



Libraryinsider

Welcome to the University of Pittsburgh Library System's *Library Insider*. Here, we share brief updates on library spaces, services, programs, and people, and extend invitations to library-hosted events we hope you will find interesting. Thanks for reading!

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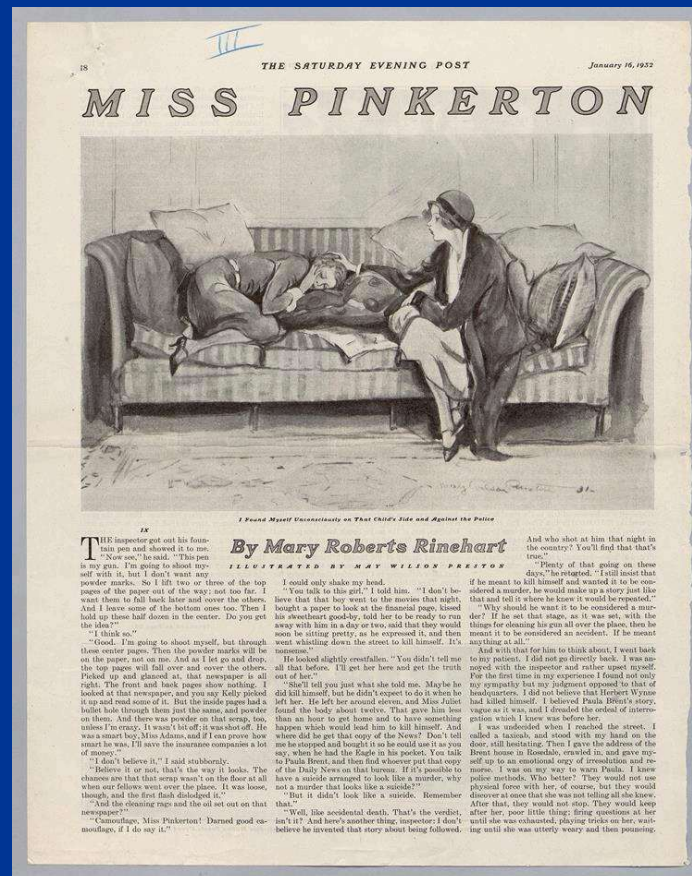
The ULS Holdings of the Mary Roberts Rinehart Papers
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The ULS Holdings of the Mary Roberts Rinehart Papers Illuminate Pittsburgh's Mystery Writer Pioneer

The digitized books, letters, manuscripts, and photos within the University of Pittsburgh Library System (ULS) include the collections of notable Pittsburgh figures such as Henry Clay Frick, William Pitt, and George A. Romero. But did you know the Library also preserves the papers of a Pittsburgh-based mystery writer who inspired Batman?

Heralded as the "American Agatha Christie," Mary Roberts Rinehart was born in 1876 in Allegheny City, now known as Pittsburgh's North Side. She became a prolific author known for her mystery short stories, novels, and plays. Her Broadway play "The Bat" was adapted into three films, and its villain is credited as

one of the inspirations for Batman. Rinehart's influence on American mystery writing has faded from modern conversation, but Pitt students researching her papers at the ULS are bringing her back into the spotlight.



Rinehart's "Miss Pinkerton," a story published in The Saturday Evening Post in 1932. The Mary Roberts Rinehart Papers, 1831-1970, SC.1958.03, Archives & Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh Library System.

Luke Johnson, a junior studying English Literature, was introduced to the Mary Roberts Rinehart Papers during an archival research methods course. The class visited Archives & Special Collections (A&SC) at Hillman Library, where David Grinnell, the Coordinator of Archives and Manuscripts, and Clare Withers, the Curator of the Elizabeth Nesbitt Collection of children's literature, guided students through the archive. Johnson credits their expertise as essential to his research.

"They know so much about Mary Roberts Rinehart," Johnson said. "They gave me foundational information to understand what I would be doing, spending time with her archive and sorting through those objects."

Johnson's introduction to the archives at the Library sparked a deeper curiosity, and he began researching the Rinehart Papers as part of an independent study. The experience left a lasting impression.

"Being able to have the tactile experience of sorting through the pages and really inspecting the annotations and marginalia," he reflected, "was endlessly insightful into an understanding of their significance as part of a large archive."

Johnson partnered with Rachel Starry, the Head of Digital Scholarship and Publishing at the Library, to develop a digital exhibit that brings Rinehart's world to life. The exhibit takes its cues from the board game Clue, using a digitally rendered model of Rinehart's family home as its backdrop.



Luke Johnson and his digital exhibit displayed on the interactive research wall in Hillman Library, featuring Rinehart's Edgar Allan Poe Award. The Mary Roberts Rinehart Papers, 1831-1970, SC.1958.03, Archives & Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh Library System.

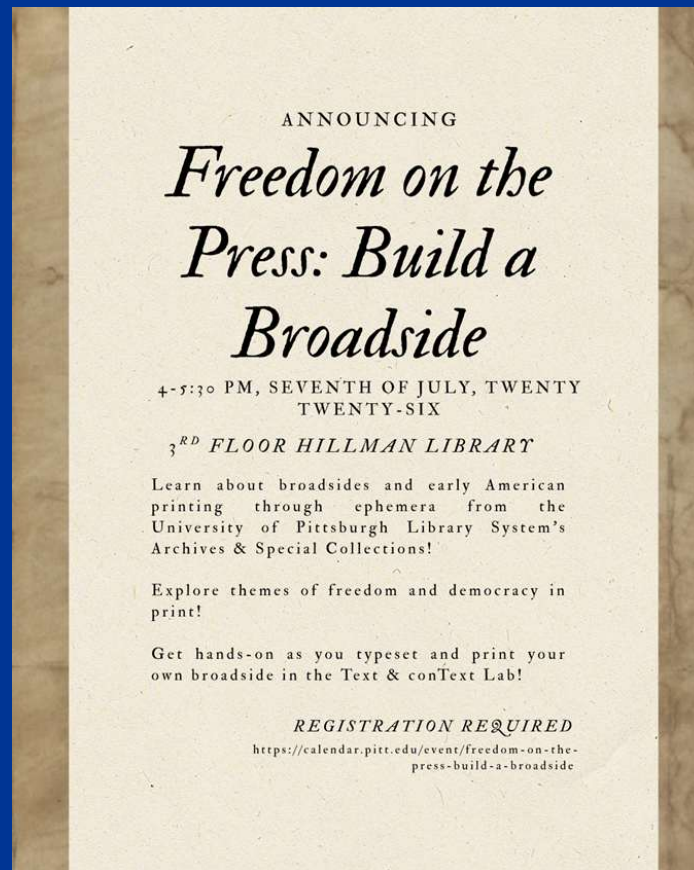
Johnson's work is a thoughtful rediscovery of a writer whose influence runs deeper than most readers realize and a compelling example of what's possible at Pitt when students and librarians work together.

It's no mystery where to investigate the Rinehart exhibit: our digital interactive research wall on the first floor of Hillman Library, accessible [any time the library is open!](#)

What's Happening Next at the ULS

Freedom on the Press: Build a Broadside

July 7



250 years ago, the Declaration of Independence was distributed to the public as a broadside, or a single sheet of paper printed on one side, similar to a flyer or poster.

Only at Hillman Library can you examine original 18th- and 19th- century American broadsides from our Archives & Special Collections, learn from the experts who preserve them, and then print your own, all in the same afternoon.

Celebrate the history of democracy in print on Tuesday, July 7. We'll explore related ephemera from the archives and print our own broadsides using the 1884 hand press in the Text & conText Lab.

From 4 to 5:30 p.m. in Hillman Library
A&SC Reading Room and the Text & conText Lab, 3rd
floor

Registration is required.

[Register here](#)

Ink & Thread: Summer Journal Making

July 23



Our Text & conText Lab has everything you need for a relaxing afternoon of making. Join us for a hands-on workshop combining two studio processes: printmaking and bookbinding. You'll create a monoprint—a unique, one-of-a-kind print—to serve as the cover of a handmade mini-journal, then learn to bind the pages using a simple stitching technique. All materials and expert instruction provided.

From 4 to 5:30 p.m. in Hillman Library
Text & conText Lab, 3rd floor

[Register here](#)

See our [events and workshops calendar](#) to find upcoming programs of interest.

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