

# Libraries Are Priceless

by Robert Gary (CA)

**H**ave you ever wondered what that hallmark means? Curious about the name on a dial or the obscure maker of your timepiece? Want to learn more about Christiaan Huygens and the development of the pendulum, or a detailed history of Abraham-Louis Breguet? The one-stop location for all horological information is the National Watch & Clock Museum's Library & Research Center (LARC) in Columbia, PA.

With more than 300,000 articles, our library houses the world's largest and most comprehensive collection dedicated to horology. The Archives contain such unique holdings as the Hamilton Watch Co. and Seth Thomas Clock Co. ledgers, a large watch paper collection, and a Breguet letter. A possible upcoming addition to the Collection is the handwritten *Horological Workbook of Johann Louis Gropengiesser*. There is no doubt that a major portion of the document was personally written by Johann Louis Gropengiesser (born ca. 1811 in Germany, probably in or around Hannover). Other portions seem to be in a different hand and would have been penned by his son Louis C. Gropengiesser. The primary German directory of historic clockmakers records the family as starting to trade in clockworks in 1825 in Hameln, Germany.

The oldest book in our Special Collection section is *Les Principes d'Astronomie & Cosmographie* by Gemma Frisius dated 1556. Early books on astronomy and mechanics are housed in the Archives. Researchers may also avail themselves of a set of Buddhist calendars from 1810 as well as a few Elgin almanacs dating from the 1870s.

The Library hosts more than 700 visitors per year, divided almost evenly between members and



non-members. The full-time staff processes as many as 1,000 requests for information each year. The children's research area is used by an average of five youngsters per month. In addition, there are special events (Home-school Day, New Years at Noon) that bring even more children to the research area.

The most urgent challenges for the Library and Archives are the needs for more storage space and more efficient storage retrieval systems. LARC is continually expanding the Collection to serve two purposes. First, to preserve horological history

thus assuring that irreplaceable documents are not sent to landfills or are destroyed. Second, to increase the amount of research material available to our members and all researchers. As items are added to the Collection, more storage is necessary. It is an on-going struggle.

The *For All Time 75th Anniversary Endowment and Capital Campaign* was established to provide for the current capital and future needs of the Association's world-renowned assets, such as LARC. Your gifts will help us reach our goal of becoming the world leader, educator, and advocate for horology and for everyone who is interested in timepieces and horological issues.

## About the Author

Robert J. Gary is a member of the NAWCC Board of Directors, Chair of the Development Committee, and a member of the For All Time Capital Campaign Committee. He has been an NAWCC member since 1999.



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