a time as President of the Hakluyt Society.

It is also fitting because it draws on some of the treasures of his family's bequest to the University. The de Beer generosity was such that the exhibition could have gone many different ways and used completely different material w/o exhausting the possibilities. I've focussed on works in English, but holdings in Italian, Latin, and French travel are also strong.

Which leads to my first disclaimer. In drawer 10 you will find the 9th edition of William Rhind's *Scottish Tourist*, which serves as a bit of a metaphor for this exhibition, because I've opened it to display the strip maps of one of his itineraries. He was not the first to use this format, but by their very nature these maps limit the gaze of the traveller. In the same way, I have approached this topic from a rather narrow and focussed perspective, looking at readers of travel literature rather than authors, at expectations rather than discoveries, and at publishing ploys rather than artists or verbal flair. Some of these books would not feature in many such exhibitions, while others are significant in all sorts of ways, including for their publishing history or techniques of interesting readers.

The title arises from my own thinking not about why travel is popular, but about why reading about travel is popular. *Enlarging the Prospects of Happiness* attempts to incorporate some ideas about the expansiveness and commercial exploitation that certainly motivated a lot of voyages and journeys, but also to capture the sense of a higher plane of vision, of surveying the vast extent of the world, and of seeking at least in part to discover, through comparison with European practices, new or other forms of happiness. Because just reading about gold in South America or penguins in Antarctica or chameleons in Africa does create senses of awe, wonder, delight as much as rapaciousness or superiority in not being like the Hottentots (or the French). On the whole, I think readers then and now prefer to think they like travel reading for these more positive qualities, even if the imperialistic results tend ultimately to confirm a culture's patronising self-confidence and right to rule.

Because of this interest in reading, a rather large number of the books are open to passages that I think reveal something about readership or authorial assumptions, rather than to the more typical title-pages or elegant illustrations, though there are plenty of those as well. The further consequence of this is that it is a more readerly exhibit, and I hope that will make it more engaging, even if you can only read through part of it at a time. The other consequence is that there is not a strict order to things. The cases are arranged vaguely chronologically and geographically, but the notes on each book apply almost solely to that book or case, so that you can browse in good conscience and begin wherever you wish.

I think I've said most of what I want to say about the books and the exhibition on the cards themselves. Instead, I want to say a bit about the steep learning curve I've gone through over the past two months and to thank all the other people who have made this exhibition possible. And I start with Jean because she has been the most essential, and the most patient, co-curator. She was able to draw items from the collections to my attention, she helped find out about books and authors for me, and above all she reminded me regularly that this was a visual exhibition, not an essay. As Sandra can assure you, I have no visual imagination; I had to build our entire addition floor-plan out of string in order to see what it might look like.

Jean has constantly helped me see how things needed to look in the cases, on the walls, and even on the poster and cards, where she worked with the University's graphic designer to choose fonts. If what you see tonight is visually pleasing, please thank Jean.

A much less visible assistance, but even more valuable for the collection, comes from the staff at the Bindery, who lovingly handcrafted each book stand, some on angles, some for foldouts, all adjusted to match the heights of the other books in the case. Lee-Ann Sinclair, their apprentice, has more than fulfilled her training on book-stand construction, under the able training of Don Tobin.

I would also like to thank Jean, Margaret Tripp, Sarah Jones and Liz Tinker for their various loans of items for these eye-catching vitrines, and Sarah and Jean for engaging text and design flair. I am confident that many more people will see this exhibit because their curiosity will be piqued by these four windows.

I would like to thank Linda Tyler, Anne Jackman and the Hocken Library for the loan of some important books, and for the stunning maps and engravings on the walls. And I would like to thank Michael for making the space available, for trusting that I'd actually see an exhibition through to an opening, and all the resources involved in mounting and advertising the event and in hosting this lovely occasion. Finally, I would like to thank you all for coming, and invite you to explore the riches of our collections related to this particular aspect of travel.

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