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Professor Coquillette Donates Rare Books

8/29/02--For the second year in a row, Daniel R. Coquillette, the J. Donald Monan SJ University Professor and former BC Law School Dean, has donated a significant collection of rare books and prints to the BC Law Library's Daniel R. Coquillette Rare Book Room. This gift of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century law books complements last year's gift of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century books.

"I am so grateful for Dan Coquillette’s generosity and his enthusiastic support of our rare books program," said Karen Beck, BC Law Legal Information Librarian and Curator of Rare Books. "He has enriched our collection immeasurably by giving us materials that you literally cannot buy anymore at any price; they just don’t come on the market. Even more important to me is his enthusiasm for teaching all of us about our shared legal history – and these books help us connect with our past so we can understand our present."

The gift features an eclectic group of works including several printed by the noted law book printer Richard Tottell; collections and abridgements of cases, statutes and writs; works on legal education and criminal law; and early legal reference works including catalogs, bibliographies and law dictionaries. Most of the books feature beautiful original leather and vellum bindings, as well as autographs, bookplates and marginal notations by former owners. Several were once owned by important historical figures including the famous American patriot James Otis.

A special hallmark of this donation is a group of works by and about the seventeenth-century jurist Sir Edward Coke, including volumes of his case reports and several editions of his famous Institutes of the Laws Of England. Virtually everything Coke wrote is represented in this collection. Another special feature is the Microcosm of London, a set of fine color prints by Thomas Rowlandson that show the inner workings of early nineteenth-century London courtrooms and houses of government.

The thread binding this diverse collection of books together is that nearly all of them were likely to have been found in a typical lawyer's library of the relevant periods. The Boston College Law Library is especially grateful for this significant gift because it adds to the library’s growing collection of works likely to have been owned by practicing lawyers in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries.

Many of the works in Professor Coquillette's latest gift are on exhibit, along with other recent additions to the collection, in the Daniel R. Coquillette Rare Book Room. They may be viewed anytime the room is open: generally Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The books will remain on view through mid-December 2002.

--Karen Beck