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Book Crimes

Theft, hoax, and counterfeiting: thinking about illegal activity in the world of books

Bruce Hatton Boyer

If you are reading this, chances are you are a criminal.

Do I have your attention?

Books and book crimes will be the subject of the fourth annual Caxton/Newberry Library Symposium on the Book this April and that topic is no oxymoron. Much as we like to think that books exist apart from crime, the truth is a bit uglier. Where there is money to be made, there is crime, and in this sense, books are no different than cars, candy stores, and diamond necklaces.

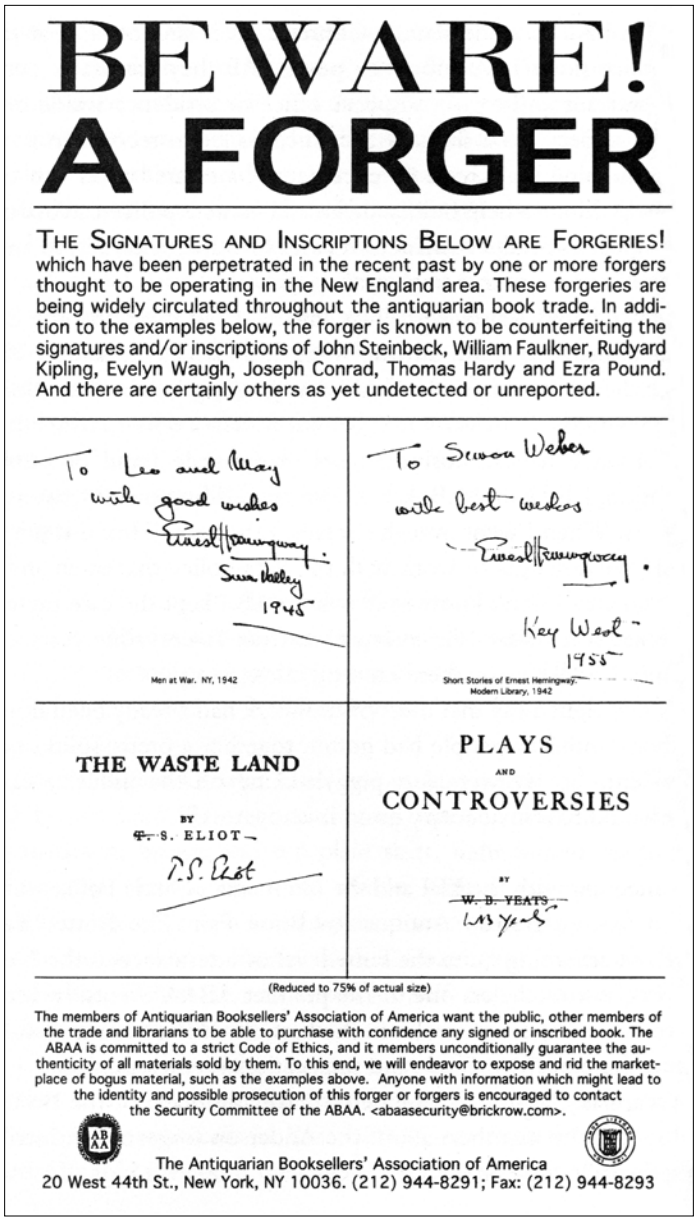
So if you have ever picked up a used paperback with its cover off, bought a book you knew was valuable for just a few dollars at a garage sale, or perused the shelves of even the most reputable antiquarian dealer, you have entered the world of the book crime.

Let me start from the beginning.

There are really only two motives for crime, namely money and passion. Viewed in this light, the book criminal is no different than any other criminal. He knows where the money is, and he can easily think of ways to get it. And if he is a book collector himself, he certainly knows all about passion.

But there is also an essential difference between everyday crime and book crime. The common thief who snatches a necklace, and the fence who passes it down the disposal chain, are not interested in the intrinsic properties of the stolen object. For them, it is only a commodity. This simple fact explains why some objects are worth stealing, e.g. jewelry, while others are not, e.g. family photo albums. Most dramatically, it explains why a car stolen in the morning is chopped into pieces by nightfall and sold off bit by bit the next morning, its identity totally – and intentionally – obscured. It's just about the money.

But when it comes to books, a different paradigm applies. Books, along with paintings, sculpture, religious reliquaries, and other cultural objects, are never just commodities. It is the position of each book in its cultural context that creates its value, not its similarities to other books; a first edition Danielle Steele is worth very much less than a first edition Ernest Hemingway. As a result, the goal of the book criminal – if I may coin such a term – is to *preserve* a book's identity. As a result, it takes a certain amount of knowledge to be a successful book criminal.



And here our passion for books blinds us. As booklovers, we *want* the book criminal to be a cut above the common purse snatcher. We *want* to think he has some type of finesse, some level of breeding, a certain *je ne sais quoi* which sets him apart. And the result of that attitude is that as a society we do not take book crimes seriously. We both romanticize the criminal who steals cultural wonders – think of the movie *Topkapi* – and we let him off lightly when it comes to the law because he has committed a "victimless" crime.

But book crimes are hardly victimless. Aside from the financial losses involved, there is the question of lost cultural patrimony, and here again, we are Janus-faced. The world shouted its objections when the Taliban dynamited centuries-old religious statues in Afghanistan. But mention the unsolved 1990 burglary of a dozen Old Master paintings from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, and you are likely to be greeted with a wink. We simply can't resist admiring the audacity of those daring thieves who have managed to elude the law for all these many years.

But unlike paintings and the Hope

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The case of the New England Forger (settled with a conviction in 1999) rattled the ABAA enough to cause them to run this ad.

Advertisement reproduced from *Warmly Inscribed* by Lawrence and Nancy Goldstone.

CAXTONIAN

BOOK CRIMES, *from page 1*

diamond, books present a special case because they are both cultural artifacts and commodities at the same time. The whole point of printing a book, after all, is to achieve widespread distribution. Except for editions that are deliberately limited, the value of most books is determined only after a period of years, when the author becomes famous or when enough copies have been destroyed, lost, or discarded to make the book a rarity.

These contradictory qualities of uniqueness and commodity status move in opposite directions from each other. A copy of *The Da Vinci Code* stolen from a public library is a commodity because millions of copies exist, so the replacement cost is minimal. On the other hand, a Shakespeare First Folio or a Gutenberg Bible can never be just a commodity. When it is stolen, it is irreplaceable and the loss, both in terms of dollars and of cultural meaning, is immense.

But whether their value is high or low, books get stolen all the time. They disappear from garage sales, from bookstores, from antique stores, and from libraries, and I suspect we all shrug our shoulders when the value of the lost (stolen?) book is only a few dollars.

But when the rarity of the book rises, so does our attention and our outrage. Here is where we start to install security devices and to inspect purses, but still the steady drumbeat of theft goes on. Nobody knows how many books are stolen each year; the number is surely immense. For example, in the past six months alone, the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries has reported the following cases. 1) Lester F. Weber, former archivist at The Mariners' Museum, was sentenced to four years in prison for selling thousands of stolen documents on the Web; 2) Laessio Rodrigues de Oliveira was sentenced to five years in prison for theft of rare books from the library of the Research Institute at the Rio de Janeiro Botanical Garden; 3) an unidentified suspect stole an estimated 150 books from the Fairfax City Regional Library; 4) a German library returned a 215-year-old Jewish manuscript stolen from a Tel Aviv library a decade earlier; 5) Edward Renehan Jr., an historian and author, was sentenced to a year and a half in prison for stealing letters written by George Washington and Abraham Lincoln from the Theodore Roosevelt Association; 6) three people were arrested in connection with rare book thefts at the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center Library in Ohio; 7) the National Library of Israel reported that hundreds of items were missing from its music section, including photographs, manuscripts, and letters by Yehudi Menuhin, Jascha Heifetz, Pablo Casals, Felix Mendelssohn, and Richard Strauss; 8) a veteran New York State archivist admitted in court that he stole more than $50,000 in artifacts and historic documents from the state Library and Archives over more than a decade; and 9) a LaPorte, Indiana man was arrested for stealing Jefferson Davis documents valued in excess of $15,000 from Transylvania University in Kentucky.

Caxtonians will doubtless remember the case of E. Forbes Smiley III, who was arrested for stealing materials from the Bienecke Library at Yale University in the 1990s. When the FBI discovered that Smiley had traveled to Chicago on several occasions, it contacted Caxtonian Bob Karrow at The Newberry Library, and asked him to check to see if Smiley had pilfered there. "I went to our readers' registration cards for the dates when Smiley was known to have been in Chicago," Karrow recalled. "We file these cards by year, so it was easy to confirm his visit. We also keep call slips for a long time, so it was relatively easy to see which books he had used on those days. I saw that Smiley had checked out four items, which I then looked at and discovered two maps missing. In the end, we could put two and two together for the FBI."

But as Karrow readily admits, catching Smiley was a matter of luck. If a crook is smart enough, something as simple as retrieving call slips will not trap him. Some twenty years ago, there was a librarian at a Chicago university who was well-respected as both a member of the Caxton and the Grolier clubs and as a priest. This above-reproach status gave him access to the stacks at the Newberry – a practice since discontinued, I must add – and he stole a number of significant items. He went so far, Caxtonian Paul Gehl told me, as to remove entries for the items from the card catalog, something only a librarian would think to do. The Newberry managed to recover some books after the man's death because they could be matched up with other Newberry records, but, as Gehl noted, that success depended on both good luck and the long memory of a few staff members. How many other books could go missing if a similar schemer were at work with full command of today's technologies?

The end of the story is even more shocking. When he was fired from his university for theft, the Grolier Club expelled the man but the Caxton Club never did, demonstrating that it is not just librarians who overlook book crimes. As for the man himself, he simply relocated to Wisconsin where he ended up teaching library science – surely a case of the fox guarding the henhouse if there ever was one!

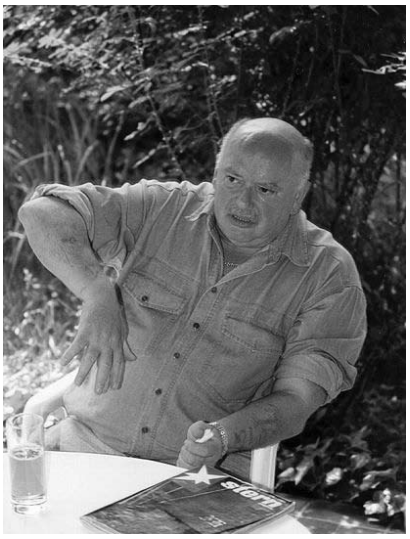
Alarming as these cases sound, they were at least reported and publicized. The dirty secret is that libraries don't like to publicize their losses. This is for several reasons. One, they are hard pressed to detect theft in a timely fashion, as the above examples suggest. Two, libraries generally don't want the public to know about the security systems they

do have in place. But the third and most understandable reason, I suspect, is that admitting such losses is embarrassing. How can a Folger or a Huntington library admit that someone tucked a 1687 first edition of Newton's *Principia* under his coat without the library being made a laughingstock in the press? Or how can a college library admit to a loyal donor that his prized copy of Audubon's Elephant Folio has disappeared? Even Paul Gehl admitted to me that his account of the felonious priest was hearsay because the Newberry did not make the case public.

What happens to these thousands of stolen items? Some no doubt remain with the thieves. But while we may enjoy the image of a master criminal in his castle paging through fifteenth-century *incunabula* over snifters of hundred-year-old cognac – see the 1954 film *The Detective* with Alec Guinness and Peter Finch – the truth is that such cases are rare. Works that famous or unique are simply too hot to handle. Those paintings stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum are a case in point. They are so valuable that they are ironically valueless; no one, from the self-respecting art dealer to the common fence, would dare touch them because they are so identifiable. True, it is easier to conceal a rare book than a painting, but who could keep such a treasure secret for very long when the whole point of owning it is to show it off to friends?

Just how identifiable such artifacts are was demonstrated last summer when a man walked into the Folger Shakespeare Library and asked someone to authenticate a book he owned. It turned out to be a Shakespeare First Folio. This particular copy was quickly traced back to the library at Durham University, from which it had been stolen a dozen years earlier. When the man was arrested, he claimed he had bought the book in Cuba, a country conveniently not recognized by U.S. law. An open-and-shut case? Not quite. To the suspicious police, the man offered the following caveat:

> If I had been the person who had stolen this book, the last thing in the world I would do is to openly walk into the Folger Shakespeare Library, under my own name, showing them my passport – the great center of Shakespeare learning – and say, "What have I got here?"



Press conference from enstages.spiegel.de; Kujau from de.wikipedia.org.

ABOVE *Reporters and editors of* Der Stern *at the press conference on 25 April 1983, at which the Hitler diaries were presented. From left to right: Prof. Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, Peter Koch, Thomas Grove, Gerd Heidemann and Felix Schmidt.* AT RIGHT *Konrad Kujau eventually admitted to the forgeries.*

While his particular copy was traceable, the man did have a point. There were 750 copies of the First Folio printed in 1623, of which 242 are known to exist today. Unlike those one-of-a-kind paintings from the Gardner, it is possible – not likely, perhaps, but still possible – that another copy could appear any day, and that the discoverer's story about finding it "in my grandfather's attic after he died" could actually be true. In this sense, even the rarest of books still remain commodities.

Another creepy possibility is that an aesthete with plenty of money but few scruples hires such thefts. The actual work (and risk) is taken on by someone whose motivation is greed, while the end result is that someone with very good taste gets to spend the rest of his (her?) life living with beautiful art.

In the main, however, most stolen books are whitewashed enough so that they are able to move through the food chain of auction houses and dealers. Does this mean that dealers and auction houses are dishonest? No, but as Caxtonian Tom Joyce, himself a rare book dealer, told me, "The simple truth is, everyone has stolen books." To prove his point, he regaled me for two hours with stories of aborted thefts, half-witted thieves, and honest collectors innocently acquiring hot books through legal channels.

The honest dealer recognizes these facts, and tries to rely on provenance. Every truly valuable cultural artifact should travel with provenance, and no reputable dealer should accept a valuable book without knowing who has owned it previously. In theory, provenance protects us from theft and skullduggery, and we can all sleep soundly.

Except, of course, that we can't sleep soundly because there are dozens of ways around provenance. Bills of sale are easily forged, and there is a long history in places such as Switzerland of laundering cultural artifacts. Indeed, whenever a valuable artifact suddenly appears on the market, there always seems to be a suspicious gap in the provenance chain. There is always an explanation for the gap as well, and I for one would like to find that nameless bookstore where first editions of Faulkner and Shaw always seem to sell for pennies, or one of those wonderful garage sales where signed Picasso etchings go for a dollar apiece. And it is curious, isn't it, how those shops just happen to have gone out of business, or the garage sales just happened to have taken place on a street whose name someone can't quite remember? Indeed, when the stakes are high enough, the lengths people will go to maintain deception can be astonishing.

Back in 1972, when The Metropolitan Museum in New York acquired the Euphronios krater, one of the most sublime examples of Attic Greek pottery ever unearthed, *The New York Times* quickly charged that the vase was illegally acquired from Italian tomb robbers. Not so, replied Thomas Hoving, then Director of the Met. He claimed it had been acquired from a Middle Eastern family, which had owned it for generations but wished to "remain anonymous." It was a Tooth Fairy story, and everyone knew it but it still took thirty years for the government of Italy to get the krater back.

Less common than theft, but certainly just as criminal, are cases of forgery. They are less common with books than they are in fine art for several reasons. For one thing, forging

See ***BOOK CRIMES****, page 4*

BOOK CRIMES, *from page 3*
entire books is largely impractical – it is hard to imagine that the returns from forging a complete first edition of *Johnson's Dictionary* would be commensurate with the effort expended. For another, the scientific analyses available today make pulling off such forgeries problematic. There are numerous cases of letters, broadsides, or handbills that were proved false through spectrographic analyses, or aging of the paper, or other scientific methods. Some of these have even turned deadly, as in 1985, when Mark W. Hoffman, a Salt Lake City man who had sold forged Mormon documents for amounts up to $40,000, killed two people with pipe bombs in an attempt to cover his tracks.

Most of the "forged" books in recent years are in fact not forgeries but hoaxes. The famous Clifford Irving autobiography of Howard Hughes back in the early 1970s is a case in point – Irving finally admitted the falseness of his claims before the book ever saw print. Even more dramatic were the infamous Hitler diaries in 1983. In that case, *Der Stern*, the German magazine which acquired the rights to publish the purported diaries, allowed experts to examine the manuscripts before publication, and some, including the eminent English historian Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, even authenticated them. The forger, a German petty criminal named Konrad Kujau, had previously created a spurious manuscript version of *Mein Kampf* and several "Hitler" poems that he had sold to an enthusiastic collector. When he invited experts to compare the handwriting in the diaries with known examples of Hitler's handwriting, he arranged to have the "litmus" specimens actually be some of his own forgeries. Very clever.

However, just as with the Irving autobiography, the worldwide stir the diaries created raised doubts. Finally, the West German Federal Archives ran scientific analyses of the paper, ink, and glue in the volumes and declared the diaries indisputable forgeries. Kujau was arrested but the evidence against him was too meager for a successful prosecution. He died a few years later, broke but still free.

When forgery occurs in books proper, it usually has to do with spurious autographs and association copies. The case of the New England Forger is instructive. In 1999, Kenneth Anderson was convicted in Connecticut for selling forty-five books with faked autographs to twelve different dealers in as many states. Anderson, a reclusive thirty-year-old English major, had stumbled into crime as a way of supporting his book collecting habit. The fact that he fooled so many dealers, many of them proud members of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America, testifies less to his skill than to the value collectors place on acquiring such items.

So, there are crimes and crimes involving books. But there is one thing that unites them all, and that takes me back to my opening sentence – book crime exists because we booklovers are part of it. There are buyers and collectors everywhere who overlook suspect provenance or glaring contradictions in their haste to serve their own greed. It takes two to tango, and every time a collector or a dealer closes his mind to a suspicious offering, he becomes a book criminal as well. And the power of denial plays a powerful, powerful role.

When the Dutch painter Han van Meegeren forged paintings by Vermeer back in the 1930s, he targeted this very weakness. He made his forgeries look the way the experts *wanted* them to look, and he bamboozled the biggest expert of them all, Abraham Bredius, by creating works that fit Bredius' conception of what missing works by Vermeer *ought* to look like. The same is true of Hugh R. Trevor-Roper in the case of the Hitler diaries. Trevor-Roper, who was one of the first Allied soldiers to enter Hitler's bunker in Berlin and who had written one of the best books on Hitler, wanted so desperately for Kujau's works to be authentic that his judgment failed him. These peoples' dilemma is ours as well, for no matter how honest we strive to be, if we are passionate collectors, we can never know for certain if our acquisitions are truly legal.

As I wrote these last words, I looked up in my book-lined library and wondered how many of the volumes on those shelves were stolen. How many of those marked discarded by some library were actually discarded? How many of my volumes of Joseph Wechsberg's writings – I have them all – were actually stolen from some unknowing owner? And I had to ask myself, how much would I pay a stranger for a complete set of the 1904 Thwaites edition of the *Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, an item I simply drool to own? Looking at myself this way stirred an uncomfortable feeling and an exhilarating one all at the same time, and it reminded me of Walt Kelly's famous line in a long-ago *Pogo* comic strip – "We have met the enemy and he is us."

See you all at the Symposium!

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Detailed information on the Symposium is included in the envelope with this *Caxtonian*. An additional attendance application should also be available on the Club website.

CAXTONIANS COLLECT, *from page 7*
descriptions of major cities, automobile tours throughout the state, and a portfolio of photographs. The FWP author list includes Nelson Algren, Saul Bellow, John Cheever, Ralph Ellison, and Eudora Welty.

Blew has all of the state guides, most of the separately printed city guides, and many of the miscellaneous publications that were generated by the various state organizations. "They're wonderful. They were the first serious efforts, and very successful ones, to create detailed travel guides to every one of the states. They were published originally in hardbound editions with often arrestingly beautiful dust jackets. Most are accompanied by pocket maps with the various tours marked for reader use.

These guides are "still used today. They've been published over and over, more recently in paperback editions. I've tried to locate first printings of first editions in the first issue dust jackets. They're very hard to find in good or better condition because they were typically subjected to heavy use. The dust jackets often perished, and the books were frequently filled with the handwritten notes of users. So to get pristine copies is very difficult, but I have had fun doing it." And Blew often acquires "reading copies" for use on the driving trips he loves to take around the country.

"Illinois is a great example of the breadth of publications which were produced by the project. There is a state guide, guides to Rockford, Princeton, Nauvoo, Cairo, Hillsboro, and DuPage County, a history of baseball in 'Old Chicago,' and a work on the 'Cavalcade of the American Negro,' among many other publications of the Illinois project."

Another category in Blew's library is Chicagoana. He says "it's nothing like the quality or quantity of Ed Hirschland's collection, but I have some wonderful things." He also collects downstate Illinois books devoted to the state's pioneer period. In recent years he has begun assembling a collection of illustrated historical

CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES

Wynken de Worde

I have at hand two newspaper clippings, saved from oblivion by our club historian, **Frank J. Piehl** ('85), an inveterate collector of almost anything related to the early history of Chicago.

The first clipping reminds me of President Obama's efforts to create his own cabinet. In 1888, President Grover Cleveland offered Chicago attorney Melville W. Fuller two positions in the government, both of which Fuller declined. I do not know what Fuller "had" on President Cleveland, but he finally prevailed upon Fuller (a man with no previous judicial experience) to accept a job on the U. S. Supreme Court – as its eighth Chief Justice.

The clipping states, "Chief Justice Fuller will feel lonesome for awhile, but he knows he can return to Chicago whenever he wearies of the burden. As long as a man knows there is a Chicago to which he can come he can stand a good deal elsewhere." That may provide some comfort to the Obamas, the Emmanuels, the Axelrods, Valerie Jarrett, and all the others of "the Chicago school" who "will feel lonesome for awhile" in Washington DC.

The second clipping tells yet another version of How Chicago Got Its Name. "John Jenkins, of Momence, Ill., whose father was the first white man that raised a crop of corn in Cass County, Mich., and who avers that when a boy he was as familiar with the Indian language as with his own, says, that the usual definition given to the word 'Chicago' is entirely erroneous. Forty-five years ago the place was called Tuck Chicago, 'tuck' meaning wood or timber, and Chicago signifying gone, absent, without. Tuck Chicago therefore, literally meant 'timber gone' —Louisville *Courier-Journal*. Now **Ed Hirschland** ('95), **Bob Karrow** ('88), **John Blew** ('95), and other enthusiasts for local history can clip this!

The worldwide web, the internet(s), have become a mixed blessing, in so many, many ways. Using the right keywords, I have searched and discovered that Mr. Jenkins' story was also reported in *Potter's American Monthly*, from which it was quoted at page 423 in Henry Hurlbut's *Chicago Antiquities*. I found it because those fine folks at Google have been copying both recent and old books in institutional libraries and putting the contents, in searchable form, on the web – for free!! – unless you count some occasional advertising as a cost.

Hurlbut's comment on the story is, "It is rather queer though, that nobody else ever heard of it, and that it does not appear in any of the Indian vocabularies" – p.424. So the challenge for Bob Karrow, who knows as much as anybody about Midwestern maps, is to find some map, any map, that refers to some form of Tuck Chicago.

Thirty years ago, the idea that any entity or combination of entities would be able to access the accumulated and individual knowledge of the world from a computer was something that would only happen in some Star Trekkian twentyfourth century, certainly not in my lifetime. And here it is. I have read in these pages that the Google minions are at work copying the contents of The University of Chicago libraries. Say it ain't so Joe.

Hyde Park booksellers have been newsworthy lately. Douglas Wilson, of O'Gara and Wilson Booksellers, attended the 2008 Holiday Revels. If and when he is proposed for membership, he ought to have no trouble paying his dues. Doug was instrumental in sending a document signed by Moliere at auction in 2008. It was the first Moliere signature recorded in a century of manuscripts sold at auction. It brought $394,000!

Jack Cella ('01), doyen of the Seminary Co-op, has been dealing with the halo effect of his customers, the Obama family, who have all moved to a bigger house in Washington, D.C. News crews, such as those from "Good Morning America," have descended on his shop in search of some new insights on out national Chief Executive. No doubt the Co-op is now on the bus tour of Obama-related sites in Hyde Park and Kenwood.

Bradley Jonas ('89) also purveyed books to Senator Obama, most particularly multiple copies of Obama's first book, *Dreams from My Father*, after they were remaindered by the publisher. Obama paid $1 a copy, but the overstock copies were depleted long ago. Brad's firm, Powell's Books of Chicago, has thousands of remainders. Most of those will soon be moving to the mammoth warehouse Brad just bought in the far southwest side of Chicago. This is quite an expansive move in this new era of contraction and consolidation.

Speaking of expansion and contraction, **Brad**, **Tom Joyce** ('82), **Florence Shay** ('85), and **Bruce Barnett** ('05) explored the possibility of reactivating the Chicago International Antiquarian Book Fair in later 2009. The sponsor was the Mid-west Chapter of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America. The committee reluctantly concluded that 2009 is not a highly-promising time to renew the Fair, but they hope that the portents will augur well for 2011. If you have any encouragement for them, be sure to discuss it with any of them.

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state and county atlases primarily published in the Midwest during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. These oversized works, the best of which were compiled under the auspices of Alfred Andreas of Chicago, contain, in addition to detailed atlases of counties and townships, often beautiful, if mostly stylized, drawings of farms, residences, and commercial and industrial establishments of the period. "I love that. Perusing these is like traveling back in time. Andreas is underappreciated. I hope to change that."

Another grouping of books in Blew's library is that devoted to architecture and architectural history, "which is a huge interest of mine. I was treasurer of the Society of Architectural Historians and a member of its board for several years, which helped to foster this interest." This category is "largely not antiquarian" and contains monographs and other works published during the last fifty years. "But there are also a few really great antiquarian books that I've acquired over the years." Much of this "collection" is devoted to Sullivan, Wright, and other Chicago School and Prairie School architects and to the history of modern architecture around the world from its beginnings early in the twentieth century to the present.

John Blew's favorite thing to read? "Books from my library, preferably on cold winter evenings in front of the fireplace. For me, it doesn't get any better than that."

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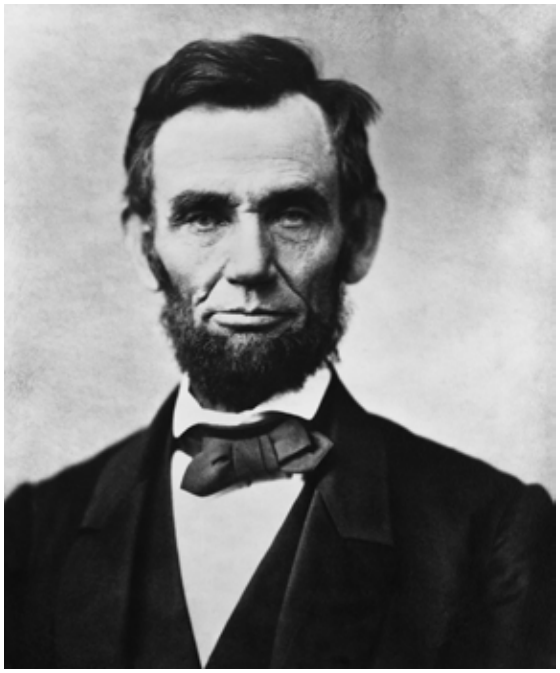
Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Bernice E. Gallagher
(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit.)

In an attempt to ward off the winter doldrums, adventurous Caxtonians might be tempted to visit either the Chicago Underground Library, 2129 N. Rockwell Street, Chicago, information at www.underground-library.org (archives and indexes of small, indie and obscure literary artifacts, including: six chapbooks written by Gwendolyn Brooks in the 1980s, one featuring poetry about Harold Washington; the entire archive of *Punk Planet*, one of Chicago's most important alternative magazines; *The Perfumed Savage* by Estelle Brinkman, a 1933 book of erotic feminist poetry, with cover design by artist and architect Edgar Miller) or the library at the Irish American Heritage Center, 4626 N. Knox Avenue, Chicago, 773-282-7035 (books, periodicals, newspapers and archival materials relating to every aspect of Irish and Irish American life, including a facsimile of the Book of Kells, the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Annals of Ireland, the Chief O'Neill musical anthologies, the Eileen McNulty Poetry Collection from Kennys in Galway, and the Liam MacGabhann Celtic Language Collection).



The Sixteenth President at Chicago History and U of C
PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXANDER GARDNER (1821-1882), FROM WIKIPEDIA

Three exhibitions are currently offered at The Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: "The Beauty of the Beasts: Artists and their Pets in twentieth-century Art" (books featuring artists and the animals who inspired them) in the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, through March 16; "The Bill Peet Storybook Menagerie" (sketches, storyboards and books by Bill Peet, creator of Dumbo and Cinderella and Walt Disney's principal animator for 27 years) in Galleries 15 and 16, through May 24; "Daniel Burnham's Plan of Chicago" (part of a citywide celebration of the Burnham Plan Centennial, including maps, diagrams, perspective drawings and watercolors, historically significant and artistically exceptional) in Gallery 24, through December 15, 2009.

"A Host of Golden Daffodils: Selections from the Rare Book Collection" (delightful examples of daffodils in botanical illustration, from woodcuts to color engraving) in the Lenhardt Library, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8201, February 6 through May 10.

"Collaborative Vision: The Poetic Dialogue Project" (thirty-one works created by visual artists in collaboration with poets, including artist-made books and mixed media art installations) in the Yates Gallery, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, 312-744-6630, through April 5.

"Lincoln Treasures" (a year-long centennial celebration exhibiting many of the museum's most prized Lincoln artifacts and after April 1 featuring one of five handwritten copies of The Gettysburg Address) at the Chicago History Museum, 1501 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-642-4600, ongoing.

"Makeready, Choke, Bleed, and Knockout" (works by artist-printers who utilized high speed rotary offset presses for reasons of speed, accurate registration, and the use of color imagery) in the Gallery at the Center for Book & Paper Arts, Columbia College, 1104 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, 312-369-6630, February 27 through March 31.

"Pomp and Circumstance: A Look at Presidential Inaugurations" (a representation of the Library's wide ranging collection of items relating to presidential topics, including formal reports, ephemera and personal accounts of political events) Spotlight Exhibit Series, The Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090, through February 16.

"Happy 75th Anniversary, Deering Library!" (artifacts, ephemera and correspondence, telling the story of previous libraries at NU, the intrepid librarians who managed them, the design and construction of the building, and the special collections in Deering) in University Archives, Charles Deering Library, Northwestern University, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658, ongoing.

Three exhibitions are featured in the Special Collections Research Center, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, 1100 East 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8075: "Our Lincoln: Bicentennial Icons from the Barton Collection of Lincolniana" (documents and artifacts exhibited at the Century of Progress Exposition and acquired by the Library in 1932, including a handwritten page from young Lincoln's "Sum Book," a presentation copy of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Lincoln, and one of the few surviving letters written by Lincoln to his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln), through February 22; "Integrating the Life of the Mind: African Americans at The University of Chicago" (original manuscripts, rarely seen portraits, photographs and books, with profiles of notable graduates), through February 27; "East European Jews in the German-Jewish Imagination from the Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica" (documents tracing the experience of German Jews, from emancipation in the nineteenth century to the eve of World War II), through June 22.

"The 'Writing' of Modern Life: The Etching Revival in France, Britain, and the U.S., 1850-1940" (works by European and American artists like Haden, Meryon, and Whistler, showing how printmakers of this period intertwined the arts of etching and writing) at the Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 5500 S. Greenwood, Chicago, 773-702-0200, through April 19.

"State Street: That Great Street" (newspaper clippings, books, and memorabilia exploring the history and attractions of State Street over 150 years) in The Chicago Gallery, 3rd Floor, Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300, through June 21.

Bernice Gallagher will be happy to receive your listings at either 847-234-5255 or gallagher@lakeforest.edu.

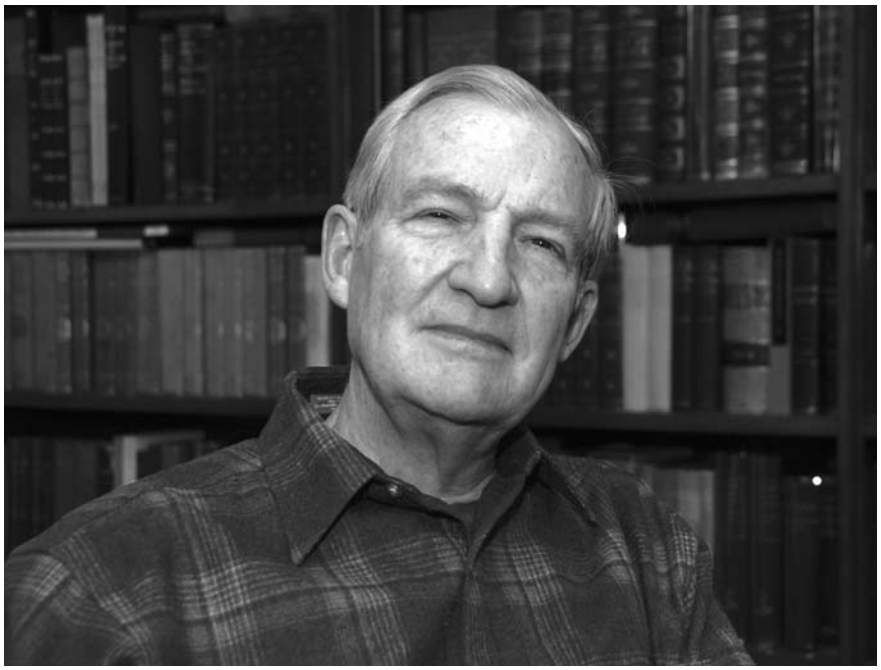
Caxtonians Collect: John C. Blew

Fiftieth in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Kathryn R. J. Tutkus

John Blew calls his aggregation of books a library, not a collection, a distinction that reflects his desire to cover a lot of ground and his use of the books for reference and reading.

He says American history has always interested him. He was an economics major in college, where he only took a "smattering" of history. But when he found out about the Returning Scholar program at The University of Chicago (which permits non-degree students to take any course offered, undergraduate or graduate, if admitted by the professor, for no credit, but with the expectation of writing the papers, participating in class, and taking exams), he signed on for the classes spanning American history.



Photograph by Robert McCamant

The courses were taught without textbooks, instead using source documents or excerpts from them. Blew had "never really grasped the significance of source documents. These books were on reserve at the library or in Special Collections and you got to handle them. I was fascinated.

"Then I started learning about book fairs and auctions. I had the good fortune to meet Terry Tanner [proprietor of Hamill & Barker in Evanston, the internationally-renowned booksellers], one of the foremost authorities on Americana, and an incredible man who took me under his wing in about 1990 and helped me build my library so far as it related to Americana. He became a good friend. He was very influential in my understanding of this whole area."

About the same time he discovered *USiana*, the great one-volume bibliography of Americana compiled by Wright Howes under the auspices of The Newberry Library. Published in a definitive second edition in 1962, "Howes" (as it is universally known) is still in regular use by collectors, dealers, and librarians. The book has been an invaluable guide in the assembly of Blew's library. Wright Howes was one of the nation's preeminent dealers, based in Chicago, in Americana for nearly 50 years, from the 1920s through the 1960s. Blew has also done extensive research on Howes' life and work, thus far distilled into three papers, one of which he presented at a Caxton Club luncheon.

He says his library of historical Americana is "broad but shallow." But there are "pockets of depth," such as the Ohio Valley, the Mississippi Valley and the Old Northwest, and the Spanish Southwest. "It's largely books from the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, with a smattering of works from the eighteenth century." He is a fan of the many elegantly printed later editions of rare Americana published beginning after the Civil War. With lengthy introductions by leading scholars and extensive footnotes, these multi-volume works, he believes, are often more interesting and illuminating than the originals.

He is trying to cover the whole expanse of American history, starting with the exploration and settlement of North America and the move across the Alleghenies and Appalachians to the first American West (the Ohio Valley, Mississippi Valley, and the Old Northwest), and then to the trans-Mississippi West, including the constant and often tragic engagement with the Native American population. Within that context, he collects the works of particular authors, editors and publishers, including Francis P. Harper, Reuben Gold Thwaites, Robert Clarke & Co., Burrows Brothers, and the Arthur H. Clark Company. In essays written by Blew to accompany an exhibition of his books in the Special Collections Research Center at The University of Chicago Library in 2002, he discusses the works published by Frances Harper and Robert Clarke and those edited and authored by Thwaites.

Blew also became interested in Mormon history because of the Mormon association with Nauvoo, Illinois at "one of the state's most beautiful sites." He has a sub-concentration of books mostly related to the Mormon communal movement from a historic standpoint, not just in Illinois but in Ohio, Iowa, and the west as well. What fascinates Blew about the Mormons is not their religion but that "they represent this country's most successful communal movement. There have been many such experiments, nearly all short-lived, but despite a difficult theology, the Mormons are vibrant in terms of what they've accomplished and the obstacles they have overcome. Mormons are insular and yet they have been able to perpetuate themselves and ultimately thrive."

Another collection he's proud of and worked hard to build consists of the publications of the Federal Writers Project (FWP) of the 1930s and early 1940s. The project was started by Franklin Roosevelt in 1935 to support unemployed writers during the Depression and was initially part of the Works Progress Administration (eventually the WPA). The most well-known of these publications are the guides to the (then) 48 states (plus guides to Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia), referred to as the American Guide Series. The format is more or less uniform for all volumes. Each contains introductory essays by distinguished writers on the state's history, culture, architecture, economy, and similar topics, detailed

See ***CAXTONIANS COLLECT,*** *page 4*

Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program
Friday February 13, 2009, Union League Club
"Handmade Book Show 'n Tell"

The many kinds of handmade books will be represented at the luncheon on Friday, February 13. Five Caxtonians who collect them will each show four books from their collection, talking a bit about each and then allowing ample time for everyone present to take a closer look. Handmade books go by many names: "private press books" tend to be idiosyncratic creations of people who want to make only books they are interested in; "fine press books" is a slightly more catholic term, referring generally to letterpress productions, often with illustration; "artists' books" tend to put more emphasis on the art and have little or no text; "livres d'artiste" allow for a formal relationship between text and art. Private and fine press books are generally done in editions of up to several hundred, while the other two are often single copies or a handful. Showing will be Hayward Blake (who has been the designer of many Caxton Club publications), Rob Carlson (selfless contributor to the Club's Web presence), Martha Chiplis (current Council member and teacher of letterpress bookworks), Bill Drendel (hand bookbinder/book artist, long active on the Council), and Bob McCamant (*Caxtonian* editor and proprietor of Sherwin Beach Press).

Audience members are invited to bring along one or two handmade books from their collections for display.

Dinner Program
Wednesday, February 18, 2009, Newberry Library
Jon Solomon
"*Ben-Hur* at the Crossroads of Popular Culture & Commerce, 1880-1925"

"I want to bury myself in a den of books. I want to saturate myself with the elements of which they are made, and breathe their atmosphere until I am of it." —Lew Wallace, 1885

Wallace might have achieved this wish using just one of his books. *Ben-Hur* (1880) enjoyed phenomenal sales, staying among the best sellers until *Gone with the Wind* in 1936. In 1913, Sears, Roebuck undertook to sell one million copies at 39 cents apiece – the largest single-year print edition (to that date) in American history. Much more than a best-selling novel, *Ben-Hur* inspired a spectacular theatrical production on Broadway (1899) and spawned a number of high-profile films, the first of which, in 1907, became the subject of the landmark Supreme Court decision establishing the relationship between film production and book copyright (1911). *Ben-Hur* also provided a veritable brand name and recognizable chariot logo for dozens of fledgling companies at the end of the nineteenth century, making it the prototype of synergy between American consumerism and popular art. This multimedia presentation will review this fascinating history and illustrate dozens of *Ben-Hur* artifacts rarely seen today.

Jon Solomon is Robert D. Novak Professor of Western Civilization & Culture and Professor of the Classics and of Cinema Studies at The University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

The February luncheon will take place at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Luncheon buffet (in the main dining room on six) opens at 11:30 am; program (in a different room, to be announced) 12:30-1:30 pm. Luncheon is $30. The February dinner will take place at The Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St. Timing: spirits at 5 pm, dinner at 6 pm, program at 7:30 pm. Price for dinner is $48.

For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org; ***reservations are needed by noon Tuesday for the Friday luncheon, and by noon Friday for the Wednesday dinner.*** *See www.caxtonclub.org for additional parking and transit information.*

Beyond February...

MARCH LUNCHEON
On Friday March 13, at the Union League Club, Caxtonian Paul Ruxin, a Samuel Johnson scholar, comes along with another remarkable tale: Hester Thrale Piozzi (historically misunderstood and remembered mainly for her relationship with Samuel Johnson), is unveiled as a Woman of Importance in her own right.

MARCH DINNER
In recent years, Caxtonian Paul Saenger of The Newberry Library has become obsessed with the question, "Where and when did the numbered chapters and verses of the Bible originate?" On March 18 he will share with us the fruit of his extensive research on medieval manuscripts and early printed books that tried to answer the question.

APRIL LUNCHEON
The luncheon will be held at the Union League Club on Friday, April 10. Noted food historian, author, lecturer, and avid cookbook collector Penelope Bingham will entertain.

APRIL DINNER
Celebrate Tax Day, Wednesday, April 15, with Peter J. Stanlis speaking on "Robert Frost: The Poet as a Philosophical Dualist," at The Newberry Library. Stanlis' new book, reviewed in the September, 2007 *Caxtonian*, is the first full-length study to understand and elaborate the underpinning of all Frost's work – his philosophical dualism.