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John C. Briggs Collection of Ichthyology

Nelson Poynter Memorial Library. Special Collections and University Archives.

James Anthony Schnur

John C. Briggs

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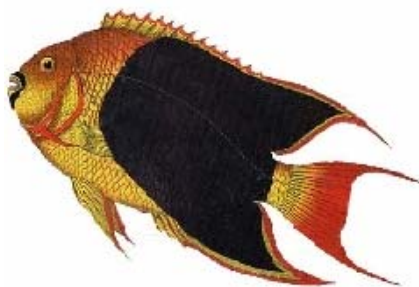
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John C. Briggs Collection of Ichthyology



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Introduction and Provenance

John C. Briggs earned his Ph.D. in biology and natural science from Stanford University in 1952. For many years, he taught at the Department of Marine Science (now College of Marine Science) on the University of South Florida--St. Petersburg. After entering phased retirement, he decided to donate his extensive collection of works on ichthyology, natural science, bontology, and biology to the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library.

The Briggs Collection offers a valuable research tool. Faculty and students in the College of Marine Science, a masters and Ph.D. program at USF St. Petersburg, as well as state officials from the Florida Institute of Oceanography, the Florida

Marine Research Institute, and the Department of Environmental Protection frequently request access to the Briggs materials. This substantial body of publications represented the second major addition to the Special Collections room at USF St. Petersburg; the Papers of Nelson Poynter, former publisher of the *St. Petersburg Times*, represented the first major special collection in the campus library.

The library obtained the titles in the late 1980s and early 1990s. After adding shelves to the walls of a former group study room in the old library building, the library faculty sorted through this substantial collection. An initial sort of the books by Deborah Henry, science librarian, led to an arrangement by discipline (marine biology, theory of evolution, ichthyology, etc.) and content (fine illustrated, foreign language materials, textbooks, general studies, etc.).

Many works include fine illustrations, elaborate fore-edge paintings, unmatched lithographic prints, and unique bindings. A few titles represent extremely rare items. For example, an Amsterdam publisher released only ninety complete sets of M. P. Bleeker's nine volume *Atlas Ichthyologique des Indies Orientales Néerlandaises*. An octavo by Pierre Belon, *De Aquatilibus, libri duo*, printed in Paris in 1553, offers a unique scholarly resource. Similarly, C. Gesner's *Medici Tigurini Historiæ Animalum Liber III, Qui est de Piscium plus Aquatilium animantium natura*--a 1558 folio with woodcuts--represented one of four classic biological studies of the sixteenth century.

Related Scholarly Collections

Other libraries have established marine science research collections. In addition to the Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, USF St. Petersburg serves as the home of the Florida Marine Research Institute Library, a branch of the state's Department of Environmental Protection. This facility collects research data, reports, and publications, and exchanges biological literature with other institutions throughout the world. The Otto C. Richter Library at the University of Miami serves as a repository for the Morton Collectanea--which includes more than 30,000 subject files on botany and economic zoology--as well as the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, with its emphasis in tropical oceanography.

Many facilities in other states have established ichthyology and marine science archives. Located at the University of California at San Diego, the Scripps Institution of Oceanography library represents one of the finest research collections in the world. It includes more than 1770 linear feet of archives, manuscripts, related materials. The Hopkins Marine Station Library at Stanford University and the California Academy of Sciences Library in San Francisco maintain comprehensive collections. The Kenneth H. Rocky and Otto Van Kienbusch angling collections in the Rare Books Department at Princeton University offer a treasure trove of titles. The Cooperative Marine Research Facility Library combines the holdings of the College of Charleston and the South Carolina Wildlife Resources Department to provide over 10,000 volumes and 220 current periodical titles devoted to the subject. The State University of New York Maritime College at Fort Schuyler, the Bronx, and the nearby United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York, house thousands of rare books on marine topics. The Marine Sciences Institute Library at the University of Texas, Port Aransas, owns nearly 50,000 volumes in the field. Other major holdings appear at the National Geographic Society

(Washington, D.C.), the Natural History branch of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries (Washington, D.C.), Los Angeles County Library, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (Ocean Springs, Mississippi), Academy of Natural Sciences Library (Philadelphia), University of Rhode Island (Narragansett), Texas A&M University (Galveston), and the University of Puerto Rico (Mayaguez).

[Access to the Collection](#)

The USF St. Petersburg library has designed a set of guidelines for researchers who request materials such as the Briggs books. All patrons must complete a research registration form and provide appropriate identification before requesting materials. The researcher then completes a call slip for the items he or she wishes to examine. Before library staff retrieve Briggs books or other research materials, the patrons who request these items must leave all briefcases, bags, and other personal property at an assigned area near the entrance to the reading room. Only pencils, paper, and lap-top computers are permitted at the table, as a means of preventing the theft or removal of pages, pictures, or other materials.

The Special Collections reading room at USF St. Petersburg has developed a number of regulations that govern the use of the Briggs books and other materials. Items requiring additional arrangement, description, processing, rebinding, or similar measures may be withheld; library staff may provide photocopies instead of originals for extremely rare or brittle materials. Books should be handled with the utmost care to prevent tears, creases, or damage to the spine. White gloves or other protective materials might be necessary when handling certain manuscripts, plates, or photographs. Library staff must approve any photocopying request after considering the condition of the material and provisions of the copyright law.

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