



The Book

Number 4, November 1984

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

AAS Sets Program's First Summer Seminar

The American Antiquarian Society's Program in the History of the Book in American Culture will offer a 1985 summer seminar that is intended to introduce the field of the history of the book in American culture to librarians, bibliographers, and scholars, including advanced graduate students, from a variety of academic disciplines.

The seminar is scheduled to begin on Sunday, June 23, 1985, and to end on Tuesday, July 2. The leader of the seminar will be Stephen Botein, professor of history at Michigan State University and a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow at AAS in 1983-84. Botein will be assisted by a number of visiting lecturers.

The seminar in general will focus on methods of analysis and problems of interpretation, drawing on recent scholarship by Europeans and Americans on the history of the book. The seminar is planned as the first in an annual series of seminars. More specifically, the 1985 seminar will take as its theme the topic of "The Making of Literate America: Diffusion of Culture Based on Printing, 1759-1850," and, through the application of the case study method, will focus on the activities in the book trade of Isaiah Thomas, whose life and career are exceptionally well documented in the collections of AAS. (See the note on the Thomas Papers on p. 4 of this newsletter.) Assisting Botein as faculty members in the seminar will be Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, professor of history, University of Michigan; David D. Hall, professor of history, Boston University, and chairman, Program in the History of the Book in American Culture, AAS; Richard D. Brown, professor of history, University of Connecticut; Jonathan Arac, Department of English, University of Illinois, Chicago; Marcus A. McCorison, director and librarian, AAS; Georgia B. Bumgardner, curator of graphic arts, AAS; John B. Hench, associate director for research and publication, AAS; and other members of the Society's staff.

Members of the seminar will also make field trips to Harvard University, where host Kenneth E. Carpenter, assistant director for research resources, Harvard University Libraries, will guide them through several Harvard collections and bibliographical projects relevant to the history of the book, and Old Sturbridge Village, where participants will visit a

reconstructed nineteenth-century printing office and chief historian Jack Larkin will talk about the uses of printing in rural New England in the nineteenth century.

Seminar sessions will take place in the Society's Goddard-Daniels House. Participants will have full access to the collections in the Society's library. All matriculants will work in the Isaiah Thomas Papers and related materials in order to produce a short "book biography" of one or another Thomas imprint. A number of townhouse apartments located on the campus of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, which is adjacent to AAS, have been reserved for the use of seminar participants.

The deadline for receipt of applications to the summer seminar is April 1, 1985. For further details and application forms, write John B. Hench at AAS.

AAS Conference Held

The American Antiquarian Society's "Needs and Opportunities" conference on the history of the book in America took place as this issue of *The Book* was going to press. Our report on the conference is therefore brief, but we promise a fuller description in the next issue.

The quality of papers and formal responses, or commentaries, was very high. The conference benefited in particular from the presence of historians of the book in Europe; Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, Elizabeth Eisenstein, Erdmann Weyrauch, and Michael Turner. Chartier added his critique of the concept of popular culture to David Grimsted's, in a session that made notable progress toward clarifying terms and opening up new questions. Discussion of the history of reading led into the morphology of the book, and to fruitful exchange between bibliographers and cultural historians. The final paper of the conference, Robert Gross's imaginative summary of themes and issues relating to "the book and society," provoked wide speculation on the promise and limitations of "the history of the book." Many topics remained untouched, and many were the calls for more research. But the conference ended with a general sense of achievement in several directions.

Major funding for the conference was provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, with a matching grant from the Earhart Foundation and additional support from ABC-Clio, Inc.

AAS Plans Zenger Celebration

Nineteen eighty-five is the 250th anniversary of the famous trial for seditious libel of John Peter Zenger, editor and printer of the *New-York Weekly Journal*, and AAS and its Program in the History of the Book in American Culture will commemorate the event with a pamphlet and a public lecture.

The pamphlet will reproduce in full-size facsimile the six issues of Zenger's paper that brought the weight of the common law upon him. An introduction and annotation will be provided by Stephen Botein, professor of history at Michigan State University, who has already been mentioned in these pages as the leader of the Program's first summer seminar. Botein's introduction will serve to highlight the legal aspects of the Zenger trial, but, more importantly for readers of this newsletter, will also serve to place Zenger's actions within the context of colonial American printing and journalism. It is Botein's intent that the pamphlet will serve students, scholars, and teachers as a general introduction to the reading of early American newspapers and to their research value.

Botein will also deliver a public lecture at AAS to mark the anniversary. The lecture is scheduled for 8 p.m., Thursday, May 16, 1985, at the American Antiquarian Society.

Newspaper History

The international study of the history of the newspaper press has received boosts through two recent developments.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the newly formed *Arbeitskreis für die Frühgeschichte der Presse*

(Working Group for the Early History of the Press) held its first meeting at Meersburg September 10-14, 1984. Under the leadership of Dr. Martin Welke, a member of the Deutsche Presseforschung at the University of Bremen Library, this group has been formed to promote research and the exchange of information about the history of the newspaper press prior to 1820.

Participants in the conference included historians, librarians, archivists, and independent scholars from Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, Poland, the Netherlands, and the United States. Among the points discussed were problems involving locating printed and archival sources for press history, the preconditions for the development of the press, newspaper production methods and content, the press in various national contexts, and the reception and impact of the press.

The *Arbeitskreis* has tentatively planned a second meeting to be held in Meersburg in October 1986, with papers devoted to the development of the journalistic profession. Would-be participants should contact Dr. Martin Welke, Paschenburgstrasse 23, 2800-Bremen 1, Federal Republic of Germany. Conference proceedings will be in German, but contributions dealing with the press in any country are welcome.

Among the participants at the recent Meersburg conference was Jeremy Popkin, a member of the history department at the University of Kentucky.

In the United Kingdom, *The Journal of Newspaper and Periodical History* has been founded under the editorship of Michael Harris of the University of London.

A prospectus announces that the publication will serve persons with a professional or academic interest in press history from the seventeenth to the twentieth century and those concerned with the organization and utilization of newspapers and periodical collections. The emphasis will be on publications from English-speaking countries, at least at first.

The first issue was scheduled to appear in September 1984. The subscription price is listed as £30 or \$50 per year for three issues. Inquiries about subscriptions or submission of articles may be addressed to the editor at 62 Queen's Grove, London NW8 6ER, England.

Wells's Wiggins Lecture Describes Technological Development

James M. Wells, of the Newberry Library, delivered the annual James Russell Wiggins Lecture at AAS on October 31, 1984. In his talk, entitled "American Printing: The Search for Self-Sufficiency," Wells offered a thorough but concise history of the development of the American printing trades, detailing the influences of individual printers and inventors and the changes in printing technology that occurred as America became a self-sufficient agent of the printed word.

American Antiquarian Society
185 Salisbury Street

Worcester, Massachusetts 01609-1634

Telephone (617) 755-5221 or 752-5813

Marcus A. McCorison, Director and Librarian

John B. Hench, Associate Director for Research
and Publication

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

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

Assistant Editor: Sheila McAvey

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

Notes on Research Collections

GUIDE TO LC'S BOOK HISTORY RESOURCES

In May 1983, I began work, now near completion, on a guide to resources in the Library of Congress for the history of books. The project, funded by the Center for the Book and to be published by the Library's Publishing Office, will identify and describe printed and archival materials in the Library's collections relevant to the study of the printed book in the West.

The project was planned as a contribution to a developing scholarly discipline, as well as to provide an opportunity to articulate themes and anticipate needs of future researchers. Although a thematic approach at first seemed desirable, it soon became apparent that a guide that corresponds with the organization of the Library provides a more useful introduction to a large and complex institution which lacks a published guide.

Descriptions of individual collections and narrative essays on custodial divisions focus on the potential for interdisciplinary and intercultural research. Publishers' archives are not a prominent feature in the guide, for the book trade has not been a collecting priority in the Manuscript Division. Nonetheless, resources in the division reflect the interaction between books and economic, cultural, and political life in America. The eighteenth-century book trade, the formation of private libraries, and the role of books in the formation of the nation are revealed in superb detail in the Papers of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. The Pierre Eugene Du Simitiere and Peter Force Papers describe the development of historical collecting in America. The papers of several late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Washington printers—Blair & Rives, Force, Gales & Seaton, and Samuel Harrison Smith, among others—reveal much about the political and cultural life in the new capital, the importance of political patronage to early government printing, as well as details about the economics of printing.

Two comprehensive publishers' archives in the Manuscript Division—those of Benjamin Huebsch and the Bollingen Foundation—reflect innovative and experimental developments in twentieth-century publishing, rather than mainstream commercial ventures. The Benjamin Ticknor and Horace Traubel Papers provide insights into author-publisher relations, but this aspect of publishing history is more fully recorded in the rich author collections, most notably, the Charles E. Feinberg Collection of Walt Whitman Papers. The R. Hoe & Company Records document the development of the power press and advances in printing technology. Material in the Pennell-Whistler Collection and the Thomas Maitland Cleland Papers illuminate the careers of these book designers and illustrators.

The records and materials regarding the legal requirement for copyright protection comprise a

national archive of printing and publishing history. The Early Copyright Records Collection in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division covers the period prior to 1870, when responsibility for registration was transferred from the clerk of the district court in which the proprietor resided to the Library of Congress. A pilot project, sponsored by the Center for the Book, is now under way to index and publish the ledger entries and title pages for the decade 1790-1800. This will serve as a first step toward indexing the entire Early Copyright Records Collection.

Centralization of copyright functions in the Library of Congress ensured the development of a comprehensive collection of copyrighted post-1870 imprints. Records created since 1870, maintained by the Copyright Office, are uniform and complete; they reveal unique information about the profession of authorship, printing, manufacturing, and publishing.

Because historians of the book rely equally on evidence preserved in archival documents and in physical artifacts, the scope and depth of printed materials in Library of Congress collections comprise outstanding resources. Copyright deposit copies form the core of three special format divisions: Geography & Map, Music, Prints & Photographs. Essays on their holdings—comprehensive for the pre-1870 period and exhaustive for the last 100 years—suggest possible lines of bibliographical and historical research into graphic arts printing, publishing, and distribution in America and the role of maps, music, prints, and photographs in American culture.

The guide describes separately maintained collections in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division that include 5,400 incunabula, the largest collection of fifteenth-century books in the western hemisphere; American Imprints (approximately 43% of Evans titles); the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, covering the western illustrated book from the fifteenth to the twentieth century; and numerous imprint, author, subject, and genre groups.

The general collections will remain a vast and largely uncharted territory. Sampling reveals extraordinary strength in bibliography and library history. Projects often begin with materials in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division and lead directly to the general collections. The holdings of library catalogs and reports, catalogs of private libraries, auction and booksellers' catalogs are remarkably strong and form an ongoing acquisitions priority in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division. Students using primary sources at the Library of Congress work within a rich context of secondary support materials. Together these resources sustain intensive research in established fields and stimulate inquiry into many new aspects of the history of books.

Alice D. Schreyer
Library of Congress

ISAAH THOMAS PAPERS AT AAS

“The first American capitalist of the printing business” is the phrase that Clifford K. Shipton chose to describe Isaiah Thomas, who was one of the leading printers, publishers, and booksellers of the United States, and perhaps the most important printer and publisher of his generation. In one building in Worcester, Thomas operated a major urban printing center that included a bindery, a flourishing bookstore, a newspaper (the *Massachusetts Spy*), a book and magazine publishing business, and the town’s post office, of which he was postmaster. At the peak of his career, Thomas controlled five bookstores, a paper mill, seven newspapers, and what was considered to be the best magazine in America. Thomas was, in fact, the first chain newspaper owner in the country. His remarkably methodical habits led him to establish commercial centers in several locations, utilizing a modern entrepreneurial system of partnerships. He also successfully mass-produced school books, which rendered him the most progressive publisher of textbooks in that era. His contributions to the field of printed music earned him the title “the father of the American music publishing industry.”

Isaiah Thomas came to Worcester, of course, just before the Battle of Lexington and remained there for fifty-six years, prospering substantially after several difficult years. It is a commonly held belief that he retired a wealthy man in 1802 in order to devote himself to his literary efforts. (He wrote *The History of Printing in America* in 1810.) In fact, he remained quite involved in vigorous business activity, even though he had appointed his less-talented son as head of his enterprises.

The majority of Thomas’s papers, fortunately, are housed in the manuscripts department of the American Antiquarian Society. The papers, covering the years from 1748 to 1874 (fifteen boxes and twenty-three volumes), constitute an important, comprehensive collection of personal and business correspondence as well as other material reflecting Thomas’s immersion in all his various activities. The papers reveal his meticulous attention to financial details, his sometimes irascible personality in dealing with business associates, especially authors (such as Jedidiah Morse and Noah Webster), and paternal concern for his extended family. The collection—most of which has been exhaustively item-catalogued—contains correspondence that relates to Thomas’s business affairs, much of it with his partner of many years, Ebenezer Turrell Andrews, his active participation in the Freemasons, speculation in real estate, and his work for the American Antiquarian Society.

The collection also contains legal documents and his wills, which Thomas loved to rewrite. There are receipts, accounts, Thomas’s personal library catalogue, contracts with authors and publishers,

articles submitted to him for publication, and his diaries, which are terse but reflect his careful recordkeeping and provide glimpses into his many business dealings, such as clandestine literature.

Thomas’s business records include accounts of stock, exchange books (portions of editions were traded between booksellers for stock), and records of sales, expense accounts, memorandum books, letterbooks, and materials relating to Thomas’s *History of Printing in America*. The collection also contains two annotated copies of that publication (which include extensive revisions done over the course of twenty years toward a second edition), and letters and papers relating to the 1874 edition.

Scholars in the past have found the Isaiah Thomas Papers to be tremendously useful in researching such topics as his contributions to printing in general, children’s literature and music publishing in America, Thomas’s literary career and his highly-regarded *Worcester Magazine*. Rollo Silver, of course, worked extensively with Thomas’s thirty-year, wonderfully detailed correspondence with his partner, Ebenezer Andrews, while other scholars have begun to examine revelations in the papers concerning the intricate network of printing centers established by Thomas in various locations.

However, many aspects of the collection remain largely untapped. More attention must be given to Thomas’s Worcester business and that of his son after 1802, although the voluminous correspondence is largely incoming. The diaries apparently contain references to Thomas’s involvement in the clandestine literature trade, and his contracts with publishers and printers are a good source of important information concerning publishing history of that era. Thomas’s business papers illuminate the workings of his satellite printing centers, especially that of Thomas & Company in Walpole, New Hampshire, 1793 to 1817, and provide information concerning “what works reached whom.” The papers span a twenty-five-year period and detail the history of the rural Walpole printing center in the form of correspondence, annual accounts of stock (including actual numbers of each volume in stock), and exchange books from 1802 to 1809.

While the Boston and Walpole centers figure largely in the Isaiah Thomas Papers, there is much additional material in the collection that provides invaluable evidence concerning bookselling in the early nineteenth century, progressive printing networks, papermaking, newspaper-chain publishing, and, in general, the life and work of a driven and brilliant entrepreneur who was dedicated to the concept that printing was, indeed, “the preservative Art of all Arts.”

Kathleen A. Major
American Antiquarian
Society

Research Notes

CHAPBOOKS IN EARLY AMERICA

For many years I have pursued an interest in English and American chapbooks. The award by the American Antiquarian Society in Summer 1984 of a Haven Fellowship enabled me to spend two months doing research on the subject in their library. Its collections, mediated by the expertise and kindness of the staff, made this a memorable period and, in due course, out of it will come a book on the common reader in colonial America.

The research period at Worcester, however, was not, initially at least, plain sailing. There was no main entry under "chapbooks" in the catalogue. For this, and other reasons, I was obliged at the outset, to rethink a definition of the term, and then approach the catalogue in a more indirect fashion. First a tentative definition: chapbooks—within the context of eighteenth-century America—were ephemeral, cheaply priced pamphlets whose contents were intended mainly, though not entirely, to divert and to amuse the reader. They were offered for sale by booksellers and hawked about the countryside by peddlers and other itinerant salesman. Two kinds of chapbooks existed: those that were imported in large numbers from England, and those that were native American productions. I do not propose to dwell at this point upon the differences between the two types, but an awareness of very real distinctions, together with the use of a few entries from my own *Chapbook Bibliography* (2d ed., 1972) cleared the way and my notebooks began to fill up.

Inevitably, research of this kind has to start with the artifact itself, the chapbook. Quite a number entered under title are to be found at AAS, but very many more were quite simply read to destruction (few English chapbooks, for example, have survived although there is abundant evidence for their existence in America); so that one has to rely to a great extent upon book catalogues and advertisements. For this reason the study of chapbooks is sometimes like trying to make bricks with imaginary straw!

After the chapbook itself, one must consider the trade: printers, publishers (in the eighteenth century there was a very imprecise and shifting line between these two functions), and distributors. The AAS catalogue of printers and locations is beyond praise. In only one or two cases was I able to modify its magisterial listings and then only in very small points of detail. Without this research tool, my work would have been virtually impossible, or at best would have taken two or three years. With regard to distributing and selling chapbooks, manuscript materials at AAS were informative, and the picture of chapbooks in America became very much clearer.

Two crucial issues remain. One is that of identifying the reader as an individual man or woman; the other is that of assessing the implications of a widely spread

popular literacy, which a study of chapbooks makes it entirely valid to assume. For the most part, the common reader has to be the "imagined reader"; there is simply not enough evidence to be more precise than this. Of his or her existence, however, given the scope and increasing development of the chapbook trade, there can be no doubt at all. What did the ability to read do to people? One of its most important effects in colonial America was that it almost certainly increased political awareness at a much lower level of society than has yet been fully realized. Bernard Bailyn (*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 1967) has explored the pamphlet literature that presented political issues to a sophisticated readership, whose ability to read was taken for granted. But it is likely that in considering the literacy of working men and women, the effects of their being able to cope, even at a fairly limited level, with the printed word was more oblique but probably just as decisive. Chapbooks were not political in content, but the mere fact of coming to terms with a page of print must surely have sharpened the perceptions of "imagined readers" and by implication heightened their sense of political awareness (the work of Alfred Young seems to confirm this) and underlined, in perhaps a somewhat inchoate manner, their need to reshape the world they lived in.

It is for these reasons that I would urge the importance of chapbooks in colonial America. I find it somewhat surprising that since the work of Harry B. Weiss, more than a generation ago, American chapbooks have received virtually no attention from scholars. Weiss was tremendously encouraging to me when I started out and I would like to think that he would have approved my work.

Victor Neuburg
Polytechnic of
North London

Book Notes

ABRIDGEMENT OF EISENSTEIN PUBLISHED

(The editors asked Elizabeth Eisenstein for a brief report on the availability of a new abridged version of her *magnum opus*. She replied, as follows:)

The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe, an abridgement of my two-volume *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, was published by the Cambridge University Press in 1984 and is now in its second printing. All footnotes have been dropped and some fifty illustrations have been added to the abridged version, which is designed for the general reader as well as for use in college courses. Instead of the long bibliographical index, there is a brief selected reading list. To keep length under 300 pages, general points are illustrated by fewer examples and much of the historiographical discussion has been curtailed. The main outlines of the big book have been retained,

however. This version should serve as a basis for discussion of the chief consequences of printing and of its relationship to religious and scientific change in early modern Europe.

Fellowship Opportunities

Several fellowship programs for 1985-86 of interest to scholars in the history of the book in American culture have been announced.

The American Antiquarian Society, which holds superb collections of early American printed materials, graphic arts, and manuscripts, awards fellowships to scholars (including doctoral candidates) for resident research in all fields of American history and culture through 1876. Fellowships are available in five categories, with tenures varying from one to twelve months, and with stipends from \$600 monthly to \$25,000 annually (for awards funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities).

Although all of the fellowships are available to scholars working in the history of the book in American culture, one award, the Albert Boni Fellowship, is specifically earmarked for scholars working in that field.

The deadline for receipt of completed applications and three letters of reference is January 31, 1985. Persons interested in applying should request the appropriate application materials from John B.

Hench, Associate Director for Research and Publication, American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury Street, Worcester, Massachusetts 01609.

AAS and the Newberry Library in Chicago have recently agreed to accept joint applications from scholars needing to use both institutions. AAS and the Newberry have collections that, for some projects, may overlap and, for others, may complement each other. The Newberry is, of course, well known for its outstanding collections in the history of printing. Thus, for projects in the history of the book, the two library collections both overlap and complement.

Scholars wishing further information on this joint fellowship plan should contact either Richard H. Brown at the Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, Illinois 60610, or Hench at the AAS address given above.

The Bibliographical Society of America has also announced its next fellowship competition. These short-term research fellowships will, of course, be of interest to all historians of the book, regardless of what time and place limits the subject of their research. The BSA has the same application deadline for its next competition as does AAS and the Newberry, that is, January 31, 1985. For further information, contact the Executive Secretary, Bibliographical Society of America, Post Office Box 397, Grand Central Station, New York, New York 10163.

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
