

headings and a standard serif for the text. While the text type could be a bit heavier given that each page offers up two broad columns of text, it seems economical enough to pack in the wealth of dates, context and other information pertaining to each subject. One practical quibble that has less to do with the layout than the binding is that the review copy (perfect-bound) was already showing signs of weakness at the spine.

The real test of such a work is in the using, of course. While editor Bruce Murphy claims that the book's "three-dimensionality ... has kept it in print for more than half a century after Benét's death," the boast seems a bit like whistling in the dark. A book must endure physically, but also in the imaginations of those who use it. This, really, is what still earns my grandfather's Oxford dictionary (among other titles) a place on my bookshelf. The best one could hope for is that this new edition of Benét's book opens minds to all the possibilities literature has to offer – regardless of how that literature is distributed in the future.

REVIEWED BY PETER MITHAM

~ *Books about Books: A History and Bibliography of Oak Knoll Press, 1978–2008*  
Robert D. Fleck  
(Oak Knoll, 2008, US\$45)

Part publisher's memoir, part press history, Bob Fleck's history and bibliography of Delaware's Oak Knoll Press should interest anyone who wants a glimpse of how this publisher works. To disclose pertinent facts up front, my interest stems from stories that visitors to the press's bookshop passed along prior to Oak Knoll's publication of my own work, *Robert W. Service: A Bibliography* (2000). My understanding – which deepened as dealings regarding the bibliography rolled along – was that the press was a typical small business with its share of colourful personalities and informal practices.

*Books about Books* confirms some of the impressions, with a raconteur's touch.

Setting the tone for the book is Fleck's candid confession on the first page that he hadn't worked with an established bookseller prior to getting started in the book business, and consequently, "made all the usual mistakes of a novice in the

field." The final page of the history describes the press's transition to a world in which digital media are often included with books and online ad campaigns are *de rigueur* – "unknown technologies when we started." Then there are the stories of meetings with authors attended by the usual glitches travellers encounter, not to mention a few travelling mercies. Fleck tells his tale with a good humour that both entertains the reader and shows gratefulness for his own good fortune.

The bibliography in the second half of the volume is a helpful guide to Oak Knoll's titles. While one might quarrel with the practice of providing separate entries for each edition of a title (printings of each edition are listed in the edition's entry), a brief introduction outlines the idiosyncracies. A bigger issue, given what the press should know about its own operations, is the diversity of information provided in the notes for each title. Many titles include print runs, others add notes on typesetting, paper and the manner of printing. Some include a brief description of the title; others include what could be the blurb from the promotional material.

Nevertheless, the bibliography's 320 entries provide an overview of the output of a well-respected press in a volume that will be helpful in sizing up the contribution of Oak Knoll in meeting demand for books about books.

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