



# The Book

Number 23, March 1991

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

---

## *Speakers Set for Conference On Iconography of the Book*

The roster of speakers at the conference on "Iconography and the Culture of the Book," scheduled for Friday and Saturday, June 14-15, 1991, under the sponsorship of the American Antiquarian Society's Program in the History of the Book in American Culture is now set. Presenting slide lectures will be:

William Moffett (Huntington Library), "European Traditions in the Iconography of the Book"; Carol Wenzel-Rideout (Pierpont Morgan Library) on the European context; David Watters (University of New Hampshire), "Reader Consider & Stand in Aw: The Book as Text and Icon in Early New England Gravestone Carving"; William J. Gilmore-Lehne (Stockton State College) leading a workshop on interpreting the iconography of the book; Thomas C. Leonard (University of California, Berkeley), "News at the Hearth: A Domestic Drama of Reading"; Judy L. Larson (High Museum of Art, Atlanta), "William Michael Harnett and the Iconography of the Book"; Sarah Black (Smith College) and Alison M. Scott (Boston University), "The *Game of Authors* and the Iconography of American Culture"; Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (Georgetown University), "The Daughter's Own Book"; Linda Docherty (Bowdoin College), "The Open Book and the American Woman"; and Nancy Finlay (Houghton Library, Harvard University), "The Girl in the Poster: Images of Women Reading in Turn-of-the-Century America."

Georgia B. Barnhill and John B. Hench (both American Antiquarian Society) will introduce the sessions. Louise Stevenson (Franklin and Marshall College) will provide a summation.

The comprehensive fee for the conference will be \$75, which includes registration, coffee breaks, Friday dinner, and Saturday luncheon. Space at the conference is limited. Places will be filled in the order in which payments of the comprehensive fee are received. Full refund of the fee will be made if a cancellation is received by May 28; half will be refunded from May 29 through June 7. No refunds will be given after June 7. For a registration form, call or write the Society.

Rooms in a residence hall of Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), whose campus is adjacent to the Society, will be available to conference participants the nights of Thurs-

day through Saturday, June 13-15 at a rate of \$25 per person per night (including linens), payable in advance. The deadline for reserving and paying for a room at WPI is Tuesday, May 28, which is also the cancellation deadline. Information on hotel and motel accommodations in the Worcester area is available on request, as is information on public transportation to Worcester.

## *Book Notes*

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: THE DIFFUSION OF INFORMATION IN EARLY AMERICA, 1700-1865

In *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (Oxford, 1989) Richard D. Brown has given us a lively and intensely imaginative contribution to the history of the book. It is true that the various media of "knowledge" that Brown discusses are by no means limited to the printed word. From the face-to-face transmission of family news in Samuel Sewall's Boston to the burgeoning of public oratory in antebellum America, spoken information takes its place alongside written and printed communications in Brown's nicely woven tapestry.

One of the author's main purposes, in fact, is to take a limited step toward exploring the relationships among all of the components of the revolution in communication—Brown thinks of it as a single, extended revolution rather than as a series of discrete ones—that has been in progress for the past few centuries. He wants to know, moreover, "the social significance," as he puts it, "of the possession of various types of information" (p. 4).

Brown's methodology is as bold as the rather audacious scope of his topic itself, and equally refreshing. In the hope of understanding how changes in information distribution affected the way people thought and lived, he approaches his topic through the use of case studies. By analyses of selected individual experiences over the century and a half of his study, Brown is able to describe the contours of this phase of the communications revolution with some confidence.

In general, his is the story of a movement from a relative scarcity of information at the beginning of the eighteenth century to relative abundance in the nineteenth, and from the control of information by the learned and wealthy to the exercise of individual choice in a competitive, pluralistic marketplace of ideas and entertainment. These chang-

es, Brown insists, were the consequences less of technology than of the cumulative effects of economic and cultural developments in American life. "Because society took its character from an endless, variegated stream of activities," he argues further, "there could be no distinct boundary between the colonial society of Sewall's . . . contemporaries and American society in Abraham Lincoln's day. Though changed radically by 1865, in its origins and descent as well as some of its ruling principles, it remained the same society" (p. 269).

Brown effectively mixes his case studies by number and kind. Separate chapters on Samuel Sewall and William Byrd II are followed by a group study of rural New England clergymen in the eighteenth century. There are chapters on farmers, on women, and on an encyclopedic preacher-scholar of Salem named William Bentley, whose "enlightened republican" approach to knowledge was, by the time of his death in 1819, on the brink of becoming an anachronism.

One of the most resonant chapters in the book, entitled "The Dynamics of Contagious Diffusion," examines the devices and processes by which the news of three events—the battles of Lexington and Concord, the death of Washington, and the assassination of Lincoln—spread throughout the American population. Here the transforming effect of what by the 1860s could truly be called "mass media" becomes obvious. The telegraph, news correspondents, and the more frequent publication of newspapers had by 1865 created an information world far different from that of 1775. In the Civil War era, writes Brown, "proximity to telegraph stations and newspapers, rather than to events themselves, be-

came the decisive factor for information about these special events which possessed the drama and importance to excite contagious diffusion" (p. 267).

As the modesty of the author's introduction makes clear, he would be the first to admit that his study, for all its richness and variety, does not disclose all that one might like eventually to know about "the formative era of the present day information and communication revolution" (p. 15). But in his formulation of the topic, in his insistence upon treating "information" whole rather than fragmenting it according to medium or institution, and in the extraordinary range of his materials and inventiveness of his presentation, this student of modernization has advanced our understanding of information in American society immensely. The "history of the book" is a very broad field. The subject of *Knowledge Is Power* is broader still.

Charles E. Clark,  
University of New Hampshire

### *AAS to Distribute Cataloguing of Early American Imprints Series*

More than thirty-five years ago, AAS librarian Clifford K. Shipton and pioneer microform publisher Albert Boni began a collaboration that has had a major influence on the direction of scholarship in early American history and literature. That was *Early American Imprints, First Series (Evans) 1639-1800*, edited by Shipton and published by Boni's Readex Microprint Corporation. For the first time, microform versions of nearly every book, pamphlet, and broadside published in America before 1801 became available to fuel scholarly research in libraries from San Francisco to Stockholm. The set was made possible by a century and a half of collecting and bibliographical work done at AAS; nearly two out of every three items reproduced in the series was filmed from an AAS copy. More recently, Readex has reissued the series in microfiche format, making it more convenient to use.

Still, the full potential of the series as a research resource had been limited by a lack of full cataloguing records for these materials. Work by the staff of the Society's North American Imprints Program (funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the U.S. Department of Education, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and other sources) over the last decade has remedied that deficiency.

In 1991, these highly detailed MARC (machine-readable cataloguing) records will become available for libraries to load into their own local, on-line cataloguing systems. This sophisticated cataloguing tool will enormously improve scholarly access to this large and centrally important research collection. Now faculty, students, and other patrons of libraries possessing the *EAI* set will be able to know, through searching the local on-line catalogue, that

American Antiquarian Society

185 Salisbury Street

Worcester, Massachusetts 01609-1634

Telephone (508) 755-5221 or 752-5813

Marcus A. McCorison, President and Librarian

John B. Hench, Director of Research and Publication

David D. Hall, Chairman, Program in the History  
of the Book in American Culture

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Kenneth Carpenter, Chairman

Lawrence I. Buell, Cathy N. Davidson,

Loren F. Ghiglione, Robert A. Gross, Mary Kelley,

Marie E. Korey, David P. Nord, Michael Winship

*The Book: Newsletter of the Program in the History of the  
Book in American Culture* (ISSN 0740-8439) is published  
in March, July, and November by the American Antiquarian  
Society at the above address.

Editors: David D. Hall and John B. Hench

The Editors welcome all news relevant to the interests of the  
Program in the History of the Book in American Culture.  
The Program in the History of the Book in American  
Culture is supported in part by a grant from the Charles E.  
Culpeper Foundation, Inc.

Copyright © 1991 by American Antiquarian Society

the library does in fact possess a copy of the 1640 Bay Psalm Book or the first edition of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* as well as copies of some 36,300 other imprints that collectively form the printed archive of America in the colonial and early national periods—all in microform, easily accessible to them.

Scholars specializing in early American history and culture in institutions holding the *EAI* microforms may wish to urge their university acquisitions librarian to obtain these catalogue records. The MARC records will also be available, as part of a package, to new purchasers of the Readex microfiche set of *EAI* making it an even more attractive library acquisition than ever before.

The cost of loading the records into a library's system will be \$5,750 if an order is placed by June 30, 1991, or \$6,950 afterwards. A sample tape containing approximately 250 records (either microopaque or microfiche versions) is available for test loading at a cost of \$150 (deductible from the cost of loading the full tape).

Inquiries and orders for the tape alone should be addressed to the Society's Director of Research and Publication. Information on purchasing the 36,000-item microfiche set plus the tape of cataloguing records may be obtained from Readex Microprint Corporation, 58 Pine Street, New Canaan, Connecticut 06840.

## Notes and Queries

### THE PORTSMOUTH LIBRARY

The Portsmouth Library, a typical late eighteenth-century proprietary library, supplanted an earlier social library in 1785. It continued until 1813, when its "one thousand volumes of well chosen books" was destroyed by fire. While Robert B. Winans's *A Descriptive Checklist of Book Catalogues Separately Printed in America 1693-1800* notes its 1796 Rules and Catalogue (no. 223), Dr. David Goodman of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, has pointed out to me an earlier version of interest in the New Hampshire Historical Society.

This Portsmouth Library catalogue, printed by John Melcher, contains the rules of the new library (dated February 10, 1785), a list of forty-seven proprietors, and 141 short author entries with shelf numbers. More importantly, this apparently unique copy (not in Winans) has the signature of John Pickering of Portsmouth, one of the library's incorporating proprietors. Pickering was an eminent lawyer, briefly president of New Hampshire, a presidential elector, and a federal judge of the New Hampshire District Court from 1796 to his death in 1805.

There are several useful manuscript additions in his hand in the catalogue. For example, there are markings next to names of certain original proprietors. "Those marked with an asterisk [are] numbered with the dead." Eight names of those known to have died between 1787 and 1795 are indi-

cated by asterisks; three other names are crossed out and may be for those who, like Benjamin Dearborn, left Portsmouth for other cities by 1795.

Pickering also kept the catalogue up to date with fifty-nine manuscript additions (excluding cross-referenced titles) to the published catalogue. This brings the known works to 200 titles. All the notations appear to date within the first decade of the library's operation and prior to publication of the 1796 catalogue.

More significant for the study of reading in early America, however, is Pickering's careful indication of "read" next to those library books, that he studied. Whether this is a mark of the meticulous lawyer's Harvard training or a compulsive trait of Pickering's infamous alcoholism and insanity, for which he was later impeached (see Sibley's *Harvard Graduates*, vol. 15, pp. 91-96) may be left to conjecture. I count some seventy-four titles "read" by John Pickering, presumably between 1785 and 1795, including a very few with additional comments such as "impt" (important?) next to the entry for "Machiavell's Works."

The Portsmouth library stamped each book cover with its name, so I have been able to locate in the Portsmouth Athenaeum three surviving volumes with original covers that escaped burning. As part of a larger study of the public and private libraries—including the Portsmouth Athenaeum—in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Portsmouth, New Hampshire, I would like to know about any other volumes with "Portsmouth Library" stamped in gold on the cover that may exist in any other institution or private collection.

Richard Candee, Boston University

### NINETEENTH-CENTURY PERIODICALS

James Tanner (Department of English, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas 76203) requests correspondence from anyone interested in forming an organization to study nineteenth-century American periodicals.

## Notes on Research Collections

The American Antiquarian Society's manuscript collections, like its other collections, relate primarily to American history and culture through 1876. One area of specialization within this field is comprised of manuscripts pertaining to printing, publishing, bookselling, book collecting, and libraries, and collections dealing with these subjects are actively sought. Several recent additions of manuscript material are of particular interest for the study of the book.

Papers of the New York City publisher Dodd, Mead and Company were purchased in two groups during 1990. The collection includes copyright certificates, memoranda of agreement, and a small amount of business correspondence, mostly from the period between 1850 and 1900. Over 130 authors are represented, and there are substantial

quantities of material for numerous writers who were popular during the nineteenth century, including John S. C. Abbott, Elizabeth W. Champney, Elizabeth R. Charles, Martha Finley, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps.

The most recent acquisition of interest for historians of printing and publishing is a voluminous collection of correspondence, accounts, and bills of lading from 1829 to 1854 for Tileston and Hollingsworth, paper manufacturers who operated a number of mills on the Neponset River near Boston. This collection, the gift of Amor Hollingsworth, has not been fully processed at the time of writing, but it offers a very detailed picture of the company's commercial activity, from the purchase of rags to the sale of paper to wholesalers and printers.

Other recent additions to AAS manuscript collections include a ledger (1856-1859) of Daniel Adee, a New York City printer, publisher, and agent; an account book (1834-1845) of Robert F. Williams, a Massachusetts and New Hampshire merchant who specialized in books and maps; a collection of papers of Bela Marsh, Boston bookseller, book binder, and stationer; and a book listing 181 subscribers for John J. Audubon's *Quadrupeds of North America*, a gift of Calvin Otto.

Thomas G. Knoles,  
American Antiquarian Society

### *About People*

Several individuals are presently serving their first terms on the Advisory Board or Executive Committee of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture. New to the Advisory Board are Richard H. Brodhead, professor of English, Yale University; Bernardo P. Gallegos, assistant professor of educational foundations and interdivisional studies, California State University, Los Angeles; James Gilreath, American history specialist, Division of Rare Books and Special Collections, Library of Congress; Jeffrey Kaimowitz, curator, Watkinson Library, Trinity College; Jack Larkin, senior historian, Research Department, Old Sturbridge Village; and Ian R. Willison, former head, English Language Collections, British Library. Added to the Executive Committee was Michael Winship, associate professor of English, University of Texas at Austin. . . . Sheila McAvey, the Society's assistant editor since 1983, among whose many responsibilities, ably met, was getting this newsletter out, left AAS at the beginning of March for a position in the publications program of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Her former colleagues on the AAS staff as well as many former AAS fellows, Goddard-Daniels House residents, and participants in Program activities wish her well in her new situation down the Mass Pike.

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY  
185 SALISBURY STREET  
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01609-1634

---

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
P A I D  
PERMIT NO. 416  
WORCESTER, MASS. 01609

---