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A detailed woodcut illustration of the city of Nuremberg, showing a dense cluster of buildings with various rooflines, spires, and towers. The city is surrounded by a wall with several towers and gates. In the foreground, there are some structures and a body of water. The style is characteristic of 15th-century woodcut prints.

The  
Nuremberg Chronicle:  
1493-1993

Library Author Series

# The Nuremberg Chronicle:

In 1493, one year after Columbus discovered the New World, a book was published in Germany which was immediately recognized as a masterpiece. Interspersed among its 600 pages were 1,089 woodcut illustrations representing views of people and places relating to the book's subject: the history of the world from Creation to 1493. It also contained the first printed map of Europe.

The Book, entitled **Liber Chronicarum** in its Latin edition and **Das Buch der Chroniken und Geschichten** in the German translation, is best known to us today as the Nuremberg Chronicle. In celebration of the quincentenary of its publication and in recognition of its own copy of the Latin edition, the Department of State Library has invited distinguished rare book expert Willis Van Devanter to talk about the significance of this book.

Why celebrate an old book printed half a millenium ago? Can it teach us anything about our own times? Surprisingly, the period from which it sprang bears some resemblance to our own. The invention of moveable type brought about a communications revolution in much the same way as the computer has revolutionized ours. The Chronicle was printed just forty years after the first appearance of printing and became part of the wave of books which were to stimulate thought, inventions and social upheaval.

The text by Hartmann Schedel is eclectic, borrowing generously from previous historians. It chronicles the history of the world divided into six ages as was popular in medieval histories and is replete with epidemics, monsters and comets. But it is in the illustrations that the book soars. For years speculation has focused on the young Albrecht Dürer as the hand behind some of the illustrations. At the time preparations were underway for the project, Dürer was an apprentice in the workshop of one of the book's artists, Michael Wolgemut and the printer of the Chronicle, Anton Koberger, was his godfather. No one knows, however, whether Dürer actually contributed to the work.

For centuries people have been drawn to the Nuremberg Chronicle. Its graphic design, its printing and woodcuts rarely fail to leave their imprint on the imagination of anyone who views this jewel of fifteenth century Germany.

The Department of State Library  
Presents

The Library Author Series  
Guest Speaker: Willis Van Devanter

Who Will Speak  
on

*Willis Van Devanter*  
16 November 1993

# The Nuremberg Chronicle: The 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1493-1993

Tuesday, November 16, 1993  
11:00 - 12:00 p.m.

*The Library*  
*Rare Book and Special Collections, Room 3239*

Mr. Van Devanter has been a buyer for the Paul Mellon Collection and agent for sale of books owned by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution and by the Alexander Graham Bell Association. He has served as trustee of the Yale Library Associates; Regent of the James Monroe Memorial Library in Fredericksburg, Virginia; Acting Curator of Graphic Arts at Princeton University; and Adviser to the Garden Library at Dumbarton Oaks. Mr. Van Devanter holds the Master of Library Science degree from Columbia University and the Bachelor of Arts degree in American Studies from Yale University. Last year he spoke at the Library Authors Series on "Collecting and Evaluating Rare Books."