





## CAXTONIAN

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BAD ENGLISH, from page 1

are only many aggravated writers who think so.

The first question one might ask about English usage is: who cares? Does the earth stop turning when somebody says *him and me went to the store*? Do the skies fall when someone says *decimate* to mean *nearly wipe out* when the word “actually” means *to kill one person out of every ten*?

In the preface to his play *Pygmalion*, Shaw observed that “It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him.”<sup>1</sup> Often, “proper” usage is about class differences. To some people, *him and me went to the store* sounds perfectly natural. To others, it marks a lack of education and culture. On the other hand, to some people, *it is I* sounds pretentious, while to others it marks the last line of defense against societal collapse. In America, at least, it is important to calibrate language to the intended audience, not so much to avoid literal misunderstanding as to avoid being misidentified. *To whom am I speaking?* is not what Tony Soprano’s friends would expect to hear when dialing his home number. It might even be taken as a warning that Tony and his family had been kidnapped by a professor from Princeton.

That was Shaw’s point in *Pygmalion*, after all: take a Cockney flower girl off the street, teach her to speak like a toff, and people will mistake her for a princess. Some years later, Alan S.C. Ross made a

similar point in his essay “U and Non-U,” which provided lists of words used by the British upper classes and corresponding words used by the rest of British society.<sup>2</sup> Professor Ross’ premise was that people who used words in Column A would be regarded as upper class, while those who used words in Column B would not. The perhaps unexpected twist was that the upper-class (or “U”) words were generally simple and direct, while the “non-U” words often came across as pretentious. For example, according to Professor Ross, the upper classes say someone is *sick*, while the lower classes say he is *ill*. The upper classes

wipe their lips with a *table napkin*, while the lower classes use a *serviette*. In her follow-up essay, “The English Aristocracy,” Nancy Mitford added that the upper classes wear *false teeth*, while the lower classes wear *dentures*.<sup>3</sup>

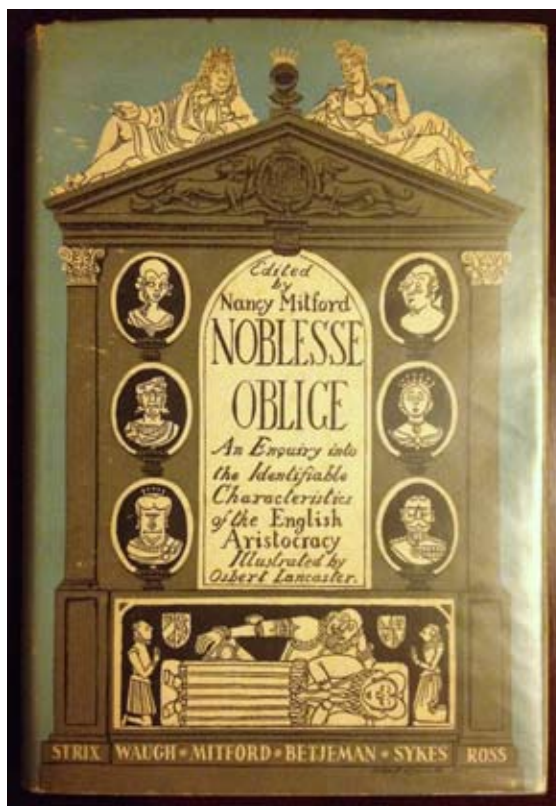
Ross’ list reflected the prejudices of his time and place, in which class – Henry Higgins’ tutelage notwithstanding – was a more-or-less permanent condition. Ross claimed that an adult non-U speaker “can never attain complete success” in becoming a U speaker. The situation in America is rather different. Politically, we embrace social mobility and reject the idea of class; nowadays, politicians will not even breathe the words *upper class* or *lower class* because everyone is supposed to be *middle class* (or *average* or *ordinary*). Culturally, however, we still use language as a marker for education, sophistication, and even political allegiance. When President George W. Bush spoke of *nucyoolar* weapons despite his Yale and Harvard degrees, he established solidarity with some of his supporters while confirming others’ negative opinions. When President Obama drops the final “g” in words like *coming* or *hoping*, it appears he is trying to defuse the politically harmful perception that he is an Ivy League intellectual.

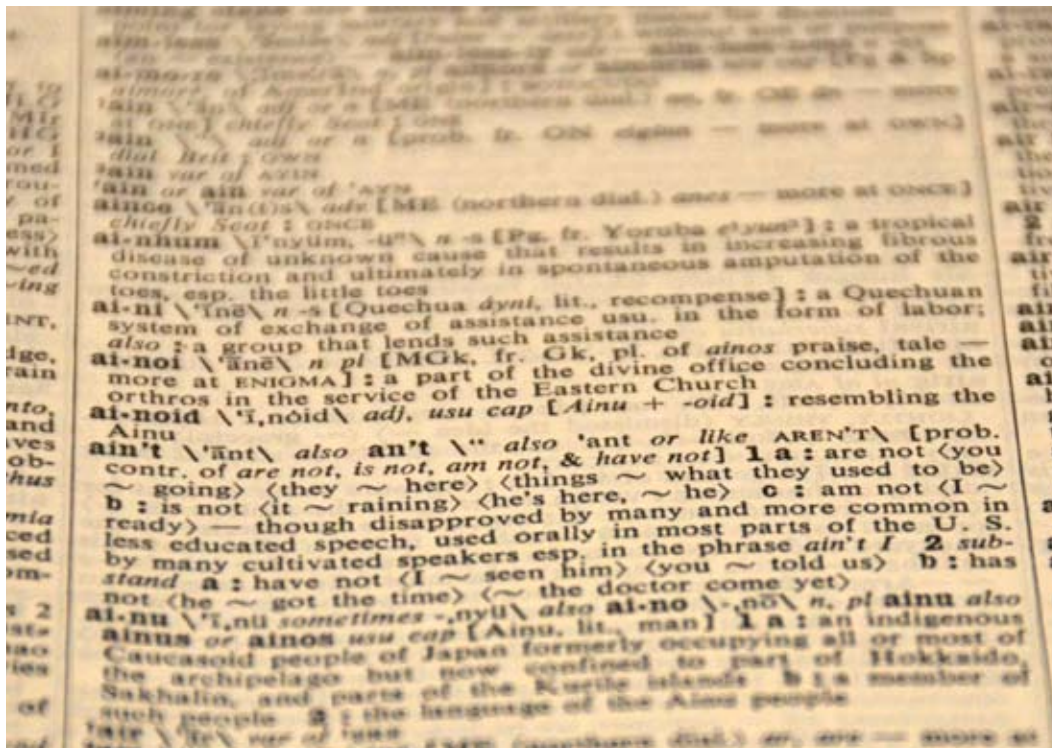
Indeed, we often speak and write as though we belong to several classes at once. The use of “four letter” words, slang neologisms, and bad grammar is common among highly educated people for emphasis and when the audience or the situation

Nancy Mitford noted that the upper classes wear false teeth, while the lower classes wear dentures.

is appropriate. Even Bertie Wooster and Lord Peter Wimsey (and presumably their real-life models) liked to throw an occasional *ain’t* into their speech for emphasis of some kind. But the uneducated person uses such words in “inappropriate” situations, as when Eliza Doolittle proved her transformation was not yet complete by excitedly shouting “Come on Dover, move your bloomin’ arse!” from the Higgins box at Ascot.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, a bit of me dies every time I ask for a *panini* in a sandwich shop. I know I should ask for a *panino*, but that would risk being misunderstood, and sometimes





"Ain't": ABOVE from Webster's Third, and BELOW from the OED.

definite purpose.  
 859 Bentley's Q. Rev. No. 3, 26 In spite of this aimless-  
 ss the wealth and empire of England are constantly in-  
 casing. 1882 Cornh. Mag. Feb. 168 The aimlessness of  
 ature.  
**Aimont**, variant of AYMONT; see also ADAMANT.  
**Aimworthiness** (ā'mwɜːrðɪnəs). rare-1. [f.  
 AIM sb. Cf. trustworthiness.] Excellence of aim.  
 1869 BLACKMORE Lorna Doone liv. (D.) These worthy fellows  
 waited not to take good aim with their cannon... trusting in  
 God for aimworthiness.  
**Ain**, north. f. ONE and OWN a.; and obs. pl. of EYE.  
**Ainalite** (ā'nālɔɪt). Min. 'A cassiterite (from  
 Finland) containing nearly 9 p. c. of tantalic acid.'  
 Dana.  
**Aince, ainis, ains**, north. dial. forms of ONCE.  
**Aind**, north. variant of ANDE, Obs., breath.  
**Aine**, variant of AYNE, EIGNE, elder.  
**Ain't** (ā'nt), v. dial. [A contracted form of *are*  
*not* (see AN'T), used also for *am not*, *is not*, in the  
 pop. dialect of London and elsewhere; hence in  
 representations of Cockney speech in Dickens, etc  
 Cf. *wōn't*, *dōn't*, *cān't*, *shān't*.]  
 1778 MISS BURNEY *Evelina* (1873) I. xxi. 87 Those you a  
 engaged to ain't half so near related to you as we are. 18  
 LAMB *Life & Lett.* (1860) I. 348 An't you glad about Bur  
 case? 1865 DICKENS *Mut. Fr.* iii. 12 'You seem to hav  
 good sister, 'She ain't half bad.'  
**Air** (ēə). Forms: 3-5 eir, 4-5 eyr, 4-6 e  
 aier, 4-7 ayre, 5 eyir, eire, 5-6 eyer, a  
 5-7 aire, 6 eyere, 6-7 ayr, 7 aēr, 7- air. [  
 O.Fr. *air* (Pr. *air*, *aire*, Sp. *aire*, Pg. *a*  
 Gr. *ἀἴρ*, *ἀἴρ-α*, f

it is better to be understood than to be right. The solution, where possible, is to avoid using the word altogether, by saying something like *I'll have the grilled ham, provolone, and capicola sandwich*. Depending on the location, the server might still look at you oddly for not pronouncing *capicola* the way he or she was

used in literature instead of according to their "true" etymological roots.<sup>5</sup> When *Webster's Third International Dictionary* was published in 1961, it was widely derided for including such "improper" words as the dreaded *ain't*, giving the lie to the teaching common in my childhood that "*ain't* isn't in the dictionary."<sup>6</sup>

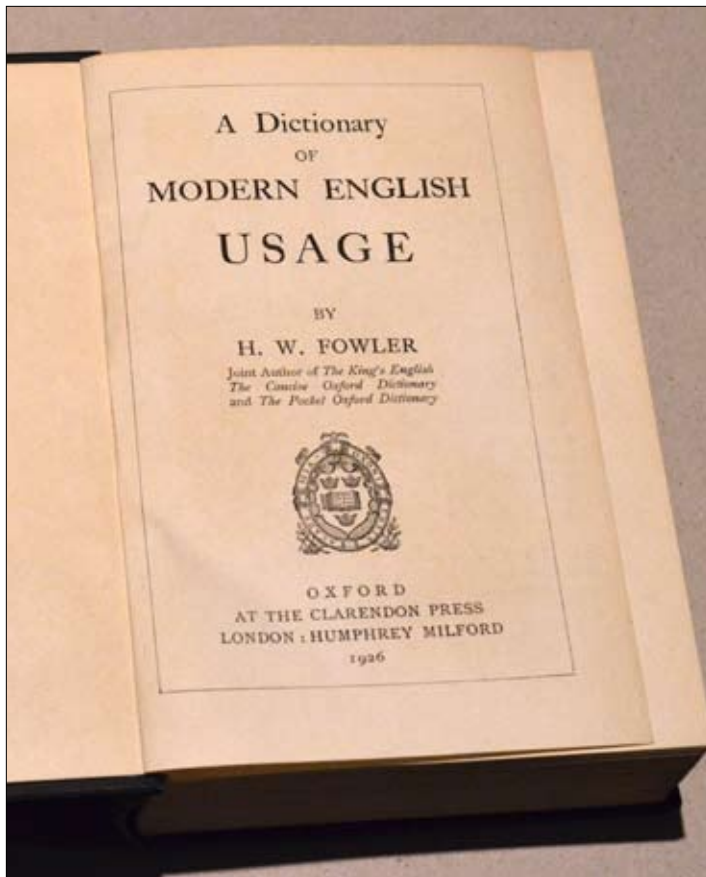
(It's still not in Microsoft Word's spell check.) The third edition of Fowler's book, almost entirely rewritten by Robert Birchfield (Oxford, 1996), was also heavily criticized for endorsing a "permissive" approach to usage, allegedly at odds with Fowler's original text and purpose.<sup>7</sup>

In my view, there is nothing wrong with *Webster's Third*. An unabridged dictionary should contain all the words anyone is likely to come across in reading or listening. How else would a native speaker of – say – Hungarian know what P.G. Wodehouse meant when he put *ain't* in Bertie Wooster's mouth?

*Fowler's Third* stands on a different footing, however. Aside from proving that Fowler, like Webster, has been reduced to a brand, it provides none of the charm and little of the wisdom found in the original.

That may sound odd to the many who, like Ammon Shea, categorize Fowler as a scold whose job it was to tell us we are constantly making mistakes while erroneously insisting that the language does not grow or develop. But if Fowler was a humorless scold, Edvard Munch was a wisecracking cartoonist. To put Shea's book in perspective, it might help to explain what Fowler actually accomplished. What most cheeses me off (an idiom that makes no sense and is probably a euphemism for another idiom that makes no sense either) is the entirely mistaken view that Fowler simply dictated rules to tamp down our freedom of expression. Nothing could be farther from the truth. (Well, of course many things could be farther from the truth, but exaggeration for dramatic effect, if understood in that context, is not so terrible.) Unlike Strunk and White, for example, Fowler rarely satisfied himself with simply laying down rules. He explained the reasons why certain usages are better than others, why some usages can rightly be deemed mistakes (because, for example, they create unintended ambiguities), and why it is sometimes better to write around a problem than to risk miscommunication by using the technically correct word.

Another recent entry into the style-manual arena, psycholinguist Steven Pinker's *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century* (Viking, 2014), pretends to have discovered the value of such See *BAD ENGLISH*, page 4



The original Fowler,...

BAD ENGLISH, from page 3 explanations:

Today's writers are infused by the spirit of scientific skepticism and the ethos of questioning authority. They should not be satisfied with "That's the way it's done" or "Because I said so," and they deserve not to be patronized at any age. They rightly expect *reasons* for any advice that is foisted on them.

Well, excuse me, Professor. I cannot think of a better description of the approach Fowler pioneered before you were born.

Fundamentally, Fowler stood for two principles that no one can seriously dispute: language should communicate what the writer or speaker intends to communicate, and it is a great shame to lose the specificity of words that have (or have acquired) particular meanings and can therefore convey specific thoughts. As Fowler drolly wrote in his entry on the words *contrary*, *converse*, *opposite*, "These are sometimes confused, & occasionally precision is important."

Taking the latter point first, I cite Sheá's discussion of *unique*. Fowler wrote that

uniqueness is a matter of yes or no only; no unique thing is more or less unique than another unique thing, as it may be rarer or less rare . . . [I]t is nonsense to call anything *more*, *most*, *very*, *somewhat*, *rather*, or *comparatively u*. Such nonsense, however, is often written . . .

Sheá's simplistic method of argument is to find counter-examples among writers whom we might respect – in this case, Louisa May Alcott, who in 1859 wrote a letter to the Canadian politician Alfred Whitman using the phrase "a very unique manner." Putting aside whether

Alcott was a prose stylist to be admired and whether a personal letter is the best place to find examples worth following, there can be little doubt that *unique*, if it is a word worth having at all, is valuable because it describes a characteristic that does not have degrees. As Fowler points out, we have several other words for conveying the idea that something is almost, but not quite, unique, e.g., *exceptional*,

*rare*, *distinctive*, *egregious*. Alcott could have written a *very unusual manner* to convey more precisely what she probably meant. Indeed, a word like *unique*, if taken seriously, requires deep knowledge and experience for proper use. Before we can accurately say something is *unique*, we should take care to know whether it is truly one of a kind or simply outside of our own experience. But it seems we – especially we Americans – don't like words we must be careful in using. It's antidemocratic.

Another of Sheá's favorite targets is the pair *disinterested* and *uninterested* – a subject Fowler himself did not address, though Ernest Gowers, editor of the second "Fowler" edition (Oxford, 1965), did.<sup>8</sup> Gowers notes that *disinterested* has acquired the special meaning of being free from personal bias, though he observes that it is often used to mean *having no care for*. He adds: "A valuable differentiation is thus in need of rescue, if it is not too late." Surely preserving the special meaning of *disinterested* would help to avoid ambiguity. Sheá simply observes that, in the 17th century, *disinterested* was sometimes used to mean *uninterested*. But Gowers does not argue from history. He argues the classic Fowlerian proposition: occasionally precision is important. And when meanings change, precise usage should follow. For example, these days it would be foolish and pedantic for a writer to use *egregious* to mean simply *exceptional*, even though that was its primary meaning in the 17th century. Now most people understand the meaning as *exceptionally bad*, and you will be misunderstood if you use the word in any other sense.

Of course meanings change over time. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell

...a shelf of recent editions,...





...and yet more of intermediate vintage.

Holmes Jr. – our greatest stylist in legal prose and one of our greatest stylists in prose of any kind – once wrote, with an insight denied to many of our usage writers, that “A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged, it is the skin of a living thought and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used.”<sup>9</sup> That is, the skin, or the symbol – the combination of letters forming the word *egregious*, for example – looks the same from one generation to the next, but the living thought underneath it evolves over time from one meaning to another.<sup>10</sup>

In a talk to our Club several years ago, lexicographer Erin McKean suggested that, with English as with money, bad drives out good. That is, when meanings change over time, they drift toward negative connotations. *Egregious* is one case in point. The classic example is *condescension*, which in Jane Austen’s time was a positive social quality but in ours is clearly not. Similarly, *conceited* once primarily described a neutral or even positive state of being; now to be *conceited* is to be unloved. In Johnson’s day, *specious* primarily meant *pleasing to the view*; today it means *deceptively attractive or seemingly true but actually false*.

Some words do improve their standing. *Fulsome* praise was once something one might wish to avoid; it no longer seems to be. *Enormous*, which formerly meant *outside the norm*, usually in a wicked or monstrous way, has now narrowed its scope to mean almost exclusively *abnormally big*.<sup>11</sup> *Infamous* once primarily meant *bad* or *reputed to be bad*. Now it is often used as an equivalent to *famous*. But, of course, we already have *famous*, so why

do we need this confusing synonym? Thus, Macaulay’s description of Boswell – that his was “fame of a peculiar kind, and indeed marvelously resembles infamy” – might make little sense to many modern readers.<sup>12</sup> And when Franklin Roosevelt said that December 7, 1941, would “live in infamy,” he did not simply mean it would be remembered. *Notorious* seems to be undergoing a similar transformation. So if you say someone is *infamous* or *notorious*, how is the contemporary listener to know for certain whether you think well or ill?<sup>13</sup>

Some words change meanings entirely. In his preface to Shakespeare’s plays (1765), Johnson offered the following critique of the playwright’s style:

A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.

Modern readers might be forgiven for being confused by Johnson’s criticism. Some 46 years later, British dramatist Mary Mitford offered the same assessment, using a word we would readily understand:

Even Shakespeare’s magic is not proof against the artillery of puns. It is, to be sure, but poetical justice, that he should sometimes fall by a weapon which he so often and so unwisely wielded.<sup>14</sup>

Johnson’s *Dictionary* makes *quibble* a synonym for *pun*, but in our own day it has entirely lost that meaning.

Words also take on entirely new and

unexpected meanings. Today, many people might describe Shakespeare as a *pundit*, and we would probably know what they meant, even though *pundit* has nothing to do with *puns* and was adopted in the British Raj from the Sanskrit term meaning *a wise person*.<sup>15</sup> In 1755, Johnson defined a *gentile* as *one who knows not the true God*. Today, the word is generally used to mean *a Christian*.

Then there are words that seem to have done a 180 and now mean the opposite of what they once meant. Exhibit A is *humble*. As late as 1961, *Webster’s Third* offered only such senses for the noun as *having a low opinion of one’s own importance and ranking low in the social or political scale* and for the verb as *to bring down the pride or arrogance of and to destroy the power, independence, or prestige of*. Yet today it is quite common for recipients of awards and prizes to claim they are *humbled by this honor* – brought low, in other words, by that which should raise them up. No doubt there is a complex mix of political correctness, false modesty, modern PR counseling, and ignorance at work in such speeches. But some of us, at least, are left wondering what precise thought, if any, the speaker is trying to communicate.

Fowler recognized that meanings change over time, and he saw no inherent problem in that. He was emphatically not wedded to some idealized linguistic Eden of the past. For example, he was not a doctrinaire proponent of shunning “foreign” influences on English. His entries on “Saxonism” and “Gallicisms” offer the best examples of his true approach. Of “Saxonism,” he wrote:

SAXONISM is the name for the attempt to raise the proportion borne by the originally & etymologically English words in our speech to those that come from alien sources. . . . The wisdom of this nationalism in language – at least in so thoroughly composite a language as English – is very questionable; we may well doubt whether it benefits the language, & that it does not benefit the style of the individual, who may or may not be prepared to sacrifice himself for the public good, is pretty clear. . . . [T]he choice or rejection of particular words should depend not on their descent but on considerations of expressiveness, intelligibility, brevity, euphony, or ease of handling, & yet that any writer who becomes aware that the Saxon or native English element in what he writes is small will do well to take the fact as a danger signal. But the way to act on that signal is not to translate his Romance words into Saxon

See *BAD ENGLISH*, page 6



The author's shelf of Oxford English Dictionaries.

BAD ENGLISH, from page 5

ones; it is to avoid abstract & roundabout & bookish phrasing wherever the nature of the thing to be said does not require it.

The italics are mine, because the notion that word choice should depend on “expressiveness, intelligibility, brevity, euphony, or ease of handling” rather than arbitrary or immutable etymological rules is a principle for which Fowler’s critics, Shea among them, never give him adequate credit.

Correspondingly, of “Gallicisms” Fowler wrote:

To advise the abandonment of all Gallicisms indiscriminately would be absurd; there are thousands of English words & phrases that were once Gallicisms, but, having prospered, are now no longer recognizable as such; & of a number now on trial some will doubtless prosper in like manner. What the wise man does is to recognize that *the conversational usage of educated people in general, not his predilections or a literary fashion of the moment, is the naturalizing authority*, & therefore to adopt a Gallicism only when he is of the opinion that it is a Gallicism no more.

Again, the italics are mine, because the notion that the conversational usage of educated people in general is the governing authority on usage is far from the supposed “moral” dictum that English must follow rigid rules with no possibility of evolution. Of course, one might quibble with Fowler’s view that the conversational usage of “educated people in general” sets the standard. But realistically, what other group should we choose? The notion that we should follow the conversational usage of ignorant people is a proposition that – as my mentor Judge Milton Shadur likes to say – refutes itself.

Those who, like Shea, call Fowler a “grammatical moralizer” or something similar<sup>16</sup> generally assume that the purpose behind Fowler’s work was to call us on the carpet for the errors in our speech or writing, like a New England preacher in his pulpit ticking off our sins. Few of us enjoy a scolding. But Fowler’s

purpose was something else entirely: to offer helpful advice in case we might want to communicate our thoughts precisely and with the least fuss. Indeed, he acknowledged that certain desirable principles of clarity had not yet achieved acceptance in the conversational usage of educated people in general. His entry on *that*, for example, says:

The relations between *that*, *who* & *which*,<sup>[17]</sup> have come to us from our forefathers as an odd jumble, & plainly show that the language has not been neatly constructed by a master builder who could create each part to do the exact work required of it, neither overlapped nor overlapping. . . . The two kinds of relative clause, to one of which *that* & to the other of which *which* is appropriate, are the defining & the non-defining; & if writers would agree to regard *that* as the defining relative pronoun, & *which* as the non-defining, there would be much gain in both lucidity & in ease. Some there are who follow this principle now; but it would be idle to pretend that it is the practice either of most or of the best writers.

So Fowler, nearly alone among usage writers, makes suggestions that he readily admits are not rules but that, in his opinion, would contribute to clarity if we followed them.

In contrast, Shea’s fundamental argument is the useless Newtonian proposition that, for every language maven (to use William Safire’s term, borrowed from Yiddish) who lays down a rule of usage, there is an equally respectable author – or even another language maven – who endorses or practices the opposite rule. A typical example is *literally*, which my high school English teacher, Mrs. Meri Wiggenhorn, told us we should not use when we meant *figuratively* or *nearly*, as in *When I spilled the soup in my lap at an expensive restaurant with my prospective in-laws, I literally died*.

Shea first points out that *literally* comes from *literal*, which originally meant *relating to letters or the alphabet*, not anything relating to *actual*. But so what? We have long spoken of *the letter of the law*, meaning what the law *actu-*

*ally* says, and of following an instruction *to the letter*, meaning *exactly*.

Shea’s next argument is that “some of our most celebrated authors” have used *literally* to mean *figuratively*, including Nabokov, Twain, and Theodore Roosevelt. Of course, even assuming those writers really thought *literally* could mean *figuratively* (and that they were not, for example, trying to reproduce a character’s speech patterns without necessarily endorsing them), pulling isolated examples from selected writers’ works does not solve the problem Fowler addressed: clarity of expression. As Fowler observed in suggesting that *literally* is not an all-around replacement for *virtually* or *practically* as an intensifier, “such false coin makes honest traffic in words impossible.” To be sure, in many cases the context will show that *literally* is a jocular exaggeration that cannot have been intended to mean *actually*, but not in all, and then how do we know what the speaker or writer really meant? *I literally died* will perhaps be taken as humorous if the speaker is still alive to tell the tale, but *my cat literally died*, when the animal is nowhere to be seen, could be taken either way.<sup>18</sup>

Strangely, Shea’s discussion of “split infinitives” does not mention Fowler’s important 1923 article “The Split Infinitive” in Tract No. 15 published by the Society for Pure English, a shortened version of which was later included in *ADoMEU*. Though Shea is always eager to portray Fowler as a rigid prescriptivist, Fowler in fact ridiculed the idea that English has any rule that would prohibit inserting a word between *to* and the infinitive form of a verb. Rather, he wrote,

a real s.i., though not desirable in itself, is preferable to either of two things, to real ambiguity, & to patent artificiality. . . . We will split infinitives sooner than be ambiguous or artificial; more than that, we will freely admit that sufficient recasting will get rid of any s.i. without involving either of those faults, & yet reserve to ourselves the right of deciding in each case whether recasting is worth while.

I don’t think Shea would argue with that

statement. But it poorly fits his general argument against Fowler as (still) the leading guide to English usage, so Shea adopts the old debater's trick of omitting evidence that does not fit his thesis.

The same is true of Shea's entries on ending sentences with prepositions, in which he sees no harm, and on *ain't*, which he accepts as here to stay. Fowler also opposed the "arbitrary rule" or "cherished superstition" against ending sentences with prepositions, citing dozens of examples from writers who did so. As for *ain't*, Fowler suggested it fills a real need as a contraction for *am I not*, and he regretted that it has been "tarred" as an "uneducated blunder." Again, however, those views apparently do not fit the picture of Fowler-the-moralist that Shea wishes to paint, so he omits them.

Shea himself is not entirely free of prejudice, as his entries on *it's me* and *between you and I* make clear. Both phrases, he observes, have a long history of use – with *between you and I* tracing its lineage at least back to *The Merchant of Venice*. Neither is grammatically correct, but *it's me* seems a well established idiom in the conversational usage of educated people in general, while *between you and I* still has a whiff of ignorance.<sup>19</sup> Yet *between you and I* is one of the few historically validated precedents that Shea does not wholeheartedly embrace. Or perhaps it would be fairer to say it is one of the rare usages whose critics he does not ridicule.

Of course, broad acceptance of *it's me* does not mean either that the rules of grammar have ceased to exist or that they never existed at all – propositions Shea might actually (dare I say *literally*) endorse. English, like many languages, is full of idioms, which are, by definition, phrases that can only be understood and validated by tradition. Some idioms, like *cheesed off*, make no sense. Others, like *it's me*, violate the established rules. But it would be just as wrong to say there are no rules of grammar as it would be to say the word *cheese* has no meaning.

Before the Oxford University Press imposed the title *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* on Fowler's work, he often referred to it as the "idiom book." Rather than get aggravated by the "incorrect" idiom, Fowler listed *it's me* in a category he called "sturdy indefensibles" – ungrammatical or even nonsensical idioms that have become entrenched and generally present no problem of ambiguity. He suggests that there are "much more profitable ways of spending time" than in worrying about them.

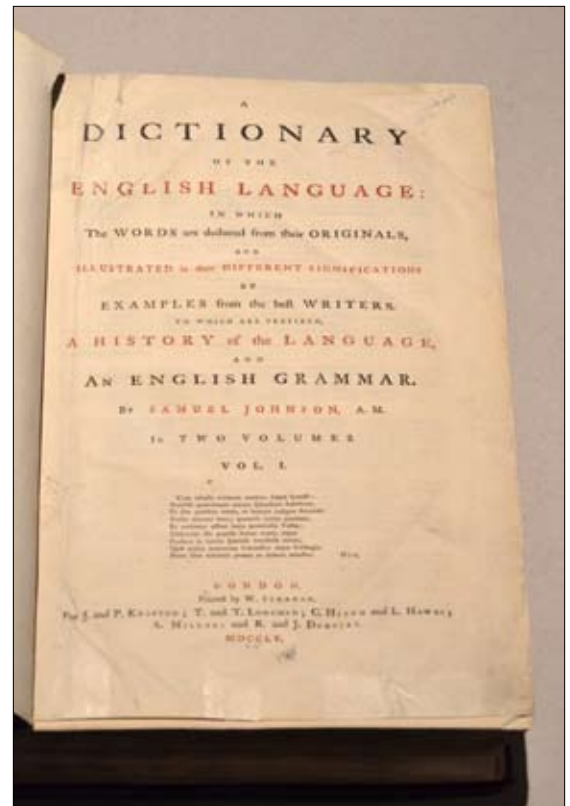
Shea's penultimate (which of course means *next-to-last*, though now one hears it used

to mean *last*, or even *really the last*, as though *pen-* were an intensifier) chapter is a list of 221 words "that are now in common (which is not necessarily to say respectable) use and that have been frowned upon at some point in the past few hundred years." With each word, from *accessorize* to *zoom*, Shea provides at least one citation to an author who has disapproved of its use. Most of those scolds wrote in the 19th and early 20th centuries, including such near-totally forgotten guides as Richard Grant White, *Words and Their Uses* (5th ed., 1882) (28 citations); Frank Vizetelly, *Errors in English* (1906) (21 citations); Ambrose Bierce, *Write It Right* (1909) (18 citations); Alfred Ayres, *The Verbalist* (1894) (17 citations); and Chicagoan Josephine Turck Baker, *The Correct Word* (1899) (10 citations).<sup>20</sup> They are, of course, easy pickings. So much about usage and idioms has changed since those authors' time that it is surprising they got very much right by today's standards.

Fowler himself receives only 11 citations, with Gowers garnering an additional two. Again, however, Shea does not play entirely fair. One of Fowler's "frowned upon" words is *happening* as a noun. Shea quotes Fowler: "It is a VOGUE WORD, which has had a startlingly rapid success & which many of us hope to see wither away as quickly as it has grown." Obviously, Fowler's hope was not fulfilled. But he was not despairing of *happening* in the idiomatic sense commonly used today. Reading Fowler's entry as a whole, it becomes obvious that he saw the word as a needless artificiality, used in his day not by hippies but by "Saxonist" pedants:

It comes to us not from living speech, but from books; the writers have invented it, how far in SAXONISM (*event* is the English for it), & how far in NOVELTY-HUNTING is uncertain. We cannot help laughing to see that, while the plain Englishman is content that *events* should *happen*, the Saxonist on one side requires that there should be *happenings*, & the anti-Saxonist on the other that things should *eventuate*.

One more example may shed light on the emptiness of Shea's method. Fowler wrote that *gender* "is a grammatical term only. To talk of *persons or creatures of the masculine or feminine g.*, meaning of the male or female sex, is either a jocularly (permissalbe or not accord-



Title page of Johnson's 1755 Dictionary.

ing to context) or a blunder." Shea disagrees. Today, of course, *gender* is an almost universal synonym for *sex* in the chromosomal sense. Does that make Fowler wrong? I would say it illustrates Holmes' aphorism very well. In Fowler's day (and in the OED) *gender* was primarily a technical term referring to the assignment of nouns in Romance and Germanic languages to the categories masculine, feminine, or neuter. Johnson's *Dictionary*, while endorsing the "grammatical" meaning, also gave the meaning *a fex* – that is, *a sex*. By Fowler's time, it seems, that use had become jocular, as he and the OED both recognized. Indeed, *he is of the masculine gender* still has a jocular sound today.

But at some point – it seems to me in the late 60s or early 70s – we began to be embarrassed by word *sex*, because it had become more closely associated with something people do than with what they are. Fowler did not anticipate that development, nor should he have. The supposedly prudish Victorians frequently used *sex* without fear of titillation or embarrassment.<sup>21</sup> Toward the end of the 20th century, however, it was no longer possible in many circles to use the word *sex* to mean simply the quality of being male or female. So we euphemistically reverted to *gender*.<sup>22</sup>

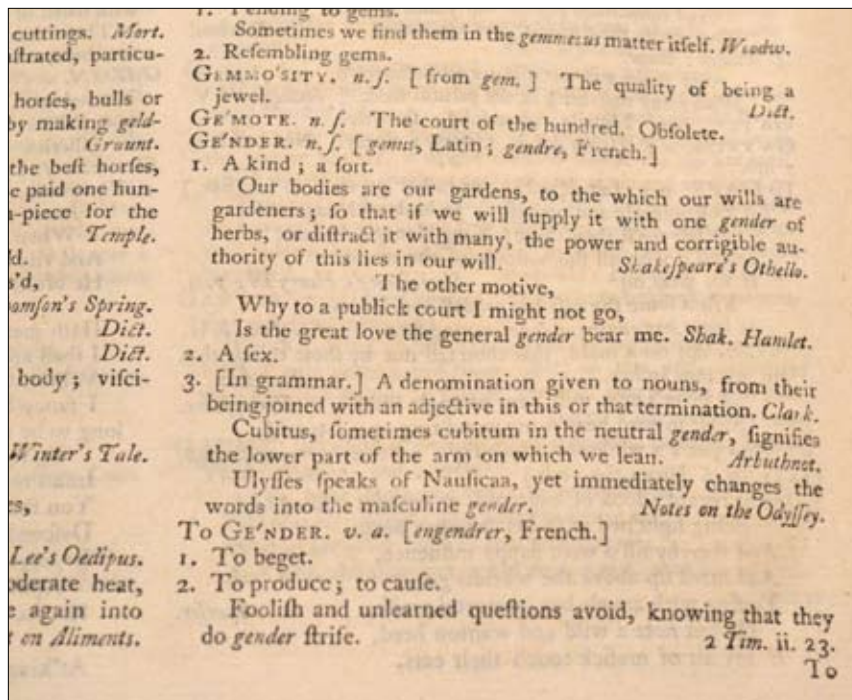
Lately, the word has taken another turn. I recently attended a conference at which the

BAD ENGLISH, from page 7  
 conveners announced their opposition to discrimination based on “race, religion, national origin, gender, and sexuality.” When I asked what the difference between *gender* and *sexuality* was supposed to be, I was told that *gender* meant the characteristic of being male or female, while *sexuality* meant what is also called *sexual preference* – though it is unclear why we do not now say *gender preference* to describe that concept. Possibly *gender preference* would be taken to mean a preference for which sex one wants to be (a notion largely unknown in Fowler’s time), as opposed to the preference for which sex one wants to be with.

Shea ends his book with an interesting mix of quotes from Shakespeare and several of today’s hip-hop artists, challenging us to tell which is which. It’s not easy, especially because both the Bard and the rappers frequently use the word *ho*, though in very different senses. But that makes a somewhat different point than the one Shea intends. In a real way, Shakespeare was the rapper’s Elizabethan equivalent. He sought out novelty and he used language that his audience would find arresting in the dramatic context. So when he had Mark Antony say *This was the most unkindest cut of all*, that was not an endorsement of the double superlative giving us permission to follow suit routinely. And when he had Hamlet ask Ophelia *Do you think I meant country matters?* he was not showing us the proper way to ask about life on the farm.

As the essayist Louis Menand has rightly observed, *ADoMEU* “is one of those reference books that are read for pleasure even when the need for instruction has been satisfied.”<sup>23</sup> Writers like Shea, who dangle the prospect of cheap pleasure by offering what boils down to an “I’m OK, you’re OK” version of usage, may make us feel good, but I’m afraid they don’t help us to communicate. Richard J. Daley’s legendary dictum to the press, *don’t print what I said, print what I meant*,<sup>24</sup> doesn’t really work for most of us.

Sometimes we are intentionally vague or confusing because that suits some purpose, though usually not an admirable one. The bigger problem in any society is the vast



“Gender” from Johnson’s Dictionary.

number of people who think they are being clear when they aren’t. Descriptionists like Shea focus primarily on the evidence of what speakers and writers do. For them the norm is how speakers and writers construct sentences and use words. But how words are used is very different from how they are understood. To tell us it’s OK to say to say *unique* when you mean *unusual* – because the evidence shows that many people do so – tells us little about what a listener will think you mean when you say it. It is faulty logic to suggest that because many people say *infamous* when they mean *famous*, most people understand what the speakers meant.

What distinguishes Fowler is his focus on what you want to mean, not on what you want to say. “Incorrect” usage is aggravating, not because it’s wrong, but because it causes confusion, betraying the speaker’s or writer’s lazy or stubborn lack of interest in making the effort to be understood clearly. In the preface to his *Dictionary*, Johnson acknowledged that language changes and must change, but he also recognized a certain nobility in resisting changes that cloud understanding:

If the changes that we fear be thus irresistible, what remains but to acquiesce with silence, as in the other insurmountable distresses of humanity? [I]t remains that we retard what we cannot repel, that we palliate what we cannot cure. Life may be lengthened by care, though death cannot be ultimately defeated: tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration; we have long preserved

our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language.

In the end, the question boils down to this: should we speak and write so that others can unambiguously understand what we intend to communicate, or do we insist that it’s our right to say and write whatever we please (at least so long as it’s rooted in some shred of historical evidence from the past 400 years), making proper understanding the listener’s problem, not our own? Shea what you will, the question answers itself.<sup>25</sup>

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Most photographs from books in the author’s collection, photographed by Robert McCamant.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I prefer Alan Jay Lerner’s more poetic rephrasing from *My Fair Lady*, in which Henry Higgins says:

An Englishman’s way of speaking absolutely classifies him.

The moment he talks he makes some other Englishman despise him.

Lerner’s Higgins further observes, in the same soliloquy:

The Scotch and the Irish leave you close to tears.

There even are places where English completely disappears.

In America, they haven’t used it for years.

<sup>2</sup> The essay can be found in Nancy Mitford, ed., *Noblesse Oblige: An Enquiry into the Identifiable Characteristics of the English Aristocracy* (Hamish Hamilton, 1956).

<sup>3</sup> In his *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage*, Bryan Garner provides an “American” version of Ross’ list, less aimed at distinguishing between *correct* words used by U and non-U speakers (*false teeth/dentures*) than at pointing out incorrect words used by non-U speakers, such as *regardless/irregardless* and *between you and me/between you and I*. Garner does note some distinctions of the sort Ross identified, e.g., *died/passed away*; *later/subsequently*; *driver/chauffeur*; and *before/prior to*. In each case Garner, like Ross, assumes the non-U speaker would use the more grandiose word in a misguided effort to presume above his or her station. I leave it for readers to determine whether that assumption is accurate and whether it expresses an unattractive prejudice on Ross’ or Garner’s part.

<sup>4</sup> From *My Fair Lady*; the wonderful scene does not appear in *Pygmalion*.

<sup>5</sup> Richardson was a disciple of the philologist and radical politician John Horne Tooke, whose views on most subjects – including dictionaries – dif-



ferred greatly from Johnson's, though Boswell quotes Johnson as having shown some respect for Tooke's erudition. Tooke returned the compliment; Macaulay tells us that Tooke "never could read [the final paragraph of Johnson's preface to the *Dictionary*] without weeping." Johnson and Tooke held opposing views on the American Revolution, which in Horne Tooke's case led to a prison term for sedition. It seems interesting that the Tory Johnson would have held the more "liberal" view of linguistic change. Tooke influenced Bentham, who in turn influenced the 20th century logicians C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, creators of "Basic English," an 850-word vocabulary said to be adequate for describing any idea, action, or thing.

<sup>6</sup> To be sure, *ain't* had been in the *OED* for some 70 years before *Webster's Third* was published, though it was characterized there as "Cockney," with citations to its use by Dickens. Useful accounts of the history and reception of *Webster's Third* are Herbert C. Morton, *Webster's Third: Philip Gove's Controversial Dictionary and Its Critics* (Cambridge, 1994), and David Skinner, *The Story of Ain't: America, Its Language, and the Most Controversial Dictionary Ever Published* (HarperCollins, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, John Updike's review of Burchfield's work in the December 23, 1996, issue of *The New Yorker*, in which Updike observes, "It was Fowler's flinty idealism that endeared him to the generations who came to consult and stayed to read, with real pleasure, his tireless compilations of slovenly English and his relentlessly logical parsing. He offers a dynamic guidance that promises a brighter future rather than a helpless wallow in the endless morass of English as it was and is." Burchfield, Updike makes clear, wallowed rather too much, regarding the English language as "a battlefield upon which he functions as a non-combatant observer."

<sup>8</sup> The Gowers edition, published 32 years after Fowler died, looks superficially much like the first, and one might assume Gowers edited with a light hand. In fact, he made many changes, and of course we cannot know whether Fowler would have endorsed them. The most obvious and pervasive change was to substitute *and* for all of Fowler's space-saving ampersands.

<sup>9</sup> The observation appears in Holmes' opinion for the Supreme Court in the case of *Towne v. Eisner*, 245 U.S. 418 (1918). The case turned on the meaning of the word *income*.

<sup>10</sup> A wonderfully elegant demonstration of Holmes' principle is found in Jorge Luis Borges' short story "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*." Borges' conceit is that a modern French author has re-

written several chapters of *Don Quixote*, but using Cervantes' exact words. Passages that had seemed innocent and entertaining when written by a 17th century Spaniard became darker and more complex from a 20th century Frenchman. The words remained the same, but because the writer's context had changed, the meaning did as well. Though Borges was a lifelong student of English literature, his views on English usage are not entirely clear. Apparently he believed Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary was superior to Johnson's, about which Borges dryly remarked (echoing Horne Tooke and Richardson), "The etymologies, added later, are the weakest aspect of his work, along with the definitions." Jorge Luis Borges, *Professor Borges: A Course on English Literature* (New Directions, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Etymologists may note that the common meanings of *enormous* (literally, "outside the norm") and *egregious* (literally "outside the group") have evolved in opposite directions, with *enormous* going from bad to neutral and *egregious* going from neutral to bad.

<sup>12</sup> Review of *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (*Edinburgh Review*, September 1831). The review was of a then-new edition of Boswell's work, edited by John Wilson Croker, which Macaulay savaged.

<sup>13</sup> Such questions are not always merely academic. A friend once published an article describing someone as *infamous*. The target brought a libel suit. My friend's lawyer attempted to argue that there was no libel because *infamous* isn't necessarily a term of opprobrium. The case settled before a jury could decide what *infamous* really means.

<sup>14</sup> Letter to Sir William Elford (1811), quoted in A.G. L'Estrange, *The Life of Mary Russell Mitford* (1870).

<sup>15</sup> The urge to ascribe punning to *pundits* obviously derives from the misleading orthographic and homophonic connections, often the source of mistakes (e.g., *hairbrained*, *playwrite*). Had *pundit* become popular in its alternative English spelling, *pandit* (readers of a certain age may remember when the prime minister of India was called *Pandit Nehru*), the confusion probably would not have spread. In addition, *pundit* in its original sense has now become debased by its near exclusive use in the not-so-respectful term *political pundit*.

<sup>16</sup> The first of many to level that charge was the Danish-born linguistics scholar Otto Jespersen, in his article "On Some Disputed Points of English Grammar," Tract No. 25 of the Society for Pure English (1926). Recent examples are in Joan Acocella's review of Henry Hitchings' *The Language Wars: A History of Proper English* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011) in the May 14, 2012 issue of *The New Yorker* and in Charles McGrath's review of Steven Pinker's *The Sense of Style* in the October 19, 2014 issue of *The New York Times Book Review*. To my astonishment, both magazines published my responsive letters defending Fowler's work (*The New Yorker*, June 4-11, 2012 and *The New York Times Book Review*, November 2, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> For those who have been taught that *between* expresses a relationship of two things, while *among* must be used when referring to three or more, Fowler's first sentence must come as a shock. His own edition of *ADoMEU* surprisingly lacks any discussion of that point. The Gowers edition, however, calls the so-called rule a "superstition" and says the better rule is that *between* suggests the relationship of a thing to one or more other things, while *among* suggests a relationship that three or more things share in common. So it is correct to speak of *the war between the states*, because *the war among the states*

suggests each state was at war with every other state. The error is instead historical, as the war was not between states but between some states and the United States.

<sup>18</sup> The debate over *literally* is still very much with us. In a recent episode of the HBO series *The Newsroom* (first broadcast on November 16, 2014), one character laments, "We no longer have a word meaning *literally*." She then says she is "literally going to set fire to this building," purposely creating ambiguity as to her true intentions.

<sup>19</sup> The French accept both *c'est moi* and *entre nous*, but, as Lerner's Henry Higgins also said, "The French don't care what they do actually, as long as they pronounce it properly."

<sup>20</sup> I don't mean to suggest that Bierce has been forgotten. Indeed, his short stories and *The Devil's Dictionary* are still current. But *Write It Right* is mostly forgotten, except by collectors. A recent attempt to resurrect it, with updated annotations (Walker, 2009) won no substantial following.

<sup>21</sup> According to the website [www.writelikeausten.com](http://www.writelikeausten.com), Jane Austen used the word *sex* 46 times in her novels. The word appears frequently in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and was used by Henry James, Thomas Hardy, and Wilkie Collins – all with the meaning that we now assign to *gender*.

<sup>22</sup> Similarly, these days we rarely use the word *ass* to describe a donkey because the word has acquired an off-color anatomical association having nothing to do with equines – certainly through a misspelling or mispronunciation of the Old English *arse*. Though the phrase *don't be an ass* can still be heard in common usage, most people modify the word to emphasize the anatomical allusion.

<sup>23</sup> "Slips of the Tongue," *The New Yorker*, November 26, 2001.

<sup>24</sup> The statement is *legendary* not merely in the sense that it is famous (or infamous), but also in the disappearing sense that it is fictitious. Worded a bit differently (*They should have printed what he meant, not what he said*), it was actually uttered by Daley's press secretary, Earl Bush.

<sup>25</sup> I thank Paul Ruxin and Bob Karrow for several ideas that helped in writing this review.

## NOMINATIONS

President Susan Hanes has appointed the following nominating committee for the election of council members and officers at the upcoming annual meeting of the club:

Michael Thompson, chair  
Lisa Pevtzow  
Alice Schreyer  
Susan Hanes, ex officio

If you have any suggestions for members you would like to see nominated, please forward them by email before March

30 to  
[caxtonclub@newberry.org](mailto:caxtonclub@newberry.org)

### Caxton on the Move to Iowa City

Beginning with cocktails on the evening of April 30th and ending with a grand dinner on the evening of May 2nd, the Caxton Club will be sponsoring a trip to the University of Iowa to view rare books, manuscript recipes from a Chicago Chef and former Caxtonian, works of book art, and an amazing private library. Please mark your calendars for this wonderful trip.

# And Now We Are 120

The Club  
Celebrates  
a Birthday



**1** Award recipients: Pamela Olson, Jenny Kim, Teresa Pankratz, Hannah Batsel, Ben Blount, Daniel Mellis, Elizabeth Long, Linde Brocato, Mardy Sears. **2** Susan Hanes. **3** Margaret McCamant, Bob McCamant (newly minted honorary member). **4** Bob Cotner. **5** Appropriate desserts. **6** Keynote speaker Dan Crawford.



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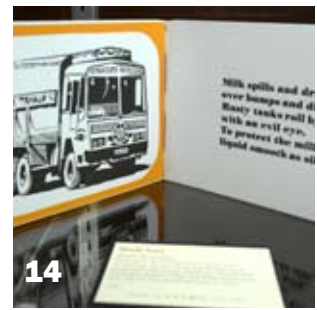
Photographs by David V. Kamba, Ed Bronson, and Robert McCamant.



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**7** Club presidents: FRONT: Susan Hanes, Hayward Blake, Mary Beth Beal; BACK, Steve Tomaszefsky, Michael Thompson, Tom Joyce, Bob Cotner, David Mann, Junie Sinson, Bruce Boyer. **8** Club publications. **9** Rob Martier, Kevin Sido, Donna Tuke. **10** Junie Sinson, Janis Notz. **11** Sarah Alger, Jerry Yanoff. **12** FRONT: John Chalmers, Jackie Vossler; BACK: Kathryn Tutkus, Ed Quattrocchi. Books by: **13** Teresa Pankratz. **14** Mardy Sears. **15** Matt Runkle.

# CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES

Wynken de Worde

It is still hard to believe that I can no longer pop through the door at Titles, Inc., and find Florence Shay sitting behind the desk, or shelving books, or telling some customers why they should buy the books they were already holding. It seems impossible that more than two years have passed since Florence lost her battle with ovarian cancer, and nearly that long since her inventory was sold off and her shop closed for good.

Florence and her partner, Sonja Levinger, had started their shop together, and it had been 30 years since Sonja moved to California and Florence had become sole proprietor. (Sonja died in Mountain View, California in 2012.) As a solo act, Florence thrived, becoming a major player in the Chicago-area antiquarian book market, and at a point in life when others of her age were thinking about retirement to a warm location, and of picking up nothing heavier than a grandchild, instead of heavy boxes of old books.

So it is perhaps the only truly appropriate homage to Florence that her husband and ace photographer, Art Shay, should immortalize Florence in book form in his newly published collection of photos, *My Florence: A 70-Year Love Story*, from Seven Stories Press, a mere \$14.95 in paperback. It is 94 pages of photos you will not soon forget, of a remarkable bookwoman.

Florence was on a panel of book-women several decades ago. It was sponsored by the Chicago Public Library and focussed on collecting children's books. The other booksellers were Ann Dumler, Joyce Klein (I think), and Gloria Damon Timmel. Dumler, a former Caxtonian, is the only one of the group who survives, despite suffering a serious fall last year at the Chicago Rare Book Center. She fractured her pelvis but is recovering nicely, though she still sometimes uses a cane for support.

Gloria Timmel passed away gently in 2013 in Lexington, Kentucky, of complications from Alzheimer's. Gloria was the founder of Children's Vintage Volumes, of Wheaton and Chicago.

Gloria had come to Chicago to attend the School of the Art Institute. Her first husband moved her to his home in Haiti, where Gloria used her artistic talents and soon operated



several dressmaking shops on the island. She left Haiti after the accidental drowning of her five-year old son, Theodore, in their pool, which I suspect had more than a little to do with her subsequent devotion to children's books.

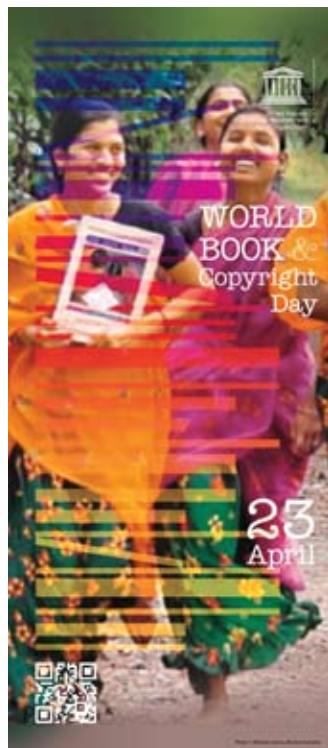
Fellow Chicagoan Mrs. Mackey shared Gloria's attachment to the books for children published by the Paul F. Volland Company in the 1910s through the '30s. The Volland books were quite special, and the Volland Company, located on Wabash, even had a permanent display in the toy section of Marshall Field's on State Street. Mackey acquired much of her collection of Volland books through Gloria. Gloria once com-

plied a bibliography of Volland publications, including a line of greeting cards, mottoes, and even postcards, though it's not likely ever to be published. But, Gloria's slide-show presentation to the Caxton Club, back in the early 1990s, revealed the astonishing breadth and depth and variety of the Volland offerings to Caxtonians, and encouraged at least Karen Skubish and **Teri Embrey** (1995) to start Volland collections of their own. Gloria also had meetings with the Rare Book Division of the Chicago Public Library to persuade them to build a collection of Volland materials, which did eventually happen.

Caxtonian **Glenn Humphreys** (2014), who heads CPL's Special Collections, would undoubtedly be pleased to show you anything from the Volland archives.

PS: While there, you might also inquire about the James W. Ellsworth archive relating to the World's Columbian Exposition. While Ellsworth is unlikely to appear in the film of *The Devil and the White City* – should Leonardo DiCaprio ever finish and release it – still Ellsworth did substantially contribute to putting the WCE together. And, as you may recall from a recent talk, Ellsworth brought the first Gutenberg Bible to Chicago, and was the first President of the Caxton Club back 120 years ago.

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The Caxton Club, the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers (ILAB), and the Cliff Dwellers are joining forces to support the worldwide celebration of:

## UNESCO World Book and Copyright Day

April 23, 2015

On Shakespeare's 399th birthday ILAB is reaching out beyond the world of antiquarian books to support a worldwide initiative on behalf of UNESCO and this special day promoting reading and the culture of the book. The money raised at this event will be used for book donations in schools and libraries in sub-Saharan Africa. Starting in Sydney, Australia, the ILAB will be hosting "pop-up" book fairs across the globe on April 23. Join ILAB members in representing Chicago.

The event: Thursday, April 23, 2015

A cocktail reception of book lovers, complete with a selection of books to browse, in the haven for authors, printers, and book collectors.

The Cliff Dwellers

200 South Michigan, 22nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60604

5:30-7:00 PM

Free Appetizers – Cash Bar – Donation \$25

All proceeds to benefit UNESCO World Book and Copyright Day

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED: [cliffdwellers@cliff-chicago.org](mailto:cliffdwellers@cliff-chicago.org)

Join the Worldwide Celebration for Books

# The 2015 Symposium on the Book

## Preserving the Evidence: The Ethics of Book and Paper Conservation

Friday, April 17, and Saturday, April 18, 2015.

The Caxton Club, the Bibliographical Society of America, and the Newberry Library will be hosting a two-day symposium exploring the current state of conservation ethics. Our 2015 symposium will kick off Friday morning with small group tours by bus for members and guests. Friday evening will be a gathering of book lovers, offering the chance to meet and dine with members of other clubs and the symposium speakers. **Please note that all Friday events require reservations and advance payment.** The Saturday program is free and open to the public, and no reservations are required. *Details below.*

### FRIDAY, APRIL 17

We will tour four Chicago conservation centers for behind-the-scenes looks at the challenges and projects facing each of these institutions and the approaches they have taken to solve them. We will visit the Conservation Center at the Art Institute, the University of Chicago, the Graphic Conservation Co., and the Newberry. Our tour will be followed by an evening social gathering at the Newberry.

### Bus Tour, 8:30-4:45

**8:30-9:00.** Meet at the Newberry for departure. Bus leaves promptly at 9:00 AM.

**9:30-11:00.** Tour the Conservation Center at the Art Institute of Chicago.

**11:45-1:00.** Break and box lunch at the University of Chicago.

Box lunch selections are:

Chicken Caesar Wrap  
Romaine, Seasoned Grilled Chicken Breast, Parmesan Cheese, House-Made Croutons and Caesar Dressing in a Flour Tortilla  
With Garden Pasta Salad, Chips, and a Brownie

Honey Ham & Cheese  
Savory Tavern Ham, Swiss Cheese, Lettuce, Raspberry Honey Mustard on a Croissant  
With Garden Pasta Salad, Chips, and a Brownie

Caprese Panini  
Fresh Mozzarella, Roma Tomatoes, and Fresh Basil with a Balsamic Reduction on Grilled Flatbread  
With Garden Pasta Salad, Chips, and a Brownie

Bottled Water or Soda

**1:00-2:15.** Tour the conservation lab at the University of Chicago's Mansueto Library.

**2:45-4:00.** Tour the facilities at the Graphic Conservation Co., conserving and restoring works on paper for museums, historical societies and private clients.

**4:45.** Arrive at the Newberry for a tour of the conservation department. Tours will continue throughout the social hour so that others joining us only for dinner can participate.

*Cost for the bus tour and lunch is \$68 per person. Space is limited. Please note that due to the number of stops, parking logistics, and time schedule, all participants must travel by bus. We have arranged for a kneel-down bus to allow easy access. Please make your reservation and lunch selection by phone or e-mail with Jackie Vossler and send payments to Jackie Vossler's address below. Payments for this event must be received by April 8.*

### Evening Gathering of Book Lovers

*For members of the Caxton Club, the Newberry, BSA, our symposium speakers, and guests*

Location: the Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St., Chicago, IL 60610.

**5:30-6:30.** Social hour, cocktails \$5.

During the social hour, Newberry staff will lead tours of the library's conservation lab.

**6:30.** Welcoming remarks.

**6:45.** Buffet dinner.

*Cost for the Evening Gathering is \$60 per person. Reservations and advance payment are required and must be received by April 13. Please send reservations and payments to:*

Jackie Vossler  
401 E. Ontario #3601  
Chicago, IL 60611  
312-266-8825  
jv.everydaydesign@rcn.com  
Make checks payable to Caxton Club.

### SATURDAY, APRIL 18

### Preserving the Evidence: The Ethics of Book and Paper Conservation

*Sponsored by Caxton Club / Bibliographical Society of America / Newberry Library*

**8:30-3:00.** The Newberry, 60 West Walton St., Chicago, IL 60610

FREE and OPEN to the PUBLIC

Experts in the book world will address a broad range of ethical issues confronting collectors of books, manuscripts, maps, and other works on paper or parchment. Speakers will also outline the challenges of preserving the evidence of our past, sometimes in the face of conflicting interests of buyers, sellers, scholars and other readers, binders, curators and conservators.

**8:30-9:00.** Coffee and juice.

**9:15-9:30.** Opening comments.

**9:30-10:40.** Session 1.

Keynote Speaker: **Jeanne Drewes**, Library of Congress, "Should It Stay or Should It Go? Critical Decisions for America's National Patrimony."

**Marcia Reed**, Getty Research Institute, "To Have and/or to Hold: Conservators and Curators Communicating as Long Term Partners."

**10:40-10:50.** Break.

**10:50-11:20.** Session 2.

**Sherelyn Ogden**, Minnesota Historical Society, "Cultural Heritage Preservation: Conservations at a Crossroads."

**11:30-12:30.** Lunch break.

Join the speakers and panelists with a pre-arranged box lunch, or lunch on own.

Box lunch selections:

Roasted Turkey Breast  
Muenster Cheese, Romaine Lettuce, Tomato, and Herb Aioli on Nine-Grain Bread  
Diced Fruit Cup, Chips, and a Cookie

Roast Beef and Cheddar  
Lettuce, Tomato, Cracked Black Pepper, and Roasted Herb Aioli on Roll  
Diced Fruit Cup, Chips, and a Cookie

Spinach & Avocado Wrap  
Artichoke Hearts, Cucumber, Goat Cheese, and Sun-Dried Tomato on Wheat Tortilla  
Diced Fruit Cup, Chips, and a Cookie

*Cost for box lunch is \$15. Selection and payment must be made by April 13 to:*

Jackie Vossler  
401 E. Ontario #3601  
Chicago, IL 60611  
312-266-8825  
jv.everydaydesign@rcn.com  
Make checks payable to Caxton Club.

**12:45-1:15.** Session 3.

**Michele Cloonan**, Simmons College, "Education for Preservation and Conservation"

**1:20-2:45.** Panel Discussion

"Ethics in the Marketplace for Books." **Bruce McKittrick**, principal, Bruce McKittrick Rare Books, Philadelphia; **Paul Ruxin**, Chicago collector; **Scott Kellar**, Chicago book binder and conservator; **Russ Maki**, principal, Graphic Conservation Co., Chicago.

**2:45-3:00.** Closing comments.

### For Our Out of Town Guests

We have arranged a block of rooms for our speakers and guests for the nights of April 16, April 17, and April 18 at the:

Sofitel Hotel  
20 E. Chestnut St.  
Chicago, IL 60611  
Phone 312-324-4000

*This hotel is within easy walking distance of the Newberry and offers free internet access. The negotiated rate for these rooms is \$185 per night, but you must mention Caxton Club/BSA promotion to receive this rate; reservations must be made directly with the hotel.*



The Bibliographical  
Society of America

# Book- and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Lisa Pevtzow

(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: **“Decidedly Surreal: The Bindings of Mary Louise Reynolds”** (bindings by an American who became a central figure in the Parisian Surrealist movement), through March 23. **“Burning the Night: Baroque to Contemporary Mezzotints from the Collection”** (mezzotint prints, books with mezzotint illustrations, and other works on paper from the permanent collection from the 17th to the 20th centuries), through May 31. **“Eldzier Cortor Coming Home: Recent Gifts to the Art Institute”** (words by the Chicago printmaker and member of the Harlem Renaissance), through May 31.

**Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library**, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: **“Orchidelirium”** (illustrated Orchidaceae), through April 19.

**Chicago History Museum**, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: **“Railroaders: Jack Delano’s Homefront Photography”**

(the federal Office of War Information assigned photographer Jack Delano to take pictures of the nation’s railways during World War II), through June 10.

**Columbia College Center for Book and Paper Arts**, 1104 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, 312-269-6630: **“Simultaneous: Seripop and Sonnenszimmer”** (Chicagoans Nick Butcher and

Nadine Nakanishi and Montréal-based Yannick Desranleau and Chloe Lum exhibit screen-printed work that investigates the relationship between fabric and paper), through April 11.

**Harold Washington Library Center**, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: **“Love Me Forever! Oh! Oh! Oh!”** (cartoonist Jeremy Sorese explores the idea of getting married, both gay and straight), through March 8.

**Newberry Library**, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: **“Love on Paper”** (collection items, from proclamations and pictures to cynical put-downs and comical send-ups of love), through April 4.

**Northwestern University Block Museum**, 40 Arts Circle Drive, Evanston, 847-491-4000: **“Toulouse-Lautrec Prints: Art at the Edges of Modernity”** (posters, illustrated books, theater programs, privately circulated portfolios from the last decade of Toulouse-Lautrec), through April 19.



Northwestern Block Museum / Modernity  
TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, SALON DES CENT. COLLECTION OF ANDRA AND IRWIN PRESS



Columbia College / Simultaneous

**Northwestern University Library**, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: **“William Hogarth’s Modern Moral Subjects: A Harlot’s Progress and A Rake’s Progress”** (prints from an 1822 edition of Hogarth’s works), ongoing.

**Oriental Institute of Chicago**, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, 773-702-9520: **“A Cosmopolitan City: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Old**

**Cairo”** (documents and artifacts from Old Cairo’s multi-cultural society, 7th to 12th centuries AD), through September 13.

**Pritzker Military Museum and Library**, 104 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, 312-374-9333: **“SEAL: The Unspoken Sacrifice”** (features photographs from Stephanie Freid-Perenchio and Jennifer Walton’s 2009 book and artifacts on loan from the Navy SEAL Museum), ongoing.

**University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery**, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: **“I Step Out of Myself: Portrait Photography in Special Collections”** (from the work of Eva Watson Schütze, Carl Van Vechten, Layle Silbert, Mildred Mead, Yousef Karsh, Alice Boughton, Joan Eggan, and Tina Modotti), through March 21. **“Closeted/Out in the Quadrangles: A History of LGBTQ Life at the University of Chicago”** (examines the range of experiences lived by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and faculty on the University of Chicago campus), March 30 to June 12.

**University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library Special Collections**, 801 S. Morgan, Chicago, 312-996-2742: **“Visualizing Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Pictorial Interpretations of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Novel”** (representations of the characters and events in various editions of the book, film stills and posters, and other popular culture arti-



University of Chicago Special Collections / Portraits  
GEORGE HERBERT MEAD, PHOTO BY ALICE BOUGHTON. HELGA JAHRMARKT, PHOTO BY EVA WATSON-SCHUTZE. CLIFTON SMITH, PHOTO BY MILDRED MEAD.

facts), through April 30.

Send your listings to [lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net)

# Caxtonians Collect: Wendy Husser

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Except for her college years, Wendy Cowles Husser lived in Rochester, New York for her whole life, until one day in 1996, she pulled up stakes and moved to Chicago; she had been solicited for the job as the Executive Editor of the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*. She immediately loved the big city atmosphere – the restaurants, entertainment, galleries. “I felt like a kid in a candy store,” she says. But she found it hard to make friends.

In addition to her College of Surgeons work, Husser took on an outside five year project as Executive Editor for the American Urological Association, producing its centennial history, published in May 2002. It was during that project that she began working with Caxtonian Matt Doherty, who was the designer on the project. One day he said “You would be perfect for the Caxton Club,” and brought her to attend a meeting. The result of this happy working team was the production and design of three more important books for the surgery audiences.

She felt immediately at home. At dinner she sat opposite a Jesuit, Brother Grace, which was a surprising but pleasant experience, and came away thinking that “everybody there was not only smart, but nice!” She joined the Club in 1999, nominated by Matt, and threw herself into its affairs. She served on the Council repeatedly, and spent one term as Vice President. In the meantime, she did editing and writing for the *Caxtonian*, worked on the organization of many events – including the first and subsequent Symposia, and was a cheerful assistant and source of ideas for many projects. “Caxton saved my life,” she says. “I would have gone to a meeting every week if there had been one.”

And she saved the Club’s life a time or two, as well. When we couldn’t get organized to issue a new directory, she volunteered to call all the members in the database and verify their information. When the Club’s offices at the Newberry were discovered to need updating, she and then-President David Mann spent several weekends reorganizing and cataloging it.

Born in Rochester, Wendy’s mother had recently been reading *Peter Pan* when thinking of names. She was the oldest of five children, and her siblings sometimes accused her of “not living in the real world” because she so often had her head in a book. As soon as she was



old enough, she made herself useful at the Edgerton Park branch of the Rochester Public Library. She started shelving books, was soon checking them out, and eventually became such a fixture that adults would ask her what books they should read.

She started college at Wilson College, in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, at what is now referred to as a single-gender school, which appealed to her. In high school she almost always knew the answers to the questions, but the teachers would more frequently call on boys. She thought she’d get a better education if there were no boys around.

Wendy married Warren Cowles in 1961 and they had three sons (thus the middle name). Ultimately, she went back to the University of Rochester to finish her English BA. She stayed on and earned an MA in English Literature and worked at the University of Rochester Medical Center, rising from information analyst to Administrator of the Department of Surgery during a career of more than 37 years. Along the way she also earned an MPA degree from the Maxwell School, Syracuse University, a 90 mile commute from Rochester.

Soon her sons had families of their own, and Wendy had just beaten back breast cancer when she moved to Chicago, so it was a time for new beginnings. (To be sure she would have a clean slate, she gave 44 cartons of books to a charity before the move.) She thinks back

fondly of Junie Sinson’s Nobel Prize group, which she enjoyed for a few years. And the organization of the first Symposium was a wonderful challenge that brought together some of the sharpest and most energetic Club members. She also enjoyed her years on what was then called the Scholarship Committee, picking out students of the book arts for cash support on major projects.

At about this time, in the early 2000s, Wendy took on an adjunct position at Harold Washington College, and taught two classes on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. One class was purely English and its grammar and importance in thinking and writing, and the other class was research preparation for various paper assignments. She remembers taking the students to Harold Washington Library during the Saturday and Sunday weekend days. Her pay was withheld for “taking students off campus.” Oh well, she again took the

students of one class to the Art Institute for a stunning free Tuesday night of exhibits. Again, she says, with pride and a laugh, her pay was withheld.

Her efforts on the Club’s web site were instrumental. When she learned how much the club was paying for its old one (“we were charged something like \$150 to make the smallest change!” she exclaimed) she was determined to find a new way to do things. She worked with Rob Carlson and Greg Prickman on developing a site that members could maintain. Then Carlson discovered Wild Apricot, the software which makes it possible for the Club to keep a central database that multiple officers can access. He transferred the data from the previous one-computer system to Wild Apricot, Husser edited the inevitable glitches, and the Club was in the modern era.

She has recently moved into a new phase, with most of her life now spent in Phoenix, Arizona. In addition to the weather, the big draw of Phoenix is that two of her three sons are there. There are grandchildren to spoil, and sometimes it is nice to have a family member along on a trip to the doctor. But when Caxton has a big event, she’s eager to come back and keep in touch. She has yet to find such a like-minded group in the southwestern desert.

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## Bookmarks...

**Luncheon: Friday, March 13, Union League Club**  
**Neil Shapiro on "Shock and Delight:**  
**Herb Lubalin, Powerful Communicator"**

Working with 26 letters, 10 numbers and a handful of punctuation marks, Herb Lubalin, graphic artist and typographer, significantly changed our perception of letters, words and language with a canvas that ranged from advertising to book jackets, from letterheads to cafeteria walls. In this illustrated talk by Chicago artist, teacher, and visual historian Neil Shapiro, you will learn how Lubalin single-handedly raised typography from a narrow craft to an art form that put important ideas SMACK in the public eye. You will hear about Lubalin's years with Ralph Ginzberg's publications: *Eros*, *fact*, and *Avant Garde*. Indeed, sexuality was part of Lubalin's pushing boundaries, but his story is much more than that. Shapiro will bring Lubalin material including *U & lc* (upper and lower case), a publication dedicated to the often riotous exploration of relationships between words, type, and images. Herb Lubalin collaborated with scores of illustrators, designers, writers, and publishers. Each was enriched by the experience of knowing him. You will be too.

*March luncheon: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Luncheon buffet opens at 11:30 AM; program 12:30-1:30. Lunch is \$32. Please reserve or cancel by Wednesday for Friday lunch. Reserved nonattendees will be billed. Check room assignment information upon arrival.*

### Beyond March...

#### APRIL LUNCHEON

Due to the April 18 symposium ("Preserving the Evidence: The Ethics of Book and Paper Conservation") and its associated events, there will be no luncheon meeting in April.

#### APRIL DINNER

Nick Wilding, of Georgia State, will discuss his discovery of the forgery of Galileo's "Sidereus Nuncius." He will discuss how he discovered it, and the forgery's continuing revelations. Wilding's new book, *Galileo's Idol*, will be available for signing. This April 15 event, at the Union League Club, will have the social hour at 5 and presentation at 6.

**Dinner: Wednesday, March 18, Union League Club**  
**John Neal Hoover on "Mississippi Mystery: Henry Lewis**  
**and the English Edition of *Das Illustrirte Mississippithal*"**

John Neal Hoover, Director of the Mercantile Library, St. Louis, will speak on one of America's greatest 19th-century illustrated books, based on Henry Lewis's "mile-long" panorama paintings of the Mississippi Valley. Lewis's life and times are intertwined with these large-scale canvases, which were presented on moving panoramas as a kind of 19th-century motion picture. The paintings toured the world and then disappeared from view, seen only in fragments, miniature facsimiles, and through the legacy of the book. The German-language edition encouraged immigration into the ante bellum Middle West. Until recently, only one English-translation copy of this book was known to exist. Now a second has been discovered for comparison and some clues regarding its printing history. Following the presentation, copies of Hoover's latest book, *Mapping St. Louis History: An Exhibition of Historic Maps, Rare Books and Images* will be for sale (\$23) and signing.

*March dinner: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. This will be a reverse program. Timing: spirits at 5, program at 6 with dinner to follow. Drinks are \$5-\$9, Dinner is \$48. Reservations are essential to attend either the program only or the program and dinner combination. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or e-mail caxtonclub@newberry.org. Please reserve no later than March 13 at 5 PM.*

#### MAY LUNCHEON

Our tastes in documents run to rare. But if we really had our druthers, we'd love our documents to be in the OKCC, which stands for Only Known Copy Club. On May 8, James M. Cornelius, curator of the Lincoln Collection at the Lincoln Library and Museum in Springfield, will reveal OKCC materials and regale us with their stories.

#### MAY DINNER

On May 20 at the Union League Club, Christopher de Hamel, of Corpus Christi College at the University of Cambridge, will speak on "Coella Lindsay Ricketts materials from the Lilly Library."