
Concluding Comments

Aesthetic judgements combine elements of both absolute values and comparison. Two items submitted this year were new editions or added volumes to ones which previously won awards. They were reminders to the judges that each year's submissions comprise a unique gathering of artifacts to be examined not only as individual items but as a whole. It is a shame that only the judges see the entire group of submissions together because although we single them out, the award winners described above are an integral part of the mass of the year's publications, a mass different from that of any other year in any place or at any time since Gutenberg. In this mass, we see values of diversity and cultural creativity which we think we can characterize and celebrate as "Canadian".

Publishers use physical design features to catch the attention of potential buyers within categories much more finely delimited than the broad ones of this competition. It is understandable that covers (of paperbacks) and dustwrappers (of hard-cover books) should attract the lion's share of the design budget for books in categories in which they are the attraction to the impulse buyer: general trade fiction and nonfiction, pictorial books, and books for the young. The other reason for good design, to provide the most fitting clothing for the book's intellectual content, usually has less obvious results since understatement can be more valued than a frontal attack on the senses. The noted typographer Beatrice Warde quipped, "Printing should

be invisible." The Canadian publishers honoured here, pinched ever more tightly between diminishing available capital and buyer resistance to higher prices for the product, are commended for continuing to value the less immediately obvious purpose. While the two are not mutually exclusive, it is easy to slight the latter as one watches the budget, or to forget that aesthetically desirable details are not incompatible with digital technology.

The Society's requests for submissions to this competition go to every known Canadian publisher and as many designers and design companies as are known to its Awards Committee to work on books. In January 1997, the Committee sent out approximately 400 notices of this competition; submissions were received from 60 sources. The judges would always like to see more submissions; some fine Canadian design is surely being missed in these awards.