“The sight of your letter pricks my heart through”

Digitizing the Brownings’ Correspondence at the Harry Ransom Center

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The University of Texas at Austin

Why this project?
Robert & Elizabeth Barrett Browning

(1812 - 1889)   (1806 - 1861)

English Victorian poets

Exchanged 573 letters before their 1846 marriage
ARMSTRONG BROWNING LIBRARY

Opened 1951; expanded 1995

Original collection of Browning works donated to Baylor in 1918 by Dr. A.J. Armstrong.

Largest collection of Browningiana in the world

3,000 letters to/from Brownings
8,000 letters to/from family, associates
About this collection

FEATURED COLLECTION

This is an unparalleled collection of correspondence written and received by the Victorian poets Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Featuring materials from the collection of the Armstrong Browning Library at Baylor University and the holdings of Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, the letters in this collection can be browsed and searched by date, author, keyword, or first line of text. The project is funded in part by the Bob and Anna Wright Endowed Fund.

The Baylor-Wellesley Collaboration

This collection is presented as a partnership between the Armstrong Browning Library at Baylor University and Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Both institutions are home to significant collections of Browningiana and are collaborating in an effort to make the compelling love story of the two poets available to scholars and enthusiasts around the globe. This initial project will continue to grow as more Browning letters are digitized from each institution’s collections.

The enduring jewel of the English Poetry Collection, largest of the Wellesley Special Collections, is the original love letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett. Their exchange of 574 letters began on 10 January 1845, with a letter addressed to “dear Miss Barrett,” and continued until a week after their marriage, ending with Elizabeth’s note to Robert as they arranged to leave England and travel to Italy [18 September 1846]. The love letters of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning are among the most famous in literary history and provide significant insights into the lives, thoughts, and works of both poets.

The Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University (ABL) is a world-renowned repository of research materials devoted to the study of the lives and works of the Victorian poets, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. ABL houses the largest collection of books, manuscripts, and memorabilia related to the Browning’s, as well as a substantial collection of materials on and from the Victorian era. The letters in the ABL collections range from sources that offer literary impact to seemingly insignificant social notes, but each item gives a unique perspective on the lives of two eminent Victorian poets.
How does the Harry Ransom Center fit in?
Browning Family:
An Inventory of Their Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Creator: Browning family
Title: Browning Family Collection
Dates: 1816-1935
Extent: 8 document boxes (3.33 linear feet), 1 oversize folder, 1 galley folder, 2 oversize bound volumes
Abstract: English poets Elizabeth Barrett, 1806-1861, and Robert Browning, 1812-1889, eloped to Italy in 1846, after Barrett’s father refused them permission to marry, and remained there for the rest of Elizabeth’s life. The Browning Family Collection contains a quantity of correspondence between various members of the Browning family as well as works by Elizabeth, Robert, Robert’s father and sister, and Robert Barrett Browning.
Language: English.
Access: Open for research
Scope of the project

All letters to or from Robert Browning (about 455)
Elizabeth Barrett Browning (about 204)

All envelopes, back and front

No transcripts or other ancillary content
• white balance the scanner
• include at least ¼” margins in the scan
• include a scale ruler in the scan in centimeters
• embed scanner profile (Adobe RGB 1998 ICC profile)
• digitize materials at 600 dpi
• save files as uncompressed TIFF (little-endian order)
• save as checklist number + '-pres_' + page numbers, example: 20005-00-pres_02-03.tif, 20005-00-pres_04-01.tif
• generate MD5 checksum signature for all images
• save pages in a checklist number directory
Developing a workflow
Workflow

1. Identifying
2. Metadata additions
3. Scanning
4. Checksums
5. Uploading
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K8kNum</th>
<th>Firstline</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Browning Family Collection</th>
<th>HRC Box/Folder</th>
<th>Number of Scans</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I propose to say I can’t be at the Bank this morning to catch</td>
<td>R.B. Adams, Sarah Flower</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I trust you have guessed the cause of my not having arrived</td>
<td>R.B. Adams, Sarah Flower</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Most sorry I am to be already engaged for the 2d of April</td>
<td>R.B. Arnold, Matthew</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I did indeed, mislay your letter—which accident you would</td>
<td>R.B. Baron, John T.</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The poem you judge so leaningly was written at the age of</td>
<td>R.B. Boyce, Hugh Stuart</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>You spoil a very pleasant expectation by this card</td>
<td>R.B. Braun, Annie</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>We have been so confounded with confusion—in such depths of</td>
<td>R.B. Braun, Annie</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thank you, my dear Mrs. Brotherston! what have you allowed me</td>
<td>R.B. Brotherston, Mary</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I have delayed writing through hoping to go &amp; see you</td>
<td>R.B. Brotherston, Mary</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I try to propitiate you for my sin of keeping</td>
<td>R.B. Brotherston, Mary</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I return to you Mr. Tennyson’s letter which Miss Bellamy</td>
<td>R.B. Brotherston, Mary</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>You are quite welcome to make any use of the papers you</td>
<td>R.B. Brotherston, Mary</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The poem you judge so leaningly was written at the age of</td>
<td>R.B. Boyce, Hugh Stuart</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Here is the Atheneum with a great many thanks! Which are</td>
<td>R.B. Brotherston, Mary</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I am going to Florence, but if we go by letter we shall</td>
<td>R.B. Brotherston, Mary</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I have at once written to Lehmann &amp; hope to hear no more</td>
<td>R.B. Browning, Robert Barrett</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>59137-10</td>
<td>I must venture to you to ask for a word about those on</td>
<td>R.B. Braun, Mary Ann</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59138-10</td>
<td>Will you have the goodness to send a copy of my new edition</td>
<td>R.B. Chapman, Edward</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59139-10</td>
<td>You will observe we are writing here not at Florence.</td>
<td>R.B. Chapman, Edward</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59140-10</td>
<td>I am very sensible of your extreme kindness; but I must make</td>
<td>R.B. Chatelet, Jean Baptiste Francois Enrie de Browning</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59141-10</td>
<td>I may say, without exaggeration, I was distressed at being</td>
<td>R.B. Colledge, Arthur Duke</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59142-10</td>
<td>With the memory of your most pleasant dinner last January</td>
<td>R.B. Colledge, Mary Anne</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59143-10</td>
<td>I shall be delighted to attend on the 5th pursuant to your</td>
<td>R.B. Colledge, Mary Anne</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59144-10</td>
<td>It will give me great pleasure indeed to dine with you</td>
<td>R.B. Colledge, Mary Anne</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59145-10</td>
<td>If anything will possibly do, I will profit by your intervention</td>
<td>R.B. Colledge, Mary Anne</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59146-10</td>
<td>It will give me great pleasure to dine with you on the 2d</td>
<td>R.B. Colledge, Mary Anne</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59147-10</td>
<td>Although I am much better than when I wrote concerning your</td>
<td>R.B. Colledge, Mary Anne</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59148-10</td>
<td>I am to be happy to dine with you on the 18th as you have</td>
<td>R.B. Colledge, Mary Anne</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59149-10</td>
<td>I had already seen, and sympathized with your two articles</td>
<td>R.B. Collins, John Clurton</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59150-10</td>
<td>You will let me say I have been delighted—and touched too</td>
<td>R.B. Corkman, Alice</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60027-10</td>
<td>I was very glad to have your letter, my dear Mrs. Corkman</td>
<td>R.B. Corkman, Lonnia</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>14m 2.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60005-10</td>
<td>you don’t have the last word. You are right</td>
<td>R.B. Corkman, Lonnia</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60006-10</td>
<td>The sight of your letter pours my heart through! What have</td>
<td>R.B. Douglass, Fanny</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60007-10</td>
<td>Mrs. Thomas Douglass has kindly come to tell me that</td>
<td>R.B. Douglass, Fanny</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60008-10</td>
<td>Indeed, my dear friend, I will let you blame me for this</td>
<td>R.B. Douglass, Fanny</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60009-10</td>
<td>I thought not to know you any more, dearest friend.</td>
<td>R.B. Douglass, Fanny</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60010-10</td>
<td>It is a pleasure to think of you — but for what</td>
<td>R.B. Douglass, Fanny</td>
<td>Browning Family Collection</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Brownings' Correspondence

- 21 volumes, projected to be 40 volumes
- Complete text of the letters in chronological order
- Fully searchable online edition
Adding metadata

- Ransom Center collection, box, file location
- Number of scans
- File names
- Notes

260 letters
534 files
85% complete
Typical example of a letter in the collection

1 ALS
4 pages of autograph text
1 leaf, folded
sometimes a letter sheet
Previously bound materials
Letter identification

Unusual paper sizes

Legibility

Page order
Checksums
Uploading

Provide TIFF files to Baylor University Libraries’ Digital Projects Group

Retain all files on Harry Ransom Center servers

Download spreadsheet after each batch upload
Retain all:

- instructions
- project changes
- troubleshooting questions & answers

Ensure item extents and filenames are documented for future use:

- long-term internal access
- patron photoduplication orders
- Ransom Center Digital Collections portal
March 31, 1842.

By present means,
Do you still keep me in heart?
How have you thought of me? What can you have thought of my unkindness, before your kindness, now two things you in so greatly
induced me to write to me? I am astonished—
me too, have you not been so kind?

My love to you, dear one. I am in so
to look at you, to prove to you that if you
didn't write or write two days, you would have
been heard from me at last!—May experience of
its kind make God's suspicion of a down-

But the report
must not believe as far as you are
that not without thought, out what love,
you want me a sign, this long interval
has fulfilled. — Love you dear one, and your
Resources

Harry Ransom Center
http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/

Baylor Armstrong Library
http://www.browninglibrary.org/

The Browning Letters
http://digitalcollections.baylor.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/ab-letters

The Brownings’ Correspondence Online
http://www.browningscorrespondence.com/

Contact details

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Texarchivist.com