



# The Book

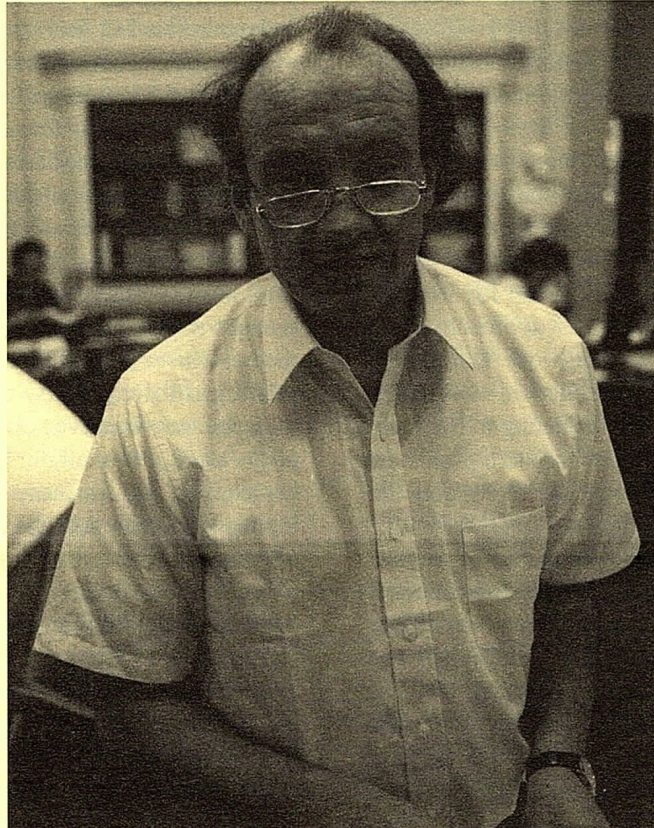
Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture  
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*William J. Gilmore-Lehne • May 2, 1945–March 19, 1999*

## AFFILIATION WITH AAS AND THE PROGRAM IN THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK

I don't know just when Bill Gilmore first set foot in the reading room of the American Antiquarian Society, but I do know that he did some of his dissertation research at AAS in the late 1960s while he was still a Ph.D. student at the University of Virginia. Perhaps I even paged books for him during the brief period, around that same time, when I worked several hours a week as a library assistant at AAS while pursuing my own degree at Clark University. In any event, he did not come across my radar screen until the mid-1970s, after I had returned to Worcester to become editor of publications at AAS.

There is in the AAS archives a letter from Bill from 1975, addressed to the curator of manuscripts. He wrote that, for a new project, he was "investigating all journals and diaries in manuscript by New Englanders and New York residents (excluding New York City) and by travellers to these states keeping journals and diaries." His search of NUCMC (the *National Union*



*Catalog of Manuscript Collections*) had led him to key sources at AAS. The letter was characteristic of Bill's brand of research and scholarship. That he had done his homework by searching NUCMC in advance testified to his strong desire to be in command of all bibliographical sources. That he intended to read "all" such journals and diaries was indicative of his compulsion to tackle the biggest kinds of research projects.

I imagine Bill and I first actually met perhaps in 1976 or '77 when he came to AAS to do research and to explore the possibility of applying for one of our then-new AAS-National Endowment for the Humanities, long-term fellowships. His search for the right project was a fluid one. When he wrote AAS about our

manuscript diaries and journals, he described the project he was working on as "Personality Development in New England and New York 1790-1840." A couple of years later it had evolved into "Cultural Conceptions of the Life Cycle, 1790-1830." Bill must have begun to feel comfortable enough around AAS to "push the envelope" a bit. In 1978,

## *Winship To Deliver 1999 Wiggins Lecture*

"The Greatest Book of its Kind": A Publishing History of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" is the title of the seventeenth annual James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American Culture, to be given on Friday, September 24, 1999, by Michael Winship, professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin. Winship is author of *American Literary Publishing: The Business of Ticknor and Fields* (Cambridge University Press, 1985) and editor of *Bibliography of American Literature*, volumes 7-9, for which he also collaborated on the preparation of the *Epitome* and the *Selective Index*. He is co-editor with Stephen N. Nissenbaum of Volume 3 of *A History of the Book in America*, and a contributor to Volume 4 of the five-volume series to be published by Cambridge University Press and AAS.

As in the past, the lecture will be published in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* and will also be issued separately.

he wrote Director Marcus McCorison to ask if an exception to the Society's 9 to 5, Monday through Friday opening hours could be made to permit him to work in the library on an upcoming Saturday. Marcus referred the request to Associate Librarian Fred Bauer, who politely wrote Bill that the Society's staff was not large enough to accommodate extra hours.

Around this time, the mid- to late '70s, we at AAS were in the beginning stages of our efforts to promote the development of the field of the history of the book in American culture. Obviously, Bill too was becoming excited by and engaged with this new field, which even then he was calling the study of "print culture" and which offered promises of linking social, cultural, and intellectual history. Institutionally, we were busy bringing our major Bicentennial project, a volume of essays on *The Press and the American Revolution*, into print. In retrospect, I sometimes view that volume as on the whole representing the last phases of a more traditional form of printing and publishing history. It was immensely exciting and satisfying to me, therefore, to see Bill's application for an AAS-NEH fellowship for 1979-80 as one of a number of signs that a newer approach to the field, which we were by then promoting—one that looked organically at all the aspects of the production, circulation, and consumption of print—was really beginning to catch on. By now, Bill had reformulated his research into a project he called in his successful application, "Reading and the Circulation of Print in Rural New England, 1787-1839." To my mind, he met the challenges and opportunities of the new history of the book head on in his fellowship application. It was an exciting project that he described. All this was a good three or four years before we formally established our Program in the History of the Book in American Culture, with which Bill would become closely associated. His 1979-80 fellowship project, of course, eventuated in the pub-

lication of his article "Elementary Literacy on the Eve of the Industrial Revolution: Trends in Rural New England, 1760-1830," which I edited and published in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* (1982), and his book *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Development in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (1989). First the article, then the book became widely cited and highly influential.

His AAS-NEH fellowship in 1979-80 was the first of four periods of extended affiliation that Bill had with AAS. He had another AAS-NEH long-term fellowship in 1990-91, plus nonstipendiary Research Associate status in 1983-84 and again just last year. In time, he was working on a topic of even larger scope than any of his previous work, "A Republic of Knowledge." Only one other scholar has been appointed to as many formal stints as a fellow or RA at AAS as Bill (the other person being Karen Halttunen), but Bill is the hands-down record-holder in terms of months spent at AAS under such affiliation.

Bill's relationship with AAS was long and strong. I shall always remember Bill for the spark of enthusiasm he brought with him at a formative time in the development of the book history field; for his legendary stature as a walking, talking bibliography of every book, article, and dissertation—however obscure—in the field (and several others); and, above all, for his complete generosity in sharing his learning with so many others at AAS and wherever else his tireless quest for what he liked to call simply "knowledge" took him.

*John B. Hench,  
Vice President for Academic and Public Programs*

#### THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE READING ROOM

In the register where visitors sign into the American Antiquarian Society library, there is a somewhat mysterious column labeled "other." Scholars usually write "research" or "fellow" there, proclaiming their purpose or their status. William Gilmore-Lehne, my late friend and colleague, always wrote "knowledge."

Bill's idiosyncratic inscription encapsulates a good deal of what was significant about his life in the library. Most important, it provides an accurate description of what he sought at the AAS—from the sources, from the staff, and from other readers. Bill, I always felt, was not there to prepare a piece or to advance his career, but to learn. He was entranced by (perhaps it is not too much to say that he lived for) engagement with the past. As much as anyone I knew, he was fully alive in the reading room.

The search for "knowledge" first involved intense attention to the sources. He called for and worked through enormous numbers of newspapers and pamphlets. Bill's area at a reading table could usually be identified by the piles of notes, papers, and books that seemed to expand with each day he spent in the library. The need to stop researching and

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concentrate on writing was a regular refrain over the years, but the lure of new sources, of deeper understanding, always was there (and, I suspect, was often too strong). In the earliest years I knew him, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, he would call for new materials until the very end of the day. I would tell friends that I knew it was time to go when Bill had submitted his last call slips and settled into reading his final set of materials.

But his life in the reading room did not involve research alone. Pursuing knowledge also involved interaction with other readers, conversations that took a variety of forms. While he was pursuing a lead, he often intensely pumped other readers for information. Last fall, when he started exploring the almost unknown activities of British customs officials in spreading printed propaganda before the American Revolution, we had a number of conversations about the historiography of the imperial crisis that had me dredging up vague memories of books that I had only heard of years ago. A few days later, Bill would have looked at nearly all of them, be ready to share his opinion, and ask for more. Pieces that he particularly liked were termed “spectacular,” another resonant word expressing his deep appreciation for good, stimulating work, whether or not it was fashionable. His respect for an older generation of historians that I knew little about helped me to appreciate that continuing engagement with the past that keeps historical scholarship alive—and which I so much admired in him.

This intense, single-minded search for “knowledge” left some rough edges. Bill could be insensitive to social niceties and sensitive to slights. He loathed academic politics and was never very good at it. But his commitment to substance over social style often led to extraordinary acts of generosity. When a fellow made a joke in a talk last fall that she would like to distribute her remaining queries for the annotations in a diary she was preparing, only Bill actually took a stack of cards, returning with new information about some and leads to others. I volunteered Bill’s help to a number of readers over the years, introducing him to people who had questions about all sorts of things. But he usually did not need to be introduced; by the time Bill had spent any stretch of time in the reading room, he had already learned about the projects of most of the readers—and generally had shared with them some lead, some source they hadn’t known about before.

I was a regular recipient of that generosity (much more often, I’m afraid, than he got help from me). His wide-ranging interests helped me track down new or obscure subjects. His encouragement and advice helped me move around and beyond the pitfalls of my early career. Although I knew he would probably try to leave the Society later than anyone else, I would sometimes wait for him at the door, hoping to carry the fellowship of the reading room outside as well. We would talk on the street beside the cars, with me worried about getting home late but caught up in Bill’s heady enthusiasm for history—for knowledge.

*Steven C. Bullock*  
*Worcester Polytechnic Institute*

## REMEMBERING A COLLEAGUE AND A FRIEND

*When we asked the staff to contribute to this memorial to Bill, I had thought I would summarize and incorporate their reminiscences into one narrative, but as I read them, it was clear that each person’s entire tribute should be included. Everyone has a different perspective on Bill. Together they reveal the multifaceted nature of his interests, abilities, and associations with us.*

Three letters were read at Bill’s memorial service at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. One was from Natalie Zemon Davis, professor of history at the University of Toronto, testifying to the importance of Bill’s book for her teaching. Another was from Jim Green, associate librarian at the Library Company of Philadelphia, describing Bill’s tenacity and creativity as a researcher and his extraordinary contributions to the field of the history of the book. Tom Horrocks, associate director for special collections and curator of rare books at Harvard Medical School, who first met Bill at an AAS summer seminar, wrote about Bill’s role as a generous colleague and mentor. At the service I spoke about Bill’s long and wonderful association with AAS. Other memorialists included an undergraduate student, Stockton colleagues, AAS staff member S.J. Wolfe and her husband David Rawson, and Bill’s younger son Liam.

All these perspectives, combined with the following reflections by our staff, make it clear that Bill was a scholar without walls. His mind and his personality moved far beyond Stockton and AAS. We are privileged that the American Antiquarian Society was his intellectual home.

*Nancy Burkett*  
*Marcus A. McCorison Librarian*

Bill Gilmore-Lehne’s secretary Jenny would call ahead to let us know that Bill was on the road and headed for AAS. Bill would usually arrive by mid-morning, sign in, and visit with the receptionists. His favorite seat in the reading room was in the corner by the windows in the genealogy alcove; he’d always sit facing the card catalogues to see the comings and goings in the reading room. Soon his work area would be cluttered with his computer, lined yellow tablets, a never-ending stack of call slips, and last but not least photocopy request forms. Once settled, Bill would always visit with me at the reference desk to catch up on the staff news. During the course of the day Bill would go down to the staff room for coffee and visit with other staff. If you couldn’t find Bill in the reading room, you’d find him in the staff room or visiting Stanley Shapiro and Eddy Morrissey in the Readex office. During the course of his stay, there would be a steady stream of staff and other researchers to Bill’s desk exchanging greetings. Bill was prolific in his use of the library collections: manuscripts, broadsides, newspapers, books and pamphlet materials. I remember the steady convoy of book trucks of materials being brought to the reading room and his legendary photocopy requests.

*Marie E. Lamoureux*  
*Assistant Director of Reference Services*

As if he sensed the hounds of heaven nipping at his heels, Bill's thought and body moved with lightning speed through the library and through our lives. Flashing like quicksilver, he would take up almost any topic, either of his choosing or of his interlocutor's, and converse about it with knowledgeable enthusiasm, always illuminating it—and you—with the spotlight of his interest and attention. The warmth and intensity of this attention drew out even the shyest among us, encouraging the normally quiet to engage in friendly debate. In a sense, we were all his students. Both a passionately dedicated scholar, and a kind man with the common touch, his presence brought excitement and collegiality to the reading room, where he will be long and fondly remembered by his many friends and admirers.

*Anne C. Moore, Cataloguer*

My abiding memories of Bill will be of him running around with pads of paper and call slips asking me how to do searches in RLIN and in MaRK. I will also remember his touching and funny remarks about Joyce [Tracy] at her memorial service. However my very best memories of Bill are of him at our house as a dinner guest, conversing on everything from ancient to modern history, beer to gardening, and cats to children; picking our brains, giving us encouragement and driving us to do better at everything. He was my husband David's outside reader on his dissertation and so he was both a friend and a colleague. In fact, he was the "cupid" who brought David and me together, as he was convinced that we were "perfect for each other." He was one of the few true Renaissance men I have ever known.

*S.J. Wolfe, Cataloguer*

I knew Bill Gilmore-Lehne for more than twenty years, and I am honored to say that he was a dear friend of mine.

Bill loved doing research at AAS. He identified with the Society. For Bill it was always the collective "we." Do we have this item? Do we subscribe to this periodical? Will we be getting more of this material? He really appreciated and understood the value of newspapers to historians. Bill was always excited about our newspaper acquisitions, even offering to organize truck convoys himself in pursuit of newspapers.

Bill was courteous and thoughtful. At many of his staff talks, he made a point of acknowledging by name people on the staff who do not ordinarily interact with readers in addition to those who deal directly with them. Bill knew that we are all part of the institution, all of us necessary for its smooth functioning.

Bill thoroughly enjoyed engaging us in conversation on almost any topic and then, with a gleam in his eye, often proceeded to provoke us. I am thinking particularly of encounters with Joyce Tracy. Topics would include the United States Newspaper Program, the format of on-line newspaper records, and the difference by definition between a newspaper and a periodical. Following a "frank" exchange of views,

Joyce would return to the newspaper department, exclaiming, "He did it to me once more, despite the fact that I was determined not to let it happen again." But she quickly recovered. Their deep and abiding friendship was secure. There was never a doubt that Bill was the one to deliver the eulogy on behalf of the readers and fellows at Joyce's memorial service three years ago. And what a moving tribute to Joyce it was.

I shall never forget how helpful Bill was to me at the time of Joyce's death. In addition to Joyce's passing away, my mother was having a hard time adjusting to residence in a nursing home. Bill's words of encouragement and support were very important to me. I shall always be grateful.

I delighted in paging newspapers for Bill. His call slips were unique. Although he did not write on the lines provided, he submitted call slips with all of the information that I would need. Often there were questions written on the call slips that would challenge me while I was retrieving the newspapers requested. Bill's orders for microfilm and Copy-Jack (a small hand-held copying device) were detailed and always accurate in their page references. When the Copy-Jack broke down with no likelihood of repair, I promised Bill that I would process his request for copies of fifteen items from newspapers as soon as we could replace the old copier with an improved device. We do not yet have a replacement for it, but Bill, if you are listening, please be assured that I really intended to make the copies. And thanks for making such a profound and positive impact on my life. Your legacy will endure.

*Dennis R. Laurie*

*Assistant Curator of Newspapers and Periodicals*

### *Beersheva Conference Considers "The Once and Future Book"*

What would a history of reading look like? How would it avoid the pitfalls of generalization without bogging down in detail? How can the marginalia, letters, and scrapbooks of nonprofessional readers shed new light on literary works and interpretive conventions of the period? How does the design of a printed page affect the meaning of a text?

These were some of the questions generated by a recent conference on "The Once and Future Book: Reconsidering Books and Reading in an Electronic Age." The interdisciplinary symposium that took place at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel on January 11-12, 1999, provided a forum for six scholars from the United States and England to interact with colleagues from four Israeli universities.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on their ongoing research, the participants addressed many of the issues that preoccupy book historians everywhere.

In his keynote address Robert A. Gross (College of William and Mary; Odense University), provided an over-

view and commentary on current research into reading practices. Emphasizing the “fundamental mystery” of how readers “make meaning” out of printed matter, Gross set the tone for the subsequent discussion. Reading, as he put it, “is best seen as a cultural practice, carried out in particular settings and styles, linked to specific groups, and informed with ideological meanings. The challenge for the scholar is to recover such practices in their full richness, to track their trajectories across time and space, to describe the pattern of continuity and change.” Many of the papers that followed seem to have responded to that call, even before hearing it.

Conference participants offered many approaches to readers and reading habits. All agreed that while the expectations and assumptions with which readers approach a given text are intangible and elusive, reading conventions are historically specific and can be reconstructed. The first panel explored reading practices of the eighteenth century. Demonstrating some of the personal uses that particular readers made of books, these papers also showed how even the most idiosyncratic modes of reading are shaped by the wider cultural “field” that they inhabit.

In “Reading and the Writing of the Self: Models Adopted and Adapted From Early Popular Autobiography,” Mechal Sobel (Haifa University) focussed on antebellum writer/readers in the United States. Pointing to the fact that many “Americans who wrote narratives of their lives in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century attested to the power other written narratives had over them,” Sobel showed how the traditional pattern of conversion narratives shaped the self-telling of diverse readers. In one particularly striking case, a black Shaker woman with no formal education experienced the moment of learning to read (in a vision!) as a foundational moment of self-understanding.

Self-construction through reading was also a component of a talk by Ellen Gruber Garvey (New Jersey City University; University of Nijmegen). Concentrating on one particular kind of nineteenth-century American reader, scrapbook-makers, Garvey suggested that the common practice of making scrapbooks “was an activity on the border between reading and writing.” When poems, stories, and articles were cut out of newspapers and pasted over the pages of an existing, printed volume they made a new text. Looking closely (with the help of slides) at one such construction, Garvey showed how scrapbook-making was a particularly active mode of reading. As stories were removed from their original site of publication and juxtaposed with other texts of a reader’s choosing, scrapbook-makers produced not only new “books,” invested with personal meaning, but also new interpretations of previously published works.

Garvey’s discussion of scrapbooks posed several theoretical and structural questions that reappeared in other forms later in the conference. A strange and fascinating link emerged between Garvey’s scrapbook-makers and the work of contemporary book artists such as those discussed by Karen Schiff (Clemson University) in her talk, “Page

Composition from Gutenberg to Contemporary Artists’ Books.” While considering the “architecture” of the page itself as an organizing structure,

Schiff effectively contextualized not only Garvey’s scrapbook-makers, but the work of such book artists as Gary Goldstein, another participant. An exhibit of Goldstein’s work (arranged by Haim Finkelstein, Ben-Gurion University) showed how Goldstein radically alters the look of the conventional printed page by painting over the leaves of published volumes. His texts are at once aesthetic statements and creative commentaries on twentieth-century conventions of reading.

Many of the papers in the conference showed how reading can productively be seen as “poaching,” appropriation, even creation. Some papers, however, stressed the constraints upon a reader’s efforts to make meaning. Throughout the conference, discussion returned to the grey area between readers and texts—the area where the interpretative freedom of readers encounters the concerted design of authors, editors, and publishers. Imposition of meaning can come from many quarters, of course. Analyzing the publishing history of “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” for example, Peter McDonald (St. Hugh’s College, Oxford) examined some of the issues that governed editorial choices in poetic anthologies of the 1890s. Appropriating Yeats’s poems for their own ideological ends, editors turned Yeats into more (or less) of a nationalist “Irish” writer, radically reshaping the meaning of his poems.

Several papers set out to examine a different kind of constraint on reading practices—the interpretive force of familiar historical and literary categories. In “Books and Ideas on the Move in Eighteenth-Century Europe,” Fania Oz-Salzberger (Haifa University) challenged the concept of the Enlightenment as a “transparent set of ideas and literary practices.” Building on the work of recent scholars who have pointed out how “varied, local, opaque, and at times intransitive the Enlightenment was,” Salzberger presented examples from her own research to show how meanings were transformed through translation, making “European high culture” of the period “a Tower of Babel no less than a Republic of Letters.”

The constraining power of generic categories was the focus of “‘The Manliest Relation to Men’: Thoreau on Reading, Manhood, and Intimacy,” in which Milette Shamir (Tel Aviv University) set out to complicate a characteristic tenet of American literary history: the idea of a fixed polarity between “two separate, gendered traditions, sentimental novel and romance.” Shamir’s paper showed how both academic rubrics and assumptions about gender tend to narrow and distort our perspective on nineteenth-century texts. In a similar spirit, Barbara Hochman (Ben-Gurion University) considered the impact on reading of historical shifts in the concept of “the author.” For many professional and nonprofessional readers throughout the nineteenth century, Hochman argued, the moral character of an author was pre-

sumed to emerge from his or her book in the course of the reading experience. Hochman showed that the interpretive convention she calls "reading for the author" was a common and longstanding practice that cut across the lines of gender, region, age, and class. This convention is easily lost to view in a post-modern age, where the "death of the author" has become a commonplace—at least for academic readers.

Toward the end of the conference several papers turned to the impact of computer technology on contemporary reading habits. David Gants (University of Georgia) explored some implications of electronic media on teaching and research in the humanities, raising questions about "the shifting notion of 'book' within the academy." Engaging the fate of historiography, Menahem Blondheim (Hebrew University) suggested that "digitization represents a challenge to conventions of authority and hierarchy as we have known them"; Brenda Danet (Hebrew University) emphasized the rapid changes taking place in the very idea of communication as new electronic devices and software proliferate.

"The history of communication is the history of society," Marilyn Deegan (Oxford University) said in her concluding remarks "From Scroll to Screen: The Electronic Book and the Digital Revolution." "From earliest times," Deegan noted, "humanity has striven to extend communication beyond the bounds of the physical capacities of human

memory, the human voice, and human endurance." Challenging the notion that the days of the codex are now numbered, Deegan suggested that "changes in books and reading are inevitable," with some books "better served by electronic media" than others. But a variety of forms, she predicted, "will coexist for many years yet."

The final papers of the conference demonstrated the seemingly infinite fluidity of cyberspace and its potential for a radical transmutation of reading practices. As David Gants suggested, electronic publishing now enables us to envision scholarly editions on the scale of a variorum Shakespeare (and beyond). Such texts could offer a multiplicity of editorial choices to every reader. Nonetheless, participants agreed that recent technological innovations cannot insure either greater interpretive freedom or greater activity on the reader's part. Every new option generates unexpected constraints of its own. The very concept of "reading" will continue to demand redefinition if we are to keep pace with the ongoing interplay of readers, texts, and contexts.

*Barbara Hochman  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev*

<sup>1</sup> *The conference was funded with the generous support of Ben Gurion University, the British Council, and the Kaplan Program for American Literature at Bar Ilan University.*

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