

Remembering Greer Allen

At home in the Chicago graphic design world of the 1950s and 1960s

John G. Allen

Greer Allen, typographer, book designer, teacher, and former Caxtonian, died on April 21, 2005 after a short illness. In a career spanning close to six decades, he left behind an opus of hundreds of books, exhibition catalogues, and other printed pieces of clarity and distinction, and a multitude of former students whom he mentored in large ways and small. Friends and colleagues in Chicago and New Haven will miss his engaging style, a distinctive combination of serious purpose and good humor.

Born and raised in the New York City area, Greer developed an interest in printing as a child. Attending Yale as an undergraduate, he worked his way through college in the type shop of the Yale University Press, where he encountered his first mentor, university printer Carl Purington Rollins, who encouraged his interest in letterpress technology and fine typography.

Enlisting in the Navy when the US entered World War II, he served as a junior officer on cargo ships in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters (an experience that later served him well in management). After release from the service in 1946, Greer completed his college education under the GI Bill, and remained in close touch with his mentor Rollins.

COMING TO CHICAGO

Shortly before graduation, Rollins asked Allen if he had ever considered doing for a living something that he really enjoyed—an



Noted photographer Archie Lieberman took this portrait while Greer worked at the University of Chicago Press.

unusual question in the years before personal fulfillment became a more important goal in the lives of millions of Americans. Greer replied that such a thought had never occurred to him; he had assumed he would look for a job in business and pursue his printing interest in his spare time. Rollins explained that there was an opening at the University of Chicago Press for an apprentice designer, and told Greer to let him

know if he was interested. After some soul-searching that night, Greer returned to Rollins's office the next day to say that he wanted the job.

Such was Rollins's stature in the typographic world that his recommendation was enough for the University of Chicago Press to hire him, sight unseen. In an era before masters programs in graphic design provided aspiring entrants with credentials, employers taught the craft of typography on the job. Like medical residents today, Greer spent time working in different parts of the Press, including composition, bindery, and the press room floor. It was largely through this rotation process that he gained a breadth of experience that was helpful throughout his career.

Having developed a grasp of the fundamentals of the production of printed material, Allen began to shine as a graphic designer. Artist Vi Fogle Uretz remembers him as an excellent designer, well known for the beautiful books he designed for the Press. Greer and his contemporaries,

Uretz recalls, saw clarity and ease of reader comprehension as the highest goals of graphic designers of their generation.

In his day-to-day work for the Press, Greer found himself under pressure, as many designers do, to finish jobs under tight deadlines. Although he produced as many as 30 books a year, he showed a talent

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CAXTONIAN

A Message from the President

The Caxton Club, Founded 1895

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As I assume office as President of the Caxton Club it seems appropriate for me to reflect on the past, look at the evolving present, and express my vision of the Club's future. The past is easiest to address. Our past leadership has been extraordinary. Under that guidance we have seen our Club's able committees excel in their missions.

PAST

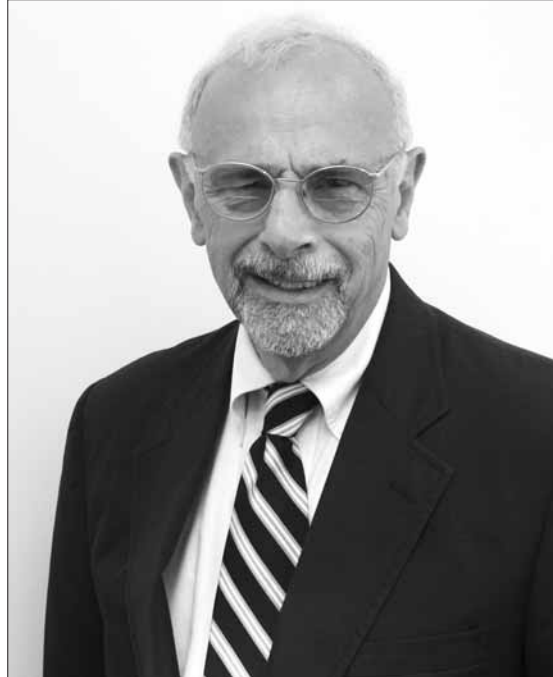
The past achievements are obvious. During the last year *The Caxtonian* has continued to reinforce its reputation of excellence. Exhibitions and Publications united to develop and present the Leaf Book Exhibit, a project that earned prideful acclaim. The Development Committee has been a steady and effective. Our monthly programs have continued to grow in the caliber of the presentations and in reward to those in attendance. Membership has remained constant, and we have continued to attract members who are willing and able to work toward achieving our Club's objectives.

PRESENT

Since accepting the office of President, I have sought counsel from many Club members. With their input and generous assistance I have begun various projects that may proudly create a dynamic "Present." A sample of these follows:

(a) It has been called to my attention that some elderly and/or disabled members have difficulty attending our meetings. Steve Masello has agreed to coordinate "transportation pools" that will facilitate the attendance of all our members. Details will be made available to the membership.

(b) David Mann is reviewing our basic legal documents and confirming the propriety of our



operating structure. (c) Gerald Bauman, our Treasurer, is working with those responsible for the collection and distribution of our funds. It is our intention to place our financial practice on a business-like basis. Additionally, efforts will be made to bond those of us with access to our Club's funds and assets.

(d) Jim Tomes has agreed to direct an effort to suggest specific criteria for

the awarding of Honorary Memberships. He was also asked to reflect on the propriety of creating an annual Special Service Award. The award, if created, would go to a member for extraordinary Club activity during the past year. Criteria for that award would also have to be developed. Naturally, any award and proposed criteria will be referred to the Council.

(e) Adele Hast, our Vice-President, has inspected our archives and our published books inventory. She has reported that they are in excellent order.

(f) Wendy Husser is chairing a group that will present the Council with suggested criteria and objectives applicable to the awarding of scholarships by our Club.

FUTURE

The future of the Club is obviously less predictable. The following represents my dreams and ambitions for the Caxton Club:

(a) Bill Mulliken, our new Membership chairman, has agreed to begin targeting and recruiting new members whose lives and activities are known to be devoted to the book.

(b) We have an obvious need to welcome and secure “younger members.” Factors that might uniquely impact younger members are: cost, time availability, networking, and social activities. A Membership sub-group is now meeting to explore recruitment steps sensitive to the above concerns, which will be both inviting and stimulating to “younger members.”

(c) I have seen much of the anticipated schedule of our up-coming luncheon and dinner meetings. The leadership of these two activities has been energetic and, as a result, produced a magnificent schedule of future events. Attendance at these meetings should be enriching in scholarship and entertaining for those present.

(d) Until we have a “Room of Our Own,” the attaining of such a facility should remain an objective of the Club. It has been correctly pointed out that a commitment to effectuate that objective should not precede our access to funds essential to the sustaining of that venture.

It is my wish to develop a Building Fund that will be a vehicle for the realization of our objective. Michael Thompson has agreed to assume leadership of the Development Committee. That Committee may best accumulate assets through the arrangement of deferred testamentary giving. Although most of us will never enjoy the fruits of our objective, some day the vision will become a reality.

(e) It is my hope to develop a committee to plan and implement the coordination of special events. The events may include periodic Club trips. We can travel to institutions and libraries of mutual interest both in and out of our immediate geographic area. A trip is being planned for Springfield, Illinois. It is our intention to visit the Lincoln Museum and Library.

(f) Activities provide our Club with energy. Our activities should be expanded.

Our visits to the homes of members for the viewing of their special book collections have been rewarding and well received.

Our Nobel Study Committee has been

both enriching and agreeable to those of us who have a particular interest in the gifted individuals who contribute to the creation of books.

I envision a new activity that will periodically provide work and study seminars. These seminars would address various aspects and components of the book. Such seminars could study subjects such as design, print, marginalia, paper, and binding. Toward that objective I will need your help and welcome your direction.

(g) During the past year, Charles Cullen, as President of the Newberry Library, took steps to encourage and develop a closer relationship between our Club and the Newberry Library. As a result of that overture we have moved toward the organization and presentation of our first joint seminar. On April 1, 2006, we will present the “2006 Caxton-Newberry Symposium: The Past and Future of Intellectual Property.”

(h) Steps will be taken to welcome and support the Newberry’s incoming President, David Spadafora. Our two organizations’ mutual membership, support, and interests make the Caxton-Newberry relationship very special.

(i) Membership on the Council should entail more than listening to Committee reports once a month. Not only should membership on the Council be a learning experience, but it should also provide the Club with energy. I envision it as a vehicle for construction and not obstruction.

Shortly after accepting the Presidency of the Caxton Club I decided to more carefully read Frank Piehl’s book, *The Caxton Club 1895-1995: Celebrating a Century of the Book in Chicago*. No club President could read that book without a feeling of special pride and humility. If the above outlined dreams for our future are achieved, I will have lived up to my responsibility to your Club. Your help is welcomed. It will be needed.

—Junie L. Sinson

Things they’re saying about us:

About the Inland Printers Exhibition:

Alan Artner in the *Chicago Tribune*: “Inland Printers: The Fine Press Movement in Chicago 1928-1945” is successful “in bringing alive a brilliant but relatively little-known aspect of Chicago’s artistic history.”

About the leaf book exhibition:

Jonathan Messinger in *TimeOut Chicago*:

“The...comprehensive exhibit is the first of its kind to showcase the leaf books, tackle the controversy and also attempt to catalog the leaf books that are still around.”

Joel Henning in *The Wall Street Journal*:

a “fascinating display of some of the best leaf books.”

John Windle in *The ABAA Newsletter* (of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America):

“I must... [congratulate] the Caxton Club on publishing such a distinguished volume so quickly and inexpensively.... By not shirking the controversial issues surrounding leaf books, and publishing important scholars on both sides of the controversy, the Caxton Club has done a great service to the world of rare book collecting....”

We regret that the fall FABS newsletter, which is expected to contain coverage of the Leaf Book exhibition, will not arrive in time to be included in the mailing with this issue. Look for it in a separate mailing, or with our October issue.

GREER, from page 1

for designing layouts of quiet distinction, with an understated strength and gentle forcefulness. Some of the books he designed for the Press include *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, edited by David Grene and Richard Lattimore, and *Inshallah*, by Forrest McDonald.

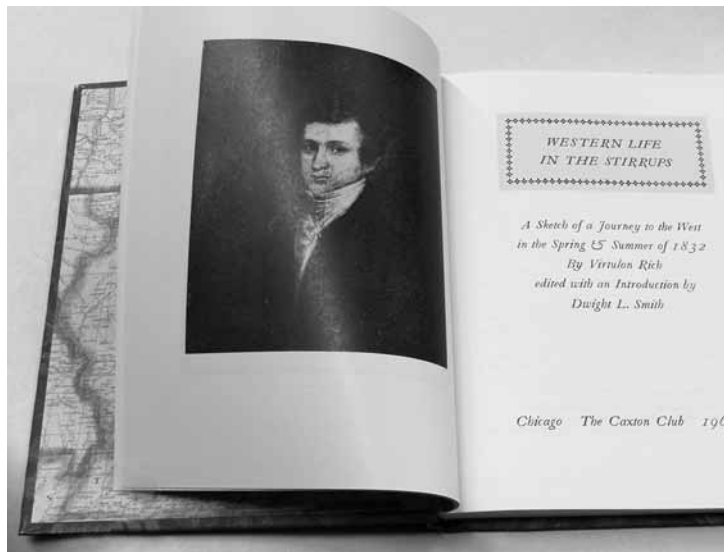
LOCAL MENTORS

In the best professional communities, established elders, secure in their standing, encourage younger people to develop their talents, and so it

was in Chicago's typographic community after World War II. Caxtonian Susan Jackson Keig recalls that typesetter Gordon Martin and his wife Jessie welcomed Greer into their circle. Highly knowledgeable about type, these designer-consultants were role models whose combination of marriage and career offered Greer a template for his own life. In Hyde Park, where he lived, illustrator and portrait painter George McVicker and his wife Julia, a talented weaver, invited him to their frequent weekend open houses. Other regular attendees included glassware artists Michael and Frances Higgins.

But the most important of Greer's mentors in Chicago was Caxtonian Robert Hunter Middleton, a typographer who combined an unassuming manner, a warm eagerness to encourage junior colleagues, and consummate professional ability. Decades after they met, Greer paid homage to Middleton in the Caxton Club's book *Robert Hunter Middleton: The Man and His Letters*: "[T]hey nurture seedling souls—guiding them to those they should know, and who in turn should know them (p. 20)."

On one occasion, Greer, when still a seedling soul in awe of Middleton's efforts on behalf of himself and other young graphic artists, expressed a wish to repay Middleton for his generosity. He never forgot Middleton's reply, which was that Greer should not repay him, but should instead pass along the gift of professional nurture he had been given to the next gen-



Western Life in the Stirrups was one of several Caxton Club books designed by Greer.

eration. Greer took this advice to heart, and was able to carry out Middleton's instructions at a later stage of his career when he taught graphic design students at Yale.

THE LIBRARY WORLD

Greer established himself professionally in Chicago at a time when Chicago was consolidating itself as a library center. Caxtonian James Wells, then in the early stages of his long career at the Newberry Library, recalls Greer's friendship and encouragement, particularly Greer's introducing him to his friends in typography and librarianship. Over the course of his long and distinguished career at the Newberry, Wells returned the favor by introducing Greer and his wife Sue to many of the important visitors he hosted, including Stanley Morison, the noted typographer of *The Times* of London. Greer designed various books for the Newberry, including *The Circle of Knowledge*, for which Wells was the curator and client.

Caxtonian Gordon Williams, director of the Center for Research Libraries, was a friend of the family who generously shared his experiences with the complexities of his administration as he worked with many of the nation's greatest libraries to develop the version—in easily available book form—of the National Union Catalog (called by Nicolas Barker "the greatest bibliographical achievement in my time."). In visits at each other's homes, Greer listened with interest as Williams, in his genial, expansive manner, reported on ongoing developments in his work with major libraries, or they

would discuss their shared interest in fine typography.

Greer's closest friend during his Chicago years was Caxtonian Robert Rosenthal, curator of Special Collections at the University of Chicago Library. The two met as young colleagues at the University. Discovering a shared interest in books and printing, they and their families developed a long, warm, and enduring friendship. As Hyde Park neighbors, the families visited each other frequently, and during their visits, they would compare notes on subjects

ranging from university administration to home repairs (both had bought somewhat neglected houses which they and their wives transformed into tasteful, welcoming homes). Caxtonian Jane Rosenthal shared her interest in Mexican culture, the Spanish language, and Náhuatl and other Uto-Aztec languages.

Through their friendship with the Rosenthals, the Allens were privileged to follow Special Collections over the years as it grew in size and stature, and in particular the department's move from Harper Library to Regenstein Library, which opened in 1970.

GREER AND THE CAXTON CLUB

Among Middleton's contributions to Greer's professional development was to interest him in the Caxton Club as an ongoing institution where typographers, book collectors, and librarians meet to share their common interests. He joined the Caxton Club in 1954, nominated by Norman Cram (an R.R. Donnelley executive who later arranged for Greer and Sue to visit the studio of Father Catich in Iowa) and seconded by Middleton. Greer enjoyed the interaction and contacts, maintaining his membership until 1981, ten years after moving from the University of Chicago to Yale.

Caxtonians today enjoy the benefit of one important Allen family contribution. Like Gordon and Jessie Martin, Greer and Sue Allen were fellow professionals as well as husband and wife. A distinguished graphic designer in her own right, Sue

established her scholarly credibility with a meticulously-researched exhibition on 19th century American bookbindings (mounted, at Robert Rosenthal's invitation, in the Special Collections exhibit cases) and a microfiche book on the subject published by the University of Chicago Press. Subsequently, she became the first woman to address a Caxton Club audience, which helped lead to the Club's 1976 decision to admit women to its membership.

SOCIETY OF TYPOGRAPHIC ARTS

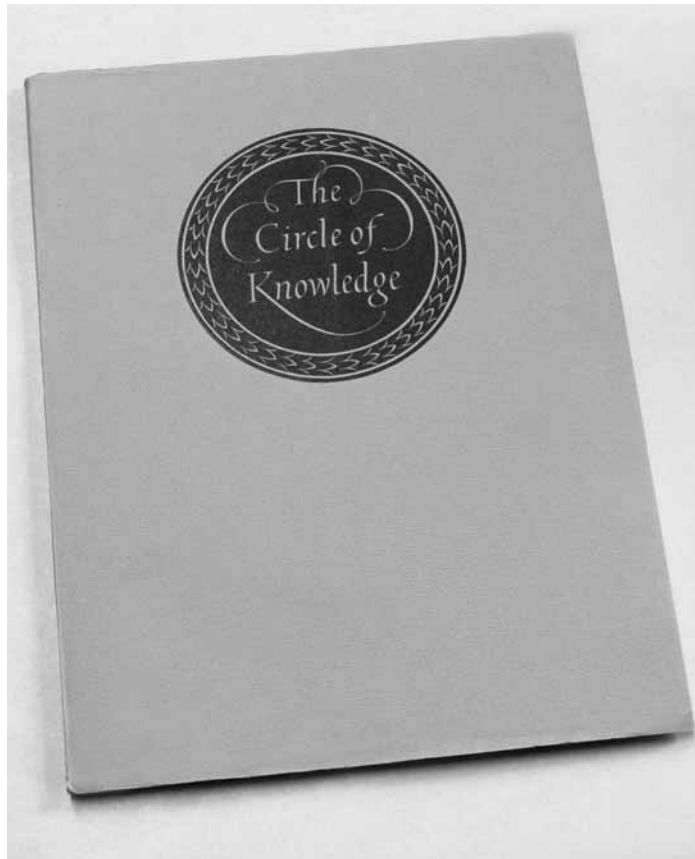
Caxtonian James Wells remembers that Greer's greatest professional involvement was with the Society of Typographic Arts. During the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, the STA was the leading professional association for Chicago's graphic designers. Founded in 1927, the STA's sixty members formed what Caxtonian Susan Keig describes as a "large-ish, but manageable" community. Its members included not only such older typographers as Middleton and McVicker, but such contemporaries of Greer as Caxtonian Hayward Blake. With its Type Workshop (housed at the Newberry Library), the STA was a very good forum for designers to explore the possibilities of their craft in a hands-on fashion. Caxtonian Muriel Underwood, in her July 1996 *Caxtonian* article, "The Story of the STA/ACD Type Workshop," notes that some of the Type Workshop's supply "had been replenished from time to time by the University of Chicago Press Printing Department, arranged through STA members Greer Allen and Cameron Poulter."

Vi Fogle Uretz, a longtime family friend, remembers meeting Greer at STA events around 1951 or 1952, and that he taught printing courses for an unofficial South Side caucus of the STA. She also recalls that he sometimes came to parties carrying a small press and some type in a knapsack, and delighted his hosts and fellow guests alike with a demonstration of the printing

process.

Underwood remembers Greer's enthusiasm for the heritage of his craft. Leaving an STA event, Greer was talking with her about Yale's great designer-printer Carl Rollins. Underwood asked "Who is he?" Greer asked in amazement, "You don't know who Carl Purington Rollins is?" The conversation inspired Underwood to learn more about typography.

The STA served social as well as professional purposes. Underwood remembers that Greer got to know his future wife Sue



Cover of *The Circle of Knowledge*, which Greer designed for the Newberry Library. It featured a medallion by Reynolds Stone. Both this and *Western Life* (facing page) are still available; contact Dan Crawford for details.

better through the STA. Vi Uretz recalls that before Greer married graphic designer Sue Richert in 1955, they were designing the STA Bulletin together.

OTHER INVOLVEMENTS

Another local typographic institution enjoying the participation of many STA members was the Book Clinic, an annual, juried exhibition through which Chicago's many publishers sought to win recognition

for their work. Susan Keig remembers that Greer and Mary Alexander, also of the University of Chicago Press, were among those very active in the Book Clinic before its importance faded in the 1970s as mergers and other changes in the publishing industry reduced the number of locally-headquartered publishers.

Another of Greer's involvements was during the 1960s, when he designed *Manuscripts*, the quarterly illustrated journal of the Manuscript Society. His covers for *Manuscripts* showed much of the combination of clarity and creativity, of conservatism and playfulness that he was to develop more fully in the later years of his career.

Among the Allens' friends was Caxtonian Gwin Kolb, the English professor and expert on Dr. Samuel Johnson. Through Kolb and his wife Ruth, the Allens became interested in Johnson, occasionally attending meetings of the Johnsonian Society. On one occasion in the late 1960s, the Great Lakes branch of the Johnsonian Society had a Chicago meeting, and one of the *divertissements* offered to the attendees was a visit to the Allen home for refreshments—and printing.

THE ALLENS AT HOME

Some of the Allens' friends may remember the simple wooden Victorian home where Greer, Sue, and their son John lived in Hyde Park. Affordable to a young couple only because its previous owners had neglected it for years, the house rewarded the Allens' hard work restoring it largely in keeping with its Victorian style (at a time when many still disdained 19th century aesthetics). They furnished their home in a graceful combination of new and old, and it was featured in articles in the lifestyle sections of both the *Tribune* and the *Sun-Times*.

For many visitors, the highlight of a visit to the Allen home was the print shop in the basement. The Allens' type shop had a wide
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variety of fonts and sizes, along with a variety of decorative illustrations of 18th and 19th century images. There was a flatbed proof press, useful for printing the occasional large-size poster in small quantities, but the favorite of the Allens and their visitors alike was a small clamshell-style press for printing cards and stationery. Many were the friends whose personalized notepads, and even birth and wedding announcements, were printed in the Allens' basement. For many years Sue would design a family Christmas card, which Greer would print in the basement. Susan Keig still has one of the Allens' Christmas cards on display in her kitchen.

Although his hobby printing focus was on historic technology, he kept up to date with contemporary printing technology by having a single-cylinder Davidson offset press moved into the basement in the late 1960s. This was an unusual machine for a hobby printer to own, and Greer did use it to print the occasional job, such as an invitation for an event at the Oriental Institute.

A HUMANE MANAGER FOR TURBULENT TIMES

After eighteen years establishing himself at and beyond the University of Chicago Press as a designer of skill and grace, Greer became manager of the Printing Department of the Press in 1965. He took charge at a time of rapidly accelerating change beginning to sweep the printing industry.

When he learned the craft of printing, the dominant method of production in the industry was hot metal composition, which produced lines of type (similar to those set through the earlier technology of hand composition, except that the discrete units were not individual characters and spaces, but lines of type set by machine). Once the lines of hot metal were cool enough to be safely handled, they were transferred to a press for printing. After the printing process, the metal lines were melted down for re-use. Although hot metal was at the leading edge of printing technology in the 1910s and 1920s, photographic composition and offset printing had come of age by the mid-1960s, and the superior efficiency was being felt throughout the printing industry with a force similar to the sweep-

ing impact of desktop publishing during the 1990s.

During Greer's years as manager of the Printing Department from 1965 to 1971, he struggled to modernize the plant against a backdrop of increasing competition from commercial printers that had been quicker to modernize. Much as he personally appreciated the history of traditional printing technology, he was acutely aware of the Printing Department's need to update its plant. He read the trade press assiduously to keep up with contemporary advances in offset technology.

Greer attended many management seminars, several of which dealt with the need for managers to engage in meaningful two-way communication with their employees rather than delivering orders in an older, more paternalistic, top-down style. This then-new approach to management fit in very well with Greer's personal style. His down-to-earth manner resonated with employees at all levels of the organization, from his assistant manager right down to the driver of the department's delivery truck. Greer's concern with his employees as human beings, which was reflected in his efforts to minimize job losses in the difficult process of changing technology, helped assure their cooperation as he oversaw the Printing Department's replacement of hot metal with offset printing.

Greer's direct style, and his easy rapport with people at all levels, came in handy on one occasion during the turbulent 1960s. Some of the pressmen were accustomed, in good weather, to eating lunch on the loading dock at the Press building (now the University of Chicago bookstore), right across Ellis Avenue from the Administration Building. These hard-working, traditionally-minded men did not approve of the casual dress and grooming of many of the students who were abundantly evident at the Administration Building across the street, particularly when protests were occurring. Using his capacity for straight talk, Greer convinced his employees to enjoy their lunch elsewhere, thus helping to ward off confrontation.

Preventing unwanted face-offs between students and his employees was the least of Greer's worries with regard to the Adminis-

tration Building, where he had to deal with a cost-concerned university administration that was unsympathetic to his needs as the manager of a department struggling to keep pace with sweeping changes in the technology of printing. Although the administration was not consciously attempting to eliminate the Printing Department, Greer and other employees sensed that the administration failed to understand or support what needed to be done if the Printing Department was to define a niche for itself in the offset age. Greer understood the value of good graphic design in helping to convey the dignity and distinction of the University itself as an institution, but unfortunately his bosses at the Administration Building failed to see the value of Greer's argument. It was a comfort to Greer that one of his colleagues at the Press, Caxtonian Robert Williams, was a distinguished calligrapher and scholar of printing history whose work he admired.

It was while Greer was struggling with these issues that Yale University contacted him about taking on a similar role in a more supportive environment. Although Greer did not want to leave the city, the neighborhood, and the university where he had built his career, he sensed that he was at a dead end at the University of Chicago, and in 1971 he left Chicago to become Yale's University Printer, in the line of succession to his Yale mentor Carl Rollins. After trying the job for a year to determine whether the Yale position truly offered him a secure future, he moved his wife Sue and son John to New Haven in 1972.

The Chicago phase of Greer Allen's career had come to an end, but despite the indifferent attitude of the administration, several friends at the University of Chicago such as Gwin Kolb and Robert Rosenthal felt his departure keenly. Non-U. of C. friends and colleagues also missed Greer. Caxtonian Susan Keig says that his departure left a void in the Chicago design community; although she and other contemporaries such as Bruce Beck, Hayward Blake, Lynn Martin, and Muriel Underwood continued to practice fine design in accordance with the same precepts of distinction and clarity that inspired Greer's work.

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Caxtonians Collect: Arlene Hoffman

Tenth in a series of interviews with members.

Interviewed by Paul T. Ruxin

Who is a bibliophile? Readers of dealer catalogues, fine-press devotees, typophiles? Collectors? Readers? Perhaps, but not necessarily. Caxtonian Arlene Hoffman, however, is most certainly a bibliophile. Proposed for Caxton by George Leonard and Susan Hanes in 2005, she came to Chicago from New York and Connecticut in 2000. She brought with her some of her remarkable collections, of which more below, but what dominates the walls and many other surfaces of her gracious Lincoln Park apartment are books; books on shelves that have been carefully organized, but according to her own system, books whose appearance makes clear that they have been read.

Caxtonian: What started you collecting books?

Arlene Hoffman: Closeness to nature. I was a middle child, and, although loved, I was often alone, and I would go out into the fields and I would collect books. Both kept me from feeling lonely.

Caxtonian: What was the power of books to do that?

Hoffman: Nature and books made me feel safe. I found a wealth, a wonderment in books. My books give me joy, and they are all very personal.

Caxtonian: Looking at your shelves one is struck by how eclectic your tastes are. I see poetry, literature, art, nature, letters—do you have a favorite writer or genre?

Hoffman: I need poetry books, and I need nature books. These three walls are “New York” books, books from my New York apartment, and these three are “Connecticut” books, from my lovely old 1722 house in Lakeville, where, unlike New York, I had my sprawling English garden—but I found that even when I was in New York I needed my field guides, and if I had had a third place I would have needed them there too.

Caxtonian: What poets, in particular, do you come back to?



Hoffman: Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Rainer Maria Rilke. I read them always.

Caxtonian: They are lyric, romantic writers. Do you find that appealing for personal reasons?

Hoffman: Oh perhaps. I was a flower child, a hippy. Beauty has always touched me.

Caxtonian: In what ways do your loves of nature and books and beauty come together?

Hoffman: They intersect everywhere. Here are some 19th Century nature books, one a set of eight about British birds [Morris, *A History of British Birds* (1880)], and one about fishing [Ronalds, *The Fly-Fisher Entomology* (1868)]. Look at these beautiful hand-painted plates of birds and fish and tied flies. See how they have egg-whited surfaces that make them gleam and come alive. I need these books around me.

Caxtonian: Your apartment here is glorious; tell me something about how your interests informed the creation of this beau-

tiful space.

Hoffman: Many of the paintings, as you can see, reflect the importance of nature in my life. I didn't feel at home here until I had my pig, my cow, my animal paintings on the walls around my bedroom, and my Biedermeier furniture, which emphasizes the lovely natural grain of the wood. My home in Connecticut had a wild-flower garden planted to attract Sphinx moths and monarch butterflies, which I also raised in Manhattan. I am doing that here too, and have been doing it for 37 years. All these loves are reflected in my collections. I need not only my poetry, but baroque music to read by, and here is a wonderful old painting—it looks like Mozart in drag, doesn't it [*Caxtonian*: “It does”], but it is all part of who I am, just as I become part of my house in Connecticut. The daughter of the builder in 1722 was named “Hannah,” or healer, and I am a healer too, and felt her spirit when I found that house, and mine is now there too.

Caxtonian: Although it's difficult to concentrate only on the books in the presence of so many wonderful things, tell me what you're reading now, new and old.

Hoffman: I just finished Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of a Dog in the Night-Time*, a beautiful moving book about a boy with Asberger's syndrome. And I am reading the Torah with a Rabbi in West Rogers park, in a small group, once a week. We read each portion over and over.

Caxtonian: Do you think of the Bible as a spiritual or literary work?

Hoffman: Oh it is spiritual; it is a way to live, an explanation, a guide.

Caxtonian: But not to exclusion of being beautifully written?

Hoffman: No, of course not. It is moving and passionate, but I don't think you can approach it as literary rather than spiritual; in that sense it is different than Rilke's or Millay's poetry which are both.

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Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program

September 9, 2005

Dan Crawford

“Famous Caxtonians You’ve Never Heard Of”

Dan Crawford, author (8 books), Newberry Book Fair Director and Caxton Club General Manager, will demonstrate the incredible diversity of the club membership since 1895 by regaling the audience with Caxton-member stories that include 3 Illinois Governors, an embezzler, a Presidential candidate, 1½ (yes) crowned heads of Europe, a sex-scandal participant, a Secretary of the Treasury and, of course, noted book collectors.

Mysterious Dan will now only reveal stories that did NOT make the final cut for his presentation: the member whose televised book auction set a new price record for a single book, the member who bought his son a Major League Baseball Team (his son renamed the team the Boston Red Sox) and two members who owned the same rare manuscript (only 50 years apart).

Dan heartily welcomes those with stories. “Please add to the mix.”

RESCHEDULED

Collectors and Their Collections

Sunday, October 2, 2-4 pm

Bruce Barnett: “The Dance of Death”

Trained as a lawyer, and active in business for many years, Bruce now concentrates on book selling and collecting. He collects “The Dance of Death,” a literary, artistic, and musical genre originating in the 13th Century based on the theme that life is short, and nobody is spared. “DOD,” as fans call it, is known in other languages as Danse Macabre and Totentanz. Among those who have used the DOD theme are Breughel, Holbein, and Liszt. Bruce also collects Art Deco and Arts and Crafts.

Bruce and David Block operate The Book Block, antiquarian booksellers based in Greenwich, Connecticut, and Lake Forest, Illinois. He started as a customer and was hooked so deeply he became a partner. He will share with us some of his insights into developing a collection.

Bruce is located at 671 Balmoral Court in Lake Forest. As always, attendance must be limited, and advance reservations are requested. Please call the Club at (312) 255-3710 to hold your spot. The attendance fee of \$25 will be collected at the door. Refreshments will be served.

Dinner Program

September 21, 2005

Gail Kern Paster

“Finding the Body in Elizabethan Almanacs”

Gail Kern Paster has been Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library since 2002. She continues as editor of *Shakespeare Quarterly*, the leading scholarly journal on Shakespeare. She earned a B.A. at Smith College and a Ph.D. at Yale. She is the author of numerous scholarly articles and three books; her most recent is *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (2004).

Elizabethan almanacs and prognostications—fragile ephemera of the world of cheap print—are a treasure trove to historians of the body. These now-rare red-and-black octavos were once printed in great quantities and contained essential information for average Englishmen and women—sites and dates of fair days, feasts and holidays, phases of the moon, times for planting and reaping. But they also showed Elizabethans how to think about and care for their bodies. Catchy monthly verses told them when to bathe, when to purge, and when to indulge in or abstain from sex. For an evidence-starved historian, these little books offer a rare glimpse into the daily habits and practices of a forgotten cosmology. Gail Kern Paster will give us a lively introduction.

Beyond September...

OCTOBER LUNCHEON:

October 14's luncheon speaker will be Sandra Taylor of the Lilly Library, Bloomington, Indiana. She will share the challenges she faces as Manuscript Curator of a world-famous collection.

OCTOBER DINNER:

Wednesday, October 19, New York lawyer David A. Richards will talk. Richards, hard at work on a bibliography of Kipling, will give a talk that is an extended rebuttal to the judgment of Robert Frost: “Collecting is the lowest form of literary appreciation. Very low.”

NOVEMBER LUNCHEON:

Note date change! Friday, November 4, Caxtonian Jerry Meyer on “From Ruskinian Medievalism to Beardsley Decadence: The Influence of William Morris’ Arts and Crafts Movement on English Book Design and Illustration.”

NOVEMBER DINNER:

Sam Eillenport is proprietor of the Harcourt Bindery in Boston. His illustrated talk on Wednesday, November 16 is about another famous bindery: the Club Bindery, whose custom bindings were the first American bindings to rival European ones.

All luncheon and dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of BankOne, Madison and Clark, Chicago. Luncheon: buffet opens at 11:30; program 12:30-1:30. Dinner meetings: spirits at 5 pm, dinner at 6 pm, lecture at 7:30 pm.

For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org. Members and guests: Lunch \$25, Dinner \$45. Discount parking available for evening meetings, with a stamped ticket, at Standard Self-Park, 172 W. Madison.