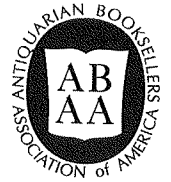




# The A B A A NEWSLETTER

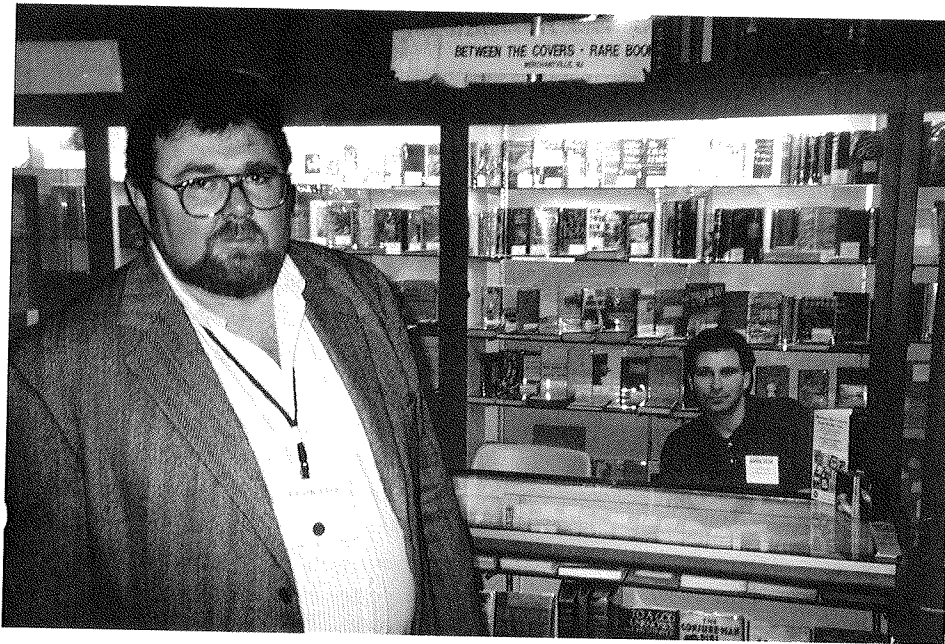


VOLUME TWELVE, NUMBER 3

ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLERS' ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

SPRING 2001

INSIDE: *Look Out: A Look In at Rulon-Miller Books.* By Rob Rulon-Miller. . . .PAGE 5



Tom Congalton and Dan Gregory (behind) of *Between the Covers* at the New York Book Fair.

## Downloading and the Mind of Collectors

by Dan Gregory

Several months ago I had lunch with a colleague who works for one of the Internet's largest out-of-print book search engines. In the course of the conversation he asked me, "Do you foresee a day when the supply of used and rare books will dry up?" I replied offhandedly, "Perhaps the question is whether I foresee a day when the *demand* for used and rare books dries up." I had in mind the inevitable digitization of texts. Not long afterward another colleague mentioned that he had been selling books to a business called Questia. When he looked up the firm on the Internet and found that its intention was to digitize the texts he was providing, he wondered whether he was, in the long run, hurting his own used book business by selling to Questia.

The initial intention of this article was to look at the ways new technologies are allowing for a revolution in the format of what we read, the like of which has not been seen since Gutenberg, and to examine how these new formats might transfigure the used and rare book business in the long term. If, several decades from now, most books and periodicals are created in a format other than the print on paper to which we are so accustomed, will children who grow up with touch screens instead of Golden Books mature into collectors of books? If not, what might they collect instead? How will the

## Books Stolen at New York Fair

Ken Sanders, Chair of the ABAA Security Committee, reports that four ABAA dealers, including himself, were victims of thefts perpetrated at the New York Book Fair in April.

**Bromer Booksellers** has reported the loss of original Rockwell Kent maquettes and drawings that they bought at auction at Christie's East on April 17, 2001 (lot 121). The items, still in their Christie's folder, were last seen under a draped table in the Bromer booth on Friday evening, April 20:

Rockwell Kent. *Christmas 1947*, artist's maquettes for the cover and page 10 "Greetings from Timothy Chord," 4 preparatory drawings from page 1 (an angel trimming a tree, the letter "I"), page

2 (a man overwhelmed by Christmas packages), page 5 (Santa vanishing up a chimney), page 8 (Santa in his sleigh flying off on a moon-lit night). Pen and ink, each approx. 318 x 236 mm (12 1/2 x 9 1/4 in). Together with the published work (N.p., n.d. 4to, original wrappers).

Please contact Bromer Booksellers if you have any information on the whereabouts of these items: 607 Boylston St., at Copley Square, Boston, MA 02116; phone: 617-247-2818; fax: 617-247-2975; email: books@bromer.com

**J & J Hanrahan** have reported the loss of a captivity narrative from their New York Fair booth. It was taken from a

continued on page 14

continued on page 10

# Letters to the Editor

*From: Virginia Faulkner,  
Old Book Shop, Morristown, NJ*

In the last ABAA *Newsletter* some writers discussed the adverse effect of the Internet on open shops. I would like to offer a different view of its impact.

For over twenty-five years I have been co-owner of a shop with a general stock of approximately 30,000 volumes, with an emphasis on Americana and ephemera. We do two book fairs a year. When we were at a previous location, we issued a number of catalogues; in the fifteen years we have been at our current address we have found ourselves too busy buying and selling books to deal with any form of mail order, whether via printed catalogue or the Internet. We aim for good turnover with a stock of interesting books at moderate prices and have a substantial dealer trade including many ABAA members.

As far as I can tell, the Internet has had very little impact on our business, and what effect it has had has been beneficial. We have the same number of customers coming in today as we did three years ago (about 125 on the average Saturday), and the turnover rate of both average-priced books and more expensive books has stayed the same. We have picked up as customers several dealers who are principally Internet booksellers (they have to get their books somewhere). Those of our customers who visit Internet sites may buy there a specific title they have been looking for, but they end up with an appreciation of our prices, which, on common books, are much lower than the average price on ABE or BiblioFind. Sometimes customers will come in with printouts from an online service, asking if we have the titles in stock.

Customers, whether dealers or retail purchasers, will return to a shop more frequently if they have previously found there books that they remember as "really nice" (odd, unusual, interesting). Many shop owners overlook the fact that every time they put a book directly into an auction, save it for a catalogue, or offer it to a

particular customer without putting it on the shelf they have reduced the opportunity for the walk-in customer to get a memorable book. Of course, every shop owner will do some of this. However, on numerous occasions, I have heard remarks such as "\_\_\_\_\_ saves all his good Civil War for special customers. I don't go there any more." Or, "\_\_\_\_\_ puts too much into auction. I never find anything interesting there." A shop owner who has had a drop in traffic might want to consider whether his or her stock is as attractive as it was a few years ago, or whether he or she has diluted its appeal by selling on ABE or Ebay.

As for buying: the person who is moving or settling an estate and has a thousand books to dispose of is not going to sell them on Ebay. The large-quantity house call continues to be just as common. We have probably lost some books we might have purchased from book scouts who now sell on the Internet. I think there is a possible long-term effect of the Internet, which has not considered by many booksellers, that may be beneficial to the entire book trade. Many

people in this country buy only new merchandise: they never go to antique shows, rummage sales, or antiquarian bookstores. If the online services such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble continue to offer out-of-print titles as a customer service, buyers may become accustomed to the idea of acquiring used books, even if they have never bought any other used merchandise. Some of these buyers may investigate used bookstores, book fairs, or Internet sales sites.

Finally, I have noticed in the last two years that every bookseller in the country who is unhappy with any aspect of his or her business is blaming the problem on the Internet, even if his or her reasons directly contradict another dealer's reasons. If some ABAA members such as Frank Walsh end up having to "swallow some pride" or "handle a variety of goods we used to think rather less of," perhaps the change is for the better. There are three antique malls in Georgia that now have more books than before, and there are some people in Atlanta who have a new chance to see paper ephemera. ■



ILAB members Dr. Adrian Flühmann and Timur Yüksel, both of Switzerland, at the New York Book Fair.

# New Board and Committee Members for ABAA

by Tom Congalton

The ABAA welcomed new three Board of Governors members at the Wednesday, April 18, meeting of the outgoing Board at the Rockefeller Center offices of our counsel, Larry Fox of the firm of McDermott, Will & Emory.

Sarah Baldwin of the firm E. Wharton & Co. replaced Andy Cahan as Southeast Chapter representative, Ben Weinstein of the Heritage Book Shop replaced Mark Hime of Bibliotopus as Southern California representative, and Carol P. Grossman of Four Rivers Books, Ltd. took the place of Michael Thompson as at-large member.

The outgoing Board members have left big shoes to fill. Andy Cahan's place as Chair of the By-Laws Committee was taken over by Owen D. Kubik. Owen will be ably assisted by Rob Rulon-Miller, who originally co-authored the current iteration of the by-laws. Mark Hime, who presided over the national Book Fair Committee through four unusually placid

years, was replaced by Tom Congalton, who has chaired the Committee in the past. Michael Thompson, who has chaired the ABAA/RBMS Committee, remains on the committee, while Carol Grossman has assumed the Chair.

Carol Grossman, who has served on the Internet Committee for the past year, also has taken over the chair of that Committee from Ken Lopez, who will now head the Planning Committee. All other committees will retain their previous chairs.

At the Board meeting the results of five proposed by-laws were announced, with three by-laws devoted to membership defeated. The by-law concerning a change in qualifications for emeritus status was narrowly defeated by a margin of 140 for to 79 against, (a two-thirds majority is required to change the by-laws); the other major proposed membership change, to require eight rather than the current four sponsorship letters for a prospective applicant, was soundly

defeated by a margin of 116 for to 107 against. The third proposed by-law change having to do with membership, a small technical change in the wording of the by-laws should the sponsors have been increased to eight, was defeated by a similar margin, 123 for to 99 against.

The defeated by-law proposals were referred back to the Membership Committee, which had been charged with revisiting the qualifications for membership, for possible further action or revision, although Membership Committee Chair Rochelle Caney indicated that no immediate further action was likely.

A proposal to change the name of the Education and Public Relations Committee to the Public Relations Committee was passed by margins of 209 for to 10 against.

Another proposal to change the term of the national Secretary from four to two years, in order for it to conform to the term of the President and Vice-President, passed by a margin of 209 for to 17 against. ■

## ABAA Executive Committee

Tom Congalton, Chair; Ken Lopez, John Crichton, Donald Heald, Tom Goldwasser, Bill Ewald

### Archives Committee

Jack Freas, Chair  
Priscilla Juvelis

### Benevolent & Woodburn Fund Trustees

Priscilla Juvelis, Chair  
Bob Fleck  
Tom Congalton

### Book Fair Committee

Tom Congalton, Chair  
Donald Heald  
Chapter Representatives  
Jeffrey Marks  
Mark Hime  
Owen Kubik

### By-Laws Committee

Owen D. Kubik, Chair  
Rob Rulon-Miller  
Sarah Baldwin

### Public Relations

Forrest Proper, Chair  
Liane Wade  
Ed Smith  
Carol Grossman

### Ethics & Standards

John Crichton, Chair  
Ken Lopez  
Rochelle Caney  
Tom Congalton  
Ben Weinstein

### Finance Committee

Donald Heald, Chair  
Ben Weinstein  
Greg Gibson

### House Committee

Jack Freas, Chair  
Donald Heald  
Sarah Baldwin  
Liane Wade

### Internet Committee

Carol Grossman, Chair  
Ken Lopez  
Bill Ewald  
James Jaffe  
Kevin MacDonell  
Tom Goldwasser  
Owen Kubik  
Vic Zoschak  
Forrest Proper  
Bob Fleck  
Allan Ahearn  
Pia Oliver

### Membership Committee

Rochelle Caney, Chair  
Tom Goldwasser  
Tom Congalton  
Jack Freas  
Ken Sanders  
Sarah Baldwin  
Ed Smith  
Ken Lopez

### Insurance Committee

Rochelle Caney, Chair

### Nominating Committee

Priscilla Juvelis, Chair  
Tom Goldwasser  
Jack Freas  
Chapter Representatives

### Publications Committee

Greg Gibson, Chair  
Rob Rulon-Miller  
Liane Wade  
Dan Gregory

### Planning Committee

Ken Lopez, Chair  
Tom Congalton  
Priscilla Juvelis  
Mark Hime

### Donald Heald

Peter Stern  
John Crichton  
Past Presidents Representative

### Security Committee

Ken Sanders, Chair  
John Crichton  
Bill Ewald  
Liane Wade

### ILAB representative

Bob Fleck

### ABAA/RBMS Committee

Carol Grossman, Chair  
Michael Thompson  
Priscilla Juvelis  
Vic Zoschak

*The ABAA President is an ex-officio member of all committees.*



# Colorado Book Seminar

The Out-of-Print and Antiquarian Book Market Seminar, now in its twenty-third year, will be held again this year at The Colorado College in Colorado Springs from August 5 through August 10.

Over the years quite a few ABAA members and their employees have attended. In total, the Book Seminar has graduated more than 2000 people, a considerable number of whom are now in the antiquarian book trade. In addition, many ABAA members have served on the faculty. This year the faculty will include Allen and Pat Ahearn (who will give the keynote address), Mike Ginsberg, Jennifer Larson, and Ed Glaser.

As the book trade has changed over the past twenty-three years, so has the curriculum of the seminar, which now offers increased emphasis on the Internet and computerized bookselling. This year's class offerings, for instance, now include "Buying and Selling Books on the Internet," "Traditional and Technological References for Bibliographic Description," "Compiling and Reading Bookseller Catalogues and Online

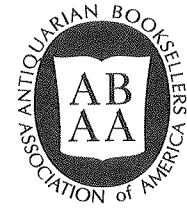
Descriptions," and "Technology for the Book Trade."

Local book dealers are active supporters of the Seminar, offering special discounts and extended hours to attendees during the week of the Seminar.

The Rocky Mountain Book Fair, sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Antiquarian Booksellers Association, is scheduled to coincide with the Seminar each summer, and will be held this year in Denver on August 3-4, 2001. For more information on the book fair, contact Lois Harvey, Coordinator, at [celebooklh@aol.com](mailto:celebooklh@aol.com).

The fee for the Antiquarian Book Market Seminar is only \$795.00 and includes all instructional materials, Sunday evening reception, Monday picnic, Friday luncheon, transportation to off-site sessions, and daily breaks. There is a discount for more than one registrant from the same organization.

Class size is limited, so prompt consideration is suggested. For further information visit [www.bookseminars.com](http://www.bookseminars.com) or phone Kathy Lindeman, Coordinator, at (719) 473-6634. ■



## Scholarships Available

The ABAA Benevolent Fund, in honor of Elisabeth Woodburn, is offering two scholarships to the 2001 Colorado Out-of-Print and Antiquarian Book Market Seminar.

The seminar, presented by Book Seminars, is an intensive weeklong program designed for new and experienced booksellers who have never had the advantage of formal training in the field, as well as for book collectors and librarians. It will be held August 5-10, 2001, on the campus of Colorado College, in the resort city of Colorado Springs.

Competition for the two awards of \$1,250 each is open to all.

Entrants must submit a brief essay of 500 words or less stating need and purpose; a letter of support by an ABAA member is also welcome. Submit materials to: Peter B. Howard, Trustee Emeritus, The ABAA Benevolent Fund, Serendipity Books, 1201 University Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702; fax: 510-841-1920; email: [pbhoward@serendipitybooks.com](mailto:pbhoward@serendipitybooks.com). Applications must be postmarked no later than July 1, 2001.

The successful candidates will be notified by phone or fax and by mail. Awards will be presented at seminar registration in Colorado Springs by an ABAA member.



Quality T-shirts, sweatshirts, and caps with the ABAA logo are available at ABAA book fairs, on the ABAA web site ([www.abaa.org](http://www.abaa.org)), and through Liane Wade at 20 West 44th Street, Fourth Floor, New York, NY 10036-6604; phone 212-944-8291; fax 212-944-8293; email [lwade@abaa.org](mailto:lwade@abaa.org). All come in black or white. T-shirts are \$12.00, sweatshirts are \$25.00, and caps are \$8.00. Shirts and sweats available in sizes Small to XX-Large.

# A Look In at Rulon-Miller Books

*The following is one in a continuing series of articles by booksellers about the businesses they operate. Candid submissions are welcome.*

by Rob Rulon-Miller

I am not a good businessman. I have never had a budget or a business plan. I am more conscious of image than of money. The checkbook is rarely balanced. I send statements only when invoices seem to have been lost or forgotten, and I have long-outstanding receivables. I maintain no want lists, as these require too much paperwork for too little reward, and besides, the Internet has, for all practical purposes, made want lists obsolete. I spend too much time with too few customers. I do not generally buy books with customers in mind; I buy them if I like them or find them unusual, then try to lateral my enthusiasm for them to my customers. I generally pay too much for ordinary books and often sell good books for too little. I forget everyone's name. I am argumentative, opinionated, testy. I fart, I belch, and I cuss in casual conversation. It's a wonder I'm still here after twenty-five years—more a wonder still that I'm thriving.

It's a difficult task to write about one's business. Stories become apocryphal. Mistakes and bad deals dim from the memory and are often glossed over by blaming others. The ordinary day is forgotten and rolled, magically, together with the countless other days, into that vast and variegated carpet called experience. The nature of our respective businesses is largely an extension of our personalities, and success, by degrees, is directly proportional to a sustained effort. And booksellers who make that effort on behalf of customers will thrive because happy customers, in turn, sustain booksellers.

Money in and of itself has little to do with our varied successes. The mythology of money, however, is apt to take on a life of its own and filter insidiously through the trade to either the detriment or

aggrandizement of the bookseller. At a recent reception in San Francisco I was told—in the strictest confidence, of course—that the word on the street was that I was worth between \$9 and \$11 million dollars. Not rounded off to “about \$10 million,” as a gossip would have it. The figures were oddly specific, as if someone were privy to a balance sheet. Now is this flattery or is it insult?

It depends, I suppose, on the character of the bookseller. In my case I am sorry to disappoint those who would elevate me, because I live much simpler than the myth. My only assets are my house, my business, and a small cabin on forty acres in a very rural northern county of Minnesota where one may still buy land for under \$500 an acre. Except for the remaining balance on my mortgage, I have no long-term debt. Everything—I mean everything—is funded from the cash flow of my business or from occasional forays into a \$335,000 home equity line of credit, which I have spent years building up from an original \$10,000 line. For years I worked fourteen-hour days (I'm now down to ten), and the business of bookselling, as it has been for many of us, is not a business at all but rather a way of life, as if we were all of the Romany.

I started with extraordinary privileges. I was given an excellent education, some of which I squandered. I had liberal and tolerant parents who taught me in my youth that money was the key to neither success nor happiness, and that being able to read and write were two of the highest virtues toward which a young man could aspire. I learned through trial and, mostly, error to make those parts of my youth that were lost to drugs and debauchery into valuable lessons of propriety and decency. Today, I cherish my sordid past even more than my youthful prudishness and find now, middle age full set upon me, that accepting—even embracing—my weaknesses has made me a stronger man.

I split from my father's business, The Current Company, in 1979-80 when my

first marriage was coming apart. By then I had been working in the trade for three years full time, although I had been working part time on holidays and summer vacations since 1969, the year I sold my first book (to Frazer Clark: a vellum-bound extra-illustrated Tauchnitz edition of Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*—\$50 if I remember it right). At the time I did not appreciate all that my father had done in preparing me for the world of rare books: much of it wrong, but enough of it right for me to eventually prosper. Even as a teenager I was collating incunables, color plate books, and rare Thoreau associations.

I was then still too close to the experience I received to fully appreciate it. Rulon-Miller *père* was no great bookseller. He had come to the business from the corporate world and had tried to impose his corporate sense on the most acorporate world of bookselling. He was my father. I loved him and I followed him, obediently at first, but as time passed, with suspicion. I remember the day in 1978 when it seemed to fall apart between him and me: he had compiled a catalogue based on our inventory slips (no computers back then, of course) and had our assistant, Theresa Simmons, type it out for me to proofread and send off to the printer. The books were all of a lesser sort: \$100 or less. The catalogue ran to some seventy pages. And he wanted it illustrated! I tallied the selling prices. I got an estimate for the printing and I calculated the postage. Even if we sold seventy percent of the catalogue we'd still lose money. It was a momentous confrontation for me because I realized for the first time that his good sense was wasting away and that dementia was lurking just around the bend. From then on, I think, I felt like I ran The Current Company, not with any particular amount of success, but with the idea that I wanted to make bookselling my profession and that I had to make money to survive. By then I had long since decided to give up on becoming a professor of

continued on next page



## ILAB Book Fairs

2001

**June 7-10**

London, England (ABA)  
Olympia Exhibition Centre

**September 20-23**

Barcelona, Spain (AILA)  
Hotel Majestic

**October 12-14**

Florence, Italy (ALAI)

**October 25-18**

Helsinki, Finland (SA)  
Helsinki Fair Centre

**November 8-11**

Boston, MA (ABAA)  
Hynes Convention Center

2002

**February**

Los Angeles, CA (ABAA)

**May 23-26**

Paris, France (SLAM)  
La Maison de la Mutualité

**June 6-9**

London, England (ABA)  
Olympia Exhibition Centre

**September 12-14**

Copenhagen, Denmark (ILAB)  
19th International Book Fair

2003

**June 5-8**

London, England (ABA)  
Olympia Exhibition Centre

For a calendar including non-ILAB book fairs, visit [www.aba.org/bookfairs](http://www.aba.org/bookfairs)

## Rulon-Miller

continued from previous page

English, so I became an ABAA member in the fall of 1977.

More for personal than business reasons, I moved to Minnesota in November of 1979, the weekend of the Jonestown suicides. My father had gone south to the Virgin Islands for the winter, and it wasn't long after I set up residence in Minnesota that it became painfully obvious that I'd be best on my own—painful being the operative word. I rebelled, consciously or not, against a scenario for which others probably would have lopped off their pinkies. I was cutting the great hand that fed me, yes, but I was equally certain that in the long run I'd be better off selling books on my own instead of trying to account for and explain to the holder of all the corporate stock the whys and hows of a business of which I was even then only imperfectly aware. By the end of 1980 I was fully incorporated as a Sub-S Corporation in Minnesota as Rulon-Miller Books, Inc. In my first quarter of business I had sales of \$40,000 and expenses of \$75,000. Not an auspicious beginning, but this is where the story of Rulon-Miller Books begins.

At The Current Company we specialized in books for the carriage trade, which meant we were pathetically predictable. We had voyages and travel, literary first editions, color plate books, Americana, sets, even incunabula. But once I was on my own, with limited amounts of cash, I had to find something else to sell with regularity: I needed a specialty, and it had to be a one I could afford. Barbara Walzer, a bookseller from Connecticut, was working with me then, and I recollect a Boston fair in the early 1980s where we both had come back to the booth with purchases and discovered that much of what we had bought was language-oriented: dictionaries, grammars, and the like. We were buying them because they were cheap and as far as I was concerned, interesting. I liked their varied typography (Laurence Urdang, the managing editor of the first unabridged *Random House Dictionary* estimated that

there were in that dictionary, on average, two-and-a-half font changes *per line*), and I liked those funny little phonetic dingbats to help with the pronunciations. There was an eerie calmness to their texts, up and down in double or triple columns, bland as the doldrums but, like the ocean, yielding great secrets about the origins of words and languages. It was as simple as that. I liked words, liked to write, did crosswords regularly, played word games. From that point on I specialized in language books, particularly in the English language, which I could understand, and particularly in dictionaries. There was little in the way of bibliographic information; much of what I learned was based on my acquiring a number of books in a given area and reading their introductions and prefaces. Dan De Simone, now the curator of the Lessing Rosenwald Collection at the Library of Congress, was a great help to me early on in acquiring some interesting pieces, many of them bought, I subsequently learned, from Madeline Kripke, the hermit New York bookseller who also specializes in the field.

By 1984 I had acquired enough of an inventory to issue a catalogue of over 400 books on language. I was nervous about it, though. I thought the market would be extremely limited (I was still using a mailing list largely composed of the old Current Company names), and I spent what seemed like a fortune on the printing and mailing of the catalogue. But the books were well researched, and I was proud of the assemblage. So early in 1985 off it went. The catalogue did beautifully, largely because I had been put in touch with an important Japanese collector, Professor Shoichi Watanabe, who ordered about one-fifth of the catalogue. The catalogue also caught the attention of the New York Times columnist, William Safire, who ordered books with a letter that began reduplicatively: "Dear Mr. Rulon-Miller, Your language catalogue is a Killer-Diller."

There are those among us who will say that I have been extremely lucky in acquiring books to sell from my local community, from collectors and institutions alike. Luck there was, of course,

but there was also a great deal of effort on my part to see that the luck came my way. My first great chance occurred in the early 1980s when I was invited into the James J. Hill Library in St. Paul to help with an ongoing deaccessioning project. There was a collection of books on art, architecture, and antiquities that needed appraising. In fact, I was not the first bookseller who had had an entrance there. Two others had preceded me, both of whom could have snarfed up the books before I arrived had they treated the library and the library staff with the respect they deserved. One was an infamous color-plate dealer from the East Coast who offered to buy the rare book collection for a mere fraction of its worth; the other was a local bookseller who had not been timely in making payments for material received from the Hill on consignment.

In the fall of 1983 the Hill Library decided to send their art and architecture collection to auction, and for my help in appraising it, lining up an auction house, and transporting it, I was to receive ten percent of the hammer price. The sale of the books in early 1984, over the course of several auctions at Swann Galleries, made far more than expected. I finally had a little cash to play with, and I was on my way. In 1984, Rulon-Miller Books had gross revenues of \$347,200 against expenses of \$359,500. That year I lost \$12,300, and I lost almost the same amount in 1985. By 1986 I managed a profit of a little over \$7,100.

I was the new kid in St. Paul in 1980, and my entrance to the Hill Library occurred because I knew some of the Hill family socially. The story of my connection with the Hill Library, which spans two decades and includes the sale of everything from the first elephant folio edition of Audubon's *Birds of America* and a complete set of Curtis's *North American Indian* to container-loads of twentieth-century books on a variety of subjects airfreighted to a university library in Bahrain, would be the making of an essay in itself. (Some of this story is treated in the second of Nicholas Basbane's two forthcoming books, due out in the fall of 2002.) For years much of the



Professor Shoichi Watanabe, Rob Rulon-Miller, and Mitsuo Nitta in the offices of Yushodo Co., Ltd., Tokyo, in March 2001.

better material went into the trade, generally at book fairs, and I still like to think that my connection with the Hill Library was a great benefit, not only to the library but to my colleagues as well.

So too were social introductions important in my subsequent connections with Emerson Wulling, a private press printer from La Crosse, Wisconsin, who since the 1930s had quietly amassed a large and very impressive library consisting of small and private press books and the history of printing; and with Elmer Andersen, the former governor of Minnesota who had a long association with John Howell—Books in San Francisco, H.P. Kraus in New York, and many other prominent dealers here and abroad. These two libraries alone accounted for fourteen catalogues issued by Rulon-Miller Books, and there were perhaps another catalogue or two worth of books that never made it into catalogues at all.

The books from the Hill Library, as well as those from Wulling and Andersen, did not come my way merely by luck, and herein is a lesson for anyone starting out in the bookselling trade today. The social aspect of our trade is vitally important, and anyone who eschews this avenue will have a more difficult time

obtaining large and/or important libraries. These libraries came my way because I took it upon myself to be active in the local book scene. I joined the local book club, The Ampersand Club, and made it a point to attend its meetings regularly. I joined the Friends groups at the local public and university libraries and went to the lectures they sponsored. I attended the local meetings of The Manuscript Society. At the Hill Library, for example, I took successive librarians to lunch perhaps as often as once a month for fifteen years! And I made (and continue to make) annual cash donations to these institutions: first, because these institutions deserve our support and second, because it is good business.

It was at these meetings and gatherings that I met people like Governor Andersen and Emerson Wulling. Social events also brought me into the inner circle of the Minnesota Historical Society and the St. Paul Public Library, both of which have deaccessioned large quantities of books and pamphlets through Rulon-Miller Books. But for all the donations, lunches, and idle chatter at local book events, my success has come

continued on next page

## Rulon-Miller

continued from previous page

because I have treated my sources fairly and, I believe, have competently performed valuable services for them.

A bookseller should be a servant to the community in which he or she lives, and I have always tried to live up to this obligation. We get on average two or three phone calls a day on the ubiquitous family Bible or, even more annoying, the Declaration of Independence, which almost always “has descended down in the family for generations” and is “very old and yellowed.” These callers are for the most part not stupid, just uninformed, and I always try to treat them respectfully, explaining to the Bible callers the laws of supply and demand, and to the Declaration callers the printing of millions of facsimiles handed out to immigrants on Ellis Island or issued in connection with the Bicentennial in 1976.

I also get calls—one or two a week—asking if I do appraisals. Most other booksellers in the Twin Cities don’t want to be bothered with appraisals, so I get many referrals from others in the local trade. Here is my opportunity to thank them heartily. I gladly do appraisals. In many instances good books have come my way because of them. I’ll give free appraisals over the phone and tell the callers as much as I can about the value of a book, intrinsic or otherwise. I will tell them what I think the retail value is, and if it is a book that interests me, I will tell them what I would pay if they were interested in selling it. If the book is not of interest to me I try to send them to another bookseller who might have an interest in it. If it is a book with no value, as many of those offered are, I explain why the book is worthless or, as I like to put it, “No value in the antiquarian market.” If callers need a written appraisal I tell them that is when the meter starts running. In a recent letter I wrote to one such caller, I offered my services thus: “Thanks for getting in touch with me about your appraisal needs. I price these jobs rather as I wish, depending on what the appraisal consists of, who wants it,

and how interesting the job might be for me. I charge anywhere from \$150 to \$175 an hour for jobs I absolutely do NOT want to do; \$100 to \$125 an hour for jobs of modest interest; \$75 an hour (and rounded downward as I see fit) for friends, famous people, and political anarchists who may have interesting books and papers to paw through.”

I bought a large house in a good neighborhood in St. Paul in 1989. I have 8400 square feet, which until recently has provided plenty of room for books and employees. Unlike many of the books I have bought, the house I bought right—at a thirty-percent discount off the listed price. The down payment for the house came from the commission I received from Sotheby’s for the sale of the elephant folio Audubon that had come from the Hill Library, sold, by private treaty, in Japan. I never would have been able to afford the house but that it offered excellent tax advantages. As the owner of the house I am able to collect rent from my business, and because it is a rental property, I am able to depreciate it and take much of the maintenance and upkeep as legitimate expenses.

By 1990 I had passed the half-million-dollar mark in gross revenues: revenues were \$539,000 against expenses of \$466,000. My profits over the preceding four years had increased tenfold. By 1992 I was ready to hire a full-time employee. I had several part-time employees prior to this, but Tracy Smith came to work on a full-time basis that year. Ever since she has been a most loyal helper, not only in keeping me up to date with the new technologies but also as a cataloguer, book wrapper, and general assistant. She has also been of special service to the ABAA as the *Newsletter’s* able associate editor. Without her the *Newsletter* would have left our offices years ago.

I mention Tracy in order to bring up what I think is another important facet in running a business. Employees need to be given a fair, even generous, wage and should be offered as many perks as one can afford, including pension plans and medical insurance. I wasn’t able to offer this when Tracy was first hired, but as I became more successful I took a cue from

Peter Howard: employees need to be honored and pampered. They, in turn, will honor and pamper you back. I now have three employees, all of whom have health insurance through our company plan and have or will have matching IRAs.

Catalogues and book fairs are the engines on which this business runs. Almost two-thirds of our revenues come from these sources, the rest coming from direct offers, Internet sales, and appraisals. Whatever habits I got for cataloguing I got from my father. He stressed the importance of describing condition and of providing accurate bibliographic information, and of always accepting the return of a book for whatever reason, even if it was the wrong reason and even if it caused a financial hardship. While our catalogues are not typographically breathtaking, they are, I think, well designed and clearly legible. I abhor excessive abbreviations, small type, and cramped leading, and rail at needless underlinings, exclamation points, and the overuse of bold type, all of which make the text of a catalogue more difficult to read. A few hours with the typographers Updike and Morison should be required reading for any bookseller issuing catalogues.

I’ve exhibited at every ABAA fair since 1978 with the exception of two. I also do about three or four regional fairs every year. It is rare if I don’t come home from these fairs with a carton or two of new books to catalogue. These fairs provide a special opportunity to meet collectors and librarians and to talk with other booksellers. I cherish my time at the fairs partly, perhaps, because I am located in the hinterlands and don’t often have the chance of seeing many other dealers except at fairs. Fairs have become the supermarkets of our business. Each year more and more dealers sign up to exhibit, and each year there seem to be more and more books to look at. The gates at the larger fairs are growing as well. The ABAA Book Fair Committee should reconsider longer time frames for fairs. In New York the fair runs, with set-up, for five full days. At the recent fair in New York I sold books on all five days, including several expensive ones on the



last day. Fairs in San Francisco and Los Angeles should be as long. The London Fair Committee should take a lesson from the ABAA Fairs and provide an extra day for set up—and be done at last with the old-world notion that buying prior to the opening of the fair is somehow abhorrent.

I always try to take a full booth because I don't want to confuse my books with those of another dealer, although at fairs in Europe I generally have taken only a half booth because I don't have a large enough inventory of books suitable for the European market. I always bring my best books to fairs, thinking that it serves no purpose to sell \$45 books at a fair where the cost of exhibiting, including travel, often exceeds \$5,000.

I have always tried to reach far and wide for my market, and so, even at an early age, I was making trips to Europe (mostly England), Australia, and somewhat later, to Japan. Europe has always been a frustrating market for me. In spite of my specialty in language, I have no real working knowledge of any language but English. I can get by, but miserably, with my six years of middle- and high-school French, and I have what I call title-page Latin, which is a remnant of Latin I and II I took in the seventh and eighth grades. My inventory—largely English language books—has met a sorry fate on the continent, with the possible exception of the Scandinavian countries, where English is not only spoken regularly, but embraced. I have also had the sinking feeling that in the European bookshops there was always a back room where the good books were secreted away that I was never allowed to see. What's the point in visiting a bookshop where one can't see the best books for sale? This is less true in the United States (although, sadly, it still happens) and even less true in Japan.

But even in England I find I have not been able to sell many books outside the English trade. To some degree, this may have something to do with my personality. Outspoken and unpredictable Americans are not frequently embraced by the more reserved Europeans, and it was a blessing finally for me to have discov-

ered Japan. I had been selling to the Japanese trade since the 1970s and, through a connection at Brown University, to Professor Watanabe, who for fifteen years was one of my best customers. When I finally arrived on Japanese soil for the ILAB Congress and book fair in 1990 my perspective on travelling abroad changed 180 degrees. The Japanese—trade and privates alike—accepted, even liked, this outspoken American, and better yet, they liked the books he offered. I have continued to dabble in Europe. I make my annual visit to London in June when I exhibit at the ABA Fair. But it has never been anything but lackluster for me, and whatever money I make there has always been on what I was able to buy, not on what I have been able to sell. On the other hand, I can't wait to get back to Japan, even if it's just for sushi.

In 1995 I passed the million-dollar mark for the first time. Revenues were \$1.1 million against expenses of \$993,000. This was also the first year of profits over \$100,000. 1995 was the first of three years over the \$1 million threshold, and it was a direct result of my having some very expensive books to sell on consignment, which had come from the Hill Library (the best of which went to that masked man, "six-figure Don"), and from Governor Andersen. In 1998 I dipped below \$900,000, and in 1999 I was only slightly better. The year 2000, however, was a record breaker industry-wide, to hear me and others tell of it: we had revenues of \$1.31 million against expenses of \$1.17 million.

There has been little talk thus far of the Internet here, and I mention it now only in passing. Yes, our Internet sales have been a wonderful boon, and our cash flow has improved considerably over the last five years because of it. But booksellers must still get books to sell, and in our experience, buying on the Internet has been unsuccessful. There are no libraries for sale on the Internet, and it is doubtful that there ever will be. Quality books come to booksellers in quantity almost always by socializing and networking, regardless of whether one has an open shop or not. Long-standing customers who are indulged and treated fairly by

booksellers are more often than not going to be a source for books in the future.

Good libraries now are often beyond the reach of a single bookseller (as are some books for that matter), and partnerships are often formed to minimize the risk and increase the potential for sale. In the American trade these partnerships are rampant, and I am happy to be part of the unions I am in. Good partnerships dissipate secrets and create loyalties, and two or three or four booksellers working toward a common goal is instructive, rewarding, and most of all, fun. I think it is very important to have as much money as one can in inventory; it really doesn't matter whether a particular book is owned by one bookseller or by five. More money in play means more potential for profit.

Is it better to have the books or is it better to have the customer? This is the age-old question of bookselling. I have been lucky enough to have had both, and at times I have had both good customers and good books at the same time: the best of both worlds. But if I were to have one and not the other, my answer to the question is that I would much rather have the customer. The good books are everywhere. Not so the good customer. A bookseller doesn't make as much money with the good customer, because the tendency is to make the price overtly fair. But happy customers sustain booksellers. Thus booksellers are happy and thrive. ■

## *The ABAA Newsletter*

welcomes contributions from all of its readers, ABAA members and non-members alike.

Please send your letters, articles, book reviews, announcements, and photographs to:

The ABAA Newsletter  
400 Summit Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55102  
PHONE 651-290-0700  
FAX 651-290-0646  
EMAIL [rulon@rulon.com](mailto:rulon@rulon.com)

# Gregory

continued from front page

ability to “get text” without purchasing a hardcopy affect the acquisition proclivities of institutional libraries? What are the broad implications of the digitization of text, and what are the specific implications for our professional heirs?

In preparing to write this article, it was simple enough to sort out existing technologies that have begun to replace printed text in specific instances. Likewise, it was a straightforward matter to review for myself the history of literacy and printing in the West. Printing, it has been said, is the one major technological innovation without which almost all technological innovations that followed would have been impossible. The great 1963 exhibition and oft-referenced catalogue, *Printing and the Mind of Man*, highlights with its titles the tangible impact printing has had on how we think and what we read, but it does little to shed light on the process itself. Finally, and by fortune, after much trolling of reference books and the Internet, I happened upon what I had been looking for all along—someone who had done my homework for me. Help came in the form of an article by James A. Dewar, entitled “The Information Age and the Printing Press: Looking Backward to See Ahead,” written for RAND and posted online at [www.rand.org/publications/P/P8014/](http://www.rand.org/publications/P/P8014/).<sup>1</sup> Dewar’s chief interest is in examining the impact of the printing press in order to speculate on the potential impact of today’s world computer network. Many of Dewar’s comments and assessments have specific application to the current and future used and rare book trade. However, anyone with even a modest interest in the past and future of books and information in general should find his article quite provocative.

If the digitization of books parallels the implementation of the printing press, then we can expect a technological shift to occur much more rapidly than a societal shift. Within the first half century of Western printing, as many copies of books had been printed as had been pro-

duced by scribes in the entire previous millennium. Yet literate European society, such as it existed, showed little change for over a century after the 42-line Bible appeared. Similarly, despite an ever-increasing volume of available digital texts, the books most of us read are likely to remain printed for some time to come. Among today’s schoolchildren there are, doubtless, not only book collectors of tomorrow but also parents of book collectors yet to be born. But what beyond that? Obviously, there are still collectors and curators of pre-1455 codices, manuscripts, letters, maps, tablets, etc. And so long as there are collectors, there will be professionals who make it their business to buy and sell that type of material. But the vast majority of book collectors and librarians concern themselves with the products of the age now dusking: printed matter. Still, most book collectors are creatures who, to quote F. Scott Fitzgerald out of context, are “borne back ceaselessly into the past” in pursuing their obsession for books, whether a year old or 500 years old. We can optimistically predict that there will always be some collectors of printed books. In speaking of this topic, another bookseller recently opined, “Of all the book collectors I’ve met, no matter how varied they were in their personalities or their interests, as collectors their obsession always went back to one moment, and that moment always involved the handling of a physical object.” In the centuries to come, when we might realistically predict that far less written material will appear on paper, just as far less written material today is produced by hand, will there be a quantity of book collectors sufficient to support a book trade of today’s proportions?

Though long a technology enthusiast, for many years I agreed with those who held that the printed book was here to stay: it was simply too efficient, too tactilely sublime, too beautiful and convenient to be replaced by an organized array of cold electrical impulses. Lately I have come to believe that such a view, while likely true for my own lifetime, has three shortcomings in the long term. First, it fails to anticipate the invention and

refinement of technologies that, perhaps now unimaginable in any practical sense, could indeed replace many of these romantic associations connected with printed books. One source told me that the next electronic book format we can expect to see will be a cylinder, as tall and thick as a trade paperback, with a pull-out sheet of film which will act as the screen. A hundred years from now, will we have instantly accessible, personally viewable miniature holographic screens or some other interface as might be seen in a science-fiction film? These projections (sorry) may prove to be either as sound as the inspirations of Jules Verne or as optimistically off-base as General Electric’s 1939 World’s Fair exhibit, “World of Tomorrow” (or worse, as corny as the Zager and Evans song “In the Year 2525”). But it is reasonable to suppose that consumers, i.e. readers, eventually will have an electronic device for reading that actually is comfortable, convenient, and easy to use, and that is not merely a toy or a passing fad—not tomorrow, but some day. Our inability to properly envision the future of digital book technology is reinforced by our inability to do the same in the past. One of the final paragraphs in Denys Hay’s introduction to *Printing and the Mind of Man* (New York, 1967), “Fiat Lux,” concerns the possibility that radio might replace the world of books. Hay’s tone implies that in 1967 we were very far away, indeed, from a day when it would be possible to “recapture the flying words and images of the past.” ARPANET, the precursor to the Internet, was begun two years later.

Significantly, defenders of the printed book often fail to recognize that the printing press didn’t merely change how books were produced; more importantly, it changed how ideas were created, preserved, retrieved, owned, and acquired. Such changes, to be discussed in greater detail later, might portend future changes in the way texts are written, read, and collected. Our definitions of writing and reading could conceivably change over a long period of time so that literati of the future may choose to download a text to some portable viewing device and not feel that they are consciously eschewing

the customs of an older age. Finally, the assertion that printed books will never be replaced fails to leave room for unexpected and unforeseeable developments. Dewar calls this variation of chaos theory “the dominance of unintended consequences” and cites several examples from the introduction of printing. The medieval Catholic Church, for instance, was a prolific user of printing, a tool it reasonably assumed could spread its message much more consistently and efficiently than scribal literature. But the great proliferation of Biblical texts, *variant* texts, significantly cast into doubt the existence of a single, infallible text, allowing Martin Luther to form and spread, through the very same new medium, the alternative interpretations that fueled the Protestant Reformation. With increased globalization, humanity’s future is more likely to resemble the constant changes of European and American history than the stability of ancient Egypt or medieval China. If we accept change as the norm, it is more unwarranted to predict that printed books will *not* be replaced than to predict that they will.

One need not look at toys, gimmicks, and prototypes to find electronic texts. Would anyone whose lifeblood is the selling of books turn at any time to an electronic version of text and, in this token gesture, betray his or her own professional posterity? It is done countless times every day all across the globe when book dealers utilize electronic reference information. Electronic text can be up-to-the-minute: what is today’s going price for a particular “rare” book according to entries at [www.abe.com](http://www.abe.com)? Electronic text can be searched efficiently and powerfully: what are the auction prices realized for similar copies over the last quarter century according to the CD-ROM of *American Book Prices Current*? Electronic text can be hyperlinked for more intuitive or exotic information retrieval: how many of the books in a collection of volumes filmed by Alfred Hitchcock also represent the first published mysteries of their respective authors according to the CD-ROM of Allen J. Hubin’s *Crime Fiction*? Compared to pouring through numerous

printed catalogues, checking every annual edition of the auction records, or flipping back and forth *ad nauseum* in a multi-volume reference tome, computer-aided bookselling is a godsend to the early twenty-first-century professional.

Much has already been written regarding the rapid changes to the world of antiquarian bookselling and collecting brought about by the Internet. Several are worth noting because they exemplify principles of social or market theory in the many-to-many communication age as predicted by Dewar and others. We have seen a massive accessibility of information, specifically the instant accessibility and availability of a significant portion of the antiquarian book market. At some point around the turn of this new century, we passed the point at which more collectible books for sale were listed online than were not. This increased accessibility has demystified the antiquarian book market for both potential collectors and potential sellers, and increased the actual numbers of both. Ease of accessibility also has democratized the business: gone are many of the traditional growing pains of building a strong rare book business, including learning to accurately and effectively identify and grade books, and grooming both a stock and a customer base. For a previous generation of booksellers, only a professional with years of experience would have been in a position to sell a high-end book to its eventual consumer. Today any person with a \$15,000 book in his or her possession has at least some reason to *believe* that he or she can eliminate the middleman and sell it personally on the World Wide Web to the final purchaser. The Internet eroded the distinction between bookselling as a profession and as a hobby or part-time avocation, just as the printing press took literacy and learning far beyond the realm of scribal, primarily sacred, literature.

Counter-intuitively, information in greater quantity delivered at a greater speed does not necessarily create a stability of knowledge, at least in the short term. In a 1981 article Renato Rosaldo commented that

*roughly during the first century after Gutenberg’s invention, print did as*

*much to perpetuate blatant errors as it did to spread enlightened truth.... Never before had things been so confusing with, for instance, Dante’s world view achieving prominent visibility at the same time that Copernican views were making their way into print. Nonsense and truth seemed to move hand in hand.<sup>2</sup>*

In the antiquarian book trade we have seen an outflux of bibliographic information that previously had been restricted to professionals and serious collectors willing to spend the time and money on a reference library. And in a parallel to that confusing incunabular period, bibliographic data circulates on the Internet quickly, whether it is correct or not. Variant issues, trial bindings, and production abnormalities take on the gospel of “rare, true first edition” whether they constitute such or not. I would argue, probably not without stirring up some dissent and even ill-will, that the democratization of the antiquarian book business through new technology has eroded industry-wide standards of professional knowledge and insight that were by-products of the steep learning curve and Darwinian struggle previous dealers had to undergo.

Slowly but eventually printed books, because they were standardized products that were virtually exact in thousands of copies available to thousands of readers, allowed for a cumulative editing process by which monsters were removed from the edges of maps, and myths and fallacies were removed from cosmologies. We can expect that, over time, bibliographic truth will squeeze out the guesses, hasty conclusions, and blatant errors currently to be found on the Internet. As previously mentioned, we have already seen a shift of some types of detailed bibliographic data and accurate pricing information. Up to just a few years ago this information was likely to go unrecorded and to be kept carefully guarded as it allowed specialists to earn their keep and helped to separate the strata of the industry. In many sub-specialties of the antiquarian trade this is still the case. Information of

continued on next page

## Gregory

continued from previous page

this type, which is in print, on CD-ROM, or available on the Internet through subscription, is largely held in copyright. Indeed, a colleague who is one of the most successful and prominent publishers and dealers in books about books told me recently that for the past several years he has taken great pains to include digital reproduction rights in all his contracts and to amend older contracts to include them as well. It is conceivable, perhaps even likely, that eventually specialized, proprietary, and reliably accurate bibliographic and pricing information will be publicly available on a worldwide computer network if there is some demand for it. At that point, perhaps the only quality separating the professional from the novice will be the irreplaceable personal knowledge that comes with hands-on experience with rare materials. Will the more specialized end of the book trade be able to keep proprietary information under wraps in the decades to come?

The very notions of intellectual property rights, of copyrights, trademarks and patents, were a response to the printing press and its ability to efficiently spread information from one to many without the supervision or even consent of the author. Cervantes was essentially forced to write a second part to *Don Quixote* not because he was unable to contain his creative muse, but rather because he was becoming dispossessed of his characters: imitators capitalized on his success by writing their own spurious continuations of the adventures of the Don and his squire. Compare this to the recent case involving the manuscript of an alternate version of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, in which author Alice Randall presents readers with new characters intermixed with people and scenes from the original work to present the world of Tara from an African-American perspective. A judge ruled that this work could not be commercially published since it infringed on the copyrights and trademarks held by trustees of Mitchell's estate (and that the social criticism the

manuscript provided could have been delineated without Mitchell's characters and settings). If the text of this new novel were to become available on the Internet, nothing could stop the potential for its circulation via peer-to-peer file sharing if enough people wanted to read it. In the last year we have seen a professional industry severely compromised as popular music listeners used Napster and the Internet to avoid buying album-length music CDs simply to listen to particular individual songs. Music publishers would do well to study Horace's *Ars Poetica: Delere licebit quod non edideris; nescit vox missa reverti* (You may destroy whatever you haven't published; once out words spoken can never be recalled). Once information is introduced on the Internet, no amount of injunction or encryption will be able to effectively stifle it—it will circulate or auto-extinguish on its own merits. Thus, reliable specialty information could gradually become public domain, be it how to identify an obscure first edition, build pipe bombs, or perform neurosurgery. Again, hands-on experience will continue to be the determinant of success or failure in such varied endeavors.<sup>3</sup>

Reference works such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and concordances are naturals as digital texts: their non-linear nature lends itself most efficiently to the searchability and cross-referencing power of computers.<sup>4</sup> Down the road a spell, if you will, they are likely to be the first printed books to become extinct because of the expense of keeping printed versions current and accurate. If you doubt me, study the last two decades of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the bulwark of the reference industry that forged ahead with its traditional printing and distribution channels, ignoring a consumer trend toward multi-media CD-ROMs, on-line subscription services, and lucrative software-bundling alliances until it found itself perilously close to financial debility. Academic students may not typically be book collectors, but their need to access texts for study has long been an impetus, at least nominally, for the institutional acquisition of antiquarian or out-of-print books. In his excellent piece, "The Rare

Book Market Today," William Reese addresses the shifting trends in library buying and mentions that among the causes for cut-backs in institutional purchases of rare books is the belief held by some libraries that their potential function would be better served in alternative formats such as microfilm or CDs. These latter technologies are merely stepping stones along a shift to networked, electronic texts. Again we can find parallels with fifteenth-century Europe: the digitization of text is to movable type as computer networks are to paper (introduced from the East a few centuries earlier and by the end of the scribal era widely used in place of parchment). The latter complement the former by allowing for economical, widespread distribution of information. In 1971 Michael Hart began inputting text in what became Project Gutenberg, a non-profit effort that now has several thousand canonical titles digitized and ready for downloading. A similar effort, the Internet Public Library, has over 15,000 titles (none of them on reserve). Questia.com has over 35,000 books and articles in digital format, accessible and searchable, with the intention of allowing college undergraduates to write research papers from the comfort of their dorm rooms.<sup>5</sup> No doubt the big fish Questia is after are not individual student subscribers but large institutional subscribers like universities. And for the student who would like to study the original printing of Vesalius' *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* or Fontana's *Della Trasportatione dell' Obelisco Vaticano* but doesn't have access to either, Octavo Digital Editions offers affordable CD-ROM duplicates with each page of an original edition carefully photographed.<sup>6</sup> We might speculate that the trend toward acquiring facsimiles in lieu of originals will continue. But perhaps owning "the real thing" will, in the future even more than in the past, constitute a badge of prestige, allowing for continued sales to institutions indefinitely.<sup>7</sup>

Ancillary to the Napster phenomenon, that copyright-crushing killer-app of the World Wide Web, is that it allows amateur musical efforts to circulate in the same medium as that of professional

musicians. Already there exists a parallel with written literature on the Internet, as would-be authors circumvent the more traditional vanity press route. At some point a text will be written that will come to have lasting literary value but which will never actually have a first printing in any standardized, commercial sense. Indeed, this literary effort may take a form as yet unseen. Recall that professional authors (those who sustain themselves commercially by writing) and the modern novel (including the ability to write it and the societal desire to read it), despite spoken and scribal antecedents, are themselves products of printing technology. Important and lasting electronic texts in the sciences are likely to be seen even before their counterparts in fiction because many scientists are now accustomed to peer review through electronic forum input. Again, there is a parallel in the spread of movable type, which allowed for the sudden and rapid cumulative development of scientific ideas through exponentially increased distribution. For decades, scientists have relied on academic journals to keep abreast of the latest developments in their fields—much would change between the time a scientific manuscript was completed and the finished book was distributed. While academic journals continue to have a cachet of prestige for their contributors, web publication and criticism of new scientific information now is also an essential part of keeping abreast of important developments.

And what of the unintended consequences? Will the World Wide Web have significant and lasting influences on language itself? Consider the manner in which printed English (e.g. the King James Bible and the works of Shakespeare) stabilized the language. Few today can read *Beowulf* or even *The Canterbury Tales* without translation, whereas, once one gets accustomed to the funny “s,” most people can read anything in English printed during the last five centuries. Most intriguing of all speculations is the manner in which the many-to-many communicative power of the Internet will change the way people think. Perhaps the most stimulating “elec-

tronic authors” will not be the first electronic Petrarchs, Cervantes, or Shakespeares—or even the first electronic Copernicuses, Newtons, or Einsteins—but rather the first electronic Paines, Jeffersons, and Marxes (and Luthers, for that matter): authors of texts whose revolutionary sensibilities, perfectly coupled with instant and ubiquitous accessibility, will manifestly change the scope of human history in immutable ways. When the revolution is over, be it a revolution in art, science, or politics, what artifacts will be sufficiently tangible to be collected?

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> RAND, I learned, bears no relation to the Objectivist novelist Ayn Rand, but is the prototypical think tank, an organization whose antecedent was the Research and Development department of the emerging United States Airforce at the end of World War II and which for the past fifty years has applied careful scientific analysis to a variety of technological and non-technological issues, from the strategic deployment of ground forces in specific military situations to the reduction of class size in specific educational settings. It is not entirely coincidental that RAND and ILAB are almost exactly the same age, as both reflect the opportunities and needs of the new world which emerged in the post-war era.

<sup>2</sup>“The Cultural Impact of the Printed Word, A Review Article,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1981, Vol. 23, No. 3, p. 508, as quoted in Dewar, *ibid*.

<sup>3</sup> Dewar points out that cumulative information building is most efficient when there is a single copy or version of a work accessible to all potential editors. Thus, bibliographic accuracy will be enhanced if there is a single, standard site on any given subject to which all users can refer and which can be refined by consensus over time. “Without such a ‘single’ copy,” he warns, “questions can arise as to which copy is the genuine or official mark-up copy.” In this alone might there not be some hope for the printed book?

<sup>4</sup> The entire printed history of the National Geographic Society is now

available on a single DVD—surely a godsend not only for the excellent text and photography it contains, but also because it allows antiquarian booksellers to excuse themselves from purchasing the many bundled issues of the magazine that they are constantly offered. These, it would seem, are more prevalent in the attics of America than rodents, spiders, and dust combined.

<sup>5</sup> In my month-long trial subscription to Questia.com I tried several searches but found very little among its 35,000 titles to help me in researching either this article or an obscure nineteenth-century suffragist. I suspect college undergraduates who lack the energy to leave their dorm rooms will also lack the energy to come up with original topics for their term papers, and Questia.com’s limited scope will suffice. In truth, though I found the interface slow and clumsy and the library inadequate, Questia’s intent is sound enough and will likely prove a good model for the future. The future just isn’t here yet.

<sup>6</sup> The study of facsimiles in place of originals, even when done with caution, can lead to erroneous conclusions. A colleague has told me of an instance where a published academic paper had to be retracted when the scholar learned that the microfilm copy upon which he had based his study was itself a reproduction of a textually inferior reprint, not the significantly older original printing. If he had been able to hold the reprint in his hands rather than view it on a screen, he would have known immediately that it was not the original printing and thus would have suspected that it was not the original text.

<sup>7</sup> The “prestige” factor, which favors one text format over another, existed as well at the dawn of the age of printing. In *Master Makers of the Book* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1928) William Dana Orcutt relates that in Duke Frederick’s famous library, where more than thirty copyists were employed for more than ten years in transcribing desired texts, all the volumes were bound in the most elaborate manner—“nor could you find a single printed volume in the whole library, for the Duke would have been ashamed to own one.” ■

# Obituaries

## Paul Appel, Mount Vernon, NY

I knew Paul's name before I knew him. We were both living in Mamaroneck, NY, a small village on the shores of Long Island Sound in Westchester County, a bastion of Republicans. There were so few of our kind that we knew them by name if not personally. When Suzanne Littwin, my late partner, and I opened a small bookshop near Paul's office, he became a good friend and colleague.

Paul was born in 1910 in Chicago. At the age of sixteen, he began his long career as a book dealer by earning money as a book scout and later opening a small bookstore. However, with the effects of the depression being felt, Paul closed the shop and moved to New York City, where he hoped to make his fortune. While working for the WPA Theatrical Project, he continued to search for books. In the late 1930s, Paul met his future wife, Pat, at a party given in support of the Spanish Civil War.

Paul wrote promotion for a small news sheet related to books and worked at odd jobs for Viking Press, where Pat was employed. Throughout, Paul continued

his book scouting. After successfully buying and selling the contents of a defunct auction house, he decided to open a bookshop on Third Avenue in New York in the 1950s. Along with books, he stocked some antique bric-a-brac. It was from New York that Paul moved his business to Mamaroneck and later to Mt. Vernon.

Paul, both energetic and restless, became an auctioneer with his own auction house where he sold antiques. The enterprise lasted for about three years, and throughout this period, Paul continued his book business.

Around 1953, a local storage house offered Paul effects from the estate of Anita Moffett, which were stored at the firm and in which the heirs were uninterested. These included miscellaneous furniture items, bric-a-brac, and over twenty-five cartons, contents unknown. Recognizing Anita Moffett as a grand niece of Mark Twain, he bought them all. Paul, donning a top hat that he found in the lot, would every day painstakingly go through each carton. It was in the last one that he came upon what is every

dealer's fantasy—a very large number of handwritten letters by Mark Twain and by Twain's brother and mother. These are now at the University of California, Berkeley.

In the mid-fifties, Paul went to South America, thinking that he could buy wonderful old books in the monasteries there. After picking up his car, which had been shipped to Peru, and choosing not to use the Pan-American Highway, Paul drove over the Andes, through Chile and Argentina. He just missed being caught in a large earthquake, which occurred the day after he passed through that area. One could speculate as to whether Paul's natural exuberance might have caused this upheaval. Paul made many friends in South America; they were all impressed with his pioneering and his courageous behavior in crossing that territory and the Andes Cordillera. Many descried him a jolly good fellow, a great bookman, and a gentleman. While Paul was not able to buy any books from the monasteries, he did find a very early book about California. He also came upon a first edition of *Simon Willard and his Clocks*, which he

---

## Thefts

continued from front page

Mylar sleeve and probably "exported" in a stack of catalogues.

[Indian Narrative]. [Rare Black Hawk War Captivity Pamphlet]. *Narrative of the Capture and Providential Escape of Misses Frances and Almira Hall... taken prisoners by the Savages, at a Frontier settlement... Likewise is Added The Interesting Narrative of the captivity and sufferings of Philip Brigdon...* N.p., 1833. 24pp. 8vo. Pamphlet sewn. Howes H61; Buck 244. Missing part of woodcut at front inner wrap; with a second woodcut facing C1. "A curious pamphlet, issued, probably, to stir up animosity toward the Indians. It illustrates, to some extent, conditions in northern Illinois during the Black Hawk War" [Buck].

Slightly different copy in the Ayer Supplement. Uncommon.

Please contact J & J Hanrahan if you have any information on the whereabouts of this item: 120 Salt Marsh circle, Wells, ME 04090; phone: 207-646-1811; fax: 207-646-1817; email: hanrahan@maine.rr.com

**Rulon-Miller Books** has reported the loss of the following Native American language item on April 19, 2001, from their glass showcase at the fair:

Roger Williams. *A key into the language of America; or an help to the language of the natives of that part of America called New-England*. London: Gregory Dexter, 1643. 8vo, pp. [16], 197, [3]; wood engraved initials, head and tail pieces, some smudging, one leaf with small wormhole, small ink stains on the title page; early sheep, rubbed corners renewed. First edition of the first

book in English on the language of the Native Americans

Please contact Rulon-Miller Books if you have any information on the whereabouts of this item: 400 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55102; phone: 800-441-0076 or 651-290-0700; fax: 651-290-0646; email: rulon@rulon.com

**Ken Sanders** has reported the loss of the following volume from the New York Fair on April 19, 2001:

Gene Stratton-Porter. *After the Flood*. Chicago, 1911. Indiana Society of Chicago. One volume of a 12-volume set. Red cloth. Small 8vo.

Please contact Ken Sanders Rare Books if you have any information on the whereabouts of this volume: 268 South 200 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84111; phone: 801-521-3819; fax: 801-521-2606; email: ken@dreamgarden.com ■

arranged to have reprinted there, thus beginning his publishing business.

Paul's publishing business focused on scholarly books and bibliography, and produced books by and about Kenneth Patchen, John Cowper Powys, Aubrey Beardsley, Sherwood Anderson, and John Steinbeck, among others. His proudest achievement was publishing a six-volume edition of the transcript of the Sacco-Vanzetti trial with an introduction by Justice William O. Douglas and a fifty-page addendum of subsequent proceedings that Paul assembled.

Paul and Pat traveled to Europe frequently, buying several estate libraries in France and England. The pursuit of the book was Paul's great pleasure. Nothing or no one daunted him in his quest. He loved his books, not only for their content but also for their physical qualities, appreciating their binding, typography, illustrations, and paper.

Paul was knowledgeable; when asked about some obscure author of the early 1900s, his usual response was "a one-book author" (he always knew the title as well), and he was always right. He was generous with his knowledge.

Paul was a colorful character who could be cantankerous, impulsive, and impetuous as well as enthusiastic, imaginative, creative, and remorseful when he over-reacted. It may have been his impetuosity that enabled him to make quick decisions about the purchase of a very large library, for his reaction to books was visceral as well as intellectual. Two weeks before he died, he was complaining that he had not bought any books recently. Paul had a love for language, words, and puns, and a great sense of humor.

Paul and I, for many years, shared a booth at ABAA fairs. His humor, comments, and stories helped to pass the time during those long, dull periods between customers. I shall miss him.

Paul Appel died March 1, 2001, after a brief illness. He is survived by his wife, Patricia; his daughter, Joy Anderson; and his granddaughter, Victoria Anderson. A memorial service was held on Sunday, March 4, 2001, in Mount Vernon.

*Elaine S. Feiden*

### **Teresa Harding, Wells, ME**

I am sorry to report that lung cancer claimed the life Doug Harding's wife Teresa on Sunday evening, April 22, 2001. She had been a special friend to Sharon and me for over twenty-five years, ever since she and Doug first took pity on a fledgling bookseller from Des Moines, providing me with a place to stay at their home in Nashua as I wandered around the bookshops of New England. Teresa was a joy to know, fiercely dedicated to her family and working hard behind the scenes at whatever needed to be done for her family and their business.

A memorial service was held April 24, 2001, at the Bibber Funeral Home in Kennebunk, Maine. In lieu of flowers, the Harding family would prefer that memorial contributions be made to the American Cancer Society.

*Phil McBlain*

### **Robert Lucas, Blandford, MA**

Longtime ABAA member Robert Lucas died on February 9, 2001, after a year-long battle against lymphoma. He was fifty-nine years old.

Bob was born January 21, 1942, in Westfield, MA, and spent endless hours fishing and hunting in the area during his early years. Later, he attended the University of Massachusetts, where he completed an undergraduate program in forestry and remained to receive a master's degree in botany, specializing in mycology (the study of fungi). During these years, he added to his hunting skills, learning to track mushrooms and wildflowers as well as fish and game.

After working for two years as a technician in a Forest Service lab, Bob headed for Cornell University to pursue a PhD in plant pathology. While at Cornell, he continued his hunting expeditions for flora and fauna, but he added to them forays for old bottles that could be found in abandoned cellar holes and dumps in the woods surrounding Ithaca. His interest in old bottles led Bob to research in patent medicine advertising, which resulted in his interest in American almanacs. Bob left Cornell after four years, ABD (all but dissertation), and

with an abiding interest in Americana that would eventually bring him to the antiquarian book trade.

Bob then worked in environmental education in eastern Massachusetts for five years, serving as education director at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History at Brewster and director of the Children's Museum at Dartmouth. At the same time, he developed his interests in antiques, particularly in antiquarian books and paper. His hunting expeditions now took him to flea markets and antique shops throughout New England, and he began publishing book catalogues part time.

In 1977, Bob moved to Blandford, where he established his full-time antiquarian book business. He was a very active member of MARIAB (Massachusetts and Rhode Island Antiquarian Booksellers) during its formative years and joined the ABAA in 1980. Bob traded in nineteenth-century Americana, whaling, and autograph materials, and he became especially regarded for his knowledge of New England authors Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe, and Henry David Thoreau. Three of the major Thoreau collections now at the Thoreau Institute in Concord, MA, were appraised by him.

Bob lent his expertise and energy to the community of Blandford as well as to the rare book world. Over the years, he served on the Park and Recreation Committee, the Gateway Regional School Committee, and on two local conservation commissions. He was a past president of the Blandford Historical Society and co-chair of the city's 250th Birthday Celebration. He conducted nature walks and tours of local historically significant sites.

Ten years ago, Bob bought a computer, and with instruction manual in hand, he mastered the new technology and started browsing the Internet. He was among the first antiquarian booksellers with a web site, and he distinguished his by building informative pages filled with hyperlinks and perceptive essays for dealers and collectors alike. In the last few years of

*continued on next page*

# Reese Speaks at Library of Congress Conference

by Terry Belanger

On Wednesday, April 4, 2001, the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress (LC) co-sponsored a one-day conference with LC's Center for the Book: *Private Collectors & Special Collections in Libraries*. The conference took place in the Mumford Room in LC's Madison Building on Capitol Hill, and it attracted more than 200 persons from a surprisingly wide geographical area for a one-day event, including attendees from institutions circling Washington in a fertile crescent and stretching from Cambridge, Ithaca, and Oberlin around to Durham. There were a good many book collectors and antiquarian booksellers in attendance, including a number of heavy hitters in both groups.

Welcoming the attendees at 9:30 am, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington announced that this conference inaugurated a new series similar to the joint Center for the Book and Rare Book Division undertakings of the 1980s that took place when William Matheson was LC's Chief of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division.

Future conferences in this series are planned for October 2001 and April 2002 (the latter featuring Christopher de Hamel and marking the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Lessing Rosenwald's gift of the Giant Bible of Mainz to LC).

Speakers at this year's inaugural event included Alice Schreyer (University of Chicago), ABAA member William Reese

(William Reese Company), and Robert H. Jackson (Cleveland, OH); other program participants included panelists Selby Kifer (Sotheby's NY), Edmond Lincoln (NYC), Merrily E. Taylor (Brown University), John Warnock (Adobe/Octavo), and Mark Dimunation (LC).

Here follows an informal and unofficial account of Reese's presentation, "What Have You Done for Me Lately? Collectors and Institutions in the Modern World." A principal speaker, along with Alice Schreyer, in the conference's morning session, Reese was introduced by John Y. Cole as a major force in American antiquarian bookselling, "despite his youthful appearance—well, let's face it: despite his youth!" [Reese notes: At forty-five, after twenty-six years in the book business, I'm glad somebody thinks so!]

Reese began his presentation by noting that collectors have played a big role in building libraries in this country since Colonial days, and that there ought to be a natural symbiosis between the two. Though the relationship between donors and libraries seems simple, it has, however, a way of becoming complex.

The major driving force in the rare book market today is the scarcity of material, a scarcity caused by the tendency of materials to move from private hands to institutional ones: "most antiquarian books in the world are in institutions." The attics have largely been opened out, and rare books are now

uncommon—in good condition, they are very rare. Collectors from Hoe to Siebert have realized that gifts to institutions would eventually dry up the market. Dr Siebert was angered by libraries, and he could never bring himself to give his collections to any library. He was a misanthrope: but his attitudes are increasingly shared by today's collectors.

## Stamps vs. Books

Stamp collecting offers an instructive comparison to that of book collecting: there is virtually no institutional participation in the market. Here any collector who lives long enough and who has enough money can eventually end up with virtually everything.

At the time of the Hoe sale, there was no distinction between books and information; the transfer of books represented a transfer of knowledge, and the culture of books and the culture of learning was the same. The first area to come under attack was newspapers, because of microfilming, with pamphlets and government documents next. The importance of books as texts has been greatly reduced. Today's collectors have few illusions that by collecting they are establishing a body of knowledge; they are collecting icons, not information, and no one who owns a copy of Dunlap's printing of the Declaration of Independence is likely to read the text in that copy. Libraries continue to have a dual role: delivering informa-

---

## Obituaries

continued from previous page

his life, Bob conducted most of his business through his web site.

Bob was first diagnosed with lymphoma in October 1999. When he relapsed in May 2000, he mounted an intensive campaign to locate clinical trials by scouring the Internet and by calling drug companies directly. He entered a clinical trial at Beth Israel Hospital in

Boston that combined high-dose chemotherapy, a stem-cell transplant, and concurrent treatment with monoclonal antibodies. Initial checks of his lymph glands looked promising, but this very aggressive lymphoma metastasized to Bob's brain and did not respond quickly enough to the chemotherapy available. The last two weeks of his life, Bob was at home under hospice care. He died peacefully on Friday evening, February 9, 2001.

Bob is survived by his wife of thirty-five years, Patricia; two daughters, Jes-

sica Lucas of Westfield, MA, and Sheila Lucas of Blandford; his mother, Bertha Lucas of Westfield, MA; and his sister, Jane Lucas of Waterbury, CT.

A memorial service was held Sunday, February 25, in Huntington, MA. Donations in Bob's memory may be made to Friends of the Library Endowment Fund, W. E. B. DuBois Library, University of Massachusetts, 154 Hicks Way, Amherst, MA 01003-9275.

Patricia Lucas ■



tion while preserving the artifact. Digitization puts libraries in a double bind: on the one hand, some institutions will see digital copies as acceptable replacements for original artifacts; on the other hand, digitization will release some collectors from an obligation to give their books to libraries since they are no longer needed as artifacts.

There is a lively debate regarding the likely effects of current tax reforms. Tax laws in the post-WWII era have favored donations, providing an extraordinary opportunity to donate highly appreciated items to institutions. The end of the death tax will be a major blow to institutions. The higher prices that rare books are currently fetching will also militate against donation, since book collectors' books tend to loom larger in their estates than was formerly the case.

#### Collectors

Collectors used to be concentrated in the northeastern United States; they tended to know each other, and they tended to work with a relatively small

number of dealers. Collectors are now more dispersed, with less contact with each other. Modern collectors are more skeptical of libraries than they used to be, and every mass disposal by libraries lessens their confidence (viz. the dispersal of the Franklin Institute library, that of the Foreign Office in London; and the guillotining of New York Public Library's pamphlet collection). Collectors need to be convinced that libraries need their support.

On the other hand, institutions should look beyond the gift of books to more general support. Dealers can bring collectors and librarians together. Dealers themselves are sometimes considerable collectors (cf. Jammes and photographs, Rosenthal and annotated books, H P Kraus and Sir Francis Drake).

#### Curators

The greatest single thing curators can do is to bring students into contact with rare books; such moments can shape lifetime loyalties. Collectors and institutions should have goals in common beyond the

transfer of books. Collectors have a stake in scholarship, too, and they should move beyond the donation of materials to become supporters of programs; in this, libraries should look for guidance to museums, which are already in this business (we are a drop in the bucket, compared to the museum world).

There are many more stumbling blocks than there used to be between collectors and libraries, though the situation is not necessarily bleak. There are still plenty of comprehensive collectors out there, putting together collections likely to be attractive and appropriate gifts to libraries. A skillful collector of modest means can still do well, as can one of considerable means: witness Michael Zinman's collection of pre-1800 American imprints, headed for the Library Company of Philadelphia (its collection of such material is now second only to that of the American Antiquarian Society). The collection stayed intact because of the willingness of collector and institution to work together. ■

---

## Recent Books by Members

### *The Jefferson Letters.* By John

**Ballinger.** Petersburg, VA: The Dietz Press, 2001. 8vo. 225 pages; hardcover, dust jacket. \$25.95. Special slipcased edition limited to 100 signed, numbered copies with manuscript leaf bound in, \$75.00.

#### Reviewed by William L. Butts

You've just got to admire a novel in which a large black man dressed as Alice (of *Wonderland* fame) yells "Yo' mamma!" at a United States president.

Bibliopoles hooked on the bibliomystery genre, rejoice: Our colleague John Ballinger, proprietor of The Bookpress, Ltd. in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, has made a welcome addition to the genre with *The Jefferson Letters*. Brad Parker, owner of Parker's Rare Books in Colonial Williamsburg (how's that for a coincidence!), and his ex-con buddy Napoleon Robespierre Jones, to whom

readers were introduced in Ballinger's first book, *The Williamsburg Forgeries* (1989), again make an unlikely duo.

The bibliomystery genre has been around for a long time, but never really came into the limelight until John Dunning's *Booked to Die* became a surprise bestseller in 1992. This groundbreaking volume gave the obscure genre a popularity and exposure it had never before received, though none of the entries since have captured the attention of that book (and, to a lesser degree, its 1995 sequel, *A Bookman's Wake*). Fans of Ballinger's *Williamsburg Forgeries* will find the eleven-year wait worthwhile, for *The Jefferson Letters* is in many respects a superior effort, livelier and better paced than its predecessor.

Don't you hate it when a well-meaning friend recommends a movie but reveals more than is necessary? Mystery books tend to be one of the most difficult type

of books to review, being laden with information that ought not be revealed before its time. So, at the risk of appearing annoyingly cryptic, this will have to be one of those reviews that discusses a book without really saying much about it.

While bibliomania is the "hook" that pulls many a dealer toward bibliomysteries, those of us who deal heavily in historic documents will find special appeal in *The Jefferson Letters*. From the opening sentence—"The letter was neatly written on one large sheet of paper and ended with the bold signature of Thomas Jefferson"—the intoxicating lure of autographs is a strong element in *The Jefferson Letters*. When the wife of a much-hated local bookseller shows up on Parker's doorstep and sells him a superb Jefferson letter, with the promise of many more to come, the stage is set. Every dealer has been in a

continued on next page

## Recent Books

continued from previous page

position comparable to Parker's upon being handed the Jefferson letter and will appreciate his understated response: "'It's nice,' I said flatly. It was, of course, more than nice. It was magnificent." Any dealer versed in American historic documents will agree with Parker's thoughts about the letter: "Buying a Jefferson letter is like buying cash. It's incredibly easy to sell."

Bibliomysteries written by non-bibliopoles, by mystery writers who merely use the book world as a convenient backdrop, quickly reveal themselves as such to any antiquarian bookseller who reads them. They may be quite good as mysteries—Lawrence Block's exceptional *The Burglar in the Rye*, which I reviewed recently for *Manuscripts*, is a perfect example—but they lack the ring of authenticity that only intimate firsthand knowledge of antiquarian books can provide. This Ballinger provides liberally, and readers will find themselves chuckling and nodding in agreement at many an observation.

What bookseller cannot relate to Parker's portrait of Peter Mosley, the conniving dealer just mentioned?

*I had yet to meet a bookseller who admitted he liked or trusted him. The mention of Peter Mosley's name at a book fair was usually good for another "terrible-Peter" story. Over the years I had heard dozens. I can't recall one bookdealer ever saying a kind word about the man, which means a lot in a profession of diverse people who, politically, range from left of Ted Kennedy to right of David Duke.*

*Peter Mosley came off as snide, arrogant, and smarmy. I habitually counted the books on my shelves after he visited the shop...*

And who but a bona fide bookseller would make an observation such as this:

*Arriving at the shop after it opens always puts me in a panic. I feel as though I were on the back end of a treadmill, running to catch up. People think of rare bookshops as bucolic islands of peace in a noisy and disrupt-*

*ive world. They're not. They are a mosaic of interruptions and chaos. As a bookseller, you have to be focused, or crazy—one or the other—to survive. No doubt I'm a little of both.*

Only actual experience, not the novelist's imagination, can come up with savvy remarks such as this on the subject of pricing:

*Pricing books is an art form. The goal is to come up with the highest price for which a book will speedily sell. For twentieth century books, I create an imaginary bell-shaped curve to represent the market-place. For desirable architecture books, and books on colonial Virginia, my prices tend to be higher than most. I have private customers for these books, ones who don't have the time or inclination to shop around... Because I'm willing to pay a fair price for books, I see a lot more unusual ones than anyone else I know, so my customers get first chance at the desirable rarities, books the tire-kicking bargain-hunters rarely see. I put lower prices on the more common also-rans, and very low prices on books outside my areas of expertise. I put very, very low prices on items I shouldn't have bought in the first place. Sometimes I price them for less than I paid, just to get rid of them. There's nothing worse for me than coming into the bookshop every day and staring at my mistakes.*

Many such morsels flavor *The Jefferson Letters* and lend it a believably authentic feel: "I wore my stoic, impassive face, the one I use when I'm making an offer on a library..." "Aside from lying in bed with Kate after making love, sitting alone in my bookshop at night... is the closest I have ever come to total peace." This nuts-and-bolts aspect, more importantly, helps the reader suspend disbelief at one far-fetched supernatural plot element that otherwise might ring flat.

*The Jefferson Letters* introduces Brad Parker's new girlfriend Kate Whitney, owner, along with ex-cons Chili Rodriguez and Napoleon Robespierre Jones, of an upscale eatery named Chez

Bayou. When the bookselling husband from whom Parker bought the Jefferson letter demands (and is refused) its return, then turns up dead in his burned-out home with his wife fatally wounded, attention turns to Parker. Twists and turns—neither too many nor too few—come in the form of a Williamsburg (via Los Angeles) detective with an attitude, a health crisis for Kate, and complications from Parker's ultra-wealthy dream client, the Christian Historical Trust, who it turns out is editing and publishing a controversial newly-discovered batch of—you guessed it—Jefferson correspondence. The possibility of Parker's Jefferson letter being a forgery becomes very real after Parker makes a surprising discovery at Mosley's crisped house. What began as a simple autograph purchase quickly evolves into a sophisticated plot to destroy Thomas Jefferson's reputation, with Parker convincingly sucked up into the center of it. All in all, it's a talented and intelligent blend of bookish intrigue with a cast of well-developed, memorable characters.

As a former English instructor and book editor myself, I do admit to occasional annoyance at a minor but recurring grammatical lapse (subject separated from verb by a comma) that should have been caught by an alert editor. Otherwise, Ballinger's prose is lean and clean, his dialogue snappy and witty, his plot just winding enough to hold attention without turning into a convoluted maze.

Antiquarian booksellers will no doubt provide the toughest audience for *The Jefferson Letters*—as far as sticklers for authenticity go—but they will likely also derive the greatest pleasure from it. Let's hope that those *outside* our bookish world will share the excitement of books and autographs and history that Ballinger's *Jefferson Letters* conveys.

***Hundred Waters: A Dangerous Journey into the Heart of a Man.* By David Greigor.** Seattle: Puget Sound Press, 2001. 8vo, 282 pages. Trade paperback \$16.00. Paperback limited to 50 signed and numbered copies with original document included \$50.00

In 1967, eighteen-year-old Morse code operator Eddie Carr is assigned to an army listening post in Panama. What he finds there changes his life. When his closest friend, Harry Miles, goes missing deep in the jungle, Eddie follows. And soon Eddie's quest to save Harry turns into Eddie's battle against the powerful forces of the jungle to save his own life. The madness and poetry of *Hundred Waters* takes the reader on a journey into one man's encounter with the power of place and the uncertainties of self.

Gregor's unswerving vision of what it means to confront one's fears and destiny is once again demonstrated in *Hundred Waters*, the long awaited sequel to the first volume of his fictional memoir of Eddie Carr, *In Different Times* (Alki Press, 1992).

In *Hundred Waters*, Gregor employs a documentary form to piece together the continuing story of Eddie Carr as he explores his own identity on the gritty streets and in the threatening jungles of revolution-torn Panama in 1969.

*Hundred Waters* delivers its powerful punch on many levels. It is a story of youth and the often painful journey to manhood. At the same time it is a tale of love and friendship and the price we pay for each. Interwoven are searing and sometimes poignant inner revelations that paint a surreal glimpse into the kind of madness that can lead to self-realization. Told with uncommon honesty, *Hundred Waters* is a real-life journey into the darkness that only fractured innocence knows. It is the story of a search for that place where all lives changes.

***Bookends: Two Women, One Enduring Friendship.* By Madeleine Stern and Leona Rostenberg.** New York: Free Press, July 2001. 8vo, 256 pages. Hardcover \$24.00.

The rare book dealers who delighted readers with the history of their book-selling days in *Old Books, Rare Friends* now offer the other side of their story—an intimate look at the joys of a relationship that has lasted more than half a century. When their friendship and business partnership began in the 1940s, Leona Rostenberg and Madeleine Stern

were pioneers in a man's world. Now approaching their nineties, the duo, who—among their many discoveries—unearthed Louisa May Alcott's pseudonymous blood-and-thunder stories, remains a vibrant institution in the rare book trade, even as the Internet changes their field—and their community—forever.

After publishing *Old Books, Rare Friends*, Rostenberg and Stern received a flood of fan mail asking about their personal lives, and they have responded with poignant honesty and the warmth for which they are famous, as they reflect on their lives and their remarkable partnership. *Bookends* recounts their fascinating histories: family backgrounds, business adventures, the men they did not marry, and their approach to the bittersweet trials of aging. More than just a dual memoir, *Bookends* is also a chronicle of the cultural changes of twentieth-century American life and a loving farewell to the golden age of book collecting. Filled with wisdom and humor, this volume is a tribute to Rostenberg and Stern's passion for the written word—and for life itself.

Catching us off guard with their candor, they offer their insights regarding their business, their way of life, and their worldview. Above all, they present the story of a special relationship. At a time when people find it increasingly difficult to connect, here we have the seamless

story of a shared life. It is the unique product of an earlier time, yet it is a timeless reflection on the very nature of friendship. Though their fantastic partnership is unreproducible, the ideal they have established, for the integration of one life so completely with another, contains lessons for all of us.

Without husbands or children they created a loving home when this was uncharted territory for women. They nurtured a business and life partnership that has lasted more than half a century and has only gotten stronger with time. When the passing years began to claim one's hearing and the other's sight, they became each other's eyes and ears. A meditation on aging and togetherness, this book is also the narrative of two pioneering single Jewish women making their way in tandem through a world largely organized to keep them in their place. It is a gentle, wise story, told in their inimitable style: sparse, unadorned, and honest. Their affirmations supersede their uncertainties. As they write, "Bookends support books and come in pairs... If the word encapsulates our past, it looks also to the future, and to the books—lived together, written together—that will follow." They confront the challenges of aging in a no-nonsense tone and, in facing them, give us an ideal of enduring human friendship that can't help but touch the heart. ■

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

## New Members

The ABAA *Newsletter* welcomes the following new members accepted at the Board of Governors' Meeting in April:

**Joseph S. Phillips**, Commonwealth Books, Inc., 134 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116; phone: 617-338-6328; fax: 617-338-6362; email: books@commonwealthbooks.com; web site: www.commonwealthbooks.com

ASSOCIATE MEMBER:

**Elayna Zucker**, Irving Zucker Art Books, New York, NY

ASSOCIATE TO FULL MEMBER:

**Victoria Dailey**, California Curio Company, P.O. Box 461150, Los Angeles, CA 90046; phone: 310-271-7757; fax: 310-271-7797; email: verseau@westworld.com

## Membership Updates

**Bert Babcock** has a new email address: bert@babcockbooks.com

**Brannan Books** has web address correction: www.humboldt.net/~brannan/

**Jeffrey Carr** has a new address: PO Box 29557, Oakland, CA 94604.

**The Fine Books Company** has a web address correction: www.mich.com/~finebook/

**First Folio** has a new email address: firstfol@bellsouth.net

**Franklin Gilliam Rare :: Books** has new email addresses and a new area code: fgrare@fgrarebooks.com; Mary can be also reached at: Gilliam@fgrarebooks.com; and Gillian

**Anthony (Tony) Samuel Weller**, Sam Weller's Books, 254 Main St., Salt Lake City, UT 84101

FULL TO EMERITUS MEMBER:

**Elaine S. Feiden**, Mamaroneck, NY

**Norman Kane**, The Americanist, Pottstown, PA

**Simon Ottenberg**, Seattle, WA

**Albert J. Phiebig**, White Plains, NY

**Sam Weller**, Salt Lake City, UT

EMERITUS TO FULL MEMBER:

**John Sinkankas**, Peri Lithon Books, P.O. Box 9996, San Diego, CA 92169; phone: 858-488-6904 ■

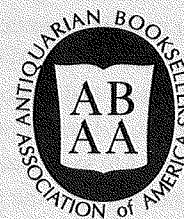
at: Kyles@fgrarebooks.com; area code as of June 1, 2001: 434.

**Edwin V. Glaser** has a new address, phone, and fax: PO Box 755, Napa, CA 94559; phone: 707-258-6281; fax: 707-258-8625.

**Susan Klein** has address and email corrections and a new fax number: 315 Neponset Street, Number 49, Norwood, MA 02062; fax: 781-762-5654; email: kleinbooks@aol.com

**Thorn Books** has a new email address: info@thornbooks.com

**Jeff Weber** has an address correction and a new email address: 2731 Lompoc Street, Los Angeles, CA 90065; email: weberbks@pacbell.ne ■



## The ABAA Newsletter

(ISSN 1070-7000X)

is published quarterly under the auspices of the Publications Committee of

The Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America  
20 West 44th Street,  
Fourth Floor  
New York, NY 10036-6604.

PHONE: 212-944-8291

FAX: 212-944-8293

EMAIL: lwade@abaa.org  
www.abaa.org

EDITOR: Robert Rulon-Miller  
ASSOCIATE EDITORS: Greg Gibson,  
Tracy E. Smith, and Liane Wade

Annual postpaid subscriptions are \$20.00 domestic; \$25.00 Canada and Mexico; and \$32.00 overseas.

**Direct subscription inquiries to:**  
Liane Wade, New York office

**Send submissions and letters to:**  
*ABAA Newsletter*  
400 Summit Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55102-2662 USA  
PHONE: (651) 290-0700  
FAX: (651) 290-0646  
EMAIL: rulon@rulon.com

The deadline for submissions to the next *Newsletter* is

July 23, 2001