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**Crime in the Library! The Special Collections of Lloyd Sealy
Library, John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY: A Repository
Profile.**

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Crime in the Library: The Special Collections of the Lloyd Sealy Library,
John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY

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the Adelphi University Archives and Special Collections

Crime in the Library: The Special Collections of the Lloyd Sealy Library, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

By Ellen H. Belcher

Introduction

Started as a small collection of books to support the New York Police Department (NYPD) Police Academy, the library of John Jay College of Criminal Justice has had a rich history and built important collections in just over four decades. The library has always had a mission to collect comprehensively in criminal justice and its collections have paralleled the college in the scholarly development of the field. The library holds the papers and publications of prisoners and prison wardens; criminals and policemen; scholars of criminal behavior and supporters of crime victims. Together, these primary materials document the process of crime, its prevention, investigation, prosecution, and punishment on an international scale.

The Library was named for Lloyd George Sealy, an African American who rose through the ranks of the NYPD, eventually commanding a Harlem precinct and the Brooklyn South Patrol Division. After retiring from the force, he became a beloved professor and scholar of Law and Police Science at John Jay, and spent long hours conducting research and assisting students in the Library. On January 4, 1985—his 65th birthday—he suffered a fatal heart attack in the library.

Rare Book Collections

Some of the original titles transferred from the Police Academy now form the nucleus of our rare book collection. While only a few of the close to 2,000 volumes that comprise this collection are in themselves rare and unique, the sum of the collections is unparalleled. No other repository collects published works on criminal justice as



Photograph of Sergeant Edward O. Shibles, NYPD. From *The Shibles Family Papers*, Lloyd Sealy Library.

comprehensively and retrospectively. Together on these shelves, are first-hand accounts of prison life and criminal activity; the writings of law enforcement and corrections practitioners; Renaissance criminal law texts; pamphlets on criminal court proceedings; and foundational works on forensic science, fire science, and criminology.

Of the titles distinctive in both their original binding and uniqueness in this country some examples are: De Tocqueville and Beaumont (1831) *Du système pénitentiaire aux États-Unis...* (a report on U.S. prison innovations); Vidocq (1837) *Les Voleurs, Physiologie de Leurs Moeurs et Leur Langage...* (written by an accomplished thief who became chief of detectives in Paris); Voch (1781) *Abhandlung von Feuersprützen. Nebst einem Unterrichte, wie man sich bey entstandenen Feuersbrünsten zu verhalten...* (an early illustrated treatise on fire engines and fire hoses).

Vellum-bound titles on early criminal law include

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Scanaroli (1655) *De visitatione carceratorum libri tres...* (a work on torture and conditions in Rome's prisons) and Damhouder (1567) *Le refuge et garand des pupilles, orphelins, et prodigues..* (offering guidance on the treatment of children in court). The library continues to add to our rare book collection at the rate of around fifty titles a year in addition to special purchases. Our titles are catalogued on the CUNY+ and in OCLC databases and are available for consultation by appointment.

Manuscript Collections

The Lloyd Sealy Library holds a diverse group of manuscript collections. The most requested collections are those tapped for our Crime in New York 1850-1950 Digital Library (described below). Amongst other collections, the library holds, *The Papers of Flora Rheta Schrieber*, a member of the first faculty of John Jay College and the author of *Sybil*, and *The Shoemaker*. The recently acquired *Shibles Family Papers* document the work of two policemen-brothers who patrolled the notorious tenderloin district in turn of the century New York.

Documenting the history of corrections and penal reform are the *Records of the Center for Knowledge in Criminal Justice Planning*, which was directed by CUNY Graduate Center Professor Robert Martinson. His groundbreaking 1974 article "What Works?" greatly influenced scholarly and popular opinion on prison reform. *The Norman Bruce Johnston Collection of Prison Plans* represents a collection amassed over a long career of research on historical



Prison 'mug shots' of Martha Place, 1899, and Ruth Snyder, 1928 both executed for murder at Sing Sing Prison. From *The Papers of Lewis E. Lawes*,



Police identification photograph, November 11, 1937 of Leonard Cohen, Irving Moskowitz, Anthony Maffatorre alias 'Dukey', Abraham Levine, alias 'Pretty'. From *The Burton Turkus Papers*.

and international prison planning and construction.

Our many manuscript collections, including the *John Jay College Archives*, reflect a continued interest in developing our collections in criminal justice, very broadly defined. All of these collections are listed on our website and are available for study by appointment.

'Open' Special Collections

This specialized library also maintains an open-shelved collection of what is best described as 'grey literature'. The backbone of this collection includes reports and other publications of local, state, national and international criminal justice agencies as well as reform and watchdog groups. While most of these materials are now available 'free' online, no other repository has worked to catalog and collect them comprehensively. Lloyd Sealy librarians make a concerted effort to find, claim and catalog these publications, contributing to these original records to the OCLC database. Because so much of this material is ephemeral with very short web-lives, they are often printed and bound for long-term accessibility. These efforts were rewarded in 2005 when the library received the *NYLink Achievement Award for Resource Sharing and Metadata*.

The Crime in New York 1850-1950 Digital Library

The *Crime in New York 1850-1950 Digital Library* (www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/crimeinny) was completed in 2006 with the support of a

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METRO Digital New York Grant. This open access web resource offers primary materials on the rich criminal history of New York City, documenting nearly a century of investigation, arrest, judgment, incarceration, and punishment of both famous and unknown criminals in New York City and New York State. This digital library is derived from portions of our three most popular collections and is in two parts:

- The Image Digital Library is comprised of digitized photographs and related documents from two manuscript collections: *The Papers of Lewis Lawes*, Warden of Sing Sing Prison 1920-1941; and *The Papers of Burton Turkus*, assistant district attorney and Chief of the Homicide Division, Kings County (Brooklyn) 1940-1945. These digitized images portray decades of criminal activity and careers in New York City through crime scene and investigation photographs, mug shots, and rap sheets.
- The Trial Transcripts Digital Library offers access to our *Trial Transcripts of the County of New York 1883 – 1927*: verbatim proceedings of 3,326 court cases, mainly heard at the Court of General Sessions, New York County. The site provides a searchable index of these transcripts, which are on 425 reels of microfilm (available by interlibrary loan). A sample of 150 transcripts



Crime scene photograph of the body of Joseph Rosen, killed by members of the Murder Inc. crime syndicate in a candy store in Brounsville, Brooklyn, September 13, 1936. From *The Burton Turkus Papers*,

is available as searchable full-text PDF files.

The Lloyd Sealy Special Collections continues to attract a growing patronage of international scholars, who yearly produce two to four scholarly books, articles, theses, and dissertation from the collections. We invite inquiries from interested researchers who wish to conduct research with our collections. More details can be found at: www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/info/speccoll/.

Further Reading

For more on the Lloyd Sealy Library, please see our website: www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu and/or read the following articles: Nancy Egan (2007) "The Lloyd Sealy Library of John Jay College of Criminal Justice: Academic, Special Library or Both?" *Behavioral & Social*

Sciences Librarian 25/2: 1-22.

Ellen Belcher and Ellen Sexton (2008) "Digitizing Criminals: Web Delivery of a Century on the Cheap."

OCLC Systems & Services: International Digital Library Perspectives. 24/2:

Ellen H. Belcher has been the Special Collections Librarian and an Assistant Professor at the Lloyd Sealy Library since 2004, before which she worked in the Special Collections and Preservation Departments of several other NYC- area libraries. She holds an MS-LS and Advanced Certificate in Library Preservation from the School of Library Service, Columbia University, and an MPhil and MA in Ancient Near Eastern Art History and Archaeology from its Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. She can be reached at ebelcher@jjay.cuny.edu.