

Monkey Business in the U.K.

Just thought I'd send a quick note to let you know that I am one of the lucky Charlies who received an original signed print of Jim Westergard's whimsical Monkey Business Press engraving in your June issue of *Amphora*. It will be finding its way over the Atlantic to a friend and poet living in London, however, so I too am relinquishing something in my own way, although not quite as reluctantly, as I know it will come into very good and appreciative hands. Come to think of it, though, what monkey that looks like that isn't made to travel the oceans? Bon voyage! And with many thanks for such a clever devising of your original prints/imaginary press series.

Agnes Cserbati
Toronto, Ont.

The limits on limited editions

I read Michael Lieberman's column ("Fine presses and the bookseller," No. 146) with interest, particularly the four "roadblocks [he has] experienced in working with the fine press and book arts communities." The problem of offering discounts to booksellers dogs most fine press printers and book artists, and sadly little progress has been made over the years to resolve some of the issues. Both artist/printer and bookseller have legitimate differing viewpoints, and some of them are apparently irreconcilable without one side or the other losing out and being dissatisfied. One of the main problems is that we are unable to price our work to reflect the cost of materials, and more importantly, the work that goes into it, and also include the discount dealers expect. This is because the public (or not enough of the public) simply won't pay those prices, so we are left with the choice of offering a smaller discount, or working for a pittance.

As to the retail price set by publishers being prohibitive, this is related to the first problem: the public has no idea of the amount of work that goes into producing a handmade book, and has no way of comparing or evaluating the work and consequently cannot understand and value it. Shock is usually the emotion registered by an ordinary non-book-collecting member of the public on hearing the price of my books. This is somewhat disheartening

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Some back issues of *Amphora* are available for purchase; please inquire for numbers still in print. Letters, story ideas, manuscripts and other material for possible inclusion in *Amphora* are welcome and should be sent to the Editor's attention at the mailing address below, or via the *Amphora* e-mail link on our Web site. We cannot promise to return unsolicited material.

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Membership in the Alcuin Society has the following categories and annual dues: Individual (\$40), Institution (\$60), Corporate/Patron (\$100) and Student (\$20, three years maximum). Individual Canadian members receive a \$16 tax receipt; Patrons receive a \$76 receipt. All categories receive *Amphora*, plus occasional keepsakes and ephemera. Members also have the option, but not obligation, of purchasing books or other materials published or distributed by the Society. The Alcuin Society is registered under the Societies Act of British Columbia as a non-profit association.

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THE ALCUIN SOCIETY was the idea of Geoff Spencer, to promote a wider appreciation of finely wrought books among book lovers around the world. Other founding members were Basil Stuart-Stubbs, Bill Duthie, Sam Black, Bill McConnell, Dale Smith and Sam Fogel.

The name Alcuin was chosen to honour the memory of Alcuin of York (A.D. 735 to 804). Alcuin was a man who cared deeply about books and literacy. As Charlemagne's "Minister of Culture," Alcuin selected the most legible script of his day and gave it official blessing. Known as Caroline minuscule, it ultimately led to our modern lowercase alphabet.

To further its aims, the Alcuin Society engages in a wide range of educational activities, many of them in collaboration with educational institutions—lectures, workshops, exhibitions, field visits and competitions. Annual design awards are made by a panel of expert judges for the best in Canadian book design. *Amphora*, the Society's journal, covers a wide range of topics related to the book: the future of the book, the history of the book, the book arts (typography, type design, calligraphy, papermaking, illustration, printing and binding), publishing, bookselling, book collecting, notable library collections, and reading.

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at times. In addition, a book is not usually something that can be displayed to great effect, thus proclaiming the owner's taste and discrimination, as can a painting, so it is way down on the list of priorities for most people.

So what does one do? I used to make editions of 49 copies when living in the U.K., to avoid giving one to legal deposit. The first half of an edition was usually relatively easy to sell, the second half less so. Consequently I have now limited my editions to a maximum of 30 copies. This means that I can sell most of the books in these smaller editions fairly quickly, and complete the making of them more quickly. I also now give subscribers a small discount to encourage customer loyalty.

Most of us who are engaged in the production of fine press and artists' books have to find ways to generate additional income. Some teach, run courses, or publish commercially viable alternatives such as cards, wedding invitations, etc. For many years I continued to take binding and conservation commissions. The other option is to scrape by hoping that eventually your genius will be recognized, and the public will at last fight to buy your books!

Jan Kellett
De Walden Press
Qualicum Beach, B.C.

UPCOMING



The next issue of Amphora (February 2008) will feature a photo-report of the annual Yosef Work - Simon Fraser University - Alcuin Society Lecture. This year's event (Saturday 17 November, in Vancouver) celebrates the six-decade career of typographer and designer Robert R. Reid (see page 8 in this issue for a preview). Also scheduled for the issue are recollections from a participant at Barbarian Press' week-long printing class; and a travelogue by musician Keith Lowe, currently on tour through Europe and Asia with David Sylvian, about spending his free time (and money) in new cities scouting for books.

LIBRARIES

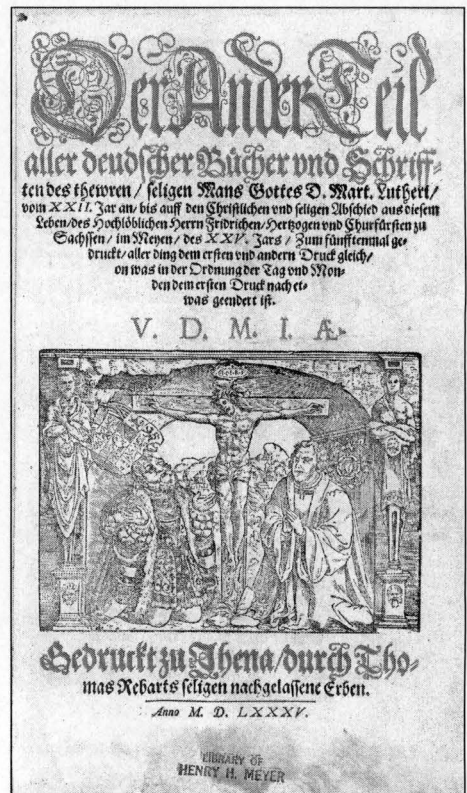
A Reformation boon at UBC

This past summer, long-time Alcuin Society member Henry Messerschmidt made a major donation to the University of British Columbia's Rare Books and Special Collections, in the form of his collection of books related to German woodcut illustration.

When Martin Luther started what became the Protestant Reformation in October

The core of his collection can be represented by *Ander Teil all deutscher Bücher und Schriften des teueren, seligen Mans Gottes D. Mart. Luthers*, a compilation of Martin Luther's works printed in Jena in 1585. This edition includes a fine frontispiece showing Luther and Friedrich, Duke of Saxony kneeling before the crucified Christ, two illustrations in a grotesque and satirical mode attributed to Lucas Cranach, and a portrait binding with the image of Martin Luther.

Henry occasionally indulged in a fine book



of 1517 he had to communicate with a large audience, many of whom were functionally illiterate. The wood-engraved illustration was a way of communicating with that large audience. Henry Messerschmidt's collection includes diverse examples of books using this medium, from modest propaganda pamphlets to major religious works. It also includes some portrait bindings that glorify the leaders of the Reformation.

Henry was first a collector of pewter, and he came to book collecting later in his life. Fluent in German, he was able to identify rare Reformation books and purchase them through auctions and on the local market at what he sometimes considered good prices.

outside of his immediate collecting area, such as his copy of Gerarde's herbal *The Herball, or, Generall Historie of Plantes*, a first edition published in London by John Norton in 1597 and notable for its woodcut illustrations, which were German in origin. UBC Library was thrilled to receive this book because it joins the second edition already in the collection. Also in this category is *Zinbergwerks Ordnung*, printed in Zwickau by Wolfgang Meyerpick in 1548, a book of mining rules that includes paragraphs on labour regulations.

Henry's collection is in the process of being catalogued. Descriptive records can be viewed by searching the library's Web site (www.library.ubc.ca).