



“Thinking Through Books”

2012 BSANZ Conference

**Selwyn College, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
14-17 November 2012**

Keynote speakers:

Graeme Beattie, presenter of Beattie’s Book Blog, **Paul Cameron**, CEO and Co-Founder of Booktrack, **Graham Jefcoate** formerly Head of Early Printed Collections at the British Library

Conference web page <http://www.otago.ac.nz/books/rbs/otago030540.html>

Conferences and Meetings

“Text and Editing Digital Cultures,” the fourth in the annual **Book Logic** symposium series commenced in Sydney in 2009, will be held at the University of Western Australia, Perth, on Friday 29 June 2012. Convened by Tim Dolin, Brett Hirsch and Jenna Mead, the one-day symposium aims to “investigate the promises and pitfalls of digital textuality, the changing role of the textual editor, and the intersections of textual studies and digital technologies within different cultures and literary traditions.” Plenary speakers are Professors Paul Eggert, ADFA (Australia), Alexander Huang, George Washington University (USA), and Fotis Jannidis, University of Würzburg (Germany).

Places are limited, and while there is no fee, registration is necessary for administrative and catering arrangements. For further information or to register,

email the convenors at booklogic2012@gmail.com.

“Editing Early Texts: Practice and Protocol” will be held at the Wellington (NZ) campus of Massey University, 15-16 June 2012. The conference focuses on editing literary and non-literary texts c.1500-1800, with papers also on the digital humanities and online editing. Keynote speaker is Paul Salzman of La Trobe University, Chief Investigator of a project on “The Material Cultures of Early Modern Women’s Writing: Editing, Reception, Mediation”. For further information contact Sarah Ross (S.C.Ross@massey.ac.nz), or see the garrulously addressed conference webpage at http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/departments/school-english-media-studies/symposium-2012-editing-early-texts/symposium-2012-editing-early-texts_home.cfm.

“The Battle for Books” is the theme of the annual **SHARP** conference held this year at Trinity College, Dublin, 26-29 June 2012. With plenary papers by Professors Nicholas Cronk, Oxford University, Claire Connolly, University College Cork, and Germaine Warkentin, University of Toronto, and parallel sessions running up to eight deep, this is bibliographic cornucopia lurching towards exhaustion. A draft programme can be found on the SHARP webpage at <http://sharp2012.org/> which reveals a sedulous extrapolation of combative metaphors for which the conference theme has much to answer.

“What Readers Should Ignore on the Printed Page: Communication Within the Book Trade” is the title of the annual **Foxcroft Lecture** to be given by BSANZ stalwart Brian McMullin on Wednesday 23 May, 6–7pm at the Conference Centre, State Library of Victoria (Entry 3 in La Trobe Street). There is no admission charge, but booking is required: *Phone* 03 8664 7099; *Email* inquiries@slv.vic.gov.au; *Web* slv.vic.gov.au/whats-on. The Foxcroft lectures, incidentally, honour the work of pioneering State Library of Victoria bibliographer A. B. Foxcroft (1884–1938).

Exhibitions

“Grimstone and Savery: Australia’s First Novelists” is showing at the **Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts**, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, Hobart, 4 May – 3 July 2012. The lives of Australia’s first novelists, Mary Grimstone and Henry Savery, are the subject of a new installation by Tasmanian artist Brigita Ozolins. Grimstone and Savery were both from well-to-do backgrounds. Savery was a businessman, transported for forging bills of exchange. After earning a ticket of leave he reoffended and was sent to Port Arthur, where he spent the final 18 months of his life. He is buried in an unmarked grave on the Isle of the Dead. Grimstone

was a prolific writer and a significant member of the early suffragettes. She travelled to Hobart with her sister in 1825 after the sudden death of her first husband. She died in London in 1869, half-blind and penniless.

Savery’s largely autobiographical novel, *Quintus Servinton*, was published in 1831 and reprinted in 1962 and 1984.

Grimstone’s *Woman’s Love* was published once only, in 1832. The copy in the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (TAHO) is one of only two known copies, the other held in the British Library. TAHO is digitizing its copy to coincide with Ozolins’ exhibition.

Currently running in the Rare Books section of Monash University Library until 8 June 2012 is “The Body in the Library” a wide-ranging exhibition on detective fiction showing early examples of the genre, samples by the major writers and publishers, and most interesting of all, spin-offs in the form of parodies, games and puzzles. One hundred and eight items are presented in a virtual exhibition available at <http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/exhibitions/detective-fiction/index.html>.

Acquisitions

The Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (TAHO) has acquired a rare – possibly unique – broadside account of the *Trial of John Francis for Attempting the Life of the Queen*. Francis, a young tradesman, was arrested and tried at the Old Bailey for discharging a pistol at Queen Victoria’s carriage on Constitution Hill near Buckingham Palace, in May 1842.

The trial hinged on whether the pistol was actually loaded with shot. Francis had no history of political activism; nonetheless he was found guilty and transported to Van Diemen’s Land. He appears to have been a model prisoner, on one occasion saving several lives by raising a fire alarm, and was employed as a

draughtsman in the Public Works Department. After completing his sentence he moved to Melbourne, where he died in 1885.

Only one other surviving broadside account of the trial is known, held by the

British Museum. The TAHO copy has been digitized and can be viewed online at <http://catalogue.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/item/?id=1034841>.

“Art and Adventure: The Fine Press Book from 1450 to 2011”

In the second edition of his classic work, *The Private Press*, Roderick Cave added a chapter on Fine Printing Down Under in which he was rather dismissive of Australian printing. He wrote, “Amateur printing has never really flourished in Australia and the private presses mentioned earlier represent occasional ‘exotic’ growth rather than a normal facet of local cultural and craft life.” Similarly, in 1999 Geoffrey Farmer, the first bibliographer of Australian Fine Presses, expressed in the Foreword to the last edition of his Bibliography “a feeling that the Golden Summer of private presses in Australia may have faded.” And Mike Hudson and Jadwiga Jarvis of the Wayzgoose Press, the leading Australian private press printers of the past two decades, were merciless in writing off the work of their fellows as “about as lively as the Nullabor in a drought” and asserting that “the Book Arts were to Australia what the English sheep dog was to space travel.”

However, a superb exhibition (on till 29 May) in the Leigh Scott Gallery at the Baillieu Library of the University of Melbourne is a testament to the quality of fine printing in Australia in the twentieth century. From the Baillieu’s Special Collections holdings of over 200,000 items New Zealand-born but now Melbourne-resident poet and printer Alan Loney selected a short-list of 300 books as possible candidates to illustrate the historical range and fine quality of the collection. The limits of the exhibition space available meant that only 62 could be displayed. Of those 26 are antipodean – three are from New Zealand. They hold their own in distinguished company which includes a leaf from the seminal Gutenberg Bible of 1454, five incunabulae printed before 1500, a 1783 book printed by Bodoni of the eponymous typeface, one from the first ‘formal’ private press, Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill, only two from the nineteenth century but a host from the Private Press Movement which William Morris initiated with the establishment of his Kelmscott Press in 1891. There is a double spread from the Kelmscott Chaucer with a huge expanse of black background out of which the intricate white pattern emerges, a real printing challenge. The other big names of the pre-WW2 PPM – Ashendene, Doves, Eragny, Essex House and Gregynog are all represented as well as the post-war Stanbrook Abbey and Rampant Lions.

In the company of these greats the Australian books are not outshone. Although at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Hal Stone and Sir McKenzie McKenzie were printing fine books, the exhibition starts with Hugh McCrae’s *Satyrs and Sunlight* printed in 1909 by John Sands in Sydney. There are a couple of rather uncharacteristic Fanfrolico Press volumes (Fanfrolico operated mainly in London but was a Lindsay family enterprise). In the 1920s and 30s Perce Green, John Gartner, Edward Shea (Sunnybrook Press) and John Kirtley were keeping the flag flying in Australia, although Kirtley’s contribution to the exhibition, the massive and grandly printed *Heemskerck Shoals*, wasn’t produced at Fern Tree Gully till 1949. Just as there is a gap in the show in the European representation for the 1960s, the next Australian volumes come from Alec Bolton’s Brindabella Press. Bolton was a librarian at the NLA who eventually resigned in order to devote himself full time to letterpress printing. He was encouraged by his wife, the poet Rosemary Dobson, who, while at school at Frencham

Heights, had imported a press from England with the encouragement of none other than Virginia Woolf, who had started her own Hogarth Press with her husband Leonard. Brindabella produced 28 classically elegant books in the 1970s and 80s before Bolton's untimely early death. But the reins were taken up by Jim Walker at the Croft Press printing Eric Thake's linocuts and two of Donald Friend's extravagantly illustrated books. Robert Summers at the Escutcheon Press printed his *How Should a Man ...* which matches anything in this exhibition for its combination of imaginative choice of text, typeface and illustration and quality of printing. There are also two books from Wayzgoose Press.

While twentieth-century PPs in Australia were largely in the UK text-based tradition, Wayzgoose can be seen as occupying a pivotal historical position, after which the direction of presses shifted somewhat. MH and JJ were both trained as artists not printers, booksellers, publishers or librarians so the illustrative element in their books is very strong. But it is never dominant – text is always important to them. That is not necessarily so in many of the 'books' now being produced by artists using letterpress. In Australia the PP movement is now driven by artists and designers, for whom lettering and text is sometimes nothing more than one of many visual elements. Happily there is a new generation of Australian book artists who are receptive to the allure of producing books with a harmonious balance between text, illustration and typography. They include Carolyn Fraser, Caren Florance, George Matoulas, Phil Day, Nick Summers, Lynn Ashby as well as seasoned book artists like Bruno Leti, Peter Lyssiotis and Loney himself, three of whose books are in the exhibition.

In his 2011 Foxcroft Lecture in Melbourne Richard Ovenden, Deputy Bodleian Librarian in Oxford asserted how appropriate it now is for research libraries to invest in their book arts collections. Jock Murphy, Director of Collections at the Baillieu, Pam Pryde, Curator of Special Collections, and Susan Millard, Deputy Curator, who worked extremely hard with Loney to organize the show and to produce the excellent – and free – catalogue should be congratulated on opening such a rich sample of their collection to the public. Millard and Loney also organized an afternoon Symposium to coincide with the opening of the exhibition. This attracted a large, diverse and distinguished crowd of librarians, academics, poets, artists and practising printers. On the one hand the analysts/critics/observers were concerned with defining the fine press book and exploring whether there is a difference between the fine and the private press. On the other hand the book artists were less concerned with definitions but more worried about finding the resources, money and time to continue their practice. They are looking for institutional support.

One way this might come about is to establish a CODEX AUSTRALIA. The Mexican ambassador to Malaysia flew into Melbourne to describe how he and colleagues had set up a CODEX MEXICO modelled on and affiliated with the CODEX Foundation in Berkeley, California, a body whose mission is to “preserve and promote the hand-made book as a work of art in the broadest possible context and to bring to public recognition the artists, the craftsmanship, and the rich history of the civilization of the book.” It acts as a focal point for book arts activity on the west coast of the US, publishes monographs and organizes book fairs and symposia. Loney is seeking support for a similar body in Australia. With the Baillieu's holdings, the magnificent and energetically managed collections in the SLV and the Wheeler Centre for the Book, The Melbourne Museum of Printing and a lot of resident artists, writers and printers Melbourne, would make an ideal home for such an institution.

Andrew Schuller