

## Books about Books

*Myron Molnau*

**Editor's Note:** In a general email to me, Myron commented, "Someday...I am going to make a list of the ten or 15 books about books I have that have inspired me." That day came as you can see.

Here is a list of Books about Books that I particularly like. This is just a selection from the bookcase in the corner of my "library." One thing I learned from my father (who was a farmer and one of the smartest people I have ever known) is to have special places for work and for hobbies. I have always had two rooms in the house for myself—a stamp room and a library/office. I no longer need the office so that room is now a library, named and christened by my wife, a wonderfully tolerant person.

Here I will digress for a bit of history. When I was about five or six and just barely could read, I found a big trunk of books in the basement. My dad said they came from his dad who read a lot. I remember a biography of Herbert Hoover in there, but that's all. My parents and my aunt, who was a teacher, encouraged me to read. At school, we could go to the city library, which was a room in City Hall, each Friday afternoon. Eventually the librarian gave me a mail order catalog from a bookstore in Chicago. I would save my allowance until I had enough for a book from the catalog. My dad would send in the order (he paid the book postage, I only had to pay for the book). That was the beginning of my book collection of Tarzan, Bomba and many children's illustrated library books. I still have many of them.

My aunt's husband was a science-fiction reader who gave me his books when he was done with them. His dad was a college professor who specialized in medieval and religious history. He got me hooked on historical fiction and especially the history of the Middle Ages and beautiful illuminated manuscripts.

Finally, I am getting to books and printing on stamps. As you may know, ships on stamps has been one of my interests for many years. That is a long story in itself. As I searched for ship stamps, I would run across stamps showing books or manuscripts. Then I got the set of Belgian printing stamps (Sc#1305-1307. Figure 1) for my Belgium collection and that reminded me that



Fig. 1. Belgium, 1988. *Printing Presses*. [Sc1305-1307].

my parents had given me a primitive printing set for Christmas right after WWII when you could finally buy toys again.

Just as I have several bookcases of nautical books to aid in my ship stamp collection, I started acquiring books about books and particularly about libraries and people who were instrumental in preserving books and literacy and the history of books over the centuries.

Here is the list of books, almost randomly chosen from my catalog. The list is really too long to publish, but you can take every other one to shorten the list. (**Editor's Note:** I did not shorten the list.) The only book in the list that does not really belong is *The Little Engine That Could*. This is the first book that I can remember owning way back in WWII times. It is still my favorite book of all time.

### **The List:**

Basbanes, N. A. (1995). *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books*. H. Holt and Co, New York, 638pp.

Battles, M. (2003). *Library: An Unquiet History*. W.W. Norton, New York, 245pp.

Bologna, G. (1988). *Illuminated Manuscripts: The Book before Gutenberg*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, New York, 199pp.

Buckley, W. F., and Vaughan, S. S. (1996). *Buckley: The Right Word*. Random House, New York, 524pp.

Childs, E. L. (1979). *William Caxton: A portrait in a background*. St. Martin's Press, New York, 190pp.

Christie, A. (2014). *Gutenberg's Apprentice: A Novel*. Harper, New York, 406pp.

De Hamel, C. (2012). *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*. Phaidon Press, London, 272pp.

Fadiman, A. (1998). *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 162pp.

Goodrum, C. A., and Pavese, E. M. (1980). *Treasures of the Library of Congress*. H. N. Abrams, New York, 318pp.

Houston, K. (2016). *The Book: A Cover-to-Cover Exploration of the Most Powerful Object of Our Time*. W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 428pp.

Kurlansky, M. (2016). *Paper: Paging Through History*. W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 389pp.

Laubier, G. de, and Bosser, J. (2003). *The Most Beautiful Libraries in the World*. Harry N. Abrams, New York, 247pp.

Matthews, J. (2000). *Reading Matter: A Rabid Bibliophile's Adventures Among Old and Rare Books*. Oak Knoll Press, New Castle, Del., 189pp.

Moore, H., and Reid, J., Bodleian Library, and Folger Shakespeare Library (Eds.). (2011). *Manifold Greatness: The Making of the King James Bible*. Bodleian Library, Oxford [England], 208pp.

Petroski, H. (1999). *The Book on the Bookshelf*. Alfred A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, New York, 290pp.

Piper, W. (1925). *The Little Engine That Could*. Never Grow Old Series, The Platt & Munk Co. Inc, New York, unpagged.

Simpson, J. A. (2016). *The Word Detective: Searching for the Meaning of It All at the Oxford English Dictionary, A Memoir*. Basic Books, New York, NY, 364pp.

Van Loon, H. W. (1937). *Observations on the Mystery of Print and the Work of Johann Gutenberg*. Book Manufacturers Institute, New York, 50pp.

Winchester, S. (2003). *The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, Oxford; New York, 260pp.

## For People Named Smith

David Celani



Over the years, I've seen many newsletters and magazines devoted to special interests. There are magazines for trains, flying, hunting, bowling, etc. From the early 1900s, I've seen magazines for Lumberjacks, Commercial Fishermen and Railroad Steam Boiler makers. This is the first time I've seen a magazine for a specific name. It's impossible to read the postmark

date, but this stamp was in use from 1875 until about 1888. Richmond, Michigan was and is a small rural community. Today the population is about 5,500. They opened their first post office in 1840, so the population couldn't have been very large in the 1880s. Obviously, there were Smiths living there. Of course, it's addressed to a Smith, a Mrs. "Judge" Smith in Denver Colorado.