

rivals will coexist under the Amazon umbrella remains to be seen. LibraryThing still retains its autonomy, but with Amazon's hand now in the book social network pot, things are sure to change quickly.

If there is one constant here it is that the world of online bookselling remains in a state of flux. The sector is still growing at a healthy pace, with online sales of non-new books now over US\$1 billion per year. Tremendous opportunities still exist, and sooner or later someone will successfully tap into the underserved antiquarian market and provide a viable destination for booksellers and book lovers.

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## MODERN FIRSTS

### *On the margins*

Enthusiastic annotator Samuel T. Coleridge coined the word "marginalia," defined by *Wikipedia* as "the general term for notes, scribbles, and editorial comments made in the margin of a book." The study of marginalia is now a growing area of interest in the study of the history of the book. William Sherman's recently published *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* estimates that 20 percent of early printed books in research libraries are annotated. Clearly a reader's annotation made hundreds of years ago can provide added insight into a work and its time and easily engages the reader and the scholar.

The response of the reader to marginalia in a contemporary volume is much less likely to be positive. With the exception of notes made by the well-known identified reader, recent annotations are likely to be viewed by book dealers and collectors as defacement and by readers as a distraction. However, others champion such interventions as a form of transgressive discourse worthy of examination. These opposing views are described by H.J. Jackson in *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* as "A is for Annotator and B for Bibliophile (A thinks B might as well stand for Bore, and B that A is Anarchist)."

As a librarian and bibliophile at heart whose immediate response is to denounce marginalia, I find myself increasingly intrigued by the role it plays in how books are read. In large part this new interest was prompted by a public art project at the Vancouver Public Library by Kyla Mallett, which led to a gallery show at Artspeak in late 2006. Mallett's show *Marginalia* comprised photographic images of annotations in VPL books. In the accompanying exhibition catalogue *An Art of the Weak: Marginalia, Writers and Readers*, critic Denise Oleksijczuk succinctly describes the motivations of unsanctioned annotators (to use her phrase): "Some are spontaneous exclamations that make it possible to recover the mental processes of readers, others are mediated interventions by those who wish to communicate their ideas about the text to a later reader." Mallett's photographs clearly illustrate these differing motivations and provoke multiple responses in the reader/viewer. The image reproduced on the cover (a half-page image used in the VPL banner triptych—the images in the Artspeak exhibition showed the full page of text) takes on a totally different meaning when one learns that the world-weary "?! Whatever" margin note appears in a book on teen suicide.

In a recent communiqué, *Amphora's* esteemed editor described his initial irritation on discovering that a used copy of Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* he had started reading had been annotated by a previous reader (in pink!). The irritation soon shifted to interest as he noted the sections the earlier reader found worthy of note. This led to the intriguing idea of building a collection of copies of the same title each annotated by a different reader. "Imagine," he wrote, "looking for annotated copies in Third World countries; or comparing notations of copies from different generations;... or the triple crown—copies with multiple annotators." A great if daunting idea which turns a book condition weakness into a strength and thereby establishes collecting parameters that by definition should be affordable. I will resist the temptation to try this out but recommend it to an energetic *Amphora* reader/collector. If anyone takes this on, or by chance has already been collecting with this focus, let us know how it's going.

I'll conclude by noting that my favourite marginalia are those made by authors

themselves. This is truly “sanctioned” annotating and can be really useful. A favourite literary example is Daphne Marlatt correcting the recipe reproduced in the novel *Ana Historic*. If I ever get around to trying it out, I’ll be much more confident knowing Ms. Marlatt has intervened with pen in hand in the copy in my collection.

*Paul Whitney is City Librarian at the Vancouver Public Library.*

## REVIEW

*Detail in Typography:*

*Letters, Letterspacing,  
Words, Wordspacing, Lines,  
Linespacing, Columns*

By Jost Hochuli

(Hyphen Press, 2008, £12.50)

Reviewed by Owen Williams

Robin Kinross, the founder of the Hyphen Press, could be considered an anti-bibliophilic bibliophile. It is not the connoisseurship of title pages or the physical nuances of letterpress printing that informs his understanding of typographic design, but rather the clear and systematic design of tax forms, train schedules and telephone books. This socially responsible approach to design reflects the training Kinross received at Reading University’s Department of Typography in the 1970s.

Kinross founded the Hyphen Press in 1980 with the publication of a second edition of Norman Potter’s *What Is a Designer*. He consolidated the press’s reputation in 1992 through the publication of his own book, *Modern Typography: An Essay in Critical History*.

The books of the Hyphen Press—quiet, reserved, functional—could be considered particularly English. This approach, however, is not parochial but instead engaged with the northern and central European critical traditions of modern design and design reform.

At a time when graphic designers such as Neville Brody were exploiting the rich possibilities of the personal computer combined with QuarkXPress and the other new graphic design programs, and spoke of their work through the dialectical language of postmodernism, Kinross was writing, editing and publishing on modernity in typography.

Kinross understands modernity to mean “an articulate consciousness of action” and regards it as an unfinished project. This idea underpinned *Modern Typography*. His later essay, *Fellow Readers: Notes on Multiplied Language*, offered a critique of a superficial application of postmodernism in graphic design. The subsequent books of the press have served to articulate these positions.

Hyphen Press books are conceived as unified objects. Many are designed by their authors with an attention to detail rare in English-language publications. Christopher Burke, the author of *Paul Renner: The Art of Typography*, went so far as to design a second version of his typeface Celeste to increase the legibility of the book’s footnotes. With such attention to detail, it is understandable that Hyphen Press books are well made. Moreover, the books are often printed in the Netherlands or Belgium, where Kinross would argue the standard of printed matter is higher than in the U.K.

The authors who publish with the Hyphen Press are often colleagues from Reading’s Department of Typography or, like Jost Hochuli, members of the Association Typographique Internationale (ATypI).

As a designer, Hochuli is known for having mediated a path between the once-polarized methods of Swiss modern typography and the neo-traditional methods of symmetrical typography. His approach realizes the value of contrast in design, while recognizing a need for detail and nuance. Aesthetically he prefers his books light and sparse, but possessing that particular form of elegance achieved through an explicit use of contrast. Though they assume a cultivated audience, his booklets in the Typotron series (1983–98) exemplify this approach.

Hochuli has written several books on typography. Though different in title and format, his English-language texts have been very similar in content. *Designing Books: Practice and Theory*, co-authored with Robin Kinross and published by Hyphen, is probably the most distinct of these publications.

*Detail in Typography* forms part of the press’s new series. To date the book has been translated into seven languages. This edition is a translation by Charles Whitehouse of the 2005 German-language edition published by Switzerland’s Niggli, which also published Emil Ruder’s *Typography: A Manual of Design* and Josef Muller-Brockmann’s *Grid Systems*