

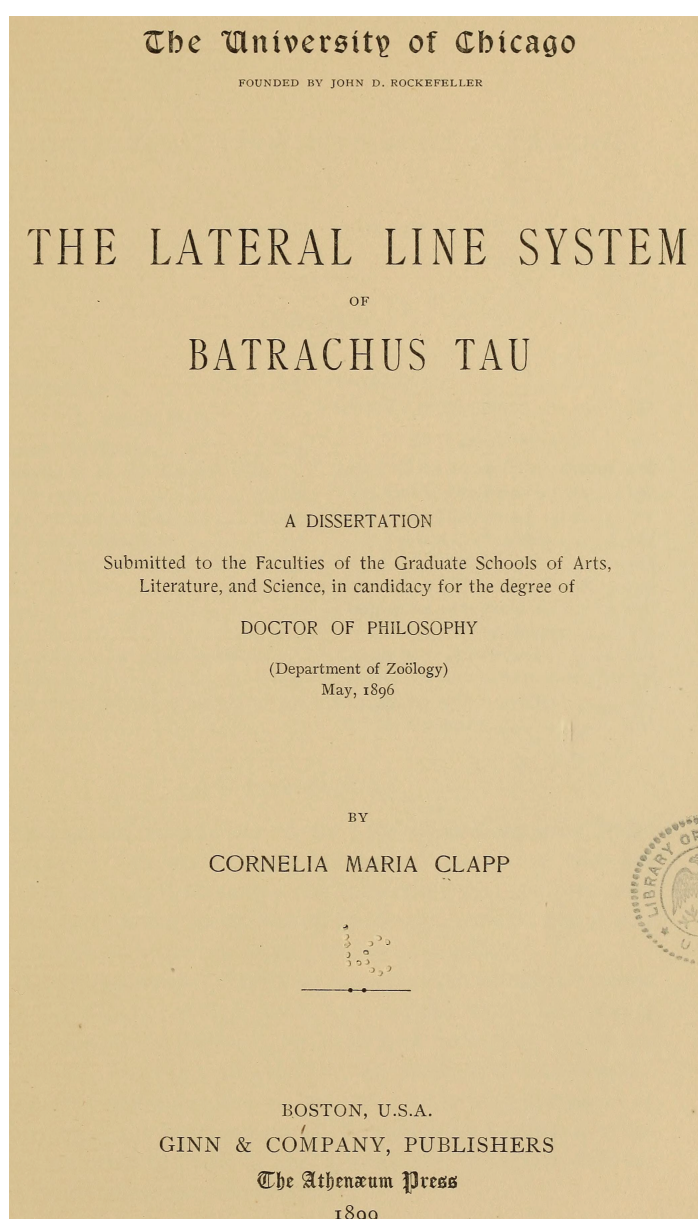
# Cornelia Clapp

The first person to arrive at the MBL, Cornelia Clapp was an independent investigator, instructor in the Embryology Course, first librarian, and first woman elected as an MBL Trustee.

MBL Trustees c. 1933



Toadfish



Clapp was also the first woman in the US to receive a PhD in biology (in 1889 from Syracuse University) and the second (in 1896 from the new University of Chicago). Her dissertation director at Chicago was Charles Otis Whitman, and her research focused on toadfish development. Her dissertation carefully described the previously ignored sense organs called the lateral line sensory system.



Though few professional opportunities existed for women, Mount Holyoke College gave Clapp a home throughout her career. She started there as an undergraduate, then returned to teach physical education while also helping organize the Department of Zoology. Mount Holyoke named her Professor of Zoology in 1904, and she shared her enthusiasm for studying marine organisms with advanced microscopical techniques. Mount Holyoke's Clapp Laboratory continues to introduce generations of young women to the life sciences.

In 2021, the MBL named its main lecture hall the Cornelia Clapp Auditorium to acknowledge her commitment to teaching, research, and the MBL.