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Fall Exhibition at Syracuse University Library: "Just One Word: Plastics[1]"

The opening and reception for Syracuse University Library's fall exhibition, "Just One Word: Plastics" will be held in the Special Collections Research Center Gallery, Sixth floor, Bird Library on Thursday, September 15, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The exhibit will run from September 12, 2011 to January 20, 2012.

For more than a century, plastics have transformed our lives – from bathroom to battlefield; from supermarket to spacecraft. Begun as a 19th-century replacement material for billiard balls and piano keys, plastics spurred 20th century developments in industry, transportation, medicine, entertainment, and other aspects of contemporary life. The original objects of *Just One Word: Plastics* represent a material history of the modern world.

This exhibition features a representative sample of the Plastics Collection at the Syracuse University Library and presents an overview of major trends in the development of plastics in everyday life. The exhibit focuses on personal and household objects rather than the use of plastics in industry, where they are also widely used. Approximately 250 objects divided into twelve categories will be on view. In addition, a small selection of manuscripts and printed materials will be included.

Specific objects to be featured in the exhibition are:

- ornate celluloid combs and a wide variety of plastic toiletries
- phenolic (Bakelite) objects from the 1920s and 30s including jewelry, radios, and other appliances and games
- musical instruments
- post-war toys, dishes, and household items
- original patent books of John Wesley Hyatt, inventor of Celluloid
- product catalogues from the 1930s and 1950s for popular items such as DuPont French Ivory dresser sets, Boltaware molded "stoneware" dishes, and Tupperware

[1] Career advice given to Dustin Hoffman's character Benjamin Braddock at his graduation party in the film *The Graduate* (1967).

- the Pleur-evac, a revolutionary plastic medical device for draining fluid and maintaining pressure in the lungs that helped save the life of President Ronald Reagan.

The Plastics Collection was begun in 2007 as a joint project of the Syracuse University Library and the Plastics History & Artifacts Committee of the Plastics Pioneers Association. The Collection expanded dramatically when the National Plastics Center and Museum in Leominster, Massachusetts, closed and transferred its artifacts, books, and manuscripts to Syracuse University's care in 2008.

Ongoing funding support for the collection and this exhibit has been provided Syracuse University alumnus Harry Greenwald '51 and the Greenwald-Haupt Charitable Foundation and by the Plastics History & Artifacts Committee, under the leadership of Glenn Beall.