

Literature and Languages Library Art Collection



By: Iris Grossman

Overview

John Milton Gregory had a progressive vision for Illinois Industrial University, soon renamed to the University of Illinois, when he began serving as the first regent in 1867. Instead of a university solely focused on engineering and agriculture, he imagined a university with a comprehensive curriculum including science, humanities, and the arts. As part of this vision, he opened an art gallery at the university to demonstrate the importance and popularity of the arts. During the summer of 1874, he purchased an incredible collection of statues, busts, medals, engravings, and photographs from the Louvre in Paris. The collection debuted on January 1st, 1875, at University Hall, and was the greatest art collection west of New York. Unfortunately, the gallery closed in 1911 and all of the artwork was separated. It was spread all over campus to Altgeld, Foellinger, the Art department, the Classics department in Lincoln Hall, and several other locations.

During this time, the Classics Library began gathering their own art collection of historical figures through donations and acquisitions. Several busts were purchased from German sculptor August Gerber, Boston plaster reproduction manufacturers P.P. Caproni and Brother, and Daprato Rigali Studios (formerly Daprato Statuary Company), located in Chicago. Meanwhile, most of the original Gregory collection was either lost or destroyed, as buildings ran out of room and plaster casts went out of fashion. However, the remaining original Gregory casts moved

to the Classics Library and were mixed in with the donated and purchased busts that were not part of the original Gregory collection. Over the years, the origins and identities of some of the sculptures were lost and original Gregory pieces became indistinguishable from donated and purchased busts.

Over the past year, Dr. Wayne Pitard, former director of the Spurlock Museum and Professor in the department of Religion, has researched the Gregory collection extensively. He has identified 7 busts and 1 statue from the Classics Library as part of the original collection. During the fall of 2016, 4 more busts have been identified as original Gregory collection pieces and will be moved, along with the first 8 pieces, to the Spurlock museum for restoration. Once restored, they will join other original Gregory collection busts and statues as part of the permanent collection.

Today, the Classics Library, which is now part of the Literature and Languages Library, has many busts that are part of its own art collection. The goal of this project has been to research and identify several busts that were purchased or donated to the Classics Library, as well as to make a comprehensive list of the items in the library's permanent collection. Information from Lorado Taft files, William Oldfather files, John Gregory files, and a Library Catalogue from 1876 from the University Archives were used for this project.

I would like to thank Dr. Dan Leon, Dr. Wayne Pitard, Mr. David Morris, Dr. Paula Carns, Mr. Bruce Swann, and the University Archives staff for their help in completing this project. I have not only met incredible people, but I have also learned some of the fascinating history of the University of Illinois.

Plaster Casts

Plaster casts were a popular way to reproduce great works of art and preserve detail, until the 1940s, when museums began to focus on original pieces of art. As a result of this shift, many museums including the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Illinois destroyed most of their plaster cast collections. In the 1980s, scholars realized that the casts preserved features of the originals that can no longer be seen due to damage from wars and pollution. Since then, there has been a revival of reproductions with new museum exhibitions and displays. These casts also serve as accurate archaeological records of destroyed buildings, and models for artists and architects.

The casts in the Classics Library at the University of Illinois are mostly made of plaster, except for a few marble reproductions. Many of them have been painted over, which covers up small details and eventually chips, causing a cracked, unhealthy shell around the busts. Fortunately, the Spurlock Museum staff cleaned and restored all of the pieces that were not part of the original Gregory collection during the summer of 2016. The Gregory pieces identified from the Classics Library will be cleaned and restored once they arrive at the Spurlock Museum.



UIUC ARCHIVES - LOW-RES PROOF



UIUC ARCHIVES - LOW-RES PROOF

These are photographs of Gregory's original Art Gallery in University Hall from the late 1800s.

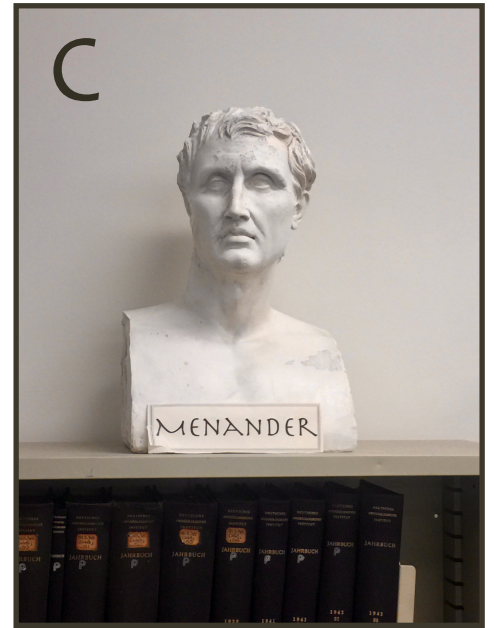
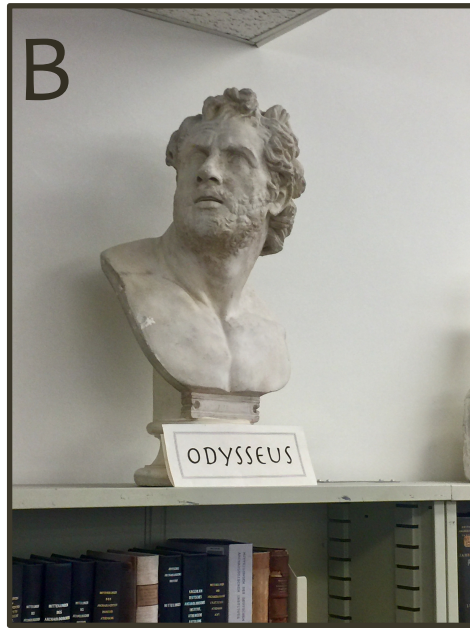
Courtesy of the University of Illinois Archives.



These are photographs of the restoration work from the summer of 2016 and the damage caused by painting the busts.

Courtesy of Dr. Wayne Pitard.





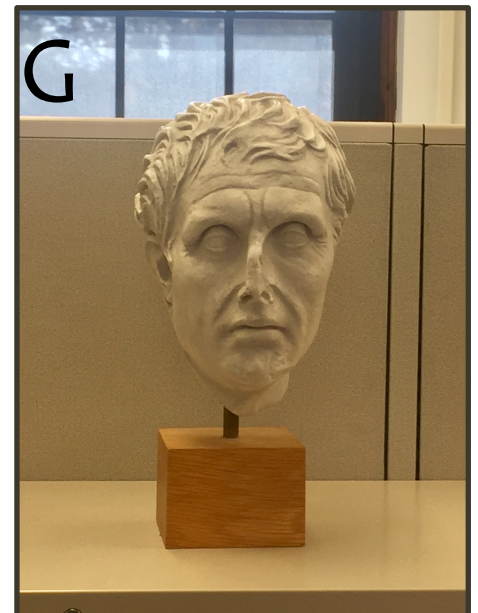
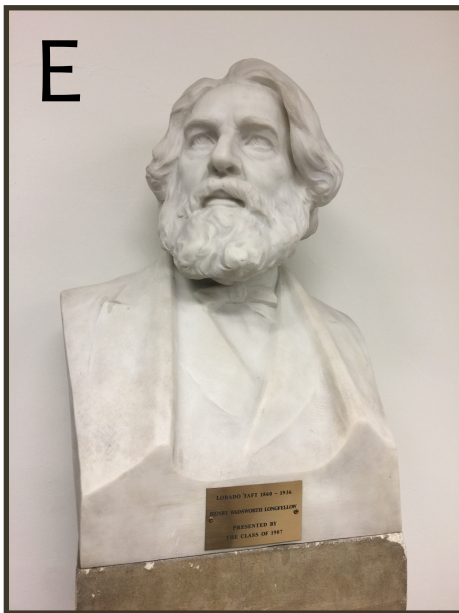
Busts in the Literature and Languages Library:

A. Unknown Male- has no definitive identity. However, it is definitely a reproduction of an unidentified Roman sculpture from the Louvre Museum. The sculpture is part of the Borghese Collection and was acquired in 1808. The original sculpture may come from the first century CE.

B. Odysseus- a legendary king of Ithaca who is the subject of Homer's poem *The Odyssey*. Although this bust is identified as Odysseus, it is most likely a companion of Odysseus. The original is part of the Sperlonga Sculptures, which were discovered in 1957 on the grounds of Emperor Tiberius's villa in Sperlonga, Italy. These sculptures were created between 100 CE- 150 CE and now reside in the British Museum.

C. Menander- lived from 342-290 BCE and was a Greek dramatist who wrote in Athenian New Comedy style. He wrote 108 comedies, which were mostly lost during the Middle Ages and now survive in fragments. This bust closely resembles the Herm of Menander, which is currently on display in Gallery 114 at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California.

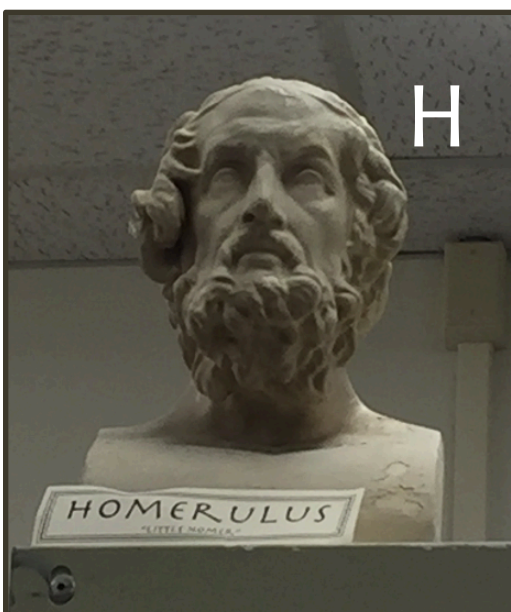
D. A group photograph of the Unknown Male, Odysseus, and Menander in the library.



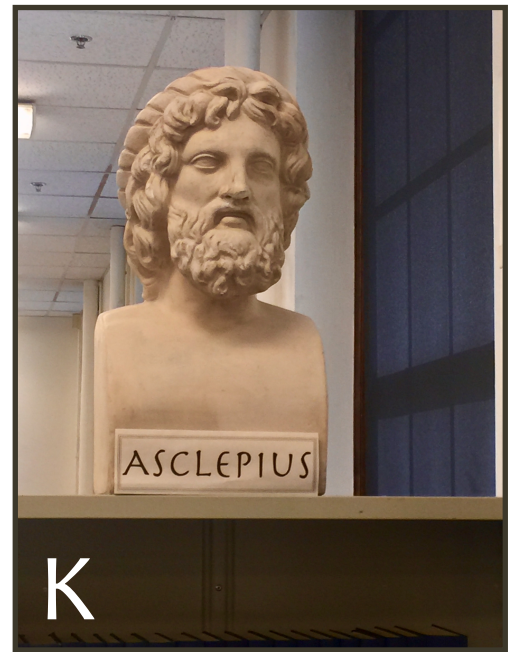
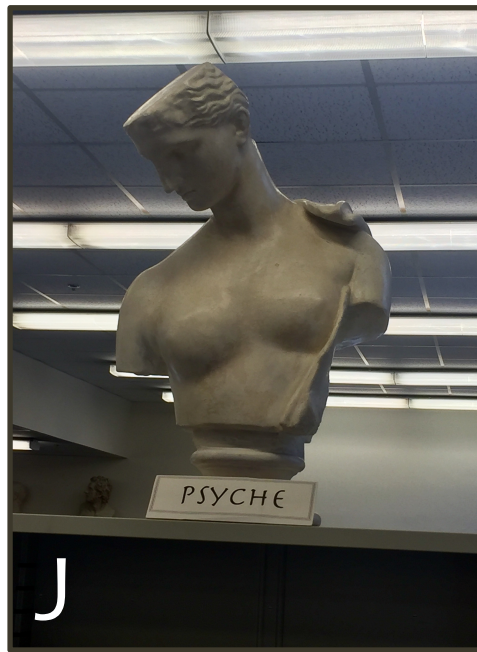
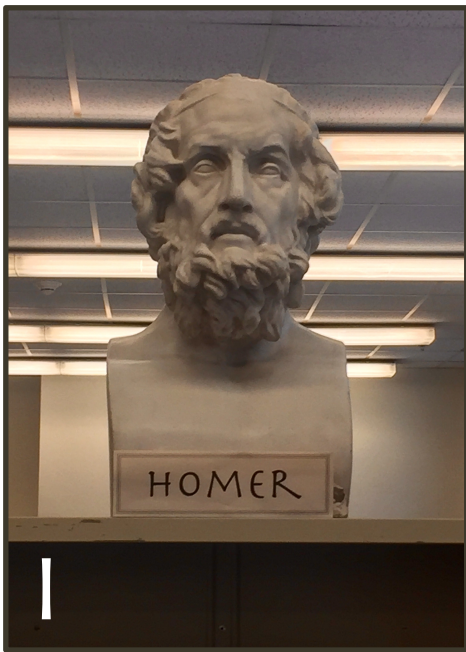
E. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow- lived from 1807 to 1882. He was an American poet and professor whose works include ‘Paul Revere’s Ride,’ ‘The Song of Hiawatha,’ and ‘Evangeline.’ This bust was created by Lorado Taft early in his career and presented to the university by the class of 1907. This 29-inch tall bust was exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1908 and returned to the university the following year.

F. Sallustia Orbiana- a young Roman woman who was briefly married to Roman Emperor Severus Alexander. Other sculptures of her only portray her head. In all probability, the company that made this cast wanted it to look more complete, so the neck and shoulders were added. There is a similar bust of this woman at the Louvre in the Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities.

G. Menander- a Greek dramatist. This bust was recently given to the Literature and Languages Library on loan from Dr. Ariana Traill, a faculty member of the Classics Department. The wooden block has a tag indicating that it is a reproduction from the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, where the original sculpture resides.



H. Homerulus- a reduced size bust of Homer, the epic poet. This bust could potentially belong to the original Gregory art collection. A reduced size Homerulus is referenced in the ‘Catalogue of the Art Gallery, Illinois Industrial University’ published in 1876 in the ‘Busts, Reduced Size’ section. This catalogue lists that this sculpture was moved to room 408 in University Hall after the art gallery closed. Unfortunately, no further documentation exists for its arrival in the Classics Library, so it cannot be absolutely proven that it is part of the Gregory collection.



I. Homer- a Greek poet famously known for his poems ‘The Iliad’ and ‘The Odyssey.’ It is unclear when Homer lived, or if he was even a real person. This particular bust came from the Daprato Rigali Studios located in Chicago. It may be modeled after a similar bust of Homer that is part of the Department of Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities at the Louvre Museum.

J. Psyche- a character in a story from *Metamorphoses*, which was written by Lucius Apuleius Madaurensis. Although this story was written in the 2nd century CE, Psyche appears in Greek art as early as the 4th century BCE. This sculpture closely resembles a bust of Psyche created by Giuseppe Rossi.

K. Asclepius- a Greek hero and God of medicine. In many depictions, he is seen carrying a staff with a serpent wrapped around it. This symbol is still used today and is associated with medicine and health care.

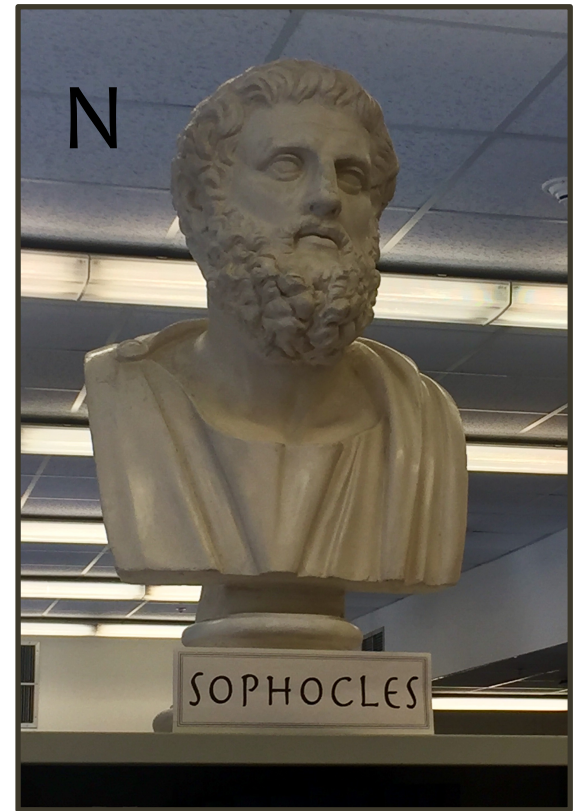
L. A group photograph of Homer, Psyche, and Asclepius in the library.



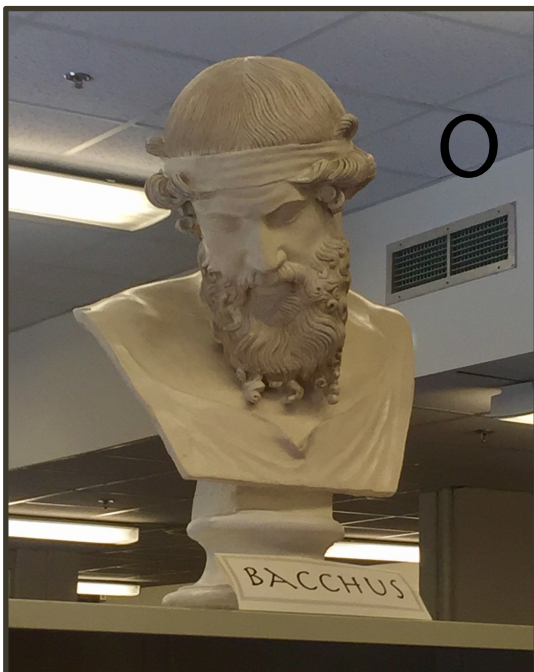


M. Unknown Female- an unknown woman who appears to be an aristocrat or a Goddess. If this cast is from the original Gregory art collection, this woman could possibly be 'Julia', 'Young Greek Girl', 'Head of Venus', or 'Sappho'. All of these possibilities are listed in the 'Catalogue of the Art Gallery, Illinois Industrial University' published in 1876 in the 'Busts' section. This woman is most likely depicting Venus, although an unquestionable identification cannot be made at this time.

N. Sophocles- a Greek tragedian who wrote 120 plays during his lifetime. Seven of these have survived in their entirety to modern times including his most famous play, 'Oedipus the King.' He lived to be 90 years old and passed away in 406 BCE, after 50 years as the most celebrated playwright in Athens. Sophocles competed in both the Lenaea and Dionysia festivals in 30 competitions and won 18. Among his contemporaries were Euripides and Aeschylus.



O. Bacchus- a Roman God of agriculture and wine who is likely copied from the Greek God Dionysus. Other depictions of Bacchus often show him carrying a staff topped with a pinecone, followed by satyrs and wild women. There is a stamp on the back of this cast that indicates it is from the PP Caproni and Brother manufacturing company. This bust looks similar to a bronze bust of Dionysus located in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, Italy.

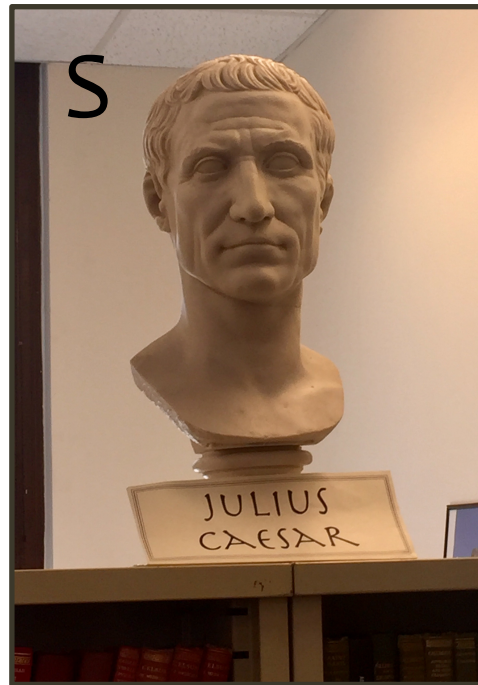




P. A group photograph of the Unknown Female, Sophocles, and Bacchus in the library.

Q. A group photograph of Octavian, Julius Caesar, and Brutus in the library.



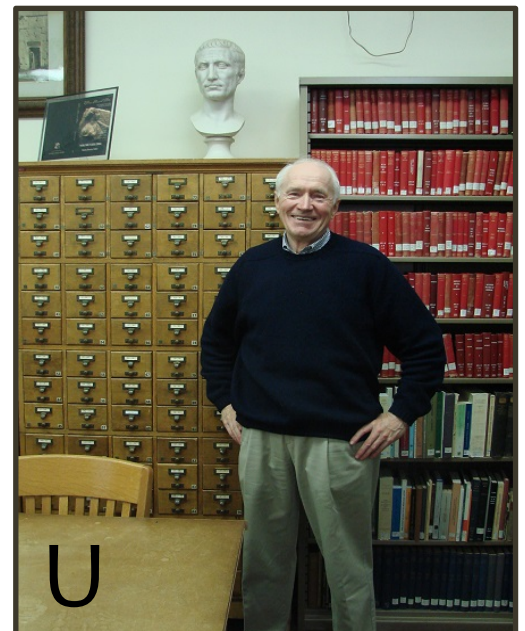


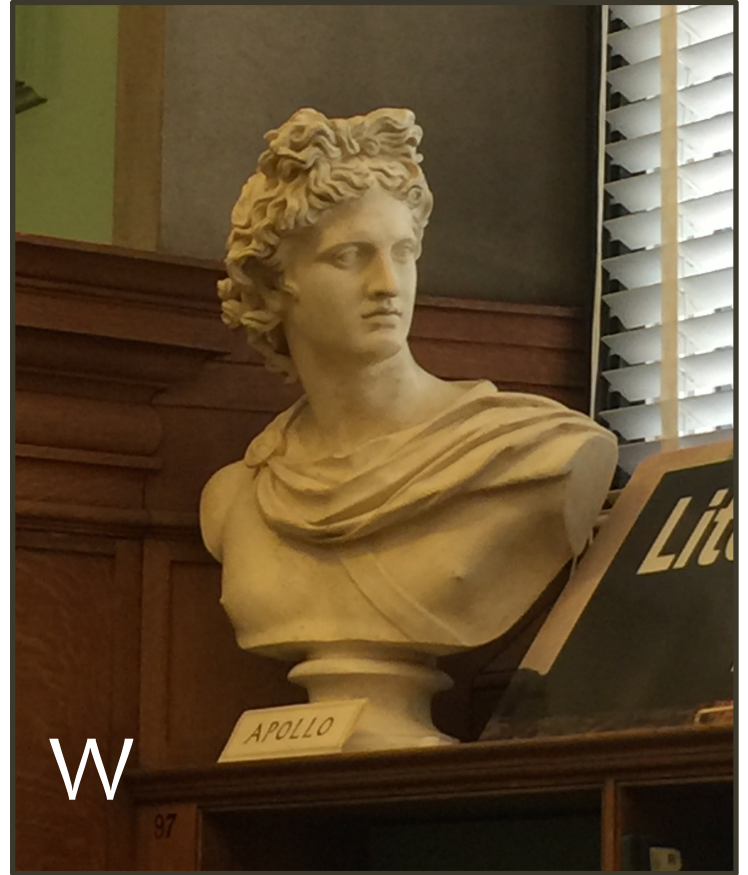
R. Octavian- also known as Augustus, was Julius Caesar's adopted heir and lived from 63 BCE to 14 CE. He founded the Roman Empire and served as its first Emperor. Octavian ruled from 27 BCE until his death in 14 CE. The sculptor August Gerber created this cast and stamped his name on the back. The original bust is named 'Young Octavian' and can be found at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in the Luce Foundation Center.

S. Julius Caesar- a Roman politician, military leader, and author. He lived from 100 BCE, until he was stabbed to death on March 15th, 44 BCE, also known as The Ides of March. Caesar was a controversial figure during a time of great changes in Rome.

T. Brutus- lived from 85 BCE to 42 BCE and was a Roman politician who led the assassination of his friend, Julius Caesar. There is a strong resemblance between this bust and a bust in the Capitoline Museum in Rome of Brutus.

U. Hugh Dawson and Julius Caesar- Hugh J. Dawson, who earned his PhD in English from the University of Illinois, donated the 22-inch bust of Julius Caesar in September of 2009. He purchased it at the Vatican Museum for \$200 many years ago. The original bust is made out of white Italian marble and resides in the Sala dei Busti, which is a part of the Vatican Museum. It is named 'The Chiaramonti Caesar' and is described as having specific features of determination inspired by other Hellenistic rulers. The original bust was probably created sometime between 30-20 BCE, years after Caesar was stabbed to death.





Busts in the Reading Room:

V. Artemis- a Greek Goddess of hunting, animals, forests, and childbirth. This bust resembles 'Diana of Versailles', which is a Roman copy of a Greek sculpture dated to the 4th century BCE. The original bronze statue is attributed to Leochares. The Roman sculpture was a gift from Pope Paul IV to French King Henri II and was one of the first ancient statues to arrive in France. It is now located in the Gallery of the Caryatides in the Louvre, which was specifically designed for this statue. The cast in the library has a stamp on the back indicating it is from the PP Caproni and Brother manufacturing company.

W. Apollo- a Greek God and patron of the Panhellenic sanctuary at Delphi. This bust is modeled after the 'Apollo Belvedere', which is made out of white marble and is dated to the 2nd century CE. It is considered to be a copy of an original bronze sculpture from 325 BCE and is attributed to Leochares. The marble statue was discovered in central Italy during the Renaissance and was part of Pope Julius II's personal art collection. It has resided in the Gabinetto delle Maschere of the Pio-Clementine Museum of the Vatican Museum complex since 1508.



Thank you very much for reading! I hope you enjoyed learning about the historic Gregory Art Collection and the current art collections in the Literature and Languages Library and the Spurlock Museum.

Please visit the Classics Library at: 1408 W. Gregory Dr. Urbana, IL 61801 on the second floor

and the Spurlock Museum at: 600 S. Gregory St. Urbana, IL 61801