On Collecting Editions

From time to time, you will notice the richness of the University's book collections measured in terms of editions. Why have various editions of a single title been collected? Not, let us assure you, merely to occupy shelf-room where shelving is scant. The reasons for collecting more than one edition are various and excellent.

The historical investigator and the literary critic, as well as the bibliographer, need to consult many editions of a single title. For example, they want the first edition because in it they find the author's first statement of his thesis. They wish to see the first corrected edition and other revised editions in order to trace the author's line of reasoning from one viewpoint to another. They also want the last edition revised during the author's lifetime, for it contains the writer's final statement or judgment. Then, they will need to consult the best edited and annotated edition for the considered opinions of other critics. Finally, if they have the love of books within them, they will want to see the most beautifully printed edition, simply for the pleasure a finely printed book can bring.

Deliberate changes by authors are not the only differences which make successive editions desirable. Often publishers' changes for political or moral reasons or printers' typographical errors distinguish printings—and sometimes provide amusement as well. We are reminded on this score of the famous edition of the Book of Common Prayer, in which, in the wedding service, confounded some of our ancestors by stating that the bride and groom promise to cleave to one another "so long as ye both shall like", instead of "so long as ye both shall live". There is a deal of difference between "like" and "live" aside from a single letter, and you don't have to be a semantist to know it.

Cicero at Michigan

Classification in a rare book library makes strange bed-fellows. For example, in the Clements Library there is a copy of Cicero's Tusculanae Disputationes Liber Primus, Venice, 1480. How can that be Americana? Cicero lived 1500 years before Columbus and the book was published twelve years before the landfall on San Salvador. But, wait a minute! When Columbus returned to Spain in 1493 "there was a bustling reporter at the Spanish Court, fond of letter writing, having correspondents in distant parts, and to him we owe it, probably, that the news spread to some notable people. This was Peter Martyr d'Anghiera." Our Cicero's Tuscanal disquisitions is from the library of Peter Martyr, and was acquired for that reason. Yet that does not end the matter of Cicero in the Clements Library. Of course, we have the famous Cato Major, Philadelphia, 1744, translated by Judge James Logan—because it was printed by a very famous gentleman, one B. Franklin, and is regarded as his typographical masterpiece. Then we have the London reprint, 1787, and the Philadelphia reprint of 1809—all because of the Franklin association.

How about the Clements Library copy of Cicero's Epistolarum ad Atticum Libri Sexdecim, Glasgow, 1749? Why is that Americana? Well, because it bears the bookplate of John Parke Custis, the autograph of Mary Ann Randolph Custis (wife of Robert E. Lee), and a notation by the gentleman who rescued the volume from a pile of rubbish "waiting the torch" at Arlington (the Lee mansion), when that building was occupied by the Union Army in 1864. The text of none of these books can be classified as having anything to do with American history, but all are quite properly regarded as Americana.

Sursum Corda

Our own "Note for a New Primer" in The Quarto, No. 2, inspired subscriber William B. Willcox, of the University's history department, to stir his deep knowledge of European imbroglios and pour out the following quatrains:

Look up from cut and colophon,
From Wiegendrucke and folio,
To read the imprimitur on
The opus of Badoglio.
The nameless young maiden in view
Has skin of a coppery hue;
Can we be shriven,
Or ever forgiven
For hinting she might be Sweet Sioux?

Shells From New Harmony
The communistic societies, once tried in the United States more than a century ago as a way of life, have all disappeared without a single surviving benefit. The settlement at New Harmony, Indiana, however, produced a book that is a milestone in American natural science. It was written by one of the members and was printed in the industrial school of the colony. It has all the attributes of a rare book since it is “important, desirable, and hard to get.” We refer to Thomas Say’s American Conchology or Description of the Shells of North America Illustrated by Coloured Figures from Original Drawings Executed from Nature. Mrs Say made the drawings.

The work was issued in seven parts—the first six in 1830–34; the seventh (and briefest), written by Timothy A. Conrad, was sent to subscribers “not later than 1838.”

The work was denounced contemporaneously as a “wretched and disgraceful example of American typography”. Reasons are not far to seek; the paper is of varying quality and foxed early, the ink is more gray-black than truly black, there are no page numbers, and the proof reading was such as industrial school children would do. The original cost of the seven parts was $10.50.

Even so, the work is a rarity sought after by collectors. Only 29 complete copies have been traced, and of this number only three are in perfect condition. One of the three is in England, another is in California, and the third has been offered for sale by a book dealer at $650.

We are happy to report that the University Museums Library possesses one of the 29 complete copies, though it is not one of the perfect copies; ours lacks the original covers. It came to the University with the molluscan collections of Dr Bryant Walker. He obtained it from A. E. Foote, dealer in “Scientific and Medical Books and Minerals” in Philadelphia. A private library label indicates that previously the work belonged to S. G. Evans, of Evansville, Indiana, a merchant interested in botany and ornithology and a member of the Indiana Academy of Science.

The Editors Like
Benjamin Franklin’s “Model of a Letter of Recommendation”:
Paris, 4 April 1777

Sir—
The bearer of this, who is going to America, presses me to give him a Letter of Recommendation, tho I know nothing of him, not even his Name. This may seem extraordinary, but I assure you it is not uncommon here. Sometimes, indeed one unknown Person brings another equally unknown, to recommend him; and sometimes they recommend one another! As to this Gentleman, I must refer you to himself for his Character and Merits, with which he is certainly better acquainted than I can possibly be. I recommend him however to those Civilities, which every Stranger, of whom one knows no Harm, has a Right to; and I request you will do him all the good Offices, and show him all the Favour that, on further Acquaintance, you shall find him to deserve. I have the Honour to be, etc.

D/W

Yes, you had better save the dust jackets! About the turn of the century, Franklin P. Adams (F.P.A. to you) attended this University, so we are interested in bibliographicizing him. His recent Innocent Mer­riment gave us a good deal of joy—and then a headache. On the back of the dust jacket there appears a ballade “These are the times that try men’s souls”. Of course, this attracted our attention, because the Clements Library issued a reprint last year of sections of Tom Paine’s famous American Crisis No. I, from which the title of F.P.A.’s ballade is taken. Then we discovered that the poem does not appear in the Information Pleaser’s book, but only on the dust jacket. We wrote the author and asked whether the ballade was printed for the first time in that peculiar spot or had seen first light elsewhere. We also asked for his opinion of dust-jacket-collecting. His reply:

Well, I always save the dust wrapper. That ballade first appeared in the New York Post. I thought it was as appropriate as any of the war bond appeals, so I made a few changes in it and ran it.

So there! The ballade on the dust jacket is its first appearance in that form—so SAVE THE JACKETS!
Note on the Price of a Book
In 1874, Moses Polock, bookseller of Philadelphia, offered to George Brinley, book collector of Hartford, a unique colonial Virginia imprint—Sherlock On Death, Williamsburg, 1744. The price asked was $15 according to the letter from Polock to Brinley, which we find in the Manuscript Division of the Clements Library. Brinley declined, and Polock kept the book, which, in due course, was inherited with the rest of his business by his nephew, Dr Rosenbach of Philadelphia. Half a century after the first offer, Dr Rosenbach sold the book—but not for $15.

Books of this sort have in many cases advanced in price more than 1000 percent in the last fifty years. We keep Polock's original letter in mute testimony of the wisdom of Richard de Bury (14th century):

"No dearness ought to hinder a man from buying books, if he has that which is asked for them, save when he resists the advance of the seller or awaits a more convenient time for buying."

No one would ever accuse Moses Polock ofavarice—he seldom sold a book at any price without afterward regretting that he sold it at all. No more "convenient" opportunity ever presented itself to Brinley to acquire this Virginia book, which is still unique.

Fun With The Spirits
By far the most fascinating reply to the "Personal" we inserted in our last issue came from friend Milo M. Quaife, of the Detroit Public Library, who wrote:

Three or four years ago, Miss Rau of the Library, attended with some friends a spiritualistic seance. During the evening each person present was permitted to ask the medium two questions. When it came to Miss Rau's turn, she asked what became of the first spouse of Mrs Christian Clemens (he disappeared in 1860 or thereabouts and was never heard of again, although some highly unreliable local papers charged Christian with responsibility for his disappearance). The medium said that he went to California (from California in 1860).

Miss Rau's second question was, what became of General Packert's papers after their capture by General Harrison's army on the shore of Lake St. Clair. This question the medium took under advisement, giving she would give the answer at a subsequent session. At this juncture she was interrupted to observe to her assistant,

"This woman asks the damnedest ques-

PP's PP of P & PP
Pucker up your lips and twist your tongues, for Peter Piper is picking his peck of pickled peppers again. One of the friends of the Rare Book Room at the General Library has just given Miss Hymans a copy of a cleverly contrived modern edition of Peter Piper's Practical Principles of Plain and Perfect Pronunciation. The tale of how the book was designed is an excellent illustration of the advantages of cooperation—something about which the world has learned much in recent months and will learn more as Time toils, trips, trots, or trickles along.

Paul A. Bennett, an electrical charge of the typographical circuit, caught sight of a copy of the original American edition and decided the time had come for a tour de force. He secured a photostat of each page of the original edition (each page bears an illustration and a rhyme for a letter of the alphabet) and parceled the series out to various noted artists, designers, and printers, inviting each recipient to redesign or illustrate the page sent him according to his own whim. When the thirty-nine typeenthusiasts had finished their designs, Mr Bennett had an introduction from Dr Harry M. Lydenberg and induced the great Bruce Rogers to join the fun. Mr. Rogers devised the title-page from type elements designed by Thomas M. Cleland and wrote additional text about his old friend the amandmand paper (overlooked in the original edition). The Mergenthaler Linotype Company published the volume in 1935 in two editions. One edition—limited to a small number of copies, and not the edition Miss Hymans received—contains the saga of the ambling ampersand printed on "ampersandpaper".

Help Wanted
The Clements Library has started collections of overseas Army newspapers. We need help in enlarging our infant files and shall appreciate as many numbers as our friends can send us.

Riopelle et Famille
Some time ago, Mrs Sydney F. Heavenrich of Detroit, presented to the Clements Library, in memory of her mother, Mrs Homer L. Love (Irene J. Riopelle), a group of letters and documents of the Riopelle family. This French family was long prominent in Detroit and the papers date from 1794 to 1894. They contain some splendid autographs of eminent officials of France, Canada, and the Old Northwest, including Louis XV; Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnal; Michel Ange, Marquis de Duquesne de Menneville; William Hull; and Arthur St. Clair.

Following this gift, the Michigan Daughters of the American Revolution forwarded another generous check to continue the work of binding the Library's Revolutionary War manuscripts. This time, the DAR, wishing to honor Mrs Heavenrich, specified that part of the money should be used to repair the Riopelle papers and encase them properly. We are happy to report that their wishes have been carried out, and the Riopelle papers, fully and carefully restored, rest in a handsome folding box. We shall be proud to show them off to any enquiring visitor.

T.J.-N.C.-P.B.

We have long suspected that as a good a method as Thomas Jefferson used to identify his books [a manuscript "T" before the signature on leaf J and a manuscript "J" after the signature on leaf T] should not have been peculiar to him. Yet we had never met with another collector who used the scheme until our worthy friend Strickland Gibson, of the Bodleian, after reading the Clements Library bulletin on Thomas Jefferson, pointed out that Nathaniel Cyrus (d. 1745) and Philip Bliss (d. 1837) both indicated ownership of books in the same fashion. Now, what we want to know is who else? Particularly, we would like to know of any American collectors of Jefferson's time or earlier.
"Bibliography is the study of books as tangible objects. It examines the materials of which they are made and the manner in which those materials are put together. It traces their place and mode of origin, and the subsequent adventures that have befallen them. It is not concerned with their contents in a literary sense, but it certainly is concerned with the signs and symbols they contain (apart from their significance) for the manner in which these marks are written or impressed is a very relevant bibliographical fact. And, starting from this fact, it is concerned with the relation of one book to another: the question which manuscript was copied from which, which individual copies of printed books are to be grouped together as forming an edition, and what is the relation of edition to edition. Bibliography, in short, deals with books as more or less organic assemblages of sheets of paper, or vellum, or whatever material they consist of, covered with certain conventional but not arbitrary signs, and with the relation of the signs in one book to those in another."—Dr W. W. Greg in Neophilologus, Vol. xviii, pp. 243-44.

Has any American matched this Englishman’s definition? If he has, where?

A Note on Pirates

Authors who write of pirates usually have to go back to Alexandre Olivier Exquemelin’s Bucaniers of America, London, 1684, for the wildest tales. Yet this book is but a translation from the Spanish Piratas de la America, Cologne, 1681. The Clements Library had the English edition, and has just acquired the Spanish. But this is not enough. We still lack the Dutch original from which the Spanish translation was made — De Americaensche Zeerovers, Amsterdam, 1678.

Source Materialism

The Pierpont Morgan Library and Miss Belle da Costa Greene have just issued a tantalizing description of their exhibit “The Development of America, 1492-1792”. The catalogue torments us because there is no list of the materials displayed; we know that they are unique and we would like to have an idea of what we should envy the Morgan Library for exhibiting. Happily, they point out anew the proper chronological development of the eastern seaboard (i.e., Florida, the Carolinas and Georgia, Virginia and Maryland, Dutch New York, English New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, and, last, New England), which almost makes us less wroth at not seeing the show.

Ex Sede Dolorosa

It seems to us painfully comic that this note should have been conceived in a dentist’s chair. However, during a lull in the ministrations of our favorite local chirurgeon dentist, we tore our mind from our moaning molar and asked the good man to name the first book on modern dentistry. Said he (used to our editorial mind): “Pierre Fauchard’s Le Chirurgien Dentiste, printed at Paris in 1728, and it’s a rare book.” We wandered back to our office in a post dental daze via the Rare Book Room in the General Library. There we checked with Miss Hyman, who ascertained that the University has a fine copy of Fauchard’s book in the Dental Library, and, what’s more, that excellent collection houses the second (1746) and the third (1786) French and the first German (1733) editions as well as the rare first edition of 1728. Somehow, after that discovery, we forgot all about our own teeth (and lack of them) in our appalled contemplation of the horrors of 18th century mechanical dentistry.

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