
The APHA Newsletter

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Reports on the 1994 APHA Annual Conference

APHA AT TWENTY

CELEBRATING THE PAST: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

At the Friday night opening reception on October 7, at the Grolier Club, attendees had a chance to renew friendships and view the exhibits *100 Books Famous in the History of Medicine*, and *Printing at the Whittington Press, 1972-1994*.

On Saturday, attendees gathered bright and early for coffee, and then heard President Martin Hutner cite Elizabeth and Ben Lieberman, recognize other founding members in attendance and thank those who made the conference possible: Mike Peich, Jerry Kelly and David Pankow, who worked on the broadside portfolio, *A Type Miscellany*; Anne Anninger, chair of the Program Committee; Steve Crook, Executive Secretary; Ed Colker and The Cooper Union, who provided the video aids; Lowell Bodger; and Bowne & Co., who printed the conference keepsake, a list of all the winners of the APHA awards.

The morning sessions brought us through APHA's twenty-year history through to the present.

Three (Possibly Four) Ages of APHA

University of Virginia Professor Terry Belanger began his address, "Twenty Years After," with two stories describing the extremes of the ability to recall details. The first story, about a contest to recall the lowest price of butter, occurred among a group of mixed ages seated around a Kansas kitchen table. The contest ended with the turn of an "older and wiser" retired English professor. "Don't play this game with me," he said. "You'll lose." In the second story, students in one of Professor Belanger's classes didn't understand the humor in a story he told about a German traveller. After ordering tea in an American restaurant, a German woman opened the neat and tidy teabag and sprinkled the loose tea in the pot to steep; but when the tea was poured she dropped the wrapped lump of sugar into her cup. The youthful students didn't know that sugar came packaged in wrapped lumps. Professor Belanger described his talk as a reflection from a position between those who remember everything and those who don't know what has come before.

Professor Belanger reflected on the first decade after APHA's formation in 1974 when interest in printing history and related fields increased at an astonishing rate. This resulted in the development of college level courses at major universities, museum and library exhibitions, and new books and catalogues all devoted to aspects of printing and book history. The effort of APHA's founders and leaders resulted in a respected scholarly journal, a newsletter, a national lecture series and highly regarded awards for contributions to the study of printing history. APHA was instrumental in building a forum among history scholars, bibliophiles and contemporary publishing and graphic arts professionals and hobbyists.

Reminiscences of APHA's beginnings were followed by reports on the technological advances of computer networking and other electronic systems that make possible nationwide networking among bibliographers and historians. These technological tools have led to more and more specialized studies. With the influx of new information from specialized research, it is no longer possible to keep up with all that is happening in printing history and bibliography.

Professor Belanger concluded his talk with the recommendation that APHA consider as its future mission the coordination of the hundreds of players now on the field of printing history.

—Lissa Doddington

The Art Preservative: From the History of the Book Back to Printing History

Michael Winship was the co-founder and president of the New England chapter of APHA. He is an associate professor of the Department of English in American literature, bibliography, and the history of the book.

Winship began his talk by stating that 1994 is an important anniversary for APHA for a couple of reasons; it is a celebration of printing, and a recognition of the recent emergence of a new discipline. Winship is a scholar and he said that his personal review of printing history can be dangerous because he brings his own prejudices to things he learns.

Printing preserves a record: it is the most important material of history. The 19th century press is a symbol of American production, along with the case binder and papermaker machines.

Winship gave an overview of examples. In 1808, Isaiah Thomas stated that in the late 18th and early 19th century the interest in the history of the book was growing. This coincided with a growing relationship between the disciplines of the history of the book and printing history. Thomas noted that there were continuities along with a new direction in this relationship. The history of the book was consciously moving away from and even preceding printing history. Thomas claimed that geography was the organizing principle, where the place and act of production was different than the place and act of consumption.

Winship offered another example of a debate between Hall and Silver. Hall stated that printers and scholars must move beyond geographical implications that Thomas had proposed. The history of the book transforms static information into dynamic. Silver argued with Hall that American printing history was already recorded. All one had to do was look at newspapers, documents and other material. It was simply a matter of organizing it all. He had created an inventory and had two suggestions – that printing history focus on the 19th century industry and that there be a close connection between “technologists” and historians. Winship wondered if Hall’s definition of printing could be as exciting today. Winship saw Hall’s argument about the history of the book as a synthesis between books and culture and between printer and reader. Silver’s history is academic and it established power relations that are not necessary.

Winship stated that today APHA is the type of organization that connects the “technologists” with the historians and to some degree it has lived up to its expectations. The organization has scholars, printers, librarians, and vast bibliographic tools and technology.

Winship then spoke about his own studies. He had researched information on a certain Charles Hamilton, born 1828, who printed the weekly *Worcester Palladium*. Hamilton was the proprietor and editor of a modest job printing house that not only produced the *Palladium* but also student papers, books, tax books, cards, tickets, etc. He also printed newsletters and bookplates for the American Antiquarian Society. When Hamilton died, he left no diaries, pictures or published personal writing. Winship was attracted to Hamilton and his printing house because all he left behind were business transactions; invoices and bills of lading. He discovered that Hamilton was in business for 50 years and lasted through the Civil War, financial panics and depressions. Winship discovered that labor was the greatest expense to Hamilton, paper and equipment costs being much less important than today. The types and models of printing presses used in a 19th century job shop allowed a glimpse of what technologies were employed. Job printers, it seems, were receptive to new inventions and new technologies, and were the first to use monotype.

Winship’s conclusions: the history of the book must turn to printing history to avoid alienating common interests. It must not become severely academic or pedagogical. The scholarship

of printing history, on the other hand, has to adapt itself to contemporary concerns. In order to thrive it must go farther than just compiling information. It should also address the study of social history and the preservation of a culture.

—Nina M. Schneider

W. Thomas Taylor, former antiquarian bookseller and private printer from Austin, spoke about the private press movement. He announced that he was leaving his business to his partner and briefly described his firm’s history. Apparently the changes in presswork had influenced his decision to retire at the end of this year. Moving to private presses, Taylor described traditional private press people as nostalgic, drawing sustenance from a tradition beginning with Gutenberg. These presses tended to be nostalgic in both production and selection of works. He contrasted the traditional private presses with newer ones, arguing that technology is shifting presswork from a more typographic tradition toward work employing more images (citing printing on coated paper). Recent bookwork, especially artists’ books and book objects, does not see itself as part of a continuum with Gutenberg. These newer private presses were unified by a willingness to explore and take chances. Taylor found the traditional influence between private and commercial presses so attenuated as to have broken. The private press movement is adrift; neither influenced nor influencing. Taylor emphasized that while private presses were not necessarily dead, they did not matter anymore. What might be lost culturally if private presses disappeared? Setting aside fine typography, Taylor described the oft-forgotten associations between private presses and new poets including Marianne Moore, T. S. Eliot, Hart Crane, Joyce, Auden, William Carlos Williams, Yeats, Pound, Frost, Robinson Jeffers, and more recently, Philip Levine and James Merrill. Jokingly, he suggested poetry might require less type [and less justification?] than other work for private presses. But more seriously, he suggested that private presses and poets shared a mutual respect for fashioning words into poems and type into books.

—Paul Romaine

We broke for lunch at this point, giving participants time to view the exhibits at the Morgan before gathering to hear about the future.



Type in the Modern Book

Cynthia Hollandsworth, the U.S. Type Marketing Manager for the Agfa Division of Miles Inc., bridged from Bruce Rogers' *Odyssey to Homer* to the CD ROM book in her presentation *Type in the Modern Book*. She organized her talk into five categories:

- 1) the Iconoclastic modern book
- 2) Redefining modern printing
- 3) Legibility/Readability
- 4) Technology and
- 5) Magazining:

To begin, Hollandsworth stated "Type always gets better". Supporting this claim, she explained that 10,000 typefaces are currently available and in 1993 more books were published than in any other year. "Books are not going away". Describing the book as the most conservative of all typographic objects, she provided examples of standard typefaces integrated innovatively. As printing has embraced the postscript and truetype technologies it has created text easier to view and consistent for mass printing.

The issues of legibility have become those of familiarity. The quality of edge in reproduction today is better than that of letterpress even in laser prints, however, it does lack the variation we appreciate as lending character to a page. So much so, that now, typefaces are being created to emulate the variation between letters. A full circle.

Other additions to postscript type such as multiple masters are intended to support document portability. These additions offer possibilities with given limitations. Essentially, Hollandsworth suggested that the taste of the designer and good judgement are key in the successful integration of any of these new technologies in quality design. Successful amalgamations of type and design in books are evident in all forms: whether in the physical book as we know it or the CD ROM representing the book of the future. The possibilities are expanding.

The choices of the multi-media advanced technology should not be threatening Hollandsworth says. These formats are expanding the idea of what communication in the book can be. They will continue to educate and inform their audience. These technologies and the aesthetic sense of the designers involved will make it easier than ever to make good books.

—Spring Harvey

Ink vs. Electrons: Comments from the Field

The last speaker, Wendy Richmond, offered "Ink vs Electrons: Comments from the Field" in a video presentation. Richmond, a designer and now an independent consultant in interactive media based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, cited her earlier studies and research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with Muriel Cooper and others in the Visible Language Laboratories, and her subsequent advanced work as part of the PBS station WGBH design team in Boston, well-known for their innovative graphics and video imaging. Richmond included part of a documentary "visual book" originally in CD ROM showing the viewer's capability to change from English to bi- or multi-lingual narration.

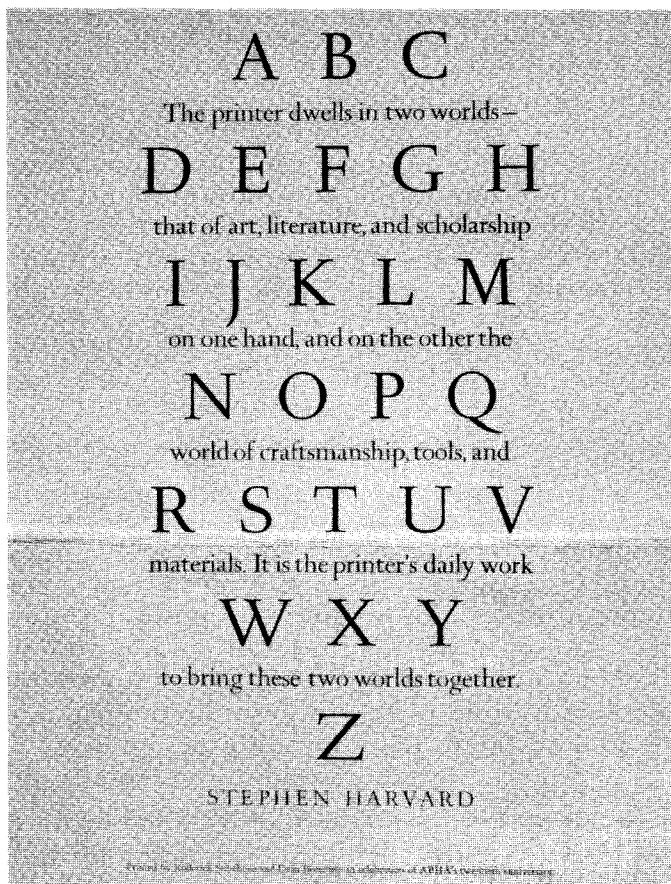
She presented (in color) what she described as three developing "tiers" of electronic transfer and demonstrated "planes" of language and data in spatial illusion to deliver several levels of communication. They could be considered: 1. The book as metaphor - existing stored information. 2. Current, up-to-the-minute, real-time information. 3. Information exchange between two people (interactive).

Thus, narrative and data are now features of the growing global progress and speed in electronic visualization. Richmond closed with an entertaining look (via Apple computers) at the networked station/office/home study of tomorrow.

—Ed Colker

Braced by this vision of the future, or in need of recovery, depending on the person, we repaired to a reception at The Union League Club, not before Anne Anninger thanked the Grolier Club, the Morgan Library, and those who made the day possible. She also encouraged us to visit the exhibits available for view on Sunday, and announced APHA's programs for next year. The 1995 Lieberman lecture, by Claire Badaracco on "The Memorable Text: The Printed Good in Library Design 1920-1940," will be held September 22 or 23 at the University of Texas at Austin. Terry Belanger and Evan Moore are program chairs for the APHA 1995 conference, October 13-15 at the University of Virginia. Mark your calendars now!





One of the special broadsides from APHA's twentieth anniversary portfolio, *A Type Miscellany*

Beinecke Fellowships

The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library announces its fellowship program for 1995–96. This program supports visiting scholars at work on post-doctoral (or equivalent) research in the Beinecke collections. The fellowships, usually one month in duration, support travel and provide a living allowance. The program runs from September '95 through May '96. Deadline for applications is January 1995. For a description of the program, the various fellowship awards, and the subject areas in the Beinecke collections, please contact Robert Babcock, Coordinator of Fellowship Programs, The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, P.O. Box 208240, New Haven, Connecticut 06520-8240; Phone: (203) 432-2968; FAX: (203) 432-4047

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