

REVIEW

Eighteenth-Century English Books, Considered by Librarians and Booksellers, Bibliographers and Collectors. Proceedings of a Conference held at San Francisco June 25–28, 1975. Chicago, Association of College and Research Libraries, 1976. pp. 97. \$5.00 (U.S.)

The proceedings of this conference, organised by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries, did not actually appear until early 1977, despite the date of imprint on the title-page. This delay in appearance has seriously affected the topicality of a proportion of the papers but much remains that is current and stimulating. The worst area of dating relates to the Eighteenth-Century STC project. The meeting at San Francisco reflected the first flood of enthusiasm, and also scepticism, towards the long awaited eighteenth-century short title catalogue. John Jolliffe's paper "An Eighteenth-Century STC", in which he announced the launching of a project by the Xerox Education Group, has long since been submerged or integrated, as have those of Eddy and Cameron, into the current extensive efforts on both sides of the Atlantic!¹

The keynote speech by William B. Todd, "Eighteenth-Century English Books: an Antirevolutionary Tract", is witty, semi-autobiographical and peppered with references to the giants of the field. He ably sets the scene with particular reference to the eighteenth-century STC and the work on the Bowyer and Strahan ledgers, documented later in the book. A reference to Dean Cameron and Ivan Page, which will be of interest to Australian readers, is marred by a misspelling of the Australian Capital Territory – a fault of Professor Todd or the final typist? Are there variants?

Solid pieces come from the ever productive G. Thomas Tanselle, "The Descriptive Bibliography of Eighteenth-Century Books", which lucidly covers the state of the art and literature, two on the Strahan and Bowyer printing ledgers by Patricia Hernelund and Keith Maslen respectively, both fascinating accounts of the nature of the material and the problems involved in publishing them, and Donald F. Bond on "Problems in Editing the Eighteenth-Century Periodical Essay".

The last three essays focus on the eighteenth-century book as seen by a bookseller, collector and rare book librarian. All are easy to read and are liberally sprinkled with anecdotes. Robert J. Barry Jr. of C.A. Stonehill Inc. relates his auction and book-selling experience with particular reference to Yale and the "ones that got away". William P. Barlow documents his collection of John Baskerville with the mixture of pride and idiosyncratic enthusiasm that only the dedicated collector possesses, while Alexandra Mason amusingly relates the hard work and intellectual curiosity needed by a rare book librarian.

The book's physical appearance sadly proves that its subject matter did not permeate its production. The papers are reproduced from a uniform typescript and bound in stiff paper covers, with the front cover and the title page unimaginatively designed and laid out. Physical attractiveness and tardy publication aside, this volume should nevertheless be in all libraries which purport an interest in the eighteenth century as reflected in the printed word. If much remains to be done in the United States and Great Britain, how much more needs, at a basic level, to be done in Australia

and New Zealand, where a relatively small number of enthusiasts battle ably on? Perhaps it is the nature of the antipodes? – witness Ms Mason's description (p.92) of the bibliographer of Edmund Curll who, on visiting Australia to check Curll imprints, became seduced by the collection of and research into aboriginal bark paintings and has never surfaced again – much to the dismay of eighteenth-century enthusiasts.

Colin Steele
Australian National University,
Canberra.

1. For those wishing to keep up with progress, reference should be made to Robin Alston's article in *Direction Line 4* and the regular reports in Terry Belanger's *Bibliography (BiN) Newsletter*, Alston leading the British Library initiatives with Belanger working on resources in New York.

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