GRUPO EX-LIBRIS BRASIL

The Gelb Bulletin

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GELB: the beginning
By Marcelo Calheiros

For me, the birth of Gelb is granted to the months of August and September 2020. I would say that is not exactly true, nor is it a lie either! A lot of time has passed, but I remember creating the WhatsApp group, which we still use to this day for our arrangements and exchanges of ideas. I think it is important to highlight that this movement was actually a concrete gesture toward the resumption of bookplate collecting in Brazilian territory, after the hiatus that occurred following the decline of groups and associations in the 1950s and 60s. The interest remained, as cited in monographs/theses, exhibitions, and by the habit and passion of collectors. That is why I state once again that the creation of our Group is not an isolated event, but a great moment of convergence that includes a sum of contributions that, at different times seemed like scattered actions, such as the *Catalog of Brazilian Bookplates*, by Paulo Berger (1995), *Ex Libris*, by Plinio Martins Filho (2008), *Ex libris: a small object of desire*, by Stella Maris (2012), The Book of Ex Libris, by the Brazilian Academy of Letters (2014), and the *1st Bookplate Collecting Meeting*, at the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (2018), among other initiatives. This scenario proves that the interest remained alive and strong; it was only missing a spark for the flame to burn once again. This catalyst emerged between August and September 2020, with a WhatsApp group

GELB members present at the 2nd Bookplate Collecting Meeting. From left to right: Silvia, Rosângela, Luiz Stelling, Raphael, Jeanne, Marcelo, Mary, Fátima, Thalles, Eduardo, Luiz Fernando.

that I created with my connections, called Grupo Ex-líbris Brasil, or Gelb. Its emergence marks a fresh start, validates past efforts, legitimizes them, and gives shape, voice, and an identity to those who, in one way or another, decided to carry the struggle and history of the ex-libris tradition. The Gelb solidifies itself as an important space for exchanges, inquiries, cross-referencing of data, dates, themes, historical facts, artists, techniques, collections, collectors, and unidentified bookplates. Invitations to

1st Gelb Encounter (virtual meeting on Jan 14, 2023)

new members were extended spontaneously, reaching out to professionals from distinct fields, including artists, printmakers researchers, collectors, historians, librarians, and representatives from major institutions. In a short period of time, the group grew, successfully expanding its reach. The year 2021 marked two important moments for the group. In July, a poll was held to define the group's name, with the winning acronym being "Gelb." In October, an internal contest was organized to create our logo. With several projects submitted, the design proposed by Gerson Witte was chosen - a beautiful, organically intertwined monogram crafted from the group's initials. The

Call for the 2nd Gelb Encounter

livestreams by the Caçadora de Ex-Líbris were fundamental in expanding our membership and and became a source of debate. Another great moment was the handcrafted publication of the booklet in memory of Alberto Lima — one of the greatest names in Brazilian bookplate collecting — titled *Alberto Lima 1898-1971 - artist, heraldist, bookplate designer: a tribute from Gelb*, in which his work was analyzed with reproductions of several bookplates from his extensive production, and Gelb artists created bookplates in honor of the biographed subject, which were included in the aforementioned booklet, marking the 50th anniversary of his passing and celebrating his legacy. The Gelb remains active on social media, and now in 2026, we grew even closer during the 2nd Bookplate Collecting Meeting, held at the National Museum of Fine Arts, in Rio de Janeiro. This inspired a shared desire to revive past projects and open up new avenues of action, such as the launch of this newsletter. May it happen with strength, clarity, and joy. Long live Gelb!

1st BOOKPLATE COLLECTING MEETING: a new breath, new connections
by Luiz Felipe Stelling

The 1st Bookplate Collecting Meeting took place at the Manguinhos Library of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), on November 1st, 2018. The event was conceived by Thalles Siciliano, and organized by him alongside Fátima Duarte and Maria Claudia Santiago, librarians at the institution. There were three lectures, namely: *Bookplate as an object of collection and study*, by Luiz Felipe Stelling (IFRJ); *The bookplate collection of the National Library*, by Mônica Carneiro Alves (FBN); and *The bookplate and the collections of the National Museum of Fine Arts: an* experience report, by Mary Komatsu (MNBA). There was also a joint exhibition featuring bookplates from the collection of Luiz Stelling, as well as rare books, bookbinding gilding tools, and historical items from Fiocruz, such as the woodblock of Oswaldo Cruz's bookplate.

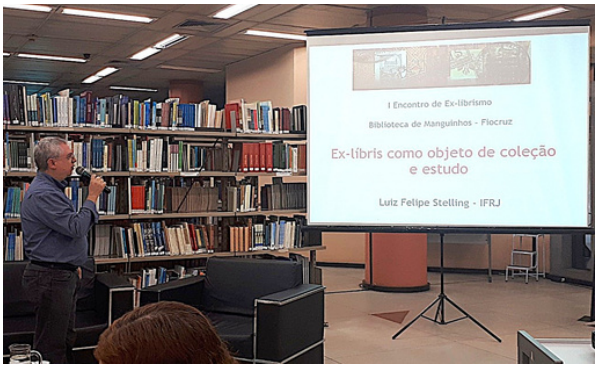
On the same day of the Meeting, which took place in the afternoon, there was also a complementary morning activity: the *Seminar on Bibliographic Provenance Marks as Traces of Memory: Identification and Research*. The Seminar featured the following lectures: *Bibliographic provenance marks as historical evidence*, by Fabiano Cataldo de Azevedo, and *Residues of Memories: the case of dedications in private libraries*, by

Audience watching the lectures at the 1st Bookplate Collecting Meeting

Book exhibition at the 1st Bookplate Collecting Meeting

Stefanie Cavalcanti Freire. Following the 1st Meeting, the ex-libris connections intensified and expanded, resulting in a group that eventually formed Gelb.

While writing this text, I felt the need to mention João Paulo de Almeida, a staff member at the Manguinhos Library. In 2017, he invited me to a lecture by paleography professor João Eurípedes



Luiz Stelling speaking at the 1st Bookplate Collecting Meeting

João Paulo at the Manguinhos Library

Franklin Leal at the aforementioned library. During the event, João Paulo introduced me to librarians Fátima and Maria Claudia. The topics of 'rare books, collections, and bookplate' arose, and Thalles Siciliano was also present, joining the library science and bookplate conversations. This initial contact, made possible by João Paulo, therefore helped germinate bookplate culture among us once again. To my friend João Paulo de Almeida (*in memoriam*), my recognition and gratitude.

2nd BOOKPLATE MEETING: MNBA reaffirms the historical tradition of ex-libris in Brazil

by Mary Komatsu

On May 22, 2026, the National Museum

From left to right: Mary Komatsu and the speakers Luiz Stelling, Jeanne Lopez, Raphael Greenhalgh, and Stefanie Cavalcanti.

of Fine Arts (MNBA), in Rio de Janeiro, hosted the 2nd Bookplate Meeting – Bookplate: Art, Identity, and Graphic Memory in Contemporary Brazil, promoted by Caçadora de Ex-líbris.

The event gathered researchers, librarians, artists, collectors, students, information professionals, and those interested in the history of the book and provenance marks, consolidating itself as an important space for the exchange of knowledge on bookplate studies in Brazil.

Holding the meeting at the MNBA carried a particularly symbolic meaning, as it was in this very museum that the 1st Brazilian Bookplate Exhibition took place in 1942, organized by the Society of Brazilian Bookplate Amateurs (S.A.B.E.L.) and by Oswaldo Teixeira, then director of the MNBA. Considered a milestone in the dissemination of this art in the country, the exhibition contributed to broadening interest in bookplate and strengthening collecting and studies related to marks of book ownership.

The meeting was officially part of the schedule for the 24th National Week of Museums, coordinated by the Brazilian Institute of Museums (IBRAM), which took place between May 18 and 24, 2026. Participation in this national program reinforced the cultural and educational character of the initiative, placing the debate on bookplate and provenance marks within the broader context of actions for the preservation, research, and dissemination of Brazilian cultural heritage.

Despite the rain and low temperatures recorded in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the public attended with enthusiasm. In addition to participants from Rio, visitors from Rio Grande do Sul, Pará, Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, São Paulo,

and the Federal District. This geographical diversity demonstrated the national reach of the initiative and highlighted the growing interest in studies related to bookplate, provenance marks, and book culture.

The meeting continued the dialogue initiated at the 1st Bookplate Collecting Meeting, held in 2018 at the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), reaffirming the importance of creating spaces dedicated to discussing this theme in Brazil.

The program for the second meeting began with the opening panel, led by Mary Komatsu—librarian, researcher, administrator of the Caçadora de Ex-líbris channel, and the event's creator—and by João Leal, acting director of the MNBA. This was followed by a cycle of lectures that addressed different perspectives related to the world of bookplate and bibliographic provenance marks.

Professor Stefanie Cavalcanti Freire (Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro - UNIRIO) presented the lecture *Traces in books: reflections on bibliographic provenance marks*, highlighting the importance of this evidence for reconstructing the trajectory of copies, their owners, and the historical contexts in which they circulated. The speaker emphasized how bookplate, stamps, handwritten annotations, and other marks can reveal valuable information about the history of collections and reading practices.

Following that, bookplate specialist, collector, and professor Luiz Felipe Stelling (Federal Institute of Rio de Janeiro - IFRJ) delivered the lecture *Bookplate - from the 15th-century ownership mark to a contemporary art form: a historical overview*. The presentation traced the trajectory of bookplates from their origins in Europe, associated with the identification of private libraries, to their consolidation as an artistic expression, highlighting their aesthetic evolution and their role in the formation of specialized collections.

Participants attend the presentations at the 2nd Bookplate Collecting Meeting

Continuing the program, librarian Raphael Diego Greenhalgh (Central Library of the University of Brasília - BCE/UnB) presented *Bookplate at the Central Library of the University of Brasília: a legacy in the making*. The lecture highlighted the work of identifying, organizing, and promoting the bookplate found in UnB's holdings, with special attention to the collections of jurist and politician Homero Pires and bookplate artist Jorge de Oliveira, as well as the efforts of professor and printmaker Stella Maris Bertinazzo in organizing and preserving the BCE collection.

Concluding the cycle, librarian Jeanne Bezerra Lopez (Guita and José Mindlin Brasiliana Library of the University of São Paulo – BBM/USP) presented the lecture

From the mark of possession to digital access: documentation and dissemination of bookplate from the Mindlin Collection. The researcher shared the results of the project aimed

The auditorium during the presentations at the 2nd Bookplate Collecting Meeting

at the identification, cataloging, and technical processing of the bookplate found within the works belonging to the collection formed by the famous bibliophile José Mindlin, highlighting the initiatives for the digital dissemination of this documentary heritage. Plans for the future publication of a catalog dedicated to the bookplates in this collection were also presented specialized in the ex-libris of this collection.

In the afternoon, participants had the opportunity to experience printmaking firsthand through the Woodcut Bookplate Creation Workshop, led by artists

André de Miranda instructing the participants

and printmakers André de Miranda and Patrícia Pedrosa. The activity allowed those registered to learn about all the stages of the process of creating a woodcut bookplate, from the development of the design and the carving of the wooden matrix to the final printing. The event also featured

Practical activity with Patrícia Pedrosa

an exhibition of bookplates belonging to the holdings of the MNBA Library and Historical Archive and the private collection of Luiz Felipe Stelling. The exhibition allowed participants to observe different styles, techniques, and production periods, highlighting the aesthetic and documentary richness of these small graphic works.

The presence of sponsors Ricardo Monteiro, from ScanSystem, and Madalena Mello Moraes Silveira, from

Vivenso, contributed to enriching the program, bringing participants closer to solutions focused on the preservation, management, and dissemination of collections.

The meeting was only made possible thanks to the support of the MNBA, REDARTE/RJ, CRB-7, SINDIB/RJ, GIDJ/RJ, BCE/UnB, and BBM/USP, as well as other institutions and partners who believed in the proposal and contributed to its success.

More than an academic and cultural event, the 2nd Bookplate Collecting Meeting reaffirmed the importance of bookplate as research sources, testimonies to the history of the book, and instruments for preserving graphic memory.

UNDER THE MONOCLE: Bookplate in focus

by Raphael Greenhalgh

The bookplate chosen for highlight and analysis was created by the artist Diogo Dourado, from Brasília. It was designed to participate in the exhibition *Bookplates: a small artistic artifact*, organized by the Rare Books Section of the BCE/UnB and by the intaglio printmaking professor, Eduardo Belga, in 2024. On that occasion, students from the university's Institute of Arts and members of the Gravura Antiutópica extension project were encouraged to produce bookplates, which would also become part of the library's collection, which already included a collection of nearly 5,000 copies.

Diogo often explores the macabre in his art, and in this case, he represented the act of reading through the lens of the sinister in synergy with the erotic, as if bringing out the reader's awe and delight when facing the new or the unexpected found within a book.

Since he attributed the ownership of the bookplate to the BCE itself, the Rare Books Section decided to adopt it for its erotic books. To this end, the inscription “Rare Books” were included in the bookplate design, and a print run of 50 copies was produced using etching, aquatint, and drypoint techniques on acid-free paper.

See more of Diogo's work on his Instagram @penamasterra.

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