

# Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies

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Volume 1, Number 3, Summer 1996

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## *From the Editor*

WE HOPE this newsletter provides information and comments useful to members of the various associated bibliophilic clubs. The modest purpose of FABS is to be of value to each of the associated clubs. We hope to accomplish this partially through these newsletters.

It is important that members of the various bibliophilic clubs respond with their own ideas about the newsletter. Please do not hesitate to submit any reports or articles you think will be appropriate. Comments or questions about any aspect of FABS are also welcomed.

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## *ILAB Reception for FABS Members!*

HOSTED by the Book Club of California on Thursday, September 5, 1996, from 5-7 pm, at their rooms in 312 Sutter Street, Suite 510, this open house will allow members of FABS associated clubs to meet with each other. The gathering is set on the eve of the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers Fair in San Francisco.

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## *The Value of Trips by Clubs Ensemble*

### *"Camp Bookworm" Brings Greater Fellowship*

By tradition, Presidents of Rowfant encourage and lead tours to libraries, collections, and bibliographic sites. This service is part of the act. We have visited places as near as Ann Arbor, Michigan and as far as Rome. Often there is a club at our destination similar to ours and with which we try to coordinate activities.

This year it was a visit to Washington, D.C. in early March. An advance visit was paid to selected libraries in mid-December. Three weeks later our roughly 250 active members were solicited for travel bookings, and on March 7, some 37 members and 20 companions converged on the nation's capitol for three days and two nights visiting six libraries,

and other places of bookish interest, while enjoying a gathering with 14 local area booksellers.

We were given wonderful hospitality by the librarians and curators involved. I had expected that pleasure. There is, however, another surprising effect of an ensemble trip. It is that we got to know and to like each other much better than in the ordinary communion of regular club events.

Rowfant has over 90 events a year. It hardly seems possible to see each other more than that. Yet, becoming companions in travel did pay additional rewards in socializing us. We saw each other in motorcoach, banquet and cafeteria, and shared three meals a day over the three days we were together.

Any vagueness about who came with whom, who collected which kind of book, who had special reminiscences and connections in the Washington area—all were dissolved away by frequent, gentle deadlines. Everyone was convivial at "Camp Bookworm."

The questions to curators, the responses to talks, and breaking off into small groups to make tiny side expeditions—all helped to attach characters to the names and faces we know at the clubhouse. On these grounds alone the trip was a fine bonding experience.

Add in the privileged access to remarkable rare volumes—early Arabian medical writings, a first folio Shakespeare, Lincoln's own scrapbooks on his debates and the benefits of a library tour are clear, whether in Washington or elsewhere.

Many clubs have never traveled together. It may be difficult to obtain an enthusiastic acceptance for a trip from club members. It may seem that group travel, especially to places where one has been, is not necessary. After all, can't we all visit such a place as Washington or London ourselves? True, but not in the same way.

The value of an ensemble trip is twofold: You won't find such a tour or even find individually access to the curator of rare books or the director of the library and also see the high points of a collection. Ours are special interest groups that fortunately get special treatment.

The second point is that a sense of camaraderie and the

pleasure of knowing similarly interested companions are indeed sweet. Clearly, in the words of the Michelin Guide, it is *vaut le voyage*.

Any club interested in putting on a tour and seeking practical advice is welcome to phone me at 216-283-0560 and learn something about what is involved. There's work—but it is worth it.

ROBERT TARGETT  
*The Rowfant Club*

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### The Club Newsletter:

#### *A Vital Extension of the Club Itself*

THE newsletter of a book society can be an important addition to the program of a club and may be well worth the cost such an addition entails. We at the Caxton Club have found it to be so, in nearly four years of publishing the *Caxtonian*.

A club newsletter is testimony to the organization's existence and provides members a linkage between meetings. When well done, it becomes the living essence of the club, defining and refining the organization both graphically and verbally in the context of each issue and throughout the years of publication.

Members respond to the newsletter with enthusiasm and the same fond appreciation they find in their club membership. Many Caxtonians report that they read the newsletter immediately upon receipt—it is considered that urgent to them. Some become inspired by the news and feature stories about books, their collection, or bibliophilic remembrances. Thus a good newsletter takes on a life of its own. In quite a remarkable way, it creates tangible bonds among people that extend fellowship, understanding, and growth beyond anything else to members.

The newsletter becomes an historical record of the club. It provides for those who cannot regularly attend meetings a running documentary of speakers and club activities—to say nothing of programs beyond the club, in the local and even in the national community. It is a means of sharing ideas and information among book people and between organizations devoted to the book.

Beyond these important intangible elements, there is another aspect that, though tangible, is consequential. Every successful newsletter editor will invest his or her publication with a certain *persona*—an extension of him or herself—that is sufficiently vital and interesting to the audience to give the expressed ideas value beyond the moment in which they

were written. The best newsletters, like good books, will be worth rereading.

The *persona* of a newsletter should be natural and authentic. It will contain a view and a voice that is larger than one person. It will represent the perspective of the collective body though spoken as if it is the editor's alone. This vantage point will be a compelling *raison d'être* for the newsletter and will, in a subtle way, enrich the club itself.

ROBERT COTNER  
Past President, The Caxton Club,  
and Editor of the *Caxtonian*

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### *Catalogue of Literary Societies Available*

WE have prepared a list of over 100 literary societies and associations. Special interest organizations range from the Jane Austen Society and Lewis Carroll Society to groups devoted to Christopher Marlow, Robert Burns, and James Joyce. There are addresses, officers, phone numbers, and sometimes a membership fee schedule.

This item is available at no cost to members of FABS clubs from L. N. Siegler, 3012 Fairmount Boulevard, Cleveland Hts., Ohio 44118.

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### *Welcome to Four New Member Clubs*

BRUCE McKittrick, Membership Chairman, has announced that the Sacramento Book Collectors Club, the Book Club of Washington, the John Russell Bartlett Society, and the Florida Bibliophile Society are now members of FABS.

THE SACRAMENTO BOOK COLLECTORS CLUB was organized in 1939 and has about 200 members. Its general purpose is to promote interest in the printed word and from time to time to publish books, pamphlets, and ephemera. The Club has published 12 books in its 57 years. At monthly meetings, members share their bibliophilic interests and often hear an invited speaker. The Club also conducts trips to sites of bookish interest. For the past ten years the Club has issued a quarterly newsletter. Annual dues are \$15. The address is P.O. Box 160044, Sacramento, CA 95816.

THE BOOK CLUB OF WASHINGTON was founded 14 years ago to recognize, encourage, and further the interests of the book, printing, and their associated arts. Members gather at dinner meetings for lectures, presentations, and exhibitions. Awards are given for achievement and contribution to the book arts. The Club has published one book and has pro-



duced a booklet style newsletter for 12 years. Membership dues range from \$25 to \$100 annually. The address is P.O. Box 4081, Seattle, WA 98104.

THE FLORIDA BIBLIOPHILE SOCIETY was established in 1983 and currently has 86 members, primarily in the Tampa Bay area. Meetings are held monthly from September to May. The Club sponsors speakers, book swaps, sales, and auctions. It supports the annual Florida Antiquarian Book Fair and also provides book evaluations. They offer displays of books, ephemera, prints, and maps at the annual St. Petersburg Festival of Reading.

We welcome members of FABS. There is always enough coffee and pastry for visitors.

The monthly newsletter contains 18 pages of book-related material from a wide variety of sources. Any questions should be directed to Lee Harrer, FBS General Factotum, 1908 Seagull Drive, Clearwater, FL 34624-6622.

THE JOHN RUSSELL BARTLETT SOCIETY is dedicated to furthering the interest of its members in all aspects of the book arts. It sponsors lectures and other events at which the members will be able to share this interest and increase their knowledge of and experience with books, printing, and related matters.

The Society holds meetings which present speakers and a variety of bibliophilic topics. It presents exhibits of small presses and sponsors demonstrations of techniques in the book arts. The Society also awards the Stillwell prize to students who show evidence of the development of a significant book collection.

The Society's address is c/o Pamela A. Rakowski, The John Carter Brown Library, Box 1894, Providence, RI 02912.

### *News and Announcements From Various Clubs*



*The Caxton Club*: Dinner programs are ordinarily held on the third Wednesday of the month. Pre-prandials: 5-6, dinner: 6-7 with a speaker to follow.

August 21: Richard Bales on "Great Chicago Fires—New Explorations in the Literature After 125 Years." Bales is a local history collector.

September 18: Werner Gundersheimer on "The Folger Shakespeare Library." He is the Director of the Folger.

October 16: Patrick Reilly, topic to be announced. Reilly is Chairman of the English Department at Glasgow University.

November 20: Richard Wilson on "Words, Words, Words—The Printer's Devils." Wilson is a Professor at Oxford University, now on a fellowship at Northwestern University.

December 18 (tentatively): Annual Holiday Revels. John S. Railing on "Pop-up and Moveable Books." Railing has one of the largest collections of pop-ups and moveables in the country.

Submitted by Tom Joyce, President. 400 N. Racine No. 103A, Chicago, IL 60622-5838; Tel: 312-738-1933.



*The Roxburghe Club* of San Francisco has been blessed this year with a stellar list of speakers at its dinner meetings on the third Tuesday of each month, usually at the University Club on Nob Hill. If you plan to be in the San Francisco Bay area, the Club invites you to join us for cocktails, dinner, and yet another "stellar" speaker. The "at-cost" price is about \$35 and it includes one of the most spectacular views of the San Francisco skyline—exceeding even that of the Emerald City of Oz.

We delight in entertaining out of town booklovers. If your schedule fits, please call Harlan Kessel at 510-452-4474 or fax at 510-452-4479, or Jack Maclean at 510-254-2570. In the unthinkable event that neither of us is available, call Jim Nance at the Book Club of California, 415-781-7532 or fax 415-781-7537.

Club members often remark that one of the great perquisites of membership in our Club is the gift of longevity; throughout its history, nonagenarians abound. Still, nothing is guaranteed forever. The Club notes the recent deaths of master-printer/publisher Ward Ritchie at 91 and Rev. William Monihan, S.J., founder of the University of San Francisco Special Collections Library. "Father Bill," to all who knew him, was 81. Ward and Father Bill, we fill your shoes with reverent trepidation.

Among our recent speakers were Nicholas Basbanes, author of *A Gentle Madness*; *Bibliophiles*, *Bibliomanes*, and *the Eternal Passion for Books*; art historian Adela Roatcat on "William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites"; Scripps College press's Kitty Maryatt on "A Quarter Century in the Book Arts"; and Long Islander Dr. Jack Hagstrom on "Robert Frost in San Francisco." The love of books has yet to establish boundaries in the San Francisco Bay area.

October 25-27 marks the biannual joint meeting of the Roxburghe Club and the Zamarano Club of Los Angeles. As this year's host, we shall treat the Zamaranoans to the finest new and established libraries—public and private—in San Francisco, the city that has in this decade spent more on new libraries than any other American city. And that's a fact you may wish to file away in preparation for your next visit.

HARLAN KESSEL  
*Master of the Press*



The Book Club of California's present exhibition called "1930" will remain in place until August 19. It will be followed by an exhibition of the work of the late Ward Ritchie, through October 7, 1996. The last exhibition of 1996 scheduled will be drawn from the Hand Bookbinders of California, who have been asked to bind a copy of Herbert and Peter Fahey's *Finishing in Hand Bookbinding*. These unique bindings will be exhibited until December 1.

Our next keepsake booklet, *A San Francisco Housebuilder*, will be distributed soon. Club members will have the opportunity to order *A Widely Cast Net: Selections From the Work of a Veteran California Writer Chosen with Comments by their Author, Oscar Lewis*. Scheduled for the autumn of 1996 is Gary Kurutz's monumental *The California Gold Rush: A Descriptive Bibliography*, which has already generated a good deal of interest and excitement. Our public programs schedule is still open. Chairwoman Louise Moises is working on several possibilities.

At the Book Club of California, we like to remember the Chinese saying, "How pleasant it is to welcome visitors from afar."

ANN WHIPPLE  
Executive Secretary



The Philobiblon Club has monthly meetings on the second Tuesday from September to October except for January. No firm schedule has been set. As usual, speakers will be worthy of our careful consideration. Visitors from other FABS clubs are most welcome.

More information can be obtained from George Allen, President, at 215-563-3398 or from Dan Traister, C/o The Van Pelt Library, 3420 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104; Tel 215-898-7088; e-mail address is [www.english.upenn.edu/~traister/phil.html](http://www.english.upenn.edu/~traister/phil.html)



The Rowfant Club's 1996-97 season promises to be one of its most exciting in many years. We have dinner meetings at our clubhouse three times per month from October to May. Our weekly Friday luncheon programs cover a wide range of subjects.

October 9: Nicholas Basbanes, who is beginning another book with special emphasis on regional collections and possibly on groups of collectors such as members of FABS

October 16: Roger Stoddard, Houghton Library, Harvard

University, "500 Years of Russian Bookmaking"

October 23: Frank Kysela, "Wine Tasting: Its Idiosyncrasies"

October 30: Steven L. Carson, ed. *Manuscript Age*, 1st Annual H. Jack Lang Lecture

November 13: Thomas Van Nortwick, Oberlin College, "The Aeneid: A Modern Point of View"

November 20: M.J. Albacete, dir. Canton Art Museum, "New Discoveries in Prehistoric French Cave Painting"

December 11: Michael Barrett, Univ. School, "Teaching History in the Modern World"

December 18: Book Auction and Christmas Party

January 15: T. Andrew Secora, "History of Great Lakes' Passenger Ships"

January 22: Alan Peskin, John Carroll Univ., "President Garfield: What If?"

We welcome your visit to Cleveland. Contact Rev. David A. Novak, 216-361-4659, President or George Weimer IV, 216-566-7019 for arrangements.



The Grolier Club's general calendar of events:

September 11-November 8: Small exhibition of new members' collections

September 17-November 23: Public exhibition—"So Precious a Foundation: The Library of Leander Van Ess" at the Burke Library of the Union Theological Seminary, Milton Gatch, Curator

September 24: Curator's chat—Dan Leab on "Collecting George Orwell" 5:30 pm

September 28: Symposium—"On John James Audubon" organized by Wendy Shadwell, probably 2-5 pm

October 2: Special functions—6 pm reception for George Newlin's *Everything in Dickens*; 7 pm dinner—David Parker, Curator Dickens House, cost \$50

Club meeting: Jaroslav Pelikan on "Biblia and Bibliotheca." Co-sponsored by the friends of the Burke Library at 6:00 pm

October 29: Nikirk Lecture—John Julius Norwich, 6:00 pm

March 4-May 3, 1997: Public exhibition—"Kim Merker and the Windover Press: 40 year retrospective" Michael Pelch, Curator

April-May 1997: Small exhibition: "Suprematism, Constructivism and the Bauhaus" From the collection of George Abrams

May 20-July 31, 1997: Public exhibition—"The Horblit/Phillips Collection of the Grolier Club" Curated by G. Thomas Tanselle and Eric Holzenberg



These events are subject to change and sometimes for members only. Please call Martin Antonetti at 212-838-6690 for details and reservation.



*The Baxter Society's* activities for the second half of the year:

August 3: Annual Summer Outing at the Castine-Blue Hill region of Maine for a day of visiting book shops and artists' studios. We will visit booksellers Leon and Elizabeth Ballou and Barbara and Richard Falk, all members of the Baxter Society and our hosts for the day. After lunch we will visit the Turtle Gallery, Deer Isle, to see the work of the state's leading wood engraver, Siri Beckman. Later we will visit the studio of Linda Funk at East Blue Hill. Linda is also a Baxter member and is considered Maine's leading botanical watercolorist. This outing is our 12th consecutive annual trip to a special book arts institution or area. The first such trip was to August Hecksher's High Loft Press at Seal Harbor in 1985.

September 11: This will be our lead off regular 2nd Wednesday meeting for the fall season. There will be a talk on the well-known Portlander, Edward Sylvester Morse, whose collecting interests included Japanese literature.

October 9: Aprile Gallant, Asst. Curator for Prints, Drawings and Photographs at the Portland Museum of Art, will give us a preview of a Maine book arts exhibit she will curate this winter at the Portland Museum of Art. She has served as a judge for the Society's triennial Stephen Harvard Competition in the Book Arts.

November 13: We will devote this meeting to a fundraising event at a local cinema owned by our members Steve and Judy Halpert. We will sell tickets for a special showing of a book-theme film, e.g., "84 Charing Cross Road" or "Fahrenheit 451," or perhaps a new film that has not yet appeared in Portland.

December 11: Our 13th annual meeting and election of officers, possibly with a speaker and certainly with holiday cheer.

If you are in the Portland, Maine area, we cordially invite you to attend our meetings. Call Georgiana Peacher, President, at 207-799-5920, who will supply details and make arrangements.

I am looking forward to attending the 16th International League of Antiquarian Booksellers Fair in San Francisco September 5-8 and meeting other FABS colleagues there.

ELIOT STANLEY  
*Founder and First President*

*Chair:* Lawrence Siegler

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*Secretary/Treasurer:* John McClatchey

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THIS issue of the FABS Newsletter has been set entirely on the Linotype in Granjon types at The Ascensius Press in Portland, Maine. Three thousand copies were printed near the end of August, 1996.