

November 19 to February 7, at the New York Public Library between February 22 and May 17 and at the Library of Congress from June 4 to September 6, 1997. In each venue the display will be augmented by rare material from the respective collections.

Here in London, from November 6 to 29, Tom Schuster reveals the fruit of six years collecting with a Beatrix Potter Exhibition that includes the privately printed *Peter Rabbit* and *Tailor of Gloucester*, a set of first editions, many variant bindings, American pirates plus letters, puzzles, posters, wallpaper friezes and other spin-offs. The Gallery is at 14 Maddox Street, London W1 and hours are Monday to Friday 9.30am-5.30pm; Saturdays 11am-3pm. The Schuster collection of Beatrix Potter numbers some 3,000 items based upon which a Catalogue Raisonné will be published next year. Two Japanese libraries are thought to be competing to buy the collection.

At the Rocket Gallery, 13 Old Burlington Street, London W1 until January 25, 'Big Painter — Small Publisher', a joint exhibition of paintings and linocuts by the abstract artist Charles Christopher Hill and books from Jacob Samuel Editions, largely etchings without text, printed in tiny editions. Hours are Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 6pm apart from Thursdays when the Gallery closes at 8pm.

'A Selection of Antiquarian and Secondhand Booksellers in and around Wiltshire', just off the press, additionally contains a diary of QBF 1977 book fairs. Copies may be obtained from Michael Green at 13 The Close, Warminster — telephone 01985-217693 or via e-mail oz52@dial.pipex.com.

B. & E. Ford of Waterside, London-derry, point out that, in their sales advertisement in *BD* 1279, page 145, two digits in their dialing code were transposed. The correct telephone number is 01504-48577 and they ask customers please to try them again.

BARRY SHAW

## Bizarre Books

And still they come ...

Difficult to have much confidence in a book when the author expresses his own uncertainties in the title: *Thought*

*Transference (or What?) in Birds* by Edmund Selous, 1931.

Eat your heart out Capability Brown! Sidney Vant lets out all the secrets of the trade in *The Amateur Landscape Gardener*, 1931. David Haxby of Thirsk likes: *The Pious Christian's Daily Preparation for Death and Eternity* 1852 — especially 'designed for the use of persons in lingering sickness'. (I'm not quite sure why he likes it — but get well soon!) Helen Smith recommends a useful book for parents of difficult children: Franklin Fox's *How to Send a Boy to Sea*. Other titles which have caught her fancy include Sarah Jewett's *The Tory Lover* (c.1901), James Burnley's *The Romance of Life Preservation* 1888 and *The Nighty Story Book* (because every nighty has a story).

Spread Eagle Books have just sold *Selective Mutism in Children*, published by Whurr Books, while Angus O'Neill can't wait to get his hands on *Vince the Rebel or, Sanctuary in the Bog* a suitable volume for the lavatory by G. Manville Fenn, 1897. He's also after *Penetrating Wagner's Ring* 1978.

Just to show how careful you have to be, Maria Edgeworth's *Little Plays for Little People* new edition 1834 is described on the title-page as WARRANTED HARMLESS. No doubt in response to the demands of the young lad referred to in the preface as wanting something 'warranted interesting' as well as harmless, play no 1 is entitled *The Grinding Organ Kept for the Master's Use* (1879) a deeply religious work by F.R. Havergal looks straightforward, unless you are Iain Campbell who pronounces the author 'Have-a-girl'. And Martin Steenson is a bookseller who just doesn't know whether he's coming or going to visit *Walled Up Nuns and Nuns Walled In* — by Lancelot Holland c.1895.

Quite how *Handbook for the Limbless* escaped Bizarre Books 1, I don't know: Edited by G. Howson, Introduction by John Galsworthy no less, nominated by Nuala Rose Newt (I think) of Kernaghan Books. She also nominates the following for the *Daily Express* ('No War This Year or Next') Accuracy Award to: Stuart Hodgson's *The Man Who Made the Peace. The Story of Neville Chamberlain* 1938, and Leonardo Blake's *Hitler's Last Year of Power* 1939.

And may they still keep coming ...

BRIAN LAKE

## A QUESTION OF ETHICS

BY KAREN THOMSON

The lack of response to the pith of my letter of resignation from the ABA was disappointing. In the last issue of the *Newsletter* there was a letter calling for Edinburgh 2000 to be reconsidered in the light of my absence from the Association, and Paul Minet (editor and President Elect) made fastidious reference to unpleasantness that had to be got out of the way. Unpleasantness was absolutely not intended, although clearly the matter was a sensitive one, and I regret very much if I have caused anyone offence. But — to the main issue. What I had hoped was that my letter might stimulate debate on the whole question of professional ethics.

This is of course not just a matter for ABA members, but must be of concern to all booksellers who wish to define themselves as professionals. It becomes of particular and vital concern to the ABA if it advertises its members as being more

professional than members of other associations, or than non-affiliated booksellers — which of course it does. But the question of definition of professional conduct surely exercises the trade in general, and *Bookdealer* is the obvious forum for addressing this.

Discussing the question among friends in the trade it emerges that there are areas of uncertainty and disagreement. To throw the debate open, so to speak, 'to the floor' at the outset, may we invite you to participate in a brief questionnaire? The greater the response the more useful of course the exercise will be, and may form the basis for a future article. Send in your answers anonymously if you wish; if you choose to include your name and address you will be entered in a prize draw, the winner to be awarded a not entirely battered copy of Moore's *Principia Ethica* (not the first edition).

### Which of the following would you do:

Certainly Probably Possibly Unlikely Never

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Transfer a dustjacket from a less good to a better copy of the same book.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Insert a bookplate to improve the appearance of a paste-down.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. If, having bought a book privately and made what you regarded at the time as a fair offer, you then discover it's worth more than you thought, go back to the vendor and offer him more.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Pay a fellow bookseller within 30 days.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. If something coming up at auction of particular interest to you will also be of interest to a friend in the trade, give him a call and discuss coming to an agreement rather than bidding each other up. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Price the same copy of a book differently depending on the knowledge and enthusiasm of the potential buyer.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Disregarding loss to yourself, cooperate with the police to recover and return stolen books.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Approach a potential customer in someone else's shop.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Make a book up with a leaf from another copy.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Make a book up with a leaf from another copy and not disclose the fact in your description.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

One final question which you may not wish to answer but which will add considerably to the interest of the mail bag. No compulsion to tick any of these boxes!

### Are you:

- A. An ABA member?  
B. A PBFA member?  
C. Both?  
D. Neither?

☐  
☐  
☐  
☐

Additional comments very welcome; please send them on a separate sheet. Should it seem appropriate to mention names in any future article I shall check the text with everyone concerned before doing so. To quote the 1816 Prospectus of *The Scotsman*: '... [my] first desire is to be honest, the second is to be useful'. The distribution of horns and halos is not the objective. Please address your replies to 'A Question of Ethics', c/o The Bookdealer.

**FACT & FICTION***The Catalogue Printers to the Book Trade*

17-19 The High Street, Wath-upon-Deane, Rotherham S63 7QQ



pages inc. cover	200	+100 run
8	40.00	6.00
12	55.00	8.25
16	70.00	10.50
20	85.00	12.75
24	100.00	15.00
28	115.00	17.25
32	130.00	19.50
36	145.00	21.75
40	160.00	24.00
44	175.00	26.25
48	190.00	28.50
52	205.00	30.75
56	220.00	33.00
60	235.00	35.25
64	250.00	37.50
68	265.00	39.75
72	280.00	42.00
76	295.00	44.25
80	310.00	46.50
84	325.00	48.75
88	340.00	51.00
92	355.00	53.25
96	370.00	55.50
100	385.00	57.75
104	400.00	60.00

LOOK for our LOGO and ask ANY of our CUSTOMERS WHAT THEY THINK of our QUALITY & SERVICE

PRICES ARE FOR A5 BOOKLETS, with 100 gsm COVERS in a CHOICE of 15 SHADES.

NO HIDDEN EXTRAS  
80gsm, 70 gsm or Recycled paper AT THE SAME PRICE

RING HILARY or ROGER on  
**01709 87 8091**  
or FAX US on **01709 87 9696**

**FREE COVER ARTWORK**  
(inc. original designwork)

**FREE PICTURE RESEARCH**

**FREE SCANS (6 inc. cover)**

**FREE PROOFS BY FAX IF REQUIRED**

**FREE DELIVERY by NEXT-DAY CARRIER**

**3/4 DAYS TURNAROUND from the RECEIPT OF YOUR COPY**

**TERMS: 14 DAYS' CREDIT from the DATE OF YOUR INVOICE**

LOOK for our LOGO and CHECK with ANY of our CUSTOMERS that this **REALLY IS LITHOGRAPHIC PRINTING at its BEST.**

PLEASE NOTE: THESE PRICES ARE FOR THE BOOK TRADE ONLY. WE DO NOT PRINT FOR AGENCIES.

# Bookdealer

Published by Werner Shaw Limited, 26 Charing Cross Road (Suite 34), London WC2H 0DH Telephone 0171-240 5890 Fax 0171-379 5770

No. 1287

THURSDAY DECEMBER 12 1996

## EDITORIAL

### A QUESTION OF ETHICS —

Karen Thomson reports

Never before has the postman needed to pause for a breather when climbing the stairs to the *Bookdealer* office. The response to the questionnaire on book-selling ethics (BD 1281) overwhelmed us all. So far (and the floodgates may not, even yet, be closed) we have had 115 replies. Considerably less than half were anonymous; the majority not only happily supplied their names, but a large number accompanied the forms with a covering letter, some of which run to several pages. I had hoped that the questionnaire might generate some response from readers, but never imagined how extensive it would be. My greatest difficulty has been having to choose what to use.

This torrent is enormously gratifying. There can be no question, both from the volume of the response and the content, that ethical questions are dear to many hearts. 'I am very hot on ethics in general. Maybe this stems from my surname?' (K.S. Crook). Whether or not the drawing up of a code is required, however, was disputed. Steve Brown is 'sure of the need for a code of ethics/guidelines

to establish standards of professionalism on behalf of public and trade alike. Our customers and potential customers expect us to operate professionally — a significant number of my customers tell me so.' But many of you refer to conscience, not as that old promoter of pusillanimity but as a sure arbiter. 'I know I don't make as much money, but I am happy to pay very fair prices and sleep at night.' (G.K. Hadfield, on the subject of independence in the auction room). 'We try to trade as we try to live — "if you wouldn't like it done to you, then don't do it to someone else." We believe honesty is the best policy for purely selfish reasons. It is good to walk down the road without having to keep checking that one isn't being followed!' (Gordon Hill of Bowdon Books). 'I decided at the very outset that if the only way I could survive was to do things that I shouldn't, then I would leave the game and apply myself to another occupation where a man could earn a living without fraud.' (Jack Haldane, Abington Books). And Philip Pegler of St Peter's Bookshop wrote a long and interesting letter about his

### E. Nister, Hildesheimer & Faulkner – Books:

Nister Annuals; Isn't it Funny; Comical Customers, Changing Pictures; Our Dear Relations; A Happy Pair by Weatherley. Also ICCA cards. Also unusual items and ephemera relating to Beatrix Potter, Lewis Carroll and Kate Greenaway.

THE SCHUSTER GALLERY, 14 MADDOX STREET, LONDON W1R 9PL  
TEL: 0171-491 2208 FAX: 0171-491 9872

growing realisation, over a period of sixteen years, that profit is not the only consideration. 'A long-term reputation is obviously founded upon integrity. It is what one might call enlightened self-interest ... The voice of conscience is an infallible guide and we invariably feel uneasy if we fail to listen to it.'

Stephen Wycherley adopts a slightly different but certainly not contrary stance, concluding his six-page letter with the following measured deliberation. 'We are all in business and not in a debating society. We live by selling items for more than we pay for them. Some people think this in itself is wrong and that the very basis of our living is unethical. We all have to accept that we come across times when we have to ask ourselves ethical questions — "Is this right?" "Should I be doing this?" "Is this fair?" There are things that we know are wrong and, hopefully, we don't do them. But there are more instances when we are just not sure. We shouldn't need to agonize too much about these though. What we should look at is our own business as a whole. Is it honestly conducted? Is it useful? Does it fulfil a worthwhile function? Are we proud of it? Are we proud of what we do with the money we make from our business? If we can, in general, answer "yes" to these questions, then if there ever is a doubt about the ethical status of any particular business decision we make, *we are entitled to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt*. Even if, in the course of things, we make mistakes they can be lost in the flow of things that we do do right.'

There was a remarkable lack of consensus about the degree of 'shade' involved in the questions. 'There is a large grey area when it comes to defining ethics and you may be adopting too rigid a view' (David Flint). 'Never is a long

time ... my maxim has always been to deal honestly, but the world is not black and white, but gradations of many colours' (Frank Payton). Alex Fotheringham wrote from the other side of the fence: 'these are all yes/no questions, decisions one has made at one point or another. One either does or one doesn't, and there shouldn't be any grey areas.' 'One feels that all the "right" answers are expected to be Certainly or Never, according to the question' (Ann Ridler of Nineteenth Century Books). In fact *only three* people confined themselves to the extreme right or left boxes, and nearly all the boxes were ticked by someone. Nobody refuses outright to co-operate with the police, or makes it their policy to take two months to pay bills (the firms known for this, to whom you allude in your letters, were not among the respondents), but those options aside, you ran up and down the gamut.

\* \* \*

In an attempt to give an idea of the range of opinion, here are the questions again one by one.

#### 1. Would you transfer a dustjacket from a less good to a better copy of the same book?

Your response was educational, for me at least. 'A book and its dustwrapper are put together randomly by the publisher so I see nothing wrong in transferring a dustwrapper *unless* you are putting a first issue dustwrapper onto a book with a later issue binding' (John Eggeling). 'I don't think I've ever done this but wouldn't regard it as unethical so long as it is between copies of the same issue of the book. Normally the copy in the wrapper would be the better copy' (Hugh

## BOOKS BOUGHT

*We wish to purchase large quantities of books on various subjects*

T. P. Sever, 'BOOKS', 17 Castle Street, Llangollen, Denbighshire LL20 8NY • Telephone: 01978-860334

Morgan of Turret House). Jack Haldane demonstrates a certain craftiness. 'Defective jackets always make books unattractive so, if there is no possibility of substitution, I always remove them. However, once the book is sold I then tell my client that I might just have a damaged jacket in my stock room and ask if they would like it ... They are always happy to get it, it doesn't cost them anything but it does mean that I have helped them to buy a book they need which they might otherwise have rejected. This is what I understand by the concept of "serving the client properly"'. This is perhaps several degrees removed from the response received from an ABA member to whom I faxed the questionnaire: '... my habit has always been to throw dustjackets away.'

#### 2. Would you insert a bookplate to improve the appearance of a paste-down?

This was regarded as much more heinous; seventy-two of you said 'Never'. But some could see the temptation. 'Quite unethical I suppose but I can imagine circumstances when I *might* do this, wishing to hide something unsightly on the paste-down but *not* with the intention to provide a spurious provenance.' I have a packet of tasteful modern bookplates which I occasionally use but only on a modern book where the owner could well have done so. Surely this is not different in principle to erasing an inscription which is ugly? Somebody mused 'I haven't really thought about this but it seems a good idea' hence convicting me of corruption of the innocent. I recall the consternation one evening when a prominent member of the trade, a bookseller specialising in

eighteenth-century literature, described doing this. A friend of mine, then engaged upon an edition of the letters of Richard Hurd, left the table.

#### 3. Would you, having bought a book privately and made what you regarded at the time as a fair offer, if you then discover it's worth more than you thought, go back to the vendor and offer him more?

Almost everyone agreed that they would do this (only eight people out of the 115 *didn't* tick the 'Certainly' box). However, the letter-writers raised questions, and there were many references to swings and roundabouts. 'It would be unlikely that the vendor would give a refund if the book were found to be worth less than the agreed price.' (Alan Brett) '... we have, on occasion, lost money by finding out that books bought by us in good faith, turned out to be defective' (Bowdon Books). 'To offer money and then to offer more shakes the confidence of the seller' (Roy Pitches). 'It depends (a) on whether the people have been pleasant and polite to me and (b) whether I think they need the money more than I do.' And one ingenious respondent perhaps explains why you are all so virtuous on this one: '... if I knew that other books were likely to be offered to me then I probably would offer more.'

#### 4. Would you pay a fellow bookseller within thirty days?

Only four of you might not. In fact there was general feeling that this traditional courtesy period was unjustified: 'There is no excuse for not paying *on receipt*. 30 days is far too long' (Stephen Wycherley).

*Peter Doyle*  
*Bookbinding & Restoration*  
 UNIT 5, WORDEN CRAFT CENTRE,  
 WORDEN PARK, LEYLAND PR5 2DJ  
 TELEPHONE: 01772-623827

'Always, — and in fact usually 7 days' (Laurie Taylor of Tamarisk Books). I chose this question because it forms part of the Code of Ethics of the ABAA, the American equivalent of the ABA. But perhaps we wish to do away with an out-moded tradition. It was this question, however, that highlighted the fact that those of you who responded to the questionnaire are not, *ipso facto*, a good sample of the trade as a whole. You're the ones who care about ethics. You're the ones who are concerned about the manner in which you conduct your business. Your lustre is untarnished. But what of the others, those who no doubt responded to the questionnaire with a muttered 'Ethics? smethics ...?' Delaying payment is clearly rife in the trade. 'I have waited six months and more for \*\*\*\* to pay me.' My only "niggle" is slow payers. I don't now quote to anyone who, in the past, has caused me to send a statement.' (Jack Owen of Colwyn Books). 'Wayward descriptions, unpaid or extremely overdue payment of invoices etc are all the more irksome when the bookseller concerned turns out to be a long established dealer' (Steve Brown). 'I did send books COR to a major, major advertiser in *Bookdealer* but it took 2-3 months to get money out of them! I have given up supplying books to this particular company — why should they benefit from my overdraft!'

**5. Would you, if something coming up at auction of particular interest to you will also be of interest to a friend in the trade, give him a call and discuss coming to an agreement rather than bidding each other up?**

Aha. This one raised a fair palaver. Many of you thought the question badly worded, but my intention was to stimulate debate, not to try to catch people out. On the whole you tended towards the negative, but there was quite a spread of answers, and eight people plumped for 'Certainly' (not necessarily those quoted below). 'I have no duty to

either the auctioneers or their clients. The clients choose to sell at auction rather than directly to a bookseller. The auctioneers can always protect their clients' interest by employing the expertise they so often boast of but so rarely demonstrate ... I would regard it as being quite unethical to eat and drink with someone on Tuesday but on Wednesday do battle with him in an auction to the advantage of smug auctioneers who can then crow about the prices they obtain, thus drumming up more business for themselves. In what contempt they must hold us! 'Can two people make a "ring"? A ring is when a group get together — that makes a conspiracy' (Roy Pitches). Waterfield's noted: 'It is one thing to discuss a particular item with another specialist and quite another to come to some sort of illegal agreement, which we would not do.'

**6. Would you price the same copy of a book differently depending on the knowledge and enthusiasm of the potential buyer?**

Again, generally, you wouldn't. The exceptions were really rather encouraging: 'I have been known to mark a book up rather excessively when expecting it to go to a particularly aggressive buyer, to give him a satisfying amount of markdown! Another more pleasant and reasonable buyer for the item might then get a rather good unsolicited discount and explanation!' (Hugh Morgan). 'Since "enthusiastic" buyers normally haggle, my prices have to rise in order to cope with their bargaining. Experience shows that in the long run those who haggle will always pay more, and it serves them right.' (Jack Haldane again).

**7. Would you, disregarding loss to yourself, co-operate with the police to recover and return stolen books?**

All squeaky clean on this one.

**8. Would you approach a potential customer in someone else's shop?**

This question appeared because to do this is against the 'Code of Usages and Customs' of the ILAB, the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers. No, I wouldn't — perhaps not a moral point but rather because the friendship of the

bookseller matters more to me than a possible sale to someone I don't know.' 'Would be OK if for example the bookshop were not able to supply the customer's requirement?' (!) 'Not without asking permission of the shop-owner' (Hedley Morgan) was the most usual response. Gordon Hill added '... the same thing happens occasionally in our shop, and we are happy to be seen to help the customer, especially if the visiting colleague can offer a service we cannot.' One dealer admitted to having loitered outside on occasion; the questionnaires fairly consistently said 'no'.

**9. Would you make a book up with a leaf from another copy?**

and

**10. Would you make a book up with a leaf from another copy and not disclose the fact in your description?**

You fairly consistently thought 9 was cricket but 10 was not, and that disclosure is all. 'Nothing wicked about another leaf as long as one declares it.' Some tossed around the rather greyer area of *intent*: 'I can imagine myself doing this but not with any intention to falsify (i.e. regarding issue points, states of plate, etc.)' Fifteen of you voted that you would certainly make a book up. 'I would infinitely rather restore a book to completeness than break it (and isn't that what *Bookdealer's* "Hospital" Page was designed for?)' (Ann Ridler).

\* \* \*

Those were my questions, relatively randomly picked. You supplied a whole load more in your replies. They will I hope be put to use in the future.

Graham Jones wrote to say that he felt that the questions asked 'tended distractingly away from the thrust of [my] letter of resignation'. I hope not too distractingly. My primary reason for resigning from the ABA was the unethical behaviour of some of its members. The lack of any published code, or, at the very least, requirement that the code of the ILAB should be adhered to, I feel is a serious deficiency, and to redress this would at least be a move towards some kind of regulatory procedure. Attack on individual members was conspicuously not part of my brief, and I have no interest in publishing the

## THE EPHEMERA SOCIETY BAZAAR

Sunday  
 December 15th

at

VICTORY SERVICES CLUB

63 Seymour Street,  
 Marble Arch, London W2

Open: 11am-4pm  
 Members from 10am

\*\*\*\*\*  
 ADVERTISING \* GREETINGS CARDS  
 MAGAZINES \* TICKETS \* STATIONERY  
 POSTERS \* LABELS \* ETC ETC  
 \*\*\*\*\*

ALL ENQUIRIES TO: 0181-450 9993

personal criticisms levied in your letters. It was however interesting to have it confirmed that I am not alone in my experience. The eleven replies to the questionnaire received from ABA members (three of them chums of mine who were bludgeoned into responding and who otherwise certainly wouldn't have done) do not constitute a large enough sample to say anything to the point, except perhaps that members of the ABA were not particularly burning to participate in this debate. I am grateful to the few who did respond, and particularly to the one who said 'This is a good idea! To the large numbers of the rest of you who gave up your time to write, in many instances passionately, on the questions I aired and on many others, I can only say that you have raised my spirits enormously and I wish I could send you all the prize; but draws work otherwise. Frank Payton of The Bookshelf in Mansfield was the winner, and 'the book's in the post!'

(*A Question of Ethics' continues next week with a further article from Karen Thomson. Your contributions to our Letters column will be welcomed. Ed.*)

# BOOK FAIR



## DIARY FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY

### CHICHESTER

THE JARVIS CHICHESTER HOTEL  
Westhampnett

Sunday, 5th January, 10am-4.30pm

### YORK

THE BARBICAN CENTRE  
York

Saturday, 11 January, 10am-5pm

### LONDON

HOTEL RUSSELL  
Russell Square, WC1

Sunday, 12th January, 1-7pm  
Monday, 13th January, 11am-7pm

### SHREWSBURY

THE MUSIC HALL  
The Square

Saturday, 18th January, 10.30am-5pm

### WELLS

TOWN HALL  
Market Place

Sunday, 19th January, 10.30am-4pm

### EDINBURGH

CONSORT SUITE  
Roxburghe Hotel

Saturday, 25th January, 10am-5pm

### DROITWICH

THE COMMUNITY HALL  
Heritage Way

Saturday, 25th January, 10am-4.30pm

### LONDON

CITY BOOK MARKET  
St Olave's Parish Hall

Mark Lane, Fenchurch St, EC3  
Tuesday, 28th January, 10am-6pm

### CAMBRIDGE

FISHER HALL  
Guildhall Place

Wednesday, 29th January, 10am-4pm

### DURHAM

THE TOWN HALL

Friday, 31st January, noon-7pm  
Saturday, 1st February, 10am-5pm

Organised by PBFA, The Old Coach House, 16 Melbourn Street,  
Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 7BX  
Tel: 01763-248400 Fax: 01763-248921

# Bookdealer

Published by Werner Shaw Limited, 26 Charing Cross Road (Suite 34),  
London WC2H 0DH Telephone 0171-240 5890 Fax 0171-379 5770

No. 1288

THURSDAY DECEMBER 19 1996

## EDITORIAL

### A QUESTION OF ETHICS —

Karen Thomson completes her report

What emerged above all from the response to my questionnaire was that there is a general desire to adhere to what might be called 'Best Practice', and strong feelings were expressed about those for whom this is not a consideration. I referred at the end of my last article to all the additional questions that you raised in your letters; on closer scrutiny a large number of them were accusatory rather than explorative. For instance, the question 'Would you move a book from one auction lot to another (a) at the beginning of the viewing period, or (b) at the end of the viewing period?' is not one that bears consideration in ethical terms. Setting aside matters of legality, the areas of concern come through fairly strongly. I have gathered them together under the following headings, which perhaps one might call

6. Honourable conduct in relation to private sellers
7. Honourable conduct in the auction rooms

I shall take these one by one, looking at your comments and comparing the published codes of ethics that are available to me. These are the *Code of Usages and Customs* of the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers, the *Code of Ethics* of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of North America, and the *Code of Practice* of the Provincial Booksellers Fairs Association. The ABA's strictures on Bookselling Virtue number 7 will also be noted, as there is no parallel guideline given in any of the other three.

#### Virtue number 1 CONSCIENTIOUS DESCRIPTION

I have divided this into two parts: correct use of terminology, and 'disclosure'.  
(a) Correct use of terminology. As quoted in last week's article in another context: 'Wayward descriptions ... are all the more irksome when the bookseller concerned turns out to be a long established dealer.' (Steve Brown). The ABAA's Code

#### THE SEVEN BOOKSELLING VIRTUES

1. Conscientious description
2. Professional pricing
3. Prompt payment
4. Observation of bookfair etiquette
5. Courteous behaviour

The postfree subscription for 51 weekly issues is £50



opens with the following guideline. 'An Association member shall be responsible for the understanding and use of the specific terminology of the trade.' Members should, as professionals, be conversant with and responsible for the correct use and interpretation of the technical terms of the trade.' (ILAB Usage 4). But as the PBFA notes (Section 1.4) terminology is often subjective. Rob Rulon-Miller in the latest issue of the ABAA Newsletter under the heading *The R' Word and Other Ramblings on Cats*, complains about the inappropriate use of the words 'rare', 'scarce' and 'uncommon' (I paraphrase slightly). The dealer who claims that Kipling's *Captain Courageous* is "rare in original cloth" knows just as well as I do that it is no more rare in original cloth than Minnesota is temperate in January. Do we need some kind of guide-book? Are we happy on the whole to retain Carter's *ABC for Book Collectors* as an authority, and if so, should it be incumbent upon all of us to possess a copy? Should it be distributed *gratis* by the various associations?

(b) Disclosure of all defects — and enhancements, the latter a debated issue. There was no argument about the requirement for defects to be pointed out, although transgression is apparently frequent. Someone complained of the practice of 'offering flawed books knowingly without noting the flaw on the free endpaper, say. It would appear to be excused sometimes by a relatively low price — but this is just a trap for the unwary.' This relates of course to Virtue number 2. Disclosure of sophistication was more controversial. Jeremy Parrott asked the following question, which certainly caused me some difficulty. The point is however clear: 'Would you (a) remove ex-library marks (labels, stamps, inked numbers) from a book, and (b) however successful or unsuccessful the operations described above were, not disclose the book's provenance in your description?' In reply to the question about bookplates someone wrote: 'Of course I've done this, but as a purely cosmetic exercise — not to create a provenance.' Having applied the lip gloss and eyeliner, one does not presumably then trumpet the fact. I would like to put another question, to complicate matters even further: if one *improves* a book in a subtle and undetectable way, and then honourably declares that one has done so, what onus is there on the bookseller

who buys it to continue to make the sophistication known?

Members should ensure that all their books are complete and if not that any fault is clearly stated ... The more expensive the book the more important it is to check it with an authoritative bibliography. Such references should be available with the book.' This seemed an extremely worthwhile point, and one that as far as I know has not been stated outside the PBFA's *Code of Practice*. 'An Association member shall be responsible for the accurate description of all material offered for sale. All significant defects, restorations, and sophistications should be clearly noted and made known to those to whom the material is offered or sold.' (ABAA Guideline 2). This is effectively verbatim from the ILAB's Code.

### Virtue number 2 PROFESSIONAL PRICING

'I suppose the truth is that most people will do something about most books if they manage thereby to sell them but I do believe that prices ought to be sensible and to mean what they say' (Colin Franklin). 'When I price a book for a specific customer, the price is often *lower* than I would put in my catalogue because I haven't the gall to ask for more' (David Flint). 'Do some booksellers deliberately corner and lead, rather than follow the market, and if so is this wrong?' (Ian Barfield). Nobody even seemed aware of the transgression I was ferreting for in one of my questions; the bumping up of a price for a collector known to have more enthusiasm than knowledge — perhaps more money than sense?

'Members shall be responsible for the accurate and professional pricing of all material offered for sale, regardless of whether they are dealing with experts or amateurs.' (ILAB Usage 5). Usage 12 states: 'Members should ensure that all material offered for sale in an open shop or at book fairs is clearly marked with the selling price.' The ABAA Code follows number 12 but not number 5; the PBFA doesn't comment.

### Virtue number 3 PROMPT PAYMENT

(this includes prompt and full refund when an item is found not to be as described)

Last week's article indicated that you

## Christmas Quiz

£100 is the prize for the winner of the second *Bookdealer* Christmas Quiz. The questions are not difficult and all are based on news items or interviews that appeared in these pages during 1996. You have until Tuesday morning, December 31, to send in your answers when correct solutions will be put into a hat and Margaret Stovold will draw the winner. Answers will appear in our January 9 issue.

### ANSWERS

1. This nonagenarian has long waged a one-man battle against the buyer's premium. Name him. ....
2. Name the book illustrator, a friend of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, who was commissioned by Dent in 1903 to illustrate *The History of the Holy Grail* and went on to become queen in her field. ....
3. E.B. Ford's *Butterflies* was a 1945 best seller. What famous series did it launch? ....
4. A new quarterly magazine for book collectors was launched in June. Under what title? ....
5. Bookbinding is my middle name. ....
6. At which London venue are Red Letter Day Fairs held? ....
7. Which British city is odds-on favourite to host the millennium ILAB Congress and Bookfair? ....
8. Who succeeded Robert Frew as Fair Manager at the Russell? ....
9. Which Anglesey bookseller, sometime member of the RAF Mountain Rescue service, died in May? ....
10. In addition to managing the Hay Cinema Bookshop he captains the PBFA cricket team. ....
11. In July Royal Mail withdrew a packing stipulation covering its Printed Papers service. What requirement no longer applies? ....
12. In 1985 Russell Ash and Brian Lake were joint compilers of an unusual book. What is its title? ....



see no reason for payment not to be by return. To my surprise the same is stated by both the ILAB and the PBFA (though not the ABAA, who recommend 30 days 'unless other arrangements are made'). The ILAB Usage 9 reads: 'It should be understood that books are normally offered for sale in catalogues at the prices affixed, subject to prior sale, and that payment is either due in advance or, when satisfactory credit has been established, promptly on receipt of the goods.' And the PBFA: 'Payment for books should be prompt. The tradition among booksellers has always been to pay by return of post, or at point of sale. A good tradition and one that PBFA members are encouraged to adopt. Prompt payment promotes good relations.' On the subject of returns and refunds the PBFA Code is the most comprehensive. 'Mistakes do happen and should a book be found by the purchaser to be defective or not as described, it should be allowed to be returned to the seller at no additional cost to the purchaser. It is courteous to contact the seller immediately with the information that the book is being returned and for what reason. 'The ABAA and ILAB touch on this question: 'a full cash refund shall be available to the purchaser of any misrepresented material', and the ABAA adds, 'the cost of returning material incorrectly described shall be the responsibility of the seller.'

#### **Virtue number 4** **OBSERVATION OF BOOKFAIR ETIQUETTE**

'Would you *put underneath* at a bookfair but wait until the end of the fair to collect and then start haggling?' Or: 'Would you go up to a bookfair stand allowing yourself to be thought a private customer but ask for trade consideration at point of sale? (Common but bad-mannered. See Brian Alldis's *Brightfount Diaries* for gloss on this — you can either have a discount or be called 'Sir')'.

The only stricture relating to fairs in the ILAB Code is the condemnation of poaching, which the ABAA follows. 'An Association member should neither approach nor solicit customers ... without the introduction or consent of the proprietor.' The PBFA understandably gives this area greater attention, and the whole of Section III.7 (6 points) relates to *Trading at Fairs*. The first two are the most relevant here. 'III.7.1. A Book

placed under a stand with a trade card inserted in it is deemed to be sold. Exhibitors should ensure that they pay for and collect any such purchase before the Fair opens. Any such books remaining at opening time must be removed from public view. III.7.2. Any Books placed under a stand without a trade card are not considered sold and may be replaced on the shelf by the Exhibitor.'

#### **Virtue number 5** **COURTEOUS BEHAVIOUR WITHIN THE** **TRADE AS A WHOLE**

This is the one that was most stressed, I felt, in all your letters. Many of the additional questions that you sent were basically to do with good manners, or as one correspondent put it, bookselling etiquette rather than ethics. 'Breaches of etiquette can often cause more bad feeling, hurt and resentment than unethical behaviour.' The previous two Virtues of course boil down to courtesy, but number 5 is a catch-all for perhaps less obvious areas. Booksellers tend in their very nature perhaps to be particularly sensitive to this. 'I love everything that's old; old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wines,' (not a bookseller — Oliver Goldsmith). The exceptions rankle. 'Have you ever refused to send a catalogue to a bookseller from whom you have bought?' 'Would you use a mobile phone inside a bookshop to ring a client about a book you've seen on the shelves?' Also repeatedly aired was the question of the 10% 'courtesy' dealer's discount. Somebody said 'Do you think you are entitled to a dealer's discount?' and (the other side of that question) 'would you exhibit at a bookfair with the policy that anybody who asked, trade or private, could have, say, a 10% discount?' This relates closely again to the second Virtue, professional pricing, but of course the point is that if you would, there is no (pecuniary) trade courtesy at all. Tobias Rodgers prefixed his most recent catalogue with a note dismissing the trade discount convention — 'this seems to me to be archaic.'

This is dealt with in a general way by the three codes, although the ILAB and ABAA do advocate reciprocal discount within their own memberships. The PBFA refers to the expectation of 'honourable and generally accepted' behaviour, and the ABAA to the maintaining of 'professional and ethical standards'.

# CHURCHDOWN BOOK FAIR

COMMUNITY CENTRE • PARTON ROAD  
CHURCHDOWN • GLOUCESTER (Junction 11/M5)

**SUNDAY 5th JANUARY**

10.00am-4.00pm (Trade 9.30am) • Refreshments

Gloucestershire's only monthly fair • First Sunday of every month

Enquiries: Sally or Keith Smith 01684-575126

**CHURCHDOWN — THE PLACE TO BE**

ILAB Usage 2 reads: 'Members of the national associations affiliated with the ILAB ... should conduct all commercial transactions according to these usages which expressly indicate that members offer to their clients a clearly defined code of practice based on high ethical standards.' Our 'national association' of course is the ABA.

#### **Virtue number 6** **HONOURABLE CONDUCT IN RELATION TO** **PRIVATE VENDORS**

This was much discussed following my question about upping your offer if something turns out to be worth more. Philip Pegler focused particularly on this one. 'The most pertinent question of your questionnaire. It is never easy to go back and pay more ... Nevertheless we make a point of doing so after buying privately when the circumstances clearly suggest it would be unfair to do otherwise. We endeavour to strike a sensible balance between the need of our business to be profitable and the important principle of fairness.'

None of the three codes of conduct tackled this one. The ILAB has something to me rather obscure: designed to protect the bookseller rather than the man in the street? 'When a bookseller makes an offer to purchase books the price should be valid either for an immediate transaction or for a stated period of option.'

#### **Virtue number 7** **HONOURABLE CONDUCT IN THE AUCTION** **ROOMS**

Much discussed elsewhere, particularly in the pages of this journal seven years

ago, and not my bag here. Suffice it to say that it is not addressed by the three codes. The ABA's Rule 9, 'Conduct', based on Lord Darling's Act, is well known, as is the sequence of events that engendered it. 'No member shall for any consideration agree with any other person not to bid at auction, or take part in the private re-auction of lots bought at public auction in the activities commonly known as "the settlement".'

\* \* \*

What conclusions can we draw from all this? I was fascinated by the fact that where the French version of the Preface to the ILAB Rules reads (second paragraph) 'Comme pour tous les contrats et les accords écrits, nous devrions en théorie ne jamais nous écarter ni transgresser ces principes', the English opposite has '... we should never have to take them out of the drawer and wave them about.' Frightfully British and all that, but your response indicates that you feel otherwise. I would suggest that there seems to be an opening for a Universal Code of Best Practice; perhaps one might call it 'The Antiquarian Booksellers' Charter'. Anyone dealing with antiquarian or secondhand material could subscribe to this. It would of course not involve payment of any subscription, merely a statement of intent. I put this tentatively to Richard Joseph, the owner of Sheppard's Directories, and he was enthusiastic. 'We could then indicate in the dealer's entry, in the same way that we list ABA and PBFA membership, whether or not he had signed the 'A.B.C.', or whatever we choose to call it. 'More food for thought? Mull it over, over your mulled wine, and Season's Greetings!