

of 2008 arrived. Oak Knoll promptly thought better of its offer, and I decided to self-publish. I was not willing to see 18 months of work wasted. The second edition came out in 2011.

I continued adding to my collection right up to the time I gave it to Simon Fraser University. Indeed, it was only in the final six months before the donation that I finally found a copy of one of the illustrated editions included in my book. It was identical to the copy in the Houghton Library that had necessitated my trip there some six or seven years before. My last major purchase, made six weeks before the transfer, was a facsimile reprint by the Folio Society of a calligraphic manuscript done by Morris of *The Odes of Horace*.

Now that I'm done, an alarming thought has struck me. Were you expecting something more along the lines of *Building a Book Collection for Dummies*? Well, be of good cheer: the methods I used to build my collection remain open to you. Indeed, I would recommend attending book fairs in particular. Book fairs provide the opportunity to meet dealers in person. If you can establish a good relationship with one or two dealers who have wide connections, they can put you in the way of outstanding books.

However, the Internet has effected fundamental changes in the last twenty years. Collectors now have access to shops around the world, and I for one have found some remarkable offerings. Abebooks.com allows one to monitor newly added books in a given category, enabling me to follow what came up on a daily basis if I wished. Online, one should not dither. Twice I did so and missed books for which I would have paid twice their price in retrospect. On another occasion I beat out a competitor by an hour for a Morris manuscript. I subsequently received an agonized plea through the dealer and I sold it on for what I had paid for it.

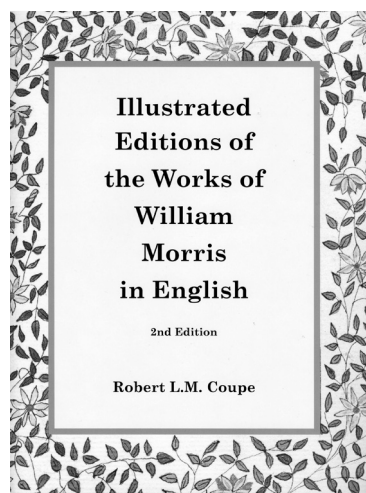
My collecting is not quite finished. Despite building my collection over the course of 40 years, I failed to find a few items I wanted. I keep looking; if I find them I shall buy them for the satisfaction of completeness. I'm not holding my breath on any of them, however. I did find my share of rarities, but there are some things one never does find.

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~ Robert Coupe, a retired dermatologist, developed an extensive collection of William Morris's illustrated works. He is the author of *Illustrated Editions of the Works of William Morris in English: A Descriptive Bibliography* (2002; 2011). He lives in Burnaby, B.C. This article is an adaptation of remarks originally delivered at Simon Fraser University on November 12, 2015.

BOOK REVIEW

Illustrated Editions of the Works of William Morris in English, 2nd ed.

BY ROBERT L.M. COUPE
(LONSDALE & YOUNG, 2011, \$70)



ROBERT COUPE HAS SHARED much of the background to this volume elsewhere in this issue. Coupe's own stories do a far better job of selling the volume than this small review could do.

Those who have had the experience of developing a bibliography and seeing such a work through the press will have a special appreciation for this second edition of *Illustrated Editions of the Works of William Morris in English*. A first edition, while an accomplishment, can't help but breed second thoughts. Could the

design have been better? Could the story have been told in a better way? What are reviewers saying? These are all questions that come to mind, and the diligent author feels compelled to respond, to make sure that what remains is truly the definitive work on the subject.

Coupe himself notes that he began discovering a significant number of books he felt should be in the original volume. He disliked aspects of the original edition's production. Reviewers pointed out shortcomings he wanted to correct.

What resulted was a work one-third longer (or approximately 75 pages, by the current page count), with colour illustrations that give readers a taste of the works described. The edition numbers 250 copies, of which 230 have been offered for sale.

But the distinctive aspect of this volume, as it was for the original, is Coupe's effort to use the bibliography to tell the story of the works in question. It aims for a conversational tone rather than one that overwhelms readers with bibliographical description. While some bibliographers offer very readable notes, often (I speak from experience) these notes are secondary to the wealth of descriptive detail that helps readers identify what they're holding. Coupe helps readers understand and appreciate what they're holding. The main focus of the bibliography is the artwork and how it complements Morris's published texts, he explains.

The introductions to each of the 18 chapters will provide even the cursory reader with enough information to make this a rewarding read. Collectors will find even more in the descriptions and discussion that follow. Three appendices round out the bibliography, covering paperback editions, orphan pictures and unique copies with illustrations.

Coupe lavishes the full scope of his collecting experience on this volume, and for that fellow Morris collectors will thank him. This work is very much a testament to his collecting career that bequeaths a legacy to others.

~ REVIEWED BY PETER MITHAM

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The Alcuin Society wishes to welcome the following new members:

Clair Battershill, Vancouver, BC
L.M. Bradbury, Kelowna, BC
David Brewer, Fredericton, NB
Esther Ghio, Burlington, ON
Saskia Jetten, Mission, BC
Roxanne Kalenborn, Vancouver, BC
Ena McInnis, West Vancouver, BC
Anne O'Grady, Summerland, BC
Tuula Shaw, Victoria, BC
Daniel Viltsek, Vancouver, BC
Owen Williams, Whitehorse, YT

Alcuin Society membership is open to any individual, institution or organization with an interest in the book arts, the history of books, book collecting and reading. An individual membership is \$50 a year, while institutional membership is \$75 a year. Students may join at the rate of \$25 a year for up to three years. A patron membership is available at the rate of \$125.

Society members within Canada pay in Canadian dollars; foreign memberships must be paid in U.S. dollars. Payment may be made online using PayPal or via cheque or money order made payable to The Alcuin Society, P.O. Box 3216, Vancouver, British Columbia V6B 3X8.

