The Gentle Madness of Book Collecting

Program Description

We take the title of our conference from Nicholas A. Basbanes’ wonderful 1995 book on bibliophiles and bibliomania. As he posits, one irony of the modern internet age is that the passion to possess books is as pervasive today as ever in recorded history. It is still a Gentle Madness. There are those of us who work in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections of the Harold B. Lee library at BYU that have been smitten by this marvelous disease for some time. We, however, collect our books with the intention of sharing them with all who wish to come. Hence, the purpose of our series of seminars is to invite you to take an afternoon and evening to join us as you indulge your own gentle madness for books. Don Quixote de la Mancha, you recall, addicted himself to the reading of books of chivalry. If you suffer from a book addiction, we promise not to cure you as you attend on October 24.

Admission and Standards

Participants of any race, color, creed, and ethnic or national origin are accepted for admission, provided they maintain the university standards while on campus. These include modesty in dress and abstinence from alcohol and tobacco.

Conference Schedule - October 24, 2003

1:00 p.m.  
Conference Welcome  
Randy J. Olsen - University Librarian

1:05-1:15  
"Collecting in the 21st Century"  
Brad Westwood - Chair, L. Tom Perry Special Collections

1:15-1:45  
"The Madness Within Me: My Passion for Building Book Collections"  
Rex Maughan - Chairman of the Board and President of Forever Living Products International

1:45-2:30 (Concurrent Seminars)

No. 1  "Mormon Incunabula: The Infancy of Mormon Publishing"  
Larry Draper - Curator, Americana Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections

View, examine, and discuss the rarity, influence, and significance of the foundational publications of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Mormonism’s first scriptures, periodicals, hymnals, missionary tracts and theological treatises. This seminar will expose the influences of these publications on the growth of Mormonism.
No. 2 “Back in the Saddle: Collecting Western Fiction”  
Russ Taylor - Reference Services Librarian, L. Tom Perry Special Collections

Beadle's Dime Novels, Munro's Nickel Books, and series like “The Adventures of Buffalo Bill” were forms of popular entertainment in the late nineteenth century. From these cheap paper-covered novelettes to the original manuscripts and first editions of Zane Grey, we explore the world of the Western. (Did you know we own six original Zane Grey manuscripts?)

No. 3 “The Top 40: The Most Influential Books Ever Printed”  
Scott Duvall - Assistant University Librarian for Special Collections

Elizabeth Eisenstein has stated that no political, ecclesiastical, economic, scientific, philosophical, or literary movement can be completely understood without taking into account the influence of the printing press. In this seminar we will examine the books that have underscored the rise of western civilization since Gutenberg first printed with movable type.

2:30-2:45 Break

2:45-3:30 (Concurrent Seminars)

No. 4 “It's My Press and I'll Print What I Want to: Collecting Modern Fine Printing”  
Robert Maxwell - Rare Book Cataloger, L. Tom Perry Special Collections

Unlike other types of rare books, it is still possible to acquire modern fine printing, hot off the press, for reasonable prices. The private press movement has flourished during the last several decades. Books produced by private/fine presses are typified by high quality, often handcrafted workmanship. The seminar will show highlights of our fine press collection and discuss how collectors can acquire these books.

3:30-4:15 (Concurrent Seminars)  
Repeat of three most requested seminars

4:15-4:30 Break

4:30-5:15 Concluding Keynote Speech  
Speaker to be announced

No. 5 “Conservation and Preservation: The Art of Preventing Dilapidation”  
Mark Pollei - Chair, Conservation Department

Books have the ability to survive. Nonetheless, they need care and attention. In this seminar we will outline some basic steps by which collectors can ensure the long term “survival” and “fitness” of their collections.

5:15-600 Tour  
Three concurrent tours of the facilities (including vaults) of the L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

7:00 p.m. Dinner and Entertainment

No. 6 “Street Literature: Common Reading, Uncommon Times”  
Brad Westwood - Chair, L. Tom Perry Special Collections

The democratization of reading during the 19th century led to far reaching changes in English and American cultures. Printed materials (newspapers, leaflets, broadsides, gift goods and a sea of colorful print ephemera) became increasingly aimed at a mass audience. In this seminar we will examine the world of “street literature” and other printed works generated for a growing consumer society. This material is often affordable and in some ways is the most interesting to collect.

3:30-4:15 (Concurrent Seminars)  
Repeat of three most requested seminars

4:15-4:30 Break

5:15-600 Tour  
Three concurrent tours of the facilities (including vaults) of the L. Tom Perry Special Collections.