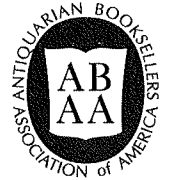


# The ABAA NEWSLETTER



VOLUME NINE, NUMBER 1

ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLERS' ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

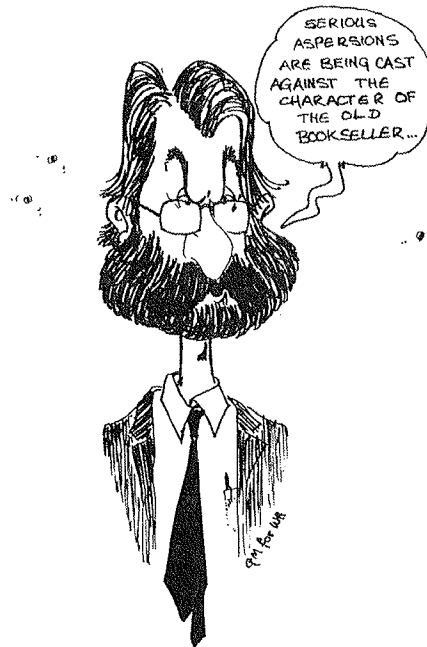
FALL 1997

## William Hoffer (1944-1997): A Memoir in the Form of a Letter

*Dear friends and colleagues,*

Bill was snuffed out Sept 28, 1997. He had burned very brightly. No filter. There was a vapor trail. He was my friend. I tried to be his.

Of Bill the bookseller it is easier to write. I have some facts, some documents, many memories, for we go back a ways. He was introduced to me as a rumor from Vancouver, surely by Preston McMann, the Old Oregon Bookshop in Portland, early in 1971, for Bill regularly repaired to Portland in those days. Steve McIntyre, a Vancouver bookseller had introduced Bill to Mac and Phyllis in the fall of 1968. Bill was leaving Simon Fraser University where he studied anthropology and agitated, politically. Behind him already was wedded home life ("Pat" and Suite 4, 1815 West 4th Avenue, Vancouver), academic prospects. *The Plague Year*, so a book of poems was intended to be titled. He meant from those moments to be a bookseller. From the very beginning he sought to step beyond Canadian borders, more than any other Canadian bookseller of his time. He was immediately and acutely aware of the limitations of the BC trade; he was always maliciously suspicious of the Eastern Canadian trade. But his purposes for twenty years at least were to return books to Canada, to further bookselling in Vancouver. And he willingly endured a ten-year apprenticeship to a trade for which he ever had profound respect. Of the book environment he woke to in Vancouver Bill



William Hoffer as caricatured by Gloria Mundi on his *Canadian Literature*, List 9.

has written memorably ("Letter from A Bookseller 1, 2, 3" in *Amphora* 56, 58, 59 [June 1984-March 1985]).

**Starve if you have to—it's better than being bribed into compromising your life with their image of what it should be**  
—Patti (letter to Bill, 1964)

But I did not actually meet Bill until the Spring of 1971, and then on the East Coast in that welcoming spot—the living room/book room of Frank and Mary Scioscia in Hastings-on-Hudson. Surely Margaret and Peter Eaton were there, and Mac and Phyllis—old friends all, for Bill had already been to England in 1969, his first trip, with his wife Pat. A letter survives to Bill's parents, unsent, perhaps, recording

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## Book Collecting on the Internet: The Essentials

by Robert F. Lucas

*The following constitutes part five in a series of essays on book collecting posted on Bob Lucas's website: [www.lucasbooks.com/part5.html](http://www.lucasbooks.com/part5.html). With his permission, it is reprinted here in a slightly revised form. Please note that by mentioning an internet address below, neither the ABAA, the ABAA Newsletter, nor Mr. Lucas endorses that particular site.*

The buying and selling of antiquarian books is well adapted for use of the Internet and as such has been on a steady increase over the past decade—relatively soon the demand for hard copies of book catalogues will be on the decrease. One can purchase books from on-line catalogues, from huge antiquarian book databases, from on-line auctions, from e-mail book lists, from e-mail quotes, and from other Internet resources such as bulletin boards and on-line for sale/want ads. Booksellers can offer books for sale through all of these on-line methods, and collectors and other individuals can also sell using the majority of them. You will find links to many of these antiquarian book sites later in this article.

There are many aspects of book collecting other than the buying and selling of books which also can be readily called up on the Internet and the world wide

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# Letters to the Editor

*From: Jennifer Larson*

Readers of the September 1997 *Biblio* magazine's illustrated announcement ("International Auction Report," p. 60) of Sotheby's recent sale of a purported Nathan Hale signature on a printed reward of merit slip may be more interested in this item's twentieth-century provenance than in its price realized at auction (\$31,050). Convicted forger Mark Hofmann identified as a forgery another copy of the same form, also ostensibly signed by Nathan Hale on May 25, 1774, but awarded to a different pupil, in a 1990 letter to this writer. He had earlier acknowledged to one of the investigators involved in his criminal prosecution having made "his own printing plate for two printed documents of Nathan Hale, which were rewards of merit." One of the two documents, he said from prison, was sold through Charles Hamilton Galleries—a statement borne out by the fact that not long after a registered shipment was made from Hofmann to Hamilton, Charles Hamilton Galleries catalogued and illustrated, in August, 1983, an "Excessively Rare Document Signed by Nathan Hale," virtually identical to the item sold at Sotheby's except for the identity of the recipient. Charles Hamilton declined to comment on the matter. In my opinion, the recent appearance at auction of a second purported Nathan Hale reward of merit further supports Hofmann's statement.

It is often said that Mark Hofmann has confessed, out of braggadocio, presumably, to forgeries that he did not create. While he must certainly be regarded as an effective and talented liar, I am unaware of any lies or misstatements by Mark Hofmann about his forgery career since his 1986 plea agreement. Absence of the peculiar "alligatored" ink which was so effective in exposing certain Hofmann documents as forgeries in the criminal proceeding is unfortunately not sufficient to establish that a document did *not* originate with Hofmann, for various technical reasons.

Collector Al Malpa, who has studied rewards of merit for over twenty years,

has noted other problems relating to the printed portion of this reward of merit. The two earliest authentic examples of such certificates known date from the late 1790s, two decades later than the questionable Nathan Hale examples. Rewards of merit were never, in Mr. Malpa's experience, pre-printed with a location ("New London") and date ("177 ") as are the purported Nathan Hale rewards. Typographically, he thinks, the printed portion of the documents in question more closely resemble billheads of the period 1810-1830 than earliest known rewards of merit.

I hope that, in light of its knowledge of these facts prior to the auction of this second purported Nathan Hale reward of merit, Sotheby's, as a member of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America, made all of this information, which certainly calls into question the authenticity of this item, known to the successful bidder and underbidder for this item, as the Association requires of its members in the case of merchandise of disputed or undetermined nature (ABAA Code of Ethics, Rule 4).

*From: Selby Kiffer, Senior Vice President Books and Manuscripts Dept., Sotheby's*  
Two weeks prior to our 19 May 1997 sale of *Fine Manuscript and Printed Americana*, we learned that, based on a statement Mark Hoffmann had made about a similar Nathan Hale document offered in a Charles Hamilton catalogue, a comment was made that the Hale "Reward of Merit" document featured in our catalogue was a Hoffmann forgery. Although questions about the authenticity of manuscripts are not uncommon (in his September column for *Biblio*, in fact, Mr. McKay reports on a questioned Lincoln signature offered at another auction house), we took this comment, like all such comments, very seriously.

Our own immediate re-examination of the Hale document did not reveal any anomalies that would indicate that it was not what it purported to be. We also understood that Hofmann did buy and sell legitimate documents and—more impor-

tant—that he had claimed to handle and produce documents that he had not. (In any case, Charles Hamilton himself acknowledged a long relationship with Hofmann, so the fact that a registered shipment was sent from Hofmann to Hamilton is not unusual, nor can any conclusions be drawn about its contents.) To further ensure our responsibility of performing due diligence, a colleague of mine examined the document at the laboratory of one of the world's foremost experts in manuscript authentication, where it was concluded that it bore none of the characteristics of Hofmann's forgeries, including ink craquelure and florescence under ultraviolet light from his method of sizing paper.

The document was offered in our May Americana sale, where, fully covered by our terms of guarantee for books, manuscripts, and memorabilia, it attracted competitive bidding from both trade and private buyers. But in light of the persistent questions about the document, Hofmann's undoubted great skill in forgery, and, especially, further circumstantial evidence about its provenance that has come to our attention subsequent to the sale, we have again vetted the document for authenticity and now agree with Ms. Larson's implication that the document is a modern forgery. The auction sale of the document has been cancelled pursuant to our terms of guarantee and the purchase price refunded to the buyer.

The lengthy authentication process that we have recently completed will be of great use if we are faced with a similar situation in the future, and we are grateful to the people who offered us a wide range of information and opinion during that process. We will continue to be vigilant against offering inauthentic materials, and willing to assume responsibility and correct the situation if such materials are inadvertently offered.

*From: Marvin Mondlin*

I would like to open up a matter concerning directories and their listings, including *Antiquarian, Specialty, and Used Book Sellers*:

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# Intellectual Property and Copyright on the Web

by Rob Rulon-Miller

It was recently brought to the attention of the ABAA Board that a particular online book search service was fiendishly downloading book descriptions from various ABAA dealers who advertise on the web, and offering the books for as much as twice the price, without the dealers' permission or knowledge. The Board sent out its posse, Larry Fox, who let the bullets fly in an exceptionally blunt letter to the encroaching search service, which is now toeing the line, I am told.

However, in his letter to the Board on the subject of intellectual properties and copyrights for online material, Mr. Fox urged some caution. While in all likelihood the privilege of copyright would apply to online catalogue descriptions, there perhaps is a limit. The basic facts about a book, such as its author, title, contents, and pagination might not be protected by copyright, and there may loom a larger question of what is original and what is not in book descriptions.

One may argue, accurately enough, that our information often comes from the same sources (DNB, BAL, PMM, etc.); and that bibliography, and by extension book descriptions, much like dictionary entries, are by their nature prescriptive, often enjoying a long and unchallenged tenure in print.

On the ABAA list server there was a recent spate of letters in response to one by Forrest Proper at Joslin Hall Rare Books in which Mr. Proper berates those booksellers who "steal" other booksellers' entries. While Proper had up and down support, and would enjoy the support of Mr. Fox as well, he also had his detractors, two of whom, Ted Ripley-Duggan and Paul Garon, were quite eloquent in expressing opposing viewpoints: Ted, who noted that "several recently decided cases in the field of law, publishing, etc. seem to indicate that perhaps physical descriptions may not be copyrightable where the material in question is publicly available;" and Paul, who seems quite happy with others using his descriptions since it often results in increased sales.

There is yet the final word. For now, we feel our way along the rough edges of the new technology. The inherent ethic of the web is still being defined, with the help of our Board of Governors and its able counsel, Mr. Fox. Herewith is a summary of Mr. Fox's letter to the Board, from which I liberally lift and copy:

The law of copyrights is implicated in the reproduction of entries from book catalogues on web sites. The law of trademarks is implicated in the use of ABAA members' trade names by third parties.

In the United States, a copyright in a work vests upon creation of that work in a tangible medium. Registration is not a prerequisite unless the author wishes to begin a law suit, at which time registration becomes mandatory. In the United States.

The work in question must meet a minimum standard of originality. In general, the degree of originality needed to be shown is very low. Where a work is a mixture of fact and opinion, copyright protection will be available for those aspects which embody the creative expression of the author's opinion or expression about the fact.

Intellectual property rights grant the owner of a copyrighted work or trade name the right to control the manner in which the work or trade name in question is used. A third party's unauthorized use of an ABAA member's copyrighted materials may create, in the mind of the consumer, the belief that the third party is in some

way affiliated with the ABAA member or, alternatively, is using the ABAA member's material by permission. An ABAA member's good will may thus be damaged.

An unauthorized electronic copy of a copyrighted work is still a copy and is still subject to claims of copyright infringement. Recognizing the problems inherent in the new medium, vendors have adopted various ways to take intellectual property issues into account. In many instances, a vendor will provide a "shrink wrap" permission form or "shrink wrap" license, similar to license forms on computer software packaging. These forms may appear as a screen of text the first time a user logs on to a web site and may ask the user to agree to certain terms before access to the web site is granted.

Third party vendors may argue that dissemination of uploaded information is common internet practice and vital to conducting business on the internet. While this may be true, there remains no authorization to copy and distribute. ABAA members do have legal grounds on which to object to misuse, provided the underlying work possesses sufficient originality. Mr. Fox cautions, however, that the choice to exercise intellectual property rights is a matter solely within the ABAA member's discretion, and he asks us to weigh the choice of our taking legal action against the would-be pirates with the potential for increased business and market growth. ■

A contribution to the ABAA Benevolent Fund or to the Elisabeth Woodburn Memorial Fund is a meaningful way to honor the memory of a departed colleague. A contribution can also be a thoughtful celebration of an important event in the life of an antiquarian bookseller—a birthday, an anniversary, or a retirement.

The Antiquarian Booksellers' Benevolent Fund is a non-profit charity fund established by the ABAA in 1952 to benefit any antiquarian bookseller in time of personal need. The Elisabeth Woodburn Memorial Fund offers financial assistance for education and scholarly research relevant to the antiquarian book trade.



Direct your contributions and inquiries to:  
Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America  
20 West 44th Street ● Fourth Floor ● New York, NY 10036

## Nominating Committee Seeks Candidates

by Rob Rulon-Miller  
Chair, Nominating Committee

In April 1998 the terms of the three governors who comprise the Class of 1998 will expire. Marilyn Braiterman, representing the Southeast Chapter; Jordan Luttrell, representing the Northern California Chapter; and Edward Ripley-Duggan, an At-Large member, will step down from the Board. They will be replaced by three new governors who will serve as the Class of 2002.

According to the ABAA By-Laws, the Nominating Committee must ask for the names of candidates who would like to serve. Replacements from the Northern California and Southeast chapters are mandatory; the At-Large governor may come from any chapter.

The ABAA membership will also be voting on nominees for the offices of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The first two of these positions have current office-holders as candidates; but they need not run unopposed. Competition is welcome. The ABAA is ensured some sense of continuity by the succession of vice-president to president—all candidates being willing. However, calamities occur, and no one is excluded from seeking office.

The Nominating Committee consists of a representative from each chapter, two out-going Board members, and myself as past president. Candidates should confer with their regional chapter chairs, representatives, and/or apply directly to the committee before the end of 1997, to: Rob Rulon-Miller, Rulon-Miller Books, 400 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55102; phone: 612-290-0700; fax: 612-290-0646; e-mail: rulon@winternet.com.

## House Calls

# Frog-Water Iced-Tea; or a Brief and Felicitous Book Tour of the Southeastern United States

by Tom Congalton

One of the many stops on my evolutionary journey to becoming a bookseller was as a sort of quasi-collector/scout. I would accumulate books from library sales and flea markets that I had a vague idea were collectable, and I would then trade them to dealers or other collectors for books more suited to my modest and wildly unfocused collection. Anyone who has little or no respect for me as a dealer might reconsider if they had seen what an unpromising book collector I made. When I look back to my beginnings, sometimes even I'm surprised that I'm still in business.

To keep body and soul together while waiting for the bookselling Gods to anoint me into my destined profession I found myself otherwise employed. I worked in the local county library while I (occasionally) went to college, wasted a couple years cooking in a restaurant, and spent some time constructing massive pieces of sculpture for a nationally-known artist. (Sometime when you're at the New York Book Fair, stop in at the lobby of the synagogue about a block away from the Armory, and see if you can figure out what the eighteen-foot tall rectangle covered with gold leaf and randomly punctured with holes is all about—I built it, and I still don't have a clue). I also spent nearly ten years as a cabinetmaker. For reasons having to do with product liability, the less said about my cabinet-making career the better. Suffice it to say that compared to my tenure as a cabinetmaker, I was a distinguished book collector.

Curiously enough, only the library job seems to have taken in any meaningful way. I can no longer figure out how to boil water, and I refuse to even own a hammer. One friend has stated emphatically that if I gave up bookselling I'd probably forget how to read, and he may be right.

My tentative entry into bookselling didn't really take off until a friend of

mine, a young librarian and fellow collector, invited me to visit him and his wife in their new home in the western highlands city of Asheville, North Carolina. While I was at it, why didn't I bring some books along to sell or trade to his new friend, the local bookseller?

This bookseller, whose name is Chandler Gordon (NOTE: I have not revealed his middle initial, W., which stands for Walker, to protect his identity) had recently given up his new bookstore and had opened a used and rare bookstore, The Captain's Bookshelf (as far as I can tell, he is not now, nor ever has been the Captain of anything, except perhaps the local volleyball team).

I had heard a fair amount about bookseller "Chan," and was somewhat startled to find, when we met at dinner, that he bore a closer resemblance to Hunter S. Thompson, than to the wizened Asian detective I was expecting.

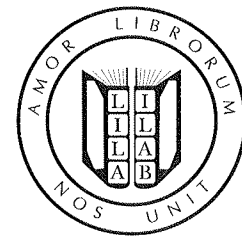
After a pleasant dinner—in retrospect, one of the last dinners I've had where the topic of conversation was *not* books—I unboxed the modest group of books I had brought down to sell or trade. Chan, while never loosing his charming Southern manner, spent the next forty-five minutes denigrating the quality, condition, desirability, and readability of my books. This did not upset me unduly, as I had spent, literally, five cents on the whole lot at a local auction. After the tirade subsided however, I was shocked to find that he would pay \$65 for a handful of the books, and not a penny more. Why, this was easy, I thought, like taking candy from a baby!

Upon my return to New Jersey, during my appointed rounds of the flea markets, Jules, a junk dealer from Philadelphia from whom I had occasionally bought some interesting books, told me that he

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BOSTON INTERNATIONAL  
**ANTIQUARIAN  
BOOKFAIR**

November 14-16, 1997  
Hynes Convention Center • Boston, Mass



## ILAB Book Fairs

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1997

**November 14-16**

Boston, MA (ABAA)  
Hynes Convention Center

**November 21-23**

Helsinki, Finland (SA)  
Valkoinen Sali

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1998

**January 29-February 1**

Stuttgart, Germany (VDA)

**February 13-15**

Los Angeles, CA (ABAA)  
Los Angeles Convention Center

**February 26-28**

Amsterdam, Netherlands (NVVA)  
Rai Congress Center

**March 20-21**

Bath, England (ABA)  
Assembly Rooms

**April 16-19**

New York, NY (ABAA)  
Park Avenue Armory

**May 14-17**

Paris, France (SLAM)  
La Maison de la Mutualité

**May 29-30**

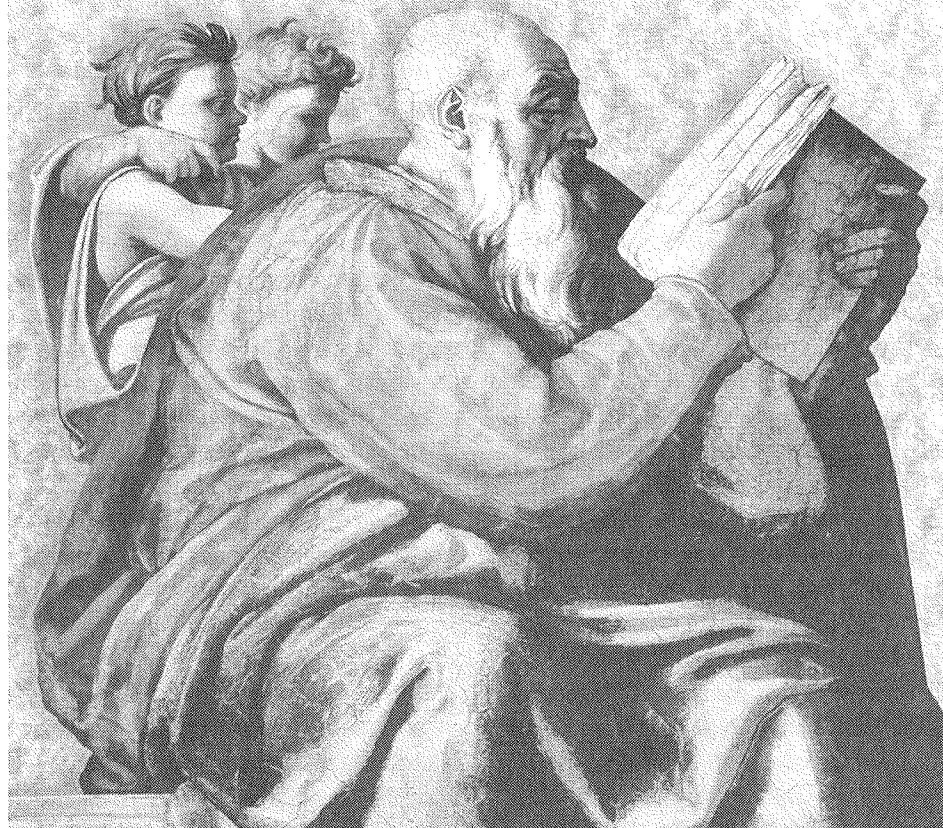
Copenhagen, Denmark (ABF)

**June 4-7**

London, England (ABA)  
Olympia Exhibition Centre

**October 9-11**

Vienna, Austria (ILAB)  
17th Annual ILAB Book Fair



Five thousand book lovers are expected to attend the 21st Annual Boston International Antiquarian Book Fair. One of the country's oldest and largest antiquarian book fairs, this year the Boston Book Fair plays host to 135 national and international dealers.

"The Book Fair attracts people from throughout New England and, increasingly, we see more collectors from all over the U.S., as well as North America and from abroad, such as England, Germany, and the Netherlands. Boston's Book Fair has developed a reputation for having some of the most novel collectible items that are in the five-figure sums as well as the more affordable items for the casual browser," says Ken Gloss, owner of Boston's Brattle Book Shop and chair of the Boston Book Fair Committee.

Some of the most sought after and novel items featured at this year's Boston International Antiquarian Book Fair will include two books with original etchings by Picasso, an FBI wanted poster for Eldridge Cleaver, an 1893 Harvard-Yale football program printed in the shape of a football, and first editions of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and Melville's *The Whale (Moby Dick)*.

The Boston Book Fair is sponsored by the New England Chapter of the ABAA. A portion of the proceeds benefits the Boston Public Library and the American Antiquarian Society.

Hours are Friday, November 14, 5-9 pm; Saturday, November 15, noon-7 pm; and Sunday, November 16, noon-5 pm. Tickets are \$10 for opening night (good throughout the weekend) and \$5 on Saturday and Sunday. For more information call (617) 266-6540.

# Clients and Customers

by Rob Rulon-Miller

Many booksellers use the words *client* and *customer* interchangeably and in so doing contribute to the on-going erosion of the once distinct meanings of the two words. Most current dictionaries still distinguish *customer* (one who purchases goods) from *client* (one who pays a service-based fee); however, in contemporary usage the meanings of the two words are becoming blurred.

According to *The Columbia Guide to Standard American Usage*, edited by Kenneth G. Wilson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993): "A *customer* is someone who is buying goods, or sometimes services... a *client* is someone for whom a professional such as a lawyer or a physician renders professional services." A steady customer may also be described as a *patron* although the primary meaning of *patron* is benefactor, as in a *patron of the arts*.

From *A Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage*, edited by Bergen and

Cornelia Evans (New York: Galahad Books, 1981): "Despite the protests of the purists, *client* and *customer* are listed as synonymous in most dictionaries. [However] the distinction between one who purchases goods from another (*customer*) and one who applies to a lawyer for advice (*client*) is maintained in American usage. The term *client* has spread to those who seek other professional services. Thus advertising agencies have (or hope to have) their clients as do many other advisory and consultative enterprises." In contrast, physicians still treat their *patients* (derived from a Latin word meaning one who is suffering).

The etymology of the two words supports their current definitions. The word *client* comes from the archaic Latin *cleuns*, from *clueo*, to hear—literally, a listener—thence through French *cluer*, meaning to hear or listen. *Client* enters English in the late fourteenth century, meaning one who is under the protection

or patronage of another. In the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries the word maintained a strong legal meaning, specifically "one who employs the services of a legal advisor in matters of law" (OED). In modern usage, perhaps as those in professional services other than the law sought to adopt the trappings of the legal profession, the word *client* has come to mean "a person who employs the services of a professional or business man in any branch of business, or for whom the latter acts in his professional capacity; a customer" (OED).

Contrariwise, *customer* comes through the Old French, *costumier*, from the medieval Latin, *customarius*, meaning accustomed, wonted. The word first enters English in the early fourteenth century with much the same meaning, but by the late fifteenth century had come to mean "one who frequents any place of sale for the sake of purchasing" (OED), a meaning it retains today. ■

## Lucas

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web. One can access the following book information: lists of antiquarian booksellers by specialty or by geography; e-mail, telephone, web site (URL), and snail-mail addresses of booksellers; lists of reference books and bibliographies relating to a variety of collecting pursuits, reviews of price guides, and other book references; calendars of library and other public book sales; calendars of antiquarian book and ephemera fairs; access to on-line library catalogues; on-line periodicals relating to book collecting; web sites of associations and clubs relating to specific authors or subject areas; electronic texts by specific authors; antiquarian booksellers' associations; book collecting discussion groups and e-mail lists; general information on book collecting; and collections of links to all of the above, and more.

To write of the advantages of the internet one must inevitably use specific URLs (web addresses). The links provided in this essay are those with which I am most familiar—primarily those in the United States. I will make an attempt, also, to include some book collecting web sites of other countries, as the world wide web is definitely international in scope.

I also must mention that when I provide a link to a web site, no endorsement of that site is intended, nor is there any intent to exclude specific book related sites. In a guide such as this, one must limit the links to a reasonable number. I will, however, give the addresses for web sites offering large numbers of book collecting links in hopes of compensating for any "missing links."

Web sites and electronic mail lists for buying and selling antiquarian books:

● **Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (ABAA):** <http://www.abaabooknet.com/> Anyone may search the on-

line catalogues offered by ABAA members (equivalent to a very large database) and purchase items directly from the specific member booksellers. One may also use the direct links to members' individual web sites; non-members may not list books for sale.

● **Advanced Book Exchange (ABE):** <http://www.abebooks.com/> Anyone may search this large database of items offered for sale. ABE currently offers two free months to bookseller subscribers; a "collector plan" is available for those who list 200 or fewer books for sale.

● **Antiquarian Bookworm at the Antiquarian Book Network:** <http://www.antiquarian.com/bookworm/> Located in the Great Britain, this international search engine allows anyone to search dealer catalogues, auction house catalogues, and home pages (in all cases, of member firms).

● **Bibliophile Mailing List (Biblio):** <http://www.auldbooks.com/biblio/> Anyone may join this private e-mail news

group which exists for the purpose of buying and selling rare, scarce, out-of-print and collectable books, and related items. Biblio offers a two-week free trial period. There is no relationship between the Biblio mailing list and *Biblio*, the recent book-collecting magazine.

● **Bibliocity:** <http://www.bibliocity.com/> Anyone may search this large database of books for sale. Listing of books is open to all booksellers. Bibliocity offers a free three month trial membership.

● **Bibliofind:** <http://www.bibliofind.com/> Anyone may search this database, which claims to be the largest Internet database of old, used, and rare books—now with more than 2.25 million items.

● **Book Search Online:**

<http://www.bksearch.com/> Anyone may search this large database (free) operated by Spoon River Press, publisher of antiquarian book references. currently offers a reduced fee for first two months to subscribers.

● **Interloc:** <http://www.interloc.com/> Anyone may search this large site, one of the first antiquarian book databases, now offering more than two million items for sale. Subscribers have special benefits including the ability to search new listings for a period of at least seven days before the same listings are offered on the public database.

● **MX Bookfinder:** <http://www.mxbf.com/> A book search engine which searches multiple book sites simultaneously, including Interloc, Advanced Book Exchange, Bibliofind, Bibliocity, and Book Search Online, and provides a single list of findings.

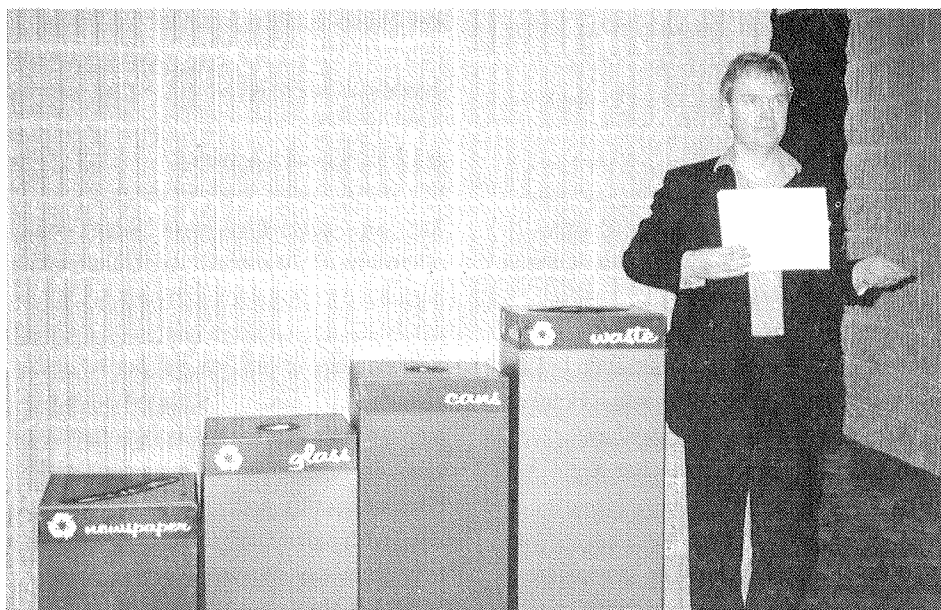
● **Netherlands Antiquarian Booksellers Network (NAN):** <http://www.antiqbook.nl/> Anyone may search this large international database of members' catalogues and web sites; non-booksellers may not list books for sale.

● **Rare Books Mailing List:**

<http://www.auldbooks.com/rare-books/prospectus.html> An electronic mail list offering a forum for the sale of high quality antiquarian and collectors' books, manuscripts, graphics, and ephemera; reading-only subscriptions are free.

Buying and selling books by auction:

● **Bookbid:** <http://www.bookbid.com/> An online book auction offering antiquar-



ABAA Treasurer Donald Heald prepares to recycle the financial statement he has just presented to the Board of Governors at their September meeting in Washington, DC.

ian books; registration for bidders is free, and there are no buyers' commissions.

● **eBay's Auction Web:**

<http://cayman.ebay2.com/aw/index.html> This online auction offers virtually everything imaginable at auction including antiquarian books, autographs, and ephemera; over 6,000 items are added daily.

● **Bibliofind:**

<http://www.bibliofind.com/auction.html> This large antiquarian book database offers weekly auctions of rare books, in cooperation with America On Line.

● **Internet Auction List:**

<http://www.usaweb.com/online.html> This web site offers access to Bidfind, a free online auction search engine that can locate items being offered by dozens of online auction houses.

The following list includes some of the online international, national, and regional antiquarian bookseller associations online. Some of these sites allow searches of their bookseller directories by specialty and/or geographical location.

● **MARIAB (Massachusetts and Rhode Island Antiquarian Booksellers):**

<http://www.tiac.net/users/mariab/>

● **MABA (Maine Antiquarian Booksellers' Association):**

<http://www.antiquarian.com/maba/>

● **FABA (Florida Antiquarian Book-**

**sellers' Association):**

<http://www.antiquarian.com/FABA/>

● **Antiquarian Bookshops and Associations on the WWW:** <http://www.connectotel.com/books/wwwbs.html>

● **International League of Antiquarian**

**Booksellers (ILAB):** <http://www.lila-ilab.org/ilab> Most of the world's national antiquarian bookseller associations belong to the ILAB. The web site offers a complete list of its twenty member associations and includes links and e-mail addresses for those on the Internet:

● ABA (Antiquarian Booksellers' Association—United Kingdom):

<http://www.antiquarian.com/aba/>

● ABAC (Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of Canada):

<http://www.booknet-international.com/ca/index.html>

● ABAA (Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America):

<http://www.abaa-booknet.com/>

● ABF (The Danish Antiquarian Booksellers Association):

<http://www.antikvar.dk/>

● ALAI (Associazione Librai Antiquari d'Italia—Italy):

<http://www.dada.it/alai/>

● ANZAAB (The Australian and New Zealand Association of Antiquarian

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# Lucas

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Booksellers ):

<http://www.anzaab.com.au/~anzaab/>

● **CLAM** (La Chambre professionnelle Belge de la Librairie Ancienne et Moderne—Belgium):

<http://www.ntc.be/CLAM/>

● **SLAM** (Syndicat National de la Librairie Ancienne et Moderne—France):

<http://www.franceantiquaire.fr/slam/>

● **VDA** (Verband Deutscher Antiquare—Germany):

<http://www.antiquare.de/>

● **NVvA** (Nederlandsche Vereeniging van Antiquaren—Netherlands):

<http://www.nvva.nl/>

● **SVAF** (Svenska Antivariatforeningen—Sweden):

<http://www.svaf.se/>

● **VEBUKU** (Vereinigung der Buchantiquare und Kupferstichhändler in der Schweiz—Switzerland):

<http://w3.iprolink.ch/vebuku/>

References, price guides and bibliographies relating to book collecting:

● **Review of Book Price and Reference Guides:**

<http://members.aol.com/bookxpress/reviews/overview.htm>

With reviews and ratings for many frequently used book collecting references, this excellent article also includes a section on how to use price guides.

● **Reference Books and Resources:**

[http://www2.gol.com/users/steve/f\\_books.htm](http://www2.gol.com/users/steve/f_books.htm)

An extensive and excellent annotated listing of many important book collecting references, this is part of a comprehensive web site on “Book and Book Collecting” maintained by Steve Trussel (I will mention this site again)

● **Reference Books for the Collector:**

<http://www.books-rare.com/refbook.htm>

In-print references relating to all aspects of book collecting are here described by Books-Rare, in cooperation with Amazon Books; many of the books are offered at discounted prices.

Many collectors and booksellers like to attend library, church and other public book sales, where large quantities of donated books are offered for sale, usually at very

low or reasonable prices. One can often find such sales listed in ads in book and antique periodicals; there is also at least one internet web site with such a calendar:

● **Book Sales in America:**

<http://www.book-sales-in-america.com/>

This site offers a listing of library and other non-profit organization book sales organized by region and by date.

Calendars of antiquarian book fairs also can be found on the Internet on the pages of fair promoters, bookseller associations, regional event calendars, and book collecting web sites. A few web sites with calendars (some very specific to promoter or region) follow:

● **ABAA Regional Book Fair**

**Calendar:** <http://www.abaa-booknet.com/shows/abshows.html>

This excellent listing of regional book fairs in the USA includes those sponsored by ABAA and many others. The listing duplicates that appearing in the print periodical, *AB Bookmen's Weekly*.

● **ABN Calendar of Upcoming Events:**

<http://www.antiquarian.com/calendar/>

An extensive listing of regional book fairs in Great Britain.

● **Berkshire Antiquarian Book Fair Calendar:**

<http://www.blaize.com/>

This calendar of regional Maine and Massachusetts book fairs highlights worthwhile one-day fairs sponsored by a promoter who also happens to be an antiquarian bookseller.

● **Biblio Magazine's Calendar of Book Fairs and Shows:**

<http://www.bibliomag.com/fairs.htm>

This promises to be an extensive list of book fairs, but as of October 21, 1997, the list was badly in need of updating.

● **NVvA's Calendar of International Book Fairs:**

<http://www.nvva.nl/events/ILAB-sanctioned-Dutch-book-fairs>

● **ILAB Book Fairs** <http://www.lila-ilab.org/ilab/#fairs>

A listing of book fairs around the world sponsored by ILAB member organizations, with links to detailed information.

The following are a few links to online library catalogues which can be helpful in the collation of books and locating copies for examination and collation. Online library catalogues also can

help in identifying authors in the case of anonymous or pseudonymous books, and sometimes they can be helpful in determining printing sequences.

● **University of Idaho's Links to Major Libraries:**

extensive links to over 2000 major library catalogues.

● **Library of Congress Catalogues:**

<http://lcweb.loc.gov/catalog/> Access to searchable catalogues of the various and extensive holdings of our national library.

● **LOC Links for Searching Other Library Catalogues:**

<http://lcweb.loc.gov/z3950/gateway.html#other> The LOC also offers a large number of links to major libraries and special collections with searchable catalogues.

Other web sites useful to bibliophiles:

● **Other web sites useful to bibliophiles:**

● **Newsgroups relating to Books and Book Collecting:**

<http://sunsite.unc.edu/ibic/IBIC-Newsgroups.html> A listing of more than forty newsgroups where you read and post book related information.

● **Biblio Magazine's List of Book Related Clubs:**

<http://www.bibliomag.com/clubs.htm> Approximately a dozen book collector clubs; if your club is not there, you may add it to the list.

● **The Clique's Book Collecting E-mail Groups:**

<http://www.clique.co.uk/booklist.htm>

This site includes seven different mailing lists or bulletin boards for posting and reading messages related to book collecting. One general list is called “BookTalk,” another, relating to collecting in the U.K., is called “UKBooks;” there are five specialized offerings: “Americana,” “ArtBooks,” “Childbks,” “ModFirsts,” and “SciMedBks.” All provide a one-month free trial membership for readers.

● **RBMS's “Your Own Books”:**

<http://www.princeton.edu/~ferguson/job.html>

This is a well-written, worthwhile page on frequently asked questions (FAQ) relating to rare books and book values. Maintained by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Sections of the American Library Association, its author was the late Peter Van Wingen, Specialist for the Book Arts, Rare and Special Collections Division at the Library of Congress.

● **Books and Book Collecting:**

[http://www2.gol.com/users/steve/f\\_books.htm](http://www2.gol.com/users/steve/f_books.htm)

Written by Steve Trussel,



this web site is one of the most comprehensive and most useful sites for antiquarian book collectors, offering a fantastic assortment of valuable book links.

● **Glenn Larsen's Book Collector's**

**Home:** <http://www.books-rare.com/> An excellent and very comprehensive book collecting web site with information on book values, references, condition, first editions, etc.; also with many interesting links.

● **Book Collecting Links:**

<http://www.dogearred.com/links.html> A Modern Library collector's page of links, nicely annotated—I like the domain name, “dogearred.”

● **Book Information Website with**

**Book History Timetable (wonderful):**

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~cremers/> A site maintained in Rotterdam by Ton Cremers and Marian Beereboom that includes an excellent time table from the earliest inventions of writing on cuneiform tablets, papyrus, first inks, etc., etc. to the latest history. Also with information on all aspects of books and book collecting.

● **American Authors on the Web and Other Literary Links:**

<http://emie.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~matsuoka/index-alt.html> Mitsuoharu Matsuoka's home page from Nagoya University, this is an extensive group of links to literary pages, including an excellent page of links to American authors and literature.

● **Perspectives in American Literature, A Reference and Research Guide:**

<http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/TABLE.HTML> From English Professor Paul Reuben's book of the same title, this site has links to many American authors, arranged by literary period.

In summary, the Internet with its e-mail, newsgroups, mailing lists, and web pages is rapidly changing many facets of our lives including the hobby of book collecting and the profession of bookselling. We can now buy and sell books and do much of our studies and research from the comfort of our own home or office. ■

## Hoffer

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the baby steps, (too?) bravely represented. He had bought 110 eighteenth and nineteenth-century books on Quakers for £70 from a bookstore in Colchester and 120 Bohn Library books which he could sell back home to Don Duggan, then owner of the Busy B. With the first few hundred imported books and the scavengings from the local Salvation Army thrift store (the “Sally Ann”) Bill got a business license in August 1969, left his wife in July 1970.

After that I slept at my . . . bookshop . . . not really living anywhere and wandering between New York, Los Angeles, [London], and Vancouver, all of it for less than rent by the mystery of my welcome in those places.

—Bill (letter to Megan, 1985)

He opened his first premises at 137 Water Street (unheated, third floor walkup, no toilet), at \$60 a month. Bill reckoned that first trip to England had made a loss of \$400 to \$500. He had endured depression “almost continuously for over a year,” but he had accomplished “a great deal in setting up in the book business.” Now was the occasion of his first publication, *A Sheet Against the Red Collective*—a wide-side on blue paper crudely printed in blue ink with a red title and a red ornamental border, twelve-point Caslon set by Bill himself. Only a single copy in corrected state is known. Beginnings are fragile and endangered.

Bill and I hit it off; we immediately plotted a book buying trip to England (my first), and we met there (I was *en famille*) in late July 1971 for an intended six-week invasion. How clear some memories remain! We stopped smoking the day we met up in England, though Bill always had an unlighted cigarette to nurse. I had fortuitously secured Peter Jay's converted pub in Greenwich for home base, as Serendipity was already distributing Jay's Anvil Press books in the USA; my manager Jack Shoemaker and his wife Vicki were along as well to help in all ways. However, I was worn out for getting there and was hospitalized with

spinal meningitis soon after arrival, for two weeks. Struck flat by a *grand mal* seizure, unconscious for the withdrawal period, I managed to cease smoking forever. Bill resumed. But he came to regret the trip. My illness caused him increased expenses, and income from his Vancouver home rent-out did not materialize. The now “infamous” Quaker books were still unplaced.

In all, William Hoffer, Bookseller issued eighty catalogues (he called them “lists” from the beginning and, with a few exceptions, always) and, near the end, at least three “stock lists” or shorter out-of-field offerings (*Literary Criticism, Pacific Rim Anthropology, Music Books in French*). From Water Street came the first twelve (number seven was in two parts). Of these, two were devoted to out-of-print poetry, one to modern lit, one to lit crit, and the remaining seven to Canadian literature. He never gave up representing Canadian literature, though from modest beginnings, the representation was accompanied by an increasingly articulate attitude, which culminates in the explosions of *Stigma* (Catalogue 80) and Bill's subsequent removal to Russia. Most of us shudder when we are forced to consider our ignorant or uninformed beginnings. Bill had little in the way of pity for others; of self-pity he had none. What he did, he did right. List 2 offers ninety-nine titles in Canadian poetry. He sold at least one copy of sixty-two entries. He had as many as fifteen copies of some items. Gustafson's *Flight into Darkness* (1/100 signed) remained unsold at \$30—the most expensive item. Bill offers to quote individual issues of Canadian literary periodicals from a large stock at the conclusion of this catalogue. Twenty-six years later I inherited more than a hundred boxes of these! List 3 offers sixty-nine runs or odd issues of these self-same periodicals. His master is annotated “only 7 items not ordered once by Nov 28/70.” List 6 came out in January 1971—*Canadian Literature*, 228 items—104 titles sold (\$1—\$100 was the range, but most are under \$10). The three biggest sales were one book at \$15 and two at \$12.50. List 8 (again *Canadian Literature*) sold just

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under thirty percent. On the cover of Catalogue 9 appears a fine comic likeness of Bill by "Gloria Mundi." A voice bubble quotes Bill, "Serious aspersions are being cast against the character of the old bookseller"—exactly capturing early on I think two signal features of Bill's personality: 1) the mantle of authority he wore in Vancouver from the beginning; and 2) a hint of paranoia. Catalogue 10 (*Canadian Literature* again) cost \$30 to produce. Bill bought most of the contents in Vancouver and the San Francisco Bay Area, usually paying less than \$1 for each book. Catalogue 12, the last from Water Street in Gastown (*Canadian Literature* yet again) offers 120 items, seventy-six of which sold. "Gastown grows more hideous every day" (there was nowhere to park!).

Just as I was first getting to know Bill, he formed a brief partnership with Van Andruss (who already had a bookstore downtown, averaging \$65 per day) and together, on December 17, 1971, they opened A.H. Falstaff, Books at 4529 West 10th Avenue in Vancouver, tempted by over-the-counter cash flow. It was an "adventure;" the rent was "high" at \$400 per month, but Van had more money than Bill, and there was an escape clause in the lease.

**The rest of the Vancouver book trade is frightened. The area is the best, and the location the best in the area.**

They opened with about two thousand books. Bill was the principal buyer. They wanted to model themselves after Moe's in Berkeley; Bill intended "to keep the catalogue going" by running Bill Hoffer, Bookseller as a mail order business within Falstaff. It was a misguided affair from the beginning and mercifully brief. By June 1972 Bill had bought Van out for \$3000 (with a little help from the friendly bank and from dad). Lists 13 through 16 were issued at this address; List 15 was a year's gathering of Australian and New Zealand literature. None of these four lists are remarkably different from what preceded, though for the first time I think George

Bowering's first book, *Sticks & Stones* (List 16, number 10 at \$32.50) pops up, and Bill here allows himself a critical and moral remark in a catalogue for the very first time, *in re* number 113, TISH 1-45 (complete):

**Of inestimable importance in the development of modern west coast poetry.....only the Tish group can rightfully be called a movement. Their concerns were those which have moved North American literature generally in recent years.**

Bill was working himself thin in these days and worried about it, down from 155 to 140 pounds or less, he told his mother. He was six-foot one.

There was a fire, fall 1971; providence, even in Vancouver. Bill moved sideways a step to 4491 West 10th Avenue for Catalogues 17 and 18 (my copy of the latter was mailed July 23, 1973). It was knowingly but a temporary relocation; the building was to be demolished to make way for a bank. From 3293 Dunbar Street came Lists 19 and 20, no different from their predecessors: a very occasional bibliographical point, no moral stance or position, no sense of discovery or exaltation in the proprietor. The Bill we knew in these days was intense and amusing, unpretentious, unsleeping. Yes, he was diabetic and to a serious degree his illness affected the rhythms of his day and therefore, when in his company, our day. Particularly at lunchtime—lunchtime anywhere. In Berkeley we often lunched at Oscar's (independent hamburger joint, grilled to order, still going...). Bill was never "hungry," but when he had to eat, our world stopped for him to eat. The inconvenience was compensated for by his gusto, usually (or, so we hoped). There was at maximum a fifteen-minute window at lunchtime, so book scouting with Bill was always a complex maneuver as we neared mid-day. Traveling with Bill, as I and Bill Matthews and David Sachs (my close friends) often risked—I can speak only for this small set of pals—was dictated by the rhythms in Bill's body and by the force of his will. These are among the most powerful natural elements I have ever encountered. We were wrong to think

Bill's friendship had a price. He could not alter the conditions even had he wanted. Insulin shock and insulin reactions put him in the hospital often enough. Sometimes one among us was there to help. Not that there was not strain. Scouting 3000 miles across Canada for books when young and poor challenges every tolerance. David and Bill and I severally weaved by the supermarket cashier, separately paying. We had not spoken for.....1000 miles. In Winnipeg I knocked a book to the floor with my elbow. When I picked it up I found in my hand Katharine Ann Porter's *What Price Marriage?* The only copy I ever scouted.

Back to 4529 West 10th Avenue he went, for the next eleven lists and the next four years. The entries are still, as always, clear and purposeful. Canadian literature all the way; Bissett without comment. Occasionally, an exciting book surfaces. Dorothy Livesay's first book, *Green Pitcher*, inscribed to her mother for \$85 (List 21); *Delta* 1-26 (complete); Callahan's *It's Never Over* in dust jacket for \$40 is far and away the most expensive book in List 23 (November 1974), while in the same list Brian Moore's *Judith Hearne* is misidentified as his first book, the common error of that time (wrong by four years and four books!). Bill has not yet begun to dig out uncommon phenomena, though his relations with Canadian libraries had surely deepened. His facility at moving the occasional archive is nowhere yet in evidence. The cover of List 22 introduces (I think) a logo Bill never after gave up: a black GO stone. We played GO together in the first year of our acquaintance; he taught me basic principles and slaughtered me several times, until he grew bored. I think we never played again. I recollect he claimed he was the best Caucasian GO player in town. From the 1960s survives his rendering of a translation from the Sanskrit about the game of GO.

....And what  
Determines who shall score  
And win the savage game of war?

Bill posted his rhyming rules of GO and offered instruction at the Louis Riel Coffee Shop. Bill had numberless mo-

ments of spontaneity, but his acts of printing were never accidental. The black stone goes first. He ever seized the initiative in campaigning.

"Catalogue" 24 utilizes for the first time the more vain heading ("Catalogue" instead of "List"); it seems to be printed rather than mimeographed; it offers 524 pieces of Canadian Literature. The GO stone dominates the title page. The books are better, gathered from farther afield, with greater sophistication—with a little help, certainly, from a wider circle of (non-Canadian) friends in the trade. An obscure Revell book by Wilfrid Campbell; a nice string of American Carmans topped by *The Gate of Peace*; Leonard Dakin's *Sorrows of the Hopeful* inscribed to Gawsorth; A. M. Klein's *Poems* (not readily unearthed in those days); Tom McInnes's *Rhymes of a Rounder* (New York: Broadway, 1913); Alden A. Nowlan's American publications; *Pan #2* (= PAN-IC); the publisher's proof copy of C.G.D. Roberts' *The Book of the Rose* (first was Boston, Page, 1903); Service's *Why Not Grow Young?* None of these might matter to modern first edition dealers elsewhere, but they mattered a great deal to Bill. He was proud to find them, catalogue them, sell them; unlike others of us, he was much too proud to brag about it in print. He got better and better at this. He even devoted all of List 26 to A.W. Purdy, without a disparaging word: a good collection meant to be a contribution toward a bibliography. By this time he had met James Hanley; collected James Hanley; encouraged a young lady in bibliography. In 1980 he would publish the first full-length descriptive bibliography of James Hanley, compiled by Linnea Gibbs. Bill needed only once to assay a task or endure a challenge, to prove to himself the type, that he was a bookman with a full range of powers.

A first uneasy note from Hoffer is appended publicly to the envelope of Catalogue 29: "Just Canadian Literature." The terse introduction sounds a theme that is not yet echoed in the descriptions that follow: "This catalogue appears exactly six years after our first Canadian literature list. That mimeographed catalogue and this somewhat more pretentious one share a paradox: at the time that List 2/3 appeared in September 1970 there was a

certain amount of politics in the street and none in the catalogue. Today the politics is in the catalogue and the streets are quiet." Beware? A threat? After a broadside list comes List 31. A very gloomy Hoffer in cover cartoon by Gloria Mundi (again) has Bill wrapping (or unwrapping?) "just Canadian literature," and so the title page reads as well, in LARGE type. Still, however, no occasion for editorializing prevails. Birney's letters to Bowering and Sward's Soft Press archive are offered at prices unprecedented in Bill's lists (\$1000 and \$875) and a substantial section is filled with Robin Skelton titles. The black GO stone both begins and ends the catalogue. It is 1977.

When Bill finally resolved to leave Canada and remove himself to Russia, after elaborate preparations of a Byzantine nature; he liquidated first his 1957 Martin Dreadnought guitar (played as if with belt buckle, one potential customer gloomily observed); then his reference books, which, admittedly, he collected rather than exploited; and then his entire stock with the single sweep of his hand. Would that any of the rest of us might one day envision such accomplished, radical, and successful surgery. At that time he gave me a sealed box with the customary romantic commands. Therein, among other documents, was his journal. The earliest dated entry I can discover is March 9, 1977. I knew Bill a dozen years at least, and I thought I knew him well, before I learned that he kept a journal. In all our years of friendship, he never once went to sleep before I did; until he moved to Russia he took Valium in order to sleep, I believe, almost always. In Russia he no longer required Valium to sleep. He wrote late into the night, often slightly drunk he confessed, or just drunk. Bill seemed to process alcohol differently from others, I felt, attributing this miracle to his diabetes. Most of his powers, his convictions, and persuasiveness were not affected by drink. Bill's journal often took the form of a letter, a letter to another, usually a woman, a lover perhaps, not sent; rewritten or not; retained, or sent but retained also. Or, often, as a letter to himself.

[!] watch myself as others from  
a fixed point

Early on he had some conventional resolutions: be practical; do not engage in pointless debates (unless they happen to be new ones); work a little; get rid of the mining books; read some anthropology; buy the Pulp building; study Yiddish two hours on each of three days a week.

From November 1977 through May 1984 Bill occupied Suite 104 at 570 Granville Street, the second floor of a building entirely inconvenient to foreign booksellers, in the heart of commercial upscale Vancouver. Directly above The Love Shop (real sexual paraphernalia). His Lists 32-54 (55?—I do not have it) come from this address. It is a period of hard work; lots of travel; vast increases in stock. An occasional employee, perhaps volunteering. Bill patronizes local printers and binders and publishes over his own name, as well as Standard Editions: Blaser, Bringhurst, Hinke's Canadian Oz bibliography, Kinsella (long before *Shoeless Joe*; Kinsella was a good friend), Musgrave, Tom Osborn, Norm Sibum. Bill's publishing bibliography may number seventy items! These did not seem angry days. Corresponding colleagues such as myself were expanding; rising to opportunity; taking chances; trying to thrash our way free from the bindings of youth or inexperience; trying to find access to capital when circumstance required. Just as Bill had sought Mac out, or Peter Eaton, or Frank Scioscia, or Serendipity, where Bill has often been uncovered, so now did young Canadian booksellers fall upon Bill, notably William Matthews and, a bit later, Michael John Thompson.

when I stop and think what he meant  
to me, how he changed my life—fuck,  
he was beautiful. a bastard to many, a  
friend to few. He was my friend, he  
gave me more than anyone, except  
perhaps my mum  
—mykaljon

The William Hoffer-Don Stewart tussles began, matters of turf, territory, attitude toward the larger issue of the meanings of a book trade, generally. Already in this time Bill and I thought up

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and designed the chapters of a co-authored guide, *How to be a Bookseller*. We were quite serious about it. In a rare moment of dispensation, Bill hired Arthur Wharton (a younger Toronto bookseller) to compile List 41: *Canadian Poetry* (1731 lots). Bill was sufficiently impatient ever himself to press on so narrowly so long. True to the promise in the enlighteningly descriptive and prophetic foreword, he would never again issue such a catalogue. It has a great cover and caption title: WAITING FOR BUSINESS.

In List 42 Bill hesitates a beat to smack Bissett. In List 43 the earlier alter ego of Frederick Philip Grove is unveiled in its printed reality; Hoffer comes of age by offering the rare first editions of Felix Paul Greve (translations into German and, later, the original German poetry) which he first dug up in quantity, and we for him. Greve was the Canadian B. Traven if you will. These acts no other Canadian bookseller could emulate. Hoffer's joy in this accomplishment was a warming emotion. It did not satisfy him, of course, and the joy did not last much longer. Cheryl Cooper compiled List 44; Christina Burrige worked for Bill a few years thereafter, followed by Caprice Munro. The hope was, I believe, that Bill could live abroad for longer periods if the store was minded at home. Bill did get some time in England thereby, but these were hardly happy relationships. Bill was a miserable employer. On List 45 appears notice of Bill's membership in the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of Canada, but it's gone by List 48 (June 1981). The ABAC and ILAB logos never appear on Bill's catalogues; the black GO stone remains fixed in place. The lists flow on, their purpose to sell some books, fund a trip. Bill never ever chased more money than he minimally needed. He reluctantly appealed to home in emergencies. He had little competition in the controlling of the flow of Canadian literature books in British Columbia. He realized no one else cared. He piled them up and, in this regard, was content, for a

while. He certainly served (some) local institutions, notably UBC—well met by a conscientious rare book librarian there, Anne Yandle, and farther afield, the National Library in Ottawa, to which he frequently reached out, and McMasters with Carl Spadoni, who remembers that Bill knew bad booksellers failed, but bad librarians went on and on. Bill insisted repeatedly his only customers for Canadian literature were institutional.

Bill consciously began to implant in his catalogues "chaotic instructions for the building of an attitude." Read his entries for Levine, Hiebert, *Indian File Books*, Bissett (ever increasingly from 1984), Faludy, Kosesar, Sorestad, Atwood, Birney, Coulter, Coach House, Harlow, Jelferd. He turns on Purdy; he turns on Bringhurst. Increasingly his catalogues or select items within become the occasions for very hostile remarks about certain Canadian writers, publishers, and the Canada Council and its grants to writers.

The increased pitch in Bill's concerns coincides exactly with his move to the last of his several Vancouver premises: 58 and 60 Powell Street, back in Gastown. It was his first real home in fifteen years, and it was a fortress. Three floors, each an elongated, narrowing right triangle, with a cellar of Canadian fiction a very weak underpinning for expanding fury and resolve. Bill slept, cooked, wooed, and played his guitar (a bit) on the top. When I arrived I got the one bed, and Bill took the couch and typewriter and the Scotch. I slept with the reference books. The better first editions in Canadian and colonial literature and literature generally (modern) was on the second floor, not accessible to the general public. Suddenly, on the main floor, which was tightly and unkindly shelved, there appeared a serious variety (one each!) of English Roast Beef and subject-oriented antiquarian books in the continental sense. A two-volume quarto travel set; a nineteenth-century book on chess; a run of the *Sussex Archaeological Journal*; pamphlets that required explanation; a color-plate plant book; a bird book; a Beardsley; a Chinese grammar; an arctic exploration; the English in Egypt, eighteenth-century. It was a set-up job. Not a sufficient depth in any one subject to woo

and entrap or entice the scholar or the focused beginner. In Vancouver there was one CP collector, one Rubaiyat collector, one New Guinea collector, one Lowry collector. Bill served them all and served them well. But there were not enough such, and more he might not have been willing to serve.

I was dismayed at the size of the shop (so small, so unsupportive of any further efforts to expand, so unwelcome to the prospect of large quantities of new arrivals—so hostile in fact to my own predilections). But Bill loved it. He was quite safe, secure, enclosed, in control. Here he began to entertain, perform, mythologize. By day, anyway. Though he and Cap collided in the aisles far too often. The doors and windows were quickly grated, barred, and double-locked. Across the street the homeless queued each morning; the occasional drunken, broken human met Bill coming back from breakfast—breakfast was a routine moments away, usually shared with Norm Sibum, Bill's poet and Bill's taxi-driver—crossing his doorway with a bad body. Bill was not temperate on these occasions, and when I sought from him one day his proffered solution he admitted he had none. The derelicts had not made a single mistake, he unkindly insisted; their lives were a continuous sequence of mistake after mistake. All I can do, he said, rather humbly, I thought, is set a better example.

I chronicled at considerable distance each of Bill's three military campaigns, the first of which consumed several years and \$100,000 of his Canadian dollars, and in which he accounted himself quite honorably. He did not approve of government subsidies to the arts in Canada. So he named his campaign "Tanks are Mighty Fine Things" (I found a tank pamphlet with this exact title years later—it must have caught his eye in his own beginning). On November 20, 1985 he launched an experimental attack on Brian Fawcett with 700 copies of *A Correspondence*. This was followed by Bill's publication of John Metcalf's *Freedom from Culture* and Marius Kociejowski's *The Machine Minders*. A boxed set of the Tanks campaign comprised in the end the

Metcalf; Norm Sibus's *Eight Poems*; McWhirter's *The Voyeur and the Countess Wielpolska*; El Lissitzky's *The Topography of Typography* (reprinted); Kinsella's *Five Stories*; Faludy's *Corpses, Brats, and Cricket Music*, poems in English and Hungarian *en face*; and Elizabeth Smart's *Autobiographies*, nobly edited by Christina Burridge—at 204 pages more lengthy by twice than the whole of all the other included works. Now on the face of it, this complex missile (150 sets) caused no panic in the face of the enemy. The imagined enemy had no face. From the first day I knew Bill I had ringing in my ears his confident proclamation that he was a fully functioning paranoid. I can attest and his letters and journals witness to the fact that he fully functioned. Bill's paranoia I can leave only to his father, a renowned psychiatrist, to interpret. His father was in fact the only man I am certain Bill respected without question. He revered his father ("deserved the Nobel Prize"). And he trusted him. One book only was sealed up with the journals and love letters: *The Hallucinogens* by A. Hoffer and H. Osmond (New York: Academic Press, 1967), inscribed "To Pat & Bill / Dec 15 '67 / abram." He put himself in his father's care in the end, and traveled 8000 miles or more to do it. But Bill did require opponents, opposition; an enemy, enemies. And ever more so I fear. The idea of the Canada Council; the notion that presses and writers should be funded willy-nilly, even in lieu of a readership, in the absence of a promise of a readership. These offences to Bill's spirit were a sufficiency to motivation. For years I have found the signal characteristic of his prose the dichotomy of balanced alternatives, usually in the abstract. Bill wrote fluently and easily and, often, endlessly. But the same sentence structures appear and re-appear, reflecting I am sure strong basic waves of competing emotional needs. He balanced uncertainties one against the other and left them there as if resolved.

**I listen for the weeping of the poets who slow their heartbeats and live and the ones who stop them and will not tell**

—April 1974

**If it is in the nature of sexuality to evolve, and to evolve in each individual differently, then only the unwillingness of individuals to allow it to evolve could have any significance in putting a stop to it.**

—[April] 1984

**If I had made different choices I might have spent a more constructive year. I might, on the other hand, have spent a less constructive year. It is hard to know such things absolutely**

—August 1997, when dying

The Tanks campaign was a major, but distracting effort. He enlisted a pack of armadillos in his cause, badged them and us with silver pins. I think some of us wore them proudly. We were a secret society. He may have thought of us as stool pigeons, when it came to the second campaign—against Toronto booksellers. The politics of the ABAC were involved. The less said here, perhaps the better. Bill wrote the ABAC constitution, as elected secretary. Thank God he was never president. He arranged for the off-year ILAB presidents' meeting to go R & R 400 miles north of Vancouver. Then he left for a trip to England. The meeting never occurred. All but two presidents (wisely) cancelled. Bill, with Steve Lunsford a principal organizer and co-chair, brought book fairs and Toronto dealers to Vancouver. Bill loathed book fairs. In his last San Francisco ABAA fair Bill played Tetris the WHOLE FAIR on his portable computer, ignoring all customers, opportunity to profit or learn, and conversation with old friends. In Vancouver he played Tetris eight hours at a time, in these later times. It was pretty obviously a sign of imminent deterioration or change. But I had liked Toronto booksellers, if not always their style. Bill did not allow for such fine distinctions. Stephen Temple, whom Bill most abused, was the first to mail me his condolences, a meaningful cry of woe. Bill had helped him by example become a better bookseller, Stephen wished me to know.

The last campaign was intensely personal and private. Bill was personally be-

trayed (he felt). The book trade which he represented was dishonored (he felt). He covered Australia in a blizzard of e-mail and fax for a year to blot up the blood. Then he started to study Russian and was recruited by the KGB. He said. So he thought. The 1990s had begun.

LEONA, RENATE, NORA, KAREN, PAT, "the fatal" CATHERINE, INDRA, LINDA, CELIA, LINNEA, CHRISTINE from Saskatoon, CHERYL, ALISON, VICKI, AUDREY, JUDITH, DIANA, GLENNIS, JEANETTA, JOYCE, TERRY, SUSAN M., MEGAN, SUSAN B., CHRISTINA, ROMA, CAPRICE, ANNA, ALICE, ELAINE, ALEXIS, MASHA.

They are not alphabetical, nor exactly chronological; all were presences in Bill's life. Correspondents if you will. Most were lovers, sustaining women. Most were tolerant. Bill was generally unkempt, cigarette ashes in the jacket pockets. His mother bought the jackets at rummage sales. Bill was careless about underwear and linen. After all, he traveled light. Once without passport, to England. Talked his way in. Two he married; one moved him more profoundly than all the others. Perhaps he did not recover fully. Probably he did. One successfully warded Bill off with a big saddle and a bigger horse. The others enjoyed him I'm sure immensely, for as long as he allowed. It was never too long. Happily for Masha, it was for the better part of six years. An eternity in Bill's chronology.

I stumbled into Vancouver in 1984 when Bill was forty. He clutched old paper. Love poems. His. A terrific wad. All to Renate. He had retrieved them. He was smitten in 1962. Ninety-six pages of poems to Renate survive from this year, not counting the undated poems. As often as not they are typed on his father's stationery: Province of Saskatchewan / Department of Public Health / Psychiatric Research / Munroe Wing / Regina General Hospital. Maybe that's where Abram Hoffer administered LSD to his son, under strict laboratory and hospital controls. Maybe he did not.

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# Hoffer

continued from previous page

An evening with Ann Arnold and Ian Jackson late 1996 in Berkeley inspired a new clerihew:

**The chapbook life of William Hoffer  
Has a profound moral lesson to offer.  
Never, ever, give LSD  
To a child of three.**  
—Ian Jackson.

Bill variously claimed to have dosed when he was 3, 9, 15, 16, but not ever, that I am aware, that it occurred when he was 18. But 1962 it was. On July 23.

**A million mindless echoes in my head  
Nail me to my coffin-bed  
.....  
A host of angry sunsets shift below  
A hundred golden crosses in a row.  
—partly under LSD**

How long had he been self-mythologizing? A long, long time ago he tried on the *nom de plume* "Ather Cobb" for a story or two (unfinished, unpublished)—intended for an unsuspecting *Atlantic Monthly* (580 words). He created and practiced runes in the early years. Drew a few figures, some abstracts in color. Never forgot the elegant marching gait of Russian soldiers in Vienna.

Well, Renate left him. In 1962. In 1984 Bill represented the situation rather differently. According to Bill Renate said in 1962 his father disapproved; that Abram would institutionalize Bill if she did not leave him. So Bill remembered for twenty-two years. Then he kept a vow, tracked her to a provincial Indian reservation when he turned forty, returned her to HIS town with five of her six daughters, got her into law school (she earned the degree). Renate is a very bright lady. Bill (and dad?) paid the bills. Then came the truth.

There were poems before, many after. But they diminish in number in exact proportion to the years receding from 1962. Even as the journals begin, gather, and thicken. Curdle.

Bill was dyslexic. Learning anything had been difficult; a new language was unthinkable. So he learned Russian, and pretty well, too. First with a tutor in Vancouver. Or was he a KGB agent? Cost Bill some money anyway, probably lots. Once he determined it was to Russia he would repair, it was easy for him. Bill was great at dismissing details, and I was helpful with the details. First the reference books as payment for an advance. Then the guitar, now somewhere in the halls of Chiron. Then the books. One truck; three days. I had a young man from Serendipity to help. Three hundred boxes I think, though sometimes I remember it was 800. The young man never worked harder, he said. Bill did not work so hard. He needed to stop and smoke and sit and talk. He did not carry many boxes from the third floor. It was OK.

I know how it happened. Absolutely. For my wife Alison meant before she died (she is still living!) to learn another language, to speak to others in their own tongue. To this end she studied Czech intensively in Prague for a month. Summer school for foreigners. She slept with friends. Bill meant before he died to learn another language, to speak to others in their own tongue. To this end he studied Russian intensively in Moscow for a month. Summer school for foreigners. He could not sleep with friends. No friends. Against the law. He was assigned to a young widow who let out a bed for some of the tuition money. That's the way there. So he married her. They lived happily ever after. Needing opposition to his will he considered Russia itself. But too big, too chaotic, too corrupt, especially in contrast to tame Canada, which cried out for an application of Bill's will daily, for years. So he chose Vasya, Masha's teenage son. Bill could be cruel to the end, and was so. But only to Vasya. Young Anya he loved gently. Dying. With two kids. Hardly a DINK.

Twenty-five lists came from 58 and 60 Powell Street (now a hairdresser's premises). I'm missing quite a few just now. Those I have are as expected. None more so than the last, which I regard as one of the most remarkable antiquarian catalogues ever published. Bill's business card for Powell Street quotes Wither on

the verso, in a mystifying effort to confuse the unwary and the innocent, the foreigner and every Canadian:

**I wonder so insupportable and so  
impertinent a thing, as a mere book-  
seller was ever permitted to grow up  
in the commonwealth. For, many of  
our modern booksellers, are but  
needless excrements, or rather ver-  
min; who being engendered by the  
sweat of scholars, printers and book-  
binders, do (as worms in timber, or  
like the generation of vipers) devour  
those that breed them**  
— 1624

List 80 (Canadian literature) is titled *Stigma*, a hostile catalogue "of some good and even important books." "Two principles guided me in the selection of the books offered here: a book had to be interesting, or it had to permit interesting comment." Canadian literature is declared contaminate. Bill promises to burn his entire stock of blowointment press publications (he did not) in a black-tie event in his parking lot. My van was stolen in that lot that year. Bill mailed out the catalogue, his best, and left before the orders came.

On his life in Russia one might spend an equal amount of time. I will not do so here. He fought the language as he fought his stepson (over the computer). He wrote me and others a weighty mass of letters. The hundred-pager he brought in person, rather than waste the postage. He collected 3000 Russian clay toys handmade by the last three surviving traditional folklorists, Filimonovski toymakers and two others. Plotted their exhibition in Ottawa, but failed. Plotted to enlist the minister of culture in order to trade rare books with the Bancroft, but failed. Mailed a Russian Hearne/Mackenzie to Lunsford for Bancroft by hailing a Russian DHL van. Left the name of the city off the mailing label and failed again. Monitored the Russian book trade (such as it is) and observed the law. Did not export forbidden merchandise. Wished to be honorable and succeeded. Read Dostoevsky in Russian. Read Russian thrillers. Listened to Mozart's *Requiem*. Over and again. His

favorite. Got walking pneumonia; stage four lung cancer, came to his father to die.

I've often quoted Bill's succinct definition of our trade, "the antiquarian bookseller solves problems caused by books," but the remark leaves a chill in the air. He often considered the texture of days in a bookshop, never more painfully than when he had given the bookshop up, as on January 31, 1997, from Russia:

**The most terrible loss I have suffered since leaving Powell Street is the loss of that curious mixture of fate and destiny, of willingness and resentment. It was/is the ultimate demonstration of freedom and its reward, freedom and its price, and it happened every day. For most people that experience is rare, something that happens once in ten years. It is the ecstasy of Saints. It is what occurs**

**only in books. It is like arousal in that one trembles always at the edge of adequacy and inadequacy. The tourist from Montana wanders in and sees the bookseller sitting with his tattooing magazines a drooling madman and wonders what kind of place he is in. His ability to be infected by it in that moment is for him a measure not of his humanity but of his inadequate grasp on his own sanity.**

**A lot of booksellers can't handle it themselves and try to rationalize the process, to fight off what has to be surrendered to, and inevitably, don't handle it, don't surrender, and have terrible bookshops. This has to do with the amount of ozone in the air, the faint trace in evidence (here I am defeated by a Russian structure that I want to use, *o tom, shto*, which doesn't exist in**

**English) that a book has gone by, like an electron in a cloud chamber.**

One among us remembers his memory, a fierce edged weapon. Another his hands, his most magnificent hands, their caress. Another the hands, flailing, after dinner, in peaceful liquored conversation. I remember his freedom from jealousy of another man's books. I remember his tearing wildly around the bases in the 1980 Santa Barbara booksellers' softball game. Bill could run; Bill could hit.

*Yours, faithfully.*

*Peter B. Howard*

*October 1997*

PS: A brief farewell from an old friend, Bill Matthews, with a nice picture of Bill Hoffer may be shared at <http://www.vaxxine.com/matthews/hoffer.html> ■

## Letters

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A *Subject Guide*, edited by James M. and Katherine Ethridge, the work you so favorably reviewed in the *ABAA Newsletter* (vol. 8, no. 2). What you said—that a directory is no sooner published than it is out of date—is, of course, within limits, true. Naturally, between the time information is gathered, questionnaires returned, editorial revisions and additions made, and the final going to press—possibly six months to a year later—it is inevitable that “too late” changes occur, hence unrecorded in the published text. In the instance of our own field, businesses come into existence, move (relocate), go out of existence, change personnel, phone, fax, e-mail numbers, etc., etc. Under the best of circumstances all that we can hope for is that the time span between the gathering of information and the publishing of it be not too great, and that, therefore, *most* of what is published is valid *even upon date of publication*.

However—and this is the sticking point that makes me look askance at the Ethridge work and compare it less favorably to the regional guides brought out

by Book Hunter Press—in the second edition of the just published Ethridge work, which boasts a seventy-eight percent increase in the number of entries, proofs having been sent out August, 1996, and with a sixty percent return, and with the elimination of about 800 entries of apparently deceased businesses, or of businesses no longer seen as usefully fitting within their tighter guidelines, a listing now of 5,261 entries as compared to 2,961 entries in the previous, first edition—with all that in mind I discovered, in the New York City section of their new edition several discrepancies which should not have occurred. For instance, Book Ranger, listed at 105 Charles Street closed in the fall of 1995. The proprietor, Shepard Rifkin, whom I know personally removed to Israel where he now resides, is no longer in business. Brazen Head Books is *for the past several years* either *out of* business or not at the location listed. Russica disappeared from view *altogether* several years ago. Alfred Zambelli, whom we used to see at Strand fairly often, is now an emeritus member of the ABAA and no longer lists in the Manhattan *Yellow Pages*; we presume he is no longer active—certainly

not at the address given. (Although the bookshop of Isaac Mendoza is no longer an open shop, it is true that Walter Caron, also an emeritus member of the ABAA, does, as indicated, operate from his home, although he is *not* listed in the current Manhattan *Yellow Pages*—neither under his own personal name, nor under the Isaac Mendoza name.) Irving Zucker's Milestone Books is listed in Ethridge, although there is no sign of its existence in the *Yellow Pages*.

I do not have the time to research the nearly 200 numbered entries in the New York City section, but I note at this point one the problem of one dealer who, after several efforts using the 1993 edition of Ethridge, gave up. He said he spent fruitless hours trying to reach listed dealers to no avail often later finding out that they were no longer in business. The entire usefulness of such a guide as the Ethridge depends, essentially, *not simply*, on its obviously immense coverage, but, surely as much upon its *reliability*.

The solution it seems to me—a solution which applies to all directories—is one which we employed at the Union of

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# Letters

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International Associations, where I was Editor-in-chief of their Yearbook (English issue) at the time I lived in Brussels, is, not only to assign a unique number to each entry—as Ethridge has in fact done—but to indicate at the *end of the entry*, either the date of the returned questionnaire or an asterisk to indicate that *no* reply has been received as of cut-off or press time. This at least warns the user that that dealer *may* not be in business, or may have relocated or—whatever! And if, after the next edition, still no reply is forthcoming to the questionnaire, a *double* asterisk is put at the end of the entry. In the subsequent edition, unless a reply or new information is forthcoming the entry is either dropped or a note “apparently no longer exists—or no longer active” is added.

Do you see the logic and advantage of this? Do you see problems with this proposed solution? Do you see a better way of dealing with the problems?

I think there are many lessons to draw from the above mentioned problems, as I see it inadequately addressed by the Ethridge volume. I cannot give the high praise to the work that you, in your opening paragraph do. Nor, however, do I agree with your demurs in your concluding remarks concerning the matter of demographics. And, as for the exclusion of “brethren paperback and comic book dealers,” at least this is so stated at the beginning and I, for one, having tried to make some sense of the bewildering jungle of these “brethren” to very little avail would have rather seen more made of the ephemera dealers. But these are mere quibbles. The main issue is how to solve the issue of *reliability* within the announced limits and scope of the work in hand.

I trust that this is of some value, possibly also to considerations of our own *ABAA Directory*.

*From: Allen and Patricia Ahearn*

We admit that we may be thin skinned, but Rob’s “review” of our *Collected*

*Books: The Guide to Values* in the last *ABAA Newsletter* seems to us to be a little unfair and shows some personal animosity. So we’ve decided to respond.

Rob asked us several times not to forget to send him a review copy of our new book. Little did we know that he has been seething over the affront of price guides, in general, and ours in particular, apparently for years. He seems convinced that collectors are being pointed toward these 15,000 to 20,000 books to the exclusion of all others. We don’t believe collectors buy this book to determine what to collect. These aren’t our recommendations; *Collected Books* is a compilation of books that are collected. The vast majority of the sales of this book are to dealers, libraries, and book scouts. And guess what they use them for? To price copies of the books they find! And the collectors who buy the book use them for the same purpose. Of course, it doesn’t have all the books, in all the languages of the world that one might collect. Give us a break

What in the world does how we format our catalogues have to do with *Collected Books*?

Rob is apparently bothered by our placing of prices “prominently affixed in a separate column in the margin.” We wonder if it bothers him that we number the catalogue entries in a separate column on the left. We get about fifteen or twenty catalogues a week, and we may be wrong but most of the formats look a lot like ours. As Rob has never sent us his catalogues, although we send him ours, we have no idea where he puts his prices. Maybe he has a separate sheet that he lays in (always thought that was a nice touch.)

Rob seems to be making fun of us by suggesting our three-volume set of the *Author Price Guides* is “collectible.” Actually it’s a good buy if you need the whole set of 160 authors. Most of the authors do not have bibliographies, and the author bibliographies that do exist are usually years or decades old. I doubt that anyone who has bought the set thinks of it as anything more than a reasonably priced reference work that will pay for itself over time. Just as *THE Guide to Values* does.

We find that libraries would rather have bound volumes as they are easier to handle than the loose leaf format, and less susceptible to “walking away.”

Rob’s greatest problem (among many) is with the “The”. This is the word that damns our work in his eyes. He wishes we had used Bradley’s exact title, much more “distant grammatically from the knock-me-down world of aggressive marketing” of our book. We wonder why Rob wasn’t bothered by Bradley’s use of *THE Book Collector’s Handbook of Values*; why not *A Book Collector’s Handbook of Values*?

(As an aside, I asked Bradley a few months before he died if he wanted us to continue his book under his name, with us as the compilers, but he told me that he had someone who was going to take it over.) Nine years later Putnams asked us to compile a similar guide and we agreed. Putnams suggested the title and admittedly we didn’t object.

Rob was “surprised to see...the absence of rock stars...where else would I go [for these] but Ahearn?” He also didn’t like wasting time on jujitsu books. In fact he spends six paragraphs complaining about what is in the book and what is not. About half the “review.” He even voices his opinion of what was the “stupidest book.” He awarded that to *The Encyclopedia of Golf Collectibles*. Of course, if you are a golf collector and someone offers you this book for \$300, or if you are a book scout and find a copy at a sale for \$5, the entry might prove useful (it’s in the *Guide* for \$150). And that’s the point of this book, to be useful.

Rob compares our book to the *Bookman’s Price Index*, *Annual Register*, *Used Book Price Guide*, and *Book Prices: Used and Rare*. While these are useful books and we consult them ourselves, they are basically compilations of dealer catalogue entries. What we try to do is present bibliographically correct information which allows the user to distinguish a first printing from a later printing. The prices are our estimates based on our dealings in the market or discussions with dealers or collectors who are experts in their fields. We spent over one year doing the first edition in



1991, and about nine months revising and adding entries for this edition. It really bothers us that Rob finds our work “cursory” (our Webster defines this as “hastily, often superficially, done.”) There are 769 pages of text in this book, and every word in them is important. We got two calls from dealers yesterday because one of our entries mistakenly had the word “with” instead of “without.” A large number of people use this book and we realize it has to be accurate. “Cursory” would not have been a word we would so lightly have thrown around if we were reviewing this book, whether we liked the book or authors, or not. We kept records since the 1991 edition and spent months revising this edition with the help of a great many dealers. Ask the dealers listed in the first paragraph of our acknowledgments how much we gave them to review, comment on, correct, question, etc. We tried to get it as accurate as possible. It isn’t perfect and most people understand that, but given the time it’s the best we could do.

Our goal with the book is to cover the most important and costly (not always the same) books by collected authors in all fields. We expanded our coverage of children’s books, photography, African-American authors, travel and exploration, and early printed books in this edition. There were dealers and collectors who had offered to help us include fifty or one hundred of the most collected books in art, architecture, medicine, science, and many other fields including big game hunting (which we’re sure Rob would also question.) Unfortunately, due to time constraints we never got around to taking advantage of these generous offers, but we hope to in the next edition. We envision adding these subjects and cutting back on some of the author entries that Rob pointed out (correctly) are overkill, so that we can keep the book to a one volume format. Rob wants to know why the signed limited *Neuromancer* is \$350, while the first edition paperback is only valued at \$100; and he admonishes us “Please don’t say the signature.” Well, I wonder why he didn’t question why the London edition which was not signed was \$500. Guess what? Collectors seem

to prefer hardbound books, and the London was the first hardbound edition and the signed, limited was the first U. S. hardback edition.

Rob acknowledges there is a “smattering of travel...press books, books on books...” Let’s be clear, there are hell of lot more than a smattering of travel books and books on books. As far as press books are concerned, we didn’t go out of our way to include those, as they are so well represented in Rob’s price guide, the auction records.

Rob mentions that there is no major bibliography of Maurice Sendak. This is the problem when you publish a book and make a mistake. We mistakenly left Joyce Hanrahan’s *Works of Maurice Sendak 1947-1994* out of the bibliography and I guess Rob can’t remember the review on this book that I wrote and he published in the *ABAA Newsletter* he publishes. Joyce sent me a note saying that without the mention in the book and with Rob’s comments in the “review” she was beginning to question whether she actually had written the book. We assured her we had put it in our errata slip and would include it in the next printing.

Although Rob did say a few nice things (damning with faint praise) “inchoate yet instrumental,” “perhaps the world needs,” “the Ahearns’ quest to produce ‘the’ guide is hopeless...but credit them for taking up the sword...;” the tenor of the “review” was fairly negative. Seems to us a mighty high horse he’s riding on. He doesn’t like price guides, but we assume he puts up with the auction records, and, of course, uses price guides, including *The Guide to Values*. We remember when it was suggested that the ABAA have separate sections for the first edition, and other specialty dealers at fairs with over 200 dealers. Rob was fast to say that he would never agree because it would hurt him, after all he had a few first editions and the customers might not find them. We wonder what he used to price them? You can probably guess.

Books are a part of our life. We have read them and collected them for decades. We love to have them around and look at them on the walls. Like most people we want everyone else to appreci-

ate and love the things we love. We want others to enjoy books and collecting as much as we do. That, among other things, is why we are booksellers and it is why we compile our price guides. We have had hundreds of people over the years tell us they started collecting books after reading *Book Collecting: A Comprehensive Guide*. There are many other books, of course, including other guides, books on collecting and books such as John Dunning’s *Booked to Die* and Nick Basbanes’ *A Gentle Madness*, that have gotten people started.

Mike Dirda, (Pulitzer prize winning critic) in a recent article on local bookstores (*The Washington Post Magazine*, July 6, 1997) said the antiquarian book business “is obviously no holiday treat. The hours are long, the pay is often lousy, the job security nonexistent. And yet. To live by one’s wits and savvy, to spend hours each day with the best that has been said and thought, to handle objects of beauty, rarity and romance, perhaps even to help people understand the 20th century. What an enviable life!”

This is all true, but remember we are not doing brain surgery here, we’re buying and selling books. And like it or not our book is one of the engines that helps drive our business. Most people like to feel they have some idea that they are making wise decisions. They want some structure. The guides give buyers and sellers some confidence that they are paying or getting reasonable prices, whether they are a collector, a book scout, a person going to the library to look up some book they found in the attic, or a dealer a little out of his field. The guides help them along, in getting the books into the right hands. We’re convinced that if Rob or someone else took the time to do something in his field, or in science, medicine, etc., just bibliographically, not prices, it would attract some new collectors. But it’s doubtful that will ever happen. They would rather complain about the lack of new collectors. ■

# House Calls

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had recently bought 20,000 books and was storing them in a garage in Philadelphia. Had anyone seen them yet? No.

Ah, the perfect time to call my new friend Chan! After all, if he had \$65 to throw around like a drunken sailor, perhaps he could help finance this venture as well.

Chan, eager to accumulate books for his new store, duly undertook the eleven-hour drive to my home in Ocean Grove, on the Jersey shore, and from there we made the additional hour drive west to Philadelphia. After some searching around we found Jules at a nondescript garage with a half-door through which we had to crawl. Jules had not overstated the number of books that he had bought. What he had neglected to mention was that they were all the same book! I no longer remember the title, but Jules had apparently bought the remainder of a diet and exercise book, about 20,000 copies of it. In retrospect, Chan and I should have each bought a copy.

All was not lost, however. We spent the day traveling around to Philadelphia bookstores, and we both found some things to buy. When we returned to the Jersey shore, Chan, who had brought some books along with him, and I spent most of the evening and all of the night trading books until dawn. The next morning he called home and was asked by his wife Miegan, "Does Tom have any good books?"

"He used to," was Chan's response.

This set the stage for an extended flurry of buying, selling, and trading. Several times a year I would load up my van with the boxes of books I had accumulated and set off for Asheville. After the shop closed at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday we would order up pizza and beer and then trundle the books up the long flight of stairs to the second-floor Captain's Bookshelf.

Chan would triage my books into piles of good, bad, and indifferent. Luckily for me, most of the Captain's Bookshelves were relatively empty, the store still in its infancy, so I managed to leave him with most of the indifferent, and even a few of the bad books. We thought that our first trading session might take several hours.

We didn't imagine that at 7:00 p.m. the next day, liberally fueled by beer, cold pizza, and a bottle of bourbon that Chan had stashed in the shop, we would still be sitting there on the floor, each of us poised motionless over a single book, each of equal value, unable to muster the brainpower needed to effect the final trade.

For twenty-five hours we hadn't left the room, except to retire to the small adjoining bathroom, more often than not to check our poker faces in the mirror.

It was stupid but fun.

During this session I was introduced to (or trampled by) some of the many strategies of my cagey Southern friend. The most effective of these was the "apple and oranges" gambit. Chan would insist that in order to get a "really good book" (the apple) I would have to overtrade books of a lesser value (the oranges). He would produce an interesting book in an obscure field, show me an auction record, price guide, or catalogue entry showing a high value, and, duly impressed, I would allow him to decimate my stock of cheaper but highly saleable modern first editions. Invariably the "apple" would turn out to be an unsaleable white elephant that had benefited from an over-enthusiastic bidder or catalogueur.

Another of Chan's stratagems was the sneak attack. I would be heavily armed with good books, seemingly having my way with the hapless and self-described "poor country boy from Murphy, North Carolina." Then, at 4:00 a.m., just when I had him on the ropes, he would reach into a drawer and pull out a book that he knew I would be willing to die for to complete one or another of my collections. Invariably, he would make me die for it.

I learned to retaliate. Once I lured Chan down to the van on some pretext (checking tire pressure or something—all Southern boys think they can fix cars), allowing my girlfriend to secret several better books behind those on his shelves. Then, when 4:00 a.m. rolled around and he reached into a drawer to pull out some treasure with an innocent, "What do you have that you'd trade for this?" I would casually stroll over to the North Carolina history section, rummage for a minute and pull out a volume. "Perhaps this would be of some interest?"

After a year or two, the books in the Captain's Bookshelf got better and better. I no longer could unload any bad books, and I could seldom even sneak any mediocre ones into the piles designated for trade. I knew the tide had finally turned when, while triaging my books, Chan came upon a book club edition of Joseph Heller's *Good as Gold*, which I thought he might want as a reading copy (inexplicably, the Captain's Bookshelf persisted, and persists still, in actually selling books for people to read rather than collect). Even now, almost twenty years later, the first edition of *Good as Gold* is one of the world's most common books. That the example I offered Chan was a book club edition only added insult to injury.

When Chan saw the book his eyes went wide. His nostrils flared. I'm not sure, but steam may have come out his ears. After a few seconds, he flung the book across the room. Running after it, he jumped up and down on it judiciously a few times, and returning by the path that he had just traversed, flung it out the second story window into the deserted Battery Park Avenue, where it lay forlorn in a cold and teeming Sunday rain storm. In a single movement, Chan returned to where I sat dumbfounded and stuffed a dollar in my shirt pocket.

At least I made a profit.

I have to admit my debt to Chan. The constant haggling, dealing, and double-dealing was a strong incentive to learn—it was either that, or perish. He was like the high school football coach that you constantly resented, and who spent every day hitting you in the head with a two-by-four to make you tough. After a sufficient number of years have passed, and probably due to some minor brain damage resulting from being hit in the head by a two-by-four, one gets a little weepy with gratitude. My revenge has been to loudly proclaim him as my mentor to all who will listen, a claim that has apparently caused him considerably more anguish than he has caused me.

But this has nothing to do with frog-water iced-tea.

*To be continued...*

# Recent Books by Members

● *The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The Rosenthal Collection of printed Books with Manuscript Annotations. A Catalog of 242 Editions Mostly Before 1600 Annotated by Contemporary or Near-Contemporary Readers.* [Foreword by Robert G. Babcock] New Haven: Yale University Press. 1997. 389 pp., 164 halftone illustrations,

reviewed by Terry Tanner

I once had a customer return a book he ordered for its binding because the original owner had written his name on the endpaper. Such an attitude, certainly not unique, in this book-collecting age that emphasizes condition almost to the exclusion of every other factor, is completely foreign to the spirit that animates this handsome catalog of the annotated books ABA member Bernard M. Rosenthal lovingly accumulated for more than thirty years. Make no mistake, this catalog is no kin to Harry B. Smith's *A Sentimental Library*. With few exceptions, these are not association copies from the libraries of famous people or well-known writers. For most of these books the identity of the annotator isn't even known. This is a catalog devoted to the fascinating interaction of books and those Rosenthal describes in his introduction as "the less glamorous writers—students, professors, physicians, lawyers, priests, scientists, classical scholars, and just 'plain readers' such as those who have owned and annotated the books in this collection."

Bernard M. Rosenthal is a distinguished antiquarian bookseller, and whatever secondary purposes impelled him to write this catalog, his primary purpose was to sell books. As such, he faced the daunting and difficult task of describing what to many in the book world would appear as little better than defective books—indeed a number of the books are, in fact, physically defective. Yale's purchase of the collection *en bloc* would have been testimony enough to how well he succeeded; Yale's decision to transform the catalog that accompanied the collection into this lovely book further corroborates the nature of Rosenthal's remarkable accomplishment.

Each of the 160 entries in the catalog contains a full collation, description of the binding, provenance (when known), references, and Rosenthal's erudite notes on the book (or books in the case of several

*sammelbände* included in the collection, which swell the total editions described to 242). But the heart and soul of this catalog clearly resides in the descriptions of the manuscript annotations. In these annotations, Rosenthal identifies the languages, the period, and the national identity of the annotator, and provides interesting analysis of the nature of the annotations, often including sample transcriptions alongside transcriptions of the printed text they gloss. In some instances where the annotations include lengthy commentary he provides incipits and explicits. His identification of the scripts is wonderfully unconventional, and the terms he uses (e.g., "a crabbed hurried cursive") are successfully evocative. In many instances, in order to adequately describe the quantity of annotations without merely reverting to vague adjectives, Rosenthal counted the total number of words in the annotations, distinguishing between interlinear and marginal annotations. Thus, we learn that the unidentified owner of a copy of Aristotle's *Libri duo posteriorum analecticorum* (Leipzig, ca. 1500), annotated his copy with 59,600 words on 68 pages (36,900 marginal, 21,000 interlinear, 1700 on the blank verso of the title leaf), which, as Rosenthal remarks, exceeds by two and a half times the number of printed words!

Although the identity of most of the annotators remains unknown, from his close analysis Rosenthal is often able to discern why the books were annotated. Thus, two *sammelbände* containing identical editions of the comedies of Plautus printed in Leipzig in 1512-1513 contain annotations that are quite similar, probably made by students at the University of Leipzig under the dictation of Veit Werler, the editor of the printed texts, Rosenthal compares these annotations, which he describes as a straightforward *explication de texte* with annotations made in an Aldine edition of 1522, which he characterizes as "aggressive" in their effort to correct errors in the text. A similar instance is described by Rosenthal in his entries for two copies of the same 1514 edition of Vergil, in both of which appear notes probably taken from the same source. In another entry, Rosenthal is able to surmise that the annotator of a 1528 edition of Galen probably annotated his copy to facilitate its use in his lectures at the University of Cordoba.

Every entry is accompanied by a halftone illustration (four have two illustrations), many of which are full-page, that enhances the reader's ability to envision the book and its annotations. There is also an alphabetical short-title list of all 242 editions described in the catalog, essential because of the presence of *sammelbände*, as well as a chronological short-title list, a bibliography, and an index of owners and annotators.

One unusual feature, of this published *Catalog* is that it retains one characteristic of its origin as a bookseller's catalogue that, at first, I thought should have been deleted from the printed catalog, i.e., the descriptions of the physical condition of the books. Such statements are a bookseller's attempt to facilitate a sale, or at least protect against return of the book, and these books were no longer for sale. Yet, the more I moved around in this *Catalog*, the more I came to appreciate that the condition statements had been retained. These statements complete the work of documenting the idiosyncratic history of these books, from time they were printed and annotated until they came into Rosenthal's possession. Although no longer necessary for the sale of the books, these statements identify yet another aspect of what is most typical about these books—what they suffered through the ravages of time and use. These too could be added to Robert Babcock's enumeration in his foreword: "The bibliographical and historical information Rosenthal supplies, as well as the sample transcriptions of annotations, should provide a sound basis for an appreciation of the books. And that is a reasonable goal for any catalog." Bernard Rosenthal achieved his reasonable goal—and a lot more.

The collector who returned the binding because it carried the original owner's name will always represent for me the epitome of what is wrong with our current overemphasis on condition. Writing about Walter Benjamin's book collecting in *Men in Dark Times*, Hannah Arendt presciently saw the dark side of collecting: "Thus the heir and preserver unexpectedly turns into a destroyer. . . . The collector destroys the context in which his object was only part of a greater living entity, and since only the uniquely

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## ABAA Welcomes New Members

The ABAA *Newsletter* welcomes the following new members, accepted at the September Board of Governors' meeting in Washington, DC:

### FULL MEMBERS

**Svetlana Aronov**, 1175 York Avenue, Suite 11K, New York, NY 10021.

**Michael Chessler**, Chessler Books, PO Box 399, Kittredge, CO 80457.

**Michael Lieberman**, Wessel & Lieberman Booksellers, 121 First Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98104.

**Margaret Page**, Page Books, HCR 65 Box 233, Kingston, AZ 72742.

**Gerard Stodolski**, 555 Canal Street, Manchester, NH 03101.

**Edward V. Thompson**, Nimue Books & Prints, PO Box 325, Orono, ME 04473.

### NEW PRIMARY MEMBERS

**Douglas Stewart Wilson**, O'Gara & Wilson, Books, 1311 East 57th Street, Chicago, IL 60637.

### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

**William F. Ahearn**, Susan Klein Fine Books.

**Andrew Armacost**, Oak Knoll Books.

**Samuel J. Hessel**, By the Book.

**Gilbert J. Pierson**, Bennett Gilbert.

### EMERITUS MEMBERS

**Michael R. Goff**, The Phoenix Book Store.

**Joseph O'Gara**, O'Gara & Wilson.

**Barbara Walzer**, Barbara Walzer Rare Books. ■

## Membership Updates

**Blue Sky Books** has a new address and phone: 1821 Polk Street, Suite 7, San Francisco, CA 94109; phone: 415-921-7972.

**The Bookpress, Ltd.** has a new address: 1304 Jamestown Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185.

**Stephen Daiter** has a new address, phone, and fax: 311 West Superior Street, Chicago, IL 60610; phone: 312-787-3380; fax: 312-3354.

**Bruce Ferrini** has a new address, phone, and fax: 1080 Top of the Hill, Akron, OH 44333; phone: 330-665-2272; fax: 330-665-2273.

**Michael Good** now has an e-mail address: MGoodBooks@aol.com

**Joseph the Provider/Books** has a shop address and e-mail: 1216 State Street, Suite 406; Santa Barbara, CA 93102;

**New York Bound Bookshop** is now **Barbara L. Cohen, Bookseller**, Two Fifth Avenue, Apt. 12F, New York, NY 10011; phone: 212-777-0283.

**Ken Sanders** has a new shop address, phone, fax, and e-mail: 268 South 200 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84111; phone: 801-521-3819; fax: 801-521-2606; e-mail: ken@aros.net

**Howard Schickler** has a new address, phone, and fax: 560 Broadway, Suite 507, New York, NY 10012; phone: 212-431-6363; fax: 212-343-2644.

**Western Hemisphere, Inc.** expresses gratitude to Margaret F. O'Connell for her many years of devoted service and wishes her success and happiness as an independent bookseller.

**Wilsey Rare Books** has a new e-mail address: erd@ulster.net

**Irving Zucker** has a new address: 91 Kenwood Drive, Woodcliff Lake, NJ 07675. ■

## Recent Books

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genuine will do for him he must cleanse the chosen object of everything that is typical about it." I don't believe any future bookseller will undertake to duplicate Bernard Rosenthal's achievement with this *Catalog*. Only a few have his paleographic skills, but, more importantly, I think that even he would no longer risk such an undertaking if he were starting in business today.

*The Rosenthal Collection* is available for \$50 from Bernard M. Rosenthal, Inc., PO Box 5279, Berkeley, CA 94705; phone: (510) 549-2531; fax: (510) 549-2763; e-mail: bmrbooks@ix.netcom.com; or from the distributor, Cornell University Press Services, PO Box 6525, Ithaca, NY 14831; phone: (800) 666-2211; fax: (800) 668-2877; outside US phone: (607) 277-2211. ■

*Deadline for submissions  
to the next Newsletter is*

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## More Changes at Headquarters

Along with the recent changes of the new headquarters address and telephone numbers, the name of our Executive Director has also changed. As of October 19, 1997, she will be known as Liane Wade, having married professor Richard G. Wade in New York City. Liane looks forward to having a simpler name for the first time in her life.

ALSO PLEASE NOTE: The fax number for the new headquarters given in the last issue of the *Newsletter* was incorrect. The correct fax number is: 212-944-8293.