

---

# *On Time: The Quest for Precision:* An Exhibit Review

by **Bob Frishman, FNAWCC (MA)**

I had never heard of the Linda Hall Library of Science, Engineering & Technology in Kansas City, MO.

Neither had my friend and fellow *Watch & Clock Bulletin* contributor Fortunat Mueller-Maerki.

Mueller-Maerki is a member of the Grolier Club in New York City, and as soon as he learned that the Grolier Club was planning an exhibit of that research library's collection of rare horology literature, he was on the phone to exhibit curator Bruce Bradley to offer the loan of horological artifacts from his own collection—to reinforce the display of rare illustrated books dating back to the fifteenth century.

With the curator's blessing, he provided clocks, watches, sundials, chronometers, and tools, which were placed alongside related texts in the exhibition room's glass-front cases for the exhibit titled *On Time: The Quest for Precision*, which ended in November 2016 (Figures 1-3).

A smaller exhibit on this theme was created by Bradley in 2012 at the Linda Hall Library in Missouri shortly before he retired from his long rare-book career there and where he now is the History of Science librarian emeritus. He told me that he has always had an interest in clocks and watches, that this earlier exhibit also was enhanced by timepieces from a local Kansas City collector, and that its revival at the Grolier resulted from the encouragement of Linda Hall Library President Lisa Browar, a longtime member of the Grolier Club, a private club for bibliophiles.

In the Grolier exhibit gallery the displays were organized chronologically, beginning with sundials. Bradley told me that Linda Hall's sundial books alone could have filled the entire exhibit space. Printed books from 1533, 1550, 1624, and up to 1867 sat propped open next to sundial examples, including Mueller-Maerki's Pilkington & Gibbs early twentieth-century English heliochronometer, capable of single-minute accuracy (Figure 4). Calendars included a stunning Dutch 1661 two-page, full-color spread of