



The Book

Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture
Published by the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts

A Fifth Volume Planned for HBA

The challenging task of organizing the fifth and final volume of the collaborative project, *A History of the Book in America*—the volume that will encompass the last half of this century—now rests in the hands of David Paul Nord, Joan Shelley Rubin, and Michael Schudson. In June the Editorial Board appointed these three scholars as editors of the volume, which will have to encompass the transition to electronic media of publication as well as dealing with more traditional topics. Joan Rubin, who takes up a new position in the Department of History, University of Rochester, in September 1995, has been an at-large member of the Editorial Board. David Nord, professor of journalism and American studies and adjunct professor of history at Indiana University, and Michael Schudson, chair of the Department of Communication at the University of California at San Diego, have participated in planning conferences for other volumes in the series.

David D. Hall
General Editor, *A History of the Book in America*

Kelley to Deliver 1995 Wiggins Lecture

"Designing a Past for the Present: Women Writing Women's History in Antebellum America" is the title of the thirteenth annual James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American Culture, to be given by Mary Kelley on Friday, October 27, 1995, at the Society. Kelley, who is John Sloan Dickey Third Century professor in the social sciences at Dartmouth College, holds the doctorate from the University of Iowa and was a Peterson Fellow at the Society in 1990-91. She is the author of *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (1984) and editor of *The Portable Margaret Fuller* (1994). With Robert A. Gross, Kelley is a co-editor of Volume 2 in the Society's forthcoming five-volume series, *A History of the Book in America*, to be published by Cambridge University Press. Kelley was elected to membership in the Society in October 1991 and to a three-year term on the Council in 1993.

The lecture will be repeated outside of Worcester at a place and time to be announced. The Wiggins Lecture is open to the public free of charge. Complete details for the Worcester lecture will be announced in the fall.

AAS Fellowships

Scholars and advanced graduate students contemplating research and writing in the field of the history of the book or more generally in American history and culture through the year 1876 are invited to apply for a visiting research fellowship at the American Antiquarian Society for 1996-97.

The National Endowment for the Humanities-funded long-term awards (up to \$30,000, four to twelve months' duration) are intended for scholars beyond the doctorate, including senior scholars. Short-term fellowships, funded from a variety of sources for one to three months at \$950 per month, include special ones that support scholars working in the history of the book in American culture and in the American eighteenth century. A new fellowship funded by the American Historical Print Collectors Society supports research on American prints of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or projects using prints as primary documentation.

The application deadline for 1996-97 is January 15, 1996. For further information and application forms, contact John B. Hench or Caroline Sloat at the Society (e-mail cfs@mwa.org).

A SHARP Reminder

The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP) will meet in Worcester, Massachusetts, July 18-21, 1996. The deadline for proposals for papers is November 20, 1995. Proposals (one-page maximum per paper) and inquiries about the conference itself should be sent to: SHARP 1996, American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, 01609-1634, USA; fax (508) 754-9069; e-mail: cfs@mwa.org. Although submissions by e-mail and fax will be accepted, original hard copy is greatly preferred.

Any member of SHARP who is not submitting a proposal may serve on the Conference's Program Committee, which will meet in Worcester on January 11, 1996. If interested, contact John B. Hench, the conference host, by November 20 (same address and fax as above; e-mail: jbh@mwa.org).

Ninth Summer Seminar

To announce a seminar on the history of reading is to venture into a vast territory, almost as limitless as the history of the book itself, and with only a few guides to show the way. What people read in the past, how they read it, and what meanings they derived for their personal selves and social lives; such questions form a pressing agenda for students of books, society, and culture. The inquiry engages fundamental issues about gender and identity, individuality and community, artifacts and meaning, ideology and power. And it encompasses all the world that can be put down on paper in word and image, to be decoded by others according to conventions we can now barely discern. What more daunting challenge could one ask for ten days at the AAS?

We imagined an engaging conversation about the various approaches such scholars as Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, David Hall, Janice Radway, and Barbara Sicherman have taken to this subject. We conceived a syllabus that would model an investigation in the myriad sources. We knew that we could secure no better site for the venture than the unparalleled holdings of the AAS, in manuscript and print. And we guessed that we would need the diverse perspectives in our quest.

But never could we have anticipated the excitement and energy that this gathering of advanced doctoral students, librarians, and faculty members generated in "Reading Culture, Reading Books." The seminar proved to be an exemplary interdisciplinary conversation, as multiform as the history of reading and books. Focusing on primary sources of the nineteenth century, with a special tilt toward New England, we managed to range well beyond in time and place. The AAS staff, under Joanne Chaison's extraordinary guidance, managed to supply a host of texts—booksellers' catalogues, story newspapers, manuscript diaries, among others—in which we plumbed the nineteenth-century world of reading. Caroline Sloat, John Hench, and Ellen Dunlap provided a rare combination of warm hospitality and seemingly effortless efficiency to sustain us along the way.

At the heart of the seminar was the collaborative work of twenty-four participants and two seminar leaders, all reading furiously and debating intensely the meanings of texts of readers long gone. "What makes such a thing work," one participant has noted, "is a mystery." But, it proved to be a remarkable experience for all. It attested to the interdisciplinary force of the history of books, under whose "generous dome" a notable array of fields—American studies, bibliography, cultural studies, library history, literature, mass communications, and material culture, social and cultural history, to name a few—can challenge and enhance one another. In the course of reading together, we proliferated meanings, too many for any single summary. In the study of other peoples' reading, we forged our own reading community.

It thus seems appropriate to present the character of the seminar in the following reflections from four participants, who offer "readings" from four fields. Their colleagues, we can be confident, will by adding their voices in scholarly papers, dissertations, and books in the coming years.

Robert A. Gross, College of William and Mary
Mary Kelley, Dartmouth College

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What did people read in the past, and how did they read different texts in diverse social settings? These questions lie at the center of the history of the book and the social history of culture. This seminar explores them through recent scholarship and case studies drawn from the collections of the AAS. We will examine how the book as physical artifact shapes the ways in which we read. We will investigate representations of reading in various genres and the cultural prescriptions they convey. We will survey numerous sources for evidence on the practices and preferences of actual readers. Applying these approaches to texts from early America through the late nineteenth century, we will address current debates in the history of the book: the relation between elite and popular cultures, the "reading revolution" of the nineteenth century; the intervention between gender and reading; and issues of domination, resistance, subversion, and appropriation. Exploring the role of reading in shaping social identities and personal selves will be central to our task.

PARTICIPANTS

Trudi Abel, assistant professor of history, Williams College; Debby Applegate, Ph.D. candidate in American studies, Yale University; Ross Beales, professor of history, College of the Holy Cross; Martin Brueckner, Ph.D. candidate in English and American literature, Brandeis University; Willis Buckingham, professor of English, Arizona State University; Norman Chaney, professor of English and department chair, Otterbein College; Patricia Crain, Ph.D. candidate in English and comparative literature, Columbia University; Jeffrey A. Douglas, director of the library, Knox College; Stephanie Girard, Ph.D. candidate in English, Rutgers University; Ann Sue Hirshorn, independent scholar, Washington, D.C.; Barbara Hochman, lecturer in English and American literature, Tel Aviv University; Melissa J. Homestead, Ph.D. candidate in English and American literature, University of Pennsylvania; Betsy Homsher, Ph.D. candidate in American history, University of California at Santa Barbara; Jennifer Hynes, Ph.D. candidate in American and British literature, University of South Carolina; Mary Louise Kete, assistant professor of English, University of Vermont; Priscilla Coit Murphy, Ph.D. candidate in journalism and mass communication, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Priscilla Older, associate professor



Front row: Homestead, Hochman, Hirshorn, Weyler; Second row: Kelley, Murphy, Gross, Applegate, Hynes; Third row: Crain, Buckingham, Abel, Older, Wajda, Brueckner, Venediktova; Fourth row: Hench, Travis, Homsher, Douglas, Schneider, Pannapacker; Fifth row: Stewart, Girard, Kete, Beales, Chaney, Sloat.

and social and behavioral science librarian, Mansfield University; William A. Pannapacker, Ph.D. candidate in American civilization, Harvard University; Ryan Schneider, Ph.D. candidate in English, Duke University David M. Stewart, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of Chicago; Trysh Travis, Ph.D. candidate in American studies, Yale University; Tatiana Venediktova, professor of comparative literature, Moscow University; Shirley T. Wajda, visiting assistant professor of American studies, University of Iowa; Karen A. Weyler, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

FOUR PERSPECTIVES

The "Reading Culture, Reading Books" seminar was an outstanding model of sophisticated interdisciplinary thinking. Unlike many interdisciplinary endeavors which function as a mere survey of methods and materials, this seminar integrated a variety of ideas into a new, synthetic approach to reading history. Much of the success was due to the participants—it is extremely rare to find a group so complementary in its diversity of skill and expertise. Led by Mary Kelley and Robert Gross, both acclaimed for their comprehensive approach to history, the participants and staff came from every possible field. Yet, despite, our occupational differences, we possessed a remarkably similar range of reference, which infused our discussions with an exhilarating breadth and depth.

The dynamics of the group were produced, I believe, by the nature of the enterprise itself. Using print culture to get at how people conceive and construct their social worlds demands an unusual combination of imaginative, analytical, and archival resources—resources that exist in breathtaking abundance at the American Antiquarian

Society. The most effective activities of the seminar were the "labs," where we waded through truckloads of rare materials in an effort to propose interpretive guidelines and avenues of investigation. We read the diary of Edward Jenner Carpenter, a rural Massachusetts apprentice in the 1840s, and then, through the auspices of his remarkable repository, spent an afternoon examining samples of virtually *every* book, pamphlet, magazine, or newspaper he had mentioned reading. Through his imaginative world of reading, we were able to delineate not only his local experience but the larger webs of the world in which he lived. Such an exploration of print culture allows for both an *intimate* and an *aggregate* view of the fabric of life as it changes over space and time.

In just this manner the seminar offered me a rare opportunity to hash out the complex issues of my own project: the Beecher-Tilton adultery scandal, popular reading, and the consolidation of middle-class consciousness from the 1850s to the 1870s. Despite the fact that reading has been inextricably associated with the middle class, there is little understanding of the causal relationship between reading and class development. By using the tools of social history, material culture, and literary criticism to excavate the spectacular print-based career and constituency of Henry Ward Beecher, I propose that the mid-nineteenth-century middle class might best be understood as an actual, identifiable reading formation. It would be impossible for me to undertake such an ambitious, synthetic analysis without the tools forged by those in the field of the history of the book.

The seminar made it very clear that the history of reading is as interdisciplinary as human experience. The AAS is establishing itself increasingly at the center of a scholarly community that is as rich and impressive as its

collection. What I found so singular about this institution, however, was the genuine warmth of feeling among the members of this disparate, far-flung group. The interdisciplinary impulse is often marked by both intellectual and personal generosity and I can think of no better way to describe the seminar than as the perfect execution of that impulse.

Debby Applegate
Ph.D. candidate in American studies, Yale University

“Reading Culture, Reading Books” proved especially interesting and important to me as a historian of colonial America. With its primarily nineteenth-century focus and the predominance of participants from the fields of English and American studies, the seminar afforded the opportunity to read materials that would have remained on my “to do” list and to benefit from the observations of scholars outside history.

A principal thread in the seminar was Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, which was assigned as a first reading (in any edition and indeed, there were some very interesting editions!), and became a focal point for several discussions. As a man who has only recently read *Little Women* (and assigned it as part of a course on the history of the American family), I greatly enjoyed the discussions of Alcott’s work and audiences, and I know that my use of *Little Women* in the classroom has been enriched.

Close reading of the manuscript diary of Sally Ripley and the published diary of Edward Jenner Carpenter were especially provocative, as each document challenged us to enter into their worlds of print. In the case of Carpenter, the rich collections at AAS contained many of the books he had read and we, in turn, read them. This was an important reminder that an understanding of print culture is far more than counting titles and types of books. And, not unimportantly, it appears that at least some of the seminar participants will use the Carpenter diary in their teaching. In sum, “Reading Culture, Reading Books” provided congenial and exceptionally able companions, an immersion in current scholarship, access to remarkably interesting primary sources, suggestions for teaching, and, not least, occasion to learn from the seminar leaders, Bob Gross and Mary Kelley, and to benefit from the expertise of the AAS staff.

Ross Beales, professor of history
College of the Holy Cross

When I told friends I would be attending a seminar in the history of reading at the American Antiquarian Society, they were surprised. Why would someone writing a dissertation that uses the 1984 Vintage Contemporaries series as a lens for examining the quality paperback series as a publishing innovation be interested in a course being taught at a library whose collection ends in 1876? This is,

of course, a question that had occurred to me and one for which I had prepared several answers.

My first response to the skeptics was to point out that because the history of publishing is both cyclical and linear, a knowledge of the book culture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is essential to developing an understanding of the book culture of the twentieth century. For example, the quality paperback series of the 1980s are a product of both the multiple paperback revolutions in Europe and the United States and the “libraries” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. What the marketing department has been trumpeting as an innovation is, in fact, a minor variation on prior experiments.

My second response focused on publishing’s construction of itself as fundamentally different from other industries. Publishing has traditionally resisted such innovations as market surveys and demographic analysis, preferring to rely upon the taste and judgment of its editors for the selection of its products. “Books are not shoes” was Henry Holt’s famous defense of this practice. While this statement may no longer be strictly true, it is still a powerful part of the cultural mythos of publishing.

My third response was purely personal. For a variety of reasons, chief among them the dominance of cultural studies and its American focus on popular culture, twentieth-century scholars have not rushed to embrace the history of the book. In order to find a community of scholars sharing common texts and common interest, I have found it both necessary and useful to trespass across period boundaries.

While these responses silenced my friends, they failed to predict what I would learn in Worcester. The questions raised throughout the seminar—how do readers select their materials?; where is the pleasure of reading located?; and how is reading constructed as a cultural activity? transcended period boundaries and forced me to rethink my approach to both a conference paper on the pleasures of reading and my final dissertation chapter on short stories, mystery novels, and the construction of genre.

What I had been calling in my own work the pleasures of recognition and affirmation, I realized, were only specifications of the pleasure of identification and were insufficient to explain the transformative power of reading. Examination of the diaries of Sally Ripley and Edward Jenner Carpenter alerted me to pleasures of reading long hidden by the psychoanalytic model. Although these diarists do not comment directly on the pleasures they derived from their reading, we can infer from what they do write, a basic pleasure in the exercise of their literacy. Their skill in reading enables them to enjoy not only the sound and sense of the written work but also the position in the community which such literacy affords them. What these diarists also demonstrated, and additional course materials confirmed, was the public nature of what has

been constructed, at least since Ian Watt, as the essentially private act of reading. From Carpenter's documentation of the frequent exchange of newspapers and books between friends and relatives in western Massachusetts in the 1840s to Elizabeth Long's study of Houston reading groups in the 1980s to the seminar itself, we can trace a trajectory of individuals using reading and reading materials as a means of confirming or creating social ties.

What is exciting to me about these insights is that they provide both a new starting point for analyzing the popularity of specific works and a confirmation of the need to examine extratextual elements in investigating the pleasures of reading. Although I am still thinking through these issues and their specific application to my work, I have assured my skeptical friends that the seminar in the history of reading was indeed useful to a student of late-twentieth-century fiction.

Stephanie Girard

Ph.D. candidate in English, Rutgers University

"Of course, books were the first mass medium." The point is readily accepted, but once stated, it is often abandoned as a truistic *cul de sac*. "Mass-comm" types don't study books; "book" types, other than those willing to be known as "pop-culturists," don't study mass media. My conviction that there is something essential to be understood about human communication in studying how books "work" in culture led me to "Reading Culture, Reading Books." I found that history and literary studies are grappling with some of the same issues mass communication has confronted, but—predictably enough—sometimes with different jargon and often in different order. "Framing," for example, means something similar but not precisely the same to someone studying *Little Women* and someone studying the news coverage of a downed United States fighter pilot.

While the majority of seminar participants hailed from literary or historical areas in the humanities, a few of us were outlanders. My field, mass communication, flows out of social science—usually in form of some nexus of interpersonal communication with sociologic phenomena. Over time, communication theory has offered a series of models, all of which have dealt to greater or lesser extent with the relative significance of the "sender" and "receiver" of a message, the message itself, and its mediation. Because the nature of both audience and mediation has been confronted from the beginning (roughly speaking, the 1940s), focus was never easily concentrated on just the message ("text") or just the audience ("reader")—in some contrast with the interpretive issues arising with deconstruction or postmodernism.

Our social science underpinnings, moreover, have always meant the possibility of dragging in a little anthropology to deal with cultural issues and a little economics to deal with patronage (not to mention a little

physics with the concept of "noise" along the lines of communication!). Thus discussions like Chartier's, whose *The Order of Books* was an essential reading for the seminar, raised familiar issues about communities and control of authorship for those of us watching entertainment megacorporations define media production exclusively in terms of market theory.

The relationship between sender/writer and receiver/reader, however, is one of intense and current interest in mass communication studies, just as in other areas. The seminar's attention to the stimulation of increased writing by increased reading in the nineteenth century (particularly among women) correlates well with mass media's current interest in "interactivity." Such questions as the self-fashioning of both reader and writer echoed much of what is currently being written by students of gender and minority issues in mass media. And after all, some of the most (in)famous studies in recent mass communications history have been those about the cultural effects of mass media. The University of Pennsylvania studies of the effects of television on children are, seen in the perspective of "Reading Culture," attempts to quantify worries not unlike those about the effect of novels on nineteenth-century female minds. In one seminar session, David D. Hall phrased the question which involves power issues and hierarchized images of society thus: "Are little people empty buckets? Or can they assert autonomy?"

The First Amendment and the power of "the word" are pivotal for mass communication students, particularly those in the history of journalism and political communication. Yet the links between the cultural history of the book and contemporary controversies over censorship versus social responsibility are often all but ignored. Analysts like Robert Darnton and Cathy Davidson are perhaps less familiar than they ought to be in schools of mass communication, sometimes rather mired in quantification of public opinion and model-building. Work like Janice Radway's tends to be pigeon-holed as exemplary of feminist approaches to media study, rather than fully appreciated as a link among several disciplines toward deeper understanding of the reciprocal impact of media and culture on each other.

A central question I took to the seminar was what it is about a book that distinguishes it from all other ways of receiving information/meaning/experience. As yet, little communication theory deals with choice of medium, but the question seems increasingly urgent with technological innovation. Some kinds of answers bubbled up at odd moments in the seminar.

Mary Kelley's interest in the issues of pleasure—that reading for pleasure is a devalued but quintessential aspect of reading in culture—illuminated one unexplored corner in that part of communications theory known as "uses and gratifications." Bob Gross's reminders of technical and financial realities in book history emphasized for me the

occasional squeamishness about these matters in mass communication and journalism departments, as professional schools frequently dependent on corporate funding.

What, finally, would be a “mass-comm” perspective on the seminar? First, that reading is, as we have come to understand, an active phenomenon—part of a communicative event even when reflexive. More generally, that knowing something about how people and books interact with each other elucidates something about how all media are alike and how each is different. And that knowing something about how other, newer media function in culture reveals something about what books have been and what, most assuredly, they will continue to be.

Priscilla Coit Murphy

Ph.D. candidate in mass communication
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

SYLLABUS

- Session 1: *The Emergence of the History of the Book as a Field of Study: An Exhibition of Recently Published Works*, Joanne Chaison, AAS.
- Session 2. *Mapping Readings* Catharine Maria Sedgwick, “Cacoethes Scribendi,” Tales and Sketches, 1835; Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, 1867.
- Session 3. *Making Meanings* Excerpts from the Diary of Sally Ripley, AAS manuscript.
- Session 4. *Workshop on Research Tools: AAS On-line Catalogue*, Alan Degutis, AAS.
- Session 5. *What is the History of Reading?* Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 1994. Guest presentation: David D. Hall, Harvard Divinity School.
- Session 6. *Cultural Practices of Everyday Life* Janice Radway, “Reading is Not Eating: Mass-Produced Literature and the Theoretical, Methodological, and Political Consequences of a Metaphor,” *Book Research Quarterly* 2 (Fall 1986): 7-29; Joan Hedrick, “Parlor Literature: Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Question of ‘Great Women Artists,’” *Signs* 17 (Winter 1992): 275-303; Nell Irvin Painter, “Representing Truth: Sojourner Truth’s Knowing and Becoming Known,” *Journal of American History* 91 (September 1994): 461-92; Grey Gundaker, “Literate Acts and Artifacts in Several African American Performances,” unpublished paper.
- Session 7. *Workshop on Research Tools: Bibliographical Sources for the History of the book*, Joanne Chaison.
- Session 8. *What Did People Read in the Nineteenth Century?* William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England*, 254-82; Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865*, 160-96, 217-44.
- Session 9. *Coding and De-Coding Texts* 1. Learning To Read—Schoolbooks: Susanna Rowson, *A Present for Young Ladies*, 1811; 2. Classifying Texts—Auction, library, and booksellers’ catalogues: Robert A. Gross, “Reconstructing Early American Libraries: Concord, Massachusetts, 1795-1850,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 97 (1987): 331-42.
- Session 10. *Coding and De-Coding Texts* (cont.). 3. Ads, Puffs, and Reviews: Matthew Bruccoli, *The Profession of Authorship, 1800-1870: The Papers of William Charvat*, 168-89; Selection of reviews from the *Southern Literary Messenger*, *North American Review*, and *New York Daily Tribune*.
- Session 11. *Coding and De-Coding Texts* (cont.) 4. Ideologies of Reading: Thomas Jefferson to Robert Skipworth, August 3, 1771; *The American Lady’s Preceptor, A Compilation of Observations, Essays, and Poetical Effusions, Designed for the Female Mind*; Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, “Reading.”
- Session 12. *Isaiah Thomas, The Society’s Founder*, Ellen Dunlap, president, AAS.
- Session 13. *Making Meanings* 2. Boys Become Men, The World of Edward Jenner Carpenter: Christopher Clark, ed., *The Diary of an Apprentice Cabinetmaker: Edward Jenner Carpenter’s “Journal” 1844-45*, reprinted from the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 98 (1988): 303-94.
- Session 14. *The World of Edward Jenner Carpenter* (cont.). Brown, *Knowledge is Power*, 230-35; Robert A. Gross, “The History of the Book: Research Trends and Source Materials,” *The Book: Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture* 31 (November 1993).
- Session 15. *Varied Forms of Reading: Print Culture as Artifact* Guest presentation by Michael Winship, University of Texas at Austin.
Field trip to Concord, Minuteman National Park, Orchard House, and Walden Pond.
- Session 16. *Workshop on Book Illustration*, Georgia Barnhill, AAS
- Session 17. *Making Meanings* 3. Reading Fiction, Making Lives: Barbara Sicherman, “Reading *Little Women*: The Many Lives of a Text,” in Linda Kerber et al., eds., *U.S. History as Women’s History*, 245-66; Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 55-79; Robert Darnton, “Readers Read Rousseau,” *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, 107-90. Guest presentation by Barbara Sicherman, Trinity College.
- Session 18. *Interpretive Communities* Mary Kelley, “Reading Women/Women Reading: Bessie Lacey’s Interpretive Community in Antebellum America” unpublished paper; Elizabeth Long, “Textual Interpretation as Collective Action” Jonathan Boyarin, ed., *The Ethnography of Reading*, 180-211.
- Session 19. *Conclusion* Darnton, “Towards a History of Reading,” *The Kiss of Lamourette*, 154-87.



Front row, from left: Zarobila, Wadsworth, (seated) Spawn, Clement, Winship, (standing) McGill, Cook; second row: Yolles, Thurber (seated) Modey, Barnhill, (standing) Wolfe, Motyka, Sloat; third row: Homsher, Schneller, Older, Murphy; top row: Barlow, Leavenworth, MacDonald, Hench, Warrington.

Tenth Summer Seminar

The second AAS Summer Seminar in June 1995—the tenth overall—addressed “The Business of Publishing: Reading Financial Records as a Source for the History of the Book.” Designed as an intensive two-day workshop, the seminar was aimed to introduce scholars of book history to a variety of business records kept by members of the book trades and to encourage them to use those records in their own research. The reading assignments showed the historical development of accounting practice and the use of business records in historical writing. Although the focus was on the nineteenth century, we discussed records ranging from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries. The workshop was led by myself, most ably assisted by William P. Barlow, Jr.—professional accountant, book collector, and bibliographer—who helped conceive and teach the seminar.

There were eighteen participants in the workshop; three hardy souls stayed on from the first seminar, and many others had taken part in AAS seminars in previous years. Participants were Richard W. Clement, associate special collections librarian and associate professor of English, University of Kansas; Nancy Cook, assistant professor of English, University of Montana; Betsy Homsher, Ph.D. candidate in American history, University of California at Santa Barbara; Peter Leavenworth, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of New Hampshire; Bertrum H. MacDonald, associate professor of library and information studies, Dalhousie University; Meredith McGill, assistant professor of English, Harvard; Christine Modey, Ph.D. candidate in English and American literature, University of Delaware; Susan Motyka, assistant curator of manuscripts, American Antiquarian Society; Priscilla Coit Murphy, Ph.D. candidate in journalism and mass communication, University

of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Priscilla Older, associate professor and social and behavioral sciences librarian, Mansfield University; Beverly Schneller, associate professor of English, Millersville University; Willman Spawn, honorary curator of bookbinding, Canaday Library, Bryn Mawr College; Cheryl Thurber, assistant professor, Union University; Sarah Wadsworth, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; David Warrington, librarian for special collections, Harvard Law School; Susan Wolfe, cataloguer, American Antiquarian Society; Melanie Yolles, manuscripts specialist, New York Public Library; Charles Zarobila, coordinator of periodicals, audio-visual and microforms, Grasselli Library, John Carroll University.

The seminar began on Wednesday evening, June 21, 1995, with an introduction to the AAS and its collections as they relate to the business of publishing, followed by dinner at the Goddard-Daniels House. On Thursday, the workshop focused on a general introduction to the conventions and practice of bookkeeping—both by single- and double-entry—and the transfer of commercial paper—promissory notes, bills of exchange, and drafts. Friday we explored how these practices had been adapted by members of the book trades to suit their special needs, looking at examples of the business records kept by a range of firms from type founders, papermakers and binders, to publishers, postmasters, and libraries. Both days, mornings were spent in the classroom, discussing general practice and working with facsimiles; afternoons were spent looking at actual examples of business records from the AAS collections. One highlight of the workshop occurred on Thursday afternoon with a practical exercise designed by Bill Barlow. This required students, acting as the imaginary merchant H.B. Bryant, to open a set of double-entry books and record all transactions for February 1859.

As always, AAS staff was indispensable in making things run smoothly and ensuring that the seminar succeed. Materials were pulled from the collections, handouts photocopied, lunches and breaks served, and problems addressed with quiet professionalism and a minimum of fuss. This two-day workshop pioneered a new format for the AAS summer seminar series, which in future can be adapted to address a range of different research skills useful to book historians.

[Perspectives on the seminar prepared by several of the participants will appear in the November issue of *The Book Ed.*]

Michael Winship
University of Texas at Austin

READING LIST

Judith A. McGaw, "Accounting for Innovation: Technological Change and Business Practice in the Berkshire County Paper Industry," *Technology and Culture* 26 (1985): 703-25.

Florence Edler de Roover, "Cost Accounting in the Sixteenth Century," *The Accounting Review* 12 (1937): 226-37.

Roy J. Sampson, "American Accounting Education, Textbooks and Public Practice Prior to 1900," *Business History Review* 34 (1960): 459-66.

Warren S. Tryon and William Charvat, extracts (pp. xxvii-xliv) from the "Introduction" to *The Cost Books of Ticknor and Fields* (New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1949).

If you are ambitious, you may also wish to read:

D. F. McKenzie, "Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing-House Practices," *Studies in Bibliography* 22 (1969): 1-75.

Retribution, Rehabilitation, Redemption: Prisoners in Print

On a recent trip across the Atlantic, I put aside my reading for the in-flight movie, only to discover, in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), a remarkable tribute to the power of books. Adapted from a story by Stephen King, the work takes a familiar genre, the prison film, and gives it a novel ideological twist.

The setting is Shawshank State Prison, a benighted institution in rural Maine, where corrupt officials and brutal guards victimize inmates without restraint. Covering the 1940s to the 1960s, the plot traces the prisoners' struggle to outwit their oppressors. The hero is Andy Dufresne (Tim Robbins), a cocksure banker framed for the murder of his cheating wife. An indomitable spirit who cunningly resists the system, Dufresne also proves to be a passionate lover of books. When the well-educated convict is assigned to the prison library, he is appalled. The meager collection amounts to a few periodicals (*National Geographic*, *Look*),

the novels of Erle Stanley Gardner and Louis L'Amour, and *Readers Digest Condensed Books*, all housed in a tiny storage room smelling of "rat turds" and turpentine and carted out to the cells once a week. In a fool's crusade to improve the situation, the indefatigable Dufresne pesters the state legislature with one letter after another, until he miraculously succeeds. Books descend upon Shawshank by the pound; moved to ample, well-lighted quarters, the prison library is soon hailed as the best in New England. Instead of cheap fiction, the inmates gain access to the classics, like *Treasure Island* and *The Count of Monte Cristo* ("You'll like it," Dufresne says. "It's about a prison break"). Intent on sharing the wealth, Dufresne becomes a literacy tutor; with his help, men who once could barely read and write obtain high school degrees. These achievements, in the face of administrative indifference, are triumphs not of Dufresne alone but of a cultural ideal. The library grows through inmate initiative, and it is designed to serve their interests and needs. Moved by the high culture Dufresne introduces into their lives—an aria from *The Marriage of Figaro* sends their souls soaring—the men yearn for beauty, nature, and the Ideal. They are joined together in the comradeship of books. In Stephen King's Hollywood, reading rehabilitates "animals" into men.

The ideology of print is alive and well on the screen, even as America repudiates liberal penology and turns prisons back into bleak human warehouses. Retribution, not rehabilitation, dominates the public mood. Against this vindictive ethos, it is tempting to surrender to cinematic illusion and imagine a milieu where books reclaim murderers and thieves for civilization. That has been the constant dream of prison reformers in the U.S. But the reality, as Eric Cummins shows in *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), has proven very different. In an important contribution to the history of books, Cummins gives an astounding account of reading and writing in jail. At San Quentin State Prison, the penitentiary on San Francisco Bay that is the focus of this study, books constituted explosive weapons in a thirty years' war (1950-80) for the hearts and minds of men. Conceived by officials as instruments of discipline and tools of reform, print could, in fact, stir prisoners to radicalism and rebellion. At San Quentin, Cummins demonstrates, literacy was never the panacea of *Shawshank*. It was invariably tied to ideology and power. In the history of books, that lesson extends well beyond the prison walls.

Students of books and society could easily miss Cummins's valuable work. The Library of Congress has catalogued the title under such rubrics as "Prisoners," "Prison riots," and "Prisons," all restricted to "California." Only the designation "Prisoners' writings" gives a clue to its larger import. Such narrow classification is lamentable but unsurprising; few historians have taken up "Books and

Reading—Prisoners” or “Prison libraries” as their subject. For the most part, scholarship on modern America explores the open arena of the marketplace; its main themes are the abundance of books, the proliferation of genres, the competition for readers, the force of popular demand. The perspective from prison challenges this liberal view. In jail, censors set the rules. Authorities inspect mail, ban books, pick the titles to order. Prison libraries offer limited supplies, tightly monitored. The collection is chosen *for* inmates, not *by* them. But official control of communications is seldom complete. Through smuggling, prisoners secure alternative reading, which circulates, like other contraband, underground.

The contest between subterfuge and power marks the history of books not just in prison but in asylums, orphanages, reformatories, schools, the slave plantation — all the more-or-less closed institutions that have shaped American life. It provides a counterpoint to the liberal themes of autonomy and choice, and it unmasks them as well. Between book and reader, in every sphere, stand relations of power, governing the process by which texts become available and interpretations are made. Readers may produce their own meanings but not necessarily under circumstances of their own choosing. “This dialectic between imposition and appropriation, between constraints transgressed and freedom bridled,” the French historian Roger Chartier reminds us, “is not the same in all places or all times or for all people.”¹ In democratic settings, where individuals are formally free to run their own lives, reading may be loosely fettered, the hold of power subtly inscribed in a copyright notice. By contrast, for prisoners, coercion is ubiquitous, a blunt printer’s mark smeared on daily experience. Shackled by authority, books appear as instruments of incarceration, deliberately employed to subdue the inmate’s will. Yet, in the convicts’ hands, reading can enable resistance, stirring dreams of escape, sustaining inner freedom, generating new personal and collective identities. To study the history of books, then, from the vantage of prison is to encounter familiar issues but in stark relief — the lines of power sharply delineated, the confrontation between liberty and constraint ever in view.²

At San Quentin, the battle over books took shape in the postwar era, when a reform-minded warden set out to remake the penitentiary into a model of progressive penology, using the latest techniques of the social sciences to rehabilitate inmates. In the cure of crime, books promised a powerful remedy, known as “bibliotherapy.” The strategy was to put the librarian and the psychiatrist on the same therapeutic team. From the librarian would come “the medicament” (p. 23)—the doses of reading—to stimulate inmates to self-reflection and reform. Herman Spector, San Quentin’s librarian, embraced this role as his life’s work, which he pursued obsessively for two decades, from 1947 to 1968. To Spector, the collection he painstakingly built — 33,000 books at its peak—constituted a “hospital for the

mind”, where troubled men could gain relief in “the inextinguishable light and wisdom” therein. Its purity was preserved by vigilant censorship. No “morbid” and “anti-social” literature was allowed, no pulp fiction, nothing about sex, nor any works disdainful of law, government, and religion. Spector believed fervently in the Great Books of the West. Reflecting the curricular trend in colleges, he organized classes for convicts on the “translucent truths” of Western civilization. (p. 25-6) (*The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and the novels of Thomas Hardy were his favorites.) Participants in these programs were thoroughly scrutinized. Access to the library was a carefully guarded privilege, earned by good behavior; borrowing habits were monitored, in turn, entering into a prisoner’s file and establishing—or undermining—his case for parole. Under Spector, books pointed the way to freedom, but only by following his directions.

Bibliotherapy fostered prisoner writing as well, with Spector organizing classes in composition. Unlike college courses, these sessions were not designed for aesthetic ends, nor did they value self-expression for its own sake. The aim was remedial. Through creative writing, inmates might reveal inner urges and thoughts, for redirection by treatment staff. Lest prisoners seek a wider audience, Spector superintended contact with the outside world. The librarian censored all writing that went beyond the prison, taking special care to excise criticism of the Department of Corrections. No inmate manuscripts were submitted to publishers without his approval. Under California law, such writings were the property of the state, the same as “a sack ... made in the jute mill.” (p. 42)

Launched at a time when prison officials kept a tight lid on their institution, the venture in bibliotherapy set forces in motion that opened authority to challenge. “Prison reading becomes prison writing,” Cummins observes, “and prison-written texts can become the public’s reading” (p. 264) —with unpredictable results. Cummins analyzes this sequence astutely, tracing the rise of literary celebrities among the inmates, notably, Caryl Chessman, Eldridge Cleaver, and George Jackson, and the burgeoning of an international audience for their words. In the interplay between prisoners and public, Cummins finds a key to the radical politics of the 1960s and early 1970s, culminating in the self-destructive violence of such “revolutionaries” as the Symbionese Liberation Army, the kidnapers of media heiress Patty Hearst. Embracing “outlaw heroes” (p. 170) as the vanguard of “the people,” the white New Left, with its base in Berkeley, projected romantic illusions onto black inmates, who, isolated behind prison walls, treated these fantasies as reality and put them into reckless, suicidal practice. This explosive dynamic between author and audience would help doom the radicalism of the Sixties.

Cummins’s account of San Quentin is an illuminating case study of a distinctive reading community. Within the political structure of the prison, inmates manipulated the

bibliotherapeutic project to their own ends. They conformed outwardly to Spector's literary prescriptions, only to mock and subvert them from within. One convict on Death Row won the librarian's approval by assuming a penitent persona and recording his life as a warning to others. By that cynical ruse, he sold one article after another to magazines. "I had about twelve publications ...," he told Cummins. "For a while I was even writing anti-drug articles for teenybopper magazines. I'd have to get loaded to write it, it was so nauseating." (p. 29) The stories paid for goods at the canteen, which were bartered for drugs and sex. For others behind bars, writing was a weapon in the struggle to win release. The condemned rapist Caryl Chessman pioneered the strategy; his best-selling books, proclaiming his innocence, generated international support and financed a long, losing fight against the gas chamber. In his wake, the authorities clamped down on prisoner writing. Nonetheless, they could not stop the flow. For most inmates, law was the Muse and litigation the preferred genre. Drawing on the legal compendia in the library, they flooded the courts with petitions for habeas corpus. An unhappy Spector lamented that jailhouse lawyers had taken over his space and rendered Great Books discussions impossible.

Ultimately, prisoners ignored Spector's collection altogether and secured their own reading, first by smuggling, then by winning legal guarantees of intellectual freedom. Organizing secret study groups, they acted, in Cummins's words, "to seize back the terms of their own

definition." (p. 64) For many black inmates, the Black Muslims supplied the catalyst. With a coherent worldview that affirmed black pride and gave cosmic meaning to black existence, the militant sect propagated literacy with its message. Other inmates found their way to a secular eschatology, like Eldridge Cleaver, who started writing in Spector's classes, joined the Muslims, and ended up with a Marxist political-sexual radicalism all his own. Under the tutelage of the Black Panthers and the Black Guerrilla Family, convicts learned the ABCs of revolution from Malcolm, Marx, and Mao. *The Communist Manifesto* was simplified to a primer. As they mastered these texts, inmates acquired not only an ideology but also a new confidence in themselves. "We started with simple things like Ho Chi Minh," recalled one of Cummins's informants. "And if you didn't know a word you ask your homeboy, your comrade, and say, 'Hey, man! What is this word, what does it mean?'" And it was rewarding to have a homeboy who started out after you come and ask you and be blessed and privileged enough to teach him." (p. 137)

Bibliotherapy had been turned upside down. Instead of delving inward and finding fault in themselves, as Spector had intended, the inmates used reading to look outward and attack the judicial and social system that put them behind bars. Yet, even as they spurned the librarian's politics, the new radicals retained his pedagogy. Reading was conducted in a collective context, where individual interpretation was subordinated to group ends. Political indoctrination, one could argue, replaced psychiatric intervention, but to the same end. In San Quentin's politics of reading, the object was thought control. With so little premium on independent reflection, it is no wonder that prison activism, inflamed by New Left polemics, burned out in rhetorical excess.

The social setting was crucial to the reading program. In the mid-1970s, in a prison in Southampton, Virginia, another black inmate named Nathan McCall was reading radical literature—*Malcolm X*, *Native Son*, Karl Marx—and engaging in intense political debates. For McCall, now a writer for the *Washington Post*, these encounters stirred an intellectual awakening and a personal transformation. Through reading, McCall gained the means of self-mastery, overcoming the prison environment in a triumph of the will. In Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" he found the inspiration to transcend the embattled circumstances of daily life:

If you can dream
and not make dreams your master.
If you can think
and not make thoughts your aim.
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
and treat these two impostors just the same

For prisoners in other times and places, the literary model—Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Emerson, Herbert Spencer—

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has varied; the assertion of individual autonomy has remained the same. That theme resounded in the defiant male voice of Caryl Chessman but was harnessed to collectivist ends in San Quentin's radical era.³

As it happened, there had always been skeptics of bibliotherapy in the prison administration, especially among guards. When reading and writing got out of hand, the authorities cracked down, intensified controls over communication, and abandoned commitment to the library. A bitter Spector, forced by heart attack into early retirement, was obliged to witness the decline and dispersal of the collection to which he had devoted his life. Today, the San Quentin library holds some 9,000 titles, one-fourth its size in Spector's heyday. Books no longer pose a challenge to law and order. In the new climate of retribution, California's most troublesome convicts are subject to near-total isolation within the high-tech, "maxi-maxi" penitentiary on Pelican Bay. Confined to windowless cells for all but an hour and a half each day, the inmates have absolutely nothing to do: no work, no classes, no conversation. Every few weeks, a book cart comes around, full of religious works. Such solitary lives resemble the bleak existence endured by the earliest objects of penal reform, the prisoners in America's original penitentiary, Philadelphia's Walnut Street Prison, founded in 1790.

To regulate the mass of inmates, California's prison officials have discovered a cheaper device: television. With sets in the cells, inmates can be pacified on popular entertainment. Cummins notes that whereas reading generates writing — all it requires is pencil and paper — viewing television has no tangible results. The political intelligentsia in prison bewails the strategy, in language that recalls the mass culture critique. One inmate told Cummins: "I think the institution said, like, 'What the fuck we doin'? Let's give these motherfuckers a TV. That'll stop 'em from readin' and writin.'" (p. 238)

Actually, American policies remain divided between retribution and rehabilitation. On the one hand, the federal government has just eliminated aid to prisoners for post-secondary education, putting an end to most on-site college courses in the nation's correctional institutions. On the other hand, *Parade* magazine recently hailed a four-year-old program in New Bedford, Massachusetts, that uses literature as an alternative to incarceration. "Read a Book—Or Go to Jail." District Court Judge Robert Kane offers that choice to repeat offenders, reportedly with successful results.

Kane's strategy, reminiscent of *Shawshank*, is surely more humane; he brings parole officers, judges, and offenders together for discussions of James Dickey's *Deliverance* and Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*. But in this new version of bibliotherapy, he would be well-advised to consult Eric Cummins's thoughtful work. Like everyone else, prisoners have minds of their own, fully

capable of finding in books the meanings that suit themselves. Until we heed that central lesson from the history of reading, our public policy is destined to fail over and over again.⁴

1. Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers Authors and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), viii.
2. For this perspective on prison reading, I am indebted to Larry E. Sullivan of the Library of Congress, who shared with me his essay, "The Big House Is Also a Home: Reading and the Development of Prison Libraries in the United States, ca. 1840 - ca. 1940" (1993), first given as a paper at the Strong Museum Conference on "Reading in America, 1840-1940," Rochester, N. Y., Nov. 21-22, 1986. See also Priscilla Older, "Patient Libraries in Hospitals for the Insane in the United States," *Libraries and Culture* 26 (1991): 511-31.
3. Nathan McCall, *Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America* (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1995), 163-65, 172-73; Sullivan, "The Big House Is Also a Home," 35-37. Is this assertion of the will tied to masculine needs and thus a function of gender? A comparative study of men's and women's reading in prison would test this claim.
4. James S. Kunen, "Teaching Prisoners a Lesson," *New Yorker*, July 10, 1995, 34-39; Michael Ryan, "Read a Book—Or Go to Jail," *Parade*, Feb. 5, 1995, 16-17.

R.A.G.

1996 Cambridge Project for the Book Trust Conference

The third biennial conference sponsored by the Cambridge Project for the Book Trust (CPBT) will be held at Magdalene College, Cambridge University, September 20-22, 1996. The conference title is "Print for Free: Non-Commercial Publishing in Commercial Societies." Publishing, defined as making print public, embraced the free and often unsolicited distribution of religious literature, political propaganda, and civic and personal gifts. Speakers will be examining aspects of the product, presentation, and reception of non-commercial print in economically advanced communities from the seventeenth-century Italian city state to the post-war Japanese and American metropolis. Those wishing to be on the mailing list for further information should reply to jr42@cus.cam.ac.uk or by postal service to Elsa Meyland-Smith, The Malting House, Newnham Road, Cambridge CB3 9EY, United Kingdom.

Edited papers from the first CPBT conference will be published as *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* by Cambridge University Press in December 1995.

Call for Papers

The Nineteenth Century Studies Association announces its fifteenth annual conference, "Nineteenth-Century Design" to be held at Florida International University in Miami, April 11-13, 1996. The conference will explore the artistic, political, scientific, literary, religious, economic, and industrial designs that transformed life and thought in the nineteenth century. Papers are invited that explore, from multiple disciplinary perspectives, all manner of nineteenth-century designs and their various cultural significances.

Proposals for twenty-minute papers should be accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae and a three-sentence abstract. Also welcome are proposals for entire panels. All materials should reach the program directors no later than November 1, 1995. The program directors are Bonnie J. Robinson, Department of English, P.O. Box 248145, Coral Gables, FL 33124-4632, telephone (305) 284-2182, Fax (305) 284-5635, and Kathleen McCormack, Department of English, Florida International University, Miami, FL 33199, telephone (305) 348-2260, Fax (305) 348-3878. Decisions will be announced in January 1996.

New York Area Book Colloquium

A monthly meeting of scholars in the New York area working on the history of authorship, reading, and publishing and interested in sharing works-in-progress is being organized by Lisa Gitelman, Thomas A. Edison Papers, Rutgers University. She invites interested residents of the metropolitan area to contact her. Her e-mail address is gitelman@gandalf.rutgers.edu.

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