



President's Message

A MOMENTOUS YEAR

To celebrate The Huntington's first 100 years, a special centennial exhibition opening Sept. 21 takes an unconventional approach. Instead of surveying an entire century, it shines a light on just one year: the institution's first, 1919. This year was immensely consequential, both personally for the Huntingtons—with Henry and Arabella signing the formal trust indenture that established the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery—and globally, as millions of soldiers returned from the Great War, and Europe attempted to emerge from the nightmare of destruction.

Curators James Glisson and Jennifer A. Watts have chosen to structure the exhibition in congruent parts: objects from and about 1919 offer both texture and context to the institution's beginnings. Every item in the show comes from The Huntington's remarkable collections. Included in this inventory are maps, photos, art, and botanical specimens, even Henry Huntington's business records and invoices from this foundational year. A view of Henry the book collector also emerges through a few prized highlights that the founder chose to display to an august gathering of New York Authors Club members in December 1919. In focusing on a momentous year in this way, our curators create a portrait of the Huntingtons woven into the tapestry of national and international events. (See the full story on pages 4–5.)

As a relatively new president, I am delighted to be joining and celebrating The Huntington as we look back on its extraordinary first century and forward to its second. When Jenny and James described to me their idea to launch our centennial with a focus on a single year in the life of the Huntingtons, I was reminded of the temporal constraint that James Joyce adopted in composing *Ulysses*, the modern Irish epic that he was serially publishing in 1919. *Ulysses* is perhaps the most famous example of a circadian novel, a quintessentially modernist form that depicts its main characters by concentrating on one day—in this case, June 16, 1904. The novel records the physical and mental furniture of

Leopold and Molly Bloom, their memories and dreams as well as their material possessions, down to an inventory of the books in Leopold's library and the invoices stacked in his drawer. In recording a day in the lives of his characters, Joyce enmeshes them in a social, material, and historical web. Through his strict temporal focus on these Dubliners, Joyce paradoxically presents one of the most encompassing pictures of the modern world. Fittingly, issues of *The Little Review* in which chapters of *Ulysses* were published, along with a number of first editions of the novel, are now part of The Huntington's collections.

Through a similar temporal constraint, our curators pair very personal portraits of the Huntingtons with the tumultuous social and political landscape in which their legacy took shape. They tell a story at once local, national, and international: an American couple who transferred European cultural patrimony to America and then moved it again from New York to their new home in San Marino, California. The exhibition contains a selection of the rare, signature items that have given The Huntington its reputation as a national treasure. But it includes many surprises as well, lesser-known items that tell other stories that exceed Henry Huntington's vision.

The extraordinary institution the Huntingtons founded in August 1919 helped to fulfill Henry's vision of a future in which "the Pacific Coast will one day be the center of culture extending around the world." But our centennial celebration also prods us to revisit how Henry's vision of the future is challenged by the radical demographic transformation of this state and this country. As The Huntington moves into its second century, we are working to create new narratives for a different moment in our national life. We are excited to address this challenge, both by building partnerships and by inviting artists, writers, scholars, and students to reinterpret our collections, augmenting and altering them through new lenses.

Karen R. Lawrence, President