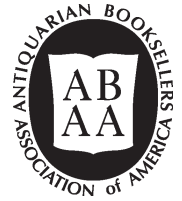




The A B A A NEWSLETTER



VOLUME EIGHTEEN, NUMBER 1 ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLERS' ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

WINTER 2007

INSIDE: *J. Howard Woolmer Reflects on his Life in the Trade*PAGE 3

Two Suggestions for abaa.org: Stock Exclusivity and Dealing with the Devil(s)

by Dan Gregory

Recently the ABAA Discuss list was the forum for a series of questions about the future of the ABAA's Internet presence, and the future of the search engine on the ABAA website. Reaching a majority satisfaction with regard to the ABAA website, and the search engine in particular, has been a perpetual headache for the association for over a decade. There is no reason to believe this issue will be satisfactorily resolved any time soon, at least in the eyes of the entire membership. Part of the problem stems from the variables which might comprise "member satisfaction" about www.abaa.org. Roughly broken down they would be: site appearance, site functionality, and bottom-line sales results. Both appearance and functionality certainly contribute to sales, but they are less important to sales than site traffic and marketing. If members want to sell more books through the ABAA website, more book buyers have to visit it.

While the Internet has, on the whole, increased overall sales for those members who use it as a sales venue, within the on-line bookselling world the

ABAA itself is in the process of becoming marginalized. In the pre-Internet age the ABAA and its members held sway over the U.S. market for antiquarian bookselling. ABAA members continue to dominate the high end of the market using traditional sales venues such as book fairs, catalogs, and direct quotes to established customers. But for the buying and selling of middle and low-end antiquarian books, sold in great quantity

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A delighted Bob Fleck accepts a plaque commemorating his service as ILAB President at the Presidents' Meeting in New Castle this Fall.

In Memoriam: Betsy Trace

Betsy Trace, owner of Timothy Trace Booksellers, ABAA member since 1950, died at her home on October 2, 2006.

Betsy, born Elizabeth Kling on either November 11 or 12, 1914 (Betsy said no one ever really knew... although if you didn't call her on the 11th and waited until the 12th, she'd be terribly upset at your having forgotten her birthday!), was born into a world of books, culture, literature and art. Her father was a doctor in the Bronx; her mother, Bertha Kling, was a published Yiddish poet. Their home was always filled with Yiddish writers and artists. She grew up in an atmosphere that embraced and fostered a knowledge and love of books and art.

A cousin, Joe Kling, owned a bookshop in Greenwich Village. He was also a publisher and editor of little magazines. It was through this connection that Betsy became friends with Julie Man Ray, R.B. (Ronnie) Kitaj, and so many other artists and poets. These people were friends throughout her life. The stories she told of them (some printable, some not!) were always fascinating.

Betsy was a graduate of Hunter College and when she began her life with her husband, Timothy Trace, embarked on a long career as an antiquarian book dealer. Betsy and Tim loved rare, important and scholarly books, but their natural acquisitiveness, wonderful taste, and love of beauty led them into dealing in early English and American antiques as well. Still, they were antiquarian booksellers first and foremost. They exhibited

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ILAB Book Fairs

2007

January 26-28

Stuttgart, Germany (VDA)
Haus des Württembergischen
Kunstverein

February 16-18

San Francisco, CA (ILAB)
Concourse Exhibition Center

March 23 & 24

Edinburgh, Scotland (ABA)
The Ballroom, Assembly
Rooms

April 19-22

New York, NY (ILAB)
Park Avenue Armory

April 26-29

Paris, France (SLAM)
Grand Palais

June 7-9

London, UK (ABA)
Olympia Exhibition Centre

October 25-27

Amsterdam, The Netherlands
(NVvA)
Passenger Terminal

November 16-18

Boston, MA (ILAB)
Hynes Convention Center

For a calendar including non-ILAB book
fairs, visit www.abaa.org



California International Antiquarian Book Fair



February 16-18, 2007

Book lovers and collectors can find the world's finest stocks of rare and antiquarian books, manuscripts and related materials priced from a few dollars to hundreds of thousands. The selection available includes early printed books and manuscripts, illustrated books, fine bindings, early American and European literature, modern first editions, children's books, maps, autographs, ephemera, and antiquarian books on history, science, law, architecture, economics, gastronomy, wine and scores of other fields.

Hours

Friday 3pm-9pm
Saturday 11am-7pm
Sunday 11am-5pm

Location

Concourse Exhibition Center
635 Eighth Street (at Brannan)
San Francisco, CA USA

Tickets

Friday: \$15 (good for three days)
Saturday, Sunday: \$10

For more info, visit sfbookfair.com
Phone: 415.962.2500

This Issue's Contributors

Judy Cohen has been a member since 1983. Located in New Paltz, New York, she is the proprietor of J.M. Cohen Rare Books. She specializes in books on Decorative Arts, Fashion, and Design.

Dan Gregory is an Associate Member of the ABAA and works for Between the Covers Rare Books, Inc. in Merchantville, New Jersey. He has served on the Internet Committee on two separate occasions. His most recent contribution to the Newsletter was on *Undocumented Hemingway Issue Points*.

Gordon Hollis has been a member of the ABAA since 1984 and was Committee Chair of the 39th California International Antiquarian Book Fair in 2006. He is the proprietor of Golden Legend, Inc. in Beverley Hills, California.

J. Howard Woolmer is a long-time member of the ABAA. He is the proprietor of J.H. Woolmer Rare Books in Revere, Pennsylvania, specializing in Irish Literature, Manuscripts & Letters, and Modern First Editions.

Chasing the Irish – A Memoir of Sorts

by J. Howard Woolmer

I come from a very modest background. My father, a Londoner from a relatively large family, emigrated to Montreal in 1908 or thereabouts. He always claimed that he'd seen Queen Victoria in his youth which was quite possible I suppose but it might also have been more a wish than a reality. He left school at an early age to learn a trade, as was the usual path for the son of a working class family in those days, and after a long apprenticeship became a bricklayer. Bricklaying was one of the more socially respectable trades at that time and he never tired of telling us that Winston Churchill counted bricklaying as one of his hobbies, although Churchill never had to make his living with his hands. My father was also a very accomplished amateur artist, painting with oils, and after serving in France during the first world war, he studied with a well known Canadian artist, John Young Johnstone, rather than using his credits for a formal education. I still have a lovely painting by Johnstone that the artist gave to my father.

My parents had three sons; I was the middle child, the one who had to run all the messages and do all the chores. The

usual fate of a middle child but my parents were very kind and treated us well. We were raised during the depression when work was very scarce; I remember that one year my father's entire earnings amounted to eighty-nine dollars. But my mother had had a good job as a secretary before her marriage and, hailing from Scotland, had learned to save as a young girl. We were also fortunate in that my maternal grandfather had built a two-storey brick house when he arrived in Montreal that my mother inherited when her parents died. So we had a place to live. We used the upstairs flat as our own and rented the one downstairs, although we rarely collected any rent as my mother wasn't about to evict anyone for the simple reason that they had been unable to find employment. As a matter of fact I remember that all during the depression we would have visits from old ladies who would invariably drop in at dinner time. I remember a Miss Walsh who always wore a heavy green velvet dress and used to write poems and send them to members of the royal family. It was only later that I discovered that my mother had been paying the rent of these old ladies and helping them in other ways. Any-

way, shortly before the beginning of the second world war in September 1939 my father found employment as a construction superintendent and worked steadily until his retirement in his late sixties.

When we were children there was little money for entertainment and my father would often take us three boys for walks on Saturday afternoons and we'd invariably end up in a shop selling used books. We could browse for long periods of time there and it didn't cost anything and occasionally we'd even buy a book. We knew nothing about first editions, of course, and had probably never heard the term. My father had a good voice and had read to us from an early age, Sherlock Holmes stories were a favorite, and I suppose that my love of books owes much to these early visits and to my father's reading to us.

In 1945 when I was sixteen years of age I changed the date on my birth certificate so that I would appear to be seventeen and joined the Canadian merchant marine, much to the disappointment of my parents. My older brother, Grant, had joined the Norwegian mer-

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Players & Painted Stage: The Leonard L. Milberg Collection of Irish Theater opens at Princeton

To mark the acquisition of the Leonard L. Milberg '53 Collection of Irish Theater, the Princeton University Library has prepared an exhibition that will feature approximately 220 items from the collection, including first and significant editions of the playwrights' published scripts, broadsides, manuscripts, playbills, and posters. The exhibition, *Players & Painted Stage: The Leonard L. Milberg Collection of Irish Theater*, opened Friday, October 13, 2006, and remains on view in the Main Gallery, Firestone Library, through April 1, 2007 and Milberg Gallery through March 18, 2007.

Exhibition highlights include a type-

script of *The Cooing of Doves*, an unpublished one-act play by Sean O'Casey that was rejected by the Abbey Theatre and later became the second act of *The Plough and the Stars*; the original playbill for the 1956 production of *The Quare Fellow* by Brendan Behan; and the 1952 edition of Samuel Beckett's *En attendant Godot, pièce en deux actes*, along with the first French program.

To open the exhibition on October 13th, Joe Dowling, the Artistic Director of the Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis, presented a lecture in the Stewart Theater, followed by a reception in the galleries, sponsored by The Friends of

the Princeton University Library. To join The Friends and support the libraries, see <http://www.fpul.org> or contact Linda Oliveir at loliveir@princeton.edu or 609-258-3155.

Exhibition hours are:

- * Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 9am to 5pm
- * Wednesday – 9am to 7pm
- * Saturday and Sunday – 12 noon to 5pm

The galleries are free and open to all visitors. ■

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chant marine two years earlier. Patriotism wasn't a dirty word back then when we were fighting a necessary war and everyone wanted to get to Europe and fight the Nazis. Anyway, to make a long story short, I served for five years and then returned home and found a job. Grant had decided to become a bookseller when he gave up the sea and he ended up buying a used bookshop that was little more than a junk shop. But after teaching himself the ropes, he eventually became a very respected dealer in Canadiana and books on the Arctic. I often helped out in his shop and when I moved to New York City in 1958 to work for the Australian Government, I would scout the local bookshops for him. Eventually the urge to become a bookseller myself became too great, and after being in New York for two years I decided to take the plunge and issued my first catalogue in April of 1961 although for insurance I continued to work for the Australians for another three years. As I didn't want to give the impression that I was a beginner, my first catalogue was numbered eleven rather than number one. Getting into the book business was very simple in those days and little capital was required. The Fourth Avenue shops were all going strong and as few of them were specialists it was easy to buy books in one's field of interest and catalogue them at an increased price. I still remember the first order that I received from that first catalogue; it was from a collector named DeCoursey Fales, a favorite of many young booksellers, and it amounted to something like thirty-two dollars and fifty cents. Not bad for a beginner back then. Fales' books are now at New York University.

Although I dealt in books in many fields in the beginning, the lure of modern first editions was hard to resist. After all, these were the books that one read and they could usually be found quite cheaply at the shops on Fourth Avenue. But after a while I found that I didn't get enough of a kick from the books of contemporary writers. For one thing I had

discovered James Joyce and my catalogues started to contain large sections of books by and about the Irishman. I remember Margie Cohn of House of Books Limited, one of the great dealers in twentieth century literature, telling me one time "You know, Howard, there are other authors besides James Joyce." The closest that I ever got to Joyce personally was getting to know his niece, Bozema Delimata, the daughter of Joyce's sister Eileen, who lived with her daughter in Victoria, British Columbia. I purchased a number of Lucia Joyce letters from her.

From the very beginning, though, my main interest has always been in building collections. Early on I issued a series of catalogues based on single subjects that besides having the usual books for sale also contained essays by literary scholars. The first of these catalogues was on the Imagist Poets (1966) and one of the essays included in the catalogue contained the first printing of a short satirical poem by Robert Frost. The second of these catalogues was on the English/Canadian novelist Malcom Lowry (1969), the author of the classic novel *Under the Volcano*, and it contained the first printing of several poems by Lowry. I remember having a very pleasant dinner with Lowry's widow Margerie back in the 1960s but I couldn't keep pace with her intake of gin martinis.

The third catalogue in the series was on the Fugitive Poets (1972). This last one didn't contain any unpublished material apart from an essay by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., the noted southern scholar, but it did lead to my becoming an appraiser. John S. Van E. Kohn of Seven Gables Bookshop in New York City was asked to appraise the papers of the Fugitive Group of poets on deposit at the Vanderbilt University Library in Nashville. Unfortunately, but fortunately for me, John was too busy at the time to take it on and was looking about for someone else to recommend for the job. Bart Auerbach, who worked for Seven Gables at the time, showed John my Fugitive catalogue and John called and asked if I'd be interested in doing the appraisal. When I explained that I'd never done an appraisal he generously suggested that he and

Bart show me how. So I spent an afternoon with them at Seven Gables learning the basics, flew down to Nashville, spent two or three days going over the material there, then spent another afternoon with John and Bart on my return to carefully go over my figures. After being assured by them that my work was well done I wrote up the appraisal which seems to have been satisfactory.

My penchant for building collections led down other paths as well. I had always been interested in the Hogarth Press, the press started by Leonard and Virginia Woolf in 1917, and the collection of its publications that I built resulted in my *Checklist of the Hogarth Press 1917-1938* that I published in 1976 under the Woolmer/Brotherson imprint. Robert Brotherson was my partner (and the brains) in the poetry publishing business that we started at the time and he assured me that if I once tried hand printing that I would fall in love with it. So, we bought a handpress, set the type, and printed one set of sheets; the book was then printed offset. Needless to say, I didn't fall in love with hand printing and we eventually found a buyer for the press. Not satisfied with that, I built a second Hogarth Press collection which resulted in the second, and enlarged, edition of the *Checklist* which took it up to 1946 the year in which John Lehmann sold his interest in the Press to Chatto & Windus. That was published in 1986 and, I believe, came as close to being a bestseller as any bibliographer has the right to expect.

I also built a second Malcolm Lowry collection and used it as the basis for my *Malcolm Lowry A Bibliography* which was published in 1983. The year 1986 saw the publication of my *Bibliography of the Samurai Press*. Of all my books, though, my favorite is *The Poetry Bookshop 1912-1935 A Bibliography*, which was published in 1988. The Poetry Bookshop was founded by Harold Monro in 1912, near to the British Library in London; its purpose being to publish books of poetry and to act as a bookshop specializing in poetry. Besides books, Monro also published several series of

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broad­sides and two periodicals. I found the original signboard for the shop hang­ing in the London office of Anthony Rota and, walking down Bond Street one day, saw Charles Ginner's wonderful painting of the shopfront in the window of The Fine Art Society. I used the signboard to illustrate the dust jacket of the book and the Ginner painting as the frontispiece. The Poetry Bookshop Bibliography had an introduction by the Booker Prize win­ner Penelope Fitzgerald and was called "admirably direct and lucid" in the Times Literary Supplement. It was illustrated in black and white and in color and had several inserts. One of these inserts was a broadside poem by Ezra Pound called *An Immorality*. When I applied to James Laughlin of New Directions for permis­sion to publish the poem he reminded me, obviously with tongue in cheek, that my bibliography was a commercial venture and I'd therefore have to pay a royalty which he set at fifteen dollars. Publishing bibliographies doesn't come cheap and my method was to build the collection, compile the bibliography, then sell the collection to a university library which would give me enough money to cover

the cost of printing and binding. This usually worked out very well but I doubt that I ever made a profit on any of these publications.

I'm not a serious book collector my­self, but I did build what I believe to be the best and most complete Cormac Mc­Carthy collection. After reading Robert Coles' review of *Outer Dark* I bought a copy of the book and was so taken with it that I wrote to Cormac confessing that it was the first fan letter that I'd ever writ­ten. Cormac replied that my letter was the first fan letter he'd ever received. That collection, with every book inscribed, is now in the Alkek Library, Texas State University, San Marcos. At one time I also collected the various editions of Gilbert White's masterpiece, *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1799) and spent a wonderful few days visiting the district that he so brilliantly wrote about. The only serious collection that I now have is of books by my friend Paul Muldoon although I do have what I consider to be one of the finest copies of Joyce's *Ulysses* (750 copies) in existence.

As I've become older I find myself still involved in building collections, and a large percentage of my work is with university libraries. In 1986 Richard M. Ludwig, Associate University Librarian for Rare Books and Special Collections at

the Firestone Library, Princeton Universi­ty, retired. One of Dick's friends, Leonard Milberg, class of 1953, decided to build a small collection of books for the library in Dick's honor and chose American poets whose first book was published in 1950 or later. I was asked to find the books and we started with a list of eleven poets. It didn't stay at eleven for very long though as we continued to add new poets. We had an exhibition of the books, broadsides, and other printed materials in 1994 with readings by some of the in­cluded poets and I compiled a catalogue of our holdings. As of this writing there are close to one hundred poets included in the collection, all American poets who published their first book in 1950 or later and we continue to add books to the col­lection.

The American Poets exhibition and the celebrations surrounding the event were such a resounding success that Leonard Milberg decided to build a second collection, this time of Irish poets. Again, poets who had published their first book in 1950 or later. There are now fifty-three poets in the Irish collection and we opened an exhibition in 1998 with readings by Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, Michael Longley and Nuala Ni Dhomnaill. An interesting aside—when the Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney read at the opening of the Irish exhibit there were two other Nobel laureates in the audience, Gabriel García Márquez and Toni Morrison.

Again, we decided that a third collec­tion would be appropriate and we chose books by Jewish-American writers. We widened the scope of this collection though and chose writers ranging from the beginning of the nineteenth century up to the present. At first there were no contemporary poets in the Jewish col­lection because they were all included in the American poetry collection so it was decided to merge them into the Jewish collection. This worked well but it did create a problem. There were now so many writers in the collection, close to one hundred and fifty, that my catalogue had to be issued in two volumes. The ex-

The Birth of the Bestseller The 19th-Century Book in Britain, France, and Beyond

A Conference in New York
March 29-31, 2007

*Hosted by the **Bibliographical Society of America**, this innovative event gath­ers participants from around the world and from a wide range of disciplines, including art history, literary history, and cultural studies. It explores the terrain of 19th-century bestsellers and considers how they came to dominate the public imagination. The multi-day event features lectures and receptions at four distinct venues: The Grolier Club, Museum of Biblical Art, NYU's Fales Library, and the Morgan Library & Museum. The ABAA is delighted to be a sponsor of this his­toric event.*

Registration is \$40. For more information, visit bibsocamer.org or call 302.831.3250.

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hibition opened in 2001 and was, again, a great success.

The latest Leonard Milberg collection is of books and other printed materials by Irish playwrights. We start with Dion Boucicault, about 1850, and continue right up to the present. There are eighty-five playwrights in the collection as of this writing but I'm sure that more will be added in the future as some of the younger Irish playwrights come into prominence. We also collect material on the Irish theatrical companies of the period. Four of the most important Irish playwrights, George Moore, George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde and William Butler Yeats, are not represented in our collection because the Firestone

Library already has in-depth collections of these writers and it doesn't make sense to duplicate the library's holdings. The exhibition of the Irish Theater Collection opened in mid-October 2006 at the Firestone Library and was accompanied by readings, workshops, and a production of Brian Friel's play *Translations* at the McCarter Theater; the play is being transferred to Broadway in January. Barry McGovern also gave a performance of his remarkable one-man Beckett reading. One of the highlights of the weekend was the first ever reading of Sean O'Casey's one act play, *The Cooning of Doves, a Conversation in One Act* by a group of ten actors (and would-be actors) including Paul Muldoon, Stephen Rea, Mark O'Rowe and others. The acquiring of rare items for such a collection can sometimes be an exciting experience and the purchase of the O'Casey typescript at

an auction in Dublin was no exception. I had to pay double my authorized bid to win it but it turned out to be well worth-while and it was the item that received all the publicity. Again, I compiled the almost five hundred-page catalogue of the collection which was described by *Books Ireland*, and I quote, "The sewn paperback is generously laid out with the air (and graces) reminiscent of books of the early and mid-nineteenth century, though in those days such good photo reproduction on text paper was not possible."

The future? That's anyone's guess although we are seriously considering starting on Irish fiction which would round out our Irish collections and would result, we believe, in the Firestone Library having one of the best collections of Irish literature in the country, if not the world. ■

An American in London: Exhibiting at the Chelsea Book Fair

by Gordon Hollis

In November 2006, the Chelsea ABA book fair was opened for the first time to ILAB exhibitors from abroad, as part of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the ABA. "Why not exhibit?" I thought. My previous visits to the Chelsea book fair were productive as a buyer and the fair was pleasant enough because of the location. Located in the town hall of the borough of Chelsea, the book fair is nestled in a cheery part of King's Road next to pubs, shops and plentiful transportation.

Chelsea is not a "high spot" or connoisseur's fair like the June ABA fair; rather, dealers bring to Chelsea sophisticated scholarly and antiquarian editions, in mostly wonderful condition, and the dealers have tremendous expertise.

Another added benefit is that the book prices are reasonable, in spite of the formidable exchange rate, and – for once – I was able to buy before the fair opened, a rich hunting ground reserved for exhibitors only.

It is inexpensive to exhibit at Chelsea.

Although a bit expensive to ship books from California – it cost \$1,600 to send 200 pounds there and back—it was worth the charge to have customs taken care of and the books delivered door to door. The fee was about \$750 for a huge booth, plus a fee for a glass case. Because the fair was only two days, thankfully, I had time to visit Paris via the Eurostar and to feel a bit like a tourist, even on my 30th trip (or thereabouts) in London.

I stayed within walking distance of the book fair venue at the Regency Hotel on Queensgate. As November is mild, it was a lovely walk through Onslow Gardens, past the Dove Tavern on Fulham Road to King's Road, not far from the Pig's Ear tavern and a multitude of restaurants. I felt fortunate too as no rain appeared throughout my stay that would require the purchase of the 30th umbrella (or thereabouts).

The exhibition hall is adjoined to a pleasant public library which has free wi-fi, so I took my laptop with me, which



The Duke Tavern. A nice place for a beer near Chelsea.

made checking OCLC and Addall.com quite simple. The availability of wi-fi adds so much to any book fair that I'm always wondering why we (Americans) don't uniformly make this part of our book fairs.

As for the booth, I had the worst booth

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Hollis

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in the fair, bar none. It was not even in the exhibition hall but in the front foyer past which visitors rushed as they entered the hall. Friday seemed very well attended with crowds numbering in the hundreds while Saturday was less so. The number of visitors who even knew I was exhibiting, however, was a fraction of whole, although more may have noticed me with surprise on their way out loaded down with their purchases. There were the occasional new people interested in my specialty (dance) and who were wonderful to speak with but not ready to buy. The location, needless to say, was like watching a Los Angeles Dodgers' game from the deep, right field bleachers, an area of the ballpark so poorly attended that the stadium is offering free, all you can eat, Dodger Dogs this season to anyone who spends \$5 for a ticket to that section.

I was not amused at the time because the booth location produced poor results and not many names for my mailing list. Well, I was late in applying, so it may have been simply "last in – worst location"; however, I just happened to get an American colleague's booth (the only other American who applied) who aban-



Christopher Edwards, a helpful member of the Chelsea Bookfair Committee.

doned the fair one day before I applied. She was not a late applicant.

I believe that booth location is one of the most important concerns for exhibitors at a book fair. Further, my opinion is that booths should be affordable to all and that they should be allocated in a scrupulously fair manner so that all booksellers have the same chance at the best booth or the worst booth as the lottery dictates. In 1992, I was on the ABAA National Board of Governors when the seniority booth system was abandoned, for an impartial lottery system.

The English ABA has never abandoned the seniority booth system which means that exhibitors are "grandfathered" to the

previous year's location, if they wish. Not surprisingly, the established and well-known English dealers were smack dab in the main hall: Harrington, Frew, Quaritch, Jarndyce, Francis Edwards, Fletcher, Shapero. The result may very well mean that seniority system allots newcomers the poorest locations that remain, in my case, deep right field.

All things considered, I enjoyed myself at Chelsea: I did make sales, mostly to the trade, I did buy some very good books, most of which have already been sold. Let me emphasize also that the staff of the ABA was absolutely wonderful to work with. Marianne Harwood, the new Events Officer, greatly helped me with logistics and was always extremely cordial as were all my colleagues on the book fair committee.

I do not mean to seem ungrateful when I conclude that, despite some good experiences at Chelsea, I will not exhibit there again—nor recommend that other ABAA members exhibit—unless the book fair committee changes their booth allocation system to give equal opportunity to all. Perhaps this is the Yankee in me rebelling against established tradition by demanding democracy, but I believe that we in the ILAB all pay the same dues and are—as a result—entitled to equal opportunities. ■

RBMS Conference to Be Held in Baltimore

The 48th annual Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Preconference, "*From Here to Ephemerality: Fugitive Sources in Libraries, Archives, and Museums*", will be held from Tuesday, June 19 to Friday, June 22, 2007, in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries, is a division of the American Library Association. It represents and promotes the interests of librarians who work with rare books, manuscripts, and other types of special collections. The conference is hosted yearly in a different city and explores diverse themes, often focusing on the rich special collections of the host city.

A website for the preconference is now live at <http://www.library.jhu.edu/collections/specialcollections/RBMS/index.html>. The site includes program information, accommodation and travel options, and a schedule of events, and will be updated periodically.

Reservations are being accepted at the conference hotel, the Tremont Plaza. Please see the conference web site for details about reservations there and at the Charles Commons, Johns Hopkins University's inexpensive housing option, which will be available shortly.

Among the libraries and cultural institutions included in the conference are the George Peabody Library, Pratt Free Library, Johns Hopkins Special Collections

libraries, and the Walters Art Museum.

A Booksellers' Showcase, sponsored by the Southeast Chapter of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America, will be held in conjunction with Preconference registration on Tuesday, June 19, 9am to 5pm, prior to the formal opening of the Preconference. The showcase will be held in the registration area. A list of participants is available on the conference website.

For information about the events, contact Henry Raine, Chair, Program Committee, (212) 485-9257. Those interested in sponsoring the conference should contact the chair of RBMS, Edwin Schroeder at (203) 432-7485 or edwin.schroeder@yale.edu. ■

Gregory

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on the World Wide Web, the ABAA as an organization is largely irrelevant. On-line the ABAA is, for the vast majority of book buyers, unknown or ignored. As a volunteer-run, non-profit organization, the ABAA will never have the funding to advertise in the manner that commercial and privately-held companies and websites can. Consequently, for the ABAA to market itself effectively it will have to do so creatively. In the past decade the two best suggestions to counter the on-line marginalization of the ABAA have been to pursue stock exclusivity, or to pursue significantly greater visibility through strategic partnerships. These two suggestions play off distinct strengths of the organization: the quality of the collective inventory of the ABAA, and the quality of the professionalism and ethical standards of our members. However, either suggestion would require dramatic rethinking by the membership in order to be seriously considered.

Stock Exclusivity

Stock exclusivity suggests that if books important to the trade, such as truly scarce and desirable items, were listed EXCLUSIVELY on the ABAA website (and dealers' individual sites) for some limited period of time PRIOR to being made available elsewhere on-line, customers for those books would willingly go to www.abaa.org first and as an alternative to other book websites. At present most on-line antiquarian book buyers have been conditioned to search first and foremost at sites with considerably larger inventories than www.abaa.org. They might ask, "Why search www.abaa.org when this other site has almost all the same copies plus so many more to choose from?" One answer, obvious to ABAA dealers, is the assurances of quality, expertise, and ethical standards that are exclusive to www.abaa.org and other national ILAB-affiliated associations. But these intangibles can be difficult to communicate to buyers. Rather than answer the question by attempting to reason with

shoppers, the stock exclusivity suggestion would attempt to negate the question. Collectors would be forced to visit www.abaa.org unless they want to repeatedly miss the books they desire. Some individual dealers have successfully made stock exclusivity a part of their on-line marketing. The Philadelphia Rare Book and Manuscript Company, for example, has for years been very successful at communicating to collectors, through print advertising and elsewhere, that much of their on-line inventory can ONLY be seen at www.prbm.com. More recently www.baumanrarebooks.com and our own site, www.betweencovers.com, have taken this approach, allowing visitors to see and purchase books not available elsewhere on the Internet.

The technical hurdles to time-tagging multi-dealer inventory so that computers would keep track of what items have been listed exclusively on www.abaa.org for 30 days (to give an example) and can now be listed on other websites, and then automatically sending that data out on behalf of dealers, are real but are not particularly insurmountable. In fact, Chuck Vilnis's Bookrouter service apparently already has the requisite programming accomplished and ready for implementation. The people, rather than the machines, are the primary hurdle with this plan. Stock exclusivity can only work as the result of a determined, collective effort by ABAA members. ABAA dealers would have to be willing, as a majority and ideally as a whole, to sacrifice potential sales of individual items on other on-line venues for a limited period of time. They would further have to be willing to implement the necessary data-management changes internally, or to allow their data to be managed by an outside party (be it Bookrouter, Rockingstone, or somebody else). And finally, the ABAA would have to repeatedly and effectively advertise the stock exclusivity to the on-line book collecting community. Were the ABAA to officially put forth a request for participation in a stock exclusivity initiative, doubtless some pioneering members would be willing to give it a try immediately. But booksellers tend to be an idiosyncratic and independent lot – the

kind of people who don't like to be told what to do, or to give others control over any part of their businesses. For stock exclusivity to really work as a marketing tool to drive traffic to www.abaa.org, a great majority of members would have to willingly participate.

Strategic Partnerships: A Prelude

On a different note, good content, even unique content, does not necessarily translate into a successful website, at least as defined by direct sales. For example, the now-defunct www.worldbookdealers.com was a very attractive site rich in content, but it failed to succeed as a viable shopping destination. And before it was acquired by Alibris, www.bibliocity.com was the best and most attractive multi-dealer website, but its superiority in design and programming did not translate into greater sales than other sites. In both cases more time to become discovered by the book collecting public may have turned things around. Naturally, visitors who have a positive shopping experience, or believe they can view unique content, will return. But given the speed of commerce and change on the Internet, as well as the sheer bulk of the Internet, time cannot be factored into the adage "If you build it, they will come." Specifically regarding www.abaa.org, there is no reason to believe that a different search engine, a hypothetical "better" search engine, different visual design, different site architecture, or anything along these lines will result in appreciably more sales for our members. Put simply, a significant increase in sales through www.abaa.org will only come about if web shoppers are directed to the site.

While giving knowledgeable collectors even more reasons to visit www.abaa.org is clearly a good thing, they, "knowledgeable collectors," only make up a small segment of today's on-line antiquarian book market. The ABAA has always had the challenge of "getting the word out" – of communicating what the ABAA is and what it offers to book buyers. But this challenge was different two decades ago, when the market was decidedly stratified.

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As collectors matured or their purchases got larger their paths were more likely to cross the ABAA. Today many more people have access to many more books for sale. There is now a much greater chance than there was two decades ago that a collector might spend many thousands of dollars building a collection without the assistance of an ABAA dealer (and without the benefits that assistance offers). Furthermore, the number of people who buy antiquarian books has greatly increased with the Internet. Thus we have a second challenge for the ABAA. Not only must we get collectors who know about the ABAA to shop at www.abaa.org, we must also try to get all the other antiquarian book buyers on the Internet to know about the ABAA.

Who are these Internet antiquarian book buyers who do not already know about the ABAA? Only a comprehensive survey of book buyers would tell us for certain. Indeed, such a survey may be a worthwhile investment of the ABAA. But in the absence of any data, we can still hazard some guesses. When the average web-user wants to search for something on-line, he starts with Google. When the average web-user wants to buy a book, he starts with Amazon. And when the average web-user wants to purchase something used or collectible, he starts with eBay. These three sites, far more than any others, dominate the Internet and e-commerce.

A surprising number of people will begin their search for a book with Google. Individual dealers whose on-line data is optimized to be seen, indexed, and cached by Google and/or Froogle (Google's e-commerce sub-site) can testify that, for lower-end books at least, many book sales do result from Google searches. ABAA dealers who list their data with Rockingstone may have noticed this as well. When we surveyed our Fall 2006 *Between the Covers*' sales through Rockingstone, we found that many came from customers who went directly to www.abaa.org or www.ilab.org to shop.

But among those sales through Rockingstone that did not originate from the organizations' sites, two thirds came from Froogle. The remaining third of sales came from AddAll and Bookfinder, sites which are known mostly to experienced Internet book buyers. Thus, in this sampling at least, the volume of sales from savvy buyers (users of AddAll and Bookfinder), was outweighed by the volume of sales from searchers on Google and/or Froogle.

Optimizing data placement on Google is no simple task. Google takes pride in keeping their results objective, and in frustrating those who attempt to "beat their system." But they do have rules which, if adhered to with care, can result in a greater likelihood that data will appear higher in results. Susan Benne and the Internet Committee have been trying to work with Rockingstone to improve the placement of Google results for ABAA inventory, though progress with them has been slow. Hopefully with continued effort, as well as the insight of individual members such as James Hinck who have very specific and productive suggestions, Rockingstone will be successful in getting ABAA data well-placed on Google results. Clearly this continued effort should be a top priority for the ABAA and Rockingstone, and on this subject there is likely a consensus among the membership.

A Case for Partnership with Amazon

Amazon, launched in 1994, quickly established itself as the darling of Internet retail. It remains one of the web's highest traffic sites. One report estimated that in mid-2006 Amazon was receiving 80 million searches a day. These kinds of numbers can be skewed, but there can be no doubt that the actual figures for Amazon's site traffic are replete with zeroes and commas. To the average on-line consumer Amazon represents Internet book retail. We must acknowledge that the average on-line consumer is not an antiquarian book buyer. But there is strength in numbers. If we use the figure of 80 million searches, and we suppose that just one out of every thousand searches is for an out-of-print or

rare book, that is 80 thousand searches. If just one out of every ten of those 80 thousand searches for out-of-print or rare books is by a person actually looking for or with the capacity to buy antiquarian books, that's 8,000 people a day. That's a lot of people. Equally important, that's a lot of NEW people. That is, most of those 8,000 looking for or with the potential to buy antiquarian books probably would not be using Amazon if they knew about other book sites. Granted, deriving 8,000 potential antiquarian book buyers from 80,000,000 daily searches on Amazon is pure conjecture and the ratios were chosen merely for illustration. Nevertheless, with so many people "plugged in," the actual number of potential antiquarian book buyers who shop at Amazon must be significant. A challenge for the book trade as a community is to convert readers into buyers. A challenge for the antiquarian book trade is to convert readers and book buyers into collectors. All sites that cater to collectors (ABE, Alibris, AddAll, Bookfinder, and certainly the ABAA and ILAB) are, for the most part, preaching to the choir. Amazon, on the other hand, represents a much greater opportunity to expand the antiquarian book market.

Through their "Marketplace" system, Amazon already allows dealers to sell used and antiquarian books. But Amazon's system is poorly designed and its data for antiquarian books is pathetic. Rather than relying on pre-existing compilations of bibliographic data, Amazon tries to match incoming book information to its existing data and if its system fails to do so it creates a new entry. Because of the vagaries of dealer descriptions and dealer inaccuracies, Amazon is now full of bad data and incorrect "matches." Additionally, Amazon has restrictions on books that can be sold. For example, they do not allow advance copies, probably to keep in the good graces of their many publisher clients. Nor do they allow books priced over \$2500. This policy was likely enacted to reduce their risk since they allow virtually anyone to sell material with no regard for experience or

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ethical standards.

A strategic partnership between the ABAA and Amazon would be mutually beneficial. One way it might work would be for Amazon, which has no shortage of sub-categories, to add the category “Antiquarian Books” to their other existing book categories which can be seen on its primary pages. This could lead to a page which explains what the ABAA is and offers only ABAA inventory (preferably at a somewhat reduced commission rate than ABAA members currently pay). In exchange, the ABAA could provide clean, bibliographically correct data for guaranteed merchandise up to and far beyond the current \$2500 cap. This would allow Amazon to create a boutique area on their site where high end books could be purchased by their customers with confidence. To “sweeten the pot” for Amazon, ABAA members could further provide relevant site content and much needed advice on organizing and handling bibliographic data (ironically, a company which calls itself the world’s biggest bookstore, and which has virtually unlimited resources, is demonstrably incapable of hiring anyone who knows anything about antiquarian books and the antiquarian book market).

Only the powers-that-be at Amazon could say whether they would have any interest in a strategic partnership with ABAA. However, their previous partnerships, such as with Sothebys, as well as their consistent interest in constantly expanding their retail base, suggest it would be very natural for the Internet’s most visible bookselling site to join forces with the Internet’s most reliable antiquarian bookselling site. This suggestion does not assume that www.abaa.org would need to change, or that Amazon would become the search engine provider for www.abaa.org. The ABAA should never relinquish any autonomy over www.abaa.org. Instead, the appropriate section of Amazon would have to be a collaborative effort. As with any partnership (particularly one involving a commercial entity

solely pursuing its own interests), only by clearly delineating rights, responsibilities, and expectations beforehand could it be successful.

A Case for Partnership with eBay

Heresy: an opinion held in opposition to the established or commonly received doctrine.

eBay is anathema to many members of the ABAA. What do we associate with eBay? Fraud, forgery, phantom books, stolen books, the detritus of humanity, crap, and all the excesses of a free market run amok. eBay has compounded all these problems by instituting policies which abet and even reward criminal behavior. It has been said, “ABAA members would never go for any kind of agreement with eBay.” Perhaps not, and perhaps rightly, for those reasons mentioned. But what does the rest of the world (including collectors and non-ABAA booksellers) associate with eBay? Anything for sale that isn’t new or is difficult to find. And that’s it. Both John Q. Public and his cousin Jerry Q. Book-Collector associate the ills of eBay much more with bad eBay sellers than with the institution of eBay. Few aside from specialist professionals such as ourselves see eBay itself as an evil. Those who believe the ABAA would be “sullyng its good name” were it to associate itself in any way with eBay are bringing to that assessment a perspective the general public, the antiquarian book buying public, and even ABAA members’ steady customers would not share.

It might be argued that, if we are going to “sell our souls” for site traffic, aligning ourselves with eBay is no better than posting pornography on www.abaa.org in order to gain traffic. But this ignores why people go to eBay – many people go to eBay, in numbers very similar to those who visit Amazon (80 million searches a day), looking to buy used and rare material. And, to a much greater extent than would be the case with Amazon, eBay visitors are looking for what we are offering. How does ignoring this segment of the book buying public help the ABAA? Furthermore, because eBay is so fraught with fraudulent bookselling,

and bad books, (and because eBay is not going away), it would be in keeping with the ABAA’s ethical goals “to encourage and promote interest in ... antiquarian books... [and] to establish and maintain professional and ethical standards” for the ABAA to bring what we like to think we’re doing right to eBay. In fact, if properly pitched (“ABAA cleans up the rare book world...”), such a partnership has the potential to be a public relations coup unlike anything in the history of the ABAA.

How might a partnership with eBay work? There is no point in trying to tame eBay – Ken Lopez’s valiant efforts years ago demonstrated that they will never forsake the hands-off policies which limit their liability, but also allow for fraud and criminal behavior. Instead, eBay might allow ABAA (or ILAB) members’ inventory to show in search results, but display those books differently, such as with the ABAA symbol. The symbol could lead either directly to www.abaa.org, or to a sub-site, a “Rare Book Boutique” in which only ABAA dealers could sell. The symbol would represent the genuine guarantee of authenticity and professionalism which eBay’s ill-conceived feedback system promises but fails to deliver. Hopefully, in no time at all eBay’s book buyers would be curious about the symbol and, clicking on it to learn what it means, would prefer to purchase items with that symbol. Perhaps in short order non-ABAA dealers would want to be able to list their books with that symbol, and they would want to join the ABAA. This is what the ABAA needs – the health and relevance of the ABAA can be measured in how many booksellers aspire to join it. As stated before, only by clearly delineating rights, responsibilities, and expectations beforehand could such a partnership be successful. Obviously eBay would have no say over who is admitted to ABAA membership, regardless of how many “Powerseller++” feedback notices a seller may have.

Only the powers-that-be at eBay could say whether they would have any interest in a strategic partnership with the ABAA.

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In a very public lawsuit Tiffany's has challenged eBay's hands-off policies. Regardless of how well eBay defends itself, taking obvious steps to lessen fraud on their site, such as by aligning with established trade organizations, is probably in their interests. Furthermore, the selection of books on eBay is simply awful. Unlike traditional auction houses, eBay makes its money from an aggregate of many thousands of tiny auction fees, rather than from notable sales. Nevertheless, if the middle and high end of the trade have left eBay, as they seem to, they run the danger of entering a cycle whereby people stop buying there, and then people gradually stop selling. An infusion of quality stock to eBay's results pages would be an important step in luring buyers back.

Why Hypothesize about Partnerships with Amazon or eBay?

Since there are, at present, no actual proposals on the table between the ABAA and either Amazon or eBay, the reader may ask why bother to suggest them. As Peter Stern noted recently on the on-line Discuss forum, "as an association our...speed in changing or adapting more resembles a bust of Dickens than it does Google." The ABAA is not a company run by a single individual, or with a single individual vested with autonomous authority who can make quick and sweeping decisions. A strategic partnership between the ABAA and a commercial company would be a chicken-and-egg situation. If the membership has no desire for a partnership, offers are unlikely to be tendered. If offers are tendered but the membership has not considered both the possibilities and the consequences, the other party is likely

to lose interest while ABAA members squabble amongst themselves.

ABAA members take great pride in their membership and in what the ABAA stands for. For the ABAA to relinquish its independence or in any way lend its name to an outside company would be a radical and unprecedented step. It is said that desperate times call for desperate measures. The present does not represent desperate times. However, members should realize that unless some dramatic steps are taken, sales through www.abaa.org are unlikely to ever increase dramatically. Furthermore, the relevance of www.abaa.org to on-line antiquarian bookselling is likely to remain minor. The membership may decide that tepid sales and a low-profile on the Internet are preferable to the alternatives detailed above, but without discussion and debate we, and the ABAA Board of Governors, will never know. ■

In Memoriam

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at numerous book fairs over the years, in particular the New York Book Fair; they also exhibited reference books on antiques, architecture and the decorative arts at antique shows throughout the east; and, from 1957, exhibited at the prestigious Winter Antiques Show in New York annually until just shortly before Betsy's death.

Together with her sister Cora Ginsburg, the costume and textile dealer, Betsy traveled frequently to England and Europe buying books and antiques. Stories of their travels and their finds were a constant source of amazement and delight.

Betsy's love of beauty and beautiful objects, her enthusiasm and passion, and her gracious generosity extended beyond books, beyond antiques and into friendships with dealers here and abroad, with librarians and curators, with everyone she met. It even extended to her love of food; her absolute delight in preparing, cooking, eating and (mostly) sharing meals in her warm kitchen, sitting with friends, Windsor chairs pulled up close around her table. Her pies were well known, as

were her Jewish specialties, including Borscht and gefilte fish.

Betsy and I went on many book hunting trips together. I remember them all, but one in particular was to look at a collection in a house in Baltimore. The books were stacked everywhere; you couldn't even get to most of them. We took one look and knew it wasn't for us... it wasn't for anyone! We left empty-handed. But when all was said and done, Betsy made a remark that will remain with me always, "Well, at least we had a good lunch." She used that line often. We always made sure we had a good lunch, anywhere, although I can't tell you how many times we had to stop at Friendly's so Betsy could have her favorite, The Fribble.

Her generosity in all things was immense. She imparted her knowledge of books easily. She was a great mentor and a great friend. She introduced me, and all others whom she befriended, to so many interesting people, to dealers, collectors, museum directors. She loved finding unusual books and unknown editions. She loved finding substantial books for bargains. She loved finding people. She loved beauty in everything. Her wealth of information and brilliant memory which

lasted until so close to the end of her life was truly inspiring. Betsy knew books. She really knew books.

When I posted a notice on the ABAA email list informing the membership that Betsy had died, I received some wonderful responses, condolences, memories (both poignant and funny), and caring remarks. Most of the memories were about food, having meals at the Trace household, the "little red house on the hill" as Paul Grinke referred to the Red Mill Road house. Hospitality went further with Betsy than with most. It didn't take long for so many people she met throughout her life to become "family," myself being but one.

Michael Ginsberg, who knew Betsy for so many years, commented that, "When we lose the likes of Betsy Trace, we lose her stories, her experiences, her booksmarts... we need to find a way to keep those things alive forever." And, in response, Chic Goldsmid quoted an African proverb, "When an old person dies, it is as if a library has burned down." I hope that we will all continue to tell Betsy Trace stories and memories to ensure that her knowledge, her enthusiasm, her love of life never be forgotten. ■

Judy Cohen

New Members

The ABAA *Newsletter* is pleased to welcome the following new full members who were accepted at the Board of Governors Meeting in November:

John Michael Lang, John Michael Lang Fine Books. 5416 20th Avenue, NW, Seattle, WA 98107. Ph: (206) 624-4100.

Susan Weiser Liebegott, Enchanted Books. 2435 Ocean Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11229. Ph: (718) 891-5241.

Douglas J. Palmieri, Palmieri Fine Books. 204 Georgetown Road, Columbus, NJ 08022. Ph: (609) 324-9909.

Francis B. (Bud) Plant, Bud Plant & Hutchison Books. Box 1133, Cedar Ridge, CA 95924. Ph: (530) 273-9762.

Associate Membership:

Cathy Lilburne, Antipodean Books, Garrison, NY.

Mark Wessel, Wessel & Lieberman Booksellers, Seattle, WA.

Membership Updates

A list of member address updates will be sent to all members shortly.

Dailey Rare Books LTD has a new address: P.O. Box 69160, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Old Editions Book Shop has a new

website and email address: oldeditions.com and service@oldeditions.com.

Michael R. Thompson Booksellers has a new address: 8242 West Third St., Ste. 230, Los Angeles, CA 90048.

Vagabond Books has a new address: 930 Hartzell St., Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

ABAA Benevolent Fund & Woodburn Fund

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.

Your help is greatly appreciated.

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.

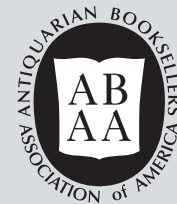
Direct your contributions and inquiries to:
Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America
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Fourth Floor
New York, NY 10036



The deadline for submissions to the next Newsletter is

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