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CAROLINA
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LAUPUS
LIBRARY

FOUNDERS WEEK 2004

DEDICATION OF THE
INTERIM HISTORY OF MEDICINE ROOM

LAUPUS HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY

**LAUPUS LIBRARY
HISTORY COLLECTIONS**

**PRESENTATION OF THE
KAREL B. ABSOLON MEDICAL HISTORY LIBRARY
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OPENING OF THE INTERIM RARE BOOK ROOM**

Introduction of Vice Chancellor of Health Sciences	Dr. Dorothy Spencer
Remarks on the Library within the Division of Health Sciences	Dr. Michael Lewis
Recognition of Special Guests & Remarks	Dr. Dorothy Spencer
Ribbon Cutting	



The Karel B. Absolon History of Medicine Library was donated from the private collection of noted surgeon and medical historian, Dr. Karel B. Absolon. This collection contains over 2,000 items ranging from books, journal reprints, journal volumes and issues, to prints and manuscripts, some dating to the 16th century. Dr. Absolon was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia in 1926. He immigrated to American in 1948, escaping the repressive Soviet government and received his medical degree from Yale University in 1952. At the University of Minnesota he worked with colleagues to perform pioneering coronary bypass surgery in

1955 and participated in the first human liver transplant in 1965. While in medical school at Yale, Dr. Absolon's interest in the history of medicine began to grow. Later, at University of Minnesota, the prominent surgeon Owen H. Wangensteen prompted him to investigate the life and work of Theodor Billroth. This early research led to the publication of Absolon's four-volume biography of Billroth, *The Surgeon's Surgeon* in 1979.

When asked why he chose Laupus Library, ECU and not Yale (his alma mater) or another university with a larger historical collection, Dr. Absolon pointed out that his books would likely not stay together at such a large institution. "I didn't feel they would keep the library as a whole. I was looking for a small school looking to start something, a school which had only a little now with plans for the future, Yale or the University of Minnesota (where he worked) might have kept 50 out of all the books that I will eventually give," he said.

The Absolon Collection is a treasure that covers centuries of medical history, but more it is a legacy that represents a life work of over 50 years. For ECU and Laupus Library it is a central building block around which our vision for a History of Medicine Collection is being achieved.



Theodor Billroth Operating
(Allgemeines Krankenhaus, 1890)

Theodor Billroth was born April 26, 1829, Bergen, on the island of Rügen, Prussia and is regarded by many as the leading German surgeon of late 19th century. He studied medicine in Berlin, Gottingen and Greifswald and obtained his medical degree from Berlin in 1852. In 1855 he wrote a monograph on colonic polyps recognizing the relationship between adenomatous polyps and colorectal cancers, later becoming the first surgeon to excise a rectal cancer. He was appointed Professor of Clinical Surgery in

Zurich in 1860 where he published "*Allgemeine chirurgische Pathologie und Therapie*" ("General Surgical Pathology and Therapeutics", 1863). As Professor of Surgery at the University of Vienna in 1867 he was a pioneer in the study of the bacterial causes of wound fever, evidenced by his publication "*Untersuchungen über die Vegetationsformen von Coccobacteria septica*" ("Investigations of the Vegetal Forms of Coccobacteria septica"), published in 1874. He carried out the first oesophageal resection in 1872 and the first laryngectomy in 1874. Billroth's ideas for more advanced surgical training and prolonged apprenticeships were taken up by many who visited him. He is perhaps best known for the two types of partial gastrectomy that are named after him. The first Billroth I partial gastrectomy was performed on in 1881 for a pyloric gastric cancer, and the first First Billroth II partial gastrectomy in 1895. In Vienna, he founded the House of the Society of Physicians in Vienna - K. K. Haus der Gesellschaft der Ärzte - and it was due to his energetic efforts that the "Rudolfinerhaus", a teaching institution for "worldly" nurses was established. Billroth was also devoted to music. A good performer on the piano and violin, he was an intimate friend and admirer of Johannes Brahms, many of whose compositions were privately performed at Billroth's home before they were published. Two of Brahms's string quartets are dedicated to Billroth. His work on the physiology of music (*Wer ist musikalisch?*) was published after his death.