

JACKSON LIBRARY'S ONE-MILLIONTH VOLUME

While admittedly a symbolic plateau, a university library's acquisition of 1,000,000 volumes is an important milestone, a strong indication that the library has acquired significant resources to be considered a major repository for scholarly research. Today, fewer than 250 academic libraries in the U.S. have achieved this distinction. This impressive number of volumes is a barometer of a university's ability to support both undergraduate and graduate research, enabling the students and faculty to locate the majority of their needs within their own institution. Achieving a million volumes reflects the library's importance to the campus research community and is a major focal point in drawing attention to a university's resources.

The academic community at UNCG takes pride in Jackson Library's achieving this status. Most faculty, staff and students contacted to date feel that the millionth volume should be a significant, influential book fitting the strengths of Jackson Library's major collections. The volume chosen as Jackson Library's 1,000,000 is a cornerstone of book illustration and becomes the crown jewel among the illustrated books in Jackson's significant Book Arts collection.

In addition to being a major poet, William Blake ranks as one of the earliest and most influential of major English book illustrators. While all of Blake's illustrations (for his own work and that of

other authors) are historically and artistically important, his illustrations of books of the Bible have survived as his most noteworthy artistic achievement. Printed in small quantities in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, these titles are considered among the finest and most desirable of all English illustrated books.

Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job was his last major commission. Published in 1826, just a year before Blake's death, Illustrations of the Book of Job remains a high point in nineteenth-century

book illustration. Called by Blake scholar Geoffrey Keynes "Blake's most widely known achievement" and ranked by book historian Gordon N. Ray "with the supreme masterpieces of graphic art," Job was published in two formats for a total of only 315 copies. Ray not only included Job as one of three Blake titles among his "100 Outstanding Illustrated Books Published in England between 1790 and 1914" but also selected an illustration from Job for the frontispiece for his Illustrator and the Book in England from 1790 to 1914. No less a critic than John Ruskin pro-

claimed, "The 'Book of Job' . . . is of the highest rank in certain characters of imagination and expression."

Few copies of this important graphic work are likely to come on the market in the future, and UNCG is fortunate in being able to acquire a work of this magnitude for its one-millionth volume.

Dr. William K. Finley
Special Collections Librarian

