



The Book

Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture
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Summer Seminar Plans Progress

Plans for the 1990 AAS Summer Seminar in the History of the Book in American Culture are progressing. As announced in the last issue of this newsletter, the seminar will take place June 9 - 19, 1989, under the joint leadership of David S. Reynolds and Michael Winship. Theme for the seminar will be "The American Renaissance: Critical and Bibliographical Perspectives." The problematic quality of the term "American Renaissance" should ensure a lively debate from the beginning of the seminar to the end.

The deadline for receipt of applications has been set for March 9, 1990. As before, low-cost housing for seminar matriculants will be available in Founders' Hall, the newest dormitory on the nearby campus of Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

This summer seminar is designed for literary scholars and historians (including advanced graduate students), librarians and bibliographers, and other scholars who are working, or contemplate working, on historical topics involving the interpretation of the cultural role of books and other forms of printed material.

The seminar will draw upon critical theory, literary history, bibliography, and printing and publishing history to illuminate the complex world of author, text, publisher, printer, illustrator, and reader in the so-called American Renaissance. With the American Antiquarian Society's superb collections of nineteenth-century books, pamphlets, newspapers, literary magazines and other journals, gift books, and similar imprints as the principal resource for the participants, the seminar faculty will suggest strategies for integrating bibliographical evidence into general interpretations in American literary and cultural history. Ample time will be allowed for participants to work in the AAS library on small research projects of their own choosing that will draw upon the issues and themes of the seminar.

The Society's grant from the Charles E. Culpeper Foundation, detailed elsewhere in these pages, will provide a pool of financial aid for eligible participants. In addition, librarians who are applicants for the seminar and who require financial aid may apply to the Council on Library Resources in Washington, D. C., for a CLR Fellowship to help support their attendance. Deadline for the CLR application is March 1.

Persons interested in applying for a place in the 1990

Summer Seminar may write or call John Hench at the address or phone numbers given on page 2 of this newsletter to have their name placed on the list to receive further information and application forms.

The History of the Book and the Noah Webster House at Greenfield Village

Exhibiting books as artifacts, with an emphasis on typography, techniques of illustration, or bindings, is a familiar practice. Even displaying books as a method of illustrating intellectual or literary history is common enough in libraries and museums. But how might an exhibit communicate to a lay audience some of the issues and insights associated with the new social history of the book? That was a challenge recently posed by the opportunity to reinterpret the Noah Webster House at Greenfield Village.



One of the exhibition rooms in the Noah Webster House at Greenfield Village

In 1929, Henry Ford set out to establish a unique form of educational institution, a place that emphasized experimental learning by putting students in touch, literally, with the buildings, tools, and other objects that had surrounded earlier generations of Americans. He had a particular interest in men whom he considered innovators, men such as Thomas Edison, Orville and Wilbur Wright, William Holmes McGuffey, and George Washington Carver. Ford created the Edison Institute, now known as the Henry Ford Mu-

seum and Greenfield Village, an indoor-outdoor museum complex near Dearborn, Michigan. In 1939, Ford added the New Haven house that had been built by Noah Webster in 1823.

In 1987, with the aid of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the museum staff began a project to reinterpret this structure. The goal was to shift the emphasis from a place to venerate a famous American and display Federal-style furnishings towards a depiction of the home and workplace of an aging intellectual in an era when books were assuming a major role in American life. Further, since it could be argued that Noah Webster, as much as any single individual of that formative generation, promoted the importance of books, book-learning, and literacy, there was a particular opportunity and responsibility to illuminate the history of the book through Webster's life.

In the transformed exhibit, visitors encounter the first-floor rooms, several upstairs bedrooms, and Noah's study furnished for a typical day in 1830. From the study (labeled his "workplace"; his library books are described as "the tools of the trade"), they enter a room originally used as a bedroom, but set up now as a frankly modern display of his products. From here they descend to a downstairs addition to view a videotape, narrated by a child, dealing with Webster's focus on educational reform and literacy. The experience takes them from Webster's daily life and family surroundings, to his products, to his larger context in formats that are, in sequence, specific in time and place, comparative, and finally, comprehensive.

The precise content of the book display was the key issue: What was the exhibit of books to convey? There was also the quite reasonable fear that a display of books could be, well, underwhelming to the general public. As with all exhibit projects, these two issues, the subject of interpretation and the method of presentation, were inextricably intertwined. It was simply unrealistic to expect members of the general public, who would be visiting a large multifaceted complex during their leisure time, to focus on reading and absorbing Webster's ideas. It was important, primarily, to illustrate how Webster brought attention to the printed word through the sheer volume and variety of his publications. Secondly, the exhibit needed to emphasize the physical character of the book as a manufactured product that is capable of infinite variations and audiences.

Three combinations of technique and focus were adopted. First, there are two arrangements of the books. As prologue, there is a case given over to the display of various versions of Webster's most enduring work, the *American Dictionary of the English Language*. These versions range from the first edition of 1828, through editions edited by his son-in-law in the mid-nineteenth century, to a common paperback version published by Merriam-Webster in the 1970s, to a computer floppy disk with manual produced in 1987. Second, an array of his most important works are arranged in chronological order; these are segmented into

display cases as works published before Webster built his New Haven house, those published during the years he occupied the house, and works published after his death in 1843. Such a periodization of Webster's works would seem odd in other contexts, yet it does no violation to any historical canons and has the distinct benefit of allowing visitors to connect their physical surroundings with the books they encounter.

Second, three large photomurals of illustrated moralistic fables taken directly from Webster's Blue-backed Speller are displayed. The point is quite simply to illustrate the connections between intellectual authority and cultural hegemony that Webster was forging in print. These murals have proven so popular—they are often the only texts of Webster's that are actually read—that visitors often request reprints from the museum stores.

Finally, the exhibit does not rely on people's willingness to read. The videotape presents Webster's published works and pedagogical theories in terms of the experience of schoolchildren in the early to mid-nineteenth century. At times, visitors listen to children reading as the texts are reproduced on the screen. The irony of using video monitors to encourage verbal literacy has not been lost on many visitors, adults as well as children.

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The Editors welcome all news relevant to the interests of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture.

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Visitor responses have been very encouraging. It is clear that many members of the general public appreciate the opportunity to get close to the actual artifact in a context that allows them to draw inferences about the man, his work, his society. The "Book Room" has become, to the surprise of many on the museum staff, a popular place to examine artifacts that usually are thought to be less evocative than entire houses, steam engines, and well-crafted furnishings.

William S. Pretzer,
Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village

Book Notes

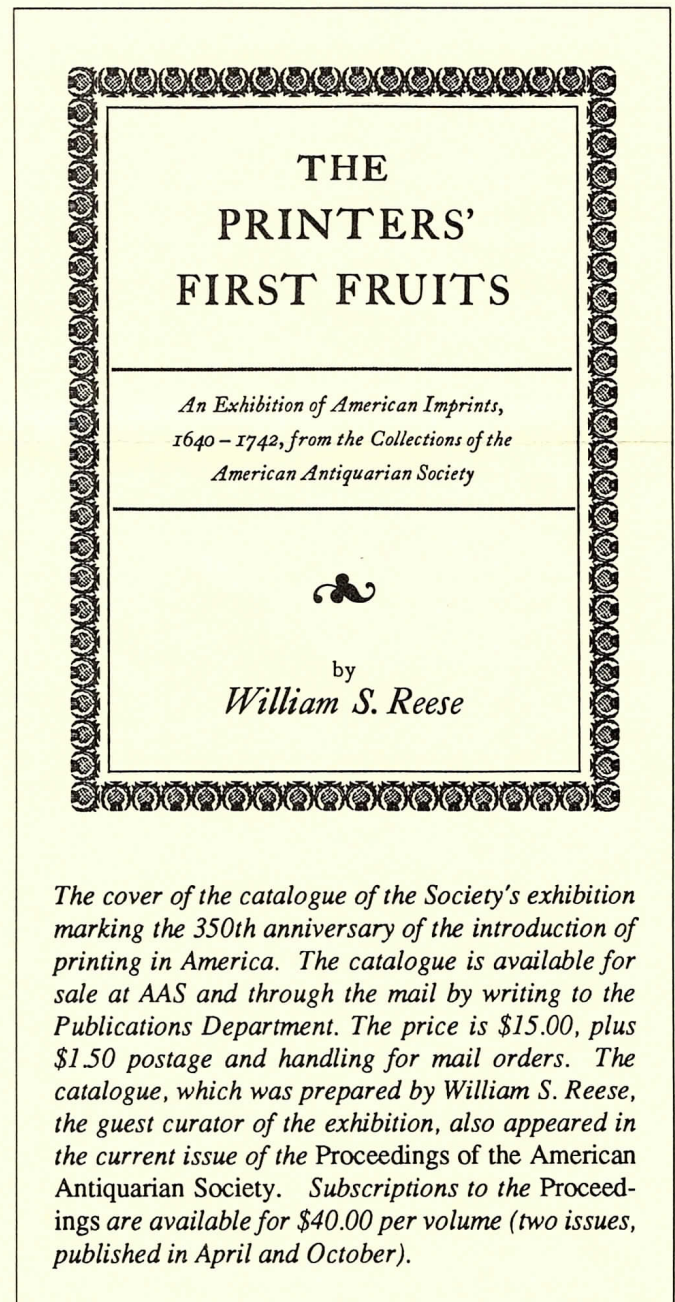
READING BECOMES A NECESSITY OF LIFE

William J. Gilmore's *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life* (University of Tennessee Press, 1989) undertakes as the subtitle states, to reconstruct the "material and cultural life in rural New England during the period 1780 - 1835." To that end, Gilmore intensively studies and correlates data on wealth, occupation, patterns of residence, literacy, personal library holdings, transportation systems, and commerce (especially printing institutions and publishing/distribution networks) for the eleven townships of southern Windsor County, Vermont, which Gilmore somewhat euphemistically characterizes as an "ecological unit." Though ploddingly redundant and given to large inductive leaps, the book contains a gold mine of information about rural culture at the point of modernization and is at least partially successful in its aim to move from statistics to a portrait of five distinct regional *mentalités* according to habitat ("fortunate village," "fortunate farmstead," "self-sufficient hamlet," "self-sufficient farmstead," "hardscrabble" farm/village existence). Initially, I suspected that these hypostases were more or less self-evidently driven by economic and/or geographic differentials rather than defensible cultural categories. But as Gilmore relates them to his data, especially in regard to reading patterns, they become more convincing.

Gilmore's title encapsulates his major claim about the burgeoning of print culture during the period, which is the book's single most conspicuous preoccupation. The title misleads, however, regarding literacy by gender. For males, reading would appear already to have been a necessity of life, since male literacy rates remained constant during the years surveyed, although rates for women increased. In this as in other respects, Gilmore tends to banish to the edges of his account the fact that he is describing people recently transplanted to the regional outback. Nevertheless, Gilmore is of course right that there was an explosion of printing institutions within the state and district during the period under review. Gilmore is also correct in diagnosing this as a new chapter in the cultural ecology of the English-speaking world, namely the advent of an apparatus of mass communications before industrialism. Gilmore is less authoritative—undoubtedly, we can never hope to be authoritative—when it comes to defining just what difference this

unprecedented development made at the level of the five *mentalités*. But *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life* is a valuable resource of data about what different categories of families owned and presumably read about a variety of books and newspapers. It is also useful for its speculation about how these groups would have read books and newspapers and how the matter they read would have reinforced impulses both of religiocentric conservatism and entrepreneurial progressivism. Intellectual, social, and literary historians will all find much of interest here.

Lawrence Buell, Oberlin College



THE BOOKPLATE COLLECTION AT AAS

Given the increased interest these days in the history of the consumption of print, including the history of reading, as an important aspect of the history of the book, bookplates and other evidence of book ownership take on a new importance in research. Bookplates are a very useful way in which historians may connect books with owners (and occasionally even with those owners as readers). They are a principal means for studying the history of libraries, both institutional and personal; sometimes a bookplate may be the only proof of the existence of a given library. Bookplates, moreover, provide material evidence of how persons in the past have valued books. The very act of affixing an "ex libris" in a book (perhaps in some books, but not in others) implies some assignment of value, in spiritual if not in monetary terms, though often in both. Their very designs, moreover, depicting as they often do the intersection of book and reader, themselves frequently provide iconographical evidence of how books have been used in past societies, both actually and allegorically. The collections of the American Antiquarian Society furnish a rich source for the study of bookplates, whether carried out for its own sake or tangentially as part of larger studies within the history of the book.

The bookplate collection at AAS had modest origins in 1914, when Herbert E. Lombard placed his collection here on deposit, but within a decade it had increased enormously under the aegis of AAS librarian and grand acquirer Clarence S. Brigham. There were about 2,300 plates in the original deposit, which Lombard soon converted to an outright gift and to which he continued to add until his death in 1940. Most of the bookplates were engraved after 1850, but the collection did include William Brattle's book label of 1677 and examples of Paul Revere, Nathaniel Hurd, and Henry Dawkins. In 1916, AAS purchased Jane Terry's collection, which included about 10,000 bookplates related to the history of personal and institutional libraries. In 1918, the Society exchanged duplicate bookplates with William Baillie and shortly thereafter acquired the collection of Frank E. Marshall of Philadelphia. The latter collection, rich in bookplates of signers of the Declaration of Independence, colonial governors, and eighteenth-century bibliophiles, contained some 20,000 plates, among which were about 750 eighteenth-century American examples. In 1921 the Society added the collection of Charles Dexter Allen, the leading collector and student of American bookplates in the late nineteenth century. The same year, Charles Veatch's collection of western American plates arrived at Antiquarian Hall.

Along with several of these collections came associated manuscript material relating to the history of bookplates, to the development of principal collections, and to bookplate



*Visitors in vain their pretty eyes may roll:
Charms strike the sense, but merit ruins the soul.*

Bookplate from the Village Library, Farmington, Connecticut. An exhibition drawn from the Society's bookplate collection will be on view in Antiquarian Hall from November 28 to January 12.

designers and engravers. The material that Terry acquired because of her interest in the history of New England libraries includes original records of several early nineteenth-century Connecticut libraries in addition to her own notes on early American libraries and bookplates. Also in the AAS manuscript department are Allen's notes for a projected second edition of his *American Bookplates* (1894) as well as collections of correspondence and works by the bookplate designers Sidney Lawton Smith (1845-1929), Edwin David French (1851-1906), and Dorothy Sturgis Harding (1871-1978). The Society's graphic arts department holds a collection of Smith's copperplates, engraving tools, and design sketches, in addition to a complete set of his bookplates.

The accumulation that started so modestly with Lombard's collection has grown to number well over 30,000 loose bookplates now. Bookplates of individuals, numbering about 20,000, are arranged alphabetically. The collection contains twentieth-century bookplates, although the emphasis is on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The institutional bookplates, which number about 11,000 items, are arranged by the name of the town or city in which the li-

brary was located. There are also about 2,300 English bookplates, 150 Mexican and South American examples, and 75 Hawaiian bookplates.

A number of tools exist at AAS to aid researchers. Allen's *American Book-Plates* (1894) is indexed by engraver, and the Society's copy of the book is annotated to reflect the library's holdings. There is also a collection of typed lists—also annotated as to AAS holdings—of bookplates by individual designers, probably compiled by Lombard. In addition, the Society possesses the typescript of Edward S. Potter's project, begun in the 1920s but not completed, to create a definitive list of American bookplates up to 1825. The list describes the plates he saw in the Baillie Collection and at AAS. A collection of secondary materials about bookplates, including runs of specialist periodicals, is also available at AAS to help interpret the collection.

Perhaps even more useful to the historian of the book is the way bookplates that still remain affixed to books are treated by AAS cataloguers and curators. The Society's standards for computerized cataloguing require the recording of marks of provenance, including bookplates and owner's signatures or presentation inscriptions. As part of the Society's ongoing North American Imprints Program, machine-readable records have so far been created for the Society's holdings of American imprints through 1800, pamphlets and broadsides through 1830, and children's books through 1860. Projects are currently under way for children's books 1861-76 and books published in the 1820s. A standardized form of these records is or will be loaded into the main Books File of the RLIN system, although the Society's notes on provenance, unfortunately, cannot be part of the RLIN version of the record. The provenance data, however, is presently available in a printout file at AAS. More importantly, the Society is currently involved in the development of various interactive systems in which previous ownership will be indexed and will therefore be searchable. As AAS cataloguers have encountered books containing bookplates, they have photocopied the plates. These photocopies, annotated as to location of the original, are then filed with the collection of loose bookplates.

Georgia B. Barnhill, American Antiquarian Society

New Members Join AAS Program's Executive Committee and Advisory Board

Kenneth Carpenter, assistant director for research resources at Harvard University Library, has been named chairman of the Executive Committee of the Society's Program in the History of the Book in American Culture, for a three-year term beginning September 1, 1989. He edited the volume of essays *Printing and Society in History*, published in 1983. Carpenter replaces G. Thomas Tanselle, vice-president of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, who served as the Executive Committee's chairman since the inception of the Program.

Two others were newly named to positions on the Executive Committee. They are Mary Kelley, professor of history, Dartmouth College, and David P. Nord, associate professor of journalism, Indiana University.

Eleven other scholars were appointed or reappointed to the Program's Advisory Board for three-year terms of to fill vacancies. They are Phyllis Dain, professor of library service, Columbia University; Donald W. Krummel, professor of library and information science and professor of music, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; John Lancaster, curator of special collections, Amherst College Library; Deanna B. Marcum, dean, School of Library and Information Science, Catholic University of America; E. Jennifer Monaghan, professor of educational services, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York; Jeremy D. Popkin, professor of history, University of Kentucky; Stephen O. Saxe, editor, American Printing History Association Newsletter; Michael Schudson, professor of communication, University of California at San Diego; Larry E. Sullivan, head, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress; Erdmann Weyrauch, Herzog August Bibliothek; and Michael Winship, editor, *Bibliography of American Literature*.

Hall Takes Harvard Post

David D. Hall, chairman of the American Antiquarian Society's Program in the History of the Book in American Culture since its inception, has been appointed professor of American religious history and Bartlett lecturer in New England church history in the Divinity School of Harvard University. He thus moves across the Charles River from Boston University, where he had been a member of the history department since 1970. His colleagues at AAS extend their warm felicitations.

Culpeper Foundation Makes Grant

A generous three-year grant of \$79,500 from the Charles E. Culpeper Foundation of New York City will help support the basic administration of the Society's Program in the History of the Book in American Culture through 1991.

Grant funds will be applied to the publication of this newsletter, the chairman's stipend, printing and other office expenses, travel costs, the annual meeting of the Program's Executive Committee, fellowship support for scholars working in the field, and the summer seminar. An earlier grant from the Exxon Education Foundation had supported Program administration previously.

Marcus A. McCorison, AAS president, noted that the Culpeper Foundation grant provided "the critical wherewithal to support the administrative underpinning that will enable the Program to continue its substantive work of focusing and directing work in this vital, yet still-evolving, interdisciplinary field."

1990-91 AAS Fellowship Competition

The AAS fellowship competition for residence in 1990-91 is under way. The particulars of the program are much as before. AAS will offer at least three long-term awards funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and some fourteen to sixteen short-term awards made possible from a variety of sources. Stipends range from \$800 per month for the short-term awards to a maximum of \$27,500 for the AAS-NEH fellowships.

Projects involved in the history of the book in American

culture may be funded under any of the fellowship categories, although certain of them have eligibility restrictions. Once again, the Stephen Botein Memorial Fund at AAS will support a fellowship specifically intended for work in the book history field.

The deadline for receipt of application and letters of support is January 31, 1990. The fellowship brochure and application forms (the latter substantially revised from previous years) are available now and may be had by writing or calling John Hench at the Society.

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