



## KBFUS ART: A UNIQUE LIBRARY FINDS A NEW HOME IN THE CENTER OF MEDIEVAL FRANCE

**Giles Constable has had a lifelong interest in medieval history. He recently donated his library of more than 10,000 books to KBFUS, and it is now on loan to a small town in France that was once the seat of the most powerful Christian monastery in Europe.**

### A passion for the middle ages

“Good teaching.” That, says 86-year-old Professor Giles Constable, is what influenced his deep-rooted and enduring passion for all things medieval.

“Nothing would have made me into a mathematician or a physicist,” he says. “I think I could have been a historian of various periods or other fields of the humanities. But I had a professor who was a medievalist. I took his classes as a freshman at Harvard and he inspired me.”

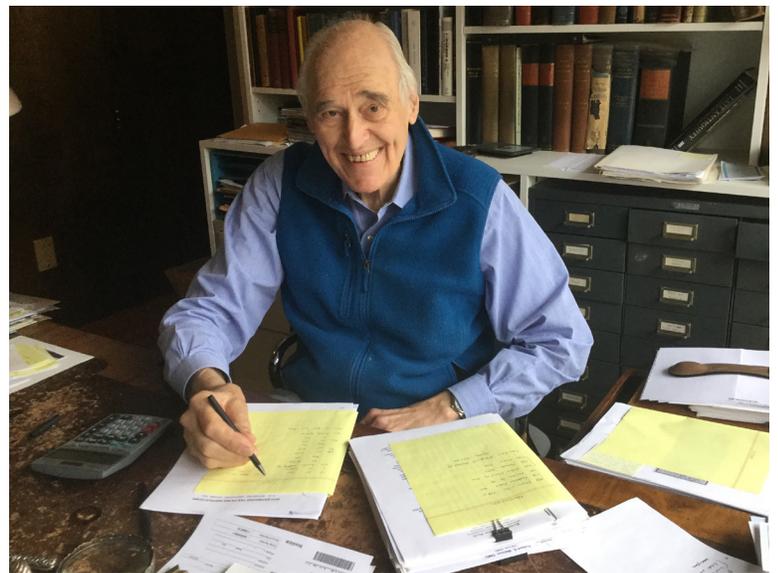
Constable’s family moved to the United States when he was eight years old. He began collecting books on medieval history as an undergraduate in the mid-1940s, sourcing them from shops across Europe and the United States as well as from book catalogues. Some were gifts from friends and colleagues. Several came from his father, who was an artist and an art historian, and a few from his grandfather. Until his grandmother passed away, she would support his acquisition of books in England.

“She very dearly subsidized the library,” he says. “When I bought books by mail I would send the bill to her and she would pay it. That went on as long as she lived. She enjoyed doing that.” Constable says he has already given some of his collection to individuals and institutions. “This is partly because I’ve been given books I’ve wanted and it meant a lot to me. I quite like to give some away.”

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### A specialty in medieval monasticism

“My collection is predominantly about the history of the medieval church and medieval monasticism, both of which I specialize in,” he says. “It includes many original texts from the period, mostly in Latin, as well as a lot of later works. There are a good number of 16th and 17th century books. They are still useful. They contain texts that haven’t been re-edited and are actually still cited by scholars.” His collection also includes works on the politics, the arts and the architectural history of the period.



Constable is the author or editor of more than 20 books on medieval history. He is Professor Emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, which he joined in 1985 as a medieval history professor in the School of Historical Studies. Founded in the 1930s, the Institute for Advanced Study is a private, independent academic institution and is one of the world's leading centers for theoretical research and intellectual inquiry. "I keep an office there and I go every day, to keep in the loop," he says.

## Sharing the knowledge

When asked if he has a favorite book, he hesitates. Patricia Woolf laughs and offers an answer. "It's like asking 'Who is your favorite child?'" Constable says that he does not necessarily have a favorite, but he has fond memories of discovering many of his books, and considered keeping some of them. "But I wanted the books to remain together as one collection, so I decided to give them all," he says.

Constable and Woolf own a 12th century house in Cluny, listed as a landmark because of its age. Although the town is small, Constable has been told that it has more standing medieval Romanesque houses than anywhere else in Europe except Venice. He and Woolf travel to Cluny twice a year.

"We will not be far away from the books," says Constable. "And they will be accessible to all scholars interested in medieval history."

## Monitoring the library

As the new owner of the library, KBFUS effectively serves as the collection's trustee, for the benefit of the public. "This means that they will keep an eye on the library and ensure it is not sold or dispersed in any way," he explains.

Constable says there was no single impetus for his decision to donate his collection. "It's not easy to give away entire collections like this," he says. "Previously, I considered several other possibilities. But I knew that I'd be lucky if an institution wanted five per cent of the books. The rest they would just want to dispose of."

But after spending time in Cluny and getting to know people there, he learned that the city wanted to establish a research center for the study of the French middle ages and monasticism, because of the great abbey. Knowing this, Constable decided to donate his entire library, with the hope and expectation that his contribution would form the cornerstone for this new initiative.

After some searching, the second story of a 19th century school building, next to the town's museum and opposite to the town hall, was chosen to house Constable's collection. "It's very centrally located and a very attractive building," says Constable.

"It will house the books and a working space. There is room for a librarian. It's a five-minute walk from our house. The books are no longer mine, but I can keep an eye on them and I can use them if I want to." Cluny arranged to pack approximately 600 boxes of books weighing several tons and shipped them by sea last February. Constable says they should be unpacked and on the shelves by summer 2016, although the task of cataloguing them may take some time.

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PROFESSOR GILES CONSTABLE

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## The road to Cluny

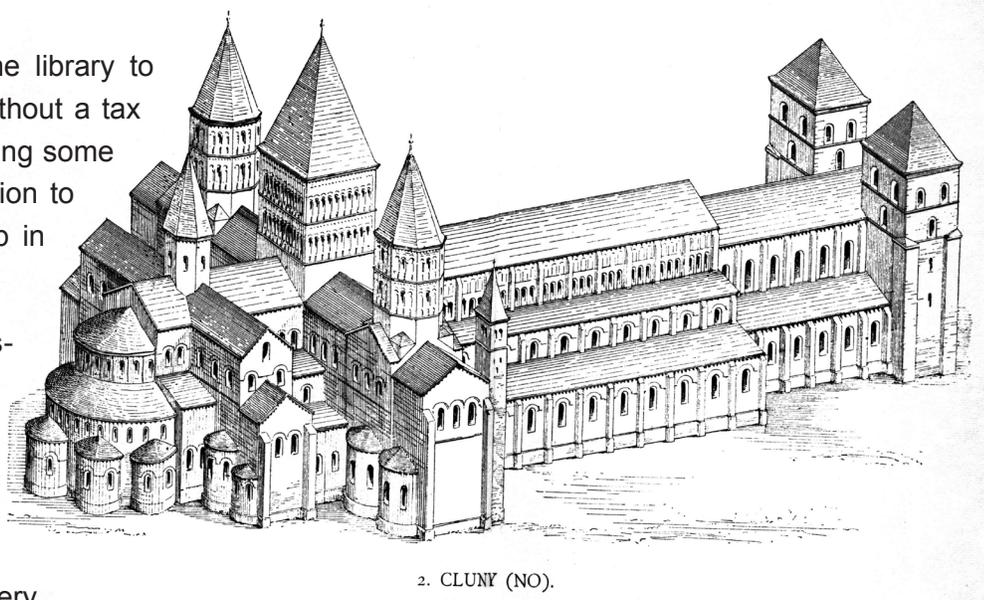
Constable's first trip to Cluny was in the early 1950s with his father. But his reason for choosing Cluny as the place for his vast collection of books comes down to a different man: Peter the Venerable.

During the middle ages, texts were written and copied by hand by others, so information varied from copy to copy. "When I wrote my thesis I wanted to do a text edition [an edited version of a book for use in schools and colleges] of a medieval text," Constable says. "I decided on the letters of Peter the Venerable, the Abbot of Cluny in the first half of the 12th century. He was a very important man, second only to the Pope and in some respects even more important. So I edited his letters and that was my thesis. They were very long and touched on many different topics." He took five or six manuscripts and compared them in an attempt to produce a text that most closely reflected Peter the Venerable's original writings. "Those letters are what led me to Cluny," he says.

## A working library

When Constable decided to give the library to Cluny, he was prepared to give it without a tax deduction. "But when we started asking some of our friends about making a donation to Europe," he says, "KBFUS came up in one of our discussions."

Constable contacted KBFUS and discovered that the Foundation was interested in helping to donate his collection to Cluny. "KBFUS was able to help with both the tax implications and the legal aspects of the donation," he says. "They were very knowledgeable, and it's been a great pleasure working with them."



Constable says the books will form a working library, not simply "a collection". It will take some time until the library is open. There will be a search for a librarian and the books need to be catalogued. The town of Cluny will be in charge of maintaining the library but KBFUS will remain the owner for some time. "I put this library together over the years to support my teaching and my research," he says. "I hope it will serve the same purpose for people who go there. It's far from complete. I hope other people will take inspiration and will donate their libraries to complement it."

Woolf says the medieval monastery of Cluny was the "motherhouse" of hundreds of other monasteries that had economic, political and, above all, spiritual impact in many countries in Europe. She adds that Cluny residents are influenced by the grandeur of the past. "Since the recent renovations of the abbey and the town's museum, there has been a revitalization of interest in the Middle Ages and in the power and dominance of the town," she says. "The promise of this new library has been quite animating for Cluny's residents. The people have been so supportive. They're excited about this."

## The Benedictine Abbey of Cluny

Cluny, France is a small, picturesque village in Burgundy about a four-hour drive southeast of Paris. Today, it has a population of around 5,000. But in the 12th century, Cluny was among the most influential Christian centers in Europe, and home to the world's largest church until St. Peter's Basilica was constructed in Rome.

More than 10,000 monks from Poland to Scotland belonged to the monastery. Large buildings were erected to house its more than 300 resident monks and 40 farms supplied their food. The Abbots of Cluny were very powerful – some of them later became Popes. The Cluny library was one of the richest and most important in Europe, safeguarding numerous valuable manuscripts.

Cluny was at the height of its power in the 12th century under Abbot Peter the Venerable. After his death in 1156, it began to lose its power as religious beliefs and loyalties across Europe began to shift. During the religious conflicts of 1562, the Huguenots, French Protestants inspired by the writings of John Calvin, sacked the abbey, and destroyed or dispersed many of the manuscripts. Those that were left were disposed of after the French Revolution, as were church furnishings, including tombs.

In the early 19th century, the town auctioned off the abbey church to a company that used explosives to topple the walls and then sold the remains to private dealers piece by piece. Today, only one transept, just a fraction of the original colossal church, remains. The French government relocated some of the abbey's treasures. Some are in private hands and others are held by the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. About 60 charters originating from Cluny are housed in the British Museum in London.

### KBFUS

#### A bridge between donors and museums overseas

KBFUS' latest initiative, KBFUS ART, was launched last year to help U.S. donors navigate the cultural, legal and tax complexities involved in donating art overseas. KBFUS ART facilitates gifts of artworks for the benefit of museums

across Europe and Africa. It can work with an institution that the donor has a close affinity with, or identify an appropriate location in the country of their choice. All proposed gifts are reviewed by an Advisory Committee, which determines if and why KBFUS should accept the artwork.

Dr. Anna Swinbourne, an independent art historian and former painting and sculpture curator at The Museum of Modern Art, is one of four volunteers serving on the Committee. "We review various artworks that the Foundation is helping to place in museums overseas," she says. "We evaluate the factual documentation, such as provenance, as well as the artistic and scholarly importance of the pieces."

#### Seeking a natural fit for an extended loan

"Owners can make recommendations as to where they want their piece to go, but it must be a natural and mutually beneficial fit for both the owner and the receiving institution," she says. "We arrange an extended loan. At the end of the loan period, there is a discussion about next steps."

KBFUS, as the owner of the gift, monitors the arrangement and ensures that the artwork is displayed, made available

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**IT'S ALMOST A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN.  
IT'S AN IMMENSE GIFT THAT SERVES THE CITY OF CLUNY,  
THE DONOR, AND THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY.**

DR. ANNA SWINBOURNE

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for research or included in temporary exhibitions, in the best possible environment and along the lines of the wishes of the donor.

Although Committee members are specialized in a particular area, each brings to the table a broad range of knowledge and practical experience about collections. “My specialty is modern art,” Swinbourne says. “One of my colleagues does contemporary art, another does old masters, and the fourth member is a collector who has more general knowledge.” Swinbourne says that KBFUS wanted to keep the Committee small and chose people who would complement each other.



So far, the Committee has reviewed two donations – Professor Giles Constable’s library of books on medieval Europe and a Roman coin depicting Emperor Didius Julianus, which was accepted and is now on loan with the Coin Cabinet of the Royal Library of Belgium.

“The possibilities that this endeavor presents are vast,” Swinbourne says. “There are very few organizations that act as a bridge between American donors and foreign cultural institutions. It has a lot of potential. It’s exciting and really intriguing to me. The service is so mutually beneficial.”

She notes that Professor Constable’s donation of his library of medieval books is a prime example of that potential. “It’s almost a match made in heaven,” Swinbourne says. “It’s an immense gift that serves the City of Cluny, the donor, and the research community. I feel honored to be part of this initiative and make a modest contribution to it.”

### Meet the Advisory Committee for KBFUS ART

- **Ms. Katelijne De Backer**  
Director of Art New York, former Executive Director of The Armory Show
- **Dr. Peter C. Sutton**  
Executive Director of the Bruce Museum, Board member of the American Friends of Mauritshuis, Member of the Scientific Committee of Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza
- **Dr. Anna Swinbourne**  
Independent art historian, former painting and sculpture curator at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)
- **Amb. Gaston Van Duyse-Adam**  
Former Ambassador of Belgium to China, art connoisseur and collector

The King Baudouin Foundation United States (KBFUS) is the leading resource for philanthropic giving to Europe and Africa - a trusted advisor for American donors seeking to support their favorite causes and non-profits overseas. Please contact us to learn more about our donor-advised funds, legacy funds, and KBFUS ART.



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