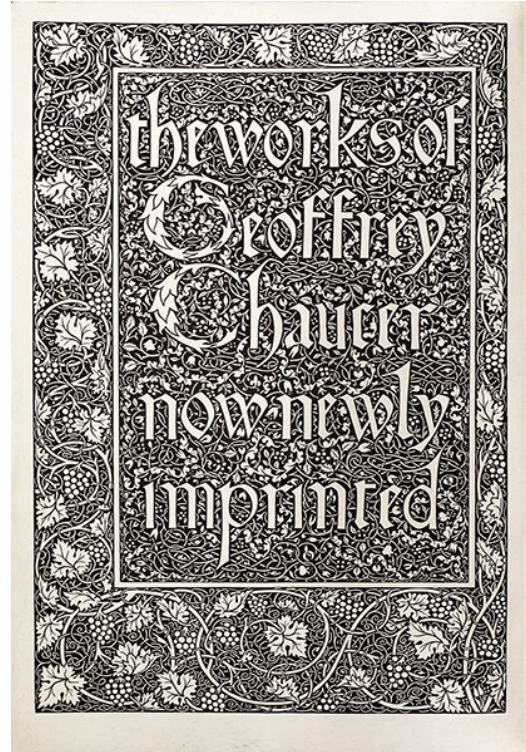


Two Books, Most Pleasing and Fine

Some books, such as the Kelmscott Chaucer, were obviously intended to be masterpieces. Others, like this copy of the poems of John Milton, had their origins as quite ordinary books, only to be later transformed into something extraordinary. Both of these stunning works of art represent just a small part of the incredible breadth and depth of our Rare Books collection. Numbering over 35,000 books, journals, manuscripts, maps, and other items, Rare Books' holdings run the gamut from 3,000-year-old Assyrian cylinder seals to contemporary artists' books.

One of the world's most influential and beautiful books, the Kelmscott Press Chaucer was printed in 1896 by William Morris. Deeply admiring the spirit and craft of the late medieval book, Morris founded the Kelmscott Press in 1891. While all his books are breathtaking triumphs of the principles of unified design and careful, proud workmanship, none is as sumptuous and lush as his Chaucer, which established a standard yet to be surpassed.



Kelmscott Chaucer, title page.



Milton's Poems with painted fore-edge.

Originally published in London in 1851, this early edition of the poems of John Milton was later adorned with a fore-edge painting. A fore-edge painting is created by first fanning the page block of a book, after which an artist paints on the now stepped surface. Many times the illustrations relate to the subject of the book itself. In this case, the rustic scene of a pond with a yet unknown town in the background might refer to one of Milton's poems.

*Bruce Cammack
Rare Books*