



Newsletter
Number 158
Winter 2005

Picture This: The Art & Technique of Illustration

THE 28TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE of the American Printing History Association (APHA) took place at the University of Delaware in Newark on September 30 & October 1, 2004. The conference coincided with the opening of an exhibition 'John DePol: Artist and Engraver' at the Morris Library of the University of Delaware, and with the Oak Knoll Fest XI, in nearby New Castle. It proved to be a happy confluence of events and overlapping circles of like-minded folks.

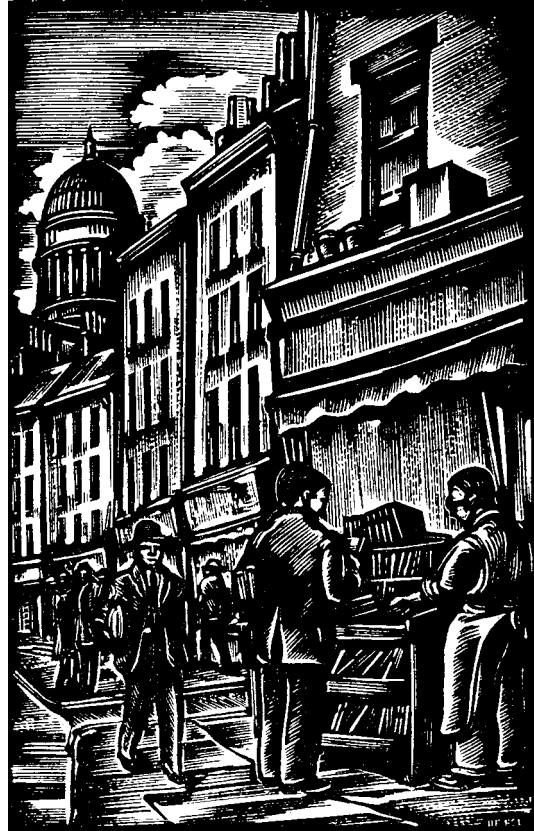
The conference began appropriately with a lecture on John DePol by David R. Godine, who recently published *Five Decades of the Burin: The Wood Engravings of John DePol*, in fulfillment of a long-standing promise to his old friend. Godine explained the difference between woodcuts and wood engravings, DePol's preferred medium. The greater detail of wood engraving made possible the tonal modulation of intaglio engraving while allowing the sturdy wood-block to be printed along with the page of type.

In the beginning of the 20th century in England, wood engravers found work with both private presses and commercial trade publishers, whereas in America, wood engraved illustration for commercial publishers was the exception. After spending the war and postwar years in Northern Ireland, DePol returned to the US in 1947 and found himself working in a vacuum. He built up a network among the Typophiles and the private pressmen with whom he met, talked, ate, and drank, including John Fass, John Anderson, Ben Grauer, and Arthur Rushmore. Always working to refine his art, DePol created an impressive body of work. Godine particularly prizes DePol's scenes of New York City, where the artist grew up and which he knew intimately.

Godine left us with the suggestion that the gifts of John DePol's papers and Mark Samuels Lasner's collection come with the responsibility of returning the book arts to the liberal arts curriculum. Not only is the subject worthy of study (and with such riches of col-

lection at hand!), but it is in the University's interest to promote such collection and appreciation of the book in its curriculum.

John DePol was present for David Godine's lecture and for the official opening of the comprehensive exhibit of his work based on his recently donated papers. DePol looked delighted by the recognition and by the dozens of friends, old and new. The Friends of the Library put on a lavish reception for the event. Attendees also visited the new Mark Samuels Lasner Room, home of his fabled collection of books, drawings and manuscripts from the 1890s.



The affection and warmth of the evening chased away Thursday's wet weather, and Friday dawned bright and pleasant for an early start to a full day of papers. Our president, Martin Antonetti, welcomed us to our largest conference in recent memory, the 'Woodstock' of APHA conferences. Susan Brynteson, the May Morris Director of Libraries at the University of Delaware, again welcomed us and John DePol (who was back for some of the morning session).

Jane Pomeroy, our first speaker, has researched American wood engraver Alexander Anderson for twenty years. Her presentation concentrated on the technical questions Anderson faced in creating wood engravings. When he started working in the 1790s, Anderson engraved on thin sheets of type metal which

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were mounted with nails on wood, making them type-high. Once he started using boxwood, his illustrations could be more intense. Unfortunately, Anderson's work suffered somewhat at the hands of his printers. His first printers used wooden presses with damp paper and a blanket, all of which made for too much squash and not enough pressure to print the finer lines of his wood engravings. Pomeroy showed several examples comparing the commercially printed version of Anderson's blocks with his own proof copies, revealing the difference careful printing would have made in the presentation of Anderson's illustrations and therefore to his modern reputation.

Steven Smith, of Texas A&M University Libraries, spoke on tricks of the trade of periodical illustrators of the second half of the 19th century, focusing on the versatile and dependable Thure de Thulstrup, the Swedish-born 'workhorse' illustrator for *Harper's*. Smith described 19th-century news illustration as an 'epistemological collage' that created an illusion of reality. A sketch made by an artist at the scene might be completely redrawn with greater detail by another artist, or a photograph taken at an event would be drawn with details added or subtracted. As wood engravings were time-consuming to create, deadlines were met using several artists, and in some instances, a portion of the illustration was engraved ahead of time. Audiences preferred engravings with the greatest sense of realism, and illustrators rose to the challenge of satisfying their readership by gleaning the details of perspective, light and shadow from photographs. Thulstrup identified himself as an artist in the truest sense and had concerns for other illustrators, who depended too much on photographs. He believed his own work provided 'realistic' scenes.

Barbara T. Gates, a professor at the University of Delaware, discussed 'Women Illustrating Victorian Natural History.' Through the 19th century, the majority of natural history illustrations were unsigned and were considered ancillary to the text. This relative unimportance was perhaps a reflection of gender roles; women in the author's family often produced the illustrations. Gates also discussed two popular female author/illustrators in greater depth. The first, Louise Meredith, was an Australian continually beset with difficulties because her sketches and texts were engraved and printed halfway around the globe in London, so she couldn't correct errors or protest bad work. Later in the century, Eliza Brightwen had greater success. A canny self-promoter, she embraced inexpensive formats

and drew from subjects both natural and domestic. The fields, ponds and forests near her home, as well as the exotic plants and animals she kept, were all inspiration for her imagination.

Margaret Smith of the University of Reading, and the new president of the British Printing Historical Society, spoke on 'Movable Woodcuts: Counterpart to Movable Types.' While contemporary readers have grown accustomed to having original artwork in modern editions, woodcut illustrations were often reused in early printed books. It was similar to the way type is distributed and reset. Smith demonstrated this point using examples of re-printed wood-blocks found in Venetian printing between 1493 and 1517. Most bibliographers apply a modern sensibility to the subject of re-use of woodcuts in early printing. Expecting new images for each title, they have considered it a sign of bad printing until now. Smith suggests the practice was so common, so 'careful and deliberate,' we should reconsider this position.

David Whitesell, of the Houghton Library at Harvard, presented a crowd-pleaser on 'Quixotic Typography,' which addressed illustrations made from fonts created or adapted for that purpose. He showed maps constructed entirely from late 18th-century cartographic fonts that included, for example, sorts that the compositor assembled to create rivers and roads. In the 19th century, needlework patterns were printed with special fonts. Also during this period, Carl Fasol made elaborate pictures using dots of various sizes on a two-point body, essentially making half-tone images manually. The crowd laughed knowingly when Whitesell suggested that we try to imagine not only the composition of these elaborate pictures, but the distribution of the tiny sorts.

Janice Hart, a historian of photography at the London College of Communication, discussed the illustrations created by Robert Macpherson, a well-known photographer who lived in Rome, for his book *Vatican Sculptures* (1863). The book's introduction describes how the illustrations were based on photographs taken by Macpherson that were reduced and traced to make blocks for printing. Hart discussed varying contemporary attitudes towards photography of artworks, and how photographs of sculptures could either be seen as works of art in themselves or as baseless imitations of the originals. She suggested that Macpherson's one-inch high print of the *Laocoön* was intended as a miniaturized 'paraphrase' of the seven-foot high sculpture, not a reproduction of it.

Gordon B. Neavill, of Wayne State University spoke on 'The Illustrated Modern Library,' a sub-series of the better-known Modern Library produced between 1943 and 1947. He described the IML as an experiment in high-quality books, 'a kind of Limited Editions Club for the masses,' often with bolder choices than the LEC. He traced the history of the IML from its conception by Harry N. Abrams through the complicated dealings between Random House (publishers of the Modern Library main series) and the textbook publishers A.S. Barnes (who could get paper despite wartime restrictions) to the dispersal of some of the last titles planned for the IML but published by the Modern Library, the Book of the Month Club, and even the Philco Corporation. Neavill showed many images of the books, illustrated by artists such as Fritz Kredel, Warren Chappell, Boardman Robinson, and even Salvador Dalí (*Don Quixote*, 1946).

Wesley B. Tanner, of the School of Art & Design at the University of Michigan, and printer and proprietor of Passim Editions, spoke on 'Cutting Wood with Light: A New Tool for Making Woodcuts.' Four years ago, Tanner began using Michigan's Lasercam, a laser that can be used to burn into or cut through wood and other objects. Architects and engineers use the Lasercam for creating models, and is it capable of very detailed work. Tanner's process involves scanning a color sketch and editing the sketch with drawing software. The Lasercam cuts the individual color-coded pieces, and the cut blocks are then mounted type-high and printed. The beautiful result of years of experimentation and software writing is *Ultima Thule*, the most recent work from Passim Editions.

We were quite disappointed that Barry Moser, an excellent and dramatic speaker, was unable to deliver his talk in person. However, his speech was read by APHA's own excellent and dramatic speaker, Martin Antonetti. In his powerful paper 'Retaining the Power of Image' Moser, the illustrator, author, and designer of over 250 works, addressed the role of illustration in books. Although given short shrift by the world of fine art, Moser believes illustration is art. This places a responsibility on the illustrator to produce work that is a true part of the whole book, not just pictures stuck into a text. Moser is an artist who makes books out of his own need and love of the work. His standards for himself are quite high, as he attempts to create art for the ages; he agrees with Flannery O'Connor that neither God nor posterity are served by anything but well-made objects. He believes in the power of images and

their potential to take art, writ, and treatise from where they are to 'where they ain't.'

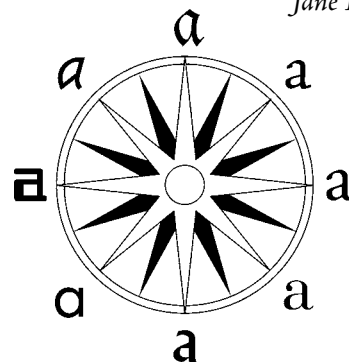
Thanks were expressed to everyone who had made the day such a success. Special note should be taken of the Raven Press, which printed the program and an edition of DePol's 'Alfred [Knopf] in London' as keepsakes from the exhibit. This letterpress studio facility is giving Delaware students an opportunity to experience printing in three dimensions, not just on a computer screen. Contact Ray Nichols (rnichols@udel.edu) if you can provide any aid, in material goods or moral support. Conference participants also received a hand-printed keepsake from the Incline Press, a small broadside of a wood engraving of 'Alice,' provided by Graham Moss.

Mark Samuels Lasner, who provided the original impetus and theme for the conference, made the final remarks and presented the library with a special copy of *Bookmaking on the Distaff Side*, a title not already in the library's collection. This was one of the three publications produced by a New York group of women printers and discussed by Kathy Walkup at last year's APHA conference.

After such a full day, we could do nothing but bustle off to New Castle for a dinner at the Arsenal, to talk about . . . books and printing. The evening prepared us for the Oak Knoll Fest, two days featuring panel discussions on building book arts collections and the illustrated book in the 21st century, as well as the Oak Knoll sale and the Fine Press Exhibition. The usual synergy of the Fest, bringing together printers, collectors and other book groupies was enhanced by the addition of the many APHA conference goers who stayed on to enjoy the continued opportunities to see more books.

Next year's conference will be based at Mills College, in the San Francisco Bay area. In 2006, APHA will join with Philadelphia institutions for a major conference celebrating the 300th anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Franklin. Information as it becomes available will be posted at www.printinghistory.org.

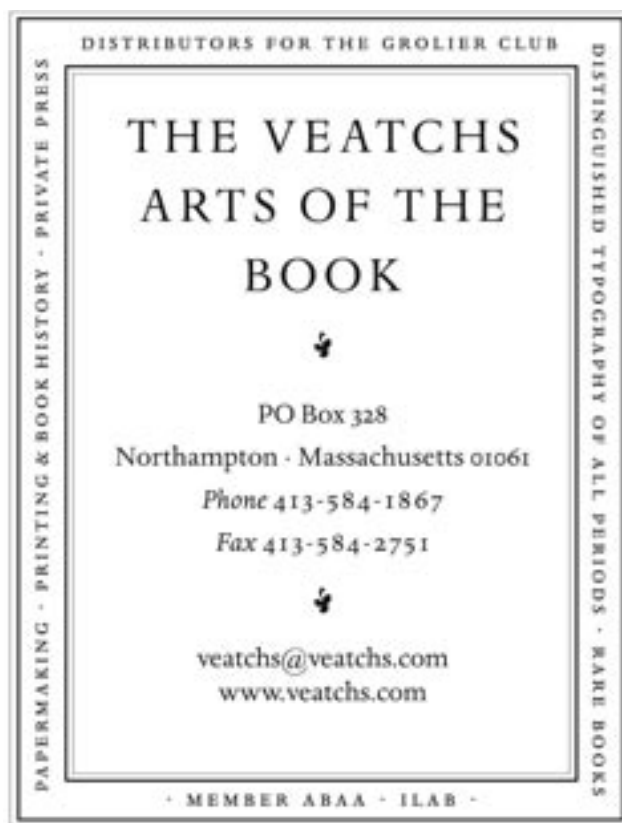
Jane Rodgers Siegel



Those of you who are paying attention know that this has been my second stint working on the *Newsletter*. With the incomparable Ed Colker and the eminently practical Virginia Bartow, I worked on issues 104 to 123. Virginia laughed when I admitted to her that I had signed up again, but it's been an amusing second time around. A long time, though: twelve issues. And now that you, Dear Reader, and I are both longing for a change, here it is. This issue comes to you under the direction of your new Editor, Shari Degraw, and is designed by your new Production Editor, Terrence Chouinard.

But before I go, let me thank the talented Suzanne Micheau Tinnian, the enabling Julia Blakely, the indefatigable Paul Romaine and the ever-present Stephen Crook for making the *Newsletter* look good and read well. All the labored constructions and grammatical *faux pas* have been my own.

Jane Rodgers Siegel



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The Newsletter is published four times yearly by the American Printing History Association.

Subscriptions are through membership in APHA.
Individual membership for the calendar year is \$45;
Institutional, \$55; Contributing, \$90; Sustaining, \$250.
Membership also includes a subscription to *Printing History*,
APHA's semi-annual scholarly journal.

Advertising in the *Newsletter* is available for
\$85 for a quarter page.

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With pleasure, Jane, Terry and I have assembled the news and upcoming events of APHA. I hope the *Newsletter* continues to inform and bring together the many constituents of APHA. Please look for up-to-date information on the combined events of the 2005 annual conference and Lieberman Lecture hosted by Kathy Walkup at Mills College in the San Francisco Bay Area in September 2005. The two events promise a weekend of lively experiences in APHA presentations and opportunities to visit the treasures of California printing history.

Thanks to the suggestion of our Advertising Manager Nina Schneider, we will introduce an announcements column in the next issue, as well as continuing a book review column and feature articles. Thank you to Jane Siegel and Suzanne Micheau Tinnian for their stewardship and dedication to the active pages of the *Newsletter* for the last three years, and thanks to all of you who have contributed to the newsletter in previous years, bringing this issue to 158.

Shari Degraw

New Members will be listed in the next issue.