



T H E H U N T I N G T O N
LIBRARY, ART COLLECTIONS, AND BOTANICAL GARDENS
1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, California 91108

CONTACT: Lisa Blackburn, Communications Coordinator (626) 405-2140
Traude Gomez, Staff Writer (626) 405-2260

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 10, 2005

ALL WAS LIGHT: ISAAC NEWTON'S REVOLUTIONS

Huntington exhibition explores the groundbreaking life and legacy of Sir Isaac Newton

March 5 – June 12, 2005

SAN MARINO, Calif. – The brilliant and controversial life of one of the foremost scientific minds of all time—Sir Isaac Newton (1642 – 1727)—will be explored in a major new exhibition at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, opening March 5 and continuing through June 12 in the Library's West Hall. By showcasing a range of Newton artifacts, including his manuscripts as well as his personal interleaved copy of his groundbreaking *Principia Mathematica*, the exhibition will examine the formation of the mind of a genius, says noted Newton scholar Mordechai Feingold, the show's curator and a professor of history at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena.

This is an exhibition in two parts: a follow-up exhibition entitled *The Newtonian Moment: Isaac Newton and the Making of Modern Culture* will examine his work and its influence on all aspects of modern culture. It runs from Saturday, July 23, 2005 through Sunday, Jan. 1, 2006.

A mathematician and physicist, Newton's innovations transformed not only the realm of scientific thought and inquiry, but the wider intellectual world as well. After Newton, the search for universal (and rational) principles shaped the development of ideas in virtually all fields, including religion, history, art, and literature. "Everyone wanted to be the Newton of their field," says Feingold.

The Huntington show follows on the heels of the recent exhibition *The Newtonian Moment: Science and the Making of Modern Culture* at the New York Public Library, curated by Feingold as well. While the Huntington show will also include key manuscripts from the Cambridge University Library in England (where the largest collection of original Newton materials reside), it will mainly draw from The Huntington's Newtonian artifacts, none of which traveled to the East Coast. "The Huntington has an extraordinary collection of scientific materials," says Feingold. The show will also feature items from UCLA's Clark Library and from Caltech, showcasing a trove of Newton items that are housed in Southern California institutions.

Through approximately 70 Newton manuscripts, objects and related materials, the exhibition will explore the many facets of Newton's interests that also delved deeply into alchemy and theology -- and delineate how his daring accomplishments evolved. Visitors to the exhibition will see personal letters and books, as well as his copious writings and exacting drawings. A centerpiece will be Newton's own copy of the first edition of his *Principia Mathematica* (London, 1687), which Feingold calls "the monumental treatise that unified celestial and terrestrial mechanics under a single law -- universal gravitation -- and charted the course of physics for some two centuries." Once the book was published, Newton took a copy and interleaved it with blank pages facing the original pages, handwriting corrections and additions on the blank sheets and in the margins. Also on display will be *The Opticks*, published 17 years after the *Principia* and containing Newton's revolutionary theories regarding light and colors.

The exhibition also will display works of those who significantly influenced Newton's thinking. Galileo's 1632 treatise, *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo*, was one of the imposing contemporary works that Newton set out to transform. Newton read the 1663 Latin translation, *Systema cosmicum*, which will be featured. His grasp of René Descartes's *Geometria* (first published in French in 1637 and later translated into Latin) marked his progress in higher mathematics and toward the invention of calculus. The Huntington will display its 1649 edition.

Newton remained pivotal even for those who criticized and revised his work, and certainly as Newton's new concepts were gaining acceptance and becoming the scientific

standard, they provoked controversies and even public clashes. “For friends and foes alike, Newton became an icon to be emulated or rejected, revered or excoriated – but always there to contend with,” says Feingold. In the end, Newton redefined the study of nature by insisting that it must be based on hard evidence and not on hypotheses -- ultimately his ideas and innovations helped to usher in a brave new age of reason. “Hence, the era of Enlightenment and Revolution may be viewed as the Newtonian Moment,” Feingold adds.

Indeed, Alexander Pope’s celebrated couplet gives voice to the perception of Newton as God’s emissary in the discovery of the laws of nature:

*Nature, and nature’s Laws lay hid in Night.
God said, Let Newton be! and All was Light*

Feingold’s book “The Newtonian Moment: Isaac Newton and the Making of Modern Culture” (Oxford University Press, 2004) is available in the Huntington’s bookstore.

ABOUT THE HUNTINGTON: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens is a collections-based research and educational institution serving scholars and the general public. More information can be found on the Web at www.huntington.org.
VISITOR INFORMATION: Hours: Tuesday through Friday from 12 noon to 4:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission: \$15 adults, \$11 seniors, \$10 students (ages 12-18), \$6 youth (ages 5-11), free for children under 5. Members are admitted free. Information: (626) 405-2100, or visit online at www.huntington.org.

###

[EDITOR’S NOTE: High-resolution digital images are available upon request for publicity use.]