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DIBNER HALL *of the*
HISTORY OF SCIENCE

BEAUTIFUL
SCIENCE
IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

THE HUNTINGTON'S HISTORY OF SCIENCE COLLECTIONS

The acquisition of the Burndy Library substantially expanded The Huntington Library's holdings in the field of the history of science and technology, making it one of the most extensive collections in this field in the world. The gift included some 67,000 rare books and reference volumes as well as a collection of scientific instruments.

The Burndy Library, founded by Ukrainian-born and Connecticut-based inventor and industrialist Bern Dibner (1897–1988), is the largest library collection to come to The Huntington since Henry E. Huntington's founding gift to the institution in 1919. Huntington created his independent research library by collecting whole libraries intact. The Burndy collection, however, dwarfs even those that Huntington was able to acquire and preserve in their entirety.

Moreover, it is the nature of the Burndy Library that sets it apart: the Library consists of an extensive collection in the history of science and technology, with a strong focus on the physical sciences. It comprises important materials from antiquity to the 20th century, with a particular emphasis on 18th-century physics, including collections by and about Isaac Newton, as well as major collections in 18th- and 19th-century mathematics, the history of electricity, civil and structural engineering, optics and color theory, among others. The collection includes such rare treasures as a 1544 edition of Archimedes' *Philosophi ac Geometrae*, a first edition of Robert Boyle's *Experiments and notes about the mechanical origin or production of electricity* (1675), and the scientific library of Louis Pasteur (1822–1895).

The Huntington has one of the most heavily used rare books libraries in the nation outside of the Library of Congress, delivering more than 350,000 rare items to some 1,700 visiting scholars each year. One of its strong collecting areas is the history of science and technology, documenting the growth of fundamental areas of scientific inquiry from the 12th century up to the dawn of the 21st.

The history of astronomy is perhaps the strongest area. Manuscript material ranges from a copy of Ptolemy's *Almagest* from 1279 to nearly a century's worth of director's papers from nearby Mt. Wilson Observatory, including correspondence between George Ellery Hale and Albert Einstein, and the papers of Edwin Hubble. The Library's holdings of printed works by Charles Darwin are unsurpassed in the United States, with books supplemented by 68 letters written by Darwin to a variety of contemporaries. One of the Library's treasures is the double-elephant folio of John James Audubon's *Birds of America* (1827–38)—massive in size, with full-color illustrations of birds in their habitats. The Huntington's history

of mathematics includes 39 editions of Euclid's *Elements*, which codified two and a half centuries of scientific work on geometry into a single work. Rare material on Newton, Galileo, Copernicus, and Linnaeus also are represented.

Coupled with the strength of the collections are the facilities that house them. In 2004, The Huntington opened its new Munger Research Center, a 90,000-square-foot building complete with a reading room for scholars, offices for long-term researchers, space for conservation and digitization, and 30,000 square feet for collections storage.