

Book Reviews



The Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia: The First Fifty Years. Ed. David L. Vander Meulen. Charlottesville: The Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1998. 272p. 300 copies printed (ISBN 1-883631-07-6). LC 98-6202.

This commemorative history of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia is composed of four articles previously published in *Studies in Bibliography*. The articles are followed by William B. Todd's anniversary address; an appendix consisting of a compilation of the society's officers, councilors, contributing members, programs, and contest winners; and a general index. The preface by G. Thomas Tanselle, president of the Bibliographical Society, sets up the contents and recounts the particulars of the anniversary celebration. In it, Tanselle explains the volume's purpose, which is to begin an assessment of the society's role in the development of the field of bibliography during the second half of the twentieth century.

Of the four articles, "History of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia," by David L. Vander Meulen, and "A History of Studies in Bibliography: The First Fifty Volumes," by G. Thomas Tanselle, seem to call for some discussion. The other two, "Publications of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1947-1997," by David L. Vander Meulen, and "Author Index to *Studies in Bibliography*, Volumes 1-5," by David L. Gants and Elizabeth K. Lynch, do not, past saying that they are well and competently done.

Vander Meulen's history of the society and, indeed, Tanselle's history of its journal are not necessarily for bibliographers only, or just for members of the society, although any commemorative volume is certainly aimed at a restricted clientele. Both are interesting as chronicles of the founding and evolution of an academic

society, and could inform anyone engaged in such an endeavor. However, the same cannot be said of the rest of the volume, which is fairly specifically constrained to either bibliographers or members of the society.

The society was founded in 1946, when an exploratory meeting was held in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Division of the university library, hosted by John Cook Wyllie, then curator of rare books, who had sent out invitations and a questionnaire in preparation for the meeting. The thirty-three people who came listened to Chalmers Gemmill, a pharmacologist at the university, discuss "John Baskerville, Typefounder," and the society was formed. And although any number of people contributed to the society, its existence and accomplishments are the work primarily of three individuals: John Cook Wyllie, who was secretary-treasurer from 1947 until 1962; Linton Massey, who was president from 1951 until 1974; and Fredson Bowers, who edited *Studies in Bibliography* from 1948 until 1991. As curator of rare books and later as university librarian, Wyllie gave the society a home; Massey contributed his business sense and financial support; and Bowers shepherded the journal.

Over the years, the society has changed, evolved, and reinvented itself. And though it has always presented public lectures and sponsored contests, its most important undertaking has always been its publications program, which began in 1947 with the *Secretary's News Sheet*, edited by Wyllie until 1962 and then by William B. Runge until its demise in 1969. The *Secretary's News Sheet* contained society business, news from members, and bibliographical notes and queries. The society also published a mimeographed series that offered the texts of lectures, checklists, indexes, and works in progress, such as Richard

Harwell's *Cornerstones of Confederate Collecting*. The other large effort, excluding *Studies in Bibliography*, has been the preparation of textual studies, such as Bower's *Essays in Bibliography, Text and Editing*, and several works by Tanselle, including *Textual Criticism since Greg: A Chronicle, 1950-1985* and *Textual Criticism and Scholarly Editing*.

The society's most substantial contribution has always been *Studies in Bibliography*; and Robin Myers, representing the Bibliographical Society, was correct in her comments at the fiftieth anniversary when she said that it was "a very special publication ... causing a yearly frisson of pleasure as it thuds down on bibliographical doormats everywhere." However, Tanselle's assertion that in the second half of the twentieth century, *Studies in Bibliography* took over from *The Library*, the publication of the Bibliographical Society (Britain), as the place where "one witnessed most dramatically the exploration of new techniques and new areas" may be going a bit far. This certainly is not proven by the essay that would have to set the contents of the one against the other but, instead, speaks only of *Studies in Bibliography*. Furthermore, an admittedly cursory examination of the contents of *The Library* does not bear out the assertion, at least not for the first twenty-five years, when authors and articles seemed almost interchangeable because they were by the same people writing about the same things, including Tanselle, Wyllie, and Greg. Nevertheless, *Studies in Bibliography* has carved out a niche for itself, primarily in the consideration of American subjects in which *The Library* seems to have little interest.

Studies in Bibliography, of course, was the creation of Fredson Bowers, and he must figure large in any history of it because few journals of such standing are created and edited by the same scholar for forty-three years.

According to Tanselle, its format was fixed with the first volume, which contained eleven articles followed by six bibliographical notes; and it came into its own with volume three, which contained Greg's "The Rationale of Copy Text," a

point of departure for textual critics for the next fifty years. Besides this, there were eleven other articles by eminent critics, fourteen bibliographical notes, and a checklist of bibliographical scholarship for 1949.

A commemorative volume need not have wide appeal, and this one does not, but because it chronicles the rise of a scholarly society in perhaps an unlikely place, it makes for more interesting reading than one would first expect. And because the society began in Special Collections at the University of Virginia, all concerned in the administration of rare books and manuscripts could benefit from examining it. —James B. Lloyd, *University of Tennessee*.

The Education of Library and Information Professionals Series

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The title of this monograph series, *The Education of Library and Information Professionals*, indicates the direction in which library and information science education