



Caxtonian

A Newsletter of The Caxton Club of Chicago

Volume II, No. 6

June 1994

Reflections on Books and Printing

I think the seeds of all that we love in life are planted during our youth. So it has been with me.

My printing career began with a set of rubber letters and a stamp pad from Woolworth's. This simple printing set led to the study and the teaching of all forms of printmaking, as well as to the founding of the Bronte Press in 1977.

Book making began with the creation of a small drawing book featuring cacti and adobe huts, which I drew on my first visit to Arizona in 1935. I was a first grader.

Book collecting began with a love of stories and poetry read to me by my mother, an excellent reader of discriminating taste. However, my love of owning books was constantly thwarted. I was never given enough of them.

The first book that I requested and that I was given was *Adam of the Road*, by Elizabeth Janet Gray. Soon after, it won the Newberry Medal.

My book collecting began in earnest with the purchase of *Shakespeare*,

illustrated by Rockwell Kent, published by Donnelley. The price was \$4, bought with a full-day's first paycheck.

I regret having neither the money nor a developed taste earlier in life. My friend, Catherine Tyler Brody, and I passed up original Bewick wood engraving blocks at Ben Abramson's Loop book store in 1948. Undergraduates at Rosary College, we had not yet been introduced to wood engraving.

Though eclectic, my book collection is concentrated on illustrated books, especially children's books: fairy tales, myths, and fantasy being favored. My preference for line drawings comes of my being a child during the final act of the Art Nouveau period.

To my way of thinking, not having enough of something makes for a lifetime of wanting it. This desire and love of beautiful books, once ignited in youth, has been the dependable joy in collecting books all of my life.

Suzanne Smith Pruchnicki

New Caxton Club Directory Published

Caxtonians Hayward Blake and Thomas Joyce have completed work on the 1994 Caxton Club Directory, which was published April 28, 1994 by Carnegie Printers of Chicago.

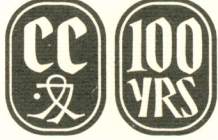
The new directory features a listing, in addition to names, addresses, and phone numbers of each resident and non-resident member, of the areas of special

interests and collecting areas for each member.


The 32-page booklet was distributed at the Annual Meeting, May 18, 1994, and then mailed to members not present at that event.

Very important assistance was provided by Nancy Sexton, Carnegie Printers, in

1993-94 DIRECTORY



FOUNDED 1895



THE CAXTON CLUB

the printing of this fine document. Caxton President, Robert Cotner commented, "This is a beautiful piece of work and is a fine addition to our centennial planning. On behalf of the Council and membership, I thank Hayward and Tom for their exceptional effort and excellent contribution to The Caxton Club."

Caxtonian

The Caxton Club of Chicago
Founded 1895



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Vice-President - Thomas J. Joyce

Secy-Treasurer - Charles L. Miner

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First Fridays Program

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Secy - Bookkeeper - Jane Smith



Newsletter Staff

Publisher - Robert Cotner
Editor - Michael Braver

Caxtonian is published monthly by the Caxton Club of Chicago. The Caxton Club office is located at 60 West Walton Street, Chicago, IL, 60610. Telephone, 312/943-9090, ext. 204. Permission to reprint material from *Caxtonian* is not necessary if copy of reprint is mailed to the Caxton Club of Chicago office and credit is given to *Caxtonian*.

Caxtonian is printed compliments of River Street Press, Aurora, Illinois
Fine Printers & Lithographers

Musings...

The Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress is a veritable temple of luminosity, where I have, over the years, spent many an hour in worship.

Caxtonian John Y. Cole's book, *Jefferson's Legacy; A Brief History of the Library of Congress*, tells of the planning for and construction of The Jefferson Building, in which the Main Reading Room is located. Erected in 1897, the building, Cole writes, "represented an unparalleled national achievement: its 23-carat gold-plated dome capped the 'largest, costliest, and safest' library building in the world." When built, "It was a functional, state-of-the-art structure as well as a Temple of the Arts, using the latest technology throughout."

I remember the first time I stood on the balcony high above the Main Reading Room and studied the magnificence of architecture and decoration in this splendid space. I had never seen anything—nor have I since—quite as powerful in architectural beauty as this one room devoted to the intellectual enterprise of reading, the heart and soul, our forebearers believed, of the successful democratic society.

The eye scans the rich wood of the lighted study desks far below, surrounding the main reference desk and the curving card catalog. As the eye moves upward, it finds pleasure in two tiers of pillared arches in the granite facings, one on each level around the outer perimeter of the room. Dominating the smaller arches below are massive encircling arches above, containing stained-glass windows, which cast a cathedral aura throughout the room.

The eye, finally, rises to the ornamented dome, illuminated by skylights. The dome serves as the perfectly appointed internal and external central focus for the Main Reading Room and for The Jefferson Building itself.

Since first seeing this building in 1954, when I lived a few blocks away on East Capitol Street, I have visited it scores of times and have come to know the place as scholar, patron, and devotee. A kinship with Jefferson, however remote, has kept me close to learning, and I can say with him, "I cannot live without books." This monument, this shrine to the book, this temple of luminosity, stands—for me personally, for the nation, for every Caxtonian—as the symbol of responsible individual freedom and flourishing democratic expectations for a watching and waiting nation and world.

Robert Cotner
President

Main Reading Room, Library of Congress -- The Nation's Temple of the Book



Built in 1897, the Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress is the embodiment of the dream of Thomas Jefferson and the ideas of Librarian of Congress Ainsworth Rand Spofford. Photo by Library of Congress, provided by John Y. Cole, Director, Center for the Book.

Adventures in Bibliomania--the saga continues

It was a lovely spring day, and local Chicago bibliophiles were on the prowl among the book stalls. Several had wandered in to browse among the goodies in the DOFOBS World.

Bobbie Bedner, noted authority on the poetry of Robert Rime, and sometime admirer of Vernon Louis Peachington, was browsing in the Saints and Sinners Corner and reached for a copy of a Klaxon Club publication, *Stories of the Streets and of the Town*, by George Aids. As he pulled it gingerly from the shelf, another bibliophile rushed over to him.

It was Carl Digger, the local authority on George Aids. He grabbed the book from Bobbie and exploded in a loud voice, "You can't have that book. See, it has my mark inside the front cover. I put my mark there a month ago to keep it on reserve while I was deciding if the price is fair."

Bobbie replied indignantly, but with his

his usual eloquence, "Mark, shmark, the book is mine. For it my heart doth pine. I really need it, for I want to read it, when in bed I do recline."

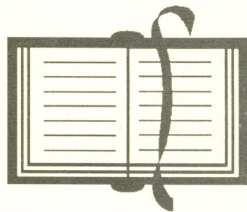
Digger put the book back on the shelf, grabbed Bedner by the lapels, and pushed him into another corner, away from his coveted treasure. The two stood nose to nose, fuming and grimacing, shouting invectives at each other.

As the two engaged in their tirade with growing intensity, Francis Peale, who had been watching with amusement from red-leather, wing-back chair, rose and slipped the book off the shelf, sidled over to the proprietor, Sir Thomas Joist, and surreptitiously paid for the book. As he headed for the back door with it, he said to Sir Thomas, "Bibliomaniacs are a strange lot." As Peale snuck into the alley, Sir Thomas mumbled, "You ought to know."

Editor's Note: This is part of a you-would-not-believe-how-many-series by the irrepressible Franklyn H. Legg.

RC

The Caxton Chronicles



As The Caxton Club closes the present season and anticipates the centennial celebra-

tion in the coming year, it is appropriate to reflect once more upon the origin of the Club, and upon its namesake, William Caxton. Born in England in 1422, Caxton traveled to Cologne, Germany, in 1471 to learn the fledgling printing trade. Several years later in Flanders, he helped to produce the first book printed in the English language, a translation of the story of Troy, *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*.

He returned to England, imported a press from the Netherlands, and set up shop near Westminster Abbey. In 1477, he printed the first book in England, *The Dictes or Sayings of the Philosophers*. Caxton

enjoyed a notable career in printing until his death in 1491. One of his publications was the first complete appearance in print of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

The primary authority on the life and work of Caxton is the treatise by William Blades, *The Life and Typography of William Caxton*, published in two volumes in London in 1861 and 1863. The first volume was devoted to Caxton's personal history, including complete reprints of all his known published writings. The second contained a dissertation about printing, as practiced by Caxton, plus a bibliographical and literary account of every known product from his press.

During the golden years of its early history, The Caxton Club published a monograph about its namesake on the

Sutter Curates Exhibit

Caxtonian Sem C. Sutter, is responsible for an exhibit on the colorful and wide-ranging historical use of papers produced with paste inks, now showing at the University of Chicago Library's Department of Special Collections.

Dr. Sutter, Bibliographer for Western European Languages & Literatures at the University, has curated this exhibit, which traces the development of paste paper as a genre, distinguishing it from other methods of decoration, such as marbling, gilt embossing, and wood-block printing with watercolors.

On display through June 20, 1994, the exhibit, called "Wrapped in Color: A Survey of Paste Paper Bookbindings," is at 1100 East 57th Street, Chicago. Caxtonian Alice Schreyer is the Curator of Special Collections at the University of Chicago Library.

tenth anniversary of the founding of the Club. E. Gordon Duff, Sandars Reader in Bibliography at the University of Cambridge, was commissioned to prepare it. He described Caxton's books, emphasizing those that had not been described by Blades, and he reviewed biographical and bibliographical information that had come to light after Blade's publication. The handsome publication was illustrated with 26 full-page plates of examples from Caxton's printing, and a reproduction of a binding by Caxton as frontispiece. Of the 252 copies on American handmade paper, 145 contained an individual leaf printed by Caxton himself from an imperfect copy of Caxton's first edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. This is the most desirable and scarest of The Caxton Club publications.

Frank J. Piehl

Treasures of Library of Congress Revealed in Caxtonian's Book

The History of the Book: A Guide to Selected Resources in The Library of Congress.

By Alice Schreyer. Washington: Library of Congress, 1987. \$15

In a dream assignment before coming to the University of Chicago, Caxtonian Alice Schreyer wrote what was, when published, the definitive descriptive book on the collections of the Library of Congress. The scope of this study, as one might imagine, is both broad and deep, for this library contains, as John Y. Cole says in the Foreword, "in all likelihood the largest gathering of books ever assembled."

Schreyer's book makes the collections more comprehensible, more accessible, and Caxtonians particularly will enjoy this book on books. She writes in the Introduction, "The purpose of the guide is to suggest research opportunities at the Library of Congress for those interested in the history of the book." But the book is far more than a guide: It is a pleasant read on the history of collecting, for, as she writes, "the history of books includes the study of all products of the printing press, such as maps, music, photographs, and prints, whether or not they are in book form."

Organized in two parts and seven chapters, the book presents a comprehensive summary of materials and their gathering at the LC under the following descriptors: "Manuscript Division" and "Rare Book and Special Collections Division" (Part One), "Copyright Records and Deposits," "Law Library," "Geography and Map Division," "Music Division," and "Prints and Photographs Division" (Part Two).

The Manuscript Division, housed in the James Madison Memorial Building, in 1987, contained 40 million items in approximately 10,000 collections. Schreyer writes, "Although documenting the role of the book trade, book-selling, and book collecting in shaping

American life has never been a collecting priority in the Manuscript Division, its resources highlight the interaction between books and economic, cultural, and political life."

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the valuable contribution Schreyer makes is to discuss one particularly appropriate collection from the Rare Book and Special Collections Division. This collection, Schreyer writes, "of approximately 3,000 rare books formed by Lessing J. Rosenwald (1891-1979) and donated by him and his estate to the Library of Congress between 1943 and 1980 exemplifies an ideal relationship among the worlds of private book collecting, institutional book collections, and scholarship."

Rosenwald of Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, had begun collecting books ("complete and pristine examples of books within . . . the western illustrated book from the fifteenth through the twentieth century") in the late 1920s, "several years after he had embarked on an equally dedicated, longstanding, and successful career as a collector of prints" of the same period.

In the space of six pages, Schreyer presents, then, an illuminating summary and analysis of the Rosenwald Collection, which contains such important elements as over 500 incunabula, 167 15th- and 16th-century Dutch and Belgian books from the Arenberg Collection, William Blake material from the William A. White collection and the Giant Bible of Mainz, "considered by many to be the greatest single item in the collection."

Schreyer's book is as rich throughout in illustration and textual detail as in this one small section. Here, as in the

some 50 other similar sections, she brings it to an analytical conclusion: "The Rosenwald Collection sustains and stimulates research in the fields of bibliography, the history of printing, literature, geography, and art history. The intellectual and aesthetic significance of the books he collected was of great importance to Lessing J. Rosenwald, and his vision of their scholarly potential is being realized in this national treasure for the study of the history of books."

Schreyer's book is thoroughly documented, tightly focused, and highly readable. It represents the sort of effort one might expect to be undertaken by a committee of a dozen scholars over a five-year period. What is most remarkable is that it was done by one gifted scholar, Alice Schreyer, Curator of Special Collections, The University of Chicago Library, whose personal vision unifies the work admirably.

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New Book Center Opens at Columbia College

Caxtonian Barbara Lazarus Metz is part of the newly-opened Center for the Book and Paper Arts at Columbia College, 218 South Wabash, Chicago. This new center, bringing together Ms. Metz's Artists Book Works and Paper Press of Chicago, is committed to allowing paper, the book arts, and all related arts to flourish and grow in Chicago.

Located in 12,000 square feet of space, the Center for the Book and Paper Arts will be part of the Graduate Interdisciplinary Arts Department at Columbia. For information or a tour, call 312/431-8616.

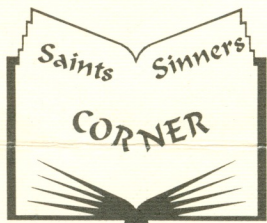
Book Marks

Luncheon Programs

All meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of the First National Bank of Chicago, Madison & Clark, Chicago. Luncheon and discussion, 12:30pm.

May marked our final luncheon for this program year. We will resume our First Friday Luncheons in September. Thank you all for your attendance and support.

Ed Quattrocchi
Leonard Freedman



Summer Workshop... Dartmouth College Library will offer a summer workshop, "W.A. Dwiggin & His Legacy," August 17 - 20, 1994. For information, write, Book Arts Summer Workshop, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH 03755. The phone number is 603/646-2236.

Welcome New Members

Following are new club members and the persons responsible for their membership.

William Drendel
Nominated by Scott Kellar
Seconded by Karen Skubish

Larry Solomon
Nominated by Karen Skubish
Seconded by Tom Joyce

John Y. Cole
Nominated by Alice Schreyer
Seconded by David Stam

Charles Miner

Books at Virginia... Caxtonian Alice Schreyer is one of 18 faculty members responsible for the 25 courses offered over a five-week program, "Books at Virginia: Rare Book School 1994," at the University of Virginia.

Under the direction of founder Terry Belanger, the school will hold one-week programs beginning July 11 through August 12. For information, please write: Rare Book School, University of Virginia, 114 Alderman Library, Charlottesville, VA 22903-2498. The phone number is 804/924-8851.

Dinner Programs

All meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of the First National Bank of Chicago, Madison & Clark, Chicago. Spirits-5pm; Dinner-6pm; Lecture-7pm

June 14.

Annual Field Trip. This early evening trip to The Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago features a special look into their current exhibit, "Stephen A. Douglas and the American Union."

August 17.

Jack Bales. "The Enigma of Kenneth Roberts, Interpreter of the American Revolution."

Tom Joyce

Reservations for luncheon programs are requested. Reservations for dinner programs are required. Please make them by calling 312/943-9090, ext. 204, no later than 24 hours prior to the event.

The First National Bank of Chicago's parking garage, 40 South Clark Street, offers a special parking rate after 5pm to guests of the Mid-Day Club. When you leave, please tell the parking attendant you were at the Mid-Day Club and your parking fee will be \$7, or \$5 if validated at meeting.



The Caxton Club of Chicago
60 West Walton Street
Chicago, IL 60610

...Celebrating a Century of the Book in Chicago, 1895-1995