

*Reception Welcome by Luise Poulton, managing curator of Rare Books*

Thank you, Greg.

Hello!

I add my warm appreciation to Greg's for the tremendous support shown by your presence.

Nothing happens in a vacuum. Your presence here tonight attests to that. There are always people who don't get thanked who deserve it as much as anyone. I'll perpetuate this crime by not mentioning many people in the library who make sure all goes well.

I do, though, especially thank Heidi Brett for her hard work in getting the word (*la parola!*) out; and always and ever, I thank the Rare Books staff – Alison Conner, Alesia Trakhimets, Katherine Paterson and Matthew Scholl. Nothing, at least nothing having to do with the rare book collections, happens without their hard work, their dedication to each other, and their utter devotion to what they work with.

When Mike Homer first mentioned doing something with rare books for the 2013 Year of Italian Culture in the United States, I thought, "Sure! We can do that." Off the top of my head, I could think of several stunning books that could make a grand statement about the library and this community. Galileo's *Dialogo* was a no-brainer. But when I began to dig into the catalog to find more, I was amazed. Again. As I always am.

I was amazed at what we have and how much we have à la Italia. The difficult task was choosing what to show off. There are lots of books sitting in the vault right now, sighing with regret that they did not get to come to this ball and join the other jewels out here among us now.

The collection has its beginnings, after all, soon after the pioneers planted their first crops. Brigham Young wrote to the United States Congress asking for money to buy books, and to send books, and the pioneers

brought books with them. Many of those books ended up in the Utah Territorial Library which came to the University of Utah in its first iteration as Deseret University. In this way, the University of Utah has been building a rare book collection for nearly one hundred and sixty-six years.

This is not, nor has it ever been, a static collection. My predecessors have added to the collection with the help of donations of books from personal libraries and generous endowments. I'm pleased to say that Greg acquired these books just last week in honor of this occasion – an early edition of Diogenes printed in 1490 in Venice and a 1545 first edition printed in Rome by the great Italian typographer, Antonio Blado. These books are perfect examples of the humanistic enthusiasm Italians have to this day for forging a strong future through innovation but never forgetting the importance of the past.

The collection will continue to grow with the same enthusiasm that brought you all here tonight. This is your gift to Utah. It is your gift to the United States. It is your legacy.

I hope you will stay with us a little longer tonight, spend more time looking at the books, and, please, come back! These are your books. We just have the fun of putting them in your hands. And, thank you, for the privilege of being able to do so.