

[Jennifer Martinez Wormser](#), Ella Strong Denison Library, Scripps College

“One Hundred Years Later: Ellen Browning Scripps and William Leon Dawson’s *Birds of California* (1923)”

Abstract:

The year 2023 marked the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of William Leon Dawson’s (1873-1928) *Birds of California*, a four-volume folio set praised for its unparalleled detail, extent, and images at the time of its issue. Yet its fifteen-year-long journey to the publication stage would not have been successful if not for the financial support of Ellen Browning Scripps (1836-1932), a journalist and philanthropist whose interest in reading and natural history led her to become a patron for several publications related to the flora and fauna of California. This presentation will explore the publication history of Dawson’s *Birds of California*, a monumental quarto-sized reference set featuring halftones, duotones, photogravures, and color plates along with text describing California’s 580 species and subspecies of birds. While the volumes rest on shelves in a number of institutions and private libraries today, they are more than just a collector’s item: Dawson’s *Birds of California* also serves as a record of the state’s biodiversity prior to the effects of climate change and the built environment on the region’s avian populations.

Bio:

Jennifer Martinez Wormser is the library director of the Ella Strong Denison Library at Scripps College. She was previously the library director at the Laguna College of Art + Design and worked with manuscript and archival materials at UCLA, San Diego State University, the Huntington Library, and the Sherman Library & Gardens. In addition to her B.A. in English from Scripps College, she also has a M.L.S. degree with a concentration in archival management from the University of Maryland, College Park and previously served as President of the Society of California Archivists.