

## He Sold Secrets

David Meyer

If you look closely at this photograph, you will see clues to the life and character of the man pictured in his surroundings. Framed diplomas of the Lonk Institute of Hypnotism hang above and near him. One is his “Master of Hypnotism” degree and the other, only partly in view, is for “Doctor of Suggestive Therapy.” The wallpaper, cabinets and linoleum floor of the nearer room are in a kitchen filled with books and papers. A single lit bulb hangs by a chain in the alcove where the man sits. You might say that he is cornered by stacks of books. His name – his middle name, “Nelmar,” the one he came to use most often in his business – is printed on a sign tacked above his “master” diploma. Although Nelmar lived and worked in Chicago during a period of 40 years, this photograph quite possibly captures the scene of his entire life as a bookseller.

He was born Anthony Nelmar Albino on July 26, 1908. Two of my long-time friends knew and left written accounts of Nelmar and his life as a bookseller. Frances Marshall, proprietor of Ireland Magic Company (later called Magic Inc. after her marriage to magician Jay Marshall), was two years younger than Nelmar and first met him when she was a teenager and living at home. “A salesman came to the door selling (of all things!) crucifixes, and very cheap, too,” she recalled. “I had my first job by then so I bought one and with it received a ‘Good Luck Charm’ printed on a card.... Mr. Albino was very talkative and pushy, plus being sort of wild-eyed. He also showed a lack of taste in



Anthony Nelmar Albino

combining the two items, but the irony of that point escaped me at nineteen.”

He was at that time, on the eve of the Great Depression, also selling his services as a professional hypnotist. “Prof. Anthony Albino – The Miracle Man with Magnetic Hands” one of his business cards declared. Another, from the early 1930s reads, “Nelmar the Great (Stage Name of Prof. Anthony Albino. Home Address: 2658 W. Polk Street).” His “credentials” were obtained from Adolph Lonk, who operated a diploma mill (out of the suburb of Palatine) that provided degrees in metaphysics, psychology (before that title became protected), and other arts and “sciences.” “Nelmar

Super-Hypnotist” touted another business card.

“Nobody in commercial magic ever worked as hard for as little as Nelmar – to give the devil his due,” Frances Marshall wrote. “Remember that this was the early 30s, with guys selling apples on street corners, long lines for every job, and a depression that was to last until war work ended it. Nelmar had a wife and two small children to support. He was a very fast and accurate typist, a little weak on the essentials of English usage perhaps, but that has never mattered in magic. By simple mathematics, he figured out that if he had one  
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# CAXTONIAN

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NELMAR, from page 1  
trick that sold for one dollar, and he had twelve copies of it, he was eleven dollars ahead, less the cost of his carbon."

Look closely at the photograph again and you will see many boxes – quite likely filled with manuscripts explaining magic tricks, to be sold to mail-order customers.

"Any trick that could be confined to sheets of paper was fair game in Nelmar Country," Frances noted, meaning he was copying magic secrets that had appeared in other publications – both with and without permission.

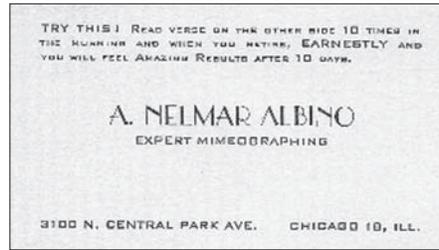
For original publications, Nelmar's file labeled "publishing contracts" includes examples of the typical arrangement he offered to his authors. Here is a contract dated October 22, 1932:

"In consideration of the work and knowledge used and applied by Jack F. Hecht, party of the first part, in writing and compiling a manuscript consisting of twelve complete magical effects and secrets to same and numerous tips to close [i.e., conclude] same manuscript, I, Anthony Albino, party of the second part, do hereby agree to pay said party of the first part the royalty of thirty (\$.30) cents on each and every copy sold as fast as they are sold, to promote the sale of said manuscript by advertising and above all to publish said manuscript in mimeograph sheets with an art cover."

"When business got better," Frances wrote, Nelmar "moved from carbon copies to mimeo impressions. He must have cut thousands of stencils in his day, with a carefree abandon where illustrations were concerned. He was a typist, not an artist, and if [the customer paying a dollar] was getting a 'deal' on something, you didn't worry too much about the pictures."

Nelmar generously added in his agreement with Jack Hecht that "any time party of the first part may check my books and see the exact number of books sold." With royalties piling up at thirty cents a copy and supposedly paid immediately, there probably never came a time when Jack Hecht showed up to check Nelmar's ledger.

In September 1933, Nelmar tried his hand as a magazine editor and publisher. The opening editorial of his *Magic Gazette* stated: "The editor, Nelmar, an entertainer (Doctor of Psychology), a graduate of Lonk Institute, has successfully completed a three months' tour of Chicago and suburbs." James B. Alfredson, a bibliographer of magic periodicals, describes the enterprise in this way: "*Magic Gazette* lasted for a total outpouring of six issues. Like



One of Nelmar's many different business cards. (Somehow the words "expert" and "mimeographing" don't go together.) The verse on the verso of the card offered "faith, guidance and light."

his other publications, *Gazette* came off his mimeograph machine on standard 8-1/2 x 11 paper. For the most part, printing appears on only one side of each page, complete with the usual strikeovers and errors.... Each copy sold for the depression era sum of ten cents. The front covers, in all but the first issue, were very modern in design, and

might today be called 'abstract art.' The last issue appeared in the summer of 1934.

By that time Nelmar was living at 2749 N. Monticello Avenue and operating his business under the name of "The Nelmar System – Publishers." His standard products were still stapled manuscripts and booklets reprinting magic secrets which had previously appeared in limited circulation periodicals issued by magic clubs and dealers' sales bulletins. Although modest cash payments were given for reprint rights, he also managed to pay with copies of his publications or credit toward future purchases from his inventory.

His first real book was *Frank Lane's Funny Talk*. It was compiled from old issues of "a monthly publication of gags, ideas, arrangements [and] tricks" issued by a Boston magic dealer and intended "for the M.C., magician, ventriloquist and other people that talk." Nelmar had great hopes for the book's sales. Although the actual publication date is unknown and may not have been until 1940 or '41, on the back of a letter received from Lane in November 1938, Nelmar typed (in all capital letters) a possible ad: "One [probably meant to be "first"] edition limited to one thousand copies for sale now. The price is twelve fifty. Nelmar (America's Second Greatest Bookseller)." This giddy claim, possibly brought on by his excitement over finally publishing an actual book, makes one wonder who he considered the "first greatest bookseller."

*Funny Talk*, bound in a variety of dull-colored, heavyweight buckram cloths, its title stamped only on the spine, resembles the standard dull-looking reference work. However, unlike any other cloth-bound book likely to be encountered, the 240 pages of text were, like his *Gazette*, mimeographed on only one side of each sheet. You were, in essence, getting only half of the amount of text that every similarly bound book offered. Still, one has to admire Nelmar's industry: 240,000 turns on the crank of a mimeograph machine had to be worked. By July of 1945, copies of *Funny Talk* were up to the "seventh impression." If Nelmar spun out as many copies of

the later impressions as he did the first, he would have turned the handle well over a million-and-a-half times – and that does not take into account the number of times he had to retype stencils.

As Frances Marshall noted, “The Nelmar System’ began to take on a sort of legitimacy when Nelmar issued the big Frank Lane patter book.”

Hard enough as it was to make a living the Nelmar System way, he had an added challenge. Nelmar did not get along with his authors or his customers.

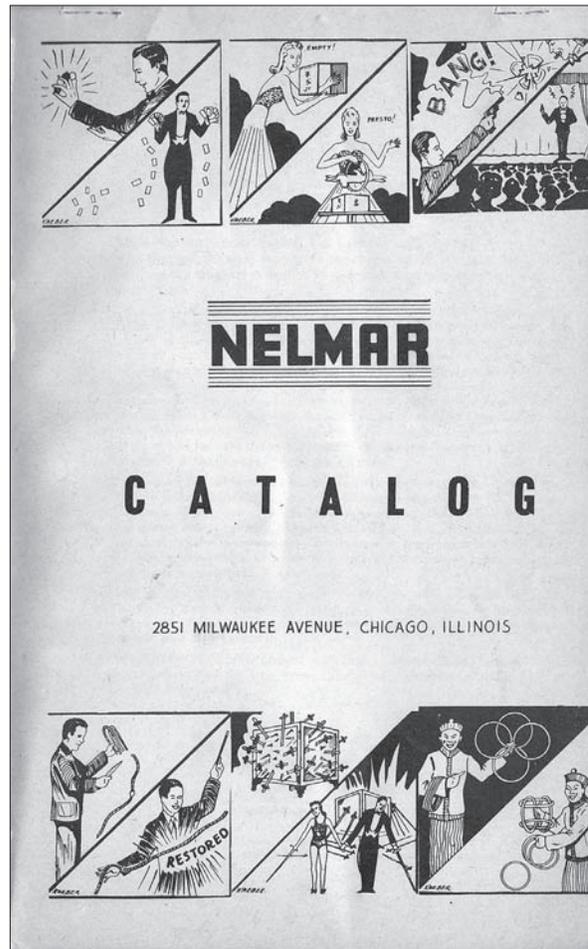
For seven years letters from Frank Lane to Nelmar wrangled over details relating to Nelmar’s right to publish *Funny Talk*.

Lane’s letters attest to Nelmar’s penchant for having further thoughts, changing terms and generally incensing the party of the first part. Here’s a sampling of Lane’s unfunny talk to Nelmar: [November 14, 1941] “Now as to your contract, I don’t understand the first paragraph...hell, man, after seven years, you don’t mean you’d charge me for using an index that’s already in the book...the

contract states that the rights and publication rights revert to me...that eliminates the first clause of the contract and also the next and there is no need for the last paragraph.... I’m not hard to get along with and I don’t think you are so let’s keep it simple....” [January 28, 1942] “I don’t want to sell the complete rights... I want it back in seven years.... Call it whatever you want as long as my name is on it...” [February 18, 1942] “I’m enclosing a simple bill of sale, a contract not being necessary on a sale that is outright.”

It took awhile, but Nelmar wore Lane down to his terms.

In a 1946 letter from the editorial offices at *Reach: The Magazine of a Thousand Interests*, Hereward Carrington (the pen name of Hubert Lavington, 1880-1958, a prolific author of books on stage magic and the occult) made the mistake of suggesting that Nelmar might be interested in printing and selling copies of Carrington’s catalog of his library. Carrington described it as “between six and seven thousand titles of books on psychics, tricks, hypnotism, science, life, death, occult sciences, etc. Suppose you published this at (say) a dollar and sold it to interested persons – retaining



Cover of Nelmar’s 1935 catalog of secrets. Most manuscripts were offered for 15 and 25 cents; books were \$2.

25 cents on every copy sold and sending me 75 cents per copy once a month? I should also want 200 copies free.”

Nelmar went immediately to work creating a proposed agreement that brought this response from Carrington:

“Your extraordinary letter reached me this morning. Of course, I can’t make head or tail of it, as it stands; but I took it to a friend of mine, who once lived in Chicago, to see if he could help me to decipher it, and uncover the hidden meaning beneath its hieroglyphics. He adjusted his glasses, read through the letter twice, and finally stated that, so far as he could discover, your thought was mainly this: that if I sent on to you [a copy of the catalog], you would print it up at your expense, send me 250 copies of the same, gratis, and sell the rest yourself, taking the proceeds therefrom indefinitely. Furthermore, that you would let me have thirty dollars worth of books from your collection, as part payment for the catalog. He presumed that you were ready and willing to undertake its issuance on this understanding... Would you let me know if his interpretation was correct?” If Carrington’s catalog was ever published, I have been unable to locate a copy.

Nelmar’s treatment of his customers was no less difficult – for either party.

According to Frances Marshall, “Nelmar kept himself in the ulcer-inducing position of being able to get two people mad at him at the same moment, and over the same thing. ‘A’ was mad because it was *his* printed trick that Nelmar had copied and offered for sale. ‘B’ was mad because he had paid for the copy of the trick but Nelmar didn’t send it. ‘A’ had no redress – you can’t get blood from a stone – although most of those involved would have been glad to just get blood out of poor old Nelmar. He was lucky to die a natural death. ‘B’ was in the same fix.... If you went out to Nelmar’s neighborhood and eventually found his flat, he wouldn’t be home. If he was home, he would put up such a smokescreen of tales of despair, bad luck and salesmanship that you would end up buying something else (without getting back the original money, of course.)”

More evidence of this aspect of Nelmar’s life and business dealings can be found in an account written by Robert Lund, a Detroit newspaperman and founder in 1976 of the American Museum of Magic in Marshall, Michigan. Lund collected anything and everything related to the life and careers of magicians. I cannot provide a better narrative of Lund’s encounters with Nelmar than Bob wrote himself:

Jay Marshall took me to see Nelmar a couple times as I had done business with the King of Stencils by mail over several years.

We went to see Nelmar when he was living in a store front in a seedy section of the city. While Jay was poking around elsewhere, Nelmar asked if I collected magicians’ letterheads.

“Not if you’ve cut the letterhead off the top of the stationery,” I replied. “But if it’s the whole sheet of stationery, I’m interested.”

Nelmar offered me “about 400” letters for \$12. It was a pig-in-the-poke deal.

“You have to agree not to look at them here,” Nelmar said. “You can’t read them until you get home.”

Why the embargo on my looking at the letters on the premises once I had paid for them? What was it that he didn’t want me to see?

“Because that’s the way I want it,” he told me.

He did say they were from “famous magicians.” I’m not a lightning mathematician, but I was able to figure that at \$12, I’d be paying about three cents a letter. Who could resist a bargain

See *NELMAR*, page 4

NELMAR, from page 3  
like that?

I considered the offer for a minute or so. Was he trying to swindle me? I'd heard stories from several magicians who claimed they'd come out on the short end of dealings with Nelmar. They alleged he didn't send the goods or only part of the goods or the wrong goods, something of lesser quality than the customer ordered or expected. Or it took months to fill an order and then only after you badgered him.

But I never had any personal experiences with Nelmar where I felt he gave me less than my due. To the contrary, I thought he often gave me the best of the deal.

So I took a chance and handed over the twelve dollars. He vanished into a back room for a minute and returned carrying a battered box.

"They're yours," he said, "but don't open the box until you leave here."

The bargain turned out to be even better than I expected. Instead of "about 400" letters – by Nelmar's count – the lot consisted of 622 items. Some good stuff, too.

Jay was driving and as soon as we got in the car, I opened the pig-in-the-poke. What was it about the letters Nelmar didn't want me to see at the time of the transaction?

I hurriedly thumbed through them. The old boy must have been going through one of his lean periods at that time or I doubt he would have parted with the letters. Many of them started, "Dear Nelmar: You son-of-a-bitch, I sent you \$1 nine weeks ago and still haven't received the goods."

If you bought from him by mail, his prices were always an even amount – 50 cents, one dollar, five dollars, or whatever. But if you bought from him at his place, his prices were almost always in odd amounts – 33 cents, \$1.61, or \$2.07. I asked him about this and he made something of a mystery of it. He had a code number – figures like 04407 – stamped or written on the back of his treasures and he would refer to this before disclosing the price. He told me the code figure was a combination of the price he paid for an item and the price he had to get for it to make a profit.

In addition to screwy prices, he had a screwy set of values. I once bought a fine poster of Herbert L. Flint, "The Jolly Prince of Fun Makers," from him for some odd amount like \$1.89. It was worth a lot more than that to me. The next item he trotted out was a letter from [author] Royal Vale Heath, "the famous New York Stock Broker," as Nelmar described Heath, and the price for the letter was \$3.10. How do you figure it? Three dollars for an unimportant letter and less than two dollars for a magnificent poster!

On one of the visits with Jay, Nelmar braced me to write a story about him. I didn't say yes and didn't say no. I said I'd have to know more about him before I could write a story.

"What do you want to know?" he asked.

I hauled out paper and pencil and put some questions to him. Personal stuff that might or might not fit in the story, if and when I wrote it. His reply to one question was so direct and straightforward it stopped me cold. Jay heard it and could vouch for it. We were talking about his family and he disclosed that his wife had divorced him.

"Why'd she divorce you?" I asked. Came the zinger:

"She wanted more men. What else do you want to know?"

Yet he had his years of success – at least in the book business – in the 1940s. During this period he published wordy ads in magic periodicals that reminded one of wanted posters. One, in fact, was headed "WANTED!" and others began "SEE HERE!" and "NOTICE!" and often ended with some rendition of the catch phrase "Satisfying customers since 1933." His most boastful ad appeared in 1942, following his participation in a convention of the International Brotherhood of Magicians. "World's Largest Display of Books at Forth Worth, Texas" it began in boldface type. "Successful, huge display....Nelmar's appealing array, over 3,000 items (921 pounds) conjuring literature (allied subjects, too) – books, pamphlets, magazines, has positively won admiration and praise of each person who has browsed thru it, or has had the pleasure to see it!"

"If I may impart a word of friendly advice," a successful magic dealer in Hollywood, California, wrote Nelmar in 1943, "your ads are quite hard to read. There is too much copy."

Success slipped away in the 1950s. Correspondence from Nelmar's files indicates that he didn't fulfill orders and couldn't keep up

with his modest financial obligations. In June 1951, he received a letter from Carl W. Jones, publisher of *The Minneapolis Star* newspaper, a prominent magic collector and a decidedly hardboiled businessman: "Your last letter when you sent me \$2.00 stated that you would send another remittance in a week. What happened? If I don't have the amount in full by the 25th of June, I shall place the entire matter before the magical magazines and also the Dealers' Association, of which I am a member. Had you acknowledged my letter and given me some sincere reason why you could not pay, I could have more sympathy," Jones wrote – signing off "very sincerely."

Collection agencies dunned him. A month after receiving Jones' stern letter, the Chicago Law Offices of Harry R. Adler sent Nelmar a form letter headed "Re: Abelard Press, Inc. Versus: Yourself" in order "to effect collection of your indebtedness in the sum of \$3.46." A friendlier letter from a lawyer in Indianapolis

TELEPHONE: BELMONT 1088  
CABLE ADDRESS: NELMAR, CHICAGO

**THE NELMAR SYSTEM**  
PUBLISHERS  
2749 N. MONTICELLO AVENUE  
CHICAGO, ILL.

January 8, 1937

Mr. Vernon E. Lux  
Mount Morris  
Illinois

Dear Mr. Lux:

Have shipped to you to-day, heavily insured, in one parcel, blue-prints, and books.

The blue-prints total: \$19.75. The books total: \$17.50  
Sent you previous total: 20.00. The GRAND TOTAL TO DATE is \$57.25.

The eight complete sets of the magazines, except one which has two missing, eight having one missing. The eight sets are worth \$5.00 each, so that will total \$40.00

The 570 odd numbered copies are not worth 10¢ a piece to me, as I am always trading because I have been in business ten years, and find a cash customer for every thing I get and have. So, here's the best proposition, subject for your approval, and if you do not affirm it, magazines can be returned, how's that? They are worth five cents each (that's something anyway) equals: \$28.50

Adding the above 40.00 is- 68.50

Have sent you goods to-date to amount of- 57.25

If approved ---- Total amount of goods I owe you at present 11.25

I have two more blue-prints, totalling \$2.00 which are going to be sent to you---as they are loaned out and expected in Wednesday. 2.00  
-----  
9.25

The total of 9.25 you can have in any of our publications, SECRETS OF SANDU BY PAUL STADLIMAN (\$1.00 each); MUSSON'S MAGIC By Clettis V. Musson, (\$1.00); GRANT'S ANNUAL OF MAGIC (\$2. ea.); UNIK TRIX THAT KLIK BY NELMAR (\$1. ea.); KARSON'S MINATURE MYSTERIES (\$1. ea.); GRANT'S THIRTEEN MYSTERIES (\$1.00 ea). --or-- NOTE BENTURY MIND-READING ACT, or the "RE-INCARNATION" of TRAYER'S FOR \$6.00, all to total \$9.25. Okay, Well, I thot it was fair enough. Let me know soon, so we can clear this up. Please return typed copy of RE-INCARNATION, as I am only loaning it to you. Thanks. Best regards.

Yours sincerely,  
Anthony Albino

2851 Milwaukee Avenue

An example of "The Nelmar System" of convoluted business correspondence.

arrived a year later, reading "I am glad to see you back in business...."

Nelmar probably never owned a home. During the forty years of his adult life, he lived in six different locations in the gritty west side of the city. "Born poor," as Frances wrote, "he was a victim of circumstances, an orphan of the times."

By the late 1950s, Nelmar was living in a storefront apartment at 3100 N. Central Park and endeavoring to sell any combination of books, tricks, and portions of his own collection.

In September 1957, Charles L. Rulfs, a chemistry professor at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and an avid collector of antiquarian magic books, received a postcard from Nelmar advertising old books for sale. Rulfs responded immediately, asking to receive details. Nelmar replied:

Dear Friend Rulfs:

Received your letter this a.m. Thanks for your interest. It will be some time before I can make up any lists of books, for the simple reason that I sent out over 500 cards identical with one you received . . .

So far I had only four visitors, but I do not expect (not even) 100. I just sold a 75-pound box full of magical catalogs . . . some ranging as far back as 30 to 35 years or more.

I have quite a batch of literature that I'm positive will interest you, including books, magazines, a few pieces of magical apparatus (old-timer's) and have decided to even break up my collection of posters, programs, business cards,

letterhead tops, news clips, etc.

If you have the cash, and can make a special trip to Chicago, soon, Sundays [I] will be here from noon to 9 p.m. Sunday is the best day for both of us, as week days I have to take care of my mimeographing business. I will be more than fair in selling you material. If your purchase goes over \$100 I will give you \$10 back. Am sure you can get a good selection, drop me a line if you're coming Sunday. Everything is subject to public sale as I'm not reserving any items. To give you an idea, my stock is valued (approximately) over \$5,000.

Sincerely yours,

A. Nelmar Albino

By the fall of 1960 his stationery read simply "Nelmar" and he was writing letters to individuals in the magic community offering books that they were not likely to be interested in, but he had to try.

"I have 500 to 700 pocket-size books (paperbacks), novels, mysteries, romances, detective stories, etc.," he wrote to a fellow magic dealer, Vernon Lux. "Would you be interested in buying this whole lot? I will try to make a good deal so you can make some profit."

There were two postscripts:

"I have some second-hand apparatus – need any?"

"Also, are there certain book titles you may want for your library – [I am] willing to arrange a very good deal, that is if you have some spare cash."

"During the last years of his life," Frances

Marshall wrote, "Nelmar lived alone in the back of a store. The front windows advertised printing and mimeographing but he was closed so much [his] business could not have been brisk.... By now he had been very seriously sick with ulcers, had had one or two collapses from ill health, plus a big problem with his teeth. He was far from being a jolly personality, but he wasn't *that* even in the old Albino days. Brooding, morose, embittered, struggling for a foothold in a world that was too much for him, that was Nelmar. The happy hobby world of magic was worlds away from him, although he was regarded as very knowledgeable in hypnotism, occult, mentalism and the dark side of the moon.

"He was found dead when neighbors noticed his absence after several days. His grown children returned to dispose of his possessions, and Jay Marshall bought the files of printed and mimeo matter...dozens of carbon paper boxes filled with sheets of tricks long gone out of date."

Nelmar never followed the "friendly" advice of the dealer in Hollywood. The last of his many versions of business cards was crowded with text in a miniscule typeface:

"Always in stock: Books, Courses, Manuscripts, Secrets, Magazines, Blueprints, Apparatus on Conjuring, Hypnotism, Ventriloquism, Mindreading, Mentalism, Chalk-talk, Escapes, Comedy-Magic, Humor (All Phases), Tricks with Numbers, Fascinating, Unusual Sciences & Hobbies. Current, Out-of-Print, Scarce and Rare. (We Buy, Sell and Rent.)"

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## Jane Smith, Caxton Club Manager, Passes

Dan Crawford

"Don't let them make you attend those meetings."

In 1995, after over twenty years minding the day-to-day correspondence and business of the Caxton Club, Jane Smith was forced by deteriorating eyesight to pass along the job to someone else. Both the nuts and bolts of the operation (which company made the name badges, how the Oak Bank liked its deposit slips) and insight into the personalities which made up the membership and administration were vouchsafed to the novice. (She told me which members of the Club were utterly self-serving and needed to be watched...no, wild horses couldn't drag it out.)

She had seen the Caxton Club move from

an era in which the very thought of women attending Club dinners made some members lose their appetites to an age in which people were suggesting the old ledgers might be replaced by computer programs. She saw utter chaos resolve itself into a successful Centennial year. With some irritation, she watched the administration suddenly become very businesslike about dues and audits and such. (She took that first audit personally, and told me with some satisfaction that it had shown everything she reported was actually there.)

Her work for the Club, and for the Newberry Library, mixed diligence, dedication, and an ability to stare down the exceedingly important people whose dues she had to demand and whose whims she had to humor. There was affection, too, for her partners in

crime and/or adversaries. When we met at the Newberry, her first question was always "And how is the Club doing these days?," frequently followed by specifics: was so-and-so still making trouble on the Council, was it true such-and-such had had a stroke, was xyz still paying his dues late, had abc submitted another bill for something he'd offered to do for free. A decade and more passed since she surrendered her Caxton duties, and she continued to ask for further installments in the story.

So for those of us who worked with Jane Smith in some capacity during her time as General Manager (then called secretary/book-keeper), it's good to stop and remember her now. Because she never forgot us.

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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.)

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: "The Art of Victorian Photocollage" (rarely displayed albums and loose pages from collections across the United States, Europe and Australia, avant-garde works combining photographs and watercolors in whimsical and fantastical compositions), Galleries 1 and 2, through January 3, 2010; "The House Beautiful: Arts and Crafts Architecture" (books and photographs illustrating how the Arts and Crafts style evolved and influenced architects like Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Greene and Greene, and Frank Lloyd Wright), Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, through February 2, 2010; "Chicago Cabinet: C.D. Arnold Photographs of the World's Columbian Exposition" (from the Ryerson Library's archive of large platinum prints made by the Exposition's official photographer, tracing the Fair's development from 1892 through to 1894), Galleries 3 and 4, through February 28, 2010; "Heart and Soul: Art from Coretta Scott King Award Books, 2006-2009" (a collection of picture books whose African American authors and illustrators promote understanding and appreciation of all cultures and their contributions to the American dream), Ryan Education Center and Gallery 10, through April 18, 2010.

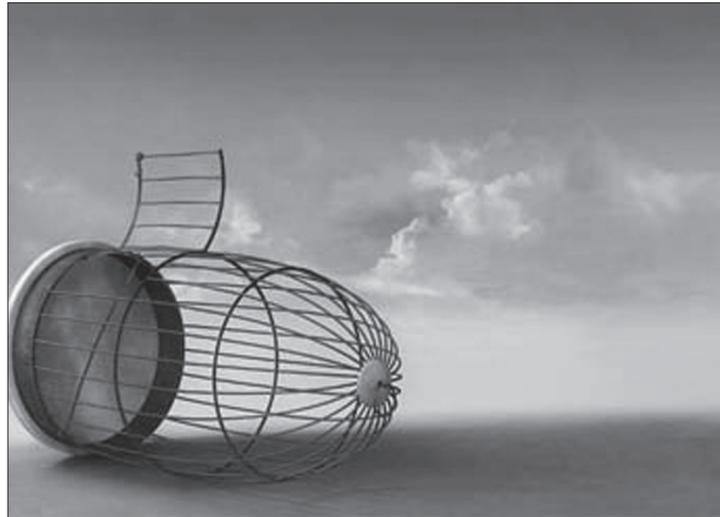
Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: "Children's Books Around the World" (uncommon children's books on nature and the plant world, published in eastern and western Europe and delighting young and old alike), through February 2, 2010.

Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, 744-6630: The University of Chicago Works of the Mind: "What Do You Want to Know About the Bible?" (lecture by George Anastaplo, Loyola University Professor of Law and University of Chicago Lecturer in the Liberal Arts, examining how various translations of the Bible have become "The Book" and the source of considerable power), Claudia Cassidy Theater, 1 p.m., Sunday January 24, 2010.

Chicago Public Library, Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: "Inspiring Dreams! Promoting the Burnham Plan" (featuring documents and artifacts used to promote the "selling" of the Burnham plan to the Chicago City Planning Commission and the public as well), Chicago Gallery, 3rd Floor, through February 2010; "Tall Man of Destiny: Images of Abraham Lincoln" (images of the president made during his life-

time, after his death in 1865 and through to today, all from the Library's Grand Army of the Republic and Civil War Collections), Special Collections Exhibition Hall, 9th Floor, through February 2010.

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-642-4600: "Abraham Lincoln Transformed" (over 150 artifacts, including original Lincoln Manuscripts, slave artifacts, fan and hate mail sent to Lincoln during his time in office, and a commemorative copy of the Thirteenth Amendment signed by Lincoln, all reflecting how the President's views were tested and ultimately transformed), Benjamin B. Green-Field Gallery and The Mazza Foundation Gallery, through April 12, 2010.



*Best of Bologna, at Northwestern Deering Library*  
ARGENTINIAN ARTIST HERNAN CANELLAS

Loyola University Chicago, Cudahy Library, 1032 W. Sheridan Road, Chicago, 773-508-2632: "Daniel H. Burnham, Creator of 1909 Plan of Chicago" (archival material highlighting the city before the Burnham Plan, at the time of the Great Chicago Fire, the 1893 Columbian Exposition, the 1909 Plan of Chicago, and after the Burnham Plan), Donovan Reading Room, ongoing.  
Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: "Honest Abe of the West" (including rare copies of printed materials relating to the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates, recently discovered ephemera

from the 1860 presidential election and the Republican Convention held in Chicago, letters received by Lincoln and then annotated in the president's own hand, and items on loan from the Alfred Orendorff Collection of various legal documents written in Lincoln's own hand), Donnelley Gallery, through February 15, 2010.

Northwestern University, Charles Deering Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: "Best of Bologna: Edgiest Artists of the 2008 International Children's Book Fair" (featuring 100 cutting-edge artists from around the world, work that breaks new ground in children's book illustration), upper lobby, extended through January 4, 2010; "A Room of Their Own: The Bloomsbury Artists in American Collections" (including books, drawings, decorative objects and designs by artists like Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Roger Fry, and Dora Carrington, all organized by the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University in connection with the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University), Main Gallery and Alsdorf Gallery; January 15 through March 14, 2010; "Burnham at Northwestern" (documents, photographs, blueprints and sketches of Daniel Burnham's 1905 "Plans of Northwestern," a redesign of the University's Evanston campus), Special Collections and Archives, ongoing.

University of Illinois at Chicago, Library of the Health Sciences-Chicago, MC 763, 1750 W. Polk Street, Chicago, 312-996-8977: "Embellished Medical Title Pages: The Sixteenth through the Eighteenth Centuries" (extraordinary images of decorative title pages from the University's rare book collection), second floor near administration office, ongoing.

Bernice Gallagher will be happy to receive your listings at either 847-234-5255 or [gallagher@lakeforest.edu](mailto:gallagher@lakeforest.edu).

# Caxtonians Collect: Elizabeth Lenaghan

Sixty-first in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Lise McKean

Many Caxtonians may not yet have talked with Elizabeth Lenaghan, who joined in 2008. She learned about the Caxton Club from Tom Joyce and attended her first meeting as a guest of Charles Miner when the club had its last gathering at the Midday Club. She is so enamored of books that her doctoral research is about the world of book collecting and its denizens—with the Caxton Club and Caxtonians as key topics of her study. She is interviewing Caxtonians about books and collecting and looks forward to talking with as many as possible while doing her research.

Elizabeth's love of books dates back to her childhood. In fact, one collecting interest, children's literature published in the U.K., was prompted by the many children's books she received from her British grandmother. She likes the window on her British heritage that these books gave her, and feels they helped her become "culturally bilingual."

Elizabeth grew up in southern New Hampshire proximate to Route 128, the high tech corridor of metropolitan Boston. Her first job was shelving books in her local public library. As a college student at Tufts University she double-majored in English and French, and spent her junior year in Paris taking classes at the Sorbonne. After graduation she moved to New York City and worked as a paralegal, then entered a one-year Master's program in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. The seeds of her current research were planted while at Columbia when she studied with a professor who "is interested in how reading practices are changing in the digital environment." While investigating and applying for doctoral programs, Elizabeth worked for a year for a literary scouting agency whose clients were foreign publishers and Warner Bros., reading fiction and nonfiction books and advising clients on acquiring translation and film rights.

In September 2006, she entered the doctoral program in Media, Technology, and Society in the School of Communication at Northwestern University.

Although it would be best for Caxtonians

to hear Elizabeth speak for herself about her doctoral research, the following brief overview provides a general introduction to its purpose and scope. Her hypothesis is that "the meanings of collecting practices in the digital context have changed more than the actual practices themselves. It's less that the practices have changed than that they mean something different now. Today's collecting is more oriented not only to the object but also to the practices around collecting, with the social



practices and relations associated with collecting carrying more weight." Therefore, rather than focusing on reading practices, Elizabeth's research "explores ways of conceiving the book as an object other than conventional bibliography, especially with the advent of reading on screen and e-book platforms such as Kindle." She wants to understand "what constitutes a person's preference for the book" and the multiple ways of experiencing the book as an object, for example, aesthetically or emotionally as a souvenir. Her research also encompasses the ways collecting practices and the work of book dealers are changing because of the Internet and online auctions. In addition to ethnographic methods of participant observation and interviews, Elizabeth is also reading memoirs and studies of collectors and will review the Caxton Club archives.

With the support of a dissertation fellow-

ship, Elizabeth now has the funding for travel to book collecting events and has recently been to ones in Scotland and Boston—as well as for regularly attending Caxton Club meetings. She is already in the process of shaping her research into publications and has co-authored a chapter on reading in *The Audience Studies Handbook* and is working on a chapter about collecting and collections for a forthcoming anthology on the impact of the Internet on collecting practices.

From her conversations with Caxtonians, Elizabeth has learned that they are diverse group with not only a wide range of collecting interests but also diverse approaches to collecting, and "that people have reasons for loving books other than reading." Just as Elizabeth asks collectors about their collecting interests, they all ask her about her own. She finds that collectors' "infectious enthusiasm" entices her to consider a myriad of collecting possibilities. She has sworn off serious collecting until finishing her dissertation—but she's toying with several possibilities. Given her interest in the form of the book, she "likes the idea of artists' books," and may later begin collecting them. Her present orientation to books, however, is consonant with S.R. Ranganathan's First Law of Library Science: "Books are for use." She makes her books useful with

annotations and marginalia and doesn't "like the idea of not being able to read my books." She doubts that she will become the kind of collector who is reluctant to crack the spine or turn the pages of her books.

When she gets around to answering my question about what's on her own bookshelves, Elizabeth says she wouldn't call them collections; she instead talks about two areas that constitute "large parts" of her library. One is books about collecting and memoirs of collectors. And as mentioned earlier, the "other significant accumulation of books" is of British children's books. It includes a set of the Munch Bunch books, which she was pleasantly surprised to learn have become rather valuable because regrettably the warehouse where the original illustrations were kept burned to the ground.

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## Bookmarks...

### Luncheon Program

Friday, January 8, 2010, Union League Club

John Railing

“Development of the Art of Movable Books from Euclid’s *Elements of Geometry* (1570) to Sabuda’s *Wizard of Oz* (2000)”

As a collector of movable books (6,000 items) and a producer of over 20 million hand-assembled movable magazine ads, (appearing in *Sports Illustrated*, *Esquire*, *Playboy*), Caxtonian John Railing is most uniquely qualified as our speaker. A former attorney and now a professional magician, John will focus his talk on his beginnings as a bibliophile, leading to his passion for movable books; he will give a brief history of movable books, beginning with his volvelles (revolving disc books, 1550’s); and he’ll include details of his involvement as a producer of movable ads (design patents, international hand-assembly, packaging and marketing). Finally he’ll talk about off-beat items in his collection, including his movable Kama Sutra; and, most importantly, he will tell about the 1960’s “renaissance” of movable books initiated by Waldo Hunt, with the resulting dramatic changes in children’s publishing. “There is a story behind every book’s creation, I will share the most fascinating.” Note: John will bring along several dozen of his choicest items for us to see and touch (including those in his all-time top 10 list!). A January treat.

The January 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. Luncheon is \$30. Details of the January dinner: it will take place at the Cliff Dwellers Club, 200 S. Michigan, 22nd floor. Timing: spirits at

### Dinner Program

Wednesday, January 20, 2010, Cliff Dwellers

Robert Williams

“Teaching America to Write: Early American Penmanship Books and Pedagogical Theory”

The use of printed books to teach handwriting goes back to the sixteenth century. It may come as a surprise to some that printing has always been a friend of penmanship, spreading examples of different writing styles and teaching methods beyond local borders through printed exemplars and instruction manuals. Writing masters in the newly formed United States joined in this tradition and introduced some surprisingly novel and unique approaches to this basic skill. Caxtonian Robert Williams will share some of his discoveries about how Americans learned to write, illustrated with materials from his collection and that of the Newberry Library.

5:00, dinner at 6:00, program at 7:30. Dinner is \$48, drinks are \$5 to \$9. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email [caxtonclub@newberry.org](mailto:caxtonclub@newberry.org); **reservations are needed by noon Tuesday for the Friday luncheon, and by noon Friday for the Wednesday dinner.**

### Beyond January...

#### FEBRUARY LUNCHEON

On February 12, the luncheon meeting will take place at the Union League Club. Speaker will be Sally Kalmbach speaking on her new book, *The Jewel of the Gold Coast: Mrs. Potter Palmer’s Chicago*.

#### FEBRUARY DINNER

On Wednesday, February 17, at the Cliff Dwellers, author James Ballowe will talk about Joy Morton, 35-year Caxtonian and founder of both Morton Salt and the Morton Arboretum.

#### MARCH LUNCHEON

On March 12, the luncheon meeting will take place at the Union League Club. Speaker to be announced.

#### MARCH DINNER

On Wednesday, February 17, at the Cliff Dwellers, designer and printer Michael Russem will talk about the myriad type designers who also designed postage stamps, and show examples of their work.