

NEWS & NOTES

Congratulations to former *Amphora* Editor **Geoff Spencer** who has launched his own journal *The Broken Urn*. To contact Geoff please e-mail him at Geoffrey_Spencer@telus.net. He sends along this medieval book curse: "This book belongs to [the Abbey of] St. Mary and St. Nicholas in Arnstein. Which if anyone take away, may he die the death, be cooked in a frying-pan, may the falling sickness and fevers draw near him, may he be hung up and twisted around. Amen."

Congratulations also to Alcuin friend and speaker **Peter Cocking** who has accepted the new position of art director with Douglas & McIntyre/Greystone Books. He has worked as a graphic designer in Vancouver for 15 years, forming his own studio in 1990, and has specialized in editorial design since the mid-1990s.

Another local book person, **Scott McIntyre**, is featured in an interview in the March 2002 *Quill & Quire*. There, in answer to the question "What do you think is the biggest challenge or change facing the book business in the near future?" Scott says: "My absolute faith in the printed artifact prevails. But all Canadian publishers face a huge challenge in dealing with the advantages of scale, the inevitable consolidation and restructuring of the Canadian-owned sector, and the problems of succession." Pick up a copy of *Q&Q* at your local newsstand or library for Scott's hilarious answer to another question posed to him: "Your strangest experience

on the job?" All I will say is that it involves the first Canadian publishing trade mission to Japan, one that went terribly awry!

This from the *Globe & Mail*: "It's been a 600-year wait but it's finally here: *The Middle English Dictionary (MED)*. The dictionary, celebrated as one of the great achievements of American scholarship, was an idea that wouldn't stop growing – four successive editors have died during its construction – and in the end it has taken 125 people 71 years to complete. A planned 4,000 pages when work began at the University of Michigan in 1930, it now stretches to 15,000 pages and exhaustively defines the 55,000 words that were in common use when the *Inglish langwache* was in its formative years in post-Norman Britain.... Work on the dictionary was originally funded by an annual grant of \$20,000 (US), but the price of medieval word mining went up progressively as the work continued down several decades, pushing the total cost to a heady \$22-million."

This from a column by **Ray Conlogue** in the *Globe* as well: " 'In the rage for cheapness, we have sacrificed everything for slop, and a dainty piece of bookmaking is like a jewel in the swine's snout' protested a publisher a century ago, as machines began to spew out inconceivable quantities of books into the world.... No longer a trade, the making of books by hand has become an arcane art. But that exactly is why it is staging a comeback in a world where some young people, hearing rumours you can make things with your hands, are inquiring to see if it's true. There are Web sites, and

we won't press the irony button here, full of courses in bookbinding and tributes to the greatest living craftspersons.... You can argue that it's Shakespeare's words that matter, not what they're printed on. And you can notice that the book artists sometimes expend huge labour and talent on writers who are not, to put it politely, Shakespeare. But these are the writers who spur the book artists to make beautiful objects. They do this in what appears to perfect indifference to a world awash in crummy things, stippled here and there with the big houses of the makers of crummy things. They know their place."



Next the book collectors dream, stumbling across a book of both consummate beauty and of great monetary value: "Barrie Pribyl knew she had something special when she took the old book out of the farmhouse and loaded it into her car with the hundreds of others. What the book dealer didn't know right away was that she had the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, a 500-year-old history of the world considered a milestone in the history of printing. Her client was in Maine to settle his parents' estate.... The *Nuremberg Chronicle* relates to the history of the world starting with Genesis in Gothic text and a profusion of woodcut illustrations throughout nearly 600 pages. Compiled by physician Hartmann Schedel, it was produced by Anton Koberger, a Nuremberg publisher considered one of the most important of the time in Europe. The book features the woodcuts of Michael Wöhlgemuth, his stepson Wilhelm Pleyenwurff and Albrecht Dürer, a masterful artist who elevated the status of graphic arts. The

book contains more than 1,800 illustrations.... Pribyl believes her client intends to keep his book, which was appraised at the U.S. equivalent of \$100,000 to \$133,000 Cdn." *Vancouver Sun*



This item from the December 2002 *The Printer*: "Taking inspiration from London Underground **book vending machines** – and improving on it – University of Iowa Center for the Book studies students are offering handmade books and kits for binding your own books from a 'book drop' vending machine in the north lobby of University of Iowa's main library.

The machine is stocked with a selection of items bound to delight any book lover, including Ethiopian bookbinding kits, Japanese stab bindings, and long-stitch bindings ideal for personal notes. Items range in price from \$5 to \$15. Aramark Incorporated provides the machine and technical support for the project.

"The book is often taken for granted", says Kristin Baum, assistant conservator and UICB UI Center for the Book student. "This project is a great chance for us not only to educate the UI community about the Center for the Book, but also to excite others about the diversity and rich history of the book. By placing historical book structures in an unusual and contemporary context – the vending machine – we are urging people to consider the book from a new perspective." For more information about this project contact Tim Barrett, director of University of Iowa Center for the Book at 319-331-5013 or contact Gary Frost, University of Iowa conservator at 319-335-5908.



The following is from *The Garden*, March 2002: “Before colour printing became, widespread, the colouring of book illustrations was usually left to the purchaser of the book. From the 17th to the 19th centuries, artists and botanists expressed their frustration at the difficulty of ensuring that illustrations were coloured similarly in every copy. The most extreme way to ensure this desirable result was to issue the book in which illustrations were not printed at all, but drawn directly on the paper.

In 1763 Nikolaus Joseph, Freiherr von Jacquin (1727–1817), Professor of Botany at Vienna University, published *Selectarum Stirpium Americanarum*, an account of the plants he found in the West Indies. In 1780–81 he published a second edition and caused something of a sensation, for each of the dozen or so copies was illustrated entirely with original drawings, not printed.

After Jacquin, came Johann Simon Kerner (1755–1830), a Stuttgart botanist and one of the Royal Horticultural Society’s first members. His first major work, the eight-volume *Abbildung aller oekonomischen Pflanzen* (1786–98), was normally printed. But in 1795 he started publishing the enormous work, the *Hortus Sempervirens*, which by his death had reached 71 elephant folio volumes each containing 12 original drawings and accompanying text. Kern’s drawings are exquisite, but it is hard to imagine a more tedious and labour-intensive means of illustrating a book.”



The following was passed along to me by a friend and colleague, Martin Dowling from *Esdaile’s Manual of Bibliography*:

“Commandments for Bibliographers:

- I. Be proud, and think highly of your calling.
- II. Be humble, and do not despise details.
- III. Be accurate, in small things as in great.
- IV. Be brief.
- V. Be clear.
- VI. Take nothing on trust, except in necessity, and even then not without saying so. There have been many bad bibliographers, and it is human to err.
- VII. Never guess. You are sure to be found out, and then you will be written down as one of the bad bibliographers, than which there is not worse fate.”



This from a request from designer Bob Reid to member **Peter Buitenhuis** to comment on **three of his favourite title pages**:

“It is challenging to select three outstanding title pages from the hundreds of books in my collection. It was also sobering to see how often those pages are mundane and inexpressive. The final selection was of course entirely arbitrary.

My criteria for choosing title pages were appropriateness, simplicity, and elegance. The first selection is from *The Yellow Book*, printed, interestingly enough, in Czechoslovakia and not dated – though I would surmise some time during the 1930s. Inevitably, the illustration is by Aubrey Beardsley. The title page is simplicity itself, admirably balanced, and I might add, teasingly erotic. It is not surprising that when the first number of *The Yellow Book* came out, there was, according to the editor of this volume, a demand “for an Act of Parliament to make this sort of thing illegal.”

Next is Edith Wharton's *Italian Backgrounds*. For the purpose of this selection, I confess a weakness for illustrated books, for the illustrations tend to creep into the title page. The verso of the title page lists The DeVinne Press as the printer. There is no provenance provided for the exquisite little picture of, presumably, the Bishop of Rome and the infant Christ – also mitred. A good balance of type face and illustration.

My contemporary selection is *The Letters of T.S. Eliot*, neatly illustrated by Eliot's own initial. A clear type face and an interesting effect is achieved somehow by having publisher and place of publication out of symmetry with the upper half of the page. The lower-case publisher's name in italics is also unusual and effective."

ITALIAN BACKGROUNDS

BY
EDITH WHARTON

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. PEIXOTTO



NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
MCMV

The Yellow Book

a selection



Compiled by Norman Denny

SPRING BOOKS • LONDON

THE LETTERS OF T. S. ELIOT

EDITED BY
VALERIE ELIOT

VOLUME I
1898-1922

faber and faber
LONDON