Recent Publications

Sidney F. Huttner, Book Review Editor

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Reviews


The premise that you can tell a book by its cover is a refreshing departure from typical textual studies, and the nine essays that compose this book examine the relationships between textual meaning and textual materiality and provide a wealth of insight into the material aspects of books. By looking at typography, paper and binding, advertising, promotional copy, and distribution, these essays expand our understanding of how books are received and perceived by readers and offer rare books librarians an opportunity to view their collections from a fresh perspective. This volume is a welcome addition to the literature on the history of the book.

Kathleen Verduin, in "Dante in America: The First Hundred Years," traces the rise in popularity of Dante's poems from Coleridge's recommendation in a lecture of Henry Francis Cary's 1805–1814 blank-verse translation, with John Flaxman's engravings from classical antiquity, to a Dante revival in America. In England, John Aitken Carlyle's prose translation in

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the 1840s supplanted Cary's version, but Longfellow's 1867 translation was touted as an important cultural and literary event. Charles Eliot Norton's 1891–1892 text in paragraph form with minimal editorial apparatus democratized Dante's work. Gustave Doré's engravings linked Dante's poetry to Gothic horror, among other things.

Publishers advertised Herman Melville's later works with "by the author of Typee and Omoo." In "The Material Melville: Shaping Readers' Horizons," Michael Kearns examines endpapers, title pages, running titles, and magazine advertisements to analyze why readers expected the new books to be like these adventure novels. Kearns explains how typecasting prevented Melville from enjoying greater success with subsequent books in another genre.

Jeffrey D. Groves examines bindings in "Judging Literary Books by Their Covers: House Styles, Ticknor and Fields, and Literary Promotion." Mass-produced bindings in the 1820s gave publishers a visual house style that consumers could readily identify "to shape their notion of what 'literature' meant and looked like" (p. 77).

Ticknor and Fields, the most prestigious literary house in mid-nineteenth-century America, made significant use of "house" styles. Their brown cloth and blind-stamped cover designed in 1850 remained a staple for 24 years. A second style—with blue cloth, gold-stamped spine, and gilt edges, introduced in 1856—was so widely imitated that "blue and gold" became a generic term for a pocket edition bound in this style by any publisher.

In "Literature in Newsprint: Antebellum Family Newspapers and the Uses of Reading," Amy M. Thomas analyzes The Spirit of the Age, a family newspaper published in Raleigh, North Carolina with "the eclectic contents of magazines in a newspaper form" (p. 101). Its editor Alexander Gorman understood the power of the paper's appearance to convey its usefulness and revised both its look and contents through the 1850s, designing it to embody value and usefulness, counteracting a cheap newspaper appearance with local and national information for entertainment and moral and intellectual enhancement.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's vivid and detailed descriptions of Italian landscapes and art fill his romance The Marble Faun, and Susan S. Williams examines the Tauchnitz edition as a popular travel guide. Hawthorne's editors stressed guidebook qualities over story, and when Leipzig publisher Bernhard Tauchnitz printed an authorized version, his promotion of the book added international prestige: the book garnered international success from extensive circulation in Rome. Most copies have 50 to 100 photos, with no two copies alike. Booksellers and readers embellished it with photographs and vellum bindings as a souvenir of their travels. This success prompted Houghton Mifflin to issue a uniform illustrated edition in 1889.

Mark Twain's status as a classic American author resulted from his self-promotion and his use of the subscription book trade. Nancy Cook's "Finding His Mark: Twain's The Innocents..."
Abroad as a Subscription Book" details the marketing of Twain's first travel book and explores the concept of the author as maker of books. She notes that "publication of The Innocents Abroad [in 1869] as a subscription book both shaped and conditioned Mark Twain's development as a successful writer" (p. 151) and suggests the experience of reading it as a subscription book might differ significantly from reading other editions. Twain used his lectures on the lyceum circuit to test material included in the book, and he used advertisements for the lectures to promote the book.

In the 1880s and 1890s, Houghton Mifflin produced two series of biographies: The American Statesmen and The American Men of Letters. Scott E. Casper, in "Defining the National Pantheon: The Making of Houghton Mifflin's Biographical Series, 1880–1900," posits that while "together the series offered a national pantheon, a Who's Who of political and literary worthies of the nation's first century, and indeed a biographical history of that century" (p. 180), American Men of Letters, with delinquent authors and poor sales, was a disappointment; but American Statesmen became a commercial success. While readers were more interested in the lives of political figures than the lives of literary men, over time the American Men of Letters volumes, most treating their subjects for the first time, became more valuable sources of

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information. The Statesmen series covered familiar ground derived from earlier, longer works; although popular, they represented no new scholarship.

Michele Moylan, in "Materiality as Performance: The Forming of Helen Hunt Jackson's Ramona," examines how readers read this book against Jackson's intention of how it should be read. The book was written to raise awareness of the plight and mistreatment of Native Americans; Jackson and her publishers encouraged readers to interpret the story of half-Spanish, half-Indian Ramona as social criticism and call to action. Readers rejected the sympathetic portrayal and preferred to see Indians as savages, an interpretation reinforced by illustrations in later editions. Moylan describes several other interpretations readers have chosen during the book's publishing history.

In "Packaging Literature for the High Schools: From the Riverside Literature Series to Literature and Life," Lane Stiles notes how Edwin Greenlaw's compilation of hundreds of disparate literary texts into a "theme or content" format "influenced how Americans have come to identify, interpret, and value 'classic' literature" (p. 250). Houghton Mifflin's Riverside Literature Series dominated high school curricula and selected titles became required reading for college entrance exams. He discusses how the materiality of the series explicitly situated readers and how it implicitly situated them in relation to classic literature.

Reading Books is the first volume in a new Massachusetts series titled "Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book"—and a promising start it is. These essays provide librarians with the tools to move beyond the textual meanings of books to understand how the physical object affects the readers' interpretations of the "book."—Susan Hamburger, Pennsylvania State University


Preservation Management describes the current state of library preservation efforts in Britain. Written by three library educators at Loughborough University, it is based upon a questionnaire distributed in 1993 to 682 libraries (173 public, 228 academic, and 281 special). The response was excellent: 488 libraries (71%) returned the questionnaire (133 public, 177 academic, 178 special).

The survey assessed preservation progress since the highly critical 1984 Ratcliffe Report, which faulted preservation and conservation practices and recommended improvements. The establishment of the National Preservation Office (NPO) in the British Library is widely seen as a response to Ratcliffe as are preservation workshops, enhanced preservation awareness, and opportunities to gather information. This book becomes, de facto, a quasi-history of library preservation in Britain since 1984.