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## How to Make a Soufflé; or, What Historians of the Book Need to Know about Bibliography<sup>1</sup>

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At last year's conference of our association, Professor Yannick Portebois graciously asked me to speak to you today about bibliography and in particular what historians of the book should know about bibliography. She mentioned that I could take out sheets of paper for you similar to Terry Belanger's demonstrations in his Hollywood-inspiring movie, the *Anatomy of a Book*.<sup>2</sup> *Voilà une grande feuille de papier!* Fold a large sheet of paper once to make a folio, twice for a quarto, and then thrice into an octavo. Say a few judicious words about format, mention chain lines and wire lines in my discussion, and then add a note about watermarks and countermarks. After more elaborate folding, perhaps a cutting of these sheets for what is called half-sheet imposition, and bibliography magically disappears as a sub-species of origami. Then a few months ago, Professor Portebois reiterated her invitation to me to "démystifier la bibliographie matérielle" and to make my presentation uplifting and possibly "amusant." Our bibliographical reverie this afternoon will thus conclude "en beauté."

Having abandoned the complicated art of origami, I now regard this assignment akin to making a soufflé. The word soufflé is the past participle of the French verb *souffler* which means "to blow up" or more loosely "to puff up." A soufflé must also have substance. It can be savoury or sweet. As many of you must know, soufflé making, even for the masters, inevitably will have mixed results. It requires delicacy and a light and airy touch. To mix my metaphors even further, I suspect that Professor Portebois has a fondness for certain French wines. You know the ones. The fine wines from Bordeaux, Burgundy, the Rhône, and Champagne. They are delicious, subtle and deceptive, but let no one here be fooled about bibliography. Like economics, the dismal science, bibliography unfortunately has a reputation that precedes itself. When I read the classic introductions to bibliography by Fredson Bowers and Philip Gaskell 25 years ago, they were known to the students as "Boring and Ghastly."<sup>3</sup> The discipline requires absolute accuracy and rigour. Alas, we humans are frail and prone to error. The practitioners of bibliography are a serious bunch. As a rule they don't laugh.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was delivered on 30 May 2006 at the conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Book Culture held under the auspices of Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences at York University, Toronto, Ontario.

<sup>2</sup> *The Anatomy of a Book: Format in the Hand-Press Period with Terry Belanger* (New York: Viking Productions, 1991). 1 videocassette (30 min.).

<sup>3</sup> Fredson Bowers, *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949); Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

Those who know me know since I am a bibliographer that I haven't really laughed for a long time. If I do laugh on occasion, I can assure you that it is only a nervous reflex caused by reading too much of Stephen Leacock's humorous short stories;<sup>4</sup> so a word of caution about my remarks today. I suggest that as good historians, you put at least one hand over an ear to guard against the dangers of bibliography. Close both eyes if you must, especially if you nod off into slumber-land five minutes into this presentation. However, if I may retreat back into the safety of the kitchen and my mixed gastronomic metaphors, we must know something about the art of cooking, *l'art du bien manger*, before we can try *haute cuisine*.

I must pause here and embark on a series of mock apologies. First to Mary F. Williamson, a determined collector and researcher of Canadian cook books.<sup>5</sup> My second apology is to Leslie Howsam, who is both a book historian *par excellence* and an apparent expert on cookery books. I acknowledge her admirable discussion of Mrs. Beeton's *Household Management*.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Elizabeth Driver (I trust that she is not here), the author of *A Bibliography of Cookery Books Published in Britain 1875-1914*, and *Culinary Landmarks*,<sup>7</sup> would undoubtedly hit me on the head with a frying pan. At the risk of getting egg on our faces, let us now venture boldly into the domain of bibliography.

To begin at the beginning, therefore, historians of the book should know that bibliography is both an art and a science, that it is a discipline unto itself and the handmaiden to other disciplines and that it has several branches. Practically all scholars at one time or another have engaged in the listing of books or publications. These are checklists with the bare essentials for matters of citation: the author's name, the book's title, and date and place of publication. This is known as enumerative bibliography. Of this kind of bibliography, Sir William Osler, the father of modern medicine and one of the greatest book collectors in his field, has written: "Not naturally dry, bibliography is too often made so by faulty treatment. What more arid than long lists of titles, as dreary as the genealogies of the Old Testament, or as the catalogue of the ships in Homer!"<sup>8</sup> When a checklist is arranged according to a plan or a classification scheme (author, subject, or date, for example), it is called systematic bibliography. Some enumerative bibliographies are also annotated. However pedestrian this type of bibliographical work might appear, it provides a fundamental support to scholarship. Historians should be aware that there are criteria for evaluating enumerative bibliography. They concern subject matter, scope, methodology, organization, the quality of annotations, bibliographic form, timeliness, and accuracy. There are good enumerative bibliographies and bad ones. In the worst case scenario, the compiler hasn't bothered to examine the citations. Here, perhaps we may pause and consider the immortal words of Carl Van

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<sup>4</sup> I have the dubious distinction of being the author of *A Bibliography of Stephen Leacock* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1988; second edition is in electronic form on CD published by the Battered Silicon Dispatch Box in 2004). To make matters worse, I have edited three other books by Leacock, Canada's premiere humorist: *My Recollection of Chicago and The Doctrine of Laissez Faire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Literary Texts, 2002); and *Gone Fishing!* (Shelburne, Ont: The Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Mary F. Williamson is the co-author of *Art and Architecture in Canada: A Bibliography and Guide to the Literature to 1981/Art et architecture au Canada: bibliographie et guide de la documentation jusqu'en 1981* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). Her personal collection of Canadian cook books prior to 1950 and nineteenth-century American and British cookery takes up more than forty feet of shelving.

<sup>6</sup> At the SHARP conference in 1997, Howsam delivered a paper entitled "Mrs Beeton's Household Management: Towards the History of a Book." See also her article on Beeton, "Food for Thought," *Rare Book Review* 31, 3 (April 2004): 32-4, 36.

<sup>7</sup> *A Bibliography of Cookery Books Published in Britain 1875-1914* (London: Prospect Books 1989); *Culinary Landmarks: A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks, 1825-1949* (in press).

<sup>8</sup> Sir William Osler, review of *Essai de bibliographie hippique* by General Mennessier de la Lance, facsimile in *Sir William Osler: An Annotated Bibliography with Illustrations*, eds. Richard L. Golden and Charles G. Roland (San Francisco: Norman Publishing, 1988), 9.

Vechten's introduction to *The Tiger in the House* (1922), and I quote:

This bibliography makes no pretence to being complete. . . An exhaustive bibliography on the subject of cats would undoubtedly fill a very large volume all by itself. But this one is more nearly complete than any other which exists; as a matter of fact it is the only bibliography on the subject [of cats] that I know save Mr. [Percy L.] Babington's, which covers only a small and select private library, and which makes no mention of periodical literature.<sup>9</sup>

Alas, unlike Mr. Van Vechten, the great portrait photographer of the twentieth century, I'm not a great admirer of the feline species. I make no apologies. There are bibliographies, and then there are bibliographies. To conclude my short heretical discussion of enumerative bibliography, I refer to Ecclesiastes, although my recollection of the verse in question is admittedly suspect: of the making of compilations, there is no end; and such bibliographical investigation ultimately can be a weariness unto the flesh.<sup>10</sup>

Enumerative bibliography is akin to basic cooking. It is fried eggs done over easy, an omelette, scrambled eggs, or French toast. A good and wholesome breakfast no doubt. At best, when the criteria of enumerative bibliography have been accomplished to the highest degree — an annotated and illustrated bibliography of an important subject, arranged skilfully and easily accessible with multiple cross-references — we may even hope for eggs Benedict, a hearty dish that can be mastered with patience and timing. But ultimately enumerative bibliography is not a soufflé.

Generally speaking, historians of the book want to know about the other type of bibliography, not the making of lists which has been conducted by all and sundry since the inscriptions found on clay tablets in ancient Assyria at Ninevah. I'm referring, of course, to what Professor Portebois has termed "la bibliographie materielle," what the Anglo-American tradition calls analytical bibliography, a god-awful name which almost puts contradiction to sleep. It is sometimes also called critical bibliography. Analytical bibliography is the study of books as physical objects, their history, appearance, and the influence of the manner of production on texts. Three recognized subgroups of bibliographical activity are within analytical bibliography: historical bibliography, textual bibliography, and descriptive bibliography.

Historical bibliography takes a broad view of printing and publishing. It is basically the history of the book but from a bibliographical perspective. You're all aware of the Adams and Barker model of book history, which criticizes Robert Darnton's communication's circuit.<sup>11</sup> In short, in one sense, one can claim that the publication of Lucien Lefebvre and Henri-Jean Martin's *L'apparition du livre* inaugurated a new discipline.<sup>12</sup> But the practice of historical bibliography fundamentally challenges this understanding of the roots of the discipline. Before the inception of the history of the book as a recognized discipline, historical bibliography was widespread in the literature. We focus not so much on the impact of books on society and culture but the reverse of this. In other words, we tell the story of a book's publication in terms of a text's authorial genesis, development, editing, printing, production, marketing, and distribution to the public. Here, the physical book

<sup>9</sup> Carl Van Vechten, *The Tiger in the House* (New York: Knopf, 1920), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:12. "Furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

<sup>11</sup> Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" *Daedalus* 111, 3 (1982): 65-83; Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker, "A New Model for the Study of the Book," in *The Potencie of Life, Books in Society: The Clarke Lectures, 1967-1987*, ed. Nicolas Barker (London: British Library, 1993), 5-43.

<sup>12</sup> Lucien Lefebvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *L'apparition du livre* (Paris: Éditions A. Michel, 1958). Translated by David Gerard into English as *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800* (London: N.L.B., 1976).

remains central to the story and not a by-product to be put aside or discarded once its impact is made on society.

Textual bibliography, another branch of analytical bibliography, sometimes called textual criticism, is indeed a discipline unto itself. It seeks to identify variations in a text and whether the author, editor, compositor, printer, or others are responsible for those variations. In the words of Sir Walter Greg — a bibliographical scholar practically unknown to historians of the book but who has had an enormous, and controversial, influence on the development of analytical bibliography — bibliography in this sense is the material science of the transmission of literary documents.<sup>13</sup> Admittedly, science is obviously too strong a word in this context. Textual bibliography is concerned with critical editing, the identification of relevant texts and the elusive search and establishment of an ideal text, whatever that may mean. Editors are familiar with the Greg-Bowers' theory of copy-text, whose purpose is to produce a single eclectic text combining early accidentals and late substantives inextricably tied to the concept of authorial intention. This editorial theory still has its defenders, though it is much in retreat these days. "The great Demiurge behind all this editing seems to be Mr. Fredson Bowers of the University of Virginia," so wrote the literary critic Edmund Wilson in October 1968. Scholarly editing and its funding, he complained, were controlled by the Center for Editions of American Authors. Wilson called Bowers an impassioned bibliographer. "I have been told that his lectures on bibliography are so thrilling," Wilson stated, "that young students often leave them with no other ambition than to become master bibliographers. But I have found no reason to believe that he is otherwise much interested in literature."<sup>14</sup> A cheap shot to be sure, without a true understanding of the central issues of scholarly editing.

The debates in editorial theory are much more complicated than Wilson's scornful send-off. They touch on the alleged difference between accidentals and substantives, printer's practices, authorial intention over time, texts and their contexts, whether editing is a process and not a product, and texts ultimately being unstable and multiple. In the era of cyberspace, moreover, texts are fleeting. They are songs in the wind, ever-changing and ephemeral. On the one hand, all of this seems quite remote from our ordinary understanding of bibliography and even further from the history of the book. Who really cares if an author deleted commas along the way, changed a few words, added sentences, or discarded a chapter under the influence of his prudish mother-in-law or a captious editor? On the other hand, the nature of authorship and texts, I would maintain, is at the very heart of the history of the book. We cannot understand, for example, the heated arguments about the status of James Joyce's *Ulysses*<sup>15</sup> without a firm grasp of textual bibliography. Textual bibliography also relates to the debate about books and authors with overlapping themes raised by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. Not all texts are the same, and the task of the textual bibliographer is to investigate and assess those texts critically.

Descriptive bibliography, the third sub-group of analytical bibliography, is the close description of books as physical objects, recording size, format, binding, and so on. Depending upon the type of imprints described, it may include descriptive elements such as typography, paper, and ink. There are established protocols for descriptive bibliography. G. Thomas Tanselle, for example, has written a series of lucid articles

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<sup>13</sup> W.W. Greg, "What Is Bibliography?," and "Bibliography-An Apologia," in *Collected Papers*, ed. J.C. Maxwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 83, 241. See also G. Thomas Tanselle, "Bibliography and Science" in his *Selected Studies in Bibliography* (Charlottesville: Published for the Bibliographical Society of Virginia by the University Press of Virginia, 1979), 1-35.

<sup>14</sup> Edmund Wilson, *The Fruits of the MLA* (New York: New York Review of Books, 1968), 17.

<sup>15</sup> See John Kidd's criticisms of Hans Walter Gabler's *Ulysses: The Corrected Text* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986): "The Scandal of Ulysses," *New York Review of Books*, 30 June 1988: 32-39; and "What Ulysses Requires," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 87 (June 1993): 187-248.

on these subjects, and in particular he has put forward a model of bibliographical description.<sup>16</sup> The model is much in use, although there are variations in these kinds of bibliographies in the presentation of data elements and description. There are descriptive bibliographies of an author's canon, descriptive bibliographies of a set of imprints specified by time, place, subject, or publisher, and even descriptive bibliographies of one book. The bibliographer is required not only to be comprehensive and accurate, but to describe books physically, all editions and sub-editions. Descriptive bibliography becomes a high-wire act when bibliography is not just physical description for the sake of description but includes publishing history based on an array of primary sources and archives, all succinctly presented. Here, bibliography becomes an art form, and the results are true monuments of scholarship. In our parallel universe of the kitchen, we have moved beyond the *la cuisine bourgeoise* into the realm of *haute cuisine*.

So, what does the historian of the book need to know about bibliography? By now you are either fast asleep or perhaps you have removed your hands from your ears in the hope of salvation. Dare, I believe, that some of you may be hungry for more? Ladies and gentlemen, in my view, the history of the book as a discipline at this time is entering a new phase. The last ten years have witnessed an extraordinary burgeoning of the discipline. Its popularity and the number of studies undertaken force us to take stock of what the historian must have in his or her arsenal. The historian does not have to be a bibliographer. However, it is not good enough to admit bibliographical naïveté or to distance oneself from bibliography as an irrelevant field of study. We have had competing models of what book history is. We have had debates about the divergent approaches of analytical bibliography versus *l'histoire du livre*.<sup>17</sup> The debate of the ways of the historian as opposed to those of the literary critic also looms in the background. The inspiration of Bourdieu and Derrida or the influence of literary theory, such as post-modernism, is like pyrotechnics; they produce "ouus" and "ahs" of exploding colour, pushing the discipline into various directions.

If we have learned anything about these debates, incursions, and fireworks, perhaps we understand that there is no one way of writing the history of books. The historian will use different approaches at different times, depending upon his or her purpose and intended audience. As historians, we presume that history must be based on a variety of primary sources: archives, oral testimony, newspapers, journals and magazines, and of course, books. To slight books as primary evidence or not to understand them physically undermines the basis of our work. In this respect, I must express my disappointment with the short shrift given to the study of bibliography in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery's *Book History Reader* and *Introduction to Book History*.<sup>18</sup> The former is slated for a revised edition with the inclusion of the Adams/Barker model of book history and Fredson Bowers's essay, "Bibliography, Pure Bibliography and Literary Studies."<sup>19</sup>

Let us return to our bibliographical soufflé. The main ingredient of our soufflé is books. Like the chef who separates the eggs, beats the egg whites, gently folds in the whites into the yolks, and adds seasoning, we must know how to analyse books and how to examine them. "Every book presents its own problems and has to be investigated by methods suited to its particular case" — so wrote Ronald B. McKerrow almost eighty years ago in *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students*, a classic work that I highly recommend. To

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<sup>16</sup> G. Thomas Tanselle, "A Sample Description with Commentary," *Studies in Bibliography* 40 (1987): 1-30. See also his *Introduction to Bibliography: Seminar Syllabus* (Charlottesville: Book Arts Press, University of Virginia, 2002), especially the section devoted to descriptive bibliography (167-80).

<sup>17</sup> One of the debates, "The Confluence of Bibliography and Book History: Whither the Debate? A Canadian Perspective," occurred at the SHARP conference in Halifax on 15 July 2005. The participants of the debate were Leslie Howsam, Carl Spadoni, Richard Virr, and Yvan Lamonde.

<sup>18</sup> David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, *The Book History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002); and *Introduction to Book History* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Finkelstein and McCleery, *The Book History Reader*. The second edition was published in 2006.

quote McKerrow further:

And it is just this fact, that there is always a chance of lighting on new problems and new methods of demonstration, that with almost every new book we take up we are in a new country, unexplored and trackless, and that yet such discoveries as we may make are real discoveries, not mere matters of opinion, provable things that no amount of after-investigation can shake, that lends such a fascination to bibliographical research.<sup>20</sup>

In this respect, the historian must have an understanding of fundamental concepts about books: edition, impression, issue, and state. *En français-édition, tirage, émission, et état*. When terms such as these give us trouble, then we must have basic tools at hand, such as John Carter and Nicolas Barker's *ABC for Book Collectors*, Glaister's *Glossary of the Book*, Roy Stokes's *A Bibliographical Companion*, Michele P. Brown's *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms*.<sup>21</sup> There is an apocryphal story of Fredson Bowers going to a rare book library in search of incunables. The librarian told him that unfortunately, no such collection was available. When Professor Bowers expressed his surprise and disappointment that the rare book library contained no books printed before 1500, the librarian tried to correct him. The library did indeed have many books from that early era of printing, but to the librarian's knowledge, none of them appeared to be incunables. If there is a moral to this Bowers parable, it is that there is a distinct vocabulary about books as physical objects. We must know what we are talking about even when these terms become blurred in their common usage. Otherwise, we will become like the unhelpful librarian who cannot tell the difference between an incunable and a brick.

In addition to being familiar with the vocabulary of the book arts and bibliography, the historian of the book should know about the evolution of scribal culture, the print industry, and the facets of publishing: how books are written and made and how they come into the hands of the public, including authorship, production, and publication. Sir Walter Greg put it this way: The bibliographer

will probably not cover the whole field, for it is a large one, but he will require an intimate knowledge of certain parts and some familiarity with the paths that lead from one part to another, if he is to be any good in his subject. The expert in typography is unlikely to be also a skilled paleographer, but he will require some knowledge of the handwritings upon which various types are based. Both alike will need some familiarity with the history of paper-making, though they will probably leave the closer examination of water-marks to a specialist. What is important is that every serious bibliographer should have some general plan of the subject in his mind that will, so to speak, enable him to find his way about, and to understand the advances made in other fields and the possible light they may throw upon his immediate studies.<sup>22</sup>

Now, Greg does not expect us to be an expert on the entire field of book making. What he is saying is that

<sup>20</sup> Ronald B. McKerrow, *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 5.

<sup>21</sup> John Carter and Nicolas Barker, *ABC for Book Collectors* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press; London: British Library, 2004, eighth edition); Geoffrey Ashall Glaister, *Glossary of the Book* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979, second edition); Roy Stokes, *A Bibliographical Companion* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989); Michele P. Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms* (Malibu, California: J. Paul Getty Museum in association with the British Library, 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Greg, "What Is Bibliography?," 79-80.

if one is a medievalist, for example, then in addition to knowing about the function of medieval manuscripts and their typology, one must understand the structure of medieval books and the materials and techniques of manuscript production (papyrus, parchment, rolls, the codex, paper, ruling, pens, inks, pigments, scripts, illustration, design, and bookbinding). In other words, the medieval book historian will know about the use of books in the Middle Ages, their context and significance for a variety of purposes, and perhaps the arrangements of texts within books: books for the clergy, for kings, for students, for aristocrats, for women, for collectors, and for the secular public. The bibliographer asks the historian to look closer at the medieval book as a physical object. Here, I have focussed my discussion on the medieval era, but one could make a similar argument for the beginnings of printing in the fifteenth century, the extraordinary technical developments in the nineteenth century, or the book in the current digital age. In short, besides specific works relative to an historian's particular interest, the historian of the book should be familiar with general histories of the development of printing and the allied trades. Steinberg's *Five Hundred years of Printing* and Twyman's *The British Library Guide to Printing* are required reading for all of us.<sup>23</sup>

"[W]hat the bibliographer is concerned with is pieces of paper or parchment covered with written or printed signs. With these signs he is concerned merely as arbitrary marks; their meaning is no business of his." Some of you will recognize this startling quotation about the limitations of the bibliographer's sphere of activity. More than seventy years ago, Sir Walter Greg made this statement in his presidential address, "Bibliography-An Apologia," to the Bibliographical Society.<sup>24</sup> It has haunted the study of bibliography ever since. Greg's intent was to separate form from content so that bibliography would not become enmeshed within the vagaries of literary appreciation. He had dreams that bibliography would become a science. "Books are the material means by which literature is transmitted," he claimed.<sup>25</sup> True enough. By the mid-1980s, when D.F. McKenzie gave his Panizzi Lectures at the British Library, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, McKenzie hinted at a paradigm shift in the study of bibliography: "If a medium in any sense affects a message, then bibliography cannot exclude from its own proper concerns the relation between form, function and symbolic meaning." For McKenzie, "bibliography is the discipline that studies texts as records forms, and the processes of their transmission, including their production and reception." Texts include "verbal, oral, and numeric data, in the form of maps, prints and music, of archives of recorded sound, of films, videos and computer-stored information."<sup>26</sup>

There are the bibliographical purists of the old school such as G. Thomas Tanselle who in a recent issue of *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* consider McKenzie's interpretation of Greg to be taken out of context. Tanselle pronounces McKenzie's general point of view "comprehensive and enlightened." He also damns McKenzie's writings for "many imprecise and incoherent passages": "His indefensible denigration of analytical bibliography, present in some of his most widely read essays, has exerted a regrettable influence that extends from Gaskell's *New Introduction* to some of the ongoing multi-volume national histories of the book."<sup>27</sup> In his ground-breaking article, "Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing-House Practices," McKenzie goes further and takes bibliographers to task for making unwarranted

<sup>23</sup> S.H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred years of Printing*, fourth edition (New Castel, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1996); Michael Twyman, *The British Library Guide to Printing: History and Techniques* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Greg, "Bibliography," in J.C. Maxwell, *Collected Papers*, 247.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>26</sup> D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London: British Library, 1986), 2, 4.

<sup>27</sup> G. Thomas Tanselle, "The Work of D.F. McKenzie," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 98, no. 4 (December 2004): 520. In this context, Tanselle's reference to Gaskell's *A New Introduction to Bibliography* probably refers to Bowers's harsh book review, "McKerrow Revisited," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 67 (second quarter 1973): 109-24.

generalizations based purely on the physical examination of books.<sup>28</sup> The criticism has unsettled Tanselle who believes that actual books constitute the evidence whereas printers' and publishers' records contain statements about books. Whenever information in the bookmaking process conflicts with the archival record, the former must take precedence, he has maintained.

It seems to me that there is a false dichotomy here. The wise bibliographer should know the limitations of empirical evidence in the artifact and when it is necessary to seek other relevant sources of collaborative information. Tanselle himself has argued that bibliography and the ways of history are not in opposition but complementary to each other. "The two are logically one," he states. "All scholars of the history of books, whether of the French or of the Anglo-American school, are historians. Analytical and descriptive bibliography is history. . ." <sup>29</sup> However, the bibliographer is not just a person who describes books. He or she is a forensic historian of books. Books as physical artifacts can tell us an enormous amount in the same way that a crime scene is analysed by a detective or a corpse is subject to a coroner's inquest. The duty of a bibliographer is to describe all imprints of an author or subject matter accurately and comprehensively. In the case of descriptive bibliography, the description focuses on separate editions, issues, and even reprintings with lesser description given to publications in other formats. But description for the sake of description is like building a house and having no one living in it, cooking a gourmet meal without eating it. How much richer a descriptive bibliography becomes when description is combined with relevant historical research. Sometimes descriptive bibliographies of this nature are called bio-bibliographies or bibliographical histories. The bibliography is akin to a soufflé. It has substance. It is complex and wonderful, a work of scholarship, a work of art.

So there is a need for historians to appreciate bibliography and a need for bibliographers to appreciate history. If one takes a quick look at the most recent issue of *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, my point will be driven home. There is an article by Andrea Krupp, "Bookcloth in England and America, 1823-50," and an article by Alistair McCleery on the 1932 edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses* published by Odyssey Press.<sup>30</sup> The former highlights 222 grain cloth patterns of nineteenth-century books from the Library Company of Philadelphia. Krupp has created a visual database of these cloth patterns. Although her research focuses on the artifact, she states: "Primary source material that would provide documentary evidence about the manufacture and use of bookcloth during the first decades of its existence, such as advertisements, patents, and publishers' and binders' records, remains scarce."<sup>31</sup> For his part, McCleery surveys the claims of bibliographers and textual editors as to the status of the 1932 edition of *Ulysses*. He then uses a number of archival sources to good advantage, chiefly the archives of Stuart Gilbert, the book's supposed editor, to question the edition's textual authority.

In the last twenty years, the history of the book has expanded almost uncontrollably. In contrast, the study of bibliography has barely held its own in English departments and schools of library and information science. There are notable exceptions, of course. At the University of Toronto, bibliography continues to flourish. At the University of Virginia, the Rare Book School, Terry Belanger's independent institute, offers thirty, five-day non-credit courses.<sup>32</sup> Many of the courses are directed to antiquarian booksellers, collectors,

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<sup>28</sup> D.F. McKenzie, "Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing-House Practices," *Studies in Bibliography* 22 (1969): 1-75.

<sup>29</sup> G. Thomas Tanselle, *The History of Books as a Field of Study* (Chapel Hill: Hanes Foundation, Rare Book Collection/Academic Affairs Library, The University of North Carolina, 1981), 5.

<sup>30</sup> Andrea Krupp, "Bookcloth in England and America, 1823-50," and Alistair McCleery, "The Reputation of the 1932 Odyssey Press Edition of *Ulysses*," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 100, no. 1 (December 2006): 25-87, 89-103.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> See the website for Rare Book School at the University of Virginia: <http://www.virginia.edu/oldbooks/>.



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conservators, teachers, and students of the history of the book. In France, Neil Harris of the University of Udine has offered an iconoclastic course on analytical bibliography at the *École de l'Institut d'histoire du livre* at Lyon.<sup>33</sup> The Bibliographical Society of Canada is hoping to revive the Canadian Institute of Analytical Bibliography next summer at the University of Toronto (unfortunately, the course was cancelled due to lack of enrolment).

Like any discipline, bibliography has a knowledge base and core skills. To go back to the beginning of my paper on bibliography and origami, it is not necessary for the historian of the book to memorize all the formats of paper folding and the directions of chain lines and wire lines and the corresponding position of watermarks. But the historian should have the smarts to know that format in the hand-press period can easily be verified in a number of sources, such as Gaskell's *A New Introduction to Bibliography*.<sup>34</sup> There are some things that can be taught and some things that can't be taught. At our conference last year at the University of Western Ontario, Germaine Warkentin's inspiring key-note address was a personal journey into the bibliographical imagination.<sup>35</sup> A true bibliographer needs to combine a love of books with textual scholarship. My reference here is to D.C. Greetham's book of the same title *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction*,<sup>36</sup> required reading for all textual scholars. Yet there is no quick route to textual scholarship.

Let us now sit down together at our bibliographical banquet. A soufflé does not rise twice so it is best that we savour it while we can. "Kings wait for soufflés; soufflés do not wait for kings," August Escoffier once observed. Even more pertinent to our discussion of the relevance of bibliography to the history of the book is James Beard's comment that "The only thing that will make a soufflé fall is if it knows you are afraid of it."<sup>37</sup> I hope that you have enjoyed my eccentric bibliographical discussion of soufflé-making this afternoon. If I may borrow the last line from Julia Child's TV show, *The French Chef*, I will conclude by saying, "Bon appétit."

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<sup>33</sup> See <http://ihl.enssib.fr/siteindex.php?page=134>. Harris's course consists of eleven sections: from evocative definitions of bibliography to "thematic vocabulary relating to technical problems in early printing together with bibliographical methods and instruments employed to solve them."

<sup>34</sup> Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*.

<sup>35</sup> Professor Warkentin's talk was entitled "The Bibliographical Imagination." She informs me that it is part of a larger work on bibliographical scholarship and research.

<sup>36</sup> D.C. Greetham, *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (New York: Garland, 1994).

<sup>37</sup> My source of these two quotations is the Web site at <http://baking911.com/>, specifically <http://www.baking911.com/howto/souffle.html>. (This link is accessible only to members of the site.)