

PBSA Turns One Hundred

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The mere fact of having square brackets on your typewriter
doesn't make you a bibliographer.

R. F. Roberts¹

A new century, a new dress: with the beginning of volume 101 in 2007 *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* (hereafter *PBSA*) has acquired a new outward guise and a new printer.² Granted, bibliographical journals don't have to compete on the news-stands, but the now-abandoned elegant cover would certainly have caught the attention, whereas the new one would blush unseen. Why the change? The Report of the Publications Committee at the Annual General Meeting of the Bibliographical Society of America (hereafter *BSA*) in January 2006 provides the answer:

In an effort to reduce expenses, the committee voted to transfer the printing of *PBSA* to the Ascensius Press beginning with v. 101, no. 1 (January 2007). The Ascensius Press will be able to handle mailing as well as printing, thereby simplifying the *PBSA* production process. Savings will be achieved through the change of paper stock, the use of an offset cover in place of the present letterpress cover with foil stamping, and a reduction in annual page count.³

Over the past several decades *PBSA* has been well served by its printers, from 1994 to 2006 the Stinehour Press and before that similarly distinguished firms from the North East, such as the Anthoensen Press, the Shagbark Press and, from 1991 to 1993, the Ascensius itself. The new paper stock is noticeably bulkier, but the printing itself is up to the customary standard, so that most readers will probably be either unaware of the changes or indifferent to them, especially readers in institutions where the covers have been removed in the process of binding the year's four numbers.

These changes seem surprising when the same annual report records the Society's assets at \$2,624,145,⁴ including a \$2.5 million portfolio that has returned an annual 11.1% since 1983, a financial situation which must surely be the envy of every other bibliographical society in the English-speaking world. On the other hand,

¹ Quoted in Jacob Blanck, "Problems in the Bibliographical Description of Nineteenth-Century American Books," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 36 (1942): 125, from an unspecified work by R. F. Roberts. Perhaps "typewriter" would today be replaced by "computer keyboard."

² In this commentary on the Bibliographical Society of America and its *Papers* I have elected to not go much beyond the mid-1960s, by which time *PBSA* had assumed its present form, concerning myself more with its origins and evolution.

³ "Report of the Publications Committee at the Annual General Meeting of the Bibliographical Society of America," *PBSA* 100, no. 4 (December 2006): 487.

⁴ All dollar amounts in this essay are in USD.

“printing, composition and mailing” absorbed \$59,000, slightly exceeding income from membership dues, and assets appear to have declined overall by nearly \$80,000 in the course of 2005 as a result of the Society’s various obligations and activities, including publications, sponsorships and the award of fellowships.

An addendum to the foregoing is necessary in view of the recently received minutes of the 2007 Annual General Meeting.⁵ In his report the president informs members that during 2006 his “top priorities were to raise funds for new projects and to reduce expenditures on continuing activities.”⁶ But he was then able to announce a bequest of \$303,000 from the estate of Katherine F. Pantzer, for ever to be remembered as the omniscient editor of the second edition of *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed ... 1475–1640*. As a result of the Pantzer bequest and various other gifts, along with “reassuring improvements in portfolio performance,” the Society now has assets amounting to \$3,184,879.

According to the 2007 Annual Report membership at July 2006 stood at 1,014 (512 institutional, 502 personal). The figure has been around the one thousand mark in the last few years, a plateau following a steady decline, from a high of 1,616 in 1971, when 1,700 copies were being printed, as opposed to 1,200 today.⁷

Yes, I allow that it’s the content of a journal that really counts, not how it’s decked out; nonetheless, this is a convenient place for one occasional contributor to *PBSA* to confess that the appeal of cover, type, printing and paper—not to speak of interested and accommodating editors—has had a bearing on where he has tried to place material, hang the pother of trying to conform with its current finicky editorial styling.⁸ On the score of styling I cannot forbear riding a skittish hobby-horse by illustrating one recently-exemplified difficulty (to rate it no more strongly) inherent in the Chicago styling, as practised by *PBSA*, viz. the convention of placing syntactical commas and full stops within closing quotation marks, so that to indicate that a punctuation mark *is* part of the quotation itself the following

⁵ The Bibliographical Society of America, *List of Members & Annual Reports*, 2007.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁷ The membership numbers given are at times difficult to interpret. For example, membership in 2001 was reported as 1,196 (634 personal), in 2003 as 944 (but only 333 personal). Perhaps the wild variations result from purges of non-financial members? Similarly with the number of copies printed: whereas in the past half-century the progressive reduction in the number of copies printed has kept step with the decline in membership numbers, in the early years the number of copies printed often greatly exceeded membership numbers, to the extent that a smattering of originals from as early as volume 5 (1910) were still available for binding up in the 1963 Kraus reprint, some of them, though, in less-than-pristine condition. (The only number of the *Bulletin*—on which see below—needing re-printing for the Kraus issue was vol. 1, no. 1 (May 1907).) Thus vol. 14, no. 1 (1920 [issued January 1922]) comprised 800 copies but vol. 14, no. 2 (1920 [issued May 1923]) only 425, and vol. 15, no. 1 (1921 [issued July 1922]) again comprised 800 copies but vol. 15, no. 2 (1921 [issued August 1922]) only 325. Perhaps the fluctuation in copies printed was due to an anticipation of a demand from non-members for particular issues.

⁸ “We follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, in matters of general style.” [Note to contributors], *PBSA* 101, no. 4 (December 2007): 449.

cumbersome (again to put it no more strongly) device has to be resorted to in order to avoid uncertainty: “... ‘This is thy sheath, there rust and let me dye. [period in text]’ (5.3.168–69).”⁹

The decision to reduce the page count was, to at least this observer, a regrettable step, given that *PBSA* is the most obvious public face of the Society, but it is clearly to be understood as an aspect of the Society’s attempt to halt what was seen to be a deterioration in its financial position. Perhaps, however, the proposed contraction will now be reversed in view of the recent impressive improvement in BSA’s finances. Financial the decision was: there can be no suggestion that there is a want of publishable material being offered to the editor—quite the reverse, for the Publications Committee’s report in 2006 notes that “Overall *PBSA* is in a very healthy state, with timely publication and a two-year backlog of accepted articles.”¹⁰ That situation has not changed in the course of a year—witness the list of accepted articles on the BSA “BibSite.”¹¹ Indeed, I understand that the other major generalist bibliographical journals have a similar embarrassment of riches in hand. Various explanations for this embarrassment might be adduced, such as the widening orbit of “bibliography,” but whatever they are there appears to be an opportunity here for journals lower in the pecking order to advance their standing by taking up the “slack”—as long, that is, as they can guarantee the same editorial standards while offering the added incentive of, I assume, a more speedy appearance.

Bibliographical societies that include a geographical descriptor in their title seem to fall into one of two categories. On the one hand are those of Canada, Cambridge and Edinburgh,¹² which are parochial in the sense that the scope of their journals is determined by the geographical limitations inherent in their titles.¹³ And there can be no quarrel with that approach as long as the supply of members and copy holds up. On the other hand the interests of the Bibliographical Society of *America*¹⁴ are not limited to the United States; in this respect BSA shares a practice with *The Bibliographical Society* (based in London).

Strictly speaking BSA had its origins in the Bibliographical Society of Chicago,¹⁵

⁹ *PBSA* 101, no. 1 (March 2007): 52.

¹⁰ “Report of the Publications Committee”: 487.

¹¹ “Future Issues” <<http://www.bibsocamer.org/Papers/default.htm>>.

¹² These societies are the only parochial ones that come to mind that pretend to an international distribution.

¹³ For example, the *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* notes that “As a matter of policy, while not excluding contributions of general bibliographical interest, [the editor] will most welcome those which have, in its widest sense, some Cambridge connections—those, for example, which deal with manuscripts or printed books in Cambridge libraries, books printed at Cambridge or written by Cambridge authors.” In practice there is a preponderance of studies of individual mediaeval manuscripts and rarely anything of a general nature. See “Editorial Note,” *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 13, pt. 1 (2004), n.p.

¹⁴ Like too, it should be noted, the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, publisher of *Studies in Bibliography*.

¹⁵ See Carl B. Roden, “Historical Sketch,” *Bibliographical Society of America Proceedings and Papers* 1,

which met for the first time 23 October 1899. The prime mover in its creation was Aksel G. S. Josephson, Chief Cataloguer at the John Crerar Library in that city, who was to be Secretary of the Chicago society 1899–1903 and President during its final year, 1903–4, and then for thirty years to occupy various positions in BSA, including among them Secretary (1909–12) and Editor of its *Papers* (1916–18). Rather than that BSA *originated* in the Chicago society it may be more accurate to say that the proponents of a national bibliographical society saw the Chicago society as an overtly temporary body (a stalking horse?) through which to achieve their grander end—in the final paragraph of his “Introductory Remarks” published in the first volume of the *Year-book of the Bibliographical Society of Chicago 1899–1900* (1900), Josephson wrote:

It is my hope that the organization of this society may lead to the founding of a national bibliographical society. We will find our most important task, as said before, in bibliography proper, and here a national society would be able to do much more than a society confined in membership to one locality.¹⁶

“[B]ibliography proper” he had earlier defined as “the registry of printed books and the recording of their contents”—this in a paragraph that had begun:

The object—the sole object—of the society should be bibliographical study and research. Our work should cover the whole range of the history of the book—printing, illustration and binding, publishing and book-selling, history and management of libraries, and last, but not least, bibliography proper ...¹⁷

The objects of the Society, as set out in the by-laws,¹⁸ were:

1. To encourage and promote bibliographical study and research.
2. To compile and publish special bibliographies.
3. To arouse interest in the history of books and libraries.

Josephson appropriates to “bibliography” the whole world of books and their management and exploitation,¹⁹ and in the light of this statement it is perhaps not then surprising that the objects of the Society do not include a more precise statement of concerns: those objects both reflect the general understanding of the

no. 1 (1904–5): 19–23. The current title of the journal was assumed with volume 4, in 1909, but for convenience in citation “*PBSA*” has been used throughout this essay.

¹⁶ Aksel G. S. Josephson, “Introductory Remarks,” *Year-book of the Bibliographical Society of Chicago 1899–1900* (Chicago, 1900), 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸ Published in each volume of the *Year-book*.

¹⁹ This appropriation is reflected in North American library parlance, where “bibliographer” was (and perhaps still is) the term used to describe a subject specialist.

comprehensiveness of what constituted bibliography a century ago and account for the nature of the publications of the Chicago society and its national successor. That is, in the beginning the founders did not make what we would likely regard today as a fundamental distinction, between “physical”²⁰ and other forms of bibliography, and it took close to half a century for American bibliography—particularly as practised by academics in departments of literature and by students of early printed books—to exhibit the characteristics that bibliography had assumed early in the twentieth century in the writings of W. W. Greg, and his associates and disciples.

In furtherance of the grander end, as early as May 1901 the Chicago bibliographers met in conjunction with the annual conference of the American Library Association (hereafter ALA), at Waukesha, Wisconsin. At this meeting Carl B. Roden (Librarian of the Chicago Public Library) read a paper “A Bibliographical Society of America” on behalf of the absent John Thomson (Librarian of the Free Library of Philadelphia). The case for a national society “attracted the favorable notice of many librarians at the conference,”²¹ but it was decided to allow the Chicago society to continue for a year or two, proving its worth by issuing “a couple of creditable publications,”²² thereby proving its reason for existence, and drawing more non-resident members to its ranks.²³ By 1902 membership exceeded a hundred, about sixty percent Chicago residents. The bibliographers met along with the annual conference of ALA again in 1902 and 1903, and an organising committee of the Chicago society had a constitution and a slate of officers in place ready for a meeting preceding the ALA annual conference at St. Louis, 18 October 1904, a date which marks the formal creation of BSA.²⁴ Henry B. Van Hoesen notes that

The first by-law of the Bibliographical Society of America required that “the time and place of the annual meeting of the Society shall correspond with the date and place of the meeting of the American Library Association ...” and the omission of this requirement in the revised Constitution and By-Laws of 1927 ... has not altered the practice.²⁵

²⁰ The term, which has been widely accepted, is proposed by Lloyd Hibberd in “Physical and Reference Bibliography,” *The Library*, 5th ser., 20 (1965): 124–34.

²¹ John Thomson, “A Bibliographical Society of America,” *PBSA* 1, no. 1 (1904–5): 20.

²² Other than the *Year-book* the Chicago society published two booklets as “Contributions to Bibliography”: Aksel G. S. Josephson, *Bibliographies of Bibliographies Chronologically Arranged with Occasional Notes and an Index* (1902), 45 pp., and Augustus De Morgan, *On the Difficulty of Correct Description of Books* (1902), 33 pp.

²³ Annual Report of the Council, read by the Secretary, *Year-book of the Bibliographical Society of Chicago 1901–1902* (1902), 20–23.

²⁴ The Chicago group continued as a chapter of BSA until it disbanded in 1912.

²⁵ “The Bibliographical Society of America—its Leaders and Activities, 1904–1939,” *PBSA* 35 (1941): 178. Though the article appears under the name of Van Hoesen an editorial note seems to say that it was written by Dr. Frank P. Hill as a chapter in his projected history of the American Library Association, left incomplete by his death: “The paper is published approximately as it was written late in the year 1939.” *Ibid.*, 177.

The original decision and the continuing practice hardly surprise when sixty percent of the initial membership of the Society comprised librarians, a figure quite possibly maintained today among personal members.

(That the centenary of the *Papers* does not coincide with that of the Society itself is explained by the irregular appearance of certain early volumes, the three “missing” years being accounted for by these irregularities: vol. 1, pt. 1 (1904–5), vol. 1, pt. 2 (1906–7), vol. 2 (1907–8), vol. 3 (1908) and vol. 7 (1913–14); from volume 8 (1915) volume numbers and dates have been in step.)

Article II of the Constitution of the new, national, society, published in the first number of *PBSA*, follows the Chicago society in listing the object of BSA as “to promote bibliographical research and to issue bibliographical publications.”²⁶ Such lack of precision could be seen as a handicap (what was admissible and what was not?); at the same time the lack of restriction allows a society (and its journal) to reflect the discipline as it evolves or changes its emphases. Certainly as far as the founding members of BSA were concerned there was apparently no need to be more explicit: they knew what “bibliography” encompassed—at least I have found no suggestion in the published record that there was any discussion on this score.²⁷

William Coolidge Lane, Librarian of Harvard College and foundation President of BSA, in his “President’s Address,” took the question of comprehension as his theme, acknowledging that “we must remember that the bibliographer may have one or more of several distinct interests.”²⁸ He distinguished four classes of bibliographer, all of whom “Surely our Society should include ... the book-lover, the recorder of titles, the competent guide, and the directory-maker ... Each can broaden the view and improve the methods of work of the other if all are brought together in some sort of association.”²⁹ Within this broad church in the early years the book-lover occupied a rear pew, even though Lane had listed him first:

He may be a student of the history of the art and craft of bookmaking, bent on throwing light into obscure places and on unravelling knotty points connected with the early history of typography, interested in tracing the connections of successive presses and in studying the improvements made by successive printers through the ages, watching the alternate rise and fall of good taste and of artistic and mechanical excellence in book production—in short a lover of the book as a book ...³⁰

²⁶ Bibliographical Society of America, Constitution, *PBSA* 1, no. 1 (1904–5): 7. It may be observed that even today the objects of The Bibliographical Society [of London] are expressed in much the same terms: “to promote and encourage bibliographical studies.” *The Library*, 7th ser., 8, no. 4 (December 2007): 485.

²⁷ I have seen no numbers of the Society’s *News Sheet*, first published in 1926. It had reached number 50 by the time of Van Hoesen’s article (see footnote 25 above).

²⁸ William Coolidge Lane, “President’s Address,” *PBSA* 1, no. 1 (1904–5): 46.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

Today we would probably call this form of bibliography “historical,” a sub-set of physical, though perhaps wincing at notions of “good taste” and “love” but nonetheless recognising such interests as legitimately within the purview of a bibliographical society. Lane continues:

On the other hand, the bibliographer may be primarily a recorder of the production of books either past or present ... Or he may do his work of recording with the authority and grasp of a specialist in the department to which he devotes himself, and then he is called upon to exercise the higher qualities of discrimination, compact statement, clear arrangement, and strict subordination of the less to the more important ... Or finally, a bibliographer may busy himself not with showing in what books certain facts or discussions are to be found, but in what libraries these books are to be found ...³¹

Collectively these three further classes we would probably call, depending perhaps on particular emphases, “systematic,” “enumerative,” “subject” or “reference” bibliography. But in certain circumstances they may well be relevant to the pursuit of the physical—for example, one would not want to regard as beyond the physical pale, particularly in their first editions, *STC* (1926)³² or *Wing* (1945–51):³³ their authors record in what libraries books falling within specific temporal categories are to be found, books that, because of their age, are likely to be of interest for their physical attributes as well as for their content. Despite the prominence accorded historical bibliography in Lane’s presidential address, and even allowing for the various roads taken by a century of intervening scholarship, modern-day bibliographers (of a physical bent) would, I think, be surprised to find very little of particular interest to them in the early volumes of *PBSA*. For example, the articles contained in the first issue are:

“The Bibliography of American Music”

“The Need of Bibliographies in Literary History”

“The ‘1516’ Edition of Gaddesden’s ‘*Rosa Anglica*’”³⁴

“Contributions to the Theory and History of Botanical Bibliography”

“Material in the Library of Congress for a Study of United States Naval History”

“*In re* a Bibliographical Institute”

“Abstract of a Paper on the European Historians of the Turks in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”

³¹ *Ibid.*, 46–47.

³² *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*, compiled by A. W. Pollard & G.R. Redgrave with the help of [eleven names] and others (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1926).

³³ Donald Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English Books Printed in other Countries 1641–1700*, 3 vols. (New York: The Index Society, 1945–51).

³⁴ The *Rosa Anglica* title sounds promising, but its purpose is simply to lay a bibliographical ghost.

At times the articles in the early volumes are straight enumerative listings, perhaps preceded by an introduction, as in Adolf C. von Noé's "Recent German Books on America," the major component of which is "A Preliminary Bibliography of German Books on the United States since 1880."³⁵ Otherwise early articles are essentially descriptive, concerned by and large with matters associated with the pursuit of enumerative, subject bibliography, as is evident from the above list: typically authors survey the current situation, identify lacunae and deficiencies, and then present proposals for improvement—O. G. Sonneck's opening article, on American music, is a perfect illustration of the approach.

Members of the Society must have been aware of a distinction of *some* sort within the field of bibliography, in that a separate *Bulletin*, described as a "quarterly record of American bibliography," was established in May 1907 to serve as "a sort of clearing-house for bibliographical information," with the aim "to set down the facts in regard to published bibliographical work and in regard to work in progress." It was further noted that "The greater part of the titles recorded in this Bulletin will be of special bibliographies of various kinds."³⁶ Only four volumes of the *Bulletin* were published: the last number covered the period July–October 1912, after which the *Bulletin* was nominally absorbed back into the *Papers*, though it seems likely that material that might previously have been included in the *Bulletin* found a home elsewhere, perhaps in subject-oriented publications.

At what I assume was the first meeting of the Society after the demise of the *Bulletin*, held at the Hotel Kaaterskill, Kaaterskill, New York, 25 June 1913, no papers were presented, but there was a discussion centring on plans for future publications.³⁷ Josephson (at the time, with Roden, Chairman of the Publications Committee) reported that he had received letters from a number of correspondents regarding manuscript bibliographies, some of them ready for publication; "During the ensuing discussion ... preference was expressed for subjects of actual practical interest, rather than of purely bibliographic or historic value."³⁸ What form they were expected to take or who was to produce them was not reported, but "It was voted to recommend, to the Publications Committee, that a series of monographs with preference for bibliographies of American authors be issued on subscription or otherwise."³⁹ On the basis of this report it does appear that in these early days the extent of an interest in physical bibliography was limited to what was needed in order to produce enumerative bibliographies.

³⁵ Adolf C. von Noé, "Recent German Books on America," *PBSA* 4 (1909): 102–19 ("A Preliminary Bibliography").

³⁶ W. C. Lane, [Editorial], *Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (May 1907): 1–2.

³⁷ Meeting of the Bibliographical Society of America, on Wednesday, June 25, 1913, at the Hotel Kaaterskill, Kaaterskill, New York, *PBSA* 7 (1912–13): 125.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

By my reckoning *PBSA* remained generally descriptive until the mid-1940s. In this respect it lagged behind its older British cousin, *The Library*, the journal of The Bibliographical Society [London]. Not that writers in *PBSA* were necessarily unaware of what was being published by bibliographers in the United Kingdom. As early as 1908 George Watson Cole, in “an attempt to solve the question on sound bibliographical principles,” demonstrated an awareness of the work of Greg.⁴⁰ Similarly in 1909 George P. Baker⁴¹ showed an awareness of Greg’s recently-published “On Certain False Dates in Shakespearian Quartos,”⁴² as well as of R. B. McKerrow’s 1904 edition of *The Devil’s Charter*.⁴³ But these were isolated instances. Taken as a whole, American writers seemed either unaware, or unwilling to follow the recommendations, of McKerrow’s “Notes on Bibliographical Evidence,”⁴⁴ subsequently expanded into his *Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (1927). Seldom in the early years of *PBSA* were technical descriptions essayed, and then without taking advantage of British models. Thus, in 1918, in what may perhaps be judged the earliest technical description in *PBSA*, the observations of L. Franklin Gruber on “The Wittenberg Originals of the Luther Bible”⁴⁵ are presumably sound, but the communication of those observations is unsophisticated—for example, it takes Gruber thirteen lines to provide a “Collation by signatures” and a “Collation by pagination”⁴⁶ for the September 1522 *New Testament*, whereas the employment of descriptive practices propounded by Greg and McKerrow would have required only three or four, even for this moderately complex volume.⁴⁷

It is not easy to pinpoint when the first analytical article in *PBSA* appeared that would be likely to satisfy modern standards, but it may be as late as 1942, in Edwin Wolf 2nd, “Press Corrections in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Quartos,”⁴⁸ which, prior to publication, had been read (and hence presumably been given an

⁴⁰ George Watson Cole, “The First Folio of Shakespeare: A Further Word Regarding the Correct Arrangement of its Preliminary Leaves,” *PBSA* 3 (1908): 65–83. Nonetheless, as a footnote reveals, “this paper was written before the writer’s attention was called to Mr. Greg’s article in “The Library” for July, 1903, in which the views there given are here independently confirmed by an examination of the sheets themselves.” *Ibid.*, 78. Cole wrote for *PBSA* from time to time, and though he was the most consistently analytical of the early contributors his articles could also be wordily descriptive.

⁴¹ George P. Baker, “Some Bibliographical Puzzles in Elizabethan Quartos,” *PBSA* 4 (1909): 9–20.

⁴² W. W. Greg, “On Certain False Dates in Shakespearian Quartos,” *The Library*, n.s., 9 (1908): 113–31, 381–409.

⁴³ Barnabe Barnes, *The Devil’s Charter*, ed. R. B. McKerrow. *Materialien zur Kunde des älteren Englischen Dramas* 6, ed. W. Bang (Louvain: A. Uystpruyst, 1904).

⁴⁴ R. B. McKerrow, “Notes on Bibliographical Evidence for Literary Students and Editors of English Works of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 12 (1911–13): 211–318.

⁴⁵ L. Franklin Gruber, “The Wittenberg Originals of the Luther Bible,” *PBSA* 12 (1918): 1–33.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3. The volume is actually foliated.

⁴⁷ For example, the Collation by signatures begins “4 preliminary leaves without signature-marks,” rather than “π⁴” (assuming normal conjugacy).

⁴⁸ Edwin Wolf 2nd, “Press Corrections in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Quartos,” *PBSA* 36 (1942): 187–98.

imprimatur) by Greg, James G. McManaway, Charlton Hinman and William A. Jackson. Similarly the first recognisably “modern” description, despite certain oddities, is probably the 1943 article by Edwin B. Knowles, Jr, “Some Textual Peculiarities of the First English *Don Quixote*.”⁴⁹

My view of the relative slowness of American bibliographers to concern themselves with bibliographical analysis is supported by William R. Parker, who introduces his review-article “Principles and Standards of Bibliographical Description” with the assertion “Let it be noted for the record that in the year 1949, with the publication of two books having nearly identical titles, the study of analytical bibliography in the United States of America impressively came of age.”⁵⁰ The “Principles” of Parker’s title alludes of course to Fredson Bowers’s *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (1949), the “Standards” to the slighter and much-less-well-known *Standards of Bibliographical Description* (1949), which contains the texts of the 1946–47 Rosenbach lectures delivered by Curt F. Bühler, McManaway and Lawrence C. Wroth. One might also note, as Parker did, that in 1948 volume 1 of what was soon to become *Studies in Bibliography* appeared from the University of Virginia under Bowers’s editorship. In passing one might note that in his Rosenbach lecture McManaway dated the “starting point of modern, scientific bibliography” to 1909,⁵¹ with the publication in London of Alfred W. Pollard’s *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos, a Study in the Bibliography of Shakespeare’s Plays, 1594–1685* (1909).

The year 1949 may indeed mark a coming of bibliographical age in the United States, but I would suggest that there had been a brilliant dawning in the third annual conference of the English Institute, held at Columbia University, 8–13 September 1941, when five sessions were devoted to “Problems in the Editing of Texts” and five to “Printing House Practice in the 16th and 17th Centuries.”⁵² As far as *PBSA* itself is concerned I believe that the coming of age dates from immediately after the Second World War and that it was signalled by three articles by Bowers: “Notes on Standing Type in Elizabethan Printing”; “Criteria for Classifying Hand-printed Books as Issues and Variant States”; and “Certain Basic Problems in Descriptive Bibliography.”⁵³ These articles were obviously preliminary airings of

⁴⁹ Edwin B. Knowles, Jr, “Some Textual Peculiarities of the First English *Don Quixote*,” *PBSA* 37 (1943): 203–14.

⁵⁰ William R. Parker, “Principles and Standards of Bibliographical Description” *PBSA* 44 (1950): 216.

⁵¹ James G. McManaway, “Early English Literature 1475–1700,” in Curt F. Bühler, James G. McManaway and Lawrence C. Wroth, *Standards of Bibliographical Description* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), 66.

⁵² Among the speakers in the latter section were R. C. Bald, Bowers, Hinman, Madeleine Doran and Jackson; all papers except Jackson’s were published in *English Institute Annual 1941* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).

⁵³ Fredson Bowers, “Notes on Standing Type in Elizabethan Printing,” *PBSA* 40 (1946): 205–24; “Criteria for Classifying Hand-printed Books as Issues and Variant States,” *PBSA* 41 (1947): 271–92; and “Certain Basic Problems in Descriptive Bibliography,” *PBSA* 42 (1948): 211–28.

matters to be taken up in the *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (1949). In the same years *PBSA* carried a number of analytical notes by Bowers on individual Restoration plays; these no doubt were to have been eventually incorporated into his “Bibliography of the Restoration Drama,” left incomplete at his death. So novel⁵⁴ were the descriptive practices employed in “Notes on Standing Type” that Carroll A. Wilson, Chairman of the Committee on Publications, felt the need to provide an editorial footnote: “The bibliographical shorthand, valuable for its brevity and accuracy, used ... throughout this paper ... follow[s] in the main the bibliographical notation advocated by Dr. W. W. Greg in various articles and exemplified in his *Bibliography of English Printed Drama to the Restoration ...*”;⁵⁵ then follows a series of explanatory examples. As I see it the volumes of the 1940s reflect the transition from “old-style-descriptive” bibliography to “new-style-analytical,” and from the 1950s onwards subject bibliography and the more obviously descriptive have been increasingly less common.

Perhaps one qualification to the claim for the supplanting of the descriptive by the new-style-analytical is the regular practice, extending into the 1960s, of publishing the texts of addresses delivered to meetings of the Society. These, which are numerous, could take the form of introductions, (a) to local resources, as in Mary N. Barton, “Rare Books and other Bibliographical Resources in Baltimore Libraries,” a talk given to a meeting at the Peabody Library, Baltimore, 8 October 1960;⁵⁶ (b) to a field of subject bibliography, as in Raymond Carter Sutherland, “A Critical View of the recent Literature of British Heraldry,” Miami, 18 June 1962;⁵⁷ (c) to a quite alien subject, as in Albert H. Greenly, “Camels in America,” University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 10 May 1952.⁵⁸ Often enough such addresses were brief and sketchy, as in Kenneth Nebenzahl, “A Stone Thrown at the Map Makers,” Rowfant Club, Cleveland, 10 July 1961.⁵⁹ It may well be that the Society had a commitment to publishing addresses delivered at meetings, but a retrospective disinterested view is that for the most part they did not warrant publication in a scholarly journal. Certainly not warranting publication was Edwin Wolf 2nd,

⁵⁴ But note Knowles’s article on the first English *Don Quixote*, referred to above. Note, too, the recognisably “Greg-Bowers” character of Francis R. Johnson, “Press Corrections and Presswork in the Elizabethan Printing Shop,” *PBSA* 40 (1946): 276–86.

⁵⁵ See the note signed “C. A. W.” in Fredson Bowers, “Notes on Standing Type in Elizabethan Printing,” *PBSA* 40 (1946): 208.

⁵⁶ Mary N. Barton, “Rare Books and other Bibliographical Resources in Baltimore Libraries,” *PBSA* 55 (1961): 1–16. An editorial note suggested that “This presentation of the bibliographical resources of Baltimore is the first of a series of regional surveys which it is hoped can be published in the *Papers* from time to time,” but the hope was not fulfilled. *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁷ Raymond Carter Sutherland, “A Critical View of the recent Literature of British Heraldry,” *PBSA* 56 (1962): 445–53.

⁵⁸ Albert H. Greenly, “Camels in America,” *PBSA* 46 (1952): 327–72.

⁵⁹ Kenneth Nebenzahl, “A Stone Thrown at the Map Makers,” *PBSA* 55 (1961): 283–88.

“Thoughts on Books and Libraries,”⁶⁰ Fales Collection, New York University, 29 October 1963, a “sensational” set of gobbets of gossip that the editor was clearly unwise to publish; Wolf was properly rebuked in a letter to the editor from Peter Scott, Head of the Microreproduction Laboratory at MIT, who judged the Wolf article an “irresponsible listing of unsubstantiated allegations and mis-statements based on a lack of knowledge.”⁶¹ Since dates of delivery are included with these addresses it can be seen that they quickly got into print; were they given preference, or did editors have so little in hand compared with the current editor?

Book reviews are a staple of bibliographical journals,⁶² though they were in fact long in coming to *PBSA*. The first review is not distinguished as such but appears as an article, by W. N. C. Carlton, headed simply “The Catalogue of the E. D. Church Collection”;⁶³ it is not a critical account but a general description of G. W. Cole’s Americana and English Literature catalogues of those sections of the Church Collection (already in Henry E. Huntington’s hands). The first review to be so called, again by Carlton, appeared in the following volume;⁶⁴ it was an appreciative, not critical, account of George Parker Winship, *The John Carter Brown Library: A History* (1914). Thereafter there was effectively a near-thirty-year drought, briefly relieved in volumes 13–15 (1919–21) by a section “Notes on Books and Workers,” which provided brief comments on recent publications, including periodical articles; this section was reincarnated in volume 53 (1959), when “News and Notes” was introduced. Certainly there was the occasional review: volume 20 (1926), for example, saw Margaret Bingham Stillwell’s review of the second volume of the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*,⁶⁵ but a substantial clutch of reviews did not form a regular feature of *PBSA* until the early 1940s. In the early 1960s reviews assumed the prominence that they have today, though there have been some fairly barren stretches in between times.

Earlier in this account I denied the parochialism of the modern-day *PBSA*. It is equally true that in its early years it did exhibit an understandable leaning towards American topics, as was made explicit in the report from the 1913 Kaaterskill meeting, quoted from above. There seems always to have been an unstated special concern with such matters, a concern that has occasionally surfaced in the pages of *PBSA*, as in “The Bibliographical Society of America: A Statement of Its Aims and Program,” which seems first to have appeared in 1955. It begins: “By uniting individuals and institutions with predominantly bibliographical interests, the Society has sought to support and to advance bibliographical research, particularly

⁶⁰ Edwin Wolf 2nd, “Thoughts on Books and Libraries,” *PBSA* 57 (1963): 438–44.

⁶¹ Peter Scott, [Letter to the editor], *PBSA* 58 (1964): 190.

⁶² The exception is *Studies in Bibliography*, an annual and therefore an inappropriate vehicle for reviews.

⁶³ W. N. C. Carlton, “The Catalogue of the E. D. Church Collection,” *PBSA* 7 (1912–13): 41–50.

⁶⁴ W. N. C. Carlton, “Review,” *PBSA* 8 (1914): 135–39.

⁶⁵ Margaret Bingham Stillwell, “*Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*,” *PBSA* 20 (1926): 104–9.

as it relates to American subjects.”⁶⁶ Nonetheless its current statement of scope is certainly universal, devoid of geographical limitations, even if in practice almost all current contributors are concerned with topics relating to bibliography as it relates to English-speaking countries, including the United States.⁶⁷

Contributions to the *Papers* may deal with books and manuscripts in any field, but should involve consideration of the book or manuscript (the physical object) as historical evidence, whether for establishing a text or illuminating the history of book production, publication, distribution, or collecting, or for other purposes. Studies of the printing, publishing, and allied trades are also welcome.⁶⁸

Foreshadowed in the President’s Report for 2005 is a centennial history, being “prepared” by Hope Mayo, chair of the Publications Committee; publication has been delayed, but members are assured that they “will find their patience amply repaid by her definitive record of BSA management, activities, and publications.”⁶⁹ A year later Ms Mayo is reported as still “working valiantly” on the *Centennial History*, its now-italicisation apparently foreshadowing actual publication.⁷⁰ Also promised is “the timely release of a full index to the nearly 11,000 articles, notes, reviews, notices, and mentions in the complete [one hundred-volume] run,” available in print and with “portions” available online via the BSA website;⁷¹ this will no doubt be a handy assemblage of data from which to trace movements of one kind or another, going back to the first decade of the twentieth century and extending to the present.

It would be rash to predict that *PBSA* will complete a second century, though certain of the omens are favourable: a healthy financial position and contributors competing for inclusion. The relative health of *PBSA* may be judged by the fact that during its lifetime several other bibliographical journals have folded: coming immediately to mind are those of the Bibliographical Societies of Glasgow (the *Records*) and Oxford (the *Proceedings and Papers*), along with the likes of *Analytical & Enumerative Bibliography* and *Proof*. There are more recent creations, such as

⁶⁶ “The Bibliographical Society of America: A Statement of Its Aims and Program,” *PBSA* 49 (1955), preliminary leaf.

⁶⁷ In this respect volumes from early in the history of *PBSA* exhibit a somewhat wider spread of topics, possibly indicating a greater familiarity among American graduates with languages other than English.

⁶⁸ *PBSA* 101, no. 4 (December 2007): 449. I have been prevented from tracing any changes in the objects of the Society or in the scope of *PBSA*, being reliant up to 1960 on the Kraus reprint and since then on bound library volumes; all volumes lack covers and prelims, where such statements may have appeared. In both cases it is likely that—in addition to wrappers—prelims and end-matter will have been omitted, so that I may have missed pertinent information relating to editorial policy, printing, membership etc.

⁶⁹ “Report of the President,” *PBSA* 100, no. 4 (December 2006): 483.

⁷⁰ “Report of the President,” *PBSA* 101, no. 4 (December 2007): n.p.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

The Journal of the Printing Historical Society, *Text* and *Book History*, which have taken possession of specialised fields, though not fields that are alien to *PBSA*: over its lifetime *PBSA* has been a broad church—in addition to articles already cited it is worth noting that it was the host for several of Paul Kaufman's articles on eighteenth-century British libraries. The only American upstart that has thrived in competition with *PBSA* is *Studies in Bibliography* (first volume 1948–49); whether the advent of the latter has affected *PBSA* would be difficult to demonstrate—both appear healthy, though with *Studies in Bibliography* perhaps faltering in recent years in terms of currency. The only threat to *PBSA* may well result from the development of new forms of access that make print on paper an uneconomic medium.

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