

Out-of-Print and Antiquarian Books: Guides for Reference Librarians

By: Patrick J. Brunet and Lee Shiflett

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*****Note: Figures may be missing from this format of the document**

Abstract:

The issue of evaluating old books is one that, on a functional level, has been removed from the provenance of librarians by Internal Revenue Service regulations. But the question in public, academic, and special libraries persists as does the assumption on the part of the general public that librarians know something about old books and the antiquarian book trade. This article reviews the issues involved and discusses the sources of pricing information most useful for general libraries in the United States and Canada.

Article:

The technical areas of acquisitions are unfamiliar ground to most reference librarians who usually do not venture into the territory beyond directing patron inquiries about price and availability of books to local bookstores or to *Books in Print*. If the book in question is still available from the publisher, this response is undoubtedly sufficient for the immediate needs of the patron. When a book is out of print and no longer available from the publisher, a question of a different order is created, a question that many librarians feel ill-prepared to attempt to answer. The antiquarian book market is an unknown arena for most librarians and one in which there are no clear answers. Because these questions represent the junction between knowledge and information, which both have undefined value, and physical objects for which value is defined, the questions themselves seem to raise their own problems in the moral and ethical realm with which many librarians are uncomfortable.

The ethical boundaries of reference service have been debated in the library community from the beginnings of American librarianship. Edmund Lester Pearson provided the librarian with this adjuration: "Question each Applicant closely. See that he be a Person of good Reputation, scholarly Habits, sober and courteous Demeanour. Any mere Trifler, a person that would Dally with Books, or seek in them shallow Amusement, may be Dismiss'd without Delay."¹ Though not made seriously, his words struck a chord among American librarians who, in 1909, were fully prepared to accept this injunction as a basic doctrine of eighteenth-century librarianship.² As guardians of a public trust committed to education, knowledge, and culture, librarians have, it seems, an ambivalent perspective on the motives that spur people to seek their services. In the past, this perspective has manifested itself in debate over newspaper reading rooms, popular fiction in library collections, and even in the provision of business information and other specialized reference services. The acceptance by American librarians of policy statements by the American Library Association insisting on freedom of access to information and on the right of library users to courteous and able responses to their queries has, to some extent, reduced the ambiguity inherent in librarians' tasks but has not eliminated it.

Though the ethics of reference service dictate that each question asked by a library user is validated by that question's importance to the person asking it and that challenging the legitimacy of information needs is beyond the proper domain of librarians, it is evident that there are types of questions that are regarded as improper subjects of inquiry as well as groups of users who are seen as pariahs in the information world. Librarians have, in some sense, come to terms with the homeless and the latch-key children. They have put

aside their personal positions on abortion, sex, and politics in order to provide objective information on all sides of these questions. But, as a group, librarians still fail to acknowledge completely the legitimacy of the information needs of those who would seek out their ancestors, of those who would win the prize in the current radio trivia contest, or of those who want to know how much their grandfather's books are worth.

It is beyond the scope of this effort to investigate the reasons for the denigration of these types of questions, but they do seem to have a commonality of motive that is essentially personal or pecuniary in origin, and perhaps it is this motive that forms the basis for the reaction of librarians. Ethically, librarians have come to terms with the trivia questions. They are to be answered with the plethora of encyclopedias and handbooks that publishers have been kind enough to make available to librarians. The moral imperative to avoid asking library users what motivates a question is a clear mandate. The genealogists pose a somewhat more complex problem. Their questions are difficult and their motives suspect. Most public libraries are unequipped to supply the types and diversity of materials genealogists need, and librarians are not equipped to help them through the complications of this type of information search. The Winter 1983 issue of *RQ* is one of the few attempts in recent years to address the problem, and the library community's reaction to this issue has been favorable. The question of how much Grandfather's books are worth, however, still remains.

Though there are no data on the phenomenon, there seems to be enough informal testimony from librarians that, even after several decades of denying the fact, librarians are still regarded by the public as people who should know books and the book trade and have some knowledge about the value of books—particularly old books. Lawyers are assailed by questions of litigation at cocktail parties. Doctors hear complaints of assorted aches and pains at dinners. Librarians invariably hear about Aunt Agatha's old books, still in the attic after the death of her father, some of which are at least one hundred years old! This is usually the item on the agenda after the introductions and immediately after the almost obligatory comment, "But you don't look like a librarian."

Library schools have made little attempt to prepare their graduates for this type of discussion.³ They do attempt in the almost ubiquitous collection development courses to familiarize students with the tools of the book trade, but these are the tools for new books—those that are currently available from the publishers or producers of the physical object. There are obviously many more books that are out-of-print than there are currently in print and available, and the tools that give information about the price and availability of the current Stephen King opus are not adequate to provide the inquirer with the going price of a Hawthorne first.

There are, however, guides to book values just as there are guides to the value of most other collectibles, such as furniture, antiques, toys, dolls, ceramics, or anything else to which people can assign a pecuniary value. These guides, widely used by booksellers, by book collectors, and by rare books librarians, must be consulted with care and with the awareness that a number of variables affect the value of any specific book.

Guides to antiquarian books fall into three categories, based on the sources for the prices given. There are those that are based on auction records, those based on the prices listed in booksellers' catalogs, and those, usually in specialized subject areas, which are compiled by booksellers and collectors and represent valuations distilled mostly from their own experience in the field. Each of these methods of compilation has strengths and weaknesses that are reflected in the guides themselves. While auction records do offer a price at which an item has actually changed hands, the atmosphere of the auction house is not particularly conducive to rational consideration by either the buyer or the seller, and the actual price paid may have little relation to the price in a different context. Booksellers' catalogs, of course, give only the price asked for an item with no reliable indication that the item has been sold for this price to an informed buyer. Compilations produced by collectors and booksellers may be the most reliable in that they rely on the informed judgment of the compiler, but there is evidence that these too suffer from biases that reflect those of their compilers.

It is unfortunate that there are few generalizations about book prices that have attained the sanction of being correct in all cases and that these few will be of little use or comfort to patrons seeking authoritative information about book prices. These few are simple: old family Bibles are worthless except to those whose ancestral records are inscribed therein; no matter how many pearls or bits of glass are sewn into the velvet binding, nineteenth century coffee table books are worthless; and nothing is added to the intrinsic value of the item because it was the only book brought over from the old country by some remote ancestor. It is unfortunate, of course, that these generalizations are only frequently—not always—true. Some old Bibles are important and may well have served as family Bibles, a number of nineteenth-century American authors' first appearances in print were in the coffee table sample format, and an ancestor's book may have value because of the book itself.

There are three areas of concern that are addressed in the evaluation of an item by a bookseller, collector, or librarian in determining a price. These are desirability, scarcity, and condition. In evaluating an item using the price guides described here, each of these areas must be considered.

FACTORS DETERMINING PRICE

Desirability

The desirability of a book is the first consideration. Any librarian familiar with the reviews of new books can readily recognize that the majority of books published in the United States have only marginal and transitory value. The best-sellers of past decades and insider exposes of the Roosevelt administration may retain some historical curiosity but are unused clutter on the shelves of most libraries. When the novelty has worn off or the information has been superseded, there is an honorable place for the book on the quarter shelf in front of the book shop and at the Friends of the Library book sale or as a prop in the furniture store to keep bookends separated. Most used books fall into the same category as used shoes or topcoats. They appear too good for landfill because someone may obtain some value from them. However, used books carry a burden beyond that of other merchandise. They are cultural artifacts that carry emotional freight as well as whatever intellectual content may yet be of value. Such books represent the same phenomenon that bedevils librarians who attempt to dispose of superseded reference books, outdated textbooks, or reserve materials, or who attempt to refuse the donation of the latest load of *Reader's Digest Condensed Books*. People want to believe with an almost religious faith that books are valuable. As an article of faith, this belief is laudable, but it does not translate into monetary value. Old books may have spiritual value and perhaps some intellectual value—but rarely do they have monetary value.

There are, of course, factors that directly affect the desirability of a title in a specific market. Local interest in a title is one that will create a wide variation in retail price elevating it beyond what the book could command in a national market. It is an axiom in the book trade that the best place to buy local history is as far from the locale as possible. The first edition of Lyle Saxon's *Fabulous New Orleans* is, for example, at best a \$10 to \$15 book in most parts of the country. It is, however, a solid \$30 to \$50 item in the tourist shops in the French Quarter. It is always wise to buy Florida books in Minneapolis and Oregon history in Miami—if you can find them there.

The significance of the item itself is an elusive variable. Some few landmarks are so well established that everyone recognizes their importance. Copies of the Bay Psalm Book, the report of the Lewis and Clark expedition, or the Kelmscott Chaucer will always be recognized as of value without the necessity for investigation into their special claim to importance. In other cases, it seems sufficient that the title is merely listed in any number of bibliographic sources to have its significance established. The appearance of a title in the *Harvard Guide to American History* seems to add appreciably to its importance and, presumably, to its value, even though the *Harvard Guide* is highly selective and ignores many titles of importance while including many titles of marginal significance.

The composing of *blurbs* pointing out the virtues of a book is a major occupational task of booksellers and one which they seem to find remunerative. In his excellent memoir of the American antiquarian book trade, Charles Everitt has noted that his entire career as a bookseller changed when he realized that, as far as librarians are concerned, blurbs—and not the books themselves—sell books.⁴ A book will not sell unless its significance is apparent to the potential buyer, and Everitt's calumnies against librarians notwithstanding, the adage holds true for private collectors as well. The amount of effort put forth by booksellers when describing the importance of an item seems directly related to the price asked. For example, in 1905, the remains of John Paul Jones were returned to the United States from France, where he had died in 1792. The event is recorded in *John Paul Jones Commemoration at Annapolis, April 24, 1906*, published by the Government Printing Office (GPO) in 1907. The book contains the only existing photographic portrait of Jones—taken 113 years after his death. Two copies of this item have recently been offered for sale, one by a dealer in Oklahoma at \$8 and the other by a Pennsylvania bookseller at \$30. Both copies are described as "good" in condition. The catalog offering the \$8 copy describes the book in two lines, and the \$30 copy is given twelve. Interestingly, the 1966 GPO reprint of this book has also recently been offered by two other dealers at almost the same price spread—\$8.50 and \$30.

It is clear that importance, as far as it has an effect on value, is relative to the perceptions of sellers and buyers of books and that these perceptions can be highly variable. In general, a bookseller who specializes in American literature, modern firsts, Nevada history, or Canadian poetry will place a higher value on books in these areas than one who specializes in another area or who is a generalist bookseller. On the other hand, in many cases books outside the area of specialization of a given dealer usually will be bargains when offered by that bookseller. It is natural to value and esteem that which one knows and loves over that which one does not. It is, of course, the function of the bookseller to point out the merits of the item offered, and presumably, the more a book can be touted, the more desirable it becomes. Thus, that the book has been signed by the publisher's ex-wife's nephew makes it, in some real way, an association copy to some, and to others the signature is merely another defect. There are booksellers to whom every book is worth multiples of whatever inflated price they paid for it, and they price accordingly. There are also booksellers for whom nothing of importance has been written since the eighteenth century; their nineteenth- and twentieth- century books are priced accordingly.

Scarcity

The scarcity of an item is the second major factor governing its value in the market. Each printing of a book is composed of a finite number of copies of which a smaller number is in existence today. Books are fragile and the forces that cause their decay are legion. As a consequence, determining the number of copies of any book currently in existence is virtually impossible. Wright Howes' *U. S. -iana*, published in 1954, was a work based on the rarity of an item.⁵ When the second edition came out in 1962, it became apparent that rare books were becoming more common and common books more scarce. This, of course, was nonsense. The real phenomenon had to do with the perceptions of the market and the trade itself. Howes was a knowledgeable bookseller who based his work on his own experience. If he had not seen many copies the book was rare, and if he had seen a number of copies it was common. When other booksellers found that an item of which they had a dozen copies in stock was a valuable rarity, it became common. The terms *rare* and *scarce* are used often enough by both booksellers and collectors to have attained the status of technical terms, though no adequate definition of either term exists. An examination of booksellers' catalogs reveals that in current usage a *rare* book is one that an active bookseller may see once a decade, while a *scarce* book is one that might be seen once every year or so. This generalization, of course, begs the question of local availability. A title that is scarce in New York may be rare in San Francisco and, possibly, common in San Antonio.

There are a variety of approaches used by booksellers attempting to determine the degree of scarcity of an item. The most useful is to obtain some form of information about the number of copies actually printed. For a few publishers, this information is available. The cost books of the American publishing firm of Ticknor and Fields and of the firm of Carey and Lea have been published and do give, with other technical information, the number of copies of a printing actually manufactured.⁶ For most publishing firms, however, this information is

not readily available, and data about the size of press runs for individual titles can be found buried only in publishing histories and authors' biographies, if at all.

Some booksellers use the number of copies located by the *National Union Catalog* as a guide to the relative rarity of an item. "Only three copies located by *NUC*" is the formula used. This is an invalid use of the tool. Editorial considerations in the past have limited the number of holding libraries listed for the purpose of interlibrary loan, and the *NUC* has never been an inventory of books held by American libraries. Indeed, many libraries have, as a matter of policy, not reported holdings.

There are also a number of comprehensive bibliographies in various fields that are often cited to further identify an item and, frequently, to certify its rarity. "Not in . . ." is a common signpost to the reader that the offering is so rare as not to have come to the attention of the bibliographer. However, the item may well have been too ephemeral, obscure, or unrelated to the purposes of the compilation to have merited inclusion, or it may well be in the bibliography but not where the bookseller has looked. For example, the note "Not in Crandall," referring to Marjorie Crandall's *Confederate Imprints*, must be used with great caution when found describing items in a bookseller's catalog.⁷ Crandall is a comprehensive bibliography of items published in the Confederate States of America and is somewhat difficult to use. Many of its entries are buried under some type of corporate author or pseudonym that makes it almost impossible to find in the single-entry arrangement used, and the item actually is in Crandall under a form of entry that has not been attempted by the bookseller.

In some cases, books carry their own statement of the number of copies produced. The proclamation that a title is a "limited edition," however, does not necessarily add to the value of the object. Scarcity is meaningless without some degree of corresponding importance. Limitation in edition size is frequently associated with small press work of some literary value. Often, these editions are issued concurrently with much larger trade editions and differ only in the binding or paper. This limitation does not necessarily enhance the value of a book. For historical reasons, printings are usually in multiples of 250. At present, the average press run on a new nonfiction book seems to fall between 1,000 and 1,500 copies with the modal value being 1,250. Most fiction press runs are between 2,000 and 6,000 copies, best-sellers notwithstanding. Through the nineteenth century, commercial press runs of 750 to 1,000 copies were common among American publishers. Most legitimate limited editions are produced in quantities far below the average for a common scholarly nonfiction publication and are usually in the range of 250 to 500 copies. Thus, statements of limitation that announce that this is number 50 of 1,000 copies or, worse, that this is number 1,000 of 3,000 copies are not particularly meaningful.⁸

The problem is further exacerbated by limitation statements that are simply fraudulent. The classic examples of such statements are the productions of the Roycroft Printing Shop under the direction of Elbert Hubbard. The Roycrofters printed a number of signed limited editions of Hubbard's work. The number of copies actually printed probably far exceeded the more modest number proclaimed in the limitation statements given in the books themselves, and Hubbard's signature was undoubtedly the artifice of print shop workers.⁹ Most limited editions, however, are what they claim to be, and the signatures of the authors, illustrators, publishers, or whomever else are authentic; yet, to be truly valuable, the book must have some intrinsic value other than the circumstance of limited production.

Complicating the problem of scarcity is the existence of reprint editions that well may be taken for the original by the unwary. These are cheap reprints of popular titles produced for a mass market audience in a business that predates the contemporary mass market paperbacks found in the grocery stores, drug stores, and newsstands today. When compared with the original editions, the inferior quality of the paper, binding, and typographic impression of the reprints is evident. But the original issue is not usually at hand for comparison, and the problem is compounded by the fact that the reprint frequently retains the edition statement of the original, with the only substantive change being the substitution of the reprint publisher on the title page. Some of the most commonly encountered reprint houses in the United States were Grosset and Dunlap, Bonanza Books, Blue Ribbon Books, Garden City Books, Halcyon House, American News, and A. L. Burt. Any book carrying these

imprints must be suspected of being a reprint edition, though occasionally, these publishers did issue original titles in the areas of juveniles and special interest books. Since many of the price guides rely on an abbreviated bibliographic form that does not give the publisher, and since many of the reprint houses have the same place of publication (i.e., New York) as that of the original publisher, it is necessary to be aware of the reprint houses to avoid confusing the true first with the cheap reprint. It must be added here that some of these reprint editions do appear on the antiquarian market offered as reprint editions at a price that is, of course, much lower than that of the original.

The ubiquitous book club edition presents another problem. Many of these editions are difficult to distinguish from the original editions. While most book clubs, such as the Literary Guild and the Reader's Digest Book Club, proclaim their identity on the title page, the offerings of the Book-of-the-Month Club are sometimes confusing even to the experienced bookseller. Since the only proclamation of its identity is on the dust jacket, which frequently is absent, and the quality of the book itself is not obviously inferior, the only way to readily identify book club offerings is the "dot" on the bottom of the back cover just to the left of the spine. This usually takes the form of an impression or *blind-stamp* in the shape of a circle, a square, or a star.¹⁰

Condition

The condition of the item itself is, perhaps, the most critical factor in pricing in the antiquarian book trade.¹¹ A copy of an item in pristine condition with a pristine dust jacket is obviously worth much more to a potential buyer than one that has been used by a former owner's dog as a teething ring. In any business that relies as much on trust as does the selling of antiquarian books, the condition of the merchandise is a major issue. The business has traditionally relied heavily on mail order, and the reputation of the individual dealer for adequately describing condition has been the only standard in the marketplace. Collectors of coins, stamps, and many other objects have long had a standardized form for describing the degree of wear in the items with which they deal. Since 1949, *AB: Antiquarian Bookman* has attempted to standardize the criteria used by booksellers to describe the condition of their wares. The proposed scheme has merit in that it does seek to standardize a terminology that has great variation in application. The criteria provide for specific points of judgment that are not so exact as the number of visible hairs on Lincoln's head but do provide some objective guidelines by which the book's condition can be described and, further, by which copies can be compared in a standard manner.

Unfortunately, the criteria have been largely ignored in the book trade. Describing a book as "silverfished, sunned, bumped, rubbed, shaken, otherwise fine" defies logic, but such descriptions happen.¹² Given the perils that any nineteenth-century book has undoubtedly suffered, the fact that many have survived is remarkable. It is difficult to see how one dealer can accumulate enough stock to fill several catalogs a year with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century books in "fine" condition, but some seem to do so. Others minutely describe each defect in the dust jacket and the foxing in the frontispiece and note that a previous owner's name appears on the front flyleaf. Some booksellers are optimistic about the condition of the books they offer, some are pessimistic, and some are realistic. In general, there seems to be less tolerance for defects in works of a literary nature than for those dealing with other subjects, perhaps because literary works are collected because of the physical object and not for the text. There is an essential difference between a tattered Hemingway first and a badly worn copy of a standard historical work. Both are abused, but the historical work can still be of use, whereas the Hemingway is nothing more than another dilapidated book.

The problem of dust jackets poses an additional complication.¹³ While *AB's* general criteria insist on the necessity for the jacket to be present if the book was issued with one, it is evident from reading bookseller's catalogs that only the exceptional copy of most books published prior to World War II still has the jacket in any acceptable condition. The purpose of the jacket is to protect the cover of the book itself from damage and soiling, and it is assumed that having served its purpose, the jacket would be either damaged beyond redemption or discarded along the way. Furthermore, it is usually impossible to determine, except in the case of some publishers who either never or always issued a title with a jacket, whether a jacket is an integral part of the bibliographic unit. The presence of an original dust jacket will enhance the value of the item, but the degree to which enhancement will occur will depend greatly on the book itself.¹⁴ The generalization made in some price

guides that the jacket will double the value of an item is nonsense for most nonfiction titles, although many collectors and booksellers insist that without a presentable jacket, works of literature—the *modern firsts*—are worthless.

Virtually all price guides address the problem of condition in some way either in the introductory material or, in the case of the guides based on the selling or asking price of a specific copy, in the entries for the items themselves. Most guides mention *ex-library* copies—those which have been formerly held by institutional collections—but not favorably. Joseph Connolly in his introduction to *Modern First Editions* (see the review below) expressed the common view of copies with library markings as having been "ritually destroyed upon acquisition." In the case of literary work, this destruction is usually considered complete, while in works of nonfiction, the scarcity and desirability of an item can, to some extent, atone for the desecration.

Pricing

The prices listed in the guides are retail prices. Booksellers must operate on a margin of profit to enable them to remain in business. A standard rule of thumb known to virtually all dealers is that of the *100 percent markup*, which means that, if strictly applied, the heir to Uncle George's books could expect to obtain an offer of only half their value as listed in the price guides. This generalization has so many exceptions that it is virtually useless to our patrons. Essentially, bookselling is an occupation that is highly idiosyncratic in its structure and its rules. All booksellers who have been successful in the trade have been so from a love of the business rather than from some hope of finding their fortunes in a stack of old pamphlets in a junk shop. The stock in trade of some booksellers is the \$5 book that they hope can be sold within a year or so for \$10 or \$15. Others seem willing to bet all on their ability to turn a profit on any book at any price. A big book for the first class of booksellers would be a University of Oklahoma or Caxton Club imprint picked up at a garage sale or a Friends of the Library book sale for a dollar with a prospect of a buyer at \$30. The latter group might be willing to pay a high price for an item to another dealer, a collector, or at an auction and to have the potential profit margin of only 10 percent. The difference between a 100 percent profit on a \$10 book and a 10 percent profit on a \$100,000 book is what keeps the market interesting.

There is a sliding scale for the amount a bookseller would be willing to pay to obtain a title. For a book expected to sell at \$5 to \$10, a bookseller may only offer as much as a dollar. For a book expected to sell for \$200, the bookseller would offer a higher percentage of the retail price. The higher priced item is more desirable, and the booksellers expect to be able to turn their money over more quickly. It is, after all, a business.

One way for a dealer to learn what a fair market value would be for a book is to find the price at which other copies of the work have sold or at least the price placed on them by other booksellers. The brief reviews of the major price guides that follow fall into three categories. The first category consists of general price guides, which are issued annually and are broadly based compilations of price data. These are primarily purchased by libraries and used by serious collectors and booksellers who refer to them regularly. The second group is composed of single-volume collectors' guides that attempt to give an overview of book prices and collecting in a broad general field. They are intended for sale to booksellers and the general public, though libraries frequently acquire them. The three single-volume guides listed here represent the best and most reputable of the genre. The price guides and book collector titles found at the local mall outlet are more valuable as landfill than as sources of collecting information. The third category is subject specialty price guides. Only a few examples are included, but other reputable titles cover children's books and horticulture as well as the editions of various literary authors.¹⁵

PRICE GUIDES

General Price Guides: Annuals

American Book Prices Current. New York: Bancroft-Parkman, 1894- . Annual. Price varies (ISSN 0091-9357). There are two unique features to *American Book Prices Current*: first, it has been published since 1894, and second, it provides actual reports of auction prices. No other source has been published nearly so long, and all other resources are based on either stated catalog prices or a combination of dealer experience and catalog

prices. While many titles sold by catalogs achieve their asking price, many other books are discounted to other booksellers, are never sold, or are sold on counteroffers.

Noted bibliographers Colton Storm, Jacob Blanck, and Victor Hugo Palsits have been among the editors who have contributed to its reputation for quality. The format is simple. Each volume of *American Book Prices Current* begins with a single page of bibliographic abbreviations, a page-and-a-half introduction detailing guidelines for inclusion, a list of auction houses and the dates of auctions held by these houses from which the entries have been taken, a list of named cosigners, and a table of exchange rates based on the U.S. dollar. This information is followed by the first sequence of entries listing autographs and manuscript materials. The bulk of the volume combines books, maps, charts, and broadsides in one sequence. Entries in each group are found in alphabetical order by author whenever possible, otherwise by title or whatever feature is of most potential importance to the collector, such as by press (e.g., Doves Press, Cummington Press), by language, by subject, or by genre. There is some use of subject and genre headings for identifiable categories such as Hebrew books or miniatures.

Data provided for each book are author, title, place and date of publication, publisher (and/or printer), edition, number of volumes, size, binding and its condition, dust jacket (if applicable), descriptive material, limitation notes, and sale record (i.e., code for auction house, date, lot number, price, and purchaser if recorded in the results of the sale).

Titles included in *American Book Prices Current* sell for a minimum of \$50 or its equivalent. Non-English language titles have a \$100 minimum. Multiyear indexes covering four years at a time have been published since 1925 and are very popular with regular users. Understandably, many libraries have stopped purchasing the indexes because book price guides are, in most cases, not high-priority items for acquisition.

American Book Prices Current consistently covers more high-priced items than any of the other guides listed here, but casual users and librarians need to be aware that auction prices may vary widely and may not reflect the value of an item on the general market. Items may go for a fraction of their estimated preauction value or may be bid up to newsworthy heights.

Even with this caveat, *American Book Prices Current* is the most prominent book- pricing tool, and deservedly so. It is essential for all large collections whose users have an active interest in the book trade, and it is a good value for those libraries with a high demand for pricing information. It is a better purchase for large reference collections than *Bookman's Price Index* if only one title is chosen.

Bookman's Price Index. Ed. by Daniel McGrath. Detroit: Gale, 1964-. . Annual. \$170 (ISSN 0068-0141). *Bookman's Price Index* is the second-best- known price guide after *American Book Prices Current*, and because it is published by a major American reference book publisher, it is probably the price guide most commonly found in American libraries. It is a massive set, with two volumes published per year since 1964 and each volume now containing approximately thirty-five thousand entries.

Like almost all price guides, its format is simple. It begins with a three- to four-page introduction that defines antiquarian books, gives a brief explanation of prices listed, examines the availability of rare books, and explains the importance of condition. Fine bindings, fore-edge paintings, and association copies are indexed by the separate indexes at the back of each volume. Association copies are books that gain their value because they have been owned (or marked up) by notable individuals. For example, the typical 1830s religious tract would have little collectible value, but if it were Abraham Lincoln's copy, that would be another matter. Sotheby's, for example, sold leaves from one of Abraham Lincoln's arithmetic notebooks for \$143,000 during the past auction year.¹⁶ Fine bindings are books with special custom bindings on particular copies. Fore-edge paintings are books on which a painting has been applied to the vertical edges of the leaves of a book so that when the book is slightly opened and the pages held at a slant, a picture, usually a landscape or seascape, appears. When the book is closed, the illustration disappears.

The list of approximately two hundred prominent general and specialist antiquarian booksellers whose catalogs were used to compile the work follows the introduction. Most of the dealers are established names and some are quite prominent. Many are among the more highly priced dealers in the trade, and *Bookman's Price Index* frequently lists prices on the high end of a particular item's value range. The high pricing is only slightly offset by the fact that around seventy thousand entries are published each year and that a search through a few years' run of *Bookman's Price Index* could be an accurate indication of the relative scarcity and general price range of an item. Since there is no cumulative index for *Bookman's Price Index*, the user must search each volume, often a very time-consuming task.

Each volume presents about thirty-five thousand entries in alphabetical order by author or main entry in a double-column format. The entry heading is capitalized to emphasize it. This is followed by the title, place of publication, publisher, date, edition, size, illustrations or portraits, binding and condition, illustrators, and other important names associated with the production of the book, bibliographies that cite the work, dealer and dealer catalog numbers, date of catalog, and the asking price in pounds or U.S. dollars. In the past few years, longtime editor Daniel McGrath has been far more conscientious about listing condition than he had been in earlier volumes. The fact that *Bookman's Price Index* now describes the condition of individual items rather than using abbreviations in its citations makes reading and understanding the entries a little easier. In 1989 Gale Research began using thinner paper and smaller print in an effort to reduce the rate of its price increases, but the spacing between entries and the typography still maintain a high level of legibility.

Bookman's Price Index has the advantage over other price guides by virtue of the number of books listed and by being issued by a major reference publisher. Unfortunately, because of its high price, it is not often found in book shops or in the hands of private collectors. Booksellers would rather use the library's copy for extensive searches. In fact, *Bookman's Price Index* is a good purchase for medium-sized and larger academic and public libraries needing a reliable and comprehensive guide. Most library patrons, however, would be better served by beginning their search using other guides and then moving on to use *Bookman's Price Index* for further information or for items not found.

International Rare Book Prices. Ed. by Michael Cole. London: The Clique Ltd. (North American Distributor: Spoon River Pr. , Peoria, Ill.), 1988- . Annual. \$180 (ISSN varies).

International Rare Book Prices is a set of annual price guides issued by the well-known English antiquarian publisher, The Clique Limited, in a set of six separately bound volumes, each one covering a broad collecting field: "Art and Architecture"; "Early Printed Books" [printed before 1800]; "Modern First Edition"; "Science and Medicine"; "Voyages, Travel and Exploration"; and "19th Century Literature." About five thousand entries are found in each volume for a total of about thirty thousand items per year.

Each hard-bound volume follows the same format: a brief three-page introduction that details how series editor Michael Cole compiled the work, one page of bibliographic abbreviations, and approximately 250 pages of book listings. The names and addresses of the dealers used in all six volumes appear at the end of each volume. The selection of approximately 140 dealers is quite representative of established dealers and includes many major names. Cole lists English language titles only in the \$20 to \$500 range, a range which he believes gives a "realistic overview of the norm rather than the exception" within the book trade. Listing entries in alphabetical order with a space between each helps to improve legibility. Dealers' catalogs are the sources for the data provided: author, title, place of publication, publisher or printer, date, edition, size, collation, description of condition, binding details, bookseller, and price in pounds sterling and U.S. dollars.

This is a well done set, even though it is fairly expensive. At \$30 per volume and \$180 per set annually, only the most complete collections will find the whole set necessary. Volumes can be purchased individually, and libraries with an interest in only a few of the six topics will find an individual volume or two a good acquisition. Academic libraries interested in broad coverage of the book trade may find themselves better served by the more expensive but much more comprehensive *American Book Prices Current*.

Single-Volume General Price Guides: Irregularly Issued

Mandeville's Used Book Price Guide. Ed. by Richard L. Collins. Kenmore, Wash.: Price Guide Publishers, 1989. \$89.95 (ISBN 0-911182-88-9).

In many ways, *Mandeville's Used Book Price Guide* is the best general price guide for most libraries. Its combination of currency, inclusion, durable binding, price, and ease of use makes it a great value for libraries that cannot afford the multiple volumes of the more expensive *American Book Prices Current* or *Bookman's Price Index*.

Mildred Mandeville first published the guide in the 1960s, and in 1977 began issuing multiyear compilations. The last two editions appeared in 1983 and 1989. They can be used separately or in conjunction with one another. The guides follow the same format: one full page of abbreviations, a one-page preface, and another page on how to use the work, including definitions of condition. This is followed by almost six hundred double-column pages of books and their prices. The last few pages list the dealer catalogs cited in the text with dates of issue and dealer addresses.

Approximately thirty-three thousand entries are published in alphabetical order by author, with title, place of publication, date, publisher, size, edition, condition and format, bookseller, and price. Because Mandeville selects a broader, more geographically representative set of dealers' catalogs than the *Bookman's Price Index*, prices are not skewed upward by overemphasis on the usually higher prices asked by East and West Coast booksellers. As an added benefit, Mandeville lists more of the titles that the typical person would seek than does either *American Book Prices Current* or *Bookman's Price Index*. Mandeville may pick up out-of-print and used books with values as low as \$10, the type of common books about which library patrons are most likely to inquire.

The new editor, Richard L. Collins, continues the very conscientious effort to list condition as it appears in the catalogs used in the compilation. Points—peculiarities of a book or an edition that merit special notes—are included where possible. The guide itself has a very legible typeface, is printed on stiff matte paper, and is sturdily bound with sewn gatherings. Pages will lie flat when opened for photocopying. This title is produced to hold up to repeated heavy use. The fact that the 1989 edition is the first edition compiled using a computer perhaps accounts for occasional lapses in alphabetization, such as *Johnstone* coming before *Johnson*.

Compared to *American Book Prices Current* or *Bookman's Price Index*, Mandeville is easily the best title for public library use. It is less expensive than the other two and more likely to list the type of book about which a public library patron would inquire. Even with an \$89 price for the latest edition, it is a better value than any of the other one-volume guides because it includes far more material than Ahearn or Connolly and is more reliable than LeFontaine, all of which are reviewed below. It is current enough to give an accurate estimation of value, is detailed enough to satisfy most bibliographic inquires, and is based on a broad enough spectrum of dealers (in terms of geography, subject specialties, and price range) to have a high degree of validity.

Book Collecting: A Comprehensive Guide. By Allen Ahearn. New York: Putnam, 1989. \$24.95 (ISBN 0-3991-3456-5).

Collected Books: The Guide to Values. By Allen Ahearn. New York: Putnam, 1991. \$50 (ISBN 0-3991-3663-0).

Ahearn characterizes his *Book Collecting: A Comprehensive Guide* as a successor to Van Allen Bradley's highly regarded *Book Collector's Hand-Book of Values*, which was last published in 1982 and was the best of the American single-volume guides until Bradley's death. Ahearn's 320 pages of *Book Collecting* are divided into three parts: six introductory chapters, a value listing of the thirty-five hundred first books by frequently requested authors, and finally, a series of five appendixes and a bibliography.

The introductory chapters provide a common sense guide to collecting, covering topics such as books as investments and as objects, what to collect, sources to find books, definition of points, pricing issues (e.g.,

condition, dust jackets, and autographs), and general information for the private collector, such as insurance, appraisals, book care, and selling books.

The body of *Book Collecting* contains the valuations provided for thirty-five hundred first books of "frequently requested authors." *By first work*, Ahearn means the first book published by an author, but he does expand the definition to include first American and British printings or first variant edition if the variant is a later edition by a significant press, a critical edition, or an elaborate binding. In the main, the emphasis is on literary works and *modern firsts* rather than on nonfiction titles. Each entry lists author, title, place and year of publication, and Ahearn's estimation of the value. One of the strengths of this work is that Ahearn often lists factors such as bindings, wraps, or points. At \$24.95, Ahearn's work is a good buy because it is valuable to the serious collector as well as informative and realistic for the novice. In addition, its low price places it within the budgetary reach of virtually all libraries.

Ahearn also has published *Collected Books: The Guide to Values*, which closely follows Van Allen Bradley's design and intent and provides price data for approximately fifteen thousand mostly literary first editions. The format, coverage, and execution make it a worthy successor to the respected Van Allen Bradley series of guides, and its strength is as much in the bibliographic information presented as in the accuracy of the pricing information. It retains the emphasis on literary works found in *Book Collecting*, but the greatly expanded size (from two hundred to six hundred pages of listings) has enabled the compiler to include many more nonfiction books. The format is essentially the same in both guides, but *Collected Books* omits most of the prefatory matter. Both are better values than the LeFontaine titles.

A Handbook for Booklovers: A Survey of Collectible Authors, Books and Values. By Joseph Raymond LeFontaine. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1988. \$69.95 (ISBN 0-87975-491-5).
LeFontaine, Joseph Raymond. *Collector's Bookshelf Value Guide*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1990. \$16.95 (ISBN 0-87975-606-8).

The latest entry in the general price guide field is this relatively expensive two-part set. The principle volume is the thick hard-bound *Handbook for Booklovers*, which lists about thirty-three thousand titles. The second part is a paperbound supplement that updates values from the main volume and is projected to be issued every two years beginning in 1990.

LeFontaine's intent is much more ambitious than that of the other compilers of price guides. *Handbook for Booklovers* is proclaimed as a book for the bibliophile rather than the collector, and it attempts much more than simply guiding the user to book values. However, the emphasis on prices seems to negate the professed emphasis on the needs of the general reader. The first four introductory chapters are short and cover the topics of dealing with booksellers, terminology, very broad collecting guidelines, and the purposes of collecting. The bulk of the volume lists titles in twelve broad topics, such as collectible authors, collectible illustrators, mainstream fiction books, and Americana. Also included is a list of North American book search services and a short six-page bibliography of books about books.

Within each section of book lists, the selection of authors and books appears to be somewhat idiosyncratic. It is easy to quibble about inclusion of individual titles and authors or about the prices listed in these guides, but the faults of LeFontaine's guide are all the more obvious when it is compared with the other guides. In intent, style, format, and execution, it seems to represent a yuppification of the antiquarian book trade. The chapter on pseudonyms is undoubtedly useful, but the careful user would wish for some sort of authority for the information. Finding that Ted White is a pseudonym for Theodore Edwin White gives one pause. Appendix D is a remarkably silly four page "Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases" in French, Latin, Greek, and Italian, few of which have anything to do with books. The final appendix, "Ready Reckoner Value Guide," is a curious offering and, perhaps, a dangerous one in that it may lead someone to actually use it. It attempts to derive a proportional relationship among titles in differing states of condition. That is, if a book is determined to be worth \$80 in good condition, it is worth \$175 in fine condition. This may work in collecting coins where

condition is well-defined, but it does not work in the case of books, where many variables invalidate such simplistic formulas.

In all, the *Handbook for Booklovers* may be an adequate introduction to the field for someone new to book collecting, but Alan Ahearn's work, at about half the price, is better. Serious collectors and booksellers will be better served by using *American Book Prices Current*, *Bookman's Price Index*, Mandeville, or specialized sources such as Broadfoot's *Civil War Books* for prices. For those users, the introductory chapters of *A Handbook for Booklovers* would be useless.

The second part of the set is the biennially issued supplement, the *Collector's Bookshelf Value Guide*, which lists all the authors in the *Handbook for Booklovers* in one alphabet with estimated values as of October 1990, based on book auction records, booksellers' catalogs, and various other price guides. In the supplement more care is exercised to emphasize condition, existence of dust jackets, and values that vary by locality, especially away from the coasts or major cities. Still, LeFontaine's valuations are highly variable, with some unreasonably high and others excessively low. Since the supplement costs about as much as Ahearn and its frequency is similar, the *Collector's Bookshelf Value Guide* is a strictly optional purchase.

Subject Specialty Price Guides

Modern First Editions: Their Value to Collectors. 3d ed. By Joseph Connolly. London: Macdonald (U.S. Distributor: Transatlantic Publications), 1987. \$42.50 (ISBN 0-536-14212-4).

English book dealer Joseph Connolly's *Modern First Editions: Their Value to Collectors* is perhaps the most interesting read of the one-volume guides. Like both Ahearn and LeFontaine, the volume begins with a brief twelve-page introduction covering Connolly's statement of what he intends to accomplish with this work, his reasons for inclusion, and his definitions of condition. The rest of the volume consists of entries for 244 items containing the author's full name, place of birth, and birth and death dates, as well as a highly opinionated evaluation of the author followed by a list of his works that Connolly considers collectible. He may provide points or other notes for a work, but for all titles Connolly provides a letter key that indicates relative value in his opinion as of 1984. Values run from five pounds up to ten thousand pounds.

Connolly's comments vary from a single sentence to an entire page, not counting the space given to the books of the author. His likes and dislikes are made evident in a vivid and frequently entertaining style. For example, coverage of P. G. Wodehouse, on whom Connolly is a specialist, runs to eight and one-half pages, while Margaret Mitchell gets a third of a page and some shots about kitsch. This is a distinctly English work, even though many U.S. authors are included and prices are often provided for both U.S. and English firsts.

It is clearly the most erudite of the one-volume works for the few authors listed, but it strongly reflects the prejudices of the author, as did the earlier editions of the work in 1984 under the same title and in 1977 under the title *Collecting Modern First Editions*. Even if its price were competitive, this price guide would not be particularly useful for the novice or for a U.S. public library. Only comprehensive book collecting or literature collections need purchase it, but serious collectors and others interested in literary gossip will enjoy it.

Civil War Books: A Priced Checklist. 3d ed. By Tom Broadfoot. Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot Publishing Co., 1990. \$40 (ISBN 0-685-41290-3).

Long before the PBS television series "The Civil War" brought to the American public a greater awareness of that terrible conflict, a substantial interest had developed in collecting Civil War material, as witnessed by bookseller Tom Broadfoot's *Civil War Books*, now in its third edition. This thick guide lists approximately fourteen thousand works on the Civil War, from Bruce Catton's general histories to biographies of obscure participants or inconsequential regimental narratives. The section on Confederate imprints—books published in the South during the Civil War—is of especial interest and utility. Broadfoot includes material he can reliably "estimate a price for"; i.e., either he has owned a copy or there is certain knowledge that the work was offered on the market. He does not list catalog prices, as so many price guides do. Instead, he relies on his twenty-plus years of experience in the book trade and on that of twenty-one other prominent Civil War specialists such as

Dan Weinberg of Chicago's Abraham Lincoln Bookshop or Bob Younger of the Morningside Bookshop in Dayton, Ohio.

Broadfoot provides only author, title, year published, place of publication, and estimated value, considerably less information than most of the guides offer. Users must go to C. E. Dornbusch's *Regimental Publication and Personal Narratives of the Civil War: A Checklist* (New York: New York Public Library, 1961-62); Allan Nevins, James I. Robertson, Jr., and Bell I. Wiley's *Civil War Books, a Critical Bibliography* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); or Michael Parrish and Robert M. Willingham, Jr.'s *Confederate Imprints: A Bibliography of Southern Publications from Secession to Surrender* (Austin, Tex.: Jenkins; Katonah, N.Y.: Gary A. Foster, 1987) for complete bibliographic data.

One valuable feature of Broadfoot is that, for almost all applicable titles, reprints and later editions are noted with price estimations as well as information on the first. One title has nine reprints noted, and some of these are listed as low as \$10. This is a real service for collectors and libraries wishing to get any copy of a particular work, not just the collectible edition. One finds virtually no comments on the relative historical merits of entries, such as a statement that the second edition of Confederate General James Longstreet's autobiography, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, is more highly prized by collectors than the first edition because of Longstreet's corrections and additions, but this is a price list and not a bibliography and such information may not be appropriate even if it is desirable.

The prefatory matter is short but extremely well written and practical. Broadfoot discusses how he arrived at his prices, book condition, the Civil War market, the factors affecting Civil War book prices, the important reference books, terminology, where to buy and sell volumes on the topic, their value as investments, how to take care of books, appraisals, insurance, estates, and gifts. The introductory matter is highly recommended for anyone interested in Civil War collecting and is a necessity for any library with either a scholarly or a popular interest in the Civil War.

Western Americana: Catalogue Prices. Comp. by Shelly Morrison. Austin, Tex.: W. M. Morrison Bks., 1987-. Annual. \$38.50 (ISBN 0-9261-5807-2).

In 1987, Morrison Books of Austin, Texas, began issuing annual price guides for Western Americana and Texiana. These plainly produced volumes cover the books of the Trans-Mississippi American West and are compiled without duplicating titles from one volume to the next. They are issued in stiff paper covers with some 270 unnumbered pages in an 8 1/2-by 11-inch double-column format. The fifteen thousand or so entries are for books valued at \$30 or more by one or more of the approximately 175 U.S. dealers whose catalogs were examined. Collectors will recognize many of the dealers compiler Shelly Morrison used for this work.

After a one-page introduction, Morrison provides a key to the dealer catalogs, which includes addresses and telephone numbers of catalog-issuing booksellers. The bulk of the volume, naturally, consists of the price listings, in alphabetical order. The last dozen or so pages include a separate listing of U.S. government documents, an index of maps, miscellaneous indexes of broadsides, magazines, newspapers, photographs, printed views, and an index to items also listed in Wright Howes' *U.S.iana*. Listings include author, title (highlighted in capital letters), publication date, place of publication, edition, condition, references to various standard bibliographies, dealer name, and catalog number, followed by catalog price. Morrison lists variants with *see* references and may list up to eight or more different catalog entries for a specific title. With the annual issue and the number of booksellers covered, users get an excellent idea of the relative availability and value of the titles listed. For libraries collecting Western Americana or Texiana, this is probably the best current price guide. At \$38.50, it is a fraction of the cost of *Bookman's Price Index* and less than half of the cost of Mandeville's, yet it is annually updated and covers a fair portion of the same dealers. It is, however, very cheaply produced and will not hold up to repeated heavy use.

Bookman's Guide to Americana. 10th ed. By Lee Shiflett. Metuchen, N. J. : Scarecrow, 1991. \$49.50 (ISBN 0-8108-2464-7).

This is the tenth edition of what is commonly known as *Heard's*, after J. Norman Heard, who either edited or coedited most of the previous nine editions. It is a priced checklist "of books thought to be of interest to booksellers, librarians and collectors," compiled from the catalogs of seventy-five well-known dealers, who represent a good cross section of used and rare booksellers. Most titles included are those that have appeared with some degree of regularity in the book trade since the appearance of the ninth edition in 1986. Entries contain author, title (highlighted in bold print), place of publication, publisher, date, edition statements, price, and condition. More than one price is frequently listed, but the sources of these are not noted in the entry. Shiflett provides a good description of the importance of condition and the vagaries of antiquarian book prices. In proportion, more general Americana appears here than in many other guides, but the list is weak in literature, a characteristic also found in most previous editions of this series.

Because of the greater breadth of inclusion of dealers, the professionalism in compilation, and the general appearance of the book, it is a sound contribution to the literature and should be a useful addition to any collection focusing on the area of general Americana. Potential users, however, must measure the usefulness of *Heard's*, costing \$48.50 and covering an estimated ten thousand entries, against \$89.50 for *Mandeville* with more than three times as many entries.

Bookman's Guide to the Indians of the Americas. By Richard A. Hand. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1989. \$72.50 (ISBN 08108-2182-6).

A Bookman's Guide to Hunting, Shooting, Angling, and Related Subjects. By Richard A. Hand. Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow, 1991. \$115 (ISBN 0-8108-2333-0).

At first glance, these two recent specialized price lists by West Virginia bookseller Richard Hand appear indulgent. They are elaborate productions on specialized topics offered at stiff prices from a publisher that the library community has come to associate with valuable reference sources and professional publications at modest prices. These two volumes come as somewhat of a surprise. The nature of the antiquarian book trade makes pricing guides somewhat ephemeral in the sense that current values are valid only for a limited time. Any price guide that sells for more than half of the cost of the items it lists has to be used heavily to justify its investment, and in most collections, these volumes will not receive that much use.

As price guides, these volumes are anomalies. They both provide extensive bibliographic information, including series notes, collation, and frequently data on variant issues and bindings—information that one would not ordinarily expect to find in the simple checklist format normally associated with price guides. For many items, Hand includes from the catalogs he consulted the blurbs written by the booksellers about the items.

The amount of information to be found in many booksellers' catalogs about printings, about the historical significance of the book, and about the particular relation of this copy to the topic through associations raises many catalogs to the status of valuable reference material for booksellers and for collectors. Indeed, many important booksellers' catalogs, particularly when they demonstrate the excellent research of the compiler, or when they contain good illustrations, or when they offer particularly strong collections in specific topics, have become collectibles in their own right and appear in the antiquarian market with some regularity. It is the inclusion of this wealth of information in Hand's two volumes that makes them important; consequently, they are more in the realm of bibliography than in the more modest realm of price guides. The quality of the research incorporated in booksellers' catalogs is debatable, and Hand apparently accepted the information without question. Further, he does not include information for many of the titles listed, but the information that is included may well be of potential value to the user of the guides; therefore, his efforts cannot be dismissed as simply expensive price guides.

The arrangement is a straightforward checklist form, alphabetized by author. Unfortunately, the compiler seems to have chosen the form of entry used by the booksellers in their catalogs, and such forms of entry are notoriously inaccurate, frequently unreliable, and rarely standardized even within the same catalog. Authors, editors, subjects, and sometimes formats are mixed together. John Wesley Powell's work on the Numa, for example, was finally published as a volume of the *Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology* in 1971. Hand

enters it under the name of the editor without a cross-reference from *Powell*. There are three pages of entries under the heading *Pre-Columbian Art*, which constitutes the only access point to these entries.

Both volumes are indexed by subject, but the breadth of many of the subject headings renders access by subject virtually useless. Furthermore, price guides are rarely approached by subject. The general feeling one gets from both volumes is that they are either bibliographies attempting to be price guides or, perhaps, price guides attempting to be bibliographies. They are not totally successful at either.

Because of the topics, the treatment, the amount of information, and the general authoritativeness of the pricing information, both are recommended. Because of the price and the limited utility, the recommendation only extends to serious collectors and to libraries having a specialized interest in collection development in these specific areas.

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Dear Editors:

It is nearly beyond my understanding that the same Fall 1992 issue of *RQ* that contains the "Guidelines for Developing Beginning Genealogical Collections and Services" also contains a snide remark about the motives of genealogists. "Out-of-Print and Antiquarian Books: Guides for Reference Librarians," is the offending article. In it the authors, Patrick J. Brunet and Lee Shiflett, claim, "But, as a group, librarians still fail to acknowledge completely the legitimacy of the information needs of those who would seek out their ancestors. . ." (p.86). I have more faith in my professional librarian colleagues than to believe that "as a group" they would support such an ill-informed statement. Where is the evidence? Censorship is not my interest, but sensitivity and truth should be the interests of all librarians. The authors, "legitimacy" remarks are out of order and should have been challenged. Nor should *RQ* readers have to be exposed to an ill-informed assessment by the authors of the profession's prejudices.

I have served genealogists as a professional librarian for the past twenty-four years; their motives are very clear and legitimate. A survey of actively researching genealogists conducted by me in 1978 revealed that the majority of genealogists simply wished to know their roots and to leave a record of such for their posterity. Often, part of that record includes important medical information, and, occasionally, a genealogist's motive was specifically for the medical history of his/her family. Most genealogists also included the economic, geographical, social, and historical information about the place and time in which ancestors lived. Very few were interested in membership in hereditary societies. Moreover, genealogical research is certainly not trivial for the native American trying to determine his or her blood quantum for monetary entitlements. Please also take a look at the *American Library Directory* and count the thousands of libraries that list genealogical materials among their *special* collections. Apparently the librarians' attitudes of those libraries differ from the opinion of the authors. Since 1975 I have taught hundreds of responsive, interested librarians how to serve genealogists. In numerous seminars across the country their attentiveness to my lectures and their participation suggest sincere interest in improving their genealogical reference skills. It also confirms that the profession recognizes the legitimacy of genealogical research. Why corrupt a good article with such misinformation?— J. Carlyle Parker, *University Archivist and Volunteer Director, Turlock, California Family History Center.*

Dear Editors:

Mr. Parker has given an eloquent justification of genealogy. I am sure that the hundreds of librarians he has instructed in his seminars have been enthusiastic in their interest. When I do sections on genealogy in my reference courses in the School of Library and Information Science at Louisiana State University, I also find a high level of interest among students—and these are students who are only exposed to the subject as part of a larger course. They did not sign on for a genealogical workshop. There is, I agree, a great deal of interest among individual librarians, and there are many good reasons for the study of genealogy.

I must protest, though, that I am offended by Mr. Parker's imputation that I disparage genealogy because of the motive of membership in hereditary societies. This motive has long been recognized by librarians as a legitimate function of genealogy. At least as far back as 1911, the New York State Library listed such membership as the *only* functional purpose, aside from curiosity, for genealogical research. I Memberships in these organizations do give something positive to the researcher, and if they do not benefit society as a whole, they at least do not have the pernicious effect of novel reading, which, I understand, occurs in many of our libraries on an almost daily basis.

However, I must stand by my statement that the complete legitimacy of genealogical study is in question by librarians. This is, of course, not to question the actual legitimacy of the subject nor the motives of the genealogist. Mr. Parker here has played a little trick of attacking what he wishes I had said and not what I actually said. I merely asserted that librarians are uneasy about whether genealogical research fits the role and domain of library service as it has evolved in America. This is, of course, an issue vastly different from the one Mr. Parker chooses to address in his objection.

To adequately document the evidence for the assertion that librarians have ambivalent attitudes toward genealogists would take a scientific survey of librarians' attitudes, which, unfortunately, is impossible here. But there are other forms of evidence that are useful. From twenty years of work in libraries and with librarians, I can assert an impressionistic view that what I say is indeed the case, but this is not the hard evidence that is demanded by Mr. Parker. One bit of evidence of the ambivalent attitude of librarians can perhaps be found in the problem of interlibrary loan policies. Mr. Parker must remember the flap in 1968 when the interlibrary loan code proposed by ALA's Reference Services Division attempted to exempt genealogical materials from those classes that could be legitimately requested by a borrowing library.² It was a provision to which Mr. Parker took exception at the time. He wrote to the editor of the *ALA Bulletin* and to other journals that such a proposal was totally objectionable and its effect was to "declare officially what has been for years the unofficial prejudice of far too many reference librarians and administrators."³ The prejudice that Mr. Parker observed is that of librarians against genealogists. Though this clause was dropped from the code, it appears that some librarians may yet have difficulty obtaining genealogical material through interlibrary loan.⁴

Parker elaborated on this theme a few years later in the pages of *Wilson Library Bulletin* when he offered his own anecdotal evidence documenting the callous and rude ways in which librarians have disdained genealogists.⁵ I cannot quibble with his use of the evidence as the basis for the call for greater efforts on the part of librarians to serve people. I do quibble when Mr. Parker now denies that the evidence exists. Did he simply fabricate these stories to further his cause?

It is possible that in the twenty years that have elapsed since Mr. Parker wrote for *WLB* that he has had a radical change of mind and now believes that the antipathy between librarians and genealogists no longer exists. Unfortunately, much of his diatribe is still current in the literature. In his letter, Mr. Parker notes the ironic contrast between my offending remark and the RASD "Guidelines for Developing Beginning Genealogical Collections and Services" published in the same issue. These "Guidelines" refer the reader to a standard guide to genealogical literature for further information. This guide is Parker's *Library Service to Genealogists*. The book is a standard and, though a decade old and needing some revision, is one that appears on my own list of sources I use as a class handout. Unfortunately, in his third chapter, "The Library's Role in Genealogy and Local History," Parker himself reiterates his view that librarians have no regard for the rights and information needs of genealogists.⁶

When Mr. Parker demands evidence to support my observation that, as a group, librarians still fail to acknowledge completely the legitimacy of the information needs of those who would seek out their ancestors, I do not think I need to go further than the evidence offered by a distinguished genealogist and author of the basic source in the area - J. Carlyle Parker, a man who has made a career of the issue.—*Lee Shiflett*.