The Book
Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture
Published by the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts

For further information on AAS fellowships and for application forms, interested persons should write John B. Hench at the Society.

Prospectus for History of the Book Published with This Newsletter Issue
A prospectus for the planned collaborative, multivolume history of the book in American culture to be edited by David D. Hall, chairman of the AAS Program in the History of the Book in American Culture and to be prepared under the Program’s auspices, has been published and is included as a supplement inside this issue of The Book. Hall welcomes comments on the prospectus, which includes a chapter outline of the three-volume work.

Work-in-Progress Conference Planned for Next Summer
The Program is planning a day-long “Work-in-Progress” conference, tentatively set for Tuesday, June 27, 1989, devoted to reports on current research. We cordially invite everyone who is presently pursuing the history of the book in any of its many forms to participate. Please indicate your interest by sending a brief summary of your research to John Hench at AAS no later than February 1, 1989. Do note that we limit our chronological scope to the centuries and decades before 1877 (or thereabouts). Details about the conference will appear in the March issue of this newsletter.

Plans are also under way for the next Summer Seminar in the History of the Book in American Culture (the fourth), to take place not this coming summer but the summer of 1990.

Printing Anniversary Events Noted
Next year—1989—will be a banner year for anniversary celebrations, and the American Antiquarian Society and its Program in the History of the Book in American Culture will participate in their share.

The year marks the Bicentennial of the French Revolution, of course. AAS is lending the printing press on which its founder, Isaiah Thomas, learned to print to the New York Public Library for the major exhibition “Revolution in Print: France, 1789.” This eighteenth-century English-made common press, along with the Society’s imposing stone, will be set up in a portion of the
Gottesman Exhibition Hall recreating a representative eighteenth-century printing office, whether in France or America. We believe that this is the first time that the press will have been exhibited outside of Worcester since it was shown at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876.

To provide special incentive for AAS members to view the exhibition, the Society's semiannual meeting in April will be held at the NYPL. Robert Darnton, who is guest curator of the exhibition, will give the paper at the AAS meeting.

Next year is also serving to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the first printing done in what is now the United States. The Society plans a number of events in conjunction. AAS will mount a special exhibition of seventeen-century American printing, drawn from the AAS collections, and will publish a catalogue of the exhibition. The exhibition will be on view in Antiquarian Hall from October 2 through November 17. New Haven rare book dealer William S. Reese will speak on the topic at the Society's annual meeting on Wednesday, October 18.

The James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American Culture will be delivered in that same month, on Friday, October 27, by Robert A. Gross, professor of history and American studies at the College of William and Mary. His lecture, entitled "Printing, Politics, and the People," will be a broad overview of the relationship between printing and American political life.

Gross's Wiggins lecture will take place during a meeting (October 26-28) at AAS of the International Committee for the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), in which AAS, through its North American Imprints Program (NAIP), is a participant. The committee's meeting will culminate in a day-long public symposium on Saturday, October 28, on the scholarly uses and research potential of bibliographical databases like ESTC and NAIP.

Research Notes

PERSONAL LIBRARIES IN ESSEX COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS, 1760-1800

This study examines the personal book holdings of Essex County residents as recorded in probate records filed between 1760 and 1800. The uncertainties inherent in probate analysis are well known, as are the idiosyncrasies of inventory takers with respect to identifying individual book titles and authors. Yet, inventories remain the most accessible and often the only evidence of book ownership we have for the late eighteenth century.

The principal aim of the inquiry is to discover the occupational, economic, and geographic patterns of book ownership in one Massachusetts county. I have examined over 4,700 estate inventories registered during that period, and have gathered information on the books owned and their monetary value, as well as on the occupation, residence, real estate, personal estate, and total estate of each decedent, whether or not a book holder. When books are not itemized by title or author, I have noted the description of them that does appear—for example, the familiar "parcel of books"—and their assessed value. The data are being entered into my personal computer for analysis using Dbase III Plus software.

I seek answers to a number of questions. For example, some Essex County residents owned books and others did not. Who comprised each group? Where did they live? What were their occupations, their wealth, their places in the political life of their town, county or state, or, in time, nation? What titles and authors appear most frequently among the various occupations, in the libraries of political leaders, in each town, and across the different economic strata? What were the sizes of personal libraries among the various occupations, towns, and categories of wealth? Did the patterns of book ownership change over time? Did the ratio of religious to secular titles change between 1760 and 1800? What can all of this tell us about the collective mentality of the county during the last forty years of the eighteenth century, and what conclusions can we make about literacy in that period?

The probate estates of retailers sometimes contain itemized inventories of books for sale along with the other goods in stock. Studying this segment of their stock-in-trade will enable us to discover, with greater precision than with personal libraries alone, if local tastes in reading changed over time; and it will provide a means of comparing the contents of personal libraries with the titles, authors, and subject matter then currently avail-
Prospectus: A History of the Book in American Culture

Since the very outset of the American Antiquarian Society's Program in the History of the Book in American Culture, we envisioned a collaborative history of "the book" in the United States. Incorporating the traditional subject matter of book history, this narrative would also encompass questions and topics arising out of literary, cultural, and social history. Interdisciplinary and, we trust, looking afresh at a range of problems, this series of volumes would represent as fully as possible the rethinking of the history of the book that has occurred in our time.

In advance, I want to sketch the general outlines of such a history. Many decisions remain to be made about emphasis and interpretation. Much will depend on the individual contributors. All the same, certain features of the project can be described with assurance. It is crucial that our history be comparative, and that it take account of recent work in literary history on authors, the marketplace, and the literary "canon." Similarly, it is crucial that the series comprehend the practice of reading and the question of a "reading revolution." Our series must have a firm ground in economic and social history via, for example, a careful geography of region and social class in these pertain to the structures of writing, reading, and the book trade. Let me expand briefly on these matters.

The task of comparison is immensely facilitated by the publication of the Histoire de l'Édition Française, and by current work in progress. I refer in particular to the History of the Book in Britain, a six-volume series under the general editorship of D.F. McKenzie and David McKitterick, for which the planning is well advanced. A collaborative, multivolume general history of publishing in Germany is also being developed. One way to take advantage of these projects is to heed the list of fourteen topics Robert Darnton has recently listed as subjects for comparative investigation. One or two of Darnton's topics have less relevance for Americanists than for our counterparts in Europe: e.g., the trade in illicit books. But with this list in hand, and taking due account of debate over independence and dependence in the shaping of American culture, we may hope to indicate more fully than before the main parallels and differences.

Another context for our project is literary history and the questions it is asking about authors, gender, and the marketplace. Literary critics are rethinking how a national literary culture emerged in the nineteenth century, and how the "hard facts" of gender, class, and race were represented in that culture. Literary criticism explicates a politics of culture, a politics central to the history of the book.

Two other topics central to the history of the book as we understand it in the 1980s are readers, together with the act of reading, and the book as artifact. Reading is a mediated practice. It occurs in the context of instructions about how to read, and assumptions about the significance of books. These circumstances converge to create interpretive communities. The history of reading also intersects with the emergence of specific genres and formats—for example, the vernacular Bible, the novel, the penny newspaper. We shall want to examine all these matters and as well consider the assertion that a "reading revolution" occurred in the early nineteenth century. The history of reading directs our attention to the book as artifact, for reading is related to the organization of the printed page.

Social and cultural history enforce on us a paradoxical awareness of conflict or division and consensus. Any argument for a separate "popular culture" or "working class culture" (to cite two examples) bears on the history of the book, since distinctions of this kind were replicated in the production and consumption of print. At the same time, historians identify cultural and social patterns that worked powerfully to mediate the high and the low, the middle and the lower classes. For two centuries and more, many Protestant Americans shared such a mediating system, a vernacular culture of the Word. By the late nineteenth century, a formation that some historians refer to as "commercial culture" was manifested in products that were widely consumed. Commercial culture had its reflex in the growing effort to articulate and organize a "serious" cultural system. When Edward Bellamy in Looking Backward imagined that the literary marketplace worked only to reward "true merit," he was voicing a goal that yielded the "higher journalism" and a reformation of the literary canon.

The making of a shared or common culture involved, in the nineteenth century, the free public school, the public library, and the religious denominations. The great denominations spawned tract and Bible societies, all of which were eager to exploit every advance in technology. We may also conceive of conflict and consensus not solely in these terms, but as involving scores of groups that operated on the periphery. Such groups functioned to contest the mainstream. Yet some turned into major players or had moments when they moved close to the center.

Our series must acknowledge the geography of culture: center and periphery, cosmopolitan and provincial. Yet it must also heed the geography of literacy and the book trade. The famous line that divided nineteenth-century France into a literate north and a less literate south was repeated in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America in the differences between North and South. We must
utilize every kind of quantitative evidence to create a set of overlapping maps that reveal patterns of production and consumption, and the routes of distribution.

Animated by these themes, the history of the book in America must begin by giving ample space to printing, publishing, and distribution. By and large, trade practices in colonial and early national America were very like the practices that made up what Roger Chartier describes as the "old regime" in France. Here, as overseas in Britain and the Continental countries, the old regime gave way gradually to the system that, in places like New York was maturing by the Civil War. An important feature of this system was the differentiation of printer and bookseller from publisher. Edition runs for certain books rose into the many thousands. Yet the "rise of the publisher," though unmistakable, should not obscure the variety of trade practices in nineteenth-century America. It is no easy task to take account of this variety, or to deal with publishing and printing as economic enterprises. We shall offset general essays with case histories that look closely at particular printers and publishers.

It is tempting to envisage a clear focus for the series. The organizers of l'Histoire de l'Édition Française chose "publishing" as their center, as have the organizers of the German series. A framework of this kind has many useful consequences, chief among them a strong sense of period and chronology. We have chosen a structure that may not be as satisfactory, though it offers other benefits. We will cover the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in a single volume, and the nineteenth (through 1876 or thereafter) in two, a division that enables us to focus clearly on the Revolutionary period before taking up the transformations that occurred in the nineteenth century. It seems likely that our main governing concepts will be drawn from cultural and social history (in the broadest sense) as much as from the history of publishing.

The first volume in the series will encompass the period of settlement, expansion, and state-making. This sweep of time is divided into three sections: the seventeenth century, by the end of which presses were at work in Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania; the half century up to 1750; and the fifty years that culminated in the Revolution and the founding of the American republic. The initial chapter in the volume will survey trade practices in Europe, and especially England, as these bear on the history of the book in colonial America. This chapter is crucial to a major theme throughout these essays, the dependence of the book trade in the colonies on its British counterpart. Another theme is the transfer to this country of a Protestant vernacular tradition, a veritable "culture" of the book that had broad consequences for the acts of writing and reading. By the early eighteenth century, a "literary" self-consciousness about books and authorship was emerging in our coastal towns. Times of crisis, like the movement to assert the right of "no taxation without representation," tested and transform-
ed the prevailing methods of communication. Independence arose out of and confirmed the framework of "republicanism," a framework that, as Thomas Jefferson realized in advising people on their reading, involved books and how to use them.

These chapters on the first two centuries of the book in America will mainly be narrative, incorporating readers, writers, the trades, and intermediaries into a single story. Once we reach the Revolutionary period, with its richer history of events, including the emergence of new genres, partition becomes necessary. Thus, it is envisaged that the last half of the eighteenth century will require treatment in three separate chapters: the first on the book trades, a second on books and the Revolutionary crisis (down to 1800), and a third on literary genres, writers, and critics. A final chapter is set aside for description of the book material as a material artifact; this same data will inform the narrative chapters.

Though the series divides at the year 1800, we recognize that long-term patterns do not end or begin so abruptly. Some of the chapters on the nineteenth century will therefore reach back into the eighteenth, either to pick up on an untold story or to set in motion trends and patterns that become more visible thereafter. Common sense, together with the reality of academic specialization, dictates that we organize the chapters in the nineteenth century volumes around topics rather than attempting an inclusive narrative.

The central theme of these volumes is the transformation from old regime to new, and its consequences for how books were understood and used. Possibly the most important chapter will deal with trade practices, including distribution, and the separation of the "publisher" from such functions as printing and book-selling. A chapter on journalism will detail the emergence of the urban penny press, the general magazine, and the "higher" journalism, all of which were present by the 1850s. The discussion of reading and readers will confront the question of a "reading revolution" in describing the emergence of a "middle-class reading public," or more sweepingly, the "common reader." It is also important that we look at particular communities in which reading was constrained by extreme social circumstances; an example is the slave community.

Other changes were occurring in the status of the author and the meaning of literary property. Copyright, originating in the Revolutionary period, came to have particular significance for writers at midcentury and beyond. Beginning in the 1820s, and especially after 1850, authors earned enough from writing to think of themselves as professionals. Meanwhile the community of writers was increasing in size. Lawrence Buell has counted some 500 persons in New England between 1800 and 1860 who were published writers of belles lettres; the total number for the nation was, of course, much larger. The surge in numbers and its consequence, a much
intensified struggle to gain recognition, may explain the emergence of the literary critic and of texts like Lowell's *A Fable for Critics*, an early effort at discriminating the good writers from the bad. The situation of women writers deserves separate consideration. The gender rules prevailing in this period threatened their careers and withheld from them the recognition of "author" that was gained by men.

The nineteenth century was distinctive in still other ways. Looking back at their own times, observers in the middle of the century were struck by the greatly enlarged role of two institutions, the church and the school. Beginning with the founding of the Methodist Book Concern in 1789, and expanding into Bible, tract, and Sunday School societies and kindred agencies, the denominations became entrepreneurs of print—to be sure, some forms of print, those that promised to transform America into a moral nation. Schoolbooks, though a long-establish ed staple of printing and bookselling, became more significant as increasing numbers of children were enrolled in "public" schools for a longer portion of their lives. A third intermediary was the library, which moved from being "social" and "commercial" as of 1800 to being "public" by the 1870s. Different from the churches and the schools in not initiating publications, libraries nonetheless advanced a certain set of values, including self-improvement.

The enormous power of these agencies was constrained by an even greater power, the commercial marketplace. The case of fiction is instructive. Contested by the tract societies and the Sunday School, condemned as immoral by the churches, regarded with suspicion by reformers bent on bringing education to the people, fiction made its way, regardless, into favor with the reading public. The "rise of the novel" deserves, for several reasons, a place in the history of the book in nineteenth-century America, and not least because it directs our attention to another set of forces than those revealed in the progress of the school and church. A parallel case, though with complications of its own, is the rise of children's books. But the most compelling case may be daily journalism. To foreigners, it was the mid-nineteenth-century American newspaper—vigorou s, racy, read by almost everyone—that seemed our major contribution.

Books can be subversive, or perceived as so. Hence the long history of attempts by church and state to regulate the book trade and to control authors. The nineteenth-century volumes will include a chapter on regulation, whether originating with the trade as a means of lessening competition or with agencies that attempted to prevent certain kinds of books from circulating. It is easy to exaggerate the impact of censorship and, conversely, to exaggerate the extent to which publishers and printers (or the civil state) had an ideal of the freedom of the press. Regulation and freedom were a patchwork that, in different settings (like the antislavery crusade and the Civil War), took on darker colorations.

A chapter in these volumes will resume the topic of the book as artifact and deal with the history of design. A related subject is book illustration, which will follow as a separate section.

Grand reflections on "the book" are best reserved for other publications. But it is fitting that the nineteenth-century volumes conclude with a chapter that, to borrow yet again from Roger Chartier, undertakes to describe the "cultural uses of print." Such a chapter will permit more reflection on the relationship between printed books and politics, including movements for reform. Here, too, the question of how print affected the transmission of culture could be addressed.

One final word of caution: we cannot deal with every form of printing, much less every literary genre. Federal, state, and local governments issued a significant proportion of all printed matter. Of this tide of words, the series will say less than it deserves, although the role of public agencies in initiating printing in newly settled states must be treated. Commercial work, advertisements, music, drama, "ephemera" like menus and timetables—these and scores of other kinds of printing cannot be considered in detail, if at all. The series will do well if it mentions more than a mere handful of writers, printers, publishers, and booksellers. Even so, the series will provide frameworks of interpretation, together with case studies, that illuminate the broader history of the world of print.

We may justly hope to summarize the best scholarship on the history of the book; we may also hope to provoke more research and encourage venturesome interpretations.

David D. Hall

Notes


Outline of the Chapters

**Volume 1**

CHAPTER 1 From the Old World to the New: The Book Trades in Europe
CHAPTER 2 A Religious Press: 1639-1700
CHAPTER 3 A Provincial Press: 1700-1750
CHAPTER 4 The Book Trades in the Revolutionary Era
CHAPTER 5 The Book and the Culture of Republicanism
CHAPTER 6 Readers and Writers
CHAPTER 7 The Book as Artifact

**Volumes 2 and 3**

CHAPTER 1 The Geography of Printing, Bookselling, Publishing, and Literacy
CHAPTER 2 The Book Crafts: Technologies in Transition
   Printing
   Papermaking
   Bookbinding
   Type Design; Type Casting
CHAPTER 3 From Bookselling to Publishing: The Rise of the Publisher
   The Early Republic
   From the 1820s to the Centennial
   Case Studies
   Non-English-Language Publishing
CHAPTER 4 Authors, Professional and Amateur Authorship
   Copyright and the Concept of Literary Property
   Case Study: Women Authors

CHAPTER 5 The Growth of the Reading Public
   The Geography of Reading and Book Ownership
   The Common Reader
   The Serious Reader
   Case Studies: The Afro-American Reading Community; Reading and Readers in Concord, Massachusetts

CHAPTER 6 The Newspaper and the Periodical
   The Practice of Journalism
   The “Higher Journalism”
   The Rise of the General Magazine

CHAPTER 7 Intermediaries: Denominations, Schools, and Political Parties
   Denominational Publishing
   Schools and Schoolbooks
   The Party Press
   Outsiders

CHAPTER 8 Intermediaries: Critics and Connoisseurs
   Criticism and the Canon
   Collectors and the Precious Book

CHAPTER 9 Intermediaries: The Library
   The Private Library and Learned Culture
   The Rise and Decline of the Social Library
   The Public Library

CHAPTER 10 Children’s Literature
CHAPTER 11 Freedom of the Press
CHAPTER 12 The Book as Artifact
CHAPTER 13 Culture, Society, and the Uses of Print in Nineteenth-Century America
able for purchase in the shops of each town. The study
will also attempt to produce, to the degree possible, a
reliable catalogue of titles and authors in the personal
libraries of county residents out of the sometimes clear
but often fragmentary or cryptic inventory notations of
probate officers.

As an examination of the books owned by all classes of
people in Essex County—works that could have meaning
either as direct sources of information for those who
read them or carry meaning as domestic artifacts—this
inquiry should bring us closer to the life of the mind of
one geographical area during the late colonial and early
national periods.

Arlin I. Ginsburg, College of the Redwoods

GIFTBOOKS AND THE PATRIARCHY
As a participant in the American Antiquarian Society's
history of the book seminar “The Politics of Reading,
Writing, and Publishing in Nineteenth-Century America,”
I became interested in the role played by giftbooks and
literary annuals during the first half of the century. (The
AAS has a superb collection.) I was particularly interest-
ed in the issue of gender and the way in which male
editors and publishers had presented these books to a
largely female reading audience, and how this may have
touched over time. I focused primarily on two of the most
popular and influential giftbooks, The Atlantic Souvenir
and The Token, their prefaces and the physical details of
the books as artifacts—outward appearance, presentation
plates, and frontispiece and title-page engravings.

What I found were two quite different and contradic-
tory “texts.” The early giftbook prefaces of The Token
and The Atlantic Souvenir contain almost no references
to the gender of their reading audience. Editors address
a mixed audience of readers as well as any aspiring writers
who may wish to submit material for publication. (Only
in the 1840s, in response to the rise of popular periodicals
for women such as Godfrey's Lady's Book, did the editor
for The Token directly address his “FAIR READER.”
At that point, giftbooks had become full-fledged “ladies
books.”) The primary purpose of giftbooks, according to
these prefaces, was to “foster native literature and art,” by
presenting to the public “the best specimens of native
genius.” Giftbook editors, then, saw themselves strengthen-
ing an American literary and arts establishment in the
face of one dominated by the British.

The physical details of these books, on the other hand,
express an altogether different message—not an American-
ization but a feminization of arts and letters in America.
In their ornate appearance, bespeaking a feminine aesthetic,
their “gift” and “souvenir” titles (“floral” and “jewel”
titles were also popular), and in their elaborate presenta-
 tion plates, giftbooks announce that their principal
readers are women. More than this, as a metaphoric
language of gender, such details also reveal an implicit
recognition and validation of female taste, customs,
values, and the growing economic power of women in the
literary marketplace.

The richest and most revealing details are the frontis-
pieces and title-page engravings. They offer readers a text
about what sort of literature to expect from these
volumes (“lighter” material) and how to read it (for
pleasure, with others). In so doing, they give voice to
reading expectations and experience different in kind
from what was most valued by a male-dominated literary
establishment, represented by critics in the leading jour-
nals of the day such as The North American Review.
These engravings, too, proclaim a feminized world of art
and literature, one that defines and celebrates an alter-
native, female value system based on imagination over
reason, heart over head, the domestic fellowship of the
hearth over the solitude of the study, and a moral
economy of human relationships that emphasizes giving,
sharing, and cherishing.

Giftbooks are important to the history of the book in
America because they reflect and helped to shape a
number of important changes in the publishing world of
this period. Their role in the emergence of women as
increasingly powerful presences in popular literature
deserves more attention by literary and cultural histor-
ians. A complete study of giftbooks and gender,
however, would mean considering also the response of
women (in letters, diaries, and journals) who read
giftbooks, and the response of critics who reviewed them
for the press.

Sherry Sullivan,
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Program Appointments Made

Several appointments to the Executive Committee and
Advisory Board of the Program in the History of the
Book in American Culture were made recently.

Joining the Executive Committee for three-years terms
are Lawrence I. Buell, chair and professor of English at
Oberlin College; Loren F. Ghiglione, president of Wor-
cester County Newspapers and incoming president of the
American Society of Newspaper Editors; and Marie E.
Korey, rare book librarian at the Free Library of
Philadelphia.

Newcomers to the Advisory Board are Susan M. Allen,
acting head of special collections at Honnold Library,
The Claremont Colleges; Nicolas J. Barker, head of
conservation at the British Library; James N. Green,
curator of printed books at the Library Company of
Philadelphia; Donald W. Krummel, professor of library
and information science and of music at the University of
Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; Haynes McMullen, of Hamp-
ton, Va., professor emeritus of library science at the
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; David P.
Nord, associate professor of journalism at Indiana
University; and Jane P. Tompkins, professor of English
at Duke University.
NEH Summer Seminar to Explore Journalism in Historical Perspective

“American Journalism in Historical Perspective” will be one of the 1989 offerings in the series of Summer Seminars for College Teachers underwritten and sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Led by Michael S. Schudson, the seminar will take place June 19 - August 11 at the University of California, San Diego. Seminar participants, according to the NEH brochure describing the 1989 program, “will examine major issues in American journalism since the eighteenth century from both historical and theoretical perspectives, paying special attention to recent scholarship that relates journalism to political, social, and literary history.”

For further information on the substance of the seminar and for application forms, write to Professor Schudson at the Department of Communications, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, Calif. 92093.

AAS Publishes Directory of Fellows and Summer Seminarians

The Society has published a Directory of American Antiquarian Society Fellows and Research Associates, 1972-1989. The directory also lists the names and affiliations of all the matriculants in the three Summer Seminars in the History of the Book in American Culture held so far and of the members over the years of the Society’s Committee on Fellowships.

Entries for the nearly 200 fellows and research associates appointed since the program began include information on their education, professional affiliations, research project, and publications (both related and unrelated to their work at AAS).

Copies of the directory are available at AAS for $3.00 each. Persons ordering by mail should add $1.00 for postage and handling.