matter of dispute), Vespucci’s description is believed to be the earliest published document that mentions Brazil. The “selected” list showcases the depth of this collection and underscores its value to scholars. Gauz briefly notes interesting content such as the indigenous music and lyrics in Jean de Lery’s work and the early illustration of a Brazilian smoking a cigar included by André Thevet in 1558. The list includes the classic treasures such as De Bry, Frézier, Debret, and Spix and the French and Dutch holdings are impressive.

Other appendices include a general bibliography of catalogs of Brazilianiana, exhibition catalogs, and resources on rare imprints. The various indexes that follow are helpful and well prepared. An index to laws, decrees, and other government publications in the JCB is chronologically arranged. The JCB has now reproduced the text of many of these laws (published 1808–1822) on their Web site. The provenance index lists names (where known) and links these to the entries. Author and title indexes complete the catalog.

It is fitting that this volume is dedicated to one of the greatest bibliophiles of Brazilianiana, José Mindlin, who served on the board of the JCB. His library was one of the most remarkable—partially underground with an elevator, yet comfortably outfitted with leather chairs and Oriental rugs, it had the feel of a James Bond movie—and was possibly the most extensive private collection in Latin America. He was a charming and generous benefactor, a collector extraordinaire who was most happy to show his treasures to visiting Americans. The country is most fortunate that he has left his Brazilianiana to the Universidade de São Paulo. And the United States is equally fortunate to have access to such treasures as are so comprehensively identified here in this catalog of the John Carter Brown Library. It is an invaluable resource for all researchers, bibliophiles, and antiquarian booksellers of colonial Brazil.—Paula Covington, Vanderbilt University, Latin American and Iberian Bibliographer, Senior Lecturer of Latin American Studies


It is ironic, as Pettegree points out in his “A Note on Sources” (353–56), that it has been the enormous growth of information about early printed books available through the Internet that has made this, by far the most significant publication yet on the social history of the book, possible. As outstanding and important as Lucian Febvre and Henry-Jean Martin’s groundbreaking The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1458–1800 (1976) and Elizabeth Eisenstein’s The Printing Press as an Agent of Change (1979) and her subsequent The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe (1983) were, this masterpiece outdistances them. While Pettegree used the vast electronic resources, primarily bibliographic records, not available to those earlier
authors to great advantage, they only served as a starting point for the numerous personal visits that he paid to large collections, like that of Fernando Colon, one of the first major book collectors, as well as smaller ones, like the Library at Innerpeffray in rural Perthshire, that enabled him to capture the true spirit of the Renaissance. Over the course of a long career working on this subject, he also managed to identify, locate, and examine a wide range of other sources such as inventories of the stock of dealers or printers who had been tried for heresy or who had died.

Best of all, Pettegree is a splendid storyteller who has carefully melded together a wealth of factual information with vignettes of important authors, collectors, dealers, illustrators, printers, publishers, and others to produce a social history of the first hundred-odd years of the book in all parts of Europe. As he proceeds in chronological order, he moves back and forth from country to country, as well as dealing with the movement of people and books between countries, as printing developed and spread. His coverage of the distribution of printers and publishers throughout Europe, accompanied by excellent maps, as well as the critical importance of events like the Frankfurt Fairs, perhaps the most significant way in which books moved from one country to another, is fascinating. Almost all of the segments are brief and to the point, and all of them are far more than dry-as-dust history. He more than adequately covers all of the technological aspects of the printing and publishing process, such as the development and use of woodcuts, but at the same time describes out-of-the-way elements such as the development and placement of indexes. The coverage of the economic aspects of book publishing at the time, including the impact of major social events like the Reformation and the emergence of popular authors like Luther, focuses on how many of those events allowed printers to survive by printing smaller-sized publications that did not require a large upfront investment of paper and time. No matter what a reader’s interests may be, he or she is certain to find some valuable nuggets of information in the text. My personal interest in children’s literature was enlightened by a section on the development of books, mainly ABC books designed to teach children to read, that were often produced in large numbers (at least 200,000 copies, including pirated versions, of John Daye’s two British texts) that are “among the most ephemeral of all the book trade and surviving examples are rare.” (188)

This is a book that deserves to be read thoughtfully, and slowly, over a period of time, not gulped down in one sitting—no matter how tempting it may be to do so. To the extent that any of our remaining library education programs still teach the kind of once-common social history courses that deal with books, reading, and libraries, The Book in the Renaissance should be the textbook for the first part of the course. All librarians who work with rare books and manuscripts should definitely read and cherish Pettegree’s efforts. Those who work in larger institutions with
other rare books and manuscript librarians might wish to consider organizing a one-time book club—even inviting other librarians outside their department or unit—to read this educational and entertaining treatise and discuss it together over several sessions. It is, by far, one of the most significant library-related books I have read in many a year; I cannot recommend it highly enough. Enjoy!—Norman D. Stevens, Director of University Libraries, Emeritus, University of Connecticut.


Expanded from a series of three lectures given in 2007, Hall describes the political, social, and cultural forces that influenced modes of authorship, publishing, and dissemination in 17th-century New England. Separate, but not wholly apart, Hall delineates how writing in New England developed along a different trajectory from the center of the English-speaking world in London. Hall begins by asserting that two keys to understanding New England’s text-making culture have been undervalued. The first is the essentially collaborative culture of how texts were written, spoken, shared, transcribed, annotated, and rewritten. The second is the fundamentally handwritten or scribal practices that were perpetuated by authors. Perhaps a counterintuitive claim, Hall insists that for the purposes of understanding New England during the 17th century, scribal publication must be interpreted as tantamount to print publication within the social context and means of production available. Each of the three forces—political, sociological, and the Puritan vernacular tradition—facilitate the succeeding explanations and arguments for evidence of a vast and complicated culture of writing in early English-speaking America.

The political aspects of writing, often indivisible from religion in 17th-century America, influenced a variety of choices authors made about what they did with their work. Central to the authorship of works was the distinction between making them public or private. Although never explicitly diagrammed, Hall generates several concentric, local to trans-Atlantic, circles of readership, such as the home, the church, the Boston area, New England, London, and the English-speaking world. Hall in turn details the numerous genres of works, sometimes directly related to these various social and political circles, such as church controversies, religious experience, poetry, prose compilations, textbooks, and secular political tracts. Paradoxically, attempts to make writings private, particularly controversial or aesthetically admired works, could accentuate their movement and penetration into other circles. Sometimes authors or disputants legitimately feared works of controversy or dissent being more widely distributed. At other times, their secrecy might have been a feint of modesty or divinely inspired truth, purity, and anticommercialism, in turn used as evidence of their righteousness.