

## Handmade books extol the power of print

March 28, 2012 11:45 AM Aidan Smith  
asmith41@tulane.edu

With discussions swirling about e-readers and online content displacing the printed word, an exhibition of miniature books on the Tulane uptown campus serves as a reminder that the book holds a special place in readers' hearts, and nothing seems to substitute for the look and touch of paper.



Handmade books are the stars of this exhibit at the Nadine Vorhoff Library. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Titled "[Monumental Ideas in Miniature Books](#)," the exhibition is a collection representing the work of more than 140 artists using unconventional materials and techniques, from conventional relief, lithograph and silk screen printing to new digital printing processes.

The books, part of a traveling collection curated by Hui-Chu Ying of the University of Akron, are now on display in the Newcomb College Institute's [Nadine Vorhoff Library](#).

While this exhibit invites the viewer to consider current contributions to the world of handmade books, Newcomb archivist Susan Tucker points out that Newcomb College has well-known ties to the decorative arts.



“Monumental Ideas in Miniature Books” is the title of the exhibit, on view through April 13.

“From the earliest date of the Newcomb Pottery enterprise in 1895, students worked with block printing and lettering, often producing engravings for books and other publications,” Tucker says. “From the 1910s onward, bookbinding was an important part of the art curriculum, and moved Newcomb-educated artists even more into the community.”

Many of those historic books are now in the collections of the [Newcomb Archives](#) and include decorative bindings with leather incisions, embossing and modeling, as well as scrapbooks made with cloth bindings. The Vorhoff Library also holds a collection of the miniature books' cousin, the [zine](#).

As the written forward accompanying the “Monumental Ideas in Miniature Books” collection proclaims: “This project demonstrates the enduring power of our most basic communication technology. The book as a unique object, made by hand to communicate and express the human condition, remains a monumental idea.”

The collection is on view in the Vorhoff Library on the Tulane uptown campus through April 13.

*Aidan Smith is external affairs officer for the Newcomb College Institute.*