



**"The Untimeliness of the Walt Whitman  
Exhibition at the New York Public Library:  
An Open Letter to Trustees," by Charles F.  
Heartman : Ms.Coll.66**

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Finding aid prepared by John Anderies on September 28, 2018

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center
<b>Creator - aut:</b>	Heartman, Charles F. (Charles Frederick), 1883-1953
<b>Title:</b>	"The Untimeliness of the Walt Whitman Exhibition at the New York Public Library: An Open Letter to Trustees," by Charles F. Heartman
<b>ID:</b>	Ms.Coll.66
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1925
<b>Physical Description:</b>	1 Volumes
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English
<b>Abstract:</b>	Charles F. Heartman's criticism of the New York Public Library's exhibition on the works of Walt Whitman argues that the "obscene" nature of Whitman's poetry should disqualify his works from being presented in a public forum such as an exhibit at the prestigious institution.

### Preferred Citation

"The Untimeliness of the Walt Whitman Exhibition at the New York Public Library: An Open Letter to Trustees," by Charles F. Heartman, circa 1925, John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center, Philadelphia, PA.

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## Biographical / Historical

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Charles F. Heartman (1883-1953) was a German immigrant collector, book dealer, and publisher who is best known for championing American literature, establishing hundreds of rare book collections among libraries across the United States. Beginning his American career in New York City, Heartman moved his operations several times over the course of his life, making homes in Vermont, New Jersey, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. In Mississippi Heartman and his wife attempted to found a "book farm," a utopian community of writers, artists, and intellectuals. While he may have associated with an educated and creative crowd in his personal and business pursuits he nevertheless seems to have drawn the line at public expressions of same-sex love and attraction, as this 1925 pamphlet makes clear.

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## Scope and Contents

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Called "An Open Letter to the Trustees," Charles F. Heartman's criticism of the New York Public Library's exhibition on the works of Walt Whitman argues that the "obscene" nature of Whitman's poetry should disqualify his works from being presented in a public forum such as an exhibit at the prestigious institution. Sixty copies of the privately printed pamphlet were released in advance of the text appearing in the *American Collector* (v. 1, no. 3 (Dec. 1925)), a monthly magazine about book collecting edited by Heartman himself. The pamphlet—a saddle stitched booklet of 5 numbered pages—includes a photograph of "Walt Whitman and his 'friend' Peter Doyle" and contains both Heartman's impassioned letter to the library trustees as well as an ensuing "personal statement."

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift, Michael J. Toklish, 2018

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Gay erotic poetry, American
- Library exhibits -- Censorship
- New York Public Library
- Whitman, Walt, 1819-1892