The Printing of Handwriting Manuals in America

FROM THE PUBLICATION of the very first printed manuals there was recognition that the reproduction of handwriting in print requires compromise. Ludovico Vicentino Arrighi, in La operina (Rome, 1522/24), doubtfully asks the reader to excuse the illustrations, since “la stampa non possa in tutto representarte la viva mano” (translated by John Howard Benson as “the press cannot entirely represent the living hand”). La operina was cut entirely in wood. Woodcuts, which are relatively easy to produce and to print, were the first technology used to illustrate writing manuals. Engraved metal plates, first employed in a copybook in 1569, were generally acknowledged as superior in quality, but as they are more expensive to produce and to print than woodcuts, both technologies were pressed into service, though for various applications.

The first handwriting instructions printed in America, a few pages in a 1748 edition of a popular British compendium produced by Benjamin Franklin, included four engraved plates showing the basic styles.* Although Franklin was copying an earlier work, he based the round-hand plate on his own distinctive hand, rather than copying the English plates. (He also used the Caslon type he so admired in showing a “Print-Hand” for marking packages.) The Worcester, Massachusetts printer Isaiah Thomas issued his own edition of The Instructor in 1785, which also contained four engraved plates. In the same year, however, Thomas published the earliest separate American writing book, The Writing Scholar’s Assistant. This little work is notable for its use of script types for the copies, a technique which was surprisingly seldom ever employed for copybooks, although it would seem to have been economical.

Engraved plates remained the norm for writing manuals, but with some tension due to cost. The itinerant Vermont writing master John Jenkins’s The Art of

Update on APHA’s 31st Annual Conference

THE AMERICAN PRINTING HISTORY ASSOCIATION will hold its 31st annual conference at the University of California in Los Angeles, California, October 11–13, 2007. The event will be launched on the evening of Thursday, October 11, at UCLA, with H. George Fletcher, Brooke Russell Astor Director for Special Collections at The New York Public library, and an expert on Aldus Manutius and his significance, delivering the keynote address. The conference banquet will follow. Sixteen academic papers on the transformative nature of innovations in printing history will be presented on Friday, October 12, first in concurrent sessions at UCLA, and later in a single session at the Getty Research Institute. On Saturday, October 13, attendees will be free to visit various institutions in the area. A brochure for the Annual Conference, detailing the schedule, sessions, speakers, venues and other events, will be mailed to members in July. Meanwhile, up-to-date information can be found on the APHA website, www.printinghistory.org.

Kitty Maryatt
Program Chair for the 2007 APHA Conference
Writing, the book credited by Ray Nash as the first truly “American” writing book, was first published in 1791 with 32 pages, including numerous wood-engraved samples and four engraved plates. But by 1809 a pathetic pamphlet appeared seeking patrons for Jenkins, who had been crushed in part by the cost of the plates, which had turned out to be much more than he had anticipated.

All the same, others profited by engraved manuals: the 1805 first edition of Henry Dean’s Analytical Guide is the first ambitious American handwriting manual, a handsome quarto of 56 pages and 18 engraved plates. It may be of interest that Dean, as Nash tells us, not only was a writing master, teacher, and bookkeeper (writing and arithmetic, the two skills needed for commerce, went hand in hand for centuries), but also had run a copperplate printing business in Salem, Mass.

So far, I’ve written mostly about handwriting manuals and albums of fancy penmanship. But the teaching of handwriting has always required the use of copies, models of writing style put at the head of the student’s slate or paper. For centuries the writing master supplied these in manuscript. Print brought the possibility of relief for overworked teachers—printed copies, often in the form of engraved slips. Platt Rogers Spencer’s first publication was just such a set of engraved slips, issued in 1848 in an envelope with letterpress instructions.

In the 1840s, however, the handwriting world was changing rapidly. A transition was taking place, from teachers making manuals mostly for their own pedagogical use, to large commercial concerns producing penmanship teaching methods. Public school systems became larger, more centralized, and more bureaucratic, and bought penmanship systems in mass quantities.

It was around the middle of the nineteenth century that these market forces met with the relatively new technology of lithography to create a boom in the production of copybooks. A typical copybook has the copies running across the tops of the ruled pages, and is part of a graded series progressing from beginners’ exercises up to advanced letterforms, with some specialty books (e.g. for ladies’ hand) included in the set of twelve. The great thing about a copybook—for the publisher—is that it is used up: the first student writes in the book and leaves it worthless for the next. Lithography was the technology which made copybooks cheap enough to be thrown away after their first use.

In Columbia University’s extensive collection of penmanship manuals is a set of copybooks, written statements, and other ephemera gathered in 1871 in aid of a lawsuit. In one of these volumes is a manuscript deposition in which Payson & Dunton (Spencer’s great rivals) claim to have been, in 1851, the first to print copybooks by lithography. Printing from copperplates, they say, “was a slow process, only four copies were printed at an impression. This caused them to consider some more rapid method of printing. Mr. Payson while experimenting with different methods of printing, saw some fine maps printed from the lithographic process. He at once conceived the idea that copy books could be printed in the same way by transfers from the copper plate .... The first process, printing directly from the copper plates, required that the paper be damped twice and partially dried before printing, which caused the paper to shrink—besides destroying the original finish of the same. By the lithographic process the original finish of the paper was preserved, it being only necessary to expose that part of the paper to the damp stone, occupied by the copy. This successful experiment established a new feature in copy book manufacture. All hitherto had printed copies from wood cuts-—and electrotypes by the ordinary letterpress work or from the copper or steel plates.” *** Needless to say, I believe it would be wise to be skeptical as to Payson & Dunton’s claim of priority. However, their arguments about the advantages of lithography for copybooks are informative.

The use of engraved plates as the master image for transfer to the lithographic stone was a process well known in the fields of music and map printing. As late
as 1887, correspondence from Charles Scribner of Payson, Dunton & Scribner shows that publishers were still having copper or steel engravings made in preparation for lithographic printing. I haven’t yet traced the demise of this practice, but it appears that with new writing styles and new publishers, the printing of handwriting manuals had turned to more standard lithography by the turn of the century.

Jane Rodgers Siegel


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Chapter News & Upcoming Events

NEW ENGLAND

ON MAY 19–20, 2007, APHA NEW ENGLAND experienced “The Passion of Paper,” a Rhode Island weekend of exhibits, talks and demonstrations on the art of handmade paper. On Saturday, May 19, Cathleen Baker, author and Senior Paper Conservator for the University of Michigan Library, presented “The Legacy of Dard Hunter” at the John Hay Library’s Lownes Room of Brown University. We viewed exhibits on Dard Hunter at the John Hay Library, and on “Ilse Nesbitt, Paper and Tools,” at the Providence Athenaeum. Sunday, May 20 brought us to Newport, where Ilse Nesbitt, Proprietor of Third & Elm Press, spoke to us about “Third & Elm Handmade: Japanese Paper Made in Newport,” and we enjoyed her demonstration of papermaking at Newport Art Museum’s Coleman Center. Sunday, August 5, will feature a buffet lunch, followed by a pilgrimage to the paper collection of Sidney Berger and Michele Cloonan in Waban, Massachusetts. Sid, who is Professor in the Communications and English Departments at Simmons College in Boston, is well known as the author of, among other articles and monographs, The Hand Made Papers of Japan, Karli Frigge’s Life in Marbling; and Michele, Dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons, is familiar to all for her Early Bindings in Paper, as well as for many articles on preservation. Together, Sid and Michele have collected paper for over 30 years and have amassed a complementary research library on the subject. During the summer, Sid will be teaching a two-week course at the Library School of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, “The Manufacture, Description, Uses, and Preservation of Paper in the Scholarly World.” On Thursday, October 18, we will again gather at the John Hay Library of Brown University, to hear Alan Fern, Director Emeritus of the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C., speak on “The Eragny Press in Context,” a talk which will touch upon Lucien and Esther Pissarro’s unusual paper choices. Preceding this will be a wine and cheese reception and tours of the exhibition, “Illustrating the Good Life: The Pissarros’ Eragny Press, 1894–1914.”

Alice Beckwith and David Wall

CHESAPEAKE

THE GREATER RICHMOND Itinerant Printers Historical & Occasional Gathering (GRIPHOG) invited us to “Galley Proof,” an event they hosted on March 31 in Doswell, Virginia at the home of Bob Oldham. Bob owns a Liberty press, an unusual platen press where the rollers move up and down in slots and the ink disc hangs off the back, out of the way. Bob and his Ad Lib Press have just published A Field Guide to North American Hand Presses and Their Manufacturers (144 pages), which features 48 color photos of hand presses. Mike Anderson and Stuart Bradley attended “Galley Proof” and greatly enjoyed perusing this marvelous volume, copies of which can be ordered from Bob’s website, www.adlibpress.us. The gathering amounted to our first Share-A-Ton, or informal, stimulating social occasion allowing us to “share a ton” of things, including show-and-tell samples of our recent letterpress endeavors, information about letterpress stuff possibly for sale, tips on letterpress supplies and services, and so
Bob generously shared his shop with us for a couple of hours, gave us a chance to try out some of his letterpress equipment (including a Cincinnati hand-press he has restored), and treated us to a PowerPoint show on moving hand-presses.

It remains merely to mention some upcoming events of interest. From August 4th to the 6th, at the Buyers’ Market of American Craft in Philadelphia, letterpress printers will show their wares at the Letterpress Pavilion. (For more information, see www.howtouse-yourhands.com.) And, of course, October 6 & 7 will bring the 14th annual Oak Knoll Fest, sponsored by Oak Knoll Books in New Castle, Delaware. The work of some 40 fine-press printers from the United States and Europe will be displayed, and panel discussions will be held on each morning of the festival.

Mike Denker, Stuart Bradley, and Ray Nichols

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

ON MARCH 10, APHA SOCAL HELD THE SECOND EVENT in its Salon Series at the home André Chaves: “Moveable Type ... and Presses ... and Cabinets.” Conversation ranged over a wide variety of subjects, such as acquiring new—or divesting old—equipment; locating (and ascertaining the cost of) new or used type; finding paper that works well with metal type; ink suppliers, photopolymer plates and non-toxic solvents. The question of where to acquire type and presses in our digital era was a hot topic. (The popular C&P Pilot press was discussed as a first choice for neophytes, but drawbacks and size restrictions were also commented upon.) André shared snacks and beverages with us, and took us on a tour of his remarkable working collection of printing presses, and typecasting and letterpress equipment, which he has set up in a magnificent custom-built Craftsman-style space. After viewing such treats, the 18 participants discussed how to move heavy metal presses and equipment. Our resident expert, Bob Paduano of the Crawford Company, was a fount of information and told people with questions to contact him any time with moving and repair issues. Bob can make needed parts and knows where to find presses. André also offered to help with locating equipment, and he invited us to return for another APHA meeting, which we indeed plan to do.

Our next meeting was held on April 28 at the International Printing Museum, where Director Mark Barbour not only demonstrated hand typecasting, but also treated us to typecasting of Chinese and Japanese characters. Mark also gave us a presentation on the Linotype and on the Monotype Thompson typecaster. The museum, founded in 1988 by David Jacobson and Ernest A. Lindner, holds the Lindner Collection of Antique Printing Machinery. More information on the museum is available at www.printmuseum.org

Our salons and collections visits have become so popular that we have had to request attendees to make reservations. Space considerations have forced us to limit our number to 18. Participants find these informal talk-fests stimulating and inclusive, and say that they are particularly good at getting people to know each other better—part of the reason we have begun to describe them in terms of a series. We have just started a Collections Series in which we plan to visit both institutional and private holdings. Our first such event was at the Getty.

On May 19, Dr. Jeff Groves, Professor of English at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, and two of his students—Glennis Rayermann and Alex Hagen—spoke about the Columbian hand press in the press room of the Honnold Library (at HMC), which Jeff has been using recently to teach classes for the college. Their talk was entitled “(Auto)biography of a Press: The R. Ritchie & Son Columbian Hand Press at Honnold Library,” and was a “thick description” of the press based on what its physical state has had to tell them about its history and operation. The event was limited to 12 attendees.

During June, as our second event in the Collections Series, we visited UCLA to get a sneak peek at some of the university’s extensive special holdings of Aldines chosen for the exhibition which will greet attendees of APHA’s Annual Conference from October 11–13. Like the Conference, “Transformations: The Persistence of Aldus Manutius,” that exhibit will highlight Aldus’s continuing influence on contemporary book production. In July, we will hold our third salon, hosted by Cristina Favretto—this time on “zines.” For late summer we plan to showcase an emerging letterpress printer.

By the way, all but a couple of our chapter members wish to participate in an announcement-only e-mail list, created to publicize meetings, send reports of our
salons and collections visits, and gather opinions on chapter matters. (Of course, members not on the e-mail list will receive posted announcements.) Such an APHA e-mail list at a national level would be marvelous! Our own list has proved very effective for communicating with our members.

Kitty Maryatt, Richenda Brim, and Steve MacLeod

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

ON JUNE 16TH, JACK STAUFFACHER hosted APHA’s NorCal Chapter at 300 Broadway, San Francisco, where his Greenwood Press has been located since 1966. 300 Broadway was once known as “The Independent Pressroom,” and according to Jack was built cooperatively by a number of printers who sought a modern facility at that time (hence its steel-concrete construction, open floors, and windows). Jack spoke about the building as it was created for printers in the early 1920s, housing such figures as the late Lawton Kennedy and Heywood Hunt. In 1945, a portion of the United Nations Charter was machined at the site. Jack is preparing a booklet on the design and history of 300 Broadway with the help of Robert Harlan, who is the author of *John Henry Nash* (1970), and who is now retired from the Library School at the University of California, Berkeley.

John McBride

NEW YORK

THOUGH IT IS NOT IN FACT sponsored by APHA New York, it is well worth our while to mention a forum on “Tradition and Innovation in Fine Printing,” which was cosponsored by the Bard Graduate Center and the William Morris Society in the United States, and held on Monday, March 26 at the Bard Graduate Center, 38 West 86th Street in New York. *Printing History* editor, Morris expert, and University of Maryland Professor Emeritus of English, William S. (Bill) Peterson explored 19th-century bookmaking techniques through the lens of the Kelmscott Press. Bill Peterson considered how William Morris (1834–96), although known as a craftsman who sought to recover medieval bookmaking methods, was also highly responsive to the artistic innovations of his time. Closely examining Morris’s own typefaces and the wood engravings of the Kelmscott Press, Bill showed that Morris made extensive, pioneering use of photography as an instrument of design. Joining the conversation was renowned artist and bookmaker Barry Moser, who discussed how he draws inspiration from both historic and contemporary techniques. The program served as a complement to the conference “Birth of the Bestseller: The 19th-Century Book in Britain, France, and Beyond,” March 29–31, which was organized by the Bibliographical Society of America and held at The Grolier Club, The Morgan Library & Museum, and the Fales Library of New York University. More information on these events is available on the websites www.bibsocamer.org, www.morrissociety.org, and www.bgc.bard.edu.

On May 2, APHA New York hosted “Boeken! Dutch Book Typography, 1907-2007,” a lecture by Mathieu Lommen at Columbia University’s Butler Library. Mathieu Lommen treated us to an illustrated survey of classical Dutch book and type design from Art Nouveau to the digital era, tracing the various trends during that time: from books inspired by William Morris and the Arts & Crafts aesthetic, to the influence of programmatic modernism after World War II and beyond, to the rediscovery of microtypographic refinements in recent years. Among the many designers
whose work was highlighted were Jan van Krimpen, Harry N. Sierman, Bram de Does and the type designers of The Hague Academy. Mathieu Lommen is Curator of the Special Collections Library at the University of Amsterdam, editor of the scholarly journal Quaerendo, and coauthor of many books, including several in English: Dutch Typefounders’ Specimens (1998), Bram de Does: Typographer & Type Designer (2003), and Sem Hartz and the Making of Linotype Juliana (2006). The event was cosponsored by the Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Columbia University, the New York Chapter of APHA, and the Type Directors Club.

On Tuesday, May 22 at The Grolier, APHA New York and The Grolier Club hosted a screening of “Letterpress Unbound,” a documentary about master letterpress printers Ruth Lingen and Peter Kruty produced by Champe Smith and Sally Gardner. Ruth discussed type and printing, and displayed some of the books she collaborated on with artists Lois Lane and Chuck Close, as well as a single book she worked on with Alexander Calder (completed posthumously). Peter Kruty joined artist Mikhail Magaril to talk about their joint project, The Nightingale, which features Mikhail’s Chinese-style woodcuts. Peter also showed books he worked on together with artists Lesley Dill, Shelagh Keeley, and Robert Peterson. The producers of the documentary, Champe Smith and Sally Gardner, were on hand along with the printers, to answer questions and showcase other printed works.

Joel Mason, Jared Ash, Paul Shaw & Nina Schneider

Printing History on EBSCO

APHA has accepted a proposal from EBSCO Publishing to include our semiannual journal, Printing History, in the full-text database Library Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA), which extends back as far as the mid-1960s. Content will be viewable in color. We have a generous open option to coexist with EBSCO’s other database aggregators, or to start up our own open access site. EBSCO plans, within a few years, to build a “Visual Arts & Architecture” database for which Printing History will also be a strong candidate. In the meantime, such subject-appropriate establishment in electronic publications by a prestigious information provider constitutes a major step forward in building awareness of our flagship publication and of APHA itself: EBSCO is utilized by roughly 90% of academic and public libraries throughout the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, not to mention many developing countries as well.

Martin Antonetti

Book Notice


Rochester (New York) Institute of Technology’s Cary Graphic Arts Press and Linotype GmbH of Bad Homburg have copublished the graphic-arts master’s own comprehensive illustrated story of his life with letters: pen-drawn, metal type, computer programs and pixels, from the early 20th century through 2006. Similar to recent Zapf books, Alphabet Stories has a plain dark-blue binding, gold-stamped title on the spine, and HZ monogram on the front of the cover. It is masterfully printed in color on an uncoated cream-colored paper, and includes the illustrated narrative, a plate section, a selected bibliography, and a postscript by David Pankow, Curator of RIT’s Cary Graphic Arts Collection, which maintains one of the most comprehensive American archives of Zapf’s work.

“Alphabet stories” are what Hermann Zapf tells best. Over his many years, he has designed over 25 typefaces, including the ubiquitous Palatino, Optima and Zapf Dingbats digital fonts which are included on most computer operating systems; he has illustrated and designed countless books, and has traveled the world educating calligraphers and graphic designers.

This is Hermann Zapf’s first monograph to be type-set in the new Palatino Nova and Palatino Sans digital typefaces issued by Linotype. It is written as an anecdotal first-person account, and the reader is treated to Zapf’s personal recollections of technical breakthroughs. Zapf reveals milestones tracing his education in 1930s Germany, to his work on the forefront of
computer-aided typesetting in the 1970s, to the tour-de-force design of a complex calligraphic font, Zapfino, in the late ‘90s. Magnificent reproductions of Zapf’s calligraphy, production proofs, typographic specimens, and photographs complete the portrait of one of the most prolific and accomplished designers of our time.

A Curious Transformation

HANS ECKERT, a librarian at the university library of Frankfurt, is preparing an exhibition, “Bruce Rogers, Book Designer,” to be displayed at the Gutenberg Museum (Liebfrauenplatz 5, 55116 Mainz, Germany) from November 20, 2007 to January 10, 2008. The exhibition will show some 60 books, as well as ephemeral material, and will formally open on November 19th at 7.00 p.m. The 64-page catalog will be available directly from the museum in November, and can be ordered from the Gutenberg Museum Shop (e-mail info@gutenberg-shop.de, tel. Germany/6131/220469). Further information on the exhibition itself is available by e-mail (gutenberg-museum@stadt.mainz.de), by web (www.gutenberg-museum.de), or by telephone (Germany/6131/122640 or 122644).

At any rate, Mr. Eckert’s inquiry, posted March 27th of this year on the SHARP-list, may strike the wry side of your funny-bone: “There is an interesting detail mentioned by Andrew Hoyem (Arion Press) at the opening of a Bruce Rogers exhibition in Minneapolis in June 2003. A portrait of Rogers painted by W.A. Conrow in 1933 was used by the Eli Lilly Company as an advertisement in drugstores across the United States. The original painting shows Rogers sketching a layout for a page holding (a pen in his right hand?) and a cigarette in his left hand. The reproduction for the Eli Lilly ad was retouched so that he now is writing out a prescription and (of course) the cigarette was removed. The book designer became a family physician ....”

As yet no one has been quite able to help Mr. Eckert locate the original Conrow painting or, as he subsequently found, the Upjohn broadside from the 30s (or reproductions thereof), with success. He would like to include some “Rogers ads” in the exhibition. A few APHA members have mentioned having seen (and one claims to own, but cannot find) a copy of the advertisement. However, like the giant squid and the Oath of a Freeman, it is proving to be rather elusive. We wait here at Editorial Central with bated breath.

Editor

Briefly Noted

AS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED by Dr. Bettina Wagner, the Munich copy of the Gutenberg Bible has been digitized and is now accessible via the online Incunable Catalogue of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich (BSB-Ink online). Go to the website, mdzx.bib-bvb.de/cocoon/bsbink/sucheEin.html, and enter “B-408,” leading to the catalog entry, digitized images and a detailed pdf description. The Munich Gutenberg is one of only two copies which contain the table of rubrics, the printed list of headlines which served as a guide to the rubricator. It is printed on paper, and contains some illumination and manuscript annotation. The latter can be ascribed to a Benedictine monk from Tegernsee. In 1803, the Bible was transferred to Munich from the Benedictine monastery of Andechs. The library website includes links to its cooperative partner, the Humanities Media Interface Project of Keio University Tokyo, which carried out the digitization, as well as to an article (in German) about the project.

“WESTERN NEW YORK TYPOFEST: A Celebration of Graphic & Typographic Arts” arranged by the WNY Book Arts Collabora-
tive, was held May 8–11, 2007, in Buffalo. May 8 was “Pecha Kucha Night,” presented by Hallwalls in the basement of The Church on Delaware Avenue. The evening featured graphic designers Alex Bitterman, Shelly Bronson, Brian Grunert, Hero Design, Colin Kahn, Richard Kegler, Nicole Lecht, Julian Montague, David Moore, and Kyle Schlesinger—all of whom discussed their work. May 9 brought a tour of and studio visit to Paradise Press and Printing Prep to see hand-setting of metal type and a demo on Helvetica. There was a showing of “Helvetica: A Documentary Film,” followed by a question and answer session with the film’s director. Further doings during May in Rochester were: a May 10 lecture by RIT’s Charles Bigelow; RIT’s Cary Graphic Arts Press’s dedication of its new Alexander S. Lawson Publishing Center (May 10); and Hermann Zapf in person at the Cary Collection on May 11.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED in cinematic depictions of historical printing, the following is excerpted from a LetPres listserv posting (January, 2007) by Graham Bignell: “The printing scenes in [the recent movie] ‘Miss Potter’ were filmed at The Type Museum in London and included both myself and Ian Mortimer of I.M. Imprint [as volunteer pressmen in period clothing] proofing a block on the museum’s Columbian Press. It was Ian’s idea to discard the usual cloth cap for the printers’ hats made from newspapers. You can just see another Albion being used behind us, and we later get a scene of Norman & Beatrix standing in front of a Wharfdale looking at final page proofs ... It is a shame that we had a lot of working shots cut from the final film, including two very expert Wharfdale operators ....” To see the online trailer of Beatrix Potter at the printers, go to www.misspotter-themovie.com.

Editor

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### Sustaining, Contributing and New APHA Members

**Sustaining members**

- Terry Belanger
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- John E. Lee
- Charles A. Rheault, Jr.
- Peter Riedel
- David S. Rose
- Mark Samuels Lasner
- Laura Sillerman
- Michael Sillerman
- Deirdre C. Stam
- Irene Tichenor

- Getty Research Institute
- David Goodrich
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- George W. Hamilton
- Martyn Hitchcock
- Paula Houser
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- Don Swanson
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- Lee Walcott
- Valley Village, CA
- David L. Warner
- Bowie, MD
- George Wong
- Los Angeles, CA

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