

News & Notes

Richard Hopkins

This unhappy news sent along by Geoff Spencer:

I have been informed by her partner, Ray Strank, that **Vera Ibbett**, SSI (Society of Scribes & Illuminators), RMS (Royal Miniature Society), died in the last week of May 2005. It may be remembered that Vera's masterpiece *Flowers in Heraldry*, combining calligraphy with flower painting, was the Society's major opus in the first decade of our existence. It was a headache to produce, and the cost nearly sank us, but I believe it to have been infinitely worth while. Vera and Ray went on to a life's work inscribing the R.A.F.'s Honour Roll in Hendon, which was completed in her final years. As a final flourish, she also managed to fit in a fascination for painting donkeys (so very English!), her models drawn from the Donkey Sanctuary in Devon. One of these paintings was recently auctioned at Christie's and subsequently resold at three times the price to a Bond Street gallery. In 1989 I commissioned a calligraphic panel from her featuring my condensation of Leo Rosten's *Credo*. The last two sentences are a fitting tribute to Vera:

"I think the purpose of life is to be useful, to be responsible, to be honourable, to be compassionate. It is, above all, to matter: to count, to stand for something, to have it make some difference that you lived at all."

A hearty welcome to **Marlene Chan** of Ottawa who has just been appointed as an ex-officio member of the Alcuin Board. Marlene has been assisting the Society in many ways in Ottawa, work that is very much appreciated!

The Society would like to extend a warm welcome to these **new members**:

Helene Redding, Vancouver
Fiona Raven, Vancouver
Judith Steedman, Vancouver
Barbara Fairchild, Vancouver
Tim Atkinson, Vancouver
Jim Douglas, West Vancouver
Kate Russell, North Vancouver
Arnold Shives, North Vancouver
Trisha Klus, Cobble Hill, B.C.
Vivienne Bruce, Victoria
Hugo Hardy, Montreal
Solomon Katz, Cote St. Luc, Quebec
John Meier, Delta, B.C.
Thaddeus McIlroy, Toronto
Robert Chaplin, Vancouver
Owen Williams, Whitehorse, YT
Ehud Yaniv, Langley, B.C.
Christopher Kevlahan, North Van
Ken Martens, Calgary
Ib Kristensen, Fort Smith, NWT
Deborah McVittie, North Van
Andrew Radzik, Vancouver
National Gallery of Canada Library
Jeff Deweerd, Surrey, B.C.
Honey Mae Caffin, Vancouver
Karen Jarvis, Vancouver
Cam Campbell, Vancouver
Pauline Lawson, Gibsons, B.C.
Kurt Rudzewski, Vancouver
Rod W. Scheurerman, Vancouver

We would especially like to thank **Dr. Charles and Mrs. Elizabeth Schwerdtfeger** who joined the Society as patron members.

We would also like to warmly thank **Shirley Hamilton**, a long time member of the Society, who generously donated five books to us (*A Theatrical Trip for a Wager*, *John West's Journal*, *Canadian*

Settler's Guide, *Northwest Voyage*, and *Richard Henry Alexander*) as well as two keepsakes (*Observations on the Colophon* and *The Joy of Printing*) as well as some early issues of *Amphora*. Thank you very much indeed.

The big, big news this issue is that the Alcuin Society has been invited by the Stiftung Buchkunst (Book Art Foundation) to participate annually in **the Frankfurt Book Fair, the international competition for book design in Leipzig, and the Leipzig Book Fair**. This will bring a much-desired Canadian presence to these prestigious book fairs, and Canadian participation in the world's most notable international book design competition. Kudos go to Leah Gordon for her work as Chair of the Design Competition!

Congratulations to the five winners at our recent **Wayzgoose celebration** of fine printing. Each person received a copy of the Society's *In Praise of Scribes*:

Bonnie Lee, Coquitlam, B.C.
Pauline Lawson, Gibsons, B.C.
Yukiko Onley – Vancouver
Des Harris – North Vancouver
P.D. Kemp – North Vancouver

Never Mind Solving Homicides,
What About the Safety of My Book
Collection?

Applied DNA Sciences, a security solutions company in California whose plant-based DNA security technology detects and deters fakes, counterfeiting, fraud, piracy and product diversion, in July announced that it has entered into a development agreement with Brown Art

Gallery in Ojai, California to create security technology for fine art and collectibles.

Applied DNA's patented DNA security technology can be covertly embedded in ink, paper, paint, thread, canvas and holograms, and provides art organizations, museums, collectors and artists with the ability to have the most advanced covert art authentication and asset protection program possible. Collectibles such as coins, stamps, **rare books**, antiques, sports, music and entertainment memorabilia can also be protected with Applied DNA's security technology.

For further information visit their website at www.ADNAS.com.

I read this piece recently and even though it is a bit "**book snobbish**" I must admit I still enjoyed it a great deal:

There is an implicit code that [book] customers rely on. If a book cover has raised lettering, metallic lettering, or raised metallic lettering, then it is telling the reader: *Hello. I am an easy-to-read work on espionage, romance, a celebrity, and/or murder*. To readers who do not care for such things, this lettering tells them: *Hello. I am crap*. Such books can use only glossy paper for the jacket; Serious Books *can* use glossy finish as well, but it is *only* Serious Books that are allowed to use matte finish.

Diminutively sized paperbacks, like serial romances or westerns or dieting and astrology guides, are aimed at the uneducated. But diminutively sized hardcover books are aimed at the educated – excepting those that are very diminutive, which are religious books,

aimed at the uneducated – and unless they are in a highly rectangular format, in which case they are point-of-purchase books aimed at the somewhat-but-not entirely educated. However, vertically rectangular diminutive softcover books, which tend to be pocket travel guides, are aimed at the educated. But horizontally rectangular diminutive softcover books – a genre pioneered by *Garfield Gains Weight* – are not.

Then there are the colors. Bright colors, and shiny colors, are necessary for the aforementioned books with raised lettering. Black will work too, but only if used to set off the bright and shiny colors. Because, remember, with the customer base in mind, the book will need to be a bright and shiny object. Conversely, a work of Serious Literature will have muted, tea-stained colors. Black is okay here too, but only if used to accentuate cool blues and grays and greens.

Woe and alas to any who transgress these laws. A number of reviewers railed against *The Bridges of Madison County* because it used the diminutive hardcover size and muted color scheme of, say, an Annie Dillard book – thus cruelly tricking readers of Serious Literature into *buying crap*. Not to be outdone, the Harvard University Press issued Walter Benjamin's opus *The Arcades Project* with gigantic raised metallic lettering. One can only imagine the disgust of blowhard fiftysomethings in bomber jackets as they slowly realized that the project they were reading about was a cultural analysis of nineteenth-century Parisian bourgeoisie – and not, say, a tale involving renegade Russian scientists and a mad general aboard a nuclear submarine.

Finally, on Serious Books and crap alike there will be a head shot of The Author sitting still while looking pensive or smiling faintly into the indeterminate distance – the one pose that has no existence in the author's actual daily life. The size of this photo will be in inverse proportion to the quality of the book. If this photo is rendered in color, it is not a Serious Book. If there is no author photo at all, then is a Serious Book indeed – perhaps even a textbook.

If a color photo of the author occupies the entire front cover, the book is unequivocal crap.

(From Paul Collins' *Sixpence House: Lost in a Town of Books*, about living and working in Hay-on-Wye, a book town in Wales boasting as many as 40 bookstores, making it truly a "Town of Books").

AMPHORA

MANUSCRIPTS
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
BOOK REVIEWS
BOOK EVENTS, ETC
are welcome

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