



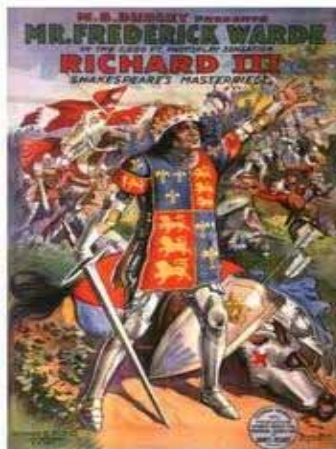
Aldus Society Notes

Winter, 2012

Volume 12, No. 1

“Aldus Collects” Program Scheduled for January 12

One of our most popular programs is “Aldus Collects.” This year six Aldus members are scheduled to talk about a wide range of high points or interesting asides in their personal collections. Listed here in no special order, our presenters will include:



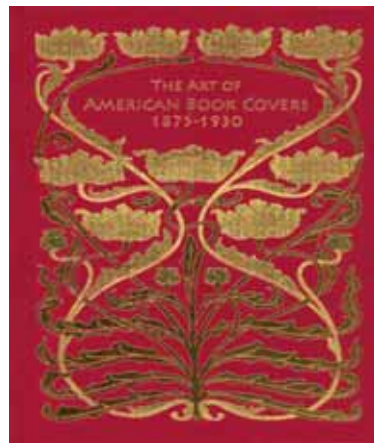
Alan Woods, who collects theatrical biographies/autobiographies. He plans to highlight *Fifty Years of Make Believe* by Frederick Warde, who was a touring actor from the 1880s through the 1920s. He was beloved on the road, making a silent version of *Richard*

III and *King Lear*. He also toured with both films, providing dialogue live while the silent films showed.

John Bennett will share a group of very small hand-made one-of-a-kind books he made some years ago, which no one has ever seen before.

(continued on page 3)

Richard Minsky Will Present Ravneberg Memorial Lecture on March 8



The Art of American Book Covers 1875-1930

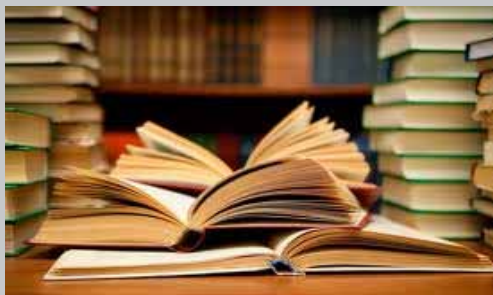
**His Evening Talk will Focus on
*The Art of American Book Covers 1875-1930***

In the world of book art, most people will say that Richard Minsky is considered to be the founder of the modern book art movement and is the most influential book

artist of his generation. A pioneer and innovator in the book arts, his critically acclaimed work is found in museums and private collections around the world and he has won many fellowships and awards.

In addition he has placed himself at the lead of book art historians as well, researching and writing numerous books documenting the development of publisher’s book bindings throughout publishing history.

(continued on page 4)



Aldus Society Meetings

Regular meetings of the Aldus Society are held at 7:30 PM on the second Thursday of the month at

**The Thurber Center
91 Jefferson Avenue
Columbus, Ohio**

☞ Socializing Begins One-Half Hour Before ☞

The Aldus Society

TRUSTEES, 2011-2012

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Aldus Society Notes is published by the Newsletter Committee of The Aldus Society. For article ideas or submissions contact Genie Hoster (editor) at: (614) 299-9985 or bookshigh@aol.com

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President's Message Genie Hoster

Best wishes for a successful new year of book learning and adventuring. Many Aldus members were spotted at the Book and Paper Show which was held in early January at the Rhodes Center. All were on quests to add to their collections, and thereby hangs a tale or two. I'd guesstimate there were nearly 100 dealers in all things ephemeral (and a few books too). Dealers' booths always range from highly-organized treasure collections to mysterious boxes of who knows what for intrepid hunters with time on their hands to rummage about.



Aldus member Scott Williams, who collects and sells items related to travel, was spotted at many of the postcard dealers' tables; there were also a number of dealers who carried colorful luggage labels, maps and advertising relating to far-off locales. I met up briefly with John Weiler as well. He collects stereoviews, U.S. western history and nineteenth-century railroad items, which were in full supply.

As we all know, Eric Johnson has so many interests, it's difficult to list them on our toes and fingers combined. He was pleased to have found a nice batch of World-War I-era issues of *Youth's Companion*, a periodical he worked with closely at Princeton. He also purchased a beautiful red velvet-covered vintage photo album that had a particular binding which fascinated him. "I'm eternally fascinated by the world of paper, manuscript, and print!" he says. Indeed, most Aldines are!



All I found was a poster stamp advertising a 1915 book *Your Baby* to add to my collection of book-related stamps. But I found much to lighten my day. That included giggling at the cultural juxtapositioning in a large display of sheet music published by the Hebrew Publishing Company (such as "Will You Buy My Bublitzki - Song of the Pretzel Dealer"), all of which advertised "special Hawaiian guitar chords" on their covers.

But at many shows, the people-watching is even more entertaining than the items for sale. There were the Apkarians, who own Castle Halloween Museum in West Virginia. In addition to their wonderful vintage Halloween collectibles they are always accompanied by their friendly black cat named Anush. Her owner, who calls herself The Halloween Queen, told me "Anush" is Armenian for "sweet." For this show Anush was dressed in a spiffy short-sleeved red knitted sweater. A bit later, while I was looking over the silent auction tables, a dealer's wife ran into the section and yelled at her husband, "You've got to come back to our table. We have a customer." He answered that he just didn't really care. "But the customer has cash in his hand!" she wailed. "Tell him to go away!" was his gruff reply.

The next show will be in September. Hope to see you there!

Susan Brooks Reed, who has a collection of children's books published over a span of 120 years, will share some interesting facts on several of these volumes.

Christine Hayes will share an amusing story of how she was reunited with a favorite children's book from her youth. She always considered it the "Holy Grail" in her lifetime of book searching, although she didn't remember the title or author. Two Aldus members came to the rescue and saw that a copy of this book got into her hands.

J. Wesley Baker collects works by historical fiction writer Kenneth Roberts; his collection also extends to such things as letters written by Roberts about his research and writing, a sign advertising the sale of a special edition of *Arundel*, the auction catalog for his estate, and books from Roberts' personal library which include Roberts' marginal notes. He is quite sure that his talk will reveal a portrait of Roberts as "a highly committed and accurate depicter of historical events, a talented writer, and a highly opinionated cuss."



Kenneth Roberts and his dogs

Bill Rich will share one of his favorite books found in a Columbus used bookshop. We can always depend on an educational and entertaining presentation from Bill, whatever title he chooses to share with us.

George Cowmeadow Bauman will be our master of ceremonies. This should be a fun program to start our 2012 program year!



February 9: Tracing Jane Austen's Literary Footsteps

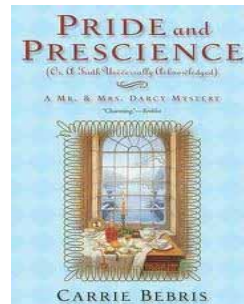
The year 2011 marked the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen's first published novel, *Sense and Sensibility*. Carrie Bebris, author of the award-winning Mr. & Mrs. Darcy mystery series, inspired by Austen, will share Austen's path to publication during a period when women were discouraged from writing professionally and when novels were considered lowbrow entertainment.



Carrie Bebris

She will also share how she recreates Regency England in her own novels through historical research that has taken her from Austen's own humble cottage to great manor houses, smuggling caves, and the holds of eighteenth-century warships.

Carrie made her mystery debut with *Pride and Prescience*, which earned a place on the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association bestseller list and was named one of the five best mysteries of the year by *Library Journal*. Successive books in the series have received starred reviews in *Publisher's Weekly* and won several awards, including the 2007 Daphne du Maurier Award for excellence in romantic suspense.



Bebris holds a master's degree in English literature and is a life member of the Jane Austen Society of North America. She frequently speaks both nationally and regionally about Austen and is on the faculty of the Antioch Writers Workshop in Yellow Springs. She was a speaker at in the 2010 Thurber House summer picnic series and was also a featured author at the 2011 Ohioana Festival.

We will have copies of *Pride and Prescience* and several other titles available for purchase, and she will inscribe them for you.



(MINSKY, from page 1)

Minsky wrote a series of books titled *American Decorated Publishers' Bindings, 1872-1929*. Together, the three volumes (issued in 2006, 2009, 2010) include 1,100 cover designs with 141 identified artists. The text illuminates the evolution of book covers in the modern era, when artists brought new visual precedents into the American home. More than just beautiful catalogs for curators and collectors, these volumes provide insights for graphic designers, art historians, and students of material culture.

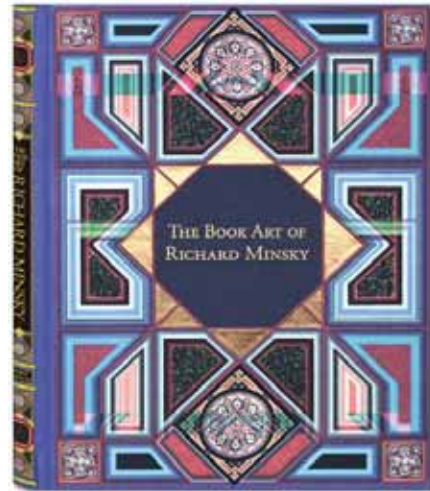
In addition, Minsky published his scrupulously researched and lavishly illustrated *The Art of American Book Covers 1875-1930*, which will be the topic of his evening talk to The Aldus Society. *Fine Books & Collections* magazine has reviewed the book as “a prize every collector deserves, particularly those whose interests include book design, decorative bookbindings, women book artists, American Gilded Age literature, or the Arts and Crafts movement.”

Minsky founded the New York City-based Center for Book Arts in 1974 to facilitate and teach the traditional practices of book formation and also to promote the use of books as a medium to create art. As a result, the organization advances the art of the book in all its forms, expanding the public appreciation of book art. The Center's programming includes presentation of historical and contemporary exhibitions, workshops, publications, classes, conferences, and maintaining a public workspace.

Minsky's website is a visual delight with over 400 pages picturing his work as well as exhibitions he has participated in. His publication, *The Book Art of Richard Minsky*, provides a wide-ranging display of the book art that he has completed over the past several decades along with explanations of each work. Minsky's concepts are both intellectually and visually challenging.

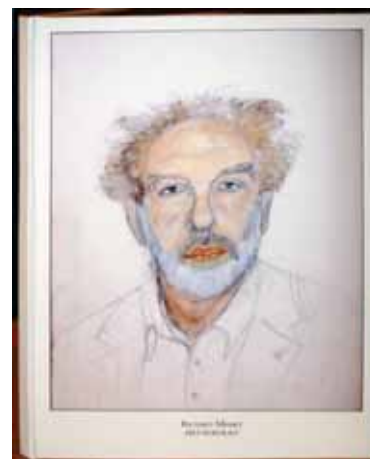
His specialty is the transformation of book covers into art work that catch the literal meanings of the written words inside each book he selects to design. For instance, Minsky was intrigued artistically by the U.S. Bill of Rights and created displays of his work for each amendment. The result was a set of ten book art

works, each of which represents one of the rights protected by the first ten amendments to the Constitution of the United States.



The Book Art of Richard Minsky focuses on work that he has completed over the past several decades.

Copies of both *The Book Art of Richard Minsky* and *The Art of American Book Covers 1875-1930* will be available for purchase at this program, and Richard has generously offered to sign them for you.



Self Portrait by Richard Minsky



Clements Library Director Will Present April 12 Program

On April 12, Kevin Graffagnino, director of the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor (“that school up north”), will present a lively talk on one of his - and our - favorite subjects: **Bibliomania**.

Graffagnino started an antiquarian book business as a teenager and has worked in the field as curator, auctioneer and author for more than 35 years. He has held positions with various state historical societies such as executive director of the Vermont Historical Society. During his tenure, the society received a national medal for public service from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. In 2008 he joined the Clements library as its director.

He has edited 16 books including *Only in Books: Writers, Readers & Bibliophiles on Their Passion*, and *All the Good Books: Quotations for Bibliophiles*. You may recall a very interesting article he wrote about his library’s founder, William L Clements, which appeared in the August 2009 edition of *Fine Books & Collections*.

Biblioclasty Topic of May 10 Program

The long-time practice of cutting up medieval manuscripts for pleasure or profit, is called biblioclasty (literally, “book-breaking”). Today, most scholars consider this practice to be cultural genocide. Examples of this activity abound, and unscrupulous dealers and selling sites such as eBay continue to contribute to the perpetuation of this assault on our collective history.

In the late 1940s, longtime Cleveland resident and art historian Otto F. Ege selected fifty medieval manuscripts from his personal collection and removed several dozen individual pages from each one. He assembled portfolios of these manuscript pages for use in teaching book arts such as decoration, typography, and layout design to the general public. Ege even published a 1938 essay entitled, “I am a Biblioclast,” in which he admitted that many referred to his ilk as “mutilators” and “aesthetic ghouls,” but he held himself to strict rules such as using the separated leaves to inspire interest in fine books, and to never take apart a museum piece.

Our May speaker is Fred Porcheddu, who has studied the activities of Ege and others who have dissected medieval folios and manuscripts. Some of Ege’s collection now reside in the library at Denison University, where Porcheddu is an Associate Professor.



Kevin Graffagnino

A review on Graffagnino’s infatuation with books which appeared in *Green Living* stated, “J. Kevin Graffagnino is a man of his word, or words. In a world increasingly dominated by cell phones that are

much smarter than their operators, it’s nice to know there are still people who are a little nutty about books. Actually, Graffagnino is more than a little nutty. He has gone zinging past ‘bibliophile’ (a term to describe your run-of-the-mill lover of books), to ‘bibliomaniac,’ a person whose love of books might seem downright pathological.

“He says he will be happy if the epitaph on his tombstone contains the single word: ‘Bookman.’”

The dreaded practice of biblioclasty has hit even closer to home. In 1995, Anthony Melnikas, a respected professor of medieval art history at The Ohio State University, was one of a handful of respected scholars authorized to research in the Vatican Library during the summer weeks when supervision is reduced and the archives are nominally closed. Upon his return to Ohio, Melnikas showed two leaves from a medieval manuscript to Bruce Ferrini, who was a book and manuscript dealer in Akron. Melnikas had sold many Old Master prints and medieval leaves to Ferrini in the past. But this time Ferrini couldn’t ignore his suspicions about Melnikas’ treasures, so he contacted the Feds. Porcheddu will share the outcome of this sorry story as well.

Porcheddu is an enthusiastic speaker and his talk, titled “Destroying Medieval Manuscripts For Pleasure and Profit,” will be highly subjective and educational.



This picture of Porcheddu is from Denison University’s official site. Subjects of his courses include medievalism, Chaucer, Charlemagne, and the Arthurian legends... perhaps the reason for those interesting gloves.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



Thanks to the “above and beyond” efforts of our Holiday Dinner and Silent Auction committees, we are able to say, yet again, that this year’s dinner and auction were the BEST EVER! We had the largest-ever attendance for any of our holiday events, and the most donations of auction items to date.

Our final tallies for the event show that Aldus raised a record-breaking total of \$2169. We had several activities which were part of the holiday merriment: the silent auction, the raffle and our Auction Preview night held at the Ohioana Library. The proceeds from all of these will be used to support Aldus programming.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Bill Evans and Kassie Rose; Ron and Kristen Hilson Beach; Genie Hoster and Clara Ireland; Diana Britt Franklin and Geoff Smith; Bill Radloff and others; and Ed Hoffman and Bill Logue.

Our raffle prizes (drawing pictured above) were a \$100 gift certificate to Acorn Bookshop, won by Ann Saup; copy #1 of *Seven Poets* printed by Logan Elm Press donated by Jay and Genie Hoster, which was won by Anna Sowell; and a framed, signed copy of Barry Moser’s *Don Quixote*, donated by Paul Watkins, which went to Jacquie Vaughan.



Our deepest gratitude and thanks go to Laralyn Sasaki for chairing the Silent Auction efforts and to Lois Smith for presiding over our enormously successful raffle. Some two dozen Aldus members and friends donated more than 400 items to be auctioned, which Laralyn and her book elves grouped into an amazing 174 auction lots. Many lots were listed under creative names such as: ZOUNDS! IT'S SHAKESPEARE!, BROMFIELD BUFFET, OH, POOH!, and SO MUCH SEUSS! We would like to thank the hard-

working elves who helped to set up, then clean up after the auction.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Two interesting lots up for auction including literary treasures and several scrapbooks; Silent Auction chair Laralyn Sasaki and Tom Dearing; Sid Chafetz and John Bennett; Don Tritt and George Bauman; two pictures of happy diners all.



Thanks to Ann Saup for her kind note which sent to The Aldus Society:
 "It was a lovely, warm and fuzzy evening, and even better by the announcement the announcement of the Carol Logue Biblio-fellowship Award. How nice to honor Carol and also Marcia and Paul. And to make the occasion even better, I won \$100 worth of books from Acorn Bookshop!"

A well-earned round of applause goes to Kassie Rose for planning the delicious dinner menu and keeping all the reservations on track; to Linda Hengst for letting us use the Ohioana space for our auction preview; and to Kassie, Amy Bostic and Emerson Gilbert (pictured above) for helping with all the auction check-out duties.

Photo credit for most photos on these pages goes to George Cowmeadow Bauman, our photographer-at-large

Carol Logue Biblio-fellowship Award Announced

The first annual Carol Logue Biblio-fellowship Award was awarded to its first two worthy recipients at our 2011 Holiday Dinner. Aldus trustees developed the award in Carol's honor because of her deep involvement in creating activities and fellowship, the resulting memories which have contributed to the success of our organization since our beginning.

Carol initiated the idea of our popular Ladies' Luncheons, where Aldus women meet every few months to share new friendships and to talk about bookish and artistic locales they have visited (and so much more!). These luncheons have always been interesting, educational and fun. Carol was our first secretary, expertly documenting the early history of Aldus. She also sent out our press releases resulting in new member prospects attending our early meetings. Carol's enthusiasm for life, books and Aldus was unbounded and her happy laughter will always live in our hearts.

Our first recipients of the Carol Logue Biblio-fellowship Award were Paul Watkins and Marcia Preston, both founding trustees who have generously given so much of their time, talents and resources in bringing members of our organization together.

Marcia was Aldus' first Program Chair and was responsible for identifying early, fascinating speakers. Several of them were her "pen pals" from abroad (the legendary Graham Moss of Incline Press in England and Desmond Kenny of the iconic Kenny's Bookshop in Galway, Ireland), whom she knew were going to be Stateside and could slip into Columbus to present a program to Aldus. Programs such as these got Aldus off to a strong start and earned us recognition in the book community for stimulating, extraordinary programming.

She also arranged a number of interesting field trips including a memorable bus trip to the Cleveland Museum of Art (our bus was buffeted by a tornado as we returned!) Marcia is a founding member of the Ladies' Luncheons, always bringing interesting book items and pictures to these meetings. She has also hosted a number of the luncheons at her home as well. She has opened her home and collections to some of our program speakers, particularly those who have a special interest in small press and handmade publications. And since our beginning, Marcia has been an official greeter at our programs, welcoming newcomers and members alike to our meetings.



Our first recipients of the Carol Logue Biblio-fellowship Award were Paul Watkins and Marcia Preston, both founding trustees who have generously given so much of their time, talents and resources in bringing members of our organization together.

Paul is our "angel," singularly responsible for the Thurber Center becoming our "clubhouse" and center of our program activities. During our formative years, our monthly meetings were held in a number of locales including the Upper Arlington Library auditorium, various classrooms at Ohio State, and meeting rooms at the Worthington and Clintonville Libraries. His generosity has led to our permanent meeting place at Thurber Center where we can hold our programs and even have enough room for refreshments (and lots of biblio-conversing). Paul arranged for hassle-free lighted parking behind the Thurber Center at the State Auto lot (desperately needed after the Columbus police discovered they could ticket our program attendees when they forgot to "feed the meters" in front of Thurber Center, which wasn't very nice of them). In addition Paul has donated a new portable sound system for our programs (on- and off-site), and each year has made major contributions of beautiful books, including many Folio Society treasures, to our annual Silent Auction.

Our heart-felt thanks to Paul and Marcia for their time and efforts in making The Aldus Society the wonderful, friendly organization it is!



A Bookish Adventure

White's Selborne

Donald Tunnicliff Rice

I had a perfectly legitimate reason for missing Ann Trubek's September talk on writers' homes – I was in England visiting Gilbert White's home in Hampshire. White, an eighteenth-century country parson and naturalist, first came to my attention 25 years ago while reading Charles S. Brooks's 1924 cycling guide, *A Thread of English Road*, a book familiar today only to book sellers, any of whom would probably be willing to make you a deal if you would take their copy home with you.

Brooks and three companions began their trip with a crossing on the *Mauretania* to Southampton. In 1986 I landed at Gatwick on a People Express 747 having paid only \$199 for the round-trip from Columbus, which was incredibly cheap even then. Does anyone else remember this couplet from that period?

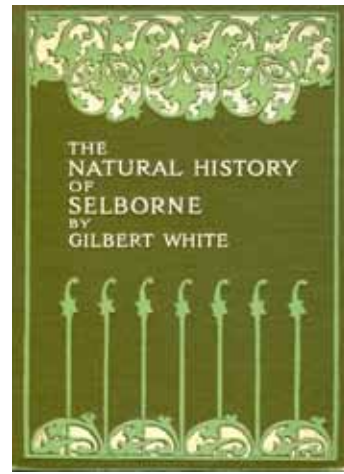
If you've never known pain and distress,
you've never flown standby on People Express.

Those were the days.

I had been planning a trip to see my son, who was spending his junior year at the University of Exeter, and I was on the lookout for other places to visit. Brooks's description of his stay at Selborne convinced me to add that village to my itinerary.



The front entrance of White's home as it appears today. I think I prefer Julia McCune Flory's sketch on the next page



My first copy of White's *Selborne* for which I paid Keith Clinker \$11.50 back in 1986.

“As everyone knows,” Brooks wrote, “the only reason for coming to Selborne is Gilbert White. It is one of those English villages forever dedicated to a single memory. I suppose that nearly everyone has read White's *Natural History of Selborne* or has intended to read it. It is one of those good intentions of which the devil makes his cobblestones, and is undeniably a book without which no gentleman's library is complete.”

Gentleman or not, I decided to get a copy. On my next weekly trip to Keith Clinker's Owl Creek Books I found one. It's a tidy little octavo edition: Cassell, third printing, 1903, with an introduction and notes by Richard Kearton, F.Z.S. Kearton (1862-1928) and his brother Cherry (1870-1940), two of the world's earliest nature photographers, provided 123 illustrations.

Amazingly, White's book has never been out of print since first being published in 1789 under the imprint of his brother Benjamin, who was astute enough to recognize its great worth. No one knows for sure how many editions there have been since then, but the figure is somewhere between 200 and 300, making it one of the most reprinted books in the English language and a real challenge to completists.

In 1987 it occurred to me that I might publish a limited edition myself in time to celebrate the book's 200th anniversary in 1989. I would illustrate it with Thomas Bewick woodcuts as, I later discovered, many other publishers had already done. I also thought of

the perfect person to write the introduction – David Attenborough. Accordingly, I wrote Sir David at his home in Surrey and got this reply:

“Thank you for your kind attention. As it happens I have already supplied an introduction to one of the many editions of White’s *Selborne*; and I don’t really think I could compose another.”

It didn’t matter. By that time I had manically moved on to another project, which I also probably never completed.

White’s *Selborne*, for those who are unfamiliar with it, is composed of 44 letters to Thomas Pennant (1728-1798), the famous Welsh naturalist, and 66 letters to Daines Barrington (1727-1800), an English lawyer, historian, and naturalist. Each of the letters is concerned with the natural state of things in Selborne, whether it be the damage to crops from herds of local deer; the notes of the churn owl; or the proper way of preparing a rush for use in place of candles.

I don’t know if anyone has ever counted the number of bird, animal, plant, and insect species mentioned in this and other of his writings, but it has to be in the many, many hundreds. Yet, as one writer has pointed out, no one turns to White’s *Selborne* to learn about crickets or swallows. There are much better books for that purpose. Why, then, has it remained so popular?

Gilbert White is considered by many to be the father of ecology. He was among the first to recognize the relationship among the flora and fauna of any particular locale. He was also an empiricist and rightly disparaged the sort of investigating that could be done “at home in a man’s study.” What distinguished him from most other naturalists of his day is this assertion:

“[T]he investigation of the life and conversation of animals, is a concern of much trouble and difficulty, and is not to be attained but by the active and inquisitive, and by those that reside much in the country.”

This was written at a time when many naturalists believed that swallows spent the winter hibernating in the mud at the bottoms of ponds. Such thinking should have been beyond day-dreaming. White couldn’t disprove it, but neither could he accept it. When he did speculate on something, he based it on observable facts. He was best known for his observations about birds. So much so that Charles Darwin wrote, “From reading White’s *Selborne* ...I remember wondering why every gentleman did not become an ornithologist.”

But it’s more than his contributions to scientific thinking that make his works so durable; it’s also his direct, yet graceful, writing style. I just opened the book at random and came upon his description of a harvest mouse nest, which species, incidentally, he is famous for having first identified:

“[It is] most artificially platted and composed of wheat; perfectly round, and about the size of a cricket-ball; with the aperture so ingeniously closed, that there was no discovering to what it belonged. It was so compact and well-filled, that it would roll across the table without being discomposed, though it contained eight little mice that were naked and blind. As this nest was perfectly full, how could the dam come at her litter respectively so as to administer a teat to each?”

I wish there were space to go on, but I wouldn’t know where to stop.

He’s quoted in at least one novel. During a conversation in T. H. White’s *The Once and Future King*, Wart asks if bird songs are a language. Archimedes, Merlyn’s owl, answers him:

“Of course it is a language. It is not a big language like human speech, but it is large.”

“Gilbert White,” said Merlyn, “remarks, or will remark, however you like to put it, that ‘the language of birds is very ancient, and, like other ancient modes of speech, little is said, but much is intended.’ ”



A drawing of the entrance to White’s home, The Wakes, from *A Thread of English Road*. The artist was one of Brooks’s companions on the journey and a fellow founder of the Cleveland Playhouse in 1915.

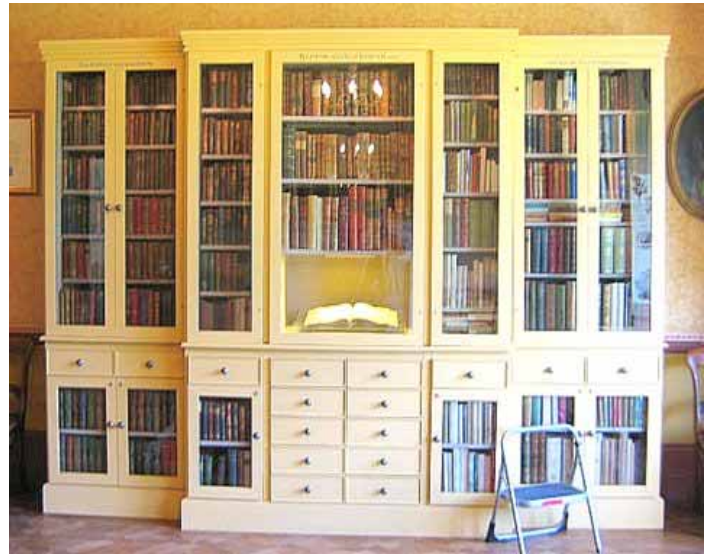
A pilgrimage to “The Wakes,” Gilbert White’s home, has been a tradition for two centuries, though not an easy thing to do before the road to Selborne was paved. In the early 1800s William Cobbett, the English pamphleteer, admitted to being particularly eager to see the village. By the late 1800s it was not an uncommon thing to do. According to the writer of an introduction to an 1887 edition of the book, “A visit to Selborne can be made by a walk of a few miles from Alton on the South Western Railway [from Waterloo Station]. It is a country walk worth taking on its own account.”

That’s probably how John Burroughs arrived there in 1882 when he found Selborne “deeply interesting in itself, as well as for its associations with the famous nature-loving parson.” Burroughs was far from being the only American fan of White’s *Selborne*. Thoreau wrote that he was “especially attracted” by the book.

Until 1954, when the property was purchased by a trust, it was far from certain that the various private owners – who had more than doubled the size of the house over the years – would let you in. The money to buy the property in 1954 came from Robert Washington Oates, who wanted to have a permanent home for memorabilia associated with two of his relatives – Lawrence Oates (1880-1912), an adventurer and associate of Robert Scott on his doomed South Pole expedition, and Frank Oates (1840-1875), a naturalist, sportsman, and explorer. The Oates Museum now occupies the second floor of the house. The remainder is devoted to Gilbert White.

I’d always planned to return to Selborne one day, and 2011, being the 25th anniversary of my first visit, seemed an appropriate time — even though the plane ticket was 600% higher. In 1986, there had been a quaintness about the place, a bit of mustiness, and a sense that you were intruding on the private domain of its zealous caretakers. (A sign on the visitor register said, “Please, no Mickey Mouse signatures. We have no sense of humour.”) Visiting the second-floor Oates collection was like going up to someone’s dark attic; you didn’t know what you might stumble across.

All this changed in 2003-2004 after a £1.3 million infusion of donations and grants that allowed the trust to hire a high-toned property developer to clean things up. And clean they did. Everything is so clever and museum-like, it’s hard to believe anyone ever lived there, let alone a country parson. The general public must approve because last year some 30,000 people visited the house, gardens, and tea shop, itself the recipient of an Award of Excellence from the Tea Council. It’s become that sort of place. But that’s okay. The house had already changed so drasti-



This bookcase was constructed specifically to contain the museum’s huge collection of *A Natural History of Selborne*, much of which was donated by a local historian. The glass-topped drawers, when pulled out, expose many rare editions opened so that pages can be viewed. In 1980 the museum acquired the original manuscript which shows at the center.

cally since the days of White’s habitation (1763-1793) that it couldn’t be considered authentic even 100 years ago.

The important thing is that it continues to foster an interest in White’s writings, particularly *The Natural History of Selborne*. I currently have two editions, the one I described earlier, which is profusely annotated, and a barely annotated 1906 Everyman’s Library edition. I prefer reading the latter because it allows me to enjoy the flow of White’s words without all those niggling interruptions.

I used to have a third edition, which I purchased during my first visit to Selborne in 1986. I loaned it to a friend, which was a mistake, of course. People who can’t relax until they’ve returned a borrowed tablespoon of baking powder will casually add your loaned books to their permanent libraries. I should have asked for a driver’s license or major credit card as security. Too late now.

Anyway, I can recommend both the book and a visit to Selborne. You can still take the train from Waterloo Station to Alton, but you no longer have to walk the last few miles. There’s a bus these days.



A Peek Behind the Scenes

Fellow Aldines Helping Us With Technical Expertise

For most Aldus members and guests, our programs appear to be a pinnacle of simplicity. Just walk into the Thurber Center around 7 p.m. on the first Thursday of most months, join friends and new acquaintances in convivial book conversations before the program, enjoy a few nibbles of Christine's cookies and coffee or Ron's great wine and cheese spread; then take a seat and enjoy a great talk on a bookish topic.

It's time for a tip of the hat to members who make these evenings (and actually everything about Aldus) seem so simple.

Tony Clark, the fellow you see operating our projector, is our resident expert in helping with visuals. Sometime it's projecting slides or CD images. Most often, our speakers have their visuals in



PowerPoint presentations.

There's a rumor that we're going to be seeing some rather obsolete film this year. Tony's done a great job of staying on top of all our speakers' needs (and challenges!).



Then there's our website. **Laura Masonbrink**, our webmaster (would it be webmistress?) works at keeping our website information up to date. She's done a terrific job of designing our site which includes pro-

gram updates, a list of past programs, links to book-related websites and organizations, all our past newsletters, and nitty-gritty stuff like our officers, history and so forth. Our website address is www.aldussociety.com



And if you missed a program (or want to relive it) you can go to

our Facebook page "TheAldus Society." You have **Anna Sowell** to thank for keeping our Facebook page up to date with photos from most all of our programming and special events. She also posts our meeting and event dates there ahead of time as well. Check us out!

And finally, a multitude of thanks to the man who has made our listserv possible. **Emerson Gilbert** has

allowed us to utilize his company's server to send out our listserv messages since our very early days. When he retired this past year, he brought in **Steve Marks** to



continue channeling our messages so that we can continue this convenient means of communicating information to to one another.

THANKS EVERYONE!!!

Book Hunting Notes: Collecting Nevil Shute

Bill Rich



A few months ago, my spouse and I had switched to the Turner Classic Movies channel during one of my periodic bursts of cycling through the channels on the vast wasteland

that is cable TV. TCM was having an evening-long showing of Jimmy Stewart movies, and we got hooked.

Two of the movies were based on classic mid-twentieth century novels, both of which I prize in my collection of modern firsts. One was, of course, the never-to-be-forgotten *Anatomy of a Murder*, from the 1958 book by



Robert Traver. The second was *No Highway in the Sky*, based on the 1948 novel *No Highway* by Nevil Shute. Stewart was perfectly cast in both roles - in the first, as a retiring, soft-spoken country lawyer, who was brilliant as a defense attorney in the courtroom. In *No Highway in the Sky*, he

plays an extremely introverted, eccentric aerospace engineer, who, while brilliant, is very uncomfortable in any place other than his test laboratory.

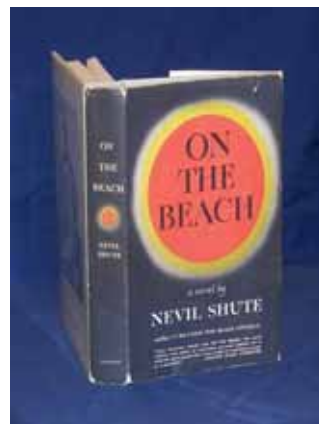
The role reminded me of the traditional definition of an "extroverted" engineer as one who, in conversation, will at least stare down at *your* shoes. After a late evening watching these two movies, I took another look at my somewhat casual collection of Nevil Shute firsts, and thought about the author, with whom I share a profession (of aerospace engineering, not novel-writing!).

Nevil Shute is one of the several British novelists of the mid-twentieth century whose story-telling ability fascinated readers on both sides of the Atlantic. More than one of his books were selected by the Book of the Month Club - a caution to seekers of the true first American printings. Shute's full name was Nevil Shute Norway - and his background is surprising for a pop novelist.

A graduate of Oxford University, he became one of the greatest of British aeronautical engineers, a famous designer of airplanes and airships in the years between the two world wars. A world traveler and a pilot himself, he was a Royal Navy Lt. Commander in World War II, and played an important role in weapons development. He immigrated to Australia in 1950. In the midst of all this, he began writing as a relaxation in the evenings.

His first novel, *Marazan*, was published in 1926. On his books, he shortened his name to Nevil Shute, to separate this activity from his day job. Twenty-three more books followed *Marazan*, all were novels except for an autobiography, *Slide Rule*, published in 1954. His stories are based on his broad life experiences. Many of his characters are from the British professional and managerial classes, from military officers to archaeologists and engineers. Others are working class - machinists, shop clerks, soldiers. There is, always, a warm empathy for people - these are non-soppy, but, usually, feel-good stories - with at least one notable exception - see *On the Beach*.

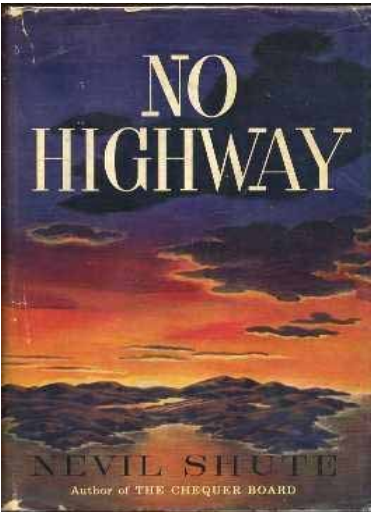
All of the books remain in print. For an informative, descriptive check list of the first editions, I recommend the Ahern's price guide for this author, which also gives a estimate of the price range of the first English and American printings. This list is available from the Quill and Brush website, and can be downloaded for a few dollars.



While I have almost all of Shute's books, only some are firsts. A few of these can be mentioned here. Certainly the most-known is *On the Beach*, published in 1957 by William Heineman in Melbourne, in the U.K. by Heineman and in the U.S. by William Morrow, all in this same year. The Australian edition is evidently the true first, identifiable by the Australian price on the flap of the dust jacket. Generally, first Australian printings by Heineman are difficult to distinguish.

I am content with the Morrow first American, shown above. Of course, this is in a decent dust jacket - with "modern" firsts, such as Nevil Shute's books, this is an absolute requirement for the collector. (My own cut-off

date for jackets on modern firsts is 1920 - anything after this has to have the jacket, or you only have a "reading copy" - meaning only, that with a few major exceptions, it would not be wise to pay more than a used-book price for fiction sans jacket.) OK, this is one Shute story that definitely does not end happily. Literally, everyone dies in the aftermath of a postulated nuclear exchange in a third world war. With two movies based on the novel, I assume most folks of my age are familiar with the story. It is a gripping one - but I don't know if I should keep it with my other Shute novels, or with apocalyptic fiction such *Brave New World*, *The Iron Heel*, and *1984*.



My second choice to discuss here is the aforementioned *No Highway*. The image at left shows the cover of the first American edition, Morrow, New York, 1948.

The hero is Theodore Pretty, a research engineer/scientist at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough - the English equivalent of one of the major

NASA labs in the U.S. Pretty is a war-widower raising his little twelve year old daughter alone, and has almost zero knowledge of the practicalities of life. An expert in new materials, he is conducting a full scale structural test, vibrating the tail section of the latest British transatlantic airliner in his lab, and raising a tremendous racket.

He is what the Brits called a boffin, and what the Americans currently are calling a scientific nerd. His elaborate theoretical model predicts that the tail section will fail after 1400 hours of flight. It is brought to his attention that one of the new airliners has already crashed in Canada, and there is some evidence in those pre-flight-recorder days that the tail may have fallen off.

Sure enough, Mr. Pretty is sent over to Canada to investigate the crash site, and, of course, he is flying in one of the new airliners. High over the North Atlantic, he learns from the crew that, unrecognized by the authorities, the airliner already has 1422 hours in the air. With his lack of people skills, he is unable to convince the aircrew of the danger, and deliberately wrecks the airplane when it is on

the ground during a stopover in Labrador. The story is replete with a beautiful stewardess and a glamorous world-weary movie star passenger, both of whom Mr. Pretty befriends, and, rather touchingly, enlists their sympathies. I won't say how this one turns out, but it is a whale of a tale. Suffice it to say that it could only have been written by an aeronautical engineer and a pilot, but one who was a superb story teller.

In the movie version that I watched on TCM, Jimmy Stewart is Mr. Pretty, and, also type-cast, the movie star is none other than Marlene Dietrich (Fig. 3). For the record, at least ten or so of Shute's books have been made either into feature length movies or television miniseries - or both.

My final choice is the autobiography, *Slide Rule*, Heinemann, Melbourne/London/Toronto, 1954; Morrow, New York, 1954). This primarily deals with Shute's exceptional engineering career, in which he was one of the chief designers of the largest airship ever built in England, and was the founder and CEO of his own airplane manufacturing company. This true story has many life lessons for anyone aspiring to an engineering career, or to that of an entrepreneur in an increasingly regulated economy. I will give one of these lessons from the book here.

In the late 1920s, the British government identified large dirigibles as a possible means of relatively rapid communication with the far-flung parts of the British Empire, as it then existed. The government was the second Labour Party government under Ramsay MacDonald, and a plan was developed to build two very large airships, one to establish regular communications with India, the other to be in service to Canada.

These were large national projects, of the like of the Concorde airliners or the Apollo programs in more modern times. While the construction of both airships was completely government subsidized, one, the R101, was designed and built by the government airship establishment, while for the other, the R100, a contract was let to a private company for which Nevil Shute Norway was the principal designer.

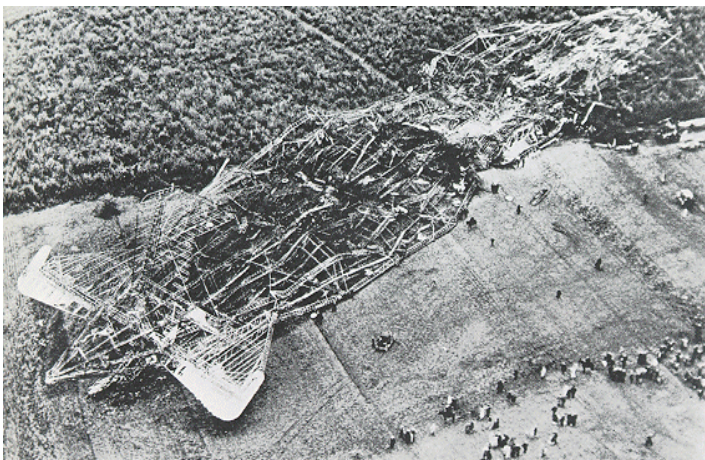
Both ships were to make their maiden intercontinental voyages by 1930. The government project was the pet of the socialist government, and it was hoped that the success of this ship would show how a nationalized project could show the virtues of the government marshal-

ling the latest technological resources. Accordingly, all research, design, and fabrication of the R101 was conducted in the full glare of the press and government announcements. The R101 design team was encouraged to incorporate the latest technical advances, so many aspects of this airship were a “reach” for the times. The R100 was developed in private, and much more conservatively, and Shute and his colleagues felt relatively free to correct mistakes, take a step back, and then to proceed.



By the 1930 target date, the R100 (pictured above) had completed a full series of flight tests, and was ready to go to Canada. The government ship had major faults, which had to be hurriedly fixed, and was still not really ready. Nevertheless, Lord Thomson, the Minister for Air, was to embark on the R101 for India, for an empire-wide conference on technology, a showcase for the Labour government.

The flight of the R101 was a literal disaster. It had only a single flight test, in good weather, before it lifted off for India in a driving rainstorm. Lord Thomson and several other bigwigs were aboard, when it crashed in Northern France, killing most of the passengers and crew, after a voyage of only a couple hundred miles. While the subsequent government inquiry was something of a whitewash,



the failure of the outer covering, protecting the fragile gasbags, was the probable proximal cause, as Nevil Shute recounts in the book. In the meantime, the R100, with Shute aboard, had flown successfully to Montreal and returned.

I have occasionally thought to use this story as part of my lectures in engineering design, but the technology involved is, of course, very dated. Shute recounts that a major regret in his life was that, in the months before the disaster, the engineers of the government ship had asked the private group if the target flight date could be postponed until 1931 for both ships. The private company engineers, full of confidence in their successful design, and being ready to go after a widely publicized competition, refused. In retrospect, Shute regrets their decision.

I show in the bottom image the wreckage of the unfortunate R101 airship after its crash from the formal inquiry report. A minor book hunting triumph was to find an abridged version of this report, published by Her Majesties Stationery Office as recently as 1999, in the Half Price Bookstore on Lane Ave. here in Columbus.

I seem to have emphasized more of the technical stories of Nevil Shute here. Let me say that, above everything else, the stories all show a warm humanity. While a wonderful writer, Shute has never made the literary highbrow lists. The *Oxford Companion to English Literature* doesn't even have a one-line entry for him.

But let me quote from a review written in December, 1940, by a more acclaimed writer. This is a review of Shute's *Landfall*, written about ordinary people in World War II and incorporating his own experiences in RAF Coastal Command:

“Perhaps ... anyone able to hold a pen can write a fairly good novel of the unpretentious kind, *if only at some point in his life he has been able to escape from literary society*. ... The present war has not yet produced a literature of its own, ... but Mr. Nevil Shute's *Landfall* is a beginning. [It] is a good, simple story, pleasantly free from cleverness, and at times genuinely moving.”

These words were written by George Orwell, to whom Nevil Shute was completely unknown at the time. I quote them because as early as 1940, Orwell, one of the great critics, had recognized an outstanding writer, whose best works were yet to come.





The Aldus Society

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Worthington, Ohio 43085-1150

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Aldus' Anniversary Keepsake and Logan Elm Press Receive Award

The Aldus Tenth Anniversary keepsake *Aldus Reflects*, printed by the OSU Libraries' Logan Elm Press, was recently awarded a **2012 Print Excellence Award** from the Printing Industries of Ohio - Northern Kentucky. This Gold Award was in the category for Booklets - Larger than 6"x9."



The project was headed by Nancy Campbell, with editorial assistance from Kassie Rose, Laralyn Sasaki, Genie Hoster, and Jay Hoster. It was designed by Hal Stevens and Ann Alaïa Woods created the calligraphy for the title page and the marbled paper utilized on the cover. Production assistance was provided by Bob Tauber, Helen Liebman, Harry Campbell, Jim Patterson and Dale Starr.

Congratulations to everyone for their wonderful work on this special project!

