

THE BOOK

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Hochman and Stewart to Lead AAS Summer Seminar in 2003

“**R**eading and Everyday Life: Books, Texts, Histories” is the title of the summer seminar to be offered at AAS, Sunday, June 15 to Friday, June 20, 2003. This seminar in the interdisciplinary field of book history is, like those offered in previous years, intended for literary scholars and historians (including advanced graduate students), librarians, archivists, and bibliographers, and other scholars who are teaching, or contemplate teaching, topics involving the interpretation of the cultural role of books and other forms of printed material.

The seminar leaders for 2003, Barbara Hochman and David Stewart, have developed their course in response to the observation that, among the principal insights to come out of the last twenty-five years of reading history, different readers read differently. They read in different places; they read for different reasons; they read different things; and when they do read the same things they understand them to have different meanings. “Reading and Everyday Life” will consider the reading of two very different, though both very popular, books of the 1850s: Harriet Beecher Stowe’s famous abolitionist novel/tract, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and pulp novelist George Thompson’s now largely forgotten autobiography, *My Life; or, The Adventures of Geo. Thompson*. The readings will inform group discussion about who read these books, how they read them, and why. Matriculants will also consider the consequences of such reading, directly in acts of reading themselves (weeping, anger, prurient interest), and more broadly in their effects on the everyday lives of readers.

Reconstructing the reading histories of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *My Life* poses different methodological problems that will be considered with special emphasis on links that have developed between history and literary criticism, links that have been indispensable to recent reading studies. Interdisciplinary methods will



“Little Eva and Uncle Tom,” AAS lithograph.

be particularly useful in considering the initial popularity of writers like Stowe and Thompson and the scholarly ambivalence that has attended them since. The format will combine seminar discussions of previously assigned readings, guest lectures, library workshops, and evening round tables.

The seminar leaders are Barbara Hochman and David Stewart. Hochman is senior lecturer in the department of foreign literatures at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, where she has taught since 1997. Her most recent publication is *Getting at the Reader: Reimagining Books and Reading in the Age of American Realism* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2001). David Stewart is assistant professor of English at National Central University, Taiwan, and currently Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at The McNeil Center for Early American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Hochman, who has published widely on American fiction, is at work on a new book about Stowe and the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*; Stewart’s research and writing is on Thompson and men’s reading. Visiting faculty will include Robert A. Gross, Forrest D. Murden Professor of history and American studies at the College of William and Mary, and Mary Kelley, Ruth Bordin Collegiate Professor of history, American culture, and women’s studies at the University of Michigan, and members of AAS staff.

**For detailed information about this seminar, visit the American Antiquarian Society web site—
<http://www.americanantiquarian.org/summersem.htm>.**

This posting includes a complete description, including information about fees and applying for financial aid, housing options during the seminar, and an application cover sheet. The priority deadline for application is February 28, 2003. Applications will be received after that date, if slots still remain in the seminar.



Summer seminar matriculants, June 2002. From left: DiLoreto, Lawrence, Cleary, Schweiger, Bilsky, Kahan, Koupal, Schultz, Smith, Hawley, Johns, Benjamin, Rego, Dorment, McMaster, Jackson, Brabham, Copans, and King.

Notes on the 2002 Summer Seminar, “Books in American Lives, 1830-1890”

Teaching the summer seminar at the AAS promises a rare experience—the resources are so vast in terms of materials and people. The summer seminar always depends on careful advance planning. Throughout the preparation phase, Caroline Sloat and Joanne Chaison guided development of the syllabus with commentary on past seminars and an exploratory field trip to Concord. To add high-octane energy and the perspective of a literary scholar to our study of Louisa May Alcott and story papers, Amy Thomas jettied in from Montana State University as a visiting lecturer.

Since my major publications in book history to date have centered on the Victorian period and domestic reading, I chose as a topic “Books in American Lives.” Sessions centered on how people of the Victorian years lived with books, what resources might be found for book history at the AAS, what sorts of questions might be asked of those sources, and what limitations scholars currently are noting as they reconstruct nineteenth-century cultural life. While designing the curriculum, I was guided by the purpose of sharing with participants the essence of fifteen years’ worth of research in the history of the book in the collections of AAS, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and Winterthur Museum.

As it should, the seminar attracted participants at every phase of their careers. They came from museums, libraries, universities, and graduate schools and from all sections of the coun-

try, and each member had a special purpose. In very general terms, graduate students and scholars looked to promote their scholarship, while librarians and museum professionals looked to develop their expertise and institutions. The seminar offers the challenge of satisfying the interests and raising new issues for each group. The following commentary highlights the points that seminar participants might have gained from our discussions. The course had three components: class presentations, investigation of materials in the AAS collections, and field trips.

The class presentations laid out a narrative framework for the seminar. Rather than bemoan the current wealth of information about white middle-class literacy, I focused the first phase of our class on the middle-class and made the most out of this seeming weakness. During class time, we followed how people of the middle-classes might encounter books and literary references in their domestic and urban lives. Slide presentations accompanied each classroom talk, and I made a few comments to connect the slide narratives. Questions elicited multiple interpretations of the slides and of the experiences of literacy. Because of our visiting lecturer’s current scholarly interest and the proximity of Concord, we planned a visit to nearby Alcott museums and shrines and read Barbara Sicherman’s fine article on the influence of *Little Women* in preparation. To introduce questions of middle-class exceptionalism and gender differentiation in reading, we then drew on

Sicherman's rich and carefully structured historiographic article forthcoming in Volume 3 of *A History of the Book in America*.

"Under the dome," seminar participants enjoyed several sessions to introduce the extent of the collection and the sorts of questions printed matter might raise. In one session, Research Librarian Chaison presented her ever-popular and valuable bibliographic tour of book history resources. In another session, she assembled collections of objects that tested participants' interpretive powers. Participants constructed stories from the original manuscript of J. F. Cooper's *Red Rover* and then a later edition of the book, or from a collection of San Francisco story papers including one with Chinese-language inserts. Through looking at publishers' trade papers, carte-de-visite albums, advertising cards, and other sources, we were able to discuss questions of sexual propriety, class exclusion, and gender, racial, and ethnic typing. Thus, the sources in the library allowed seminar participants to tangle with the initial middle-class focus.

We also took off to Concord for a day of field tripping. There, we visited the Concord Free Public Library, Concord Museum, Orchard House, and the Thoreau Institute. My pedagogical purpose was to encourage the teachers in the group to make use of resources in their communities, to suggest the vast resources available beyond the generous dome, and to raise questions about the relationship of book history to establishment of historical memory. Previously we had engaged the memory question when we spent an evening viewing the most recent effort of Hollywood to reconcile sex appeal and bookishness by casting Winona Ryder as Jo March. Highlights of our Concord day included handling texts that Thoreau had inscribed to Emerson and an early Bible. We were privileged to see an exhibit of Alcott books accompanied by her instructions to illustrators about how their characters should appear.

On the last afternoon of the seminar, the group journeyed up Salisbury Street to a Reform synagogue to hear its rabbi tell about Torah. For the non-Jewish members of the seminar, this trip held many reminders about the cultural relativism of text and the experience that many immigrant groups have when they encounter western-style books and reading. This book encounter in the synagogue should have jarred participants to consider how much we take for granted about our literary culture, including the traditions of reading, the accessibility of text, and its appearance.

Participants in the seminar left impressed by the vastness of the collections at the Society, and the stories that they had not imagined that those resources might tell. As for me, I am still chuckling over the tidbit fed me by a document conservator in our group. Only the week before she had worked on the bill that Paul Revere had sent for riding to Lexington and Concord. We figured out that Revere had charged more than the IRS currently allows per mile.

Louise L. Stevenson
Franklin and Marshall College

MATRICULANTS

Michael Benjamin, Ph.D. program in history, Drew University; Dana Bilsky, Ph.D. candidate in English, Northwestern University; Robin Brabham, associate librarian, Atkins Library, University of North Carolina, Charlotte; Marie Cleary, independent scholar, Associates Program, Five Colleges, Inc.; Ruth Copans, college and special collections librarian, Skidmore College; Sonia DiLoreto, Ph.D. candidate in English, Rutgers University; Maureen Dorment, Ph.D. candidate in history and literature, Drew University; E. Haven Hawley, Ph.D. candidate, School of History, Technology, & Society, Georgia Institute of Technology; Millie Jackson, associate librarian, Zumberge Library, Grand Valley State University; Elizabeth Johns, professor of art history emerita, University of Pennsylvania, and Lilly Fellow, Center for Religion, Ethics, and Culture, The College of the Holy Cross; Paul Kahan, Ph.D. candidate in modern history and literature, Drew University; Cornelia King, reference librarian, Library Company of Philadelphia; Nancy Tystad Koupal, director, South Dakota State Historical Society Press; Kathleen Lawrence, Ph.D. candidate in American and New England Studies, Boston University; MaryKate McMaster, adjunct assistant professor, department of history, Anna Maria College; Rebecca Rego, conservation assistant, Drew University; Lucille Schultz, professor of English, University of Cincinnati; Beth Schweiger, assistant professor of history, University of Arkansas; Sarah Smith, senior bindery technician, Northeast Document Conservation Center.

THE SYLLABUS

Copies of the syllabus for "Books in American Lives, 1830-1890" are available electronically or by mail. Send a request by e-mail to csloat@mwa.org, for an attachment (Microsoft Word for Windows) or to receive hard copy, write, enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope (\$.37 stamp will suffice) to 2002 Summer Seminar Syllabus, c/o Caroline Sloat, American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury Street, Worcester, MA 01609.



Louise Stevenson (center), with Amy Thomas (left), and Joanne Chaison (right).

“Perspectives” as American Book History: Developing a Late-Twentieth-Century Artifact

[These remarks by Paul M. Wright on *Perspectives on American Book History: Artifacts and Commentary* were made at a Library of Congress Symposium, October 21, 2002. This work, edited by Scott E. Casper, Joanne D. Chaison, and Jeffrey D. Groves, was published by the University of Massachusetts Press in association with AAS and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in 2002. —Ed.]

Thanks to the techniques and advances in print culture studies, we have learned to think of a book as not just the physical item one can hold in one’s hand, describe bibliographically, open and appreciate as a made object, but also, and maybe primarily, as a conjunction—a flowing together and nexus—of social currents, intellectual trends, economic potential, historical forces, technological advances, commercial demands, and the like. The seemingly fixed, finished, immutable, and apparently inevitable object—the printed book—we now can define as fluid, contingent, socially constructed, and even accidental. We are here today to talk about some of those social-historical aspects of one particular book: *Perspectives on American Book History*.

Growing out of a medieval guild ethos, printing and publishing have been deliberately arcane sciences. Publishers, like the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain, have not been disposed to reveal their secrets lest the truth come out—that they are much less in control and much more the victims of circumstance than they would let on. Publishing, as I have described it elsewhere, is anarchy masquerading as a business. But as a publishing and print culture historian for thirty-some years as well as an editor for longer than that, I feel obliged to pull aside the curtain and show some of the wheels in motion.

But let me do it by trying to imagine a future print culture historian who will be investigating the genesis and development of that quaint late-twentieth-century artifact: *Perspectives on American Book History*. Let’s suppose that this person is a graduate student studying with a professor of Ancient American Studies at the renamed College of William and Mary and Elvis and Marilyn. This student, having learned that a diligent researcher must go beyond the printed artifact to the documentary records, to the lives of the authors and editors, and to the files of the publishers and sponsoring agencies, will search out the records of the University of Massachusetts Press, housed, one can only hope, at a suitable archive—perhaps the virtual Library of Congress on a vast and complex network that today’s Internet can barely suggest. She will discover perhaps that the 2.5 linear feet of highly acidic paper files on *PABH* (I measured them in preparation for this talk) was digitized sometime in the early twenty-first century and migrated from medium to medium over the years winding up as a small part of a much larger collection residing on a yet to be imagined storage and retrieval medium.

Looking back at the record, our researcher might be struck by the sea change during development of the book from correspondence by conventional mail, telephone, and the then new-fangled FAX to an almost complete switch to e-mail and e-mail attachments for all aspects of business communication. Indeed, the researcher would find that the final “manuscript” — an even more archaic term in the 1990s than in the days of typewriters — was transmitted from the editors to the publisher, along with hard copy, on disk in the form of word-processing files. She would discover that that manuscript was edited on screen, first by me and then by a professional copy editor, that the editors’ and contributors’ corrections and emendations were entered electronically. She would find that the design and layout were all done on screen, including computerized typesetting and digitizing of the illustrations and images, that electronic files of the final pages were sent to the printer who made off-set printing plates directly from those files. For a great deal of its gestation period this manuscript-becoming-a-book would exist as digital files made manifest as flickering images on a video display screen or highly ephemeral hard-copy printouts. As recently as twenty-five to thirty-five years before production of *PABH* our student would discover that publishing was a much more materially-oriented business with virtually unique copies of typed and written-over manuscripts set into metal type, paper proofs corrected in pencil and type reset, final proofs photographed, and negatives exposed on sensitized metal plates, or pages printed directly from type impressed into paper. The only thing digital in those days was the pressman’s fingers. Of course, behind all this electronic simulation and governing and modeling its outcome was the old-fashioned printed book for which a set of conventions had been worked out within the constraints of traditional typography, presswork, and binding over some 500 years.

Our researcher might be struck also by the irony that a book about books would include a large array of electronic files on a CD-ROM bound into the book. She would discover from the correspondence that CD-ROMs were considered “transitional technology,” and that there was an internal debate about using this form of storage or simply mounting the material it contained on an Internet website. Given the pedagogical purposes of the CD-ROM and the then-prevailing slow rates of download from the net as well as questions of security for unique objects, the CD faction led by the editors and this

editor prevailed. But our graduate student would discover from the paper trail that manufacturing and inserting a CD in a paperbound book was not without its problems and stresses. A book with an electronic appendix was still something of a novelty. You will hear more this morning about the pedagogical purposes of that CD.

Our researcher would find that commissioned “textbooks” of this type were not usually undertaken by university presses, which in the postwar and especially post-Sputnik period developed along with burgeoning American universities to disseminate the results of research and original scholarship produced by rapidly expanding faculties. Such scholarly publication would have been subsidized as part of the research mission of universities. It would be discovered that the University of Massachusetts Press, founded in 1963, was a prime example of this postwar phenomenon with all the expectations and constraints that peer-reviewed publication demanded.

Traditionally, books such as *PABH* would have been developed by a well-capitalized textbook house rather than a not-for-profit university press — with emphasis decidedly on the “not.” Our researcher would surmise that the UMass Press’s series, “Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book,” and *PABH* had common origin in the academic training, interests, and networks of one of the Press’s sponsoring editors, the series advisory board, and the volume’s editors.

It would be discovered that a remarkable degree of collegiality and pro-bono effort in the service of a developing interdisciplinary “movement” would bring this project to successful conclusion at UMass Press at this time. And, that individuals would be joined by significant institutions. The record would show an original proposal for an edited selection of already published articles mutating into a collection of artifacts with interpretative essays as Scott Casper, Jeff Groves, and later Joanne Chaison consulted with me. It would show the large originating role played by the Summer Seminars in the History of the Book convened at the American Antiquarian Society, where I first met Jeff Groves in 1990 or ’91, and where Scott

Casper and Jeff in subsequent years found the interest and impetus growing for our book. Several of the contributors — perhaps a majority — would be alumni of that program. It would show that Scott Casper, as a graduate of the American Studies doctoral program at Yale University, made connections in New Haven that led to inclusion of several of the key contributors. Indeed, the book could be construed as the joint effort of the friends of Scott, Jeff, Joanne, and Paul. The record would show that the contributors to this volume, including prize-winning authors and

scholars at the most productive period of their careers, generously provided their essays and expertise pro bono, in the kind of service to scholarship that usually receives only lip service.

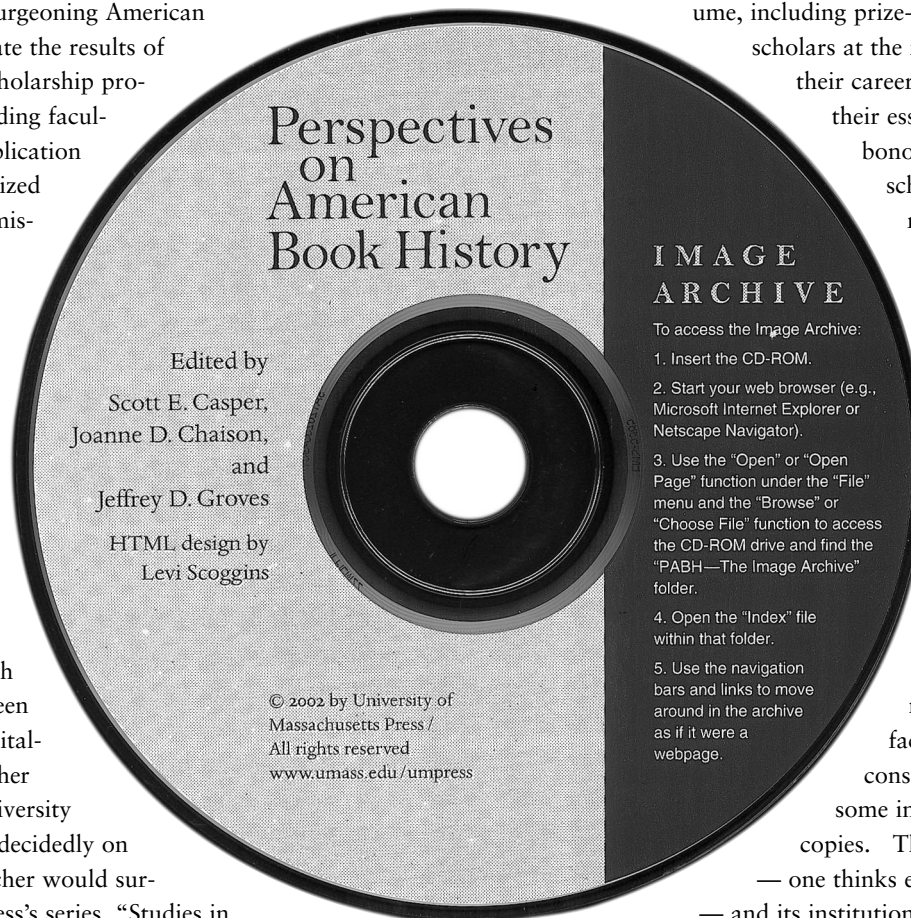
Some of them are on the panel today, and I know that the others are with us in spirit.

One would discover that the

American Antiquarian Society generously opened its collections to the editors and allowed inclusion of dozens of seventeenth- through nineteenth-century artifacts and texts that it had conserved over the years — some in unique or nearly unique copies. The AAS staff’s enthusiasm

— one thinks especially of John Hench — and its institutional contributions in spirit and in kind were an essential part of the book’s

genesis. Similarly, the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, long a bastion of book history studies, played an essential role, entering the scene at a point where progress was stalled for want of sufficient funding. Our researcher would discover that a developing “crisis” in scholarly publishing began to deepen just as *PABH* was coming into being. The costs of book production were increasing, while book sales (except for blockbuster bestsellers) were declining generally in the trade and precipitously for scholarly monographs, and research library budgets were being slashed. The whole edifice of university press publishing was in danger of collapse as operations dipped below the controlled deficit line into free fall. I do not want to embarrass John Cole and Ralph Eubanks by putting them on white horses, but their arrival was more than timely.



What else would our graduate student find in those archived files? She would discover that *PABH*, which sought to coordinate visual artifacts, textual artifacts, commentary, and apparatus, presented serious design problems. After some initial confusion, a gifted free-lance designer came up with a combination of display type, type sizes, and page placements that helped the “end-user” (the person we used to call the “reader”) find his/her way through the book. The researcher would learn that it was common practice, thanks to computers, for compositors in the late twentieth century to set type and make up pages from massaged word processing files — thus eliminating a whole set of artisans and the old metal-type-based galley proof stage. *PABH*, it would be found, was somewhat unusual in that the designer did the typesetting and make-up himself to control the variables—at a premium fee one might note.

A considerable amount of correspondence would be found in the files relating to the paperback cover illustration: William Harnett’s 1878 *Job Lot Cheap* — a trompe l’oeil masterpiece that seemed to me to speak directly to the issues and concerns addressed in the book. We had considered other images, including a Norman Rockwell genre painting of an elderly man at a bookstall — a sort of goofy, nearsighted, absent-minded-professor

type — and my personal favorite, a photograph of Marilyn Monroe reading a copy of the Random House edition of Joyce’s *Ulysses*. But Harnett it was, despite the fact that it was too horizontal for a book cover and the Reynolda House Museum would not allow cropping or any typographic intrusion into the picture space. Dennis Anderson, the same designer who solved the text, came up with the solution for the cover you have before you.

Perhaps the largest block of material in the files our researcher would examine would be related to clearing the permissions and fees for items either still under copyright or in unpublished or unique form in institutional collections. If AAS had not given its blanket permission the file would no doubt be twice as large. Finding and clearing copyright one would find to be an adventure in futility involving authors, agents, estates, and publishers in a circular game. Literally hundreds of pieces of paper were generated to clear rights for *PABH*. Eventually items were cleared and fees negotiated downward, or best effort to find copyright holders demonstrated. Our investigator would be surprised to learn that the literary executor of a figure as well known as Dwight Macdonald had no forwarding address and could not be found. And she might be slightly shocked to discover that the highest fees were charged not by commercial houses for excerpts from famous writers like Vladimir Nabokov or William Styron, but by other university presses for excerpts from modern editions of historical documents — publications that were originally supported by government and institutional grants. One recalls my remarks about the crisis in scholarly publishing.

Our graduate student, by now, one hopes, drafting her dissertation, would have discovered that a publisher’s files on any given book are a record of hopes, aspirations, promises, frustrations, delays, and compromises. Every book, she would have found, was a complex negotiation between what should be and what could be in any given historical moment. In the case of *Perspectives on American Book History* — an atypical book for a university press to undertake — she would have seen an unusual degree of cooperation and collegiality, and just plain good vibes. She would read the drafts of these remarks and learn that I was honored to be a part of the process that made this book and delighted publicly to thank my friends and colleagues, Scott, Joanne, Jeff, Bob (Gross) Alice (Fahs), Glenn (Wallach), Nancy (Cook), and Ann (Fabian) — all here today — and those who could not come — Jill (Lepore), Russ (Martin), Susan (Williams), Jen (Huntley-Smith), Chuck (Johannigsmeier), Trysh (Travis), and Ellen (Garvey) — for making *PABH* a very special confluence and nexus.

Paul M. Wright
University of Massachusetts Press

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The editors welcome all news relevant to the interests of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture.

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Additions to the Newspaper Collection Include a Newly Discovered Georgia Newspaper

The American Antiquarian Society continues to build its extensive collection of newspapers. Among recent purchases are thirty-five issues of the *Evening Express*, a newspaper published in Savannah, Georgia. The *Evening Express* is not listed in the U.S. Newspaper Project (an attempt to record all newspapers in the United States) nor in the massive reference work *American Newspapers 1821-1936*, edited by Winifred Gregory (1937). The AAS purchase extends chronologically from February 8, 1860 (vol. 1, no. 76), to May 8, 1860 (vol. 1, no. 154). This indicates that its publication started in November 1859; publication was suspended sometime in 1860, but that date is not yet known.

The *Evening Express* was short-lived. An advertisement in the Savannah city directory for 1860 indicated that the newspaper office was on the northeast corner of Bull and Bryan streets. Edited by Ambrose Spence and published by John Holbrook Estill, the paper was to be “Devoted to Literature, Politics and Commerce, and advocating Conservative Democrat Southern Rights’ Principles.” The original plans were for daily, tri-weekly, and weekly issues, although only a daily and weekly were listed in an 1861 newspaper directory.¹ One-year subscribers to the daily edition would receive the Sunday issue free for their five-dollar payment. The AAS purchase includes only daily issues, printed from Monday through Saturday. After the March 15, 1860 issue there is no mention of a Sunday issue, but “official paper of the county” is added to its description.

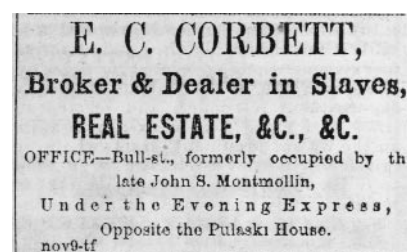
When the *Evening Express* was introduced, Chatham County had a population of 31,000 (16,200 free and 14,800 slaves). There were 105 periodicals published in Georgia (75 political, 4 religious, 22 literary, and 4 miscellaneous) producing over thirteen million issues annually or just under 22 issues per year for each free person in the state. At the time the *Evening Express* began publication, there were three other newspapers being published in Savannah, the city where Georgia’s first newspaper, the *Georgia Gazette*, was published in 1763.

The daily issue of the *Evening Express* was printed on a single sheet folded in half to make four pages. It contains a variety of local news as well as items quoted from other newspapers from New York to California. Advertisements take up more than half of the newspaper. Visitors arriving in Savannah on April 10, 1860, who bought a copy of the *Evening Express*, could find advertisements for lottery tickets, oysters, guano, whisky, hats, shoes, and cod liver oil. They would discover where to have a daguerreotype taken, purchase a train ticket for the Central Railroad, and attend a show starring Prof. Jacobs’s *Soirees Fantastiques* which included ventriloquism and legerdemain (and advertised as appropriate for women and children).

Little is known of the editor, Ambrose Spence, but the publisher, John Holbrook Estill (1840-1907) was a distinguished citizen of Georgia. Coming from a family involved with printing, he started working in a newspaper office in 1851 and founded the *Evening*

Express when he was only nineteen. After the failure of the newspaper, he served with the Confederate Army until he was wounded at Manassas and was discharged with the rank of colonel. After the war Estill, like many Southerners, was broke, but his knowledge of the printing business served him well. After getting a job on the *Savannah News and Herald*, he saved enough to start his own printing business, which was very profitable. Estill purchased a half interest in the *Morning News* in 1867, bought the other half in 1868, and absorbed his two competitors by 1871. In 1869 Estill published F. D. Lee’s and J. L. Agnew’s *Historical Record of the City of Savannah*. In the chapter on newspapers, many other Savannah papers get detailed histories, but for his first newspaper he merely says, “The *Evening Express* was started in 1859, by Ambrose Spencer and J. H. Estill. In 1860 its publication was suspended.”

An advertisement that appeared in The Evening Express (Savannah, Ga.) several times in 1860.



Other newspapers recently acquired by the American Antiquarian Society include 3,000 issues (1846-69) of the *Cincinnati Volksblatt*, a German-language paper, forty-two issues of *The Literary Visitor* (Wilkesbarre, Pa) 1814-15, the *Maryland Colonization Journal* for July 1840, published by the Maryland State Colonization Society of Baltimore, July 1840, and scattered issues of another dozen newspapers ranging from 1820 to 1875.

AAS holds the largest collection of early American newspapers in the world focusing on newspapers published before 1877. In addition, the AAS also collects Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon and Texas to 1880; Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming to 1890; Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah to 1895; and Alaska to 1900; West Indies and Canada to 1876; Great Britain to the end of the Revolutionary War; and English language newspapers from Central American countries to 1876. My colleagues Dennis Laurie and Philip Lampi in the Newspaper Department and I regularly answer questions about newspapers in the collections and accept donations of newspapers within the Society’s scope of collecting.

Vincent Golden
Curator of Newspapers and Periodicals, AAS

¹ Daniel Kenny, *The American Newspaper Directory and Record of the Press* (New York: Watson & Co., 1861).

ISAIAH Enables AAS Readers To Search the Catalogue on the Web

While the words, "Search the Catalog," may not yet have the cachet of "You've got mail," they are certainly music to the ears of users of the former AAS on-line catalogue. In recent months, the Society has introduced a web-accessible custom-built system. Containing many features that are based on the strengths of the Society's superior rare-books cataloguing records, among its many advantages are its ease of use and that it allows for searches by printers, publishers, and illustrators.

AAS President Ellen Dunlap hailed the achievement in her Report of the Council in October 2002. "After years of planning and months of intensive work behind the scenes, in July we 'went live' with our new on-line catalogue, which we lovingly call ISAIAH: Internet Sources for Access to Information on American History. More than 350,000 cataloguing records were successfully transferred from our old software program to the new and, as predicted, the readers are thrilled at the ease and speed with which the catalogue can be searched.

Researchers can use simple keyword searches and pull-down menus familiar to all users of the web, consult on-screen help for searching tips, and e-mail the results of their searches back to themselves. Much of that was possible in our old system, too, but it required a level of effort that few in the attention-deficited world today were willing to exert."

Members of the team that planned for the transfer of the data were Alan Degutis, head of cataloguing services, Kathleen Haley, cataloguer in the North American Imprints Program, Thomas Knoles, curator of manuscripts, and Caroline Stoffel, on-line services librarian. Their challenge was to find a provider who would work with AAS to customize their basic product to meet the Society's standards. Endeavor Information Systems of Des Plaines, Illinois, was selected to provide the graphical user interface that looks familiar to anyone who has ever searched the Internet.

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