

# BIBLIOGRAPHICA

## Introduction

by John Russell

This issue of *Bibliographica* is devoted to the fine printers and presses of Canada. I got the idea while reading an issue of *The Devil's Artisan*, "Canada's premier journal of the printing arts" (as the blurb on the subscription bookmark has it). I had a great time reading the articles and it dawned on me that there is this whole world of printing going on just to the north and I've only scratched the surface.

Luckily, I was easily able to tap into the good will of enough people to assemble the articles that you are about to read. Obviously, innumerable pages could be spent on describing the book arts in Canada, so what you have here is just a sample. If you'd like to learn more about the printers and presses of Canada, here's a small list to get you started:

*The Devil's Artisan, a Journal of the Printing Arts* is a great journal that comes out twice a year; visit <http://www.sentex.net/~pql/DA.html> for subscription information as well as some sample articles that touch on the history of a few presses.

The *Alcuin Society* is an organization of Canadian bibliophiles that publishes *Amphora*, a journal of the book arts, collecting, and more. Their website has a lot of stuff for further reading: <http://www.alcuinsociety.com/>.

The *Canadian Binders and Book Arts Guild* is described elsewhere in this issue, so I'll just point you to their website and note that there is a great online gallery where you can take a peak at the work created by CBBAG's members: <http://www.cbbag.ca/>.

Last resource that I'll mention: the Library and Archives Canada's *Canadian Private Presses* online exhibit: <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/presses/index-e.html>. It's got a list of presses past and

present, a general history, and a slightly fuller treatment of seven presses.

On to the articles!



## The Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild: A Passion for Book Arts

by Grant Wilkins

The Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild – abbreviated as “CBBAG” and pronounced “cabbage” by its members and friends – is an umbrella organization representing the full spectrum of professional and amateur craftspersons and artists in the book arts and paper arts in Canada.

Formed in 1983, CBBAG's goals from the very beginning have been to establish a sense of community amongst those interested in the book arts in Canada, to improve access to education in the book arts fields, to improve awareness of the book and paper arts amongst the general public, and to promote the highest standards in these arts.

Currently, CBBAG has more than 500 members, running the gamut from bookbinders to letterpress printers, papermakers, book restorers, conservators, calligraphers, paper marblers and book artists of all kinds. Members range from full time professionals in their particular fields to newly interested amateurs to respected educational institutions. Though focused on its Canadian base, CBBAG is open to all who are interested in the book arts, and has many members in the United States, the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

Run as an all-volunteer organization, CBBAG is administered by an elected board of directors, with regional representatives from across Canada. A

number of standing committees assist the board with policy, planning and programming, as well as various ongoing administrative functions. A registered charitable organization, the Guild's funding comes from its membership fees, as well as donations, grants and the income generated by its workshops and exhibitions.

Given the far-flung nature of Canada's geography, CBBAG's vision of establishing and maintaining a sense of community amongst Canadian book artists is an ongoing challenge that requires ongoing effort. This effort is focused through the newsletters sent to members quarterly, an annual membership list, as well as listings of suppliers and educational opportunities available outside the Guild. A series of regional email networks keep members apprised of local, regional & national happenings, while the CBBAG website ([www.cbbag.ca](http://www.cbbag.ca)) is an important conduit into the larger book arts communities inside and outside Canada.

The Guild has always taken the educational part of its mandate seriously, and has run workshops and courses from its earliest days. Currently, between 35 and 40 such workshops are held each year, ranging from intensive six day bookbinding courses to one or two day workshops on topics ranging from book-box making to paper marbling to specialized forms of binding. Many of these workshops are run at CBBAG's bindery - in spite of its shoestring budget, the Guild has maintained an office in Toronto since 1988 and a bindery since 1997 - but many more are run in other locations across Canada.

CBBAG is currently the only Canadian institution with a structured bookbinding curriculum. To meet the needs of those members who aren't able to travel to the Toronto bindery for these intensive workshops, the Guild has developed a home study program which, using written and video components, allows participants to take the complete bookbinding curriculum by correspondence, with coursework fully evaluated by qualified instructors.

The exhibition of fine bookworks and paper arts is also an important aspect of CBBAG's mandate, uniting an interest in promoting greater awareness of book arts to the public with giving its membership more and wider exposure for their work.

CBBAG's "The Art of the Book" series of exhibitions began in 1988, and has been remounted every five years since (in 1993, 1998 and 2003, with assembly of the 2008 edition under way), highlighting the state of book arts in Canada. The 2003 version literally crossed the country, exhibiting in Toronto, Saskatoon, Halifax, Winnipeg, Victoria, Medicine Hat, Quebec City and Fredericton.

There have been many other exhibits through the years, including "Fine Printing: the Private Press in Canada", "Two Centuries of Bookbinding", and "Millenium in a Box", a portfolio collection of work from 35 Canadian book artists which circulated to more than 40 libraries, schools and galleries. The most recent major exhibition was "A Book Arts Mosaic", another portfolio project which featured the work of 33 book artists and which was designed to be a travelling exhibit easily mounted in small public spaces, galleries & libraries. It can currently be viewed online on the CBBAG website.

Another forum for promoting public awareness of the book arts has been CBBAG's perennially popular Book Arts Fair, held every summer in Ontario. The Guild also actively participates in other such events, including the Grimsby Wayzgoose, the Ontario College of Art's Book Arts Fair, and the Word On The Street festivals in Toronto and Halifax. Beyond this, CBBAG encourages its members to take part in other book and paper arts related fairs and exhibitions, and actively advertises these events to its membership and the general public on its website, and through its newsletters and email lists.

Although the field of book arts has always been a traditional one, CBBAG itself has recognized from the beginning that it must be an organization that

can change and adapt to the needs of its members and the world around it. To that end, the Guild recently undertook an extensive strategic planning exercise, with the objective of updating and refocusing its organization, its methods and its goals.

The result of this has been an initiative to establish regional CBBAG chapters across Canada wherever there is enough of a membership base and enough interest to warrant it. This movement towards a more broadly based, decentralized model is intended to allow the Guild to more actively and more directly support more members in their activities, with these regional groups being given the resources to support local events and educational initiatives, rather than having them programmed from and centred on CBBAG's main office in Toronto.

This continuing evolution demonstrates CBBAG's ongoing ambitions for and support of the book arts community in Canada, and shows that, 24 years on, the Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild and its members are as passionate as ever about their role and their art.



### **A Glimpse Down the Rabbit Hole**

by Richard Coxford

Although I have been a collector of books my whole life, it wasn't until a few years ago that my eyes were opened to the beautiful books that the Canadian Private Presses had to offer. My first private press book purchase was a copy of *Wouldn't it be Murder?* published by the Cheshire Cat Press. The book contains the paper Joseph Brabant originally presented to the Lewis Carroll Society of Canada regarding whether Alice would have been convicted of murder for the abandonment of the baby/piglet that was flung at her by the hurried Duchess during her adventures in Wonderland. It was this book that sparked my curiosity in private presses, and my subsequent evolution into an enthusiastic collecting of, and involvement in, the Canadian Private Press scene.

The Cheshire Cat Press was a collaborative effort of typesetter/letterpress artist Bill Poole of the Poole Hall Press, wood engraver George Walker, and Lewis Carroll scholar Joseph Brabant. For over a decade they would create some of the most memorable fine editions of Carroll's classic adventures of Alice. It began in the early 80's with a few Poole Hall Press forays into the world of Lewis Carroll with amusing editions that only a private press could produce, such as *Lewis Carroll and Alice Liddell* and *Sacred Topics and Lewis Carroll's Double Standard*. However, in 1988 the Cheshire Cat Press would come to life printing the first entirely Canadian publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in a breath-taking quarter bound leather edition of 177 which contained over ninety original wood engravings and a hand-coloured frontispiece.

A decade later they would follow-up their previous masterpiece with an equally stunning edition of *Through the Looking Glass*, this time featuring over a hundred wood engravings and a hand-coloured frontispiece in a custom-bound, quarter-leather binding with handmade paper covers. Over the years they also published a array of Carroll related pieces such as *Alice's Adventures in Toronto*, *Some Observations on Jabberwocky*, and *Wouldn't it be Murder?*, all in limited editions of 177 with wood engravings by George Walker. The Cheshire Cat Press sadly ended its great productions in 2001 with the passing of Bill Poole. As a result of chasing down Cheshire Cat Press editions, two more areas of my collection blossomed into being: private press works that included the work of George Walker and books printed at the Poole Hall Press.

Last fall, my wife and I had the honour, along with a couple of friends and fellow letterpress lovers from Ottawa, of being invited to Toronto for dinner at the home of George and Michelle Walker. The evening was one of the most enjoyable outings in memory as the Walkers are an energetic and fascinating couple who seem to have an endless vault of press stories and anecdotes, not to mention an eclectic collection of books which George has put together and is

readily willing to tell their history and inspiration. The evening was capped off with a tour of George's studio and the opportunity to see some of the original wood blocks used in the creation of those fine editions of Alice's adventures.

The following day was spent with the Walkers at the Ontario College of Arts and Design (OCAD) small press fair that in turn gave us the opportunity to meet other private press printers such as Will Rueter of the Aliquando Press and Alan Stein of the Church Street Press. However the highlight of the OCAD show for us was getting the opportunity to meet with Lyndsay Dobson, the daughter of Bill Poole and an accomplished letterpress printer in her own right (her *The Canadian Private Presses in Print* and supplement are still one of the foremost resources on Canadian private presses). We had corresponded previously by e-mail thanks to Michelle, but were very grateful that she made the trip to meet with us at the fair. We spent most of the morning discussing the Poole Hall Press, the Grimsby Wayzgoose her father had organized (now an annual event) and her involvement in the world of private presses via her presswork and as the proprietor of Lyndsay Dobson's Books. Her bookshop for decades was one of the few venues in which the private presses across Canada could have their works promoted and sold. Her mail order catalogues (often letterpress printed themselves) *Recent Arrivals* and *Other News* have become a valuable record of the private press activity that took place across Canada over the past few decades. To top things off, she had brought some samples of early Poole Hall Press editions for us to see as well as a bag of private press goodies to take back home with us to Ottawa. The trip was both a wonderful opportunity to meet and talk with those who had a hand in the book that inspired my private press collection and an immense learning experience. As we continue to learn more and more about the history of the Canadian Private Presses, it is these magnificent books and the brilliant people behind them that forever lure us further down the rabbit hole.

**Note:** The Carroll books can be seen at the University of Toronto as part of Joseph Brabant Collection in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, or perhaps see a copy on display if you are fortunate enough to catch the Walkers hosting a table at a small press event, in which case you're in for a double treat!

### **Bibliography of the Cheshire Cat Press**

Carroll, Lewis; Brabant, Joseph (introduction). *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Wood engravings by George Walker. Cheshire Cat Press, 1988. Edition of 177.

Brabant, Joseph (introduction). *Alice's Adventures in Toronto: The Wood Engravings and Drawings for Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Wood engravings by George Walker. Cheshire Cat Press, 1991. Edition of 177.

Brabant, Joseph. *Some Observations on Jabberwocky*. Wood engraving by George Walker. Cheshire Cat Press, 1997. Edition of 177.

Carroll, Lewis; Malcolm, Andrew (introduction). *Through the Looking Glass*. Wood engravings by George Walker. Cheshire Cat Press, 1998. Edition of 177.

Brabant, Joseph; Walker, George (epilogue). *Wouldn't it be Murder?* Wood engravings by George Walker. Cheshire Cat Press, 1999. Edition of 177.



### **Cotton Socks Press**

by Andrea Taylor

Why do I make letterpress books? For me, writing and letterpress printing my own books and images is a part of my practice as an artist.

Developing as a serious artist, I am strongly drawn at the moment to portraiture in painting and in linoleum cut. The works of Picasso and Modigliani inspire me. One of my next letterpress printing endeavors is a portrait portfolio of expressive portrait linocuts. Already completed are portraits of Robert R. Reid (commissioned by Heavenly Monkey) and one of Jim Rimmer; I am hoping to

add Jan and Crispin Elsted, Martin Jackson, and others.

A project that is currently in the stages of completion is "Shell Book" with my own poetry and wood engravings of shells. Another book in the works contains paper lithography of my gesture drawings.

Carving and relief printmaking as a passion came easily. Studying printmaking at 2 print shops in Vancouver, BC starting in 2000, I devoured all the information that came my way and soon became a member of printmaking co-op, Dundarave Print Workshop in Vancouver. At the same time, I studied letterpress printing at Barbarian Press, obtained a Vandercook SP 15-21 in 2001, and have since printed several letterpress books.

Figure drawing and drawing all the time, painting often until 4am, I am driven to create. As I apprentice with a great artist, James Picard, my dreams of what I might be able to one day create get larger and larger.

Letterpress draws me to it with its unique magic: setting the letters and then turning a blank paper into a beautifully hand printed page. The same feeling I have as I pull a print, I feel as I print a page of hand-set type and the accompanying images. I am smitten with hand-printed, hand-made books. As my art practice expands to painting and drawing, my letterpress books are sure to evolve in exciting new directions.

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Andrea's work features her relief prints, etchings, acrylic paintings on canvas and her own hand-bound letterpress books from her press, Cotton Socks Press. Commissions so far include portraits, movie work and corporate gifts.

Andrea has an etching press & a letterpress in her home studio and is a member of the Dundarave Print Workshop at Granville Island, where she enjoys the company of other printmakers. Andrea had a solo show in 2003 and one in 2006 at Dundarave and participates in many group shows. She has exhibited in a number of international juried shows and her work is in private collections

in Canada, USA, Germany, Japan, Australia, UK, Greece, and France. Andrea's letterpress books are in the special collections of UBC, SFU, University of Alberta, VPL and Wyly Community Art Center in Colorado.

Andrea Taylor and Cotton Socks Press can be reached on the web at <http://www.andreataylor.ca>



### **Simon Fraser University's Special Collections & Rare Books: A Brief Introduction**

by Eric Swanick

During the last few years Simon Fraser University's Special Collections and Rare Books has expanded significantly along with the continued growth of its base collections: the Contemporary Literature Collection (a major poetry collection based originally on the Beats, Black Mountain, and San Francisco Renaissance) and a major Wordsworth Collection. In recent years there have been initiatives put forward to develop collections in the area of British Columbia studies. The original mandate for the development of a British Columbia collection was in the area of history, but the B.C. collection has grown to include political materials, socio-cultural collections (e.g., the environment and gay studies) and additional resources in other fields such as literature.

In the area of literary archives the collection has focused on collecting B.C. authors and has acquired the papers of several writers, such as Lisa Robertson, Caroline Adderson, Paul St. Pierre, Peter Trower, Shani Mootoo, Lynn Coady, and Alan Twigg. In conjunction with these writers we continue to add publishers' archives: Talonbooks, Douglas and McIntyre, New Star, Sono Nis, Polestar as well as the archives of Room of One's Own, Canada's first feminist literary periodical.

The editorial cartoon collection has doubled in the number of primarily BC artists to now include the

cartoons of Bob Bierman, Graham Harrop, Bob Krieger, Dan Murphy, Len Norris, Roy Peterson, Ingrid Rice, Jim Rimmer and Edd Uluschak (there are approximately 5000 cartoons in the searchable data base). Charles Hou, a well known local high school teacher and long time advocate for further use of editorial cartoons, recently donated his collection of editorial cartoons in seventy-two volumes, each volume containing 250-300 cartoons. Mike Apsey, a senior BC forestry official both within the provincial government and in private industry donated his editorial cartoon collection of over seventy cartoons dealing specifically with the US/Canada lumber wars.

Readers of *Bibliographica* will likely be most interested in our ever-expanding collection in the history of the book and the book arts. There are two main aspects to this developing collection: the increasing interest in book history (the third and final volume in the *History of the Book in Canada* was recently published) with its multitude of research possibilities (Simon Fraser University also has a Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing and a recently established Centre for Studies in Print and Media Cultures); the concentration in British Columbia of private and smaller press operations, as well as the numerous individuals working in the book arts both privately and in various educational facilities: binders, papermakers, preservation personnel, book artists. Our collections in these areas are growing rapidly.

Of special interest in recent acquisitions is the archive of Jim Rimmer and his Pie Tree Press and Type Foundry. Jim has spent a lifetime in printing, graphic arts, teaching and mentoring. This lifetime is partly celebrated in his book (actually his autobiography as a printer) issued under the Pie Tree Press and Type Foundry imprint, *Leaves from the Pie Tree: Memories from the Composing Room* (2006). In 1950 Rimmer began a six year apprenticeship with Vancouver-based printer and publisher J. W. Boyd and Sons. This was followed by seven years as a journeyman compositor with several B.C. newspapers and while in Williams Lake, B.C. he drew editorial cartoons (over sixty are in the Rimmer fonds). From 1972 until 1999 Rimmer

ran a freelance design office working as an illustrator and graphic designer. Some of his more famous commercial designs include the logo for the Canadian Pacific Airlines and the provincial mark for the Province of British Columbia. He recently designed the letters used in the newly designed Simon Fraser University home page (<http://www.sfu.ca>) --- this design and research material will come to Special Collections soon.

Along the way Rimmer's design work has won numerous awards from his peers. These awards came from the Creative Club, Graphic Designers of Canada, Art Direction Creativity in Design, Communication Arts Award of Excellence and more. In *Leaves from the Pie Tree* Rimmer wrote "From the first days of my apprenticeship I had marvelled at the beauty and perfect precision of type, and wondered if it would ever be possible that some day I might be able to design a type, leave aside the idea of actually cutting it." *Leaves from the Pie Tree* was printed in 14 pt. Quill designed and cut by the author. Leading up to this publication Rimmer had designed several type faces in metal and many more in digital format. (Rimmer's first designed type face was Totemic, completed in 1971.) Much of his design work is in the Rimmer collection at SFU. About his career he was to write that "My fated collision with printing has been quite plainly one of the greatest blessings in a charmed life". The SFU Rimmer Collection is a very fine documentation of type design, graphic design, and book making by one of Canada's most significant individuals in the field. Will Rueter, long time book designer at the University of Toronto Press and proprietor of the prestigious Aliquando Press wrote that Rimmer is "one of Canada's most remarkable typographic figures."

Last fall Simon Fraser University Special Collections convened "Rimmerfest," a celebration of Jim Rimmer and his many accomplishments. Approximately 200 people from Canada and the United States attended. As part of the celebration nineteen printers contributed broadsides to celebrate this many faceted man. SFU Special Collections will post these broadsides to the web,

along with a recording of the evening's events. In addition, the inventory of SFU Special Collection's holdings of Rimmer material and a bibliography of writings by and about Rimmer will be highlighted. For further details on the Rimmer

Collection, visit [http://www.sfu.ca/aq/archives/april\\_05/features/jim\\_rimmer.html](http://www.sfu.ca/aq/archives/april_05/features/jim_rimmer.html)

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You have been reading issue 7 of *Bibliographica*, edited by John Russell, Kira Homo, and Skye Hardesty. We are always delighted to hear from our readers. Want to comment on something you've read? Have an article or book review that you'd like to write for us? Please contact the editors at [aeoluspress@yahoo.com](mailto:aeoluspress@yahoo.com).