



The Book

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Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture
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1987 Conference to Explore Teaching the History of the Book

The Society's Program in the History of the Book and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will sponsor a two-day conference on "Teaching the History of the Book: Methods and Concepts" to take place at the Society in Worcester on June 12 and 13, 1987. The conference is intended to address the question of how the subject of the history of the book can be incorporated into the liberal arts curriculum and into the curriculum of such professional schools as library science and journalism. Some ten or twelve scholars from a variety of disciplines will present papers or lead conference sessions, which will culminate in a workshop involving the design of model syllabi.

Participation in the conference is limited and will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. The deadline for applications is May 1, 1987, but persons are urged to make application much earlier than that in order to be assured of a place. Low-cost accommodations will be available in a dormitory belonging to Worcester Polytechnic Institute, which is adjacent to the Society. Alternative housing is available in nearby hotels and motels. For registration information and application materials, write to John B. Hench, Associate Director for Research and Publication, American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury St., Worcester, Mass. 01609.

This conference will take the place in 1987 of the Program's Summer Seminar in the History of the Book in American Culture. The seminar series will resume in 1988.

Cathy N. Davidson Delivers Fourth James Russell Wiggins Lecture

Cathy N. Davidson, professor of English at Michigan State University, gave the fourth James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American Culture on October 29 in Antiquarian Hall in Worcester. The title of her address was "Ideology and Genre: The Rise of the Novel in America."

The centerpiece of Professor Davidson's discussion was America's first best-selling novel, Susanna Haswell Rowson's *Charlotte, a Tale of Truth* (1791), more commonly known as *Charlotte Temple*. In analyzing why and how this novel became such a popular success, Professor Davidson argued that the novel as a genre represents a complex form of cultural production, involving such

apparently "nonliterary" matters as national identity, changing economies, new technologies, and developing patterns of work and leisure.

Mathew Carey printed the first American edition of *Charlotte Temple* in Philadelphia in 1794. Carey's was a reasonably faithful copy of the original English edition published by William Lane's Minerva Press, which was often castigated for its economic success with cheap pot-boilers. Like Lane, who advertised his specialization in "Novels, Tales, Romances, Adventures," Carey, too, nurtured a growing audience for fiction in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America. Significantly, with no copyright laws to protect her, Rowson herself profited little from either the English or the American editions of her novel.



James Russell Wiggins and Cathy N. Davidson

In promoting a book that might satisfy the growing taste for novel-reading in America, Carey printed a title page that made specific note of the author's career in America as an actress. It was a ploy intended to appeal to a native audience of upper- and middle-class readers, a book-buying and theater-going audience who were probably familiar with Rowson as both a popular character actress and playwright.

As Davidson pointed out, the subsequent publishing history of *Charlotte Temple* also reveals the economic truth that printing fiction was good business. The popularity of this tale of love betrayed (so appealing to readers that a "grave" was made for the heroine in Trinity Churchyard in New York City), resulted in a myriad of editions of the novel in the nineteenth century, many reprinted from Carey's own reprinted edition. *Charlotte Temple* was published in styles ranging from elaborate gift books to story paper texts that the poor could

afford; even the titles of the novel changed in some editions, in deference to popular tastes for sentimental or sensational fiction. The novel was also produced as a toy book for children, with Rowson's story of the tragic consequences of illicit sexuality transformed into a moral tale for children, a lesson not without entertainment value, however. Davidson concluded by noting that in the present century, *Charlotte Temple's* appeal is largely to an academic audience, and recent editions (including Davidson's forthcoming publication of the work) emphasize both its value as a literary masterwork and its importance in enlarging our understanding of the history of the book in American culture.

S. McA.

Botein Memorial Fund Established

A memorial fund honoring the late Stephen Botein, professor of history at Michigan State University and the leader of the first two AAS Summer Seminars in the History of the Book in American Culture, has been established with lead gifts by members of his family. Fund income will go to support those activities within the Society's Department of Research and Publication that serve to make the AAS collections more available to students and teachers of history and that help make AAS a meeting ground for scholars of different backgrounds and interests.

Contributions to the fund by those who knew Steve Botein are most welcome. They may be sent to the Stephen Botein Fund, American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury St., Worcester, Massachusetts 01609.

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

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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.

Program Publishes Conference Volume

Several of the papers that were presented at the conference exploring needs and opportunities in the history of the book held at the Society November 1-3, 1984, have been collected in a single volume that will be available at the beginning of January 1987. These papers had appeared in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*. Cost of the hardcover book is \$29.95. Orders may be placed with the Society's distributor, the University Press of Virginia, Box 3608 University Station, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

Notes on Research Collections

(We offer below a two-pronged note on the amateur newspaper collection at AAS, one part by a member of the Society's newspaper staff and the other by a scholar who has used the collection in her research.)

AMATEUR NEWSPAPERS AT AAS

The amateur newspaper occupies a unique place in the history of journalism. Amateur journalism was described by one practitioner as "the recreation of a fraternity of young men and women, who edit or contribute to small papers and magazines, for the purpose of self-culture and as a pleasant and constructive pastime." The amateur newspaper collection at the American Antiquarian Society consists of about fifty thousand issues. There are more than 5,500 titles from every state except Alaska and Hawaii, as well as issues from fifteen foreign countries, thus making the Society's holdings among the largest and most extensive in the United States. The Society has files of seventy-eight titles from Worcester alone.

Amateur newspapers range in size from miniature to quarto, and from two to as many as thirty pages. The Society concentrates its efforts on acquiring amateur papers that fall within the same time period as that for the regular newspaper collection, that is, up to 1876 for those printed in states east of the Mississippi River. That time frame is extended, however, for newspapers printed in Worcester, Boston, and the western states.

It is not definitely known when amateur journalism began, but the earliest amateur newspapers that are extant were printed in England during the eighteenth century. The first amateur newspaper published in the United States is believed to be the *Thespian Mirror*. This paper was edited by John Howard Payne, the future dramatist and actor, while he was a New York City bookkeeper. The first issue appeared on December 28, 1805, and continued weekly until March 22, 1806. A final issue appeared on May 31, 1806. The journal was printed for Payne, then just fourteen years old, by professional printers and was intended for an adult audience. AAS owns seven of the fourteen issues of this amateur paper, which included theatrical reviews, biographical sketches, and poetry.

Until the late 1860s, there were three methods of publication available to the amateur journalist: (1) writing or printing the contents of the paper with pen or pencil, the method used by the editors of the *Flower*, published at Smithfield, R.I., in 1836, and for the *Casket*, published at Boylston, Mass., in 1857; (2) paying a professional printer to do the typesetting and presswork with the aid of the amateur's manuscript, as did John Howard Payne; and (3) building his or her own press, as did Marcus Rogers, who in 1854 constructed a press and printed the *Rising Sun* at Mill River, Mass., and Cyrus Curtis, who in 1865 utilized a discarded handpress to print the *Young American* at Portland, Maine.

In 1867, Benjamin O. Woods of Boston invented an inexpensive, hand-inking printing press. Owing to its simple construction, the "Novelty Press" (as Woods named it) could be sold for a few dollars. Woods advertised his press in periodicals such as *Saint Nicholas* and the *Youth's Companion*, which, along with *Oliver Optic's Magazine*, carried news about amateur printers and editors and reached a large audience of young people. In the early 1870s the first self-inking amateur press was offered for sale.

During the ten years following the invention of Wood's press, the number of amateur newspapers increased from fewer than one hundred to almost one thousand. Although many of these were short-lived, some endured for five years or more. Amateur journalism flourished all across the country. In addition to editorials, original fiction, essays, jokes, stories gleaned from other publications (both amateur and professional), poetry, and even puzzle departments began to appear as regular features in many amateur papers. The Society holds a great many of these journals from the golden age of amateurism, the 1870s and 1880s.

The Society's amateur newspaper collection is arranged in 134 folio boxes. The four boxes at the beginning of the collection contain the following uncatalogued items: amateur newspaper directories and guides, constitutions and by-laws of national and local organizations of amateur journalists, pamphlets and programs of local amateur press clubs, promotional literature, membership lists and yearbooks of national societies, and programs from meetings of national societies. In the next 128 boxes are the amateur newspapers themselves, filed alphabetically by title. And in the last two boxes are uncatalogued brochures and books that were written or published by amateurs.

Five trays of catalogue cards provide access to the amateur newspaper collection. Each card lists the place of publication, the title of the newspaper, its frequency of publication, and the Society's holdings of the title. The catalogue cards are filed alphabetically by place of publication.

Dennis R. Laurie,
American Antiquarian Society

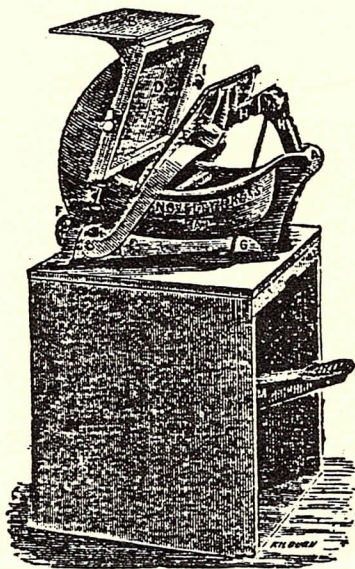
SCHOLARLY USES OF AMATEUR NEWSPAPERS

Most things produced in miniature for children or manufactured by children themselves appeal to the observer. When either the Smithsonian Institution or the Boston Children's Museum mounts an exhibition devoted to toys, especially dollhouses, the viewing public and its offspring throng the halls to marvel at the detail of items scaled to fit a child's world. Much the same can be said for amateur newspapers; at first glance they are charming because they are small and fitted out for young readers or, better yet, because they were printed by youngsters and possess all the hallmarks of their first efforts. Besides their human interest, amateur newspapers also proffer some solid research possibilities for the scholar whose interests might be in the history of the book or the history of the family.

Historians exploring the history of childhood invariably encounter one methodological problem: discovering what children really thought. The first and obvious solution to this problem is, of course, using juvenile diaries, journals, or letters to gain some purchase on youngsters' thinking. Unfortunately, although their authors were perhaps more inclined toward exposition, the writings of nineteenth-century children were neither as reflective nor as numerous as historians might wish. Generally speaking, American archives do not hold many examples of *juvenilia*, and only a small percentage of these contain information appropriate to historical writing. The diaries also favor northeastern male writers of the white middle class and skew research in that direction. In any case, a small crop of diaries spread across the nation is hardly a comfortable research base. The amateur newspaper collection cannot offer antidotes to all research problems, but it can redress a regional imbalance, increase the representation of a female sensibility, and even in some cases cross the boundaries of class and race. Most important, amateur journalism demanded that its practitioners reflect on their experience. An examination of amateur publishing can, therefore, provide insight into adolescent attitudes toward work, success, education, relationships, and recreation.

The invention of the Novelty Printing Press, the device that produced the bulk of the American Antiquarian Society's holdings, literally put the power of print into the hands of young people—boys, to a greater extent than girls, and created a mass, adolescent culture. Although many of the papers of the 1840s and 1850s were northeastern products and imitated their adult counterparts by reprinting selections, after 1870 the papers were diverse geographically and committed to original work. Bereft of stylistic sophistication—metaphor, symbol, character development, and sometimes plot—the amateur papers provided insight into young people's thinking as they marked the time between childhood and adulthood. Not only do these amateur stories demonstrate the pervasive influence of nineteenth-century children's authors, but

they also reveal a whole new set of adolescent anxieties, strategies, and experiences. William “Downsey” Downes, for example, in his serial, “Roger Dale,” simply rewrote Oliver Optic’s *A Soldier Boy* but added or altered certain themes to suit his own tastes, delighting his readers with a love interest and boyish athleticism. These nineteenth-century adolescent journals, moreover, suggest how young writers recast and reshaped these author’s values to answer their own teenage needs in creating their own version of adolescence.



Quarto Novelty Press

In addition to its contribution to family history, the amateur newspaper also stands to add to the history of the book by what it reveals about children’s reading habits and their response to popular literature. The issue of the [Washington, D.C.] *Boy of the Period* for November 1871 illustrates the range of possibilities. In addition to the conclusion of William Downes’s story involving an unsuccessful marriage proposal, a satirical travelogue by “Mephisto,” and a humorous piece by “Hautboy,” the editor treated his readers to comments on the travail of schoolboys, the inequities of a union shop and its effect on a boy’s prospective career, and the abuses in newspaper advertising. Puerile and superficial as they might be, these pieces indicate an abiding preference for wild adventure, sexy romance, vaudeville humor, and conservative politics—attitudes and tastes that would characterize the Gilded Age. Like other journals, *Boy of the Period* also attempted literary reviews. Although the reading public lionized Louisa May Alcott’s renditions of childhood, the young reviewer criticized his elders’ judgment. “Mrs. [sic] Alcott’s writings,” he wrote of *Little Men*, “are all of one order. It is hard to define them with exactness: they are not faithful portraiture of nature, for her characters never existed; they are not false to life, for it is impossible to say that such beings might not exist.” The reviewer’s remarks were perhaps more apt than he knew, for at the close of his essay he correctly surmised that one of

Alcott’s purposes was to “show a parent, who reads them with care, what the right treatment of his growing charges may produce.” These review columns suggest what elements of contemporary fiction appealed to juvenile readers. They also allude to the development of reading tastes in the younger generation and limn a group’s response to aspects of popular culture. Similar analysis of material from related publications like the [San Francisco] *New Planet*, the [St. Louis] *Gaberlunzie*, or the [Chicago] *New Industry* would undoubtedly offer some interesting perspectives on book history across a broad geographical and thematic base. After all, pondering how young Irving Brown’s “Quadroon Husband” dealt with miscegenation in the [Boston] *Excelsior*’s July 15, 1858, issue is enough to set any historian wondering about how childhood reading and tastes in books might have influenced adult opinion and actions.

Paula Petrik,
Montana State University

Literacy, Literacy Instruction, and the History of the Book

In the study of the history of the printed word in America, the history of literacy already occupies a small but respectable niche. Equally important to that history, but less well advanced, is the history of literacy instruction, including the materials and methods for teaching reading, the relationships of reader content to the general culture, and the roles that printers and publishers played in the evolution of the instructional process. Central to this history are textbooks, which have commanded a highly visible place in American print culture since the colonial era. Textbooks were the second most popular genre imported into the colonies, outdone only by theology texts. By 1830, they represented nearly one-third of the dollar volume in the publishing trade and since then have been the single largest selling category of books.

Among textbooks, the literacy texts—primers, ABCs, spellers, readers, preceptors, and rhetorical guides—have always held the largest share of the trade. Along with almanacs and blank books, primers and ABCs were staples of the early American press. Isaiah Thomas’s editions of Webster’s *American Speller*, Mathew Carey’s *American Primer*, and Samuel Wood’s *Young Child’s ABC* were as important to the commercial success of these publishers in the early nineteenth century as was the *New England Primer* and Dilworth’s *Speller* to Franklin & Hall in the middle of the eighteenth century.

Although histories of the more popular reading texts such as the *New England Primer* and *McGuffey’s Readers* have been written, until Jennifer Monaghan’s work on Webster’s blue-back speller (*A Common Heritage*, Hamden, Conn., 1983), little effort was directed towards understanding the marketing and distribution of textbooks, and minimal use was made of primary data from printers, publishers, and booksellers. The importance of

commercialism to the popularity of readers and other literacy texts has been recognized, but work remains to be done on the compilation, production, and marketing methods of the textbook publishers.

Within the broader agenda of the history of the book, the history of literacy instruction offers an alternative locus for studying such issues as the Americanization of print, the role of books as liberating or constraining influences on individuals, and the validity of the intensive-extensive reading hypothesis. Readers and other literacy texts are like roadside billboards in that they are open to whatever message the renter-compiler wishes to insert. Unlike geographies, math books, or histories, literacy texts have no intrinsic content; reading can be taught with any configuration of print that falls within rather broad limits of coherence and complexity. Consequently, school readers, more so than any other form of print, have been attractive instruments for those who have sought control over the minds and hearts of children. From the compiler of the first *New England Primer* in the late seventeenth century to the present-day Texas and California state textbook committees, individuals and organizations have directed the contents of readers towards selected cultural values and away from others.

As might be expected, there are opposing interpretations of the content of the nineteenth-century readers. One view, represented by Ruth Elson's *Guardians of Tradition* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1964), characterizes this content as a benign compendium of popular values, "an idealized image both of [the child] and the history that produced the admired American type." The other view, derived in part from Merle Curti's *The Social Ideas of American Educators* (New York, 1935), finds that the texts reveal a form of overt social control, with a heavy bias toward the conservative interests of merchants and industrialists rather than the common man.

The issue of social control is more complex, however, than just what is revealed through analysis of the content of a reader. Reading texts reflect schooling attitudes in general, and these are derived, in part, from prevailing concepts of childhood. Thus, the study of reader content needs to be placed within the larger context of childhood and schooling. Such analyses must be equally cognizant, for example, of the transition in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries from a theological to a psychological basis for behavior, and changing views towards materialism. The transition of reader content from a theological base in the seventeenth century to the present-day melange of folk tales, myths, legends, and neutralized vignettes of childhood speaks not only to the interests of the history of the book but also to current educational policy.

Besides analyzing the content of readers, spellers, and the like, scholars of the history of literacy instruction have focused on several issues: methods of reading instruction,

the backgrounds and competencies of teachers, the distribution of literacy abilities across communities of differing size, proximity to commercial centers, and school maintenance. The issues that these studies have engendered range from the amount of schooling necessary for self-sustained literacy to the roles that literacy played in everyday life during different periods in American history. Among the most prominent have been Shirley Brice Heath's "The Functions and Uses of Literacy," *Journal of Communication* 30 (1980):123-33, William Gilmore's "Elementary Literacy on the Eve of the American Revolution," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 92 (1982):87-171, and Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens's *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School in the United States* (Chicago, 1981).

Some recent studies have revealed a form of intensive reading in modern society, particularly among older and less literate people, that parallels what is hypothesized for the general reader in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What role literacy instruction may have played in promoting extensive reading remains to be examined. While religious texts were prominently represented in the colonial curriculum, secular texts and newspapers predominated by the middle of the eighteenth century, particularly outside New England. Schooling, though tradition-maintaining by nature, may have encouraged the broader form of reading that is assumed for the end of the eighteenth century, a development that resulted from changes in the economics of printing and the availability of discretionary income and time. Alternatively, intensive reading of a small number of texts may simply be an enduring characteristic of marginal literacy, and the appearance of an intensive-extensive shift at the end of the eighteenth century may be largely an artifact of the expansion of schooling and of increased access to print.

Viewed from the perspective of the history of the book, the history of literacy instruction is in its infancy. Descriptive bibliographies are lacking, except for a few of the best known reading texts, and the primary records of textbook usage need to be collected and catalogued. Yet reading texts and literacy methods have already been utilized as convergent evidence for assaying the distribution of popular belief in America and for tracing the development of the mass reading public. After many years of neglect, the history of American reading instruction has attracted a renewed interest. With the scholarship and encouragement of the practitioners of the history of the book, and with the resources and activities of the American Antiquarian Society, literacy studies could be drawn into the wider context of the social history of the book.

Richard L. Venezky,
University of Delaware

Fellowship Opportunities

Several fellowship programs of interest to scholars and doctoral candidates working in the history of the book in American culture will again be offered by the American Antiquarian Society in 1987-88. Fellowships in four categories support resident research in all fields of American history and culture through 1876, with tenures from one to twelve months. Stipends are from \$700 monthly to \$27,500 annually (for awards funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities). In addition, AAS and the Newberry Library in Chicago accept joint short-term fellowship applications for scholars who need to do research at both libraries.

The Society's deadline for receipt of completed applications and three letters of reference is January 31, 1987. Persons interested should request materials from John B. Hench, Associate Director for Research and Publication, American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury St., Worcester, Mass. 01609. Those wishing further details about the joint AAS-Newberry Library fellowship plan should contact either Hench or the Committee on Awards, Newberry Library, 60 West Walton St., Chicago, Ill. 60610.

The Bibliographical Society of America again invites applications for its annual short-term fellowship program, which supports bibliographical inquiry and research

in the history of the book trades and in publishing history. Applications, including three letters of reference, will be due on January 31, 1987. Prospective applicants should contact the BSA Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 397, Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163.

Two Wiggins Lecturers Named

Two scholars have been named to deliver the James Russell Wiggins Lectures in the History of the Book in American Culture at the Society in 1987 and 1988.

Roger Chartier will deliver the 1987 lecture, on Wednesday, September 30. Chartier is director, Centre de Recherches Historiques, l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. With Henri-Jean Martin, he is co-editor of the multivolume *l'Histoire de l'Édition Française*. He serves as a member of the Advisory board of the Society's Program in the History of the Book in American Culture.

The 1988 lecture will be given by John Bidwell, reference acquisitions librarian, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles. A one-time visiting research fellow at AAS, Bidwell is a member of the Executive Committee of the Society's book history program.

Details of these lectures will appear in future issues of *The Book*.

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

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