



Bibliographers and the Library

G. THOMAS TANSELLE

OF THE SCHOLARS who enter libraries to pursue research, those who call themselves bibliographers have been among the most vocal critics of the policies and attitudes they encounter. That there should be such divergence of opinion, and at times even mutual disparagement, between bibliographers and librarians is particularly distressing because the two fields are naturally related and, indeed, overlap (especially in their interest in the identification and recording of printed material). Developments in one field are bound to affect the other, and progress can best be made in both if a spirit of cooperation and understanding exists between them. Just why this understanding frequently is not present is a complex matter. Stereotyped views of certain scholarly activities may exacerbate the problem—as when literary critics belittle bibliographical work, or when bibliographers in turn look down on library work—but these prejudices are, of course, symptoms rather than underlying causes of misunderstanding. The prejudices will decrease as workers in one field come to understand what their colleagues in an associated field are really doing and what relationship that activity bears to their own. With this in mind, I should like to try to describe the bibliographer's approach to books and to indicate some of the implications of that point of view for library policy. In doing so, I do not mean to suggest that librarians are unique in sometimes failing to understand what bibliography is about; just as much misunderstanding exists within academic departments. Moreover, the cause in each case is the same: a failure to recognize the relationship between the form and the content of books.

Any attempt to explain what bibliographers do must first confront the awkward word *bibliography* itself, a word which has been applied to a considerable variety of activities. What most people think of when

G. Thomas Tanselle is Professor of English, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

they hear the word is a list of works on a given subject, and this usage is the one prevalent in libraries—which often have staff members designated as “bibliographers,” whose job it is to know the literature of particular fields and to select new material for acquisition in those fields. This kind of bibliography is concerned with the content of books. But the word *bibliography* somewhat confusingly is used to refer to another activity as well: the investigation of books as physical objects. Printing and publishing history is one example of this kind of bibliography; descriptive bibliography—the systematic recording of the physical features of books—is another. A descriptive bibliography, which usually takes up a group of related books (such as those containing works by a single author), is one specialized kind of publishing history, for it records some of the specific details upon which the generalizations of a more encompassing history must be based. Still another branch, which underlies both of these, is what has come to be known as analytical bibliography: the analysis of the physical evidence in a book in an effort to determine as many details as possible of its printing history. This work is basic, because it focuses on the primary evidence of the books themselves; information found in publishers’ archives or advertisements must be regarded as incorrect if it is contradicted by the actual book before one’s eyes.

Recognition of the importance of physical evidence and increasing sophistication in its use have been perhaps the major developments of twentieth-century bibliography, stimulated by McKerrow’s influential *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (published in 1927, having appeared in an earlier form in 1913)¹ and the work of Fredson Bowers² and his establishment of *Studies in Bibliography* in 1948. While most of this research has been undertaken by literary scholars whose primary interest is in the assistance which analytical bibliography can offer to the establishment of accurate texts, it is nevertheless true that analytical bibliography is not merely an aid to literary study but is an independent field, of interest in its own right. As such, it—like descriptive bibliography and printing and publishing history—is a form of history. Although some analytical techniques, such as the analysis of compositorial spelling, depend on a knowledge of the language of the text, the intellectual content of the text is irrelevant to bibliographical analysis. Similarly, a descriptive bibliography of an author is not concerned with assessing the literary qualities of the works involved; and if the history of a publishing firm occasionally comments on the significance of certain works, it is to that extent moving into literary history and away from historical bibliog-

Bibliographers and the Library

raphy. All these kinds of bibliography, then, concentrate on books as physical objects and are not directly concerned with the content of the texts conveyed through the vehicle of the physical book.

This distinction between the physical and intellectual aspects of books has often been pointed out, and I do not wish to belabor it here. Several years ago Lloyd Hibberd suggested the terms *reference bibliography* and *physical bibliography* for the two large divisions of bibliography,³ and the terms do usefully suggest what differentiates the two approaches. The difference between a "bibliography" at the end of a book or article and a full-scale descriptive bibliography is not really the quantity of detail. It is true that the latter is likely to be more detailed than the former, but the crucial difference is that it is concerned with physical details, whereas the former is concerned with details relating to content. A physical bibliography could be sparse in its recording of details, and a reference bibliography might provide copious annotation, but the amount of detail in each case would not alter the basic orientation of the bibliography.⁴ All this seems obvious enough, and yet precisely this distinction between the two ways of looking at books lies at the heart of the misunderstanding which often exists between bibliographers (I shall use this term to refer to physical bibliographers) and librarians.

If some people in both groups have now learned to be fairly careful in distinguishing these two kinds of bibliography, much less care has been taken about the usage of the word *book*. An author's "latest book" means, more often than not, his "latest work." There is no harm, of course, in using *book* as a synonym for *work*, as long as the concepts do not get mixed up; but when one person in a conversation is thinking of books as works and another is using the word to refer to physical objects, confusion is bound to result. A bibliographer's angle of approach, his entire way of thinking—what Bowers has called the "bibliographical way"—is based on a recognition of the importance of paying close attention to the physical features of a printed book; most librarians, on the other hand, have been trained to think of a book first of all in terms of its content, i.e. as a novel, a poem, a statement on a particular subject. The distinction between *books* and *works* is clearly basic,⁶ and it must be kept firmly in mind by bibliographers and librarians if they are to achieve a real understanding of one another's problems and concerns.

Librarians in general do normally recognize that one branch of their profession—rare-book librarianship—deals with books as physical objects. Writers on library matters have often pointed out that the

materials in a collection of so-called "rare books" are there because the physical form of the items is in itself important.⁷ A first impression or a private-press book is included in the collection not necessarily because it is rare or worth a lot of money, but because that particular physical embodiment of the text is of interest in its own right and requires special protection for its preservation: a text, after all, can be reproduced in numerous ways, but an artifact cannot be recreated. The proportion of librarians, however, who work with "rare books" is naturally quite small, and library schools have not in the past paid a great deal of attention to training "rare-book" librarians—a failing which has been lamented by a number of people, both bibliographers and librarians.⁸ As a result, many librarians have tended to think of "rare books" as a special problem out of their domain; in effect, they have tended to assume that books of interest as physical objects have been largely segregated into "rare-book" departments and that the remaining books under their care are primarily useful for the texts they contain. The point which obviously needs to be more widely understood is that no precise dividing line exists between "rare books" and other books, and that any book can in fact be approached as a physical object. Every book, however lowly or undistinguished, occupies its own niche in printing and publishing history, and there is no book that a bibliographer may not need to examine for its physical makeup. The bibliographer, in other words, approaches all books in a library as if they were "rare books."

This approach should not come as a surprise to any librarian, even those who are not associated with research libraries and who cannot expect very often to encounter a reader with a bibliographical point of view. Nevertheless, many librarians, not having been exposed to much physical bibliography in their training, do seem to be surprised by bibliographers' expectations. I recently had occasion to check an early printing of a state constitution, and I dropped by a library which had reported possessing a copy. It turned out that the only copy there was a photocopy, and the staff member I talked to did not seem to understand why that would not do or why I considered the library to have been wrong in reporting the copy. This librarian evidently was so accustomed to thinking of the materials he dealt with as *works* that he could not conceive of anyone thinking of them as mere *books*, as physical objects. Every bibliographer has a fund of such anecdotes, and many of them have appeared in print.⁹ No purpose would be served by extending the repertoire here: it is clear that this difference in point of view exists and that it can provoke hard feelings. What is

Bibliographers and the Library

important is to understand why it exists, as a prerequisite for trying to improve the situation.

One can see why a small-town public librarian, for instance, who has not been trained in library school to think of the physical aspect of books and whose readers virtually never raise a bibliographical question, might be almost totally unaware of physical bibliography; this failing would not really be the librarian's fault or reflect any personal lack of conscientiousness. At the same time, one can see why a bibliographer, visiting that library upon learning that it contained a copy of a late printing of a particular edition, would be exasperated when the librarian recommended the use of a more up-to-date and accessible edition and when the book, finally retrieved from storage, proved to be rebound. To the bibliographer's mind, such librarians are oblivious of part of their duty, failing to recognize that they have collections of books—not simply works—under their charge. The title of Randolph Adams's famous essay, "Librarians as Enemies of Books,"¹⁰ sounds harsh, but when carefully interpreted it points to an important truth: librarians are not usually enemies of works, for they are generally efficient in classifying and disseminating knowledge; but they are often enemies of books, for they are frequently careless of the physical forms in which those works are presented.

The reason that librarians—of all kinds, not just "rare-book" librarians—*should* be concerned with books as well as works is simple to state, but enormous in its implications: works can be transmitted only by being incorporated into tangible or audible forms. A work is an abstraction, which can be given a concrete embodiment in a manuscript, a printed book, a sound recording, and so on.¹¹ No single manuscript or book contains *the* text of a work, but only one embodiment of that text; and the nature of the processes (such as typesetting or proofreading) involved in the physical production of texts is such that one cannot expect the texts in any two embodiments of a work to be identical. A first-edition text is not likely to be the same as the text of the manuscript, and the second-edition text will, in all probability, be different from the first. Changes, both intentional and inadvertent, can occur within an edition as well—either between impressions or even during the course of a single impression.¹² No two copies of a work, then, can be assumed to be identical, even in an age of machine-produced books.¹³

The result of this situation is that anyone who is seriously interested in the content of a work must also be concerned with its physical embodiment, because the text may not say the same thing in any two

copies. Whether the differences are trivial or significant cannot be known without some investigation, but it is naïve to think that one edition or impression of a work will do as well as another. Many people who are careful in other respects, however, have not learned this elementary fact; many historians and literary scholars quote passages for discussion without paying any attention to the physical source of those quotations—using a conveniently available paperback, for example, without checking into its reliability. There is a vague feeling on the part of some scholars that a concern with physical details is somewhat frivolous and beneath the attention of those interested in intellectual matters. The truth is that real respect for the intellectual content of a text must entail an attempt to ascertain its accuracy, which in turn involves an investigation of its physical embodiment. What certain scholars—and that includes some librarians as well—need to acquire is the bibliographical turn of mind, in which all documents are approached in a critical and questioning spirit.

Determining what differences exist among various texts of a work does not, of course, tell one which readings are correct (i.e. intended by the author) at each point. To answer that question requires knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the production of each of the editions (or manuscripts) containing the texts—knowledge derived both from external sources (such as the author's letters or the publisher's records) and from internal evidence as interpreted by analytical bibliography to indicate as much as possible about the exact course of the book through the press. Even all this information may often be inconclusive, and one must finally decide among variant readings on the basis of one's familiarity with and sensitivity to the nuances of the author's style and thought. Thus, the process of establishing an accurate text—that is to say, editing—is not, strictly speaking, a branch of physical bibliography; rather, it is an activity of literary study (hence the familiar term *textual criticism*) which utilizes physical bibliography as a major tool. The reason that editing is frequently discussed or undertaken by bibliographers—and the term *textual bibliography* sometimes employed—is that physical bibliography is basic to editing. Although editing undeniably involves literary judgment, that judgment must operate within the framework of facts established by physical bibliography; the physical investigation must come first, and no judgment on literary grounds can stand if it contravenes established physical facts. It is this insight (essentially a recognition of the intimate relationship between the physical and

Bibliographers and the Library

intellectual aspects of books) which accounts for most of the remarkable development of bibliography in the English-speaking world in the twentieth century.

The practical results of this approach to editing can best be seen in certain editions which have appeared in the last quarter-century—editions such as Fredson Bowers's of Thomas Dekker,¹⁴ which set the style for a whole generation of editors, or the large series of editions which have been in progress since the early 1960s under the auspices of the Modern Language Association's Center for Editions of American Authors (CEAA) and its new Center for Scholarly Editions.¹⁵ What the CEAA editions are demonstrating is that editing nineteenth-century texts—just as much as editing Renaissance texts—demands analysis of the physical forms in which those texts appear. Several of the CEAA editors have made plans for descriptive bibliographies as part of their projects, for precisely the reason that the two activities are complementary: a detailed descriptive bibliography is invaluable to an editor, but the research necessary to produce it is most likely to result from the process of editing itself. At the moment, the best descriptive bibliographies of certain nineteenth-century American writers are available in the pages of the editorial matter of the CEAA editions. The editors of those volumes are above all concerned with the content of the works they are editing, but they recognize that the content can finally be apprehended only through an understanding of the forms to which that content is tied.

What I have been saying is simply an attempt to summarize the bibliographer's point of view in somewhat abstract or theoretical terms, and I hope that it can provide the background for a brief discussion of certain more specific points. Many people, I think, can follow in general assent the theoretical statement of the bibliographer's position without fully realizing what stand it implies on various practical issues. I should like, therefore, to take up as examples a few areas in which the bibliographer's point of view is likely to differ from that of the average librarian.

To begin with, there is the question of rebinding. In many libraries, when a book in the general stacks has been used to the point where it is coming apart, the book is automatically rebound with a sturdy library binding. The content of the book, so the argument runs, has not been changed, and the effective life of the book has been prolonged. To the bibliographer, however, an artifact has been tampered with, and part of the evidence originally present has now been destroyed. (I am speaking here of nineteenth- and twentieth-century

books originally issued in some form of publishers' binding or casing; earlier books in custom-made bindings present a different situation, although such bindings are also a source of evidence and are of interest in their own right.) Obviously, a rebound book from the nineteenth or twentieth century is almost useless to the descriptive bibliographer, for his job is to describe the physical forms of books and to reconstruct publishing history; he needs, therefore, to see the casing and endpapers as they came from the publisher. There are times when the casing is the sole feature distinguishing between two issues of a book—as when only part of an impression is initially cased, and then some time later the remaining sheets are cased more cheaply for sale in a remainder series. This occurrence has not been an uncommon one over the years, and such facts must be described in any attempt to record the publishing history of a book. The cheap remainder casing is not likely to wear well, however, and collectors—at least until quite recently—have probably not regarded the copies in the remainder casing as particularly valuable; therefore, many of those copies will have been destroyed, and if the others in libraries are rebound one by one, the evidence is in danger of disappearing completely—or, at best, of becoming very difficult to locate.

Any bibliographer who works with nineteenth- or twentieth-century books has encountered similar situations and recognizes that many books of this period are extremely scarce—despite the fact that they are not particularly old and were originally issued in large numbers—simply because they have not fitted into the traditional categories of collecting and have not been sought by collectors and “rare-book” librarians.¹⁶ Books in “rare-book” departments are usually safe from rebinding; but one should remember that any book in the general stacks is a potential future candidate for transfer to the “rare-book” collection. I am not suggesting that librarians should never have books rebound; what I am saying is that they should not do so without giving serious thought to the evidence that will thereby be destroyed and attempting to assess its importance. Furthermore, all librarians have this responsibility, not just those in research libraries or in libraries with “rare-book” departments. Bibliographers sometimes locate important bibliographical evidence in small public libraries, and the librarians of those institutions should be aware of the fact that their actions, like those of “rare-book” librarians, ultimately affect the total store of bibliographical evidence available.

The relationship of original bindings to publishing history is easy to see; what is not as widely understood is the connection among

Bibliographers and the Library

bindings, the sheets enclosed in the bindings, and the content of the sheets. In a rebound book, nothing can be trusted, because one cannot know what else has been altered in the process of rebinding. If, in a rebound copy, one finds some of the preliminaries—a map, a prefatory note, and an epigraph, for instance—in a different order from that encountered in any previously examined copy, one cannot immediately conclude that this copy represents a formerly unknown printing or state, because the preliminaries may have been shifted around by the binder (or may have reached the binder in the wrong order, if some of the leaves had become detached). Moreover, rebound copies are frequently sewn in such a way that it is impossible to open them far enough to determine how the gatherings were originally sewn.

Similarly, there are likely to be problems at the end of a rebound book, because one can never assume that any advertising matter will have been retained in the rebinding. Inserted advertisements (i.e. inserted by the original binder and not part of the sheets of text) are naturally of interest to the descriptive bibliographer as part of the physical book as issued. Advertisements which occupy the final pages of the last gathering of text (and which therefore went through the press with the text) may be of additional interest. For example, the existence of two printings of the last gathering of Melville's *Redburn* (1849) is revealed by the fact that in some copies this gathering consists of ten leaves, with seven of advertisements, and in others it is made up of twelve leaves, with nine of advertisements. The evidence of reimposition which the arrangement of these advertisements offers would be unavailable in rebound copies from which the advertisements had been excised. Integral advertisements can help to solve textual problems also: one example would be the case of two variant readings in the last gathering, the order of which could be determined only through the presence of a nonreversible textual or typographical difference in one of the advertisements. The librarian's disregard of advertisements springs from the belief that because they are not part of the *work* contained in a book they are therefore expendable; the bibliographer's concern with advertisements stems from the recognition that they are part of the *book* and may therefore have a bearing on the interpretation of the work it contains.

One result of the bibliographer's view is to point up some of the inconsistencies in the standard library cataloging codes. The librarian who directs the binder to leave out advertisements (or, for that matter, to throw away the covers of a paperback or a periodical) is

hardly to be blamed for thinking them unimportant when the catalog cards for the books do not take the advertisements into account in the first place. The *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules* (AACR)¹⁷ and some prominent earlier codes direct that the statement of pagination should normally indicate the last numbered page of each numbered section; only if the pages containing advertisements are numbered, then, will they be recorded—and in such a case, AACR requires that a parenthetical indication of the number of pages of advertisements be added, presumably so that one will know that the actual work is not as long as the number of pages might imply. If the goal is to specify the extent of the work, however, it seems pointless to be concerned with what page numbers actually appear: just as nontext pages such as advertisements can be numbered, so, too, can a final text page be unnumbered—in fact, it frequently is. Recording the last numbered page is neither a satisfactory way of indicating the extent of a work nor an adequate means of accounting for the sheets of the physical book. The trouble with the code is that it reflects an indecisiveness as to whether the subject of the cataloging is the work or the book. A bibliographer is understandably puzzled to learn that a book described on a catalog card as having “230, [1] p.” actually contains three more unnumbered pages of advertisements: puzzled because the notation seems to be concerned with physical details (carefully indicating which pages are numbered), and yet the 231st page is referred to only because it contains a checklist (a “bibliography”)—in other words, only because of its special content (it would not have been mentioned if it had contained the end of the text instead). If the pagination statement were fully committed to indicating the extent of the work, at least it would not be misleading, even if it did not tell the bibliographer all he would like to know; as it stands, it is hardly more useful to the bibliographer, for it implies attention to physical details and then only partially records them.¹⁸ The treatment of advertisements in library cataloging well illustrates the confusion that results when the relationship between books and works is not fully grasped.

Another area which is a source of trouble for both bibliographers and librarians is the treatment of dust jackets. “Rare-book” librarians retain the jackets that come their way, but the jackets for most books in the general stacks are discarded—or are kept on the books temporarily, not to preserve the jackets but to protect the books. However, the fact that jackets are not physically attached to books does not, from the bibliographer’s point of view, mean that they are disposable. A jacket is a part of a book as it leaves the publisher, and the jacket

Bibliographers and the Library

must be described by the bibliographer who is setting down the publishing history of a book and recording its physical features. Because so many jackets have been thrown away, bibliographers of late nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century books often find that they cannot locate even a single copy of jackets which they can be fairly certain once existed. Jackets are historical documents, and the historical record is so much the poorer as a result of the thoughtless destruction of great quantities of this class of material. Besides being artifacts of publishing history, jackets can be important in a number of ways. They may include blurbs written by well-known people; they may contain information about the author and the publication of the book which is not to be found within the book itself; they may be decorated with illustrations that appear nowhere else—indeed, they are pieces of graphic art.¹⁹

Many of these points are generally recognized, even by the librarians who discard jackets; but they go on discarding them, feeling overwhelmed by the idea of accumulating thousands of jackets, and perhaps also thinking that it is someone's else's business to preserve them. Actually, the task of storing jackets need not be burdensome: the fact that certain jackets exist can be noted on the catalog cards, and the jackets themselves can be filed in a vertical file, arranged by the call numbers of the books. I am glad to see that dealers are giving more attention to jackets in their catalogs and are charging considerably higher prices for copies of books in jackets.²⁰ A jacket is worth the extra expense, and the sooner this fact is widely understood, the better the chances that jackets will be routinely saved. In this respect as in others, there should be no great gulf between the practices of "rare-book" librarians and other librarians; all who are involved in the collection and preservation of books have a common responsibility.

The question of what to do with duplicate copies is another issue which has often in the past been a point of contention between bibliographers and librarians. The fact that books which seem to be duplicates may not really be so is well known—and has been at least since December 1911, when Falconer Madan spoke of "the duplicity of duplicates."²¹ The bibliographer's fear has generally been that the librarian would dispose of a seeming duplicate without sufficient checking; indeed, it has often happened that two *issues* of a book are kept, because the difference shows up on the title page or some other prominent place, while two possibly more important *states* are not recognized, because the only difference may be a revision in the middle of the text.²² The necessity for full textual collation of sup-

posed duplicates is by now, I think, commonly understood—if not always practiced—in connection with early books. It is surely no longer necessary to explain the scholarly value of keeping together the approximately seven dozen copies of the Shakespeare First Folio at the Folger Library, especially after Charlton Hinman's work,²³ which could hardly have been undertaken without that collection. What seems to be less well recognized, however, is that the principle involved applies to all books of any period. It may be that copies of a machine-produced book will not vary as frequently as copies of a book printed by hand, but differences do exist in them. (Broken types or plates, for example, often occur in some copies of an edition which seem indistinguishable in other respects, and this evidence may turn out to differentiate impressions.) No two physical objects are ever identical, even if they are intended to be, so in the strict sense there are never any duplicates. The crucial question, of course, is to decide what differences are significant enough to pay attention to—a question made particularly difficult by the fact that one can never know what details now regarded as insignificant may be shown in the future to be important.²⁴

Perhaps the central point to be made about the bibliographer's approach to "duplicates" is that, whatever period he is dealing with, multiple copies are essential to his research. When a bibliographer sees several copies of a single edition on a shelf in the stacks, he does not see duplicates but rather independent physical objects, each with its own evidence to offer. If, after carefully examining five copies, he finds no differences, textual or otherwise, his time has not been wasted: any statement he now makes about the book will be based on more evidence than would have been the case if he had examined only one copy. Bibliographers and editors always need to see as many copies of a book as they feasibly can because, as in any inductive investigation, new evidence may turn up at any moment invalidating conclusions drawn on the basis of the previously known evidence. When copies of a book are standing side by side, there is the chance that certain differences will become noticeable which one might otherwise never have thought to make notes on and to check in separated copies. When I find in a bookstore two copies of a book exhibiting such differences, I frequently buy them in order to preserve the bibliographical evidence; I am thus in the position of purchasing "duplicates" of a book that I would not have bought in only a single copy. In bookstores with large sections of used fiction, there are generally entire shelves of copies of certain bestsellers; I

Bibliographers and the Library

have found that the simple process of looking at each of these copies can reveal a considerable amount about the publishing history of the books involved. Many public libraries have a similar situation in their stacks—copious quantities of old bestsellers, no longer in demand. The need for space may dictate that they be discarded, but no librarian should take this action without weighing in the balance what will be lost. To the bibliographer, whether one is disposing of a “duplicate” Elizabethan quarto (for the money it will bring) or a bestseller of 1934 (for the space it will vacate), the theoretical considerations are the same. The action taken, to be sure, may finally rest on practical grounds; but if it is to be an informed action, it must always take into account the fact that for bibliographical research there is no substitute for a group of copies in one location. Furthermore, bibliographical research may take place in libraries that are not generally thought of as research libraries. The physical books, after all, are the primary evidence the bibliographer works with, and he is therefore interested in any assemblage of books; no matter how remote or obscure the library, some bibliographer will find his way to it and will discover significant bibliographical evidence there.

The same line of thinking dictates the bibliographer's attitude toward later printings and editions (that is, “nonfirsts”): they constitute part of the evidence for the history of a particular edition (or of the editions of a particular work), and they, as well as the “firsts,” must be examined. The traditions of book collecting have stressed the importance of “first editions” (meaning first printings), with the result that many copies of first printings have been saved (frequently for their supposed monetary value) and many copies of later printings discarded (because there was little market for them—except as “reading” copies, regarded as replaceable when worn out by other “reading” copies of any edition). For this reason, it is now much easier to find copies of first printings of certain books than it is to locate copies of later printings, as CEEA editors have repeatedly discovered. Copies of the first American impression of *Moby-Dick* (1851), which obviously command a high price, are available in a large number of “rare-book” collections; but the Melville editors had difficulty finding copies of the 1871 printing, the last printing from the original American plates. Yet for bibliographical and editorial work, the 1871 copies are as much of a necessity as the 1851 copies; they represent one stage in the history of that edition, and the text of the 1871 printing must be collated against that of the 1851 printing in order to determine whether any changes occurred during the course of the four print-

ings from these plates. Because libraries have acquired their "rare books" from private collectors or have followed the same traditions in their own collecting, there are few libraries which possess long runs of successive printings of important editions. One of the valuable by-products of the CEAA has been the building up of such collections (like the Melville Collection at the Newberry Library), and this process in turn has given some publicity to the idea that later printings are worth collecting.

As far as early books are concerned, the collecting of later printings is nothing new: all *Short-Title Catalogue* (STC) and Wing books, and not just the "firsts," are regularly searched for. One reason is simply that their age causes them to be of interest as physical objects to many people other than bibliographers; but another reason is that later printings from this period are likely to be in fact later editions (because it was not generally feasible to keep type standing), and the potential textual significance of different editions is more readily seen than that of different impressions. However, when one gets to the eighteenth century, where printings from standing type frequently occur, and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where plates and photographic processes give still longer life to a single typesetting, one finds that there has been much less interest in the assembling of later printings and even of later editions. Obviously any printing or edition during an author's lifetime is of potential textual value, and printings and editions made after his death are still part of the history of the author's reputation and influence (and may sometimes make use of authoritative documents). Ideally, an author collection should contain multiple copies of every printing of every edition, down to the latest printing of the latest paperback. Some private and institutional collections of this kind do exist, but it is naturally not possible for most persons or institutions to undertake this kind of collecting for large numbers of authors. The point is that an understanding of the value of later printings and editions can have an impact on the librarian's decisions in two kinds of situations. First, if a library already has certain outstanding special collections or is presently attempting to build up some significant collections, the librarian with this understanding will be in a position to decide intelligently whether the collecting policy should require the acquisition of later printings and editions. It is surprising, and distressing, to see how many research libraries continue to neglect later printings and editions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century books in otherwise impressively administered collections. Second, there is the common situation in

Bibliographers and the Library

which the stacks contain many random copies of later printings and editions; even though they are not part of a detailed special collection, they may be of considerable bibliographical value, if the bibliographer knows they are there. The bibliographically informed librarian not only will retain these copies (realizing that they do not constitute an unnecessary duplication of texts) but will also see that they are reported to the *National Union Catalog*. My own recent experience in trying to locate copies of abridged editions of *Moby-Dick* has underscored the point that some books—even from the last few decades—are extremely difficult, or practically impossible, to locate because they fall into classes which have traditionally been regarded as unimportant. Late printings and editions are not yet high on many collectors' lists, but their value is increasingly being recognized, and no librarian should hesitate to give serious attention to such seemingly unglamorous items.²⁵

None of these points will be unexpected to anyone who thoroughly understands the bibliographical approach to books. It is unfortunate that bibliographers and librarians have not always seen eye to eye on these matters in the past, for the two groups should be working together toward the same goals. As Arthur Brown has recently pointed out, the librarian is at the center of the whole process of the preservation and dissemination of texts and therefore cannot avoid being a bibliographer.²⁶ The librarian is like the curator of a museum, for both have been entrusted with a collection of artifacts by means of which the culture of the past can be examined in the present. The objects in the museum, like those in the library, are used for study; but the curator of a museum—even of a small one which is not primarily a research institution—takes pains to preserve the physical appearance and makeup of the objects in its collection, whereas the average librarians are likely to think of their duty as pertaining only to the texts contained in the books. When an object does not display any words or writing, it is easier to see that form and content are one and that the form cannot be altered without changing what the object communicates to us. Books, which are undeniably human artifacts, contain words, however; and because the same words can be printed on different physical backgrounds, people tend to think that the message conveyed is independent of the vehicle carrying the words. Even if that were true, it would be no reason to neglect the books as physical objects; nevertheless, the history of the transmission of texts shows conclusively that the content of texts is affected by the me-

chanical processes of transmitting them. Some books contain works which could be regarded on occasion as intellectually unimportant, but those same books are of interest in their own right as examples of the bookmaking techniques of a given time and place. The knowledge of bookmaking derived from them can therefore be applied to the study of texts judged to be more important. Every library, of whatever kind, possesses a stock of artifacts relevant to the investigation of man's intellectual development. What the bibliographer therefore asks of all librarians—not just “rare-book” librarians—is to recognize that a serious concern with the printed word can be effective only if it is supported by a respect for books as physical objects.

References

1. McKerrow, Ronald B. *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927. For the earlier version, see _____. “Notes on Bibliographical Evidence for Literary Students and Editors of English Works of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 12:213-318, Oct. 1911-April 1913.
2. Bowers, Fredson. *Bibliography and Textual Criticism*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964. See also _____. *Essays in Bibliography, Text, and Editing*. Charlottesville, Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1975, pp. 535-45.
3. Hibberd, Lloyd. “Physical and Reference Bibliography,” *Library* (5th series) 20:124-34, June 1965. See also Tanselle, G. Thomas. “Bibliography and Science,” *Studies in Bibliography* 27:55-89, 1974.
4. For further discussion, see Tanselle, G. Thomas. “Descriptive Bibliography and Library Cataloguing,” *Studies in Bibliography* 30:1-56, 1977.
5. Bowers, Fredson. *The Bibliographical Way* (Library Series No. 7). Lawrence, University of Kansas Libraries, 1959. Reprinted in _____, *Essays . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-74.
6. For a discussion of this distinction addressed to librarians, see Lubetzky, Seymour. *Principles of Cataloging*. Los Angeles, Institute of Library Research, University of California, 1969, pp. 1-17. See also Tanselle, “Descriptive Bibliography . . .,” *op. cit.*, note 11.
7. See, for example, Alden, John E. “Cataloging and Classification.” In H. Richard Archer, ed. *Rare Book Collections* (ACRL Monograph No. 27). Chicago, ALA, 1965, p. 66; Bennett, Josiah Q. *The Cataloguing Requirements of the Book Division of a Rare Book Library*. Kent, Ohio, Kent State University Libraries, 1969, pp. 6-7; and Cave, Roderick. *Rare Book Librarianship*. London, Clive Bingley, and Hamden, Conn., Linnet Books, 1976, p. 68.
8. See, for example, Adams, Frederick B., Jr. “Long Live the Bibliophile!” *College & Research Libraries* 16:344-46, Oct. 1955; Byrd, Cecil K. “Rare Books in University Libraries,” *Library Trends* 5:441-50, April 1957; Silver, Rollo G. “The Training of Rare Book Librarians,” *Library Trends* 9:446-52, April

Bibliographers and the Library

1961; Ray, Gordon N. "The Changing World of Rare Books," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 59:117-24, Second Quarter 1965; and Bowers, Fredson. *Bibliography and Modern Librarianship*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California, 1966. Reprinted in _____, *Essays . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-93.

9. See, for example, Bowers, *Bibliography and Modern Librarianship*, *op. cit.*; Shipton, Clifford K. "Bibliotheca Americana," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 62:351-59, Third Quarter 1968. Examples of librarians' failure to understand format designations and inconsistency in employing them are given in John R. Hetherington. "Signatures and Sizes," *Times Literary Supplement* Oct. 14, 1965, p. 928; and Shaaber, Matthias A. *Check-List of Works of British Authors Printed Abroad, in Languages other than English, to 1641*. New York, Bibliographical Society of America, 1975, p. v.

10. Adams, Randolph G. "Librarians as Enemies of Books," *Library Quarterly* 7:317-31, July 1937.

11. In a recording or recitation, of course, spelling and punctuation would not usually be specifically indicated.

12. An *edition* consists of all copies produced from the same setting of type; an *impression* (or printing) consists of all copies of an edition printed at one time. See Bowers, Fredson. *Principles of Bibliographical Description*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1949, pp. 37, 39; and Tanselle, G. Thomas. "The Bibliographical Concepts of *Issue* and *State*," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 69:18-21 [First Quarter] 1975.

13. Even photographic copies can vary: variations in inking or foreign matter on the photographed surface, for instance, can make the text illegible or appear to read differently.

14. Bowers, Fredson, ed. *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1953-1961. Bowers's other editions are recorded in _____, *Essays . . .*, *op. cit.*, pp. 532-34.

15. References to the CEAA editions (of Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, John Dewey, Emerson, Hawthorne, Howells, Irving, Melville, Simms, Thoreau) can be found, among other places, in Center for Editions of American Authors. *Statement of Editorial Principles and Procedures*. 2d ed. New York, Modern Language Association of America, 1972, pp. 22-23. This pamphlet also summarizes the application of W. W. Greg's "The Rationale of Copy-Text" (*Studies in Bibliography* 3:19-36, 1950-51) to the editing of nineteenth-century literature (pp. 4-7) and conveniently brings together references to the principal essays on this subject (pp. 17-21).

16. Bindings may also preserve presentation inscriptions and other indications of former ownership, which in turn can sometimes be important in evaluating bibliographical and textual evidence. See Adams, Frederick B., Jr. *The Uses of Provenance*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California, 1969.

17. *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*. North American Text. Chicago, ALA, 1967.

18. This problem is commented on in some detail in Tanselle, "Descriptive Bibliography . . ." *op. cit.*

19. See Tanselle, G. Thomas. "Book-Jackets, Blurbs, and Bibliographers," *Library* (5th series) 26:91-134, June 1971.

G. THOMAS TANSELLE

20. One recent indication of this trend appears in Allen Ahearn. *The Book of First Books*. Rockville, Md., Quill & Brush Press, 1975, p. 6: "On the average the presence of a dust wrapper will increase the value of a book by 50%. On books 20 years old or older the average increase in value added by the dust wrapper would be closer to 100%."

21. Madan, Falconer. "The Duplicity of Duplicates," *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 12:15-20, Oct. 1911-April 1913.

22. For further comment on this situation, see Bowers, Fredson. "The Function of Bibliography," *Library Trends* 7:506-7, April 1959.

23. Hinman, Charlton. *The Printing and Proof-Reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963.

24. See Tanselle, G. Thomas. "Tolerances in Bibliographical Description," *Library* (5th series) 23:1-12, March 1968.

25. Perhaps a word should be added about a situation which is in one sense the opposite: a case where earlier editions, rather than later ones, are routinely neglected. In their treatment of reference books, many librarians, even in "research" libraries, regularly retain only the latest editions. But earlier editions serve many purposes in historical research, and the bibliographer, being a historian, frequently needs superseded editions of bibliographical reference works. It is an unfortunate fact, however, that libraries with generally good bibliographical holdings do not always see the value of devoting space to back runs of such works as the *Publishers' Trade List Annual*, *Books in Print*, or volumes of the *Cumulative Book Index* which have been superseded by larger cumulations.

26. Brown, Arthur. "The Text, the Bibliographer, and the Librarian." In Folke Sandgren, ed. *Otium et Negotium: Studies in Onomatology and Library Science Presented to Olof von Feilitzen*. Stockholm, P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1973, pp. 23-31. See also Bowers, "The Function of Bibliography," *op. cit.*, p. 508.