



SHARP News

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Quebec Colloquium Set for 2000

A major international colloquium on publishing history is to take place in Quebec in May 2000. 'From Old Europe to New Worlds: The changes in publishing from the 18th century to the year 2000', is to be jointly hosted by the Université de Sherbrooke and the Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines. According to the main organisers, Jacques Michon and Jean-Yves Mollier, the aim is to bring together those involved in national history of the book and publishing projects to take stock of progress achieved, and to consider ways forward for these and other emerging book history projects. Thus the colloquium will serve as a platform from which to evaluate methodologies, investigate areas of potential international collaborative research and survey progress in the field. Five major themes have been agreed upon under the general conference title, including examining the export of national publishing models and the growth of large publishing houses, analysing the development of homegrown publishing systems, and discussing the circulation of ideas and innovations through print media.

The organisers are currently soliciting general comments and session ideas, and in particular suggestions relating to publishing and book history in areas such as India, Asia and Africa. For further information, contact Jacques Michon, GRELQ, Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, Quebec, J1K 2R1, Email: j.michon@login.net or Jean-Yves Mollier, Centre d'histoire culturelle des sociétés contemporaines, Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, 47 Bd. Vauban, 78047 Guyancourt, Cedex.

Second Edinburgh Centre Launched

After two years of planning and negotiation, the University of Edinburgh announced in February 1998 the establishment of a Centre for the History of the Book. The CHB, based in the Faculty of Arts, exists as an interdisciplinary and international research centre for advanced scholarly research into the history of the production, circulation, and reception of texts.

The CHB provides a research base for a number of projects, including *A History of the Book in Scotland*, to be published in 4 volumes by Edinburgh University Press, with editorial collaboration from Cardiff, Napier, and Oxford Universities.

Book History is researched and taught at the University of Edinburgh within several departments. In recent years, the University has also hosted a number of Book History events, including the SHARP conference in 1995, as well as the annual conference of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals (RSVP). In 1996 a conference entitled 'Across Boundaries: the Culture and Commerce of the Book' was jointly organised by the Departments

of English Literature and French with sponsorship from the Sainsbury Vineyard of California, the papers of which will be published in early 1999.

In recognition of 150 years as bookseller to the University, James Thin announced this year its sponsorship of an ongoing series of CHB lectures. The forthcoming James Thin lecture will be delivered by Robert Darnton on 26 May in Old College (5.15 pm). The title of Professor Darnton's lecture will be 'Forbidden Books and the Media of Prerevolutionary France'.

Short- and long-term visiting fellowships are available to scholars undertaking advanced research into any aspect of Book History or the sociology and material culture of the text. For further details please write to the Secretary, CHB, 22A Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9LN, UK, or Email CHB@ed.ac.uk. The CHB web page can be found at: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/englit/research/chb>

Books Go Dutch

In January of 1997 Leiden University Library hosted the inaugural meeting of the Werkgroep Boekwetenschap, or Leiden Centre for the Book. The Centre brings together research and teaching interests ranging across the entire period of recorded communication, from inscription to digital information networks, and right across the Faculty of Arts and the university library. This varied background promises an enormous potential for interdisciplinary collaboration, and the participation of the university library in the Centre has paved the way for a more intensive use of the library's rare books and manuscripts, such as the rich Indonesian and Near-Eastern collections and Dutch publishers' archives.

Despite the severe budget restraints Dutch universities have been experiencing in recent years, the Leiden Centre for the Book has attracted support from the university's Board of Governors for new programmes of teaching and research. A new teaching programme is now in the process of being drafted. The new programme should offer all Arts students a choice of specialisation paths (such as paleography, text edition and recension; book and publishing history; electronic text and image processing) cutting across a wide range of existing disciplines. It is expected that from the academic year 1998-99 Boekwetenschap (book studies) will be available as an optional specialisation for any student taking a degree in an existing arts discipline. If the specialisation programme proves successful, a full book studies MA (equivalent) programme may be created over the next number of years.

The Leiden programme is unique in the Netherlands for its marriage of Eastern and Western book history and the intensive collaboration between the university library and the Faculty of Arts. But in addition to the pursuit of the many traditional branches

of scholarly book studies it also offers courses in various aspects of the electronic revolution, such as SGML markup and electronic prepress, as well as some practical instruction in letterpress printing and book publishing. The publishing activities are coordinated by Academic Press Leiden, a publishing venture run jointly by students and staff, publishing works of book historical interest (eg Stanley Morison's *First Principles of Typography* with an introduction by Huib van Krimpen and a preface by David McKitterick, and *The Vocal Forest: A Study of the Context of Three Low Countries Printers' Devices of the Seventeenth-Century*) and works of Anglo-Dutch interest such as travel accounts (Anne Radcliffe's *A Journey Through Holland Made in the Summer of 1794* is scheduled to appear in May).

Research interests of participating staff include Dutch book history from medieval times to the present; Anglo-Dutch book relations; Oriental book history; electronic publication, etc. The Centre has recently awarded PhD scholarships for research of two Leiden university collections, the unique library of the seventeenth-century Leiden jurist and book collector Johannes Thysius, and the archives of Haarlem publisher De Erven Bohn (one of very few surviving Dutch publisher's archives going back to the late eighteenth century). Pursuing its interest in electronic publication, the centre participates in another recent initiative, the Electronic Text Centre Leiden (ETCL), founded in October 1997 with the aim of supporting and stimulating the use of electronic forms of text in teaching, research and scholarly publication. The ETCL, jointly funded by the university library and the Faculty of Arts, is about to embark on a digitisation and archiving programme, which will initially focus in particular on the Dutch Golden Age. It aims to make available a corpus of literary works of the period, mainly in Dutch and Latin.

Other activities of the Centre include the organisation of incidental conferences, such as the round table meeting on the Dutch equivalent of the Net Book agreement held in October last, with economists, representatives of the Dutch booktrade, and a guest appearance by distinguished British publisher John Calder, solitary apologist for the demised NBA. In 1999 a conference is planned on nineteenth-century Leiden book culture, the era of renewed international expansion of the Dutch booktrade, which saw such Leiden publishers as E.J. Brill, A.W. Sijthoff and Martinus Nijhoff rise to prosperity.

It remains to be seen, of course, whether it will be possible for such a heterogeneous collection of people and interests as the Centre has brought together to forge a lasting bond. But a D fl 1.1 million allocation from university central funds over the next three-and-a-half years will certainly help to stimulate efforts to formulate and consolidate teaching and research programmes.

Adrian van der Weel, Project Coordinator, Leiden Centre for the Book

Booktrade in Austria as a Field for International Studies

The history of the book in the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy has never been written. This is especially true for the time from Maria Theresa to the Revolution 1848/49 where many periods and regions are still a *terra incognita*. This is in sharp contrast to the

results of book research in other European countries, such as England, France or Germany. It has therefore been hardly recognised that Austria, with its many ethnic groups, nationalities, religions, and no less that 14 languages within its borders, would be an ideal field for comparative research. Thus, within one state we find the internationalism claimed by Robert Darnton as needed in the study of the history of the book.

There are many reasons why the study of that area lags behind the research done in Germany and elsewhere. There is the language barrier. Furthermore, research has developed differently in various Austrian regions, with many sources now dispersed in the libraries and archives of many nations.

When in 1967 the Stanford University Libraries bought a large Austrian-Collection with many early and rare books, brochures, newspapers, magazines and leaflets, I tried to identify their printers and publishers. Soon I realised that most of them were virtually unknown, not found in any book histories, handbook, or other sources. Since then I have been collecting names, dates and facts. Research revealed that the production of original works was neither as meagre as had been believed, nor was it without important works. This material is now the basis for a planned topography.

Although the booktrade within the Habsburg Empire was interconnected in various ways and connected to other European centres (eg Leipzig), most of the studies published so far have focused only on specific regions, either the Austro-German, the Czech or the Hungarian sectors. A survey of the whole is still lacking (one exception, at least as a beginning, is the articles in the 1910 issues of the *Österreichisch-ungarische Buchhändler-Correspondenz*).

German research has concentrated mainly on the booktrade of the Austro-German region, now part of modern-day Austria. It overlooked that the situation in the Habsburg monarchy with its many nationalities was quite different from that of Germany, because the Austro-German population at that time represented only about one third of the whole population. Whereas the printing, publishing and trade with books during the early period was mostly done by German and Austro-Germans, there were nevertheless Czech, Hungarian, Hebraic, Italian, Polish and other printers and publishers at work. Austro-Germans published not only German books, but also others in the languages of the monarchy. One should

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note that the first Serbian newspaper was published in Vienna, the first Hungarian periodical in Latin in Bratislava (Poszony), and the first Romanian political newspaper in Kronstadt (Brasso). The Austrian monarchy therefore had, before the dawn of Nationalism in the second half of the 19th century, a multi-national, multi-cultural atmosphere; it was a melting-pot.

Since a survey of the booktrade in the Habsburg monarchy is lacking, the plan emerged to create a *Topography* of all printers, publishers, dealers, lending-libraries and so forth for the period from 1750 to 1850. It follows the pattern of the works by Benzing, Paisey and H.W. Laing, modifying their content and arrangement. The *Topography* will be arranged according to the place names of cities in the German version, listing the first printings, followed by the names of printers, publishers and dealers, their activities, dates etc, their forerunners and successors, agents, bibliographic references and indices. At present the list of the cities from Agram (Zagreb) to Mistek, A–M, is in preparation with the aim of establishing a bibliography of all relevant works for that area and period. The *Topography* will show the many national and international connections, laying the foundation for later intensive research.

Compared with the research project of Frédéric Barbier and others for France, undertaken within the framework and with the support of the Institut de l'histoire modern et contemporaine at l'École pratique des Hautes Études, the *Topography* is a modest enterprise. It has to be accomplished with the help of only a few assistants. Only recently, it has been sponsored by the Horst Kliemann-Stiftung of the Börsenverein (for material) and by the Jubiläumsfond of the Austrian National Bank (for assistants). The *Topography* will be published in the new series *Buchforschung*, edited by Peter R. Frank and Murray G. Hall, by Böhlau Verlag, Wien. This series is devoted to works on the history of the book in Austria, from the Baroque era up to the present. The first volume, Alena Kadlecová's study of the printing and booktrade in Prague (Praha), from the time of Rosenmüller to Jan Otto, will be ready for publication in 1999. Further information about these projects is available from Dr Peter R. Frank, Friedenstraße 48, D96121 Heidelberg, Germany (Fax: 06221 402945).

Dr Peter R Frank, Heidelberg

Teaching the History of the Book and a Textbook for Book History

This past summer (1997) the University of Virginia witnessed the annual influx of book enthusiasts who come to attend the Rare Book School, sponsored by the Book Arts Press. I was among those attending for the first time, and for me it was an extraordinary experience. I came to participate in a new course, one that I'm sure will be of particular interest to the readers of *SHARP News*. This was a course on 'Teaching the History of the Book'. But before I launch into an account of that course and its outcome, I'm sure a number of readers would like to know more about the Book Arts Press and its activities at the University of Virginia.

The Book Arts Press (known as the BAP to its many friends) was founded by Terry Belanger in 1972 at Columbia University. Its mission, then as now, is to support teaching the history of the

book in its many permutations. When Terry moved to Virginia in 1992, where he is University Professor and Honorary Curator of Special Collections, the BAP came along too. The BAP consists of a suite of rooms on the first floor of the university library, which is a most suitable location. Contained within those rooms are a first-rate library of about 15,000 books and 5,000 prints, dating from the 15th century to the present, a collection of printing presses and equipment (including a replica wooden common press), and classroom and studio facilities. Here University of Virginia students work closely with Terry during the academic year, and here also is the focal point for the summer Rare Book School. See the BAP home page for its full range of activities: <http://poe.acc.virginia.edu/~oldbooks/>.

Rare Book School (RBS) also dates back to Terry's years at Columbia (it was founded in 1983) and today RBS boasts a very distinguished group of alumnae and alumni. Each year about 300 students gather to take one or more of the 24 classes offered over four weeks in the summer (there are now also winter offerings). This year, the subjects included such topics as 'The American Book in the Industrial Era: 1820-1940', 'Introduction to Descriptive Bibliography' (one of the RBS mainstays), 'Book Illustration to 1890', 'History of the Printed Book in the West' (also a mainstay), and an 'Introduction to Electronic Texts and Images'. Clearly there is much here to attract anyone interested in book history. But there is more. There are lectures and other bookish events organised for the evenings. The week of my stay we had lectures by G. Thomas Tanselle, 'The Bibliographical Analysis of Book Design', Peter Stallybrass (Penn), 'How Many Hands Does It Take to Read or Write a Book?' and Terry Belanger, 'Twenty-Five Come Sunday: The Book Arts Press, 1972-'. Each week there were two different invited lecturers in addition to Terry, and an evening visit to the Charlottesville bookshops. Perhaps the most stimulating aspect of RBS is simply the concentration of talent and interest in that most remarkable place, the BAP. Attending RBS for someone bibliographically inclined, like myself, is probably as close as I'll ever get to a religious experience. I highly recommend it.

'Teaching the History of the Book' was developed and taught by Michael Ryan and Daniel Traister, both of the Department of Special Collections at the University of Pennsylvania. I can do no better than quote their description of the course: 'This course will investigate different ways of thinking about, designing, and conducting a course on the history of the book. It is a course, not on the history of books and printing, but on the teaching of that subject. Our first purpose will be the assessment of some of the strengths and weaknesses of differing approaches to the subject. Our second purpose will be the investigation of resources available to teachers and students in this field. The Book Arts Press's extensive collection of resources for teaching the history of the book will play an integral role in this course. Our intention is to consider the options and resources open to instructors whether full- or part-time academics or librarians, or others who are either currently engaged in teaching such a course, or who will begin doing so in the coming academic year.'

Of the nine of us who took the course, four were librarians who worked with rare books, manuscripts, or archives; one was a book collector; one was a library administrator; one was a printer;

one was a graduate student; and one was a history professor. Most of us had already taught the history of the book, or some aspect of it, or were preparing to do so. Our instructors both had had extensive experience in teaching book history and recently team-taught such courses as this RBS course was also team-taught. Such arrangements can be awkward and difficult, but in this case Ryan and Traister worked well together and with the class to create a teaching and learning situation that was as intellectually stimulating as anything I have ever participated in. That we were able to spend five days, all day long, sitting around a seminar table talking about teaching book history (and much more), without growing bored, was a tribute to our instructors. The two had an extraordinary ability to bounce topics and ideas back and forth, each with his own valuable perspective. Both of our instructors are well versed in the history of the book, but Michael Ryan comes to it from a background in European intellectual history, and Dan Traister comes to it from a background in sixteenth-century non-dramatic literature. One participant (I hesitate to use the word student here because we were all teachers – some for many years – who were discussing matters of great personal and professional concern) characterized our instructors as ‘a delightful combination of Boswell & Johnson and Laurel & Hardy’. And though they were certainly entertaining, they were always intellectually stimulating.

Most RBS courses are full of facts, techniques, processes, and hands-on learning, but our course was all discussion. Ryan and Traister had prepared a detailed day-by-day syllabus that we managed to follow for a day or two: though we covered all the topics by the end of Friday, it was not in the order envisaged by their syllabus. We began by considering the field of the history of the book, and even the question of what we mean by ‘book’. This led us into historiographical considerations of how the field has developed and what its roots are. But this supposes there is a concise field, and as we discovered (and many of us already knew) the field is far from being well defined. Indeed what should this field of study be called? It has been called many things, but over the last few decades ‘history of the book’ has found much favour, particularly among those who have been trained in the Anglo-American bibliographic tradition (my own background) which has emphasised the physical book itself. Recently, however, the field has undergone an exciting, if somewhat chaotic, influx of new ideas, concepts, and perceptions by scholars who, in general, have not been trained in the analysis of the physical book. These new students draw on, but are by no means limited to, intellectual influences derived from the French *Annales* school; the sociocultural approach of bibliographical scholars such as D. F. McKenzie (both of which are usually considered within the newer ‘history of the book’); literary approaches such as reader reception theory; and traditional historical emphases on archival research, from all of which (as well as from cultural studies) the new book history has emerged. No longer focused solely on the physical book or its production, ‘book history’ emphasizes how books function in society and shape culture, and much, much more. Indeed the field seems wide open, a development which I believe to be all to the good.

In our discussions on teaching it soon became apparent that

the one thing we all agreed on is that we lack a textbook for the field. I have been teaching the history of the book for more than a decade and have tried several different texts or combinations of texts and found none that was really suitable. Some of us have used texts as widely varying as Eisenstein’s one-volume *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, the English translation of Febvre and Martin’s *Coming of the Book*, Gaskell’s *New Introduction to Bibliography*, Greetham’s *Textual Scholarship* (I’ve used all of these), McMurtrie’s *The Book*, Williams and Abbott’s *Introduction to Bibliographical and Textual Studies*, or some combination of readings from various journals and books. While each of these texts has its good points, none is able to serve as a text for the whole field, whether we call it ‘history of the book’ or ‘book history’. We began to digress from the syllabus and discuss (with our instructors’ enthusiastic support) just what such a textbook ought to contain. This, of course, is dependent on all kinds of other decisions, and brings us back to the question of what the field encompasses. That is still an open question, of course, but the very act of creating a text would go a long way to define the field. We decided to attempt an outline for a textbook. Jonathan Rose went so far as to present an outline he had worked up during the few hours we weren’t meeting. The outline was comprehensive and assumed that the work of creating the book would be shared. We spent many hours considering Jonathan’s outline, alternatives, possible formats beyond the codex, but in the end came back to the original concept of a comprehensive text. We agreed that such a text is greatly needed, but we did not want to see the momentum we had developed just disappear after we all went back to our lives beyond RBS.

Four of us from the class - Michael Ryan, Dan Traister, Jonathan Rose, and I - came together as an executive editorial board to explore and plan for a textbook in book history; we invited Martin Antonetti (Curator of Rare Books, Smith College), who has been teaching the History of the Printed Book in the West at RBS for many years, to join us. We will be presenting our outline and ideas at the SHARP conference in Vancouver in the hope that we will generate consideration, criticism, and suggestions by people who might actually use such a text in the classroom. We have established a web site for the project (<http://www.ukans.edu/~bookhist/textbook.html>) where we are posting information, including our tentative outline. Our project is a collaborative one which will involve the contributions of many people. We invite you to attend the Vancouver session, to offer your suggestions, and to volunteer as a contributor. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please look at our web site and likewise offer your suggestions and volunteer as a contributor.

Richard W. Clement, University of Kansas

Call for Contributions

Eighteenth-Century Novel will be an annual refereed publication dedicated to critical examination of the prose fiction of the ‘long’ eighteenth century, roughly 1688–1830. At present we are especially interested in articles dealing with works written after 1730. Requests for further information or manuscripts of 750–1,500 words (notes) or 7,000–14,000 words (articles), prepared

in compliance with the rules and procedures outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th ed.) should be submitted to Professor Susan Spencer, Editor *Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 16 East Constance Avenue, Santa Barbara, CA 93105 Email inquiries should be sent to sspencer@aix1.ucok.edu

The Reading Experience Database (RED) is launching a quarterly newsletter *RED Letter* for contributors to, and those interested in, the database and related topics in the history of reading. If you wish to receive an electronic version of issue one please contact S.M.Colclough@open.ac.uk This issue contains a list of designated readers of texts which contain many reading experiences, and news about the Open University Book History research project 'Was there a reading revolution? Evidence for change in the British reading experience, 1700-1740-1800-1840'. If you would like a hard copy of *RED Letter*, complete with the RED introduction pack, please write to Dr Colclough, The Open University, Parsifal College, 527 Finchley Road, London NW3 7BG, UK.

In 1999 **ESC (English Studies in Canada)**, an official publication of the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English (ACCUTE), will be celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary as a quarterly journal of criticism and scholarship concerned with all literature written in the English language. To help mark this event, the editorial team at ESC is planning a special issue on the history of the book in the English language. Submissions are invited, therefore, from members of ACCUTE, and others associated with the Canadian academic and literary community, on the authorship, production, publication, reception, and readership of books in the English language as well as on the significance of books and other forms of print culture. These submissions, clearly written in a language that communicates with both specialists and non-specialists in the history of the book, should conform to the latest edition of either the MLA Handbook or The MLA Style Manual. They should be submitted in duplicate, with a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and two cover sheets listing the author's name and address and the title of the article. These articles should arrive at the ESC editorial office at Carleton University by **31 December 1998**, so that they may be evaluated by two assessors, one of them a member of the ESC Editorial Advisory Board. Those selected will be published in the December 1999 issue of the journal. For further information please contact: ESC, Department of English, Dunton Tower, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6

Call for Papers

The History of the Book in Australia (HOBA) 1998 conference will be held at the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, from Saturday 19 to Sunday 20 September 1998. HOBA '98 is being organised in association with the Library Society of the State Library of NSW and the Australian Scholarly Editions Centre, University College ADFA.

The HOBA '98 conference will be devoted to papers: (a) on topics relating to publishing, readership and reception in languages other than English (including the Celtic languages) and, (b) on

other topics falling within any of the three periods of the HOBA project. Proposals for 20 minute papers are now called for. Abstracts (no more than 300 words) should be sent by **18 May 1998** to: Elizabeth Webby, Department of English, University of Sydney NSW 2006 Australia (Tel: +61 2 9351 6835; Fax: +61 2 9351 2434; Email: elizabeth.webby@english.usyd.edu.au) The program committee will advise on selection by 1 June 1998 and further information about HOBA '98 will be circulated shortly afterwards.

Conference

The **Library History Round Table** is holding a conference on 11 and 12 June 1998 on 'Books, Libraries and Reading Throughout the Cold War' in the Sèvres Centre, 35 bis rue de Sèvres, Paris.

The programme includes the following sessions:

Thursday 11 June, 9.00–13.00 *Libraries in the Cold War*, chaired by François Dupuigrenet Desrouilles; 14.30–17.30 *Publishing During the Cold War*, chaired by Pamela Spence Richards.

Friday 12 June, 9.30–13.00 *Reading During the Cold War*, chaired by John Y. Cole; 14.30–18.00 *Libraries During the Cold War*, chaired by Martine Poulain.

On both days there will be a screening of Nizan's *Arthur Koestler, from Komissar to Yogi* at 13.30. There is no charge for admission. Further particulars from Marie-Noëlle Frachon, *enssib*, 17–21 bd du 11 novembre 1918, 69623 Villeurbanne, France. Tel: 04 72 44 43 22 Fax: 04 72 44 27 88; Email: frachon@enssib.fr

Course Announcement

The **History of the Book MA** in the School of Advanced Study, University of London, was established in 1995 by Professor Robin Alston OBE, who retires as Course Director this summer. His post will be filled by Dr Simon Eliot of the Open University, co-founder and current President of SHARP, and co-director of the Reading Experience Database.

This Master's degree is the only such programme in the English-speaking world. The opportunity to study the History of the book in world-renowned institutions with experts not only from the University of London but also from the British Library, the British Museum, and the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum has attracted students from Australia, Canada, Ireland, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Spain and the United States.

Options already under way are 'Authors, Publishers and Textual Theory (1880-present day)' (Warwick Gould, Keith Sambrook); 'The Serial and the Book' (Michael Harris, Laurel Brake); 'The Mediaeval Book' (Pamela Robinson, invited experts); 'The Electronic Book' (Robin Alston); 'Text and Image: Illustrated Books and Art Publishing since 1830' (Valerie Holman, Paul Goldman, Rowan Watson); 'Western Book Structures: issues in Materials, Conservation and Preservation' (Roy Moxham, Robin Alston, invited experts). All students attend a Core Course, and write a Dissertation.

Next year the programme will build on its success and offer a new option in 'The Italian Book 1465-1800' utilising the unrivalled resources for the study of Italian books in the British Library. The course will be co-ordinated by Dr Jane Everson (Royal Holloway, University of London) and Dr Denis Reidy (British

Library).

Full details, including prospectuses and application forms, can be obtained from Pamela Robinson, Course Tutor, MA in the History of the Book, Centre for English Studies, School of Advanced Study, Room 307, Senate House, Malet St., London WC1E 7HU; phone and fax (from 15 April): 0044-171 862 8764; 0044 171 862 8672 Email p.robinson@sas.ac.uk

Scholarly Liaisons

The 1998 meeting of the **American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies**, held at the University of Notre Dame, 1–5 April, marked SHARP's third year as an affiliate of this organization. This year's ASECS/SHARP session, 'The Periodical Press and the Diffusion of Culture', met in the Rare Book Room of University of Notre Dame's Hesburgh Library. Paul Benahamou, Purdue University, chaired the session which featured four papers representing a rich variety of work on print history from the perspectives of several European cultures. Harold Stone (American University in Cairo) gave a paper entitled 'Bacchini's *Giornale de Letterati*'; Jin Lu (Purdue University, Calumet) spoke on 'England in Prevost's *Pour et Contre*- An Example of Cultural Diffusion'; Karin A. Wurst (Michigan State University) presented 'The Periodical *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* and the Differentiation of Eighteenth-Century German Culture'; and Edward Jacobs (Old Dominion University) talked about 'Managing Modernity's Bloody Fluxes: Eighteenth-Century British Newspapers and the Conquest of Mutability'. These presentations, in turn, generated good follow-up discussions.

In addition, the organisers of the 1998 ASECS conference graciously arranged a reception at the conference for members of SHARP. Christopher Fox, co-chair of the 1998 ASECS meeting, secured sponsorship for the SHARP get-together from the University of Notre Dame's The Friends of the Library, and Laura Fuderer made the actual arrangements. The reception took place in the Hesburgh Library's Rare Book Room, and a representative from the Library spoke briefly on Notre Dame's 18th-century holdings. The 1998 list of Recent and Current Research Projects on Authorship, Reading, and Publishing by Members of ASECS and SHARP was distributed at the reception; copies will also be available at the 1998 SHARP conference in Vancouver this July. Within the next month or so, an electronic version of the 1998 handout will be prepared for mounting on the SHARP website.

Sharpists may be interested to learn of a new journal in book studies, past present and future. Called 'Y Llyfr yng Nghymru'/'Welsh Book Studies', it is produced bilingually in Welsh and English by the recently formed **Aberystwyth Centre for the Book** in Aberystwyth, Wales. The Aberystwyth Centre for the Book is a cooperative venture by the Welsh Books Council, the National Library of Wales and the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, to foster interest in the book.

For further information about this new journal contact the Marketing Department, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, Wales SY23 3BU. For information on the Aberystwyth Centre for the Book, contact Dr Chris Baggs, Department of Information and

Library Studies, University of Wales, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, Wales SY23 3AS. Email: cmb@aber.ac.uk

Web Watch

The new World Wide Web pages for Early Printed Collections in the British Library have been mounted on Portico, the British Library's Online Information Server, and are available at: <http://www.bl.uk/collections/epc/> In addition to information on the new Rare Books and Music Reading Room at St. Pancras, they also provide a guide to their printed material collections and catalogues. For further information, please contact: Dr. Christopher Skelton-Foord, Digital Library Coordinator Early Printed Collections, Lower Ground Floor, The British Library, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB Email: christopher.skelton-foord@bl.uk

Book Reviews

David D. Hall. *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996. 195 p. ISBN 1-55849-048-5 (cloth). \$45.00/£35.95. ISBN 1-55849-049-3 (paper). \$14.95/£11.95

This collection by David D. Hall spans two decades, from a piece on print culture and collective mentality in seventeenth-century New England that dates from the late 1970s to an essay on varieties of communication (oral, written, and printed) in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake that will appear in the forthcoming *History of the Book in America*. Along the way one encounters all the little gems that have made Hall one of the foremost figures in the study of early American book history, including 'On Native Ground' (1983), 'The Uses of Literacy in New England' (1983), 'The Politics of Writing and Reading in Eighteenth-Century America' (1994), and 'Readers and Reading in America' (1994).

Think of David Hall as a bridge builder. At a time when many scholars were still writing about early American print culture as if it had no connection with the rest of the world, Hall established a fruitful rapprochement with French book historians that is evident throughout this volume. Emphasising continuity rather than change, he sets out to show, Chartier-like, that alleged differences between the culture of the common people and that of elites such as the Puritan clergy were not nearly as great as some scholars have thought. The same applies to the perceived divide between center and periphery: 'Always, colonial culture was both local and metropolitan', he writes (p. 6). Similarly, Hall stresses the 'continuum between print and oral modes' (84), and his essay on the Chesapeake skillfully shows the continuities between scribal and print modes. Hall acknowledges no turning points in time, at least until well into the nineteenth century; in his view, the entire colonial period in American history, and well beyond, constitutes one seamless cultural web. The glue that holds together all this gap-busting is Hall's conviction that early American culture, as reflected in its 'cultural practices' in regard to print, was essentially and consistently Protestant and practical. Almanacs, sermons, and devotional works comprise the 'steady sellers' that lie at the heart of what Hall calls 'traditional literacy' (57). Traditional literacy in this sense is the key to his primary goal as a book historian:

the formulation of 'a more adequate history of culture in America' (13).

Hall's graceful style is perfect for an essay format. Almost every chapter reads like a plenary lecture of sorts, as several of them originally were. But for all the charm and elegance of these essays, one wonders what sort of audience this book will find today. When book history as cultural history was struggling to establish itself against an elitist brand of high intellectual history on the one hand and older traditions of printing history and bibliography on the other, several of these essays did yeoman service. That critical battle has now been won, however, and SHARP, along with the American Antiquarian Society and several other far-sighted institutions that sponsored conferences at which some of these essays were first presented, embodies the cosmopolitan, international spirit of book history and print culture that Hall did so much to initiate. At the same time, reading these essays in a cluster in the late 1990s left me with an uneasy feeling of lightness and insubstantiality, as if Hall had formulated a vision and sketched out some hypotheses without providing the detailed evidence necessary to support them. But perhaps that is another way of saying that the essays in this book have helped to define a discipline which it is up to all of us to build.

Richard B. Sher, NJIT and Rutgers University

Alistair Black. *A New History of the English Public Library: Social and Intellectual Contexts, 1850-1914*. London: Leicester University Press, 1996. 368 p. ISBN 0-7185-0015-6 (cloth). £50 There is not a great deal of writing in British library history and what there is tends to be in essay form and is prone to be descriptive, rather than analytical. Big books with ideas tend to be in short supply. Even Thomas Kelly's classic *A History of the Public Library in Britain* is stronger on description than interpretation. Alistair Black's repackaged PhD thesis, one of the best in the subject area produced in the UK in recent years, takes us a long way in the ideas direction. Library historians, especially those with insufficient time for background reading, will benefit greatly from the discussions about the ideas which informed thinking about public library provision in the 19th century. There are chapters on the background to the public library ideal, utilitarianism, library pioneers, cultural and economic influences, idealism and the thinking of T. H. Green, social control, the character and influence of librarians and the social characteristics of library architecture.

Some of the text is inevitably controversial. While the influence of utilitarianism and its more intellectually attractive bedfellow, philosophic radicalism, is obvious to Black, he cannot show a direct link. Some discussion about the influence of radical Liberalism with its commitment to the widening of educational opportunity might have helped the argument. Although Sir John Lubbock gets a mention, a longer discussion of his work would have been useful. He was, after all, the William Ewart of the late 19th century. This is a difficult area for there was obviously something behind the rhetoric of the time even if it is difficult to put one's finger on what it was.

The book is a good starting point for those wishing to follow up on this. The role of the public library is extended with discussions about its contribution to technical education and the

emergence of business libraries during the First World War, which the author explicitly links with changing industrial needs. A re-evaluation of the role of the librarian shows them as less custodial and more proactive than previously thought. His discussion on social control is essential reading for those with an interest in who pulled the strings, although the conclusion that there was no overarching strategy of social control will not come as a great surprise.

The emergence of the public library is associated with the development of a building type and Black includes a well documented discussion of this. Social, rather than physical, factors are emphasised. Certainly the public library building of the period was remarkable in its need to give outer expression of its inner function but behind much of its rationale lay the simple fact that new industrial towns were markedly lacking in civic architecture and library buildings helped to alleviate this dearth. The fact that there was a strong chance that somebody else might pay for them was an additional inducement.

The copious footnotes show clear evidence of much hard work but unfortunately there is no bibliography and this makes tracing sources awkward, especially as the notes pages have no running headers (and this in a title with a list price of £50 sterling). At certain points in the text the author undertakes a Foucauldian analysis of the ideas discussed. I am not competent to comment on such matters except to state that every Scotsman knows that those who are fou are seldom cauld.

John C. Crawford, Glasgow Caledonian University

Robin Myers and Michael Harris, eds. *Antiquaries, Book Collectors and the Circles of Learning*. (Publishing Pathways, no. 16). Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1996. xv, 165 p. ill. ISBN 1-873040-29-6 (UK); 1-884718-24-8 (US) (boards). £25.00/\$39.95

Arnold Hunt, Giles Mandelbrote, and Alison Shell, eds. *The Book Trade and Its Customers, 1450-1900: Historical Essays for Robin Myers*. Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1997. xviii, 316 p. ill. ISBN 1-873040-42-3 (UK); 1-884718-34-5 (US) (cloth). £44.00/\$75.00

These two volumes utilize the talents of several respected scholars of the book. *Antiquaries, Book Collectors and the Circles of Learning*, edited by Robin Myers and Michael Harris, began as papers presented at the 1995 conference on the history of the book trade held at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House. Five of the seven contributors are Fellows of the Society. The publication is an attractive one, scholarly as well as enjoyable to read. It includes an agreeable range of subjects beginning with articles by David Pearson on book collectors in Oxford, 1550-1650, and Mirjam Foot on the bindings of scholar-collectors of a slightly later period. Pearson shows that scholars were rarely interested in their books as physical objects. Use was of greater consequence than fashion. On the other hand, Foot found that wealthy scholars and aristocratic-collectors of Europe, over a three-hundred-year period, were very much concerned with the outer appearance of their books which had to be handsome as well as serviceable. Myers offers a piece on the pioneer of Anglo-Norman studies, Andrew Coltee Ducarel, which gives an account of his life and aspects of

his work that is noted for its comparison of Anglo-Norman culture and ecclesiastical architecture. T.A. Birrell's paper, focusing on John Gage (the early nineteenth-century director of the Society of Antiquaries of London), illuminates his taking medieval studies into the nineteenth century. Arnold Hunt discusses the library and collecting career of Richard Heber, a true bibliomaniac in the longest essay in the volume. Janet Blackhouse's description of 'The sale of the Luttrell Psalter' takes the reader behind the scenes as one of England's great cultural treasures is preserved in the British Museum. Next, the illuminated manuscript collection of Edmond de Rothschild is discussed by Christopher de Hamel. Like Blackhouse's article, Hamel focuses primarily on dispersal but his introductory comments on this outstanding collection of late-medieval manuscripts with their fantastic royal provenances is significant also because it sheds light on a collection that was almost secret due to its lack of catalogue or photographic record. The volume is completed by Bernard Nurse's brief description of 'The library of the Society of Antiquaries of London: acquiring antiquaries' books over three centuries'.

Presented in *The Book Trade and Its Customers* is a collection of essays that serve to honour Robin Myers, a respected historian of the book trade, editor of the Publishing Pathways Series (devoted to studies in book trade and publishing history), Honorary Archivist of the Stationers' Company, and recently elected President of the Bibliographical Society (London). In an introductory essay, D. F. McKenzie writes that the works 'will be warmly welcomed by the ever-expanding body of scholars now recognizing the central value of book history to our understanding of past mentalities' (xviii). Fittingly, the book focuses on two themes which Myers has spent considerable time amplifying during her career: the historical development of the British book trade and the history of book ownership, collecting, and libraries. (Indeed, the volume reviewed above underscores her many accomplishments.) This volume is formally divided into two parts: 'The Book Trade' and 'The Customers'. In the first section, Anna Greening and Elisabeth Leedham-Green approach the sixteenth-century by presenting case studies of individual stationers in London and Cambridge (Richard Tottell and Manasses Vautrollier, respectively). David Pearson examines a seventeenth-century binding found on the third edition of Lewis Bayly's *The Practise of Pietie* (London, 1613) and speculates on its including the arms of the Stationers' Company. Three essays, by Arnold Hunt, Giles Mandelbrote, and Michael Harris, discuss attempts by booksellers and printers to protect their own interests in their relationships with authors, patentees, printsellers, and engravers. The London and Dublin book trades are discussed in essays by Scott Mandelbrote (on Bible printing) and James E. Tierney (on literary piracy and publishing). The section closes with studies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Michael L. Turner ('A List of the 'Stockholders in the Worshipful Company of Stationers', 1785') and Esther Potter ('The changing role of the trade bookbinder, 1800-1900').

The second part of *The Book Trade and Its Customers* opens with a case study by Christine Ferdinand on Magdalen College, Oxford, 1450-1550, and its role in the book trade. Three pieces in this section begin to place collecting and the world of books within their social, cultural and intellectual milieu: T. A. Birrell on Sir

Edward Sherburne's library; Alison Shell on John Clubbe, the antiquarian; and David J. Hall on Francis Fry, a bibliographer and maker of chocolate. James Raven writes on the Anglo-American book world of the late eighteenth-century, in 'Gentlemen, pirates, and really respectable booksellers: some Charleston customers for Lackington, Allen and Co.'; Eiluned Rees describes the fine bindings housed in the National Library of Wales; and Michael Treadwell treats 'Richard Lapthorne and the London retail book trade, 1683-1697'. The volume closes appropriately with a bibliography of Robin Myers' publications and a short memoir of her by associates, including John Walwyn Jones' sentiments: 'It would be pleasant to imagine that the antiquarian book world was full of international variations on a theme of Robin Myers, but sadly it isn't; she is indeed a rare tome, probably unique, and as such she is both valued and cherished' (p. 302).

Both of these volumes add to an ever-growing amount of relevant and useful information on various aspects of book history. Professional scholars and aficionados alike should view them positively. The individual articles are, on the whole, well written and include beneficial notes, and both volumes are indexed. The accompanying illustrations serve to enhance these publications as well. If the sum of the works leans a trifle towards antiquarianism in their makeup, that can be forgiven because a (relatively) newly-developing discipline such as book history needs to have such pieces at hand in order to put together and complete the record. Several of the authors collected in these volumes, too, are from the antiquarian world and having such an orientation is quite understandable. The various sub-divisions of book history (printing, publishing, selling, collecting, etc.) provide an endless amount of little stories for us all to collect and use as we see fit. Importantly, what we need, what we are still waiting for, is more synthesis, more gathering up and interpreting from cultural, social, and intellectual points of view. The utility of these publications, of course, lies in their potential to be applied towards the larger, grander goals of the history of books. It should be noted that articles by James Raven ('Gentlemen, pirates and really respectable booksellers'), Christine Ferdinand ('Magdalen College and the book trade'), Arnold Hunt ('Book trade patents, 1603-1640') and David Pearson ('Scholars and bibliophiles'), among others in these two volumes, indicate a rosy future and heighten our anticipation for full-fledged monographs in the field.

Robert A. Shaddy, University of Toledo

Burt Kimmelman. *The Poetics of Authorship in the Later Middle Ages: The Emergence of the Modern Literary Persona.* (Studies in the Humanities: Literature-Politics-Society, no. 21). New York: Peter Lang, 1996. 288 p. ISBN 0-8204-2856-6 (boards). \$49.95

Kevin Pask. *The Emergence of the English Author: Scripting the Life of the Poet in Early Modern England.* (Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture, no.12). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 x, 218 p. ill. ISBN 0-521-48155-4 (cloth). \$49.95/£32.50

Burt Kimmelman and Kevin Pask each trace what they see as decisive stages in the genesis of modern ideas of authorship, and at the same time explore how developments in society reflect and

influence the nature of literary production. For Kimmelman the modern author grows out of poets' philosophically-based explorations in language theory between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, while for Pask the crucial moments are reflected in the changing features of the 'life of the poet' genre between the early lives of Chaucer and Samuel Johnson's life of Milton. Authorship is too slippery a concept to admit easily to firsts or origins, however. In the end, the origins of the modern author resist being pinned down, since how one defines 'modern' and 'author' in large measure determines the where and when of the beginnings. The process rather than the single defining moment is the important thing, and claims of origin aside, Kimmelman and Pask each shed light with varying success on this long process.

Kimmelman finds a distance or detachment between poet and work in the twelfth century that to him represents the beginnings of authorial self-consciousness, and he sees three figures as especially important to this change: the troubadour Marcabru at first, and later Dante and Langland. Through a close reading of their work, and particularly their inclusion of forms of themselves within their works, Kimmelman charts the development of the modern literary persona, culminating in Langland's Will, a fictionalized narrator detached from the person of the author William Langland. Kimmelman argues that this is not simply a literary development, but rather reflects a fundamental realignment of the liberal arts after the twelfth century, when logic slowly displaced grammar from the head of the trivium and when it moreover infused language use with its ideas. The central development was a growing separation of signifier and signified in theories of language based on philosophical nominalism, a separation that influenced poets and that allowed them considerable freedom to experiment with language.

A peculiarity of this book is that its argument is more intuitively plausible than it is convincing in details. A central problem is Kimmelman's vagueness about the actual means of transmission of ideas back and forth between philosophy, poetry, and society. He posits, validly to be sure, a connection between them, but gives little indication of how this connection worked in practice, a point that would make his argument far more persuasive than it is. This is emphatically a work of intellectual history, with nary a mention of manuscript transmission and only a few brief nods towards readers (eg, p. 71–72). For Kimmelman, disembodied ideas were in the air in the later Middle Ages, and he little concerns himself with the details of exactly how they blew about from place to place. We know nothing whatsoever about Marcabru's education, for example, besides what we can deduce from his writings (seldom a reliable guide), and so cannot tell if his philosophical echoes are at first or second hand, or even simply commonplaces. And to argue that 'Likely enough, Dante helped to increase the importance of pronouns in the minds of thinkers who came after him whether or not they actually knew of or had even read his work' (45) is utter nonsense. Linking ideas and society without considering the physical means of transmission leaves an awkward unbridged gap, a problem with this type of intellectual history.

Another problem is Kimmelman's almost medieval reliance on received authority: often entire pages are composed mainly of

strung-together block quotations from secondary authors, usually providing only background, but occasionally making Kimmelman's points. Almost half of the last fifteen pages of chapter 4, for instance, are long quotations from other authors. If Kimmelman had relied only on block quotations of secondary sources it would mainly be an editorial annoyance, but he also tends to mine his authorities for his own contextual primary sources, particularly philosophical texts. Time and again he cites medieval logical, rhetorical, or philosophical works via the footnotes of Marcia Colish, Janet Coleman, Jesse Gellrich, or others (eg, 77–80, 138, 161–62). In a work whose central argument rests on an attempt to put medieval literature in a philosophical context, it is a grave problem indeed when that context is largely second-hand.

Finally, Kimmelman's reliance on authority also leads him to adopt historical generalizations that may seem acceptable to literary scholars, but that send up red flags to historians. 'Feudal society' is problematic enough when applied to socio-military relations in the early Middle Ages, but is virtually meaningless when used as a blanket description of late medieval Europe (e.g., 48, 59). Similarly, the ideas of 'orality' and 'literate culture' while certainly not meaningless, require more precise definition: it goes too far to lump Dante's Italy and Langland's England into the same unqualified 'literate culture'.

Kevin Pask's book is perhaps less ambitious than Kimmelman's; his claims to have found the origins of the modern author are much more muted but is ultimately far more successful. Pask surveys the life-narratives of five poets – Chaucer, Sidney, Spenser, Donne, and Milton – and shows how broader social and historical concerns shaped both the biographies of these individual authors and the concept of authorship more generally. Along the way, Pask makes important contributions to the histories of canon formation and of the raising of English to a worthy literary language.

Pask outlines his thesis in a brief introduction before exploring it in five mostly self-contained case-study chapters. His main concern is to show how the changing emphases and embroidery of the life-narratives reflect broader social and intellectual concerns, particularly those of the biographers who were working to canonize their subjects. Thus Pask demonstrates how stories such as Chaucer's education and supposed stay at the Inns of Court contribute both to valorizing his oeuvre against classical literature and to elevating him to the status of national poet-laureate for the young Tudor dynasty. The other chapters similarly illustrate Pask's 'both intertextual and historically contextual' (p. 3) methodology through discussions of the cultural uses biographers made of, among other subjects, Sidney's aristocratic valor, Spenser's supposed friendship with and patronage by Sidney, Donne's wayward poetic youth versus his sober religious maturity, and Milton's domestic life. The result is an often fascinating trip through shifting literary fortunes, incipient and changing canons, and varied polemical and political uses of literature.

Perhaps the only weakness in Pask's clearly argued and carefully researched book is a tendency, though less pronounced than in Kimmelman's case, to adopt overly-generalized historical contexts, often at third-hand via literary studies rather than from

historians. 'Late medieval feudalism' (9, 84) is so vague as to be virtually meaningless, and if it is permissible at all to call sixteenth-century England an 'absolutist state' (19, 53, 84), it certainly requires defence and explanation. The tendency to reach for easy terms instead of grappling with difficult historiographical debate illustrates how hard interdisciplinarity is; on the whole, however, Pask's history is considerably more nuanced than Kimmelman's, and the few unconsidered generalizations detract but little from the insights Pask gleans from the dialogues between history, society, and literature.

Eric H. Reiter, Concordia University, Montreal

SHARP Correspondence

I was sobered to read in a recent issue of *SHARP News*, in Sharp-end, that there has been a 'dearth of feedback'. (I read it first as a death of feedback, which is a little worse.) I don't know quite why you're not hearing from more of us. But I look forward to the newsletter as it arrives, make notes in it, tear out pages, etc. It seems to be very informative in its listings and the two or three longer pieces that lead off every issue.

My advice editorially would be to make the publication as lively as possible and to get a little loose. It's scholarly, and it's meant to be scholarly, but I don't know whether it has to be quite so sober-sided. You might as well have a little fun – or reveal the fun that lies in the study of those rectangular objects that command our attention and in many cases our lives.

Samuel S Vaughan, Random House, Inc., New York

One of the features which I have always valued in SHARP is its straightforward treatment of scholarly matters (and its scholarly treatment of straightforward matters), free from omnidirectional abstract nouns and widely ambiguous verbs. The *News* gives me useful information in a tone of voice which assures me that it is under scholarly control. There's no guff. But I think you may have to be careful when you give your reviewers their additional freedom.

Ian Michael, Bristol

The final paragraph in the Autumn issue of *SHARP News* has freed me from my self-imposed (and self-denying?) silence on seeing the main articles in the Spring issue. I failed to get into either of these: I had neither the inclination nor the time to peruse their polysyllables for meaning – communication, the sole (?) purpose of writing, had failed. Probably, however, I should have recalled Alexander Wollcott's tale of the broken-down tragedian sharing a park bench with a bedraggled and unappetising street-walker. 'Ah, Madame,' says he, 'quelle Ironie! The two oldest professions in the world – ruined by amateurs.'

I am proud to be an amateur of book-trade history (one aspect of the rather orotund 'history of the book') and, as such, greet the 'professionalisation' of the field with glad sadness. Glad I am in duty bound to be now that what I have been doing for over forty years, in spare moments from an active career in civil engineering, has been made academically respectable in this way; but sad that, as we have seen in sport, the professional rapidly drives out the amateur. (Is this, I wonder, yet another example of Gresham's

Law?)

Dr F W Ratcliffe, in his paper 'The contribution of book-trade studies to scholarship' presented to the 1990 Seminar in Durham on the British Book Trade was vigorously dismissive of the mere amassing of detailed information by us amateurs. But we provide the straw for the making of bricks – straw the dull labour of whose collection only the amateur has the stomach for. If we are so misguided as to enjoy this labour, I hope that 'real' book historians will use our straw and will recognise that there is still a place for us in the new scheme of things.

Fred Ratcliffe goes on: 'Despite the 'History of the Book Trade in the North', other regional groups and annual seminars and conferences, their published works remain in the main apart, outside the required reading of scholars. It is a sobering thought that many of the articles ... will never come to the notice of many who need to read them. If the full potential of the study into the provincial book trade is to be brought before the scholarship, the subject needs to be focused and brought into an integrated whole.' In short Ratcliffe sees an essential role for the straw-gathering amateur. Do you Professionals agree with him? If so, then I can accept the new professionalism with glad gladness.

Peter Isaac, Past President, Bibliographic Society

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Springtime in Edinburgh is always a contradiction, since the weather never seems to make up its mind on what to do. Or like SHARP, is getting altogether very busy. Echoing Mark Twain, I can safely say that this spring 'I have counted one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of weather inside of four and twenty hours'. And in this issue of *SHARP News*, we count several reports on major book history developments. New centres have been launched in Edinburgh and Leiden, and major book projects on teaching and mapping out book history are underway in Germany and the U.S. Those with a particular interest in teaching book history should take note of the special session at the upcoming Vancouver SHARP conference dedicated to thrashing out issuing a reader on the subject. It is an idea long overdue for development, and should stimulate important debates on the matter. I look forward to seeing what comes out of this session.

Finally, two points regarding *SHARP News*. Over the next few months we will be making available an electronic archive of past *SHARP News* issues for viewing on the world wide web. It's the closest thing to a chronicle of the society's progress as we currently have, and really makes for some interesting comparisons. I hope everyone will be able to make use of it. Secondly, a correspondence section has been added featuring comments from readers, which seem to range from 'lighten up' to 'keep us informed'. Perhaps for future issues you can start sending me book history related jokes? Preferably informative ones.... See you in Vancouver!

Dr. Linda Connors,
Drew University Library,
Madison, NJ 07940, USA

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