

SPEAKING OF BOOKS

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Summer 2011

The Book Club of Detroit is an association of Detroit-area bibliophiles who assemble periodically for the purpose of stimulating a mutual interest in books, specifically those aspects concerned with collecting, bibliography, design, and production.

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BCD



Shown here in front of the elevator doors in the Hunt Institute Library are, left to right, Mary Clare Duran, Maurice Barie, Kay MacKay, Harriet Larson, C. Hedger Breed, Twyla Racz, Joan Knoertzer, and Harriet Larson's daughter, Lori Rariden.

FABS CONFERENCE IS FABULOUS

By Kay MacKay

Nine Book Club members joined 50 other bibliophiles from across the country at the annual Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies (FABS) convention held at Pittsburgh's University Center from May 12 through May 15, 2011.

The group stayed at the Holiday Inn situated on campus, a few miles from downtown Pittsburgh. Most meetings involved campus libraries, except one day spent in the downtown area touring the state historical museum, viewing the Andy Warhol collection (Warhol was a Pittsburgh native), and touring the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, which featured an exhibit of historic newspapers.

Interesting exhibits at the numerous campus libraries included the digitization of the 435 Audubon bird plates (conservationists stressed tears and poor condition) and special collections at the Carnegie and Carnegie Mellon libraries. We visited the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, toured the Stephen Foster Memorial and the Heinz History Collection, and enjoyed dinner at the famed Duquesne Club. Especially interesting
(continued on page 4)

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT *By Robert K. Jones*

Just before the beginning of spring, my wife, Jo-Anne, and I received an invitation to dinner at the home of David and Nancy Aronovitz. Many of you who have thumbed through the Book Club's directory know that David and Nancy own and operate the on-line and by-appointment business, The Fine Books Company (A.B.A.A./1979). They began purchasing rare and collectible items in 1976 and selling them in 1979. They have travelled to, purchased, and sold books on every continent except Antarctica. They boast an abundant stock in the fields of creativity, namely all genres of fiction in first edition, but possess a wide array of non-fiction published over the last 500 years as well.

The Aronovitzes live and labor in Rochester, Michigan, anchored in an 1840's farmhouse guarded by three cats, a Tin Man, and a very mobile recreated Frankenstein. It was here, on Friday, April 29, that we enjoyed a very fine dinner (salad, chicken piccata, and red potatoes by David; asparagus with hollandaise sauce and dessert by Nancy). This scrumptious mélange was consumed amid incessant conversation that included the disparate topics of climate change, the television series *The Prisoner* (You, dear reader, are, for the remainder of this article, number 6), three-dimensional Scrabble and other board games, science fiction ventures, Australian-made kaleidoscopes, and the merits of vacationing in Wales versus those of vacationing in southern Brazil. This cacophony of tongues, tone, and type was aided by a lusty red wine and its light, but potent, white companion, both from Argentina.

After dinner we were treated to a shortened tour of their business stock and private collection. The business stock is held in well-lit, finely organized stacks. Their private collection is distributed throughout the house and comes upon you with dazzling suddenness evoking awe as you encounter here, for instance, many of H.G. Wells' before-book appearances as boxed sets of magazine serials and there, a signed photograph of David with Ray Bradbury (*Fahrenheit 451*) and one of the Beatles (signed) and they are smoking! And what is this? It too

is not a book; it is a kaleidoscope designed to immediately call to mind Captain Nemo and his creator Jules Verne! We quickly realized that a full survey could not be done in an evening and perhaps not even in a day.

A big thrill for me was to hold the first edition of *The Wizard of Oz* while gasping at its value. Having a master collector and book dealer take us on the tour was indeed a treat, for at every stop and at every book taken from the stacks David provided us with a story, a little-known fact, or a bit of lore. I thought how marvelous it would be for the Book Club to experience this tour and to have David give us, in his own inimitable style, a talk of his choosing yet centered on books. Perhaps the lack of any commercial book activity in Antarctica, the only place he and Nancy have not sold books, could be the inspiration for this talk to the Book Club. As we moved through the stacks, our aside talks turned to the Book Club. Later in this discussion, I asked David what he thought the Book Club needed to do in this electronic and otherwise age of rage against the printed book. His answer, most fitting, was more of an encouragement for BCD members to become more aggressive collectors of rare books and the like as opposed to simply acquirers and to realize exactly what types of stock exist in their own backyard. For example, the number of contacts originated by members of The Book of Detroit with The Fine Books Company over the past two years has been pathetically low, *(continued on page 4)*



Above, Nancy and David Aronovitz in front of the rear facade of Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet.



Shown above, Kay MacKay in the combined den and home office of her charming Grosse Pointe Park home. Here, surrounded by books, photos, and some of her collections, she writes her *Speaking of Books* articles, reads, and enjoys the view of her tree-shaded back yard. Center photo: A few of the many silhouettes in Kay's collection. At right, a small selection of Kay's antique mugs featuring mottos and other words of wisdom. The one at the left says, "If you would have a faithful servant & one that you like serve yourself."

THE MANY FACES OF KAY MacKAY *By Paula Jarvis*

When you step inside Kay MacKay's Grosse Pointe Park home, you are greeted by faces—men's faces, women's faces, children's faces. All on paper and all in black on white, these are antique silhouettes, just one of the many collections that make the MacKay residence so interesting. Near the silhouettes, a table filled with old brass candlesticks and another adorned with a few jugs and pitchers from her collection of American and English pottery attest to the variety of her enthusiasms. Kay is clearly a collector to the bone.

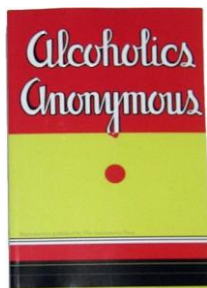
A long-time member of The Book Club of Detroit, editor of *Speaking of Books* for two decades, and for years a part-time dealer specializing in children's books, Kay didn't begin her collecting career with books. Instead, as a child living on the west side of Detroit, she collected stamps. However, after moving to Grosse Pointe, marrying the late John MacKay (whom she met while they were students at the University of Michigan), and raising two children (a son, Lachlan, and a daughter, Susan), she earned a master's degree in library science and became a volunteer in the Detroit Public Library's Rare Book Room. (Note: She is also the Detroit Institute of Arts' longest-serving volunteer, with 50 years of service to her credit.) It was there that curator Gloria Francis introduced Kay to the Rare Book Room's collection of old and rare children's books and inspired Kay's lifelong

interest in this area of collecting. Kay eventually went to work at Gale Research where Annie Brewer (then her boss and later her *Speaking of Books* co-editor) told her that Gale owner Fred Ruffner was looking for someone to help him organize the books in his Grosse Pointe Farms home. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn about book collecting from one of the Detroit area's foremost book collectors. An early member of The Book Club of Detroit who was later accepted for membership in the famed Grolier Society, Fred was and continues to be a friend not only to the Book Club but also to budding bibliophiles. Kay soon joined the Book Club, became a member of "The Women's Committee for the Revival of the Book Club of Detroit," and began co-editing *Speaking of Book* with Annie Brewer. After doing years of research, Kay wrote *Book Club of Detroit: 1957-2007*, which was privately published in 2008 by The Book Club of Detroit for its members. Two years later, she followed up the BCD book with *200 Years of Detroit Booksellers: 1817 to 2007* (jointly published by Kay and BCD in 2010). These two volumes constitute an invaluable contribution to the history of book selling and book collecting in the Detroit area for which we are deeply grateful.

Now Editor Emerita of *Speaking of Books* and still an active member of The Book Club of Detroit, Kay embodies the true collecting spirit.

AA “BIG BOOK” IS 72 *By Kay MacKay*

“The Big Book” is known as more than a book, it’s a way of life. The book has served as a lifeline to millions struggling with alcoholism. It sets forth concepts of recovery from alcoholism and tells the stories of many who have struggled with the disease. Early copies of this classic had wide margins and very thick paper. There were 16 printings of the first edition between 1939 and 1954. In April of 1939, 4,650 copies of the first printing appeared, and these are seen on the Internet today priced from \$14,000 to \$28,000. There were 265,000 copies of the first edition, and the second edition resulted in 1.2 million copies. The fourth edition, which so far has had 14 printings, appeared in 2001. It’s interesting that the seventh printing in 1945 is considered the rarest. Due to war-time rationing, the printer ran out of paper and few copies were produced, only 500 to 1,500. Prices of current editions run from 99 cents to \$100. However, free copies are always available at all Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. The original text, written by Bill Wilson, also known as Bill W. (his “anonymous” name), has remained unchanged, while personal stories have been added to each edition. The organization is the original self-help, twelve-step program, which has spawned numerous spin-offs.



FABS IS FABULOUS (continued from page 1)

were discussions concerning the relevance of today’s archivist’s in this age of digitization.

We particularly enjoyed a lovely cocktail party at our host’s John Bloch’s late Victorian home. Bloch, a noted bibliophile and chairman and publisher of the *Pittsburgh-Post Gazette* and *Toledo Blade*, discussed “The Future of News” at the annual symposium. (His family has owned the newspapers for most of the 20th century.) He admitted that much of today’s newspaper business was not profitable and stressed the public’s desire for truth and accuracy. He added that “news is not just a headline” but the “meat and potatoes” of information. Bloch gave a

depressing picture of today’s journalism, stressing that newspaper advertising revenue is down, and costs, including printing and delivery, are rising, and it is hard to find revenue to support a reporting staff. Bloch believes future news will be delivered through electronic means, rather than on paper, and that it should be less expensive.

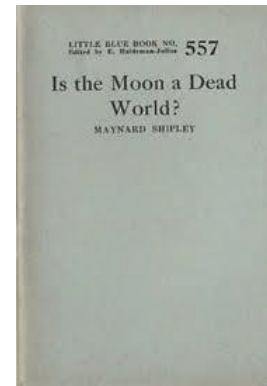
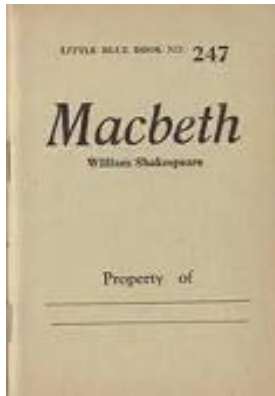
It is interesting to note that BCD ranked third in number of members attending this year’s convention. It has often ranked first.

(To see photo highlights of the 2011 FABS convention, please go to BCD’s Facebook page: www.facebook.com/BookClubofDetroit.)

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT (continued from page 2)

not surpassing the number of digits on one hand with three digits missing! He suggested that a greater support on the part of the Book Club of the area-wide, on-line, and brick-and-mortar book dealers would go a long way in helping the club to grow its number of serious book collectors.

Alas! It was soon time to leave their clowder of cats, the Tin Man, and the mobile Frankenstein to their guard duties and David and Nancy to seek some well-deserved rest after preparing for such a delightful, but long, evening. We won’t soon forget the gourmet dinner (with capers); the gracious talk that spoke of extensive travel on both sides of the equator, and the rites of passage that attend its crossing. Nor will we forget the wide and wonderful blessing of books and the stories that go with them poured upon us by the artful Aronovitz clan. May they sleep in peace and dream of books, books, and more books and of the fantastic men and women who write them.



TINY BOOKS WITH A BIG IMPACT *By Paula Jarvis*

Anyone who spends much time in used-book shops has come across the small staple-bound paperback books known as Little Blue Books. Often selling for as little as a few dollars, they're hard to resist. Buy one, and you'll soon find yourself buying more and more. If you want to collect them, it can become a lifetime hobby because almost 2,000 titles were published during the series' six-decade history.

Originally published in 1919, bound in red paper, and called "Appeal's Pocket Series," the series went through several name and color changes before the Little Blue Book name took hold in 1923. Priced at just five cents for many years, the books could be found in bookstores and on drugstore racks. At 3 1/2 inches by 5 inches, they were truly pocket size, which is one reason that author Louis L'Amour carried them on his travels during the Great Depression. (See his memoir, *Education of a Wandering Man*, for a list of the Little Blue Books that he read during those years.) The little books sold well for many years, but a variety of factors, including the inclusion of books on socialism, atheism, birth control, and other then-



controversial topics, led to the series' decline in the 1950's, although sales continued until a fire destroyed the printing plant and warehouse in 1978. All told, more than 300 million copies of the booklets were sold during the series' lifetime. The man behind this publishing phenomenon was Emanuel Haldeman-Julius, an atheist-Jew, socialist, and newspaper publisher who, with his wife, Marcet, bought a publishing house in Girard, Kansas, that had produced a socialist weekly for which Haldeman-Julius had served as editor. It was the couple's hope that they could bring great literature and a wide range of ideas to as many people as possible with low-cost books that could easily be carried in a pocket. Indeed, Louis L'Amour was not the only person of note to read the Little Blue Books. Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Admiral Richard Byrd (who took Little Blue Books with him to the South Pole), Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, and Studs Terkel were also among the series' many fans. To learn more about the history of Little Blue Books, as well as how to identify and collect them, go to www.haldeman-julius.org.

At left, Emanuel Haldeman-Julius (1889-1951)



LONG LIVE THE BOOK

I hold in my hands
 A book
 Given to me by Johannes Gutenberg
 More than 500 years ago.

The words leap from its pages
 And fill my aging brain
 With images
 Of far away places,
 Of troubles in the Middle East,
 Of impoverished people hungry
 For freedom from want,
 For freedom from fear,
 For freedom of expression
 And self determination.

While others here and there
 Sip Starbucks
 And play games on their I-Phones
 Or tweet abbreviated inanities to friends,
 Oblivious to the world around them.

Long live the printed page,
 Long live the book!

*Submitted by Floyd Johnson**
BCD Life Member, Peoria, Arizona
April 27, 2011


**According to Floyd, he was inspired to write
 this poem while reading Charles Enderlin's
 The Lost Years.*

✦ BCD GOES DIGITAL

The Book Club of Detroit is now on Facebook (www.facebook.com/BookClubofDetroit) and has a web site (www.bookclubofdetroit.org). Be sure to check both sites often for the latest news in the world of books and book collecting. (Go to BCD's Facebook "Photos" page for pictures taken at the 2011 FABS convention.)

✦ IN MEMORIAM

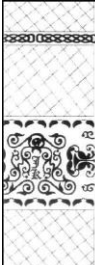
It is with sorrow that we report the passing of Paul T. Scupholm (January 6, 1935-April 30, 2011), a long-time BCD member and Executive Director of the Friends of the Detroit Public Library. As the Friends' first paid Executive Director, Paul brought a wealth of knowledge and professionalism to the position. He was also chair of the National Automotive History Collection's board of trustees, a trustee of the Redford Public Library, and founder of the Redford Soccer Club. In addition, he made wooden toys for children's hospitals and was an avid fly fisherman. In his memory, BCD will donate a fine volume on fly fishing to the Detroit Public Library's Burton Historical Collection.



WHITE RAVEN BOOKS

C. HEDGER BREED
Books of Interest Bought & Sold

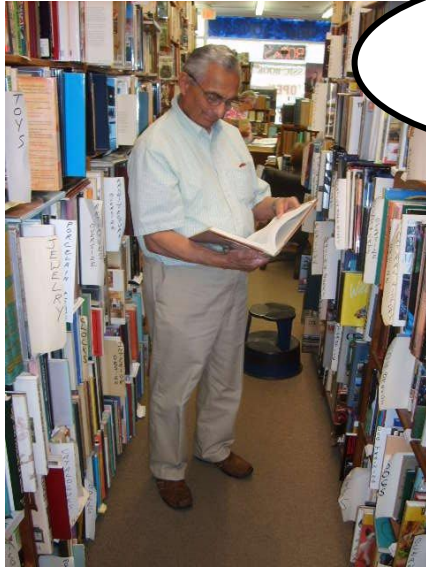
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The Library
Bed & Breakfast

Joan Knoertzer

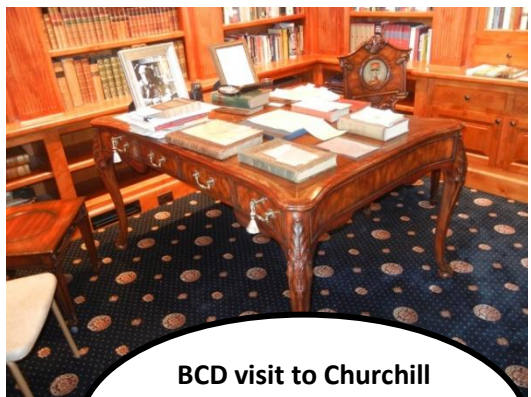
808 Mary Street
 Ann Arbor, MI 48104 (734) 668-6815



Annual BCD Bookstore Crawl, June 25, 2011, North Woodward area.



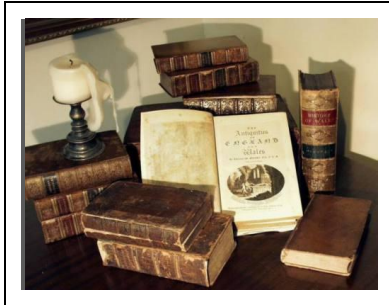
Far left, Chuck Chandler perusing books during the 2011 Annual Bookstore Crawl. Left, Martha Sempliner, owner of Library Books, with BCD member Bobbie Parks. Below left, BCD members enjoying lunch at O'Mara's Irish Restaurant in Berkley.
(Photos by Jim Deak.)



BCD visit to Churchill Collection of Richard Marsh, Ann Arbor, June 5, 2011.

Shown above, Mary Jo and Richard Marsh in front of a painting of Winston Churchill in their library. (Photo by Steve Pepple/AnnArbor.com.)

The Book Club's thanks go to Richard and Mary Jo Marsh for opening their Ann Arbor home on June 5 to present some special items from Richard's collection of Churchilliana. Current president of the Winston Churchill Society of Michigan and a lifelong admirer of Churchill, Richard collects books, prints (such as the Punch illustrations shown above), photos, and other memorabilia related to Britain's most famous 20th century statesman. *(Photos of collection by Maurice Barie.)*



BECOME A BCD MEMBER

Annual dues: \$35 individual, \$50 couple/family, \$100 sustaining.
Lifetime: \$350 individual or \$500 couple/family. Send check payable to The Book Club of Detroit to:

The Book Club of Detroit
c/o Scarab Club
217 Farnsworth
Detroit, MI 48202

BCD PRESIDENTS

Robert K. Jones, 2011
C. Hedger Breed, 2009 & 2010
Joan Knoertzer, 2007 & 2008
Marguerite Humes Schwedler, 2006
Janet Whitson, 2005
Jay Platt, 2004
Joseph Ajlouny, 2003
Joan Knoertzer, 2002
Jim Deak, 2001
Shahida Nurullah, 2000
Barry Neavill, 1999
Harriet Larson, 1998
Sam Gatteno, 1997
Roy Pilot, 1996
Alice Nigoghosian, 1995
James Beall, 1994
Annie Brewer, 1987- 1993
Frank Sladen, 1986
Joann Chalut, 1984 & 1985
James Babcock, 1983
Jean Colburn, 1982
Paula Jarvis, 1981
Robert Thomas, 1972-1980
John Neufeld, 1971
Evan Thompson, 1970
Richard Walker, 1969
Robert Orr, 1968
Gloria Francis, 1967
Seymour Kent, 1966
Alfred H. Whittaker, 1965
Roger Lindland, 1964
James Babcock, 1963
Donald Weeks, 1962
C. E. Frazer Clark, Jr., 1961
William A. Bostick, 1960
Benjamin R. Donaldson, 1959
Franklin G. Laucomer, 1958

WEB SITES OF INTEREST

AE Monthly: The Magazine for Book Collectors & Booksellers:
www.americanaexchange.com

American Booksellers Association of America (ABAA): www.abaa.org

American Society of Bookplate Collectors & Designers:
www.bookplate.org

Bookbinding: www.bookbinding.com

Books & Book Collecting:
www.trussel.com/f_books.htm

William L. Clements Library:
www.clements.umich.edu

Ephemera Society of America:
www.ephemerasociety.org/

Essentials of Book Collecting:
www.trussel.com/books/lucas01.htm

Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies (FABS): <http://fabsbooks.org>

Fine Books & Collections:
www.finebooksmagazine.com

Fine Press Book Association (FPBA): <http://fpba.org>

Firsts: Magazine of Book Collecting: www.firsts.com

Friends of Detroit Public Library:
www.detroit.lib.mi.us/friends

The Huntington Library:
www.huntington.org

International Rare Book Collectors Association: www.irbca.com

Miniature Book Society:
www.mbs.org

The Morgan Library & Museum:
www.themorgan.org

Scarab Club: www.scarabclub.org

typoGRAPHIC:
www.rsub.com/typographic/

Typographica: <http://typographica.org>

EVENTS AND EXHIBITS

Across the United States:
www.finebooksmagazine.com/calendar/

Clements Library (Ann Arbor):
Through October 7: Nineteenth Century American Sport

The Book Club of Detroit
(event details to be announced):
August 13: Tour of remodeled Cranbrook Library

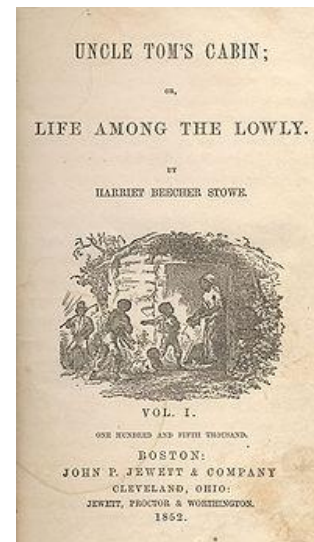
September (TBD): Lecture on 400th anniversary of printing of King James Bible (DPL/Friends)

October 14: Women Book Collectors (DPL/Friends)

November (TBD): Lecture on fine bindings

December 6: Christmas dinner and book auction

NOTICE: To ensure prompt receipt of emailed announcements and *Speaking of Books*, as well as other BCD communications, please send new email addresses to Maurice Barie at mojoconsult@sbcglobal.net.



If you've never read Uncle Tom's Cabin, celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Harriet Beecher Stowe (on June 14, 1811) by reading her famous book.