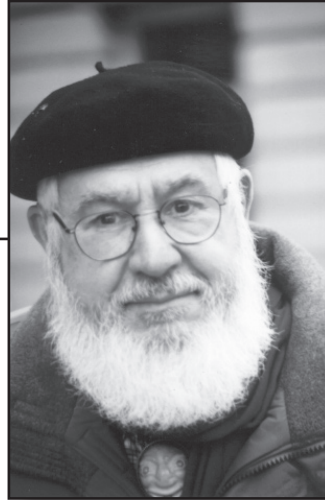


Daniel J. Slive

INTERVIEW WITH ROGER E. STODDARD



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ROGER E. STODDARD WILL RETIRE in December 2004 as Curator of Rare Books in the Harvard College Library after four decades of service in the Houghton Library. To commemorate this event, Stoddard curated an exhibition in spring 2004 titled “RES Gestae: Libri Manent: A Curator’s Choice of Books Purchased for the Houghton Library from 1965 to 2003,” which explored many of the collecting areas he pursued at Harvard. Acquisitions for Historical Collections, a symposium in the curator’s honor, was also held at Harvard in March 2004.¹

Born and raised in New England, Stoddard attended Brown University and received his bachelor’s degree in classics. His experience with the antiquarian trade began when, as an undergraduate, he cofounded a used and rare book firm. His professional experience also began at Brown a few years after graduation, when he held the position of Curator of the Harris Collection. Since the mid-sixties, Stoddard has held positions at Houghton acquiring books, curating exhibitions, and teaching at Harvard. Since 1962, he has also been a prolific author, writing and speaking on numerous bibliographic topics. A collection of his writings, *A Library-Keeper’s Business*, was published in 2002.²

1. The symposium, “Acquisitions for Historical Collections,” was held on March 22, 2004, at Harvard University. The speakers were Gerd-Josef Böette, Rare Books Librarian in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin; Antoine Coron, Directeur de la Réserve, Bibliothèque nationale de France; Claudia Funke, Curator of Rare Books in the Avery Library, Columbia University; James N. Green, Associate Librarian of the Library Company of Philadelphia; and Richard Ovenden, Keeper of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford University. The moderator was Ann M. Blair, Professor of History, Harvard University. The papers, together with an illustrated catalog of the exhibition, have been published in the *Harvard Library Bulletin*, NS 15: 1–2 (2004).

2. Roger E. Stoddard, *A Library-Keeper’s Business: Essays by Roger E. Stoddard*. Selected and edited by Carol Z. Rothkopf. Preface by Stephen Weissman (New Castle, Del: Oak Knoll Pr., 2002).

This interview was recorded at the Houghton Library on February 21, 2004.

You've curated an exhibition celebrating your career at Houghton from 1965 to 2003. Can you discuss the exhibition's structure and contents? Noting that you have acquired 65,000 books during your tenure, how did you deal with organizing the show when considering the number of possibilities?

Usually when an exhibition commemorates a retirement or a career, it's entitled something like "Fifty Great Books" acquired during the tenure of so-and-so. I think it's nice to associate fifty great books with the tenure of a librarian, but I think it's perhaps more interesting to make a demonstration of institutional collecting during the tenure of the librarian, and that's what I've done. They are not necessarily my favorites and they are not necessarily the greatest books that have come to the library in my time, but they are a demonstration of collecting. They are purchases in large part, sometimes with cash given by library supporters, more often with income from endowments given by book collectors and well-wishers, many of them for particular subjects. The exhibition that I've arranged shows many of the languages and national literatures which are represented in the great Widener library beside us [at Harvard] and have been historically represented in the Houghton Library since its opening in 1942.

The first five cases show adding to the old collections in the old ways—the national literatures, philosophy and science, arts, the classics and the classical tradition—so that more books were being added to each of those collections during my tenure here. The second five cases show adding in new ways with perhaps a new tone, a new tenor. You have a case of marks in books, and marks in books can be from any period and any subject so long as they're interesting and documentary. Then you have European Britannica, which shows English culture and its impact in Europe, and those two themes I've pursued during much of my tenure here. I found that the English collections were so full that it was very hard to add to them, but what you could do is add English books, translations of English books, and books about England from Europe. Beyond that, you find international authors and new authors and then, finally, a case of books that's so mysterious that I can hardly believe that any of those books exist. I think they're quite wonderful books, very strange, and some of them very ephemeral.

Could you describe a few of these?

There is a Commented Psalms that we think was printed before 1521 in Rome. It has a little tiny line of Hebrew type here and there. It never was actually published; it never got preliminaries or a title page. It came from Bernard Quaritch Limited in an advance copy of a catalog. When I opened the catalog, I found that book and I picked up the phone. So we have that book here. A few people from other libraries have expressed interest in finding out about that book. It's so mysterious, one wants to know where it is and what it is. There is a tract volume in that case of books on miraculous healing, eight or ten quarto tracts, seventeenth-century French printing. It's hard to imagine two such tracts, let alone a whole volume. And there's a note which deals with other tract volumes, some of them having to do with a year of locust plague in Europe, another one on the very cold winter of 1739–1740. All of them little libraries, little collections that were formed at the time and bound up and which no one has broken up and which have come here intact.

The first book in the exhibition is a copy of the 1854 first edition of *Walden*, and the copy that Thoreau gave to his alma mater is at Houghton. This copy, however, was owned by Daniel Ricketson of New Bedford, a hiking companion of Thoreau's, and it includes two drawings of Thoreau and notes of meetings with Ricketson. The last book in the show is a volume of restoration plays that was owned by two students in the 1720s, and one of them has made in it a facetious inscription about being caught playing cards and begging the forgiveness of the president and fellows of Harvard College. So you start at Walden Pond and you wind up in the Yard, but making a very grand excursion out into the great world.

Moving a little away from the Yard, can you discuss your time growing up in New England and your early experiences with books and the trade?

I grew up in Needham, a suburb of Boston on a commuter rail line, and that was a very good town for me. I began to collect all kinds of things: coins and minerals and stamps. I printed a business card for myself, "Dealer in Stamps," when I got printing merit badge, and at a certain point I began to go into Boston on Saturdays and attend the silent stamp auctions. Then I discovered Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle, but I got hooked on all of these other Conan Doyle books and I decided to read them all. The public library in Needham didn't have them, so instead of buying stamps in Boston, I began to go around to the bookshops.

This came back to me at Brown University where I took an undergraduate degree in classics. I went into the antiquarian book business on the side with a schoolmate, John G. Blair. He was in American studies and decided he wanted to get a *Fanshawe*, the first book of Hawthorne. We found an antique dealer who had bought a houseful of books. We offered \$100 for the books and brought them to Brown, and we found various ways to sell clumps of these books. We held two auctions of books, and I produced some catalogs. I quoted books in *Antiquarian Bookman*, bought books in *AB*, and had a very good time. I found some early eighteenth-century Mather sermons and eventually found my way to Lawrence Wroth at the John Carter Brown Library, who bought them and put them in the annual show of acquisitions. I asked him if he would tell me something about the background of such books and bibliography, and he took me as the only student he had had in many years. It was a course in which he would say, "Read [Daniel Berkeley] Updike on printing types, write a page and a half, and come in and we'll have a talk." That's the way we made our way through the literature that dealt with Spanish Americana, British Americana, and eventually even to [Jacques-Charles] Brunet and his *Manuel*.³ I'd had two years of French in junior high and four years of Latin in high school, which permitted me to pass the language requirement in Latin on entrance. That French was just exactly what I needed in order to understand Brunet, and Brunet is still very close to me.

Word about my interest in old books and my ability to find books and to learn about them made its way sufficiently so that George Goodspeed hired me in the summer of my junior year and again in the summer of my senior year. I may well have spent my entire career on Beacon Street in Boston had it not been for William Jackson, the founding librarian of this library, who offered me a job as his assistant. I told George I would be back soon after a stint here, and he said I would never come back, and he was right. I spent three years with Jackson as his accessioner, handling every printed book that came into the library and much of the backlog, making stub records and making exhibitions. Then I went back to Brown University to become Curator of the Harris Collection. When William Jackson died, I was called back here and have been here ever since.

Can you talk more about the book business you ran as an undergraduate?

3. Jacques-Charles Brunet, *Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur de livres* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1860-65); the fifth edition published in six volumes.

It was called Sibylline Books for the Cumaean Sibyl, who had nine books of oracles which legend says she offered to Tarquin. He turned her down because her price was too high, so she went away and burned three and came back with the remaining six. They were the same price, he turned her away again, and she came finally back with the remaining three volumes. He had to pay the full price of the nine, but only got a third of the books. So that was a little fable that we wanted to set out for our potential clients: They should really buy the first time they're offered a book instead of paying a price for something perhaps not as interesting as what we were offering. We had a very good time with that. The big thing I learned was respect for my fellow antiquarian book dealers. Most of them treated me with great respect, and here I was a teenager looking for something I could buy and sell to someone I knew. They could easily have said, "Get out" or "You don't get any discount," but they were very kind to me. My relations with the book trade have been the best ever since I've been on the other side of the counter because I'm extremely sympathetic to what goes on in a bookshop and in pricing and in buying. We have very good relations, which really began when I was an undergraduate at Brown.

You mentioned your time working in special collections at Brown. What were some of your experiences as a curator in the early sixties?

The librarian was David Jonah, who was very kind to me. He turned over to me the project he had started, a revision of Oscar Wegelin's bibliography of early American poetry. As Curator of the Harris Collection, I worked with S. Foster Damon, the great Blake scholar, and I spent many hours sorting sheet music with him and many hours outside the library filling my car with sheet music I would buy from country dealers and haul in and add to this very grand collection of American songs that Foster managed. In the collection, I tried to work a little bit the way Jackson had worked here. In my annual reports, I had sections for plays, songs, early poetry, for Canadian poetry, [and other literary fields]. I probed the collection to see where weaknesses were and tried to find dealers who would help me fill out the collection. At the end of my tenure, I had just started to work on Yiddish and Hebrew poetry written by Americans as a match to the Ukrainian poetry written by some of the Canadians, and the French language poetry, which goes way back in this country to New Orleans in the eighteenth century.

You created exhibits at Brown and have produced exhibitions at Houghton for nearly four decades. Can you discuss a few of these shows and your thoughts on curating exhibits?

I was very much interested in exploring collections that were little known and that people might not necessarily associate with Houghton. Classic examples of that would be the Modern Greek and the Danish literature exhibitions.⁴ It was very important to reach out beyond the university to Boston residents and others, to show them that we cared for their cultures, we were good custodians of their books, and we appreciated their contributions to world literature. That's one thing I tried to do. The "Marks in Books" is a very strange kind of story and exhibition. I discovered at a certain point that none of my bosses really knew what I had to know in order to do my job. They really had no understanding of what a special collections librarian has to know. So I thought, what is perhaps the most arcane thing, the strangest body of knowledge, that a rare books librarian should know? It occurred to me that it was markings in books that could be easily misunderstood or overlooked. I made a whole exhibition of such marks, including as many different kinds of marks as I could. It made a perfect exhibition because each label was a description of a physical characteristic in the book shown. It was like exhibits with an absolute relation between the label and the exhibit, and it made a great hit.⁵

For the current exhibition, in the accompanying handout there are notes of related pieces that I hope will encourage people to think a little bit about some of the genres. Exhibited in one case is the thesis of Goethe, a very rare book and important in his career. Beside it is an eighteenth-century Italian thesis. It's a huge broadside with an engraving of the solar system at the top and with references to Halley, Newton, and all the great English astronomers with whose works this young Italian nobleman was familiar when he stood to defend his thesis, which is printed below this wonderful engraving. The notes to these two items on exhibition show [other] theses written by South American novelists, Hélène Cixous's celebrated thesis on Joyce, the thesis of the French novelist Céline, by Russian scientists, by an eighteenth-century German

4. The catalogs for the Greek and Danish exhibitions, respectively, are: Evro Layton, *Five Centuries of Books and Manuscripts in Modern Greek: A Catalogue of an Exhibition at the Houghton Library, December 4, 1987 through February 17, 1988* (Cambridge: Harvard College Library, 1990); and Nancy S. Reinhardt, *Danish Literature: Saxo Grammaticus to Isak Dinesen: An Exhibition at the Houghton Library, October 16–November 21* (Cambridge: Harvard College Library, 1986).

5. Stoddard, *Marks in Books, Illustrated and Explained* (Cambridge: Houghton Library, Harvard University, 1985).

fable writer. It shows that the thesis is often an important element in the development of a writer in Europe, more so than here, and that if you're going to show the work of one of those authors, you have to confront the thesis and see if you can find a copy. That's one of the things that I've done here across the national collections, to look for theses by people who are interesting scientists, philosophers, classicists, and authors.

Moving from exhibitions and accompanying catalogs to your other publications, are there particular works that you would like to mention?

I went to a conference on Edmond Jabès, as I'm the bibliographer of Jabès, and they were quite vexed with me, this audience coming from [French] universities. They said, what else have you done? Where are you coming from? I found myself listing a number of bibliographical topics that I had pursued beginning with [Julien Offray de] La Mettrie, the author of *L'homme machine*, in the eighteenth century, and [E.P. de] Senancour, a preromantic who was flourishing in the 1790s up to about 1830, Jacques-Charles Brunet who was the master bibliographer of the whole world in the nineteenth century. The thing these authors have in common is difficulty. It's difficult to know what in the world you're doing with these authors because the bibliography won't support you. That's why I went at it and I'm still at that. I'm at Andrée Chédid, because to deal with her [output], you have a mixture of her first book from Cairo and her early books from Paris. Then [there are] her plays, some of which get printed by the French equivalent of a dramatists' play service, an inside outfit, and then the private press printers who make illustrated books in the country and whose books tend not to get deposited in the national library. You can't just go to the Tolbiac and see them, you have to go poking around for them. It's the same with Jabès, with a mixture of his books from Cairo, his books from Paris, and the books that are printed in Italy and all manner of odd places and publishers. So these are the authors that have attracted my attention as a bibliographer.

If you can't figure out what's going on, well, why not do a bibliography? My current one is Primo Levi, who is more complicated than the biographers think because they didn't read the Italian national bibliography. If you read the national bibliography, you pick up his translations. For instance, he translated 1,800 pages of organic chemistry from the American in between his first book and his second book, and he translates *The Trial* from the German of Kafka. He translates two anthropol-

ogy books from the French of Lévi-Strauss and even more books from English. It's difficult to understand altogether what it is that Primo Levi accomplished as an author, but I think I know that now.

Aside from the authors I've published on, and Chedid and Levi yet to be published, I'm most proud, I think, of two rather Harvardian pieces. One is on lost books and the other is on mourning wrappers. In "Lost Books," I'm talking about a hundred American books or pamphlets of poetry published before 1821.⁶ In the preface, I quote what George Parker Winship said to William A. Jackson about lost books, and then I say something about Jackson and his notes on lost books and [mention] notes by some of the nineteenth-century bibliographers, most of whom never published their lists of lost books. I'm very proud to say that I've published mine. It's there in the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* for anybody who may find one of these books or may say that there's enough of a lead in this description to find that book. And, of course, a few of them have come forth since I published the list.

Mourning wrappers is as ephemeral a subject as you would want to come upon. A wrapper on a funeral sermon, an elegy, in a culture that is not very rich can be a blackened piece of paper. It can be blackened in a printing office by any apprentice or helper and applied to the pamphlet, and it tells you with one look that this is something about a person who's died. Now, in the old countries, a mourning binding may be black morocco, and it may be gilt with tools of skulls and bones and shovels. It may be very complicated. The Italian mourning wrappers sometimes have woodcut designs on them, but in a culture like New England, the mourning wrapper sufficed and this you would think of in conjunction with the mourning ring, which has an inscription about the deceased person, and the gloves that would be given to people attending funerals. It's all part of the ceremony. But who is going to tell you about them, and how will you identify one when you see it? How will you know what that is? I give lists and I try to give enough examples so that you can have a notion of the places where such wrappers were applied and the period during which such wrappers were applied, but with the full understanding that most of these have evaporated. When you bind up a sermon in a tract volume, chances are you shuck off the wrapper that it had. Whether it was a cartridge paper, bluish-grayish wrapper, or a mourning wrapper, you shuck it off and just bind the printed pages.

6. Stoddard, "Lost Books: American Poetry before 1821," *PBSA* 76 (1982): 11-41.

Most of the evidence is gone, and I'm very proud that I was able to accumulate so much of that evidence in print.⁷ Those two genre articles I like very well, in addition to the articles that deal with the bibliographies of the works of an author.

In the introduction to the catalog for your current exhibition, you write that "the true curators of special collections and historical libraries are antiquarian book dealers," and you list dealers with whom you have collaborated over the years. Can you talk about the relationship between curators and book dealers?

Librarians can do nothing in historical collections without the collaboration of book dealers. If you're a curator and you say I will have nothing to do with book dealers, that means that you're content with the collection you manage as it stands and you don't need to do anything about it. My admiration for book dealers is boundless and I often tell them so. I tend to have a pretty good relation with many of the book dealers who are in subjects that are represented here. There are some terrible gaps. There's not really a Russian book trade, and the Russian books we get may come from London instead of from Moscow or some ancient trading city of Russia. That's a shame. There's no real Greek, modern Greek, book trade, so the Greek books here will probably come from English dealers ..., but otherwise we have very good relations with booksellers in our subjects.

Beyond the actual acquisitions, can you discuss the symbiotic relationship between curators and the trade?

I've written about Georges Heilbrun and this extremely sympathetic relationship that existed between him and Philip Hofer [founder of Houghton's Printing and Graphic Arts Department] in the 1930s.⁸ Hofer was interested in learning about illustrated books beyond the known. He also collected known illustrated books in order to make a representative collection, but he wanted to explore unexplored fields. That inspired him to get into baroque books, and there's a Harvard Press book that Hofer made showing what wonderful engravings lay hidden in this

7. Stoddard, "The Use of Mourning Wrappers in New England, with a Note on Mourning Papers in English Books at Harvard," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 30 (1982): 96-98. Reprinted in *A Library-Keeper's Business*, 211-17.

8. Stoddard, "More Valuable to Us Than All the Books in the World": Georges Heilbrun and His Harvard Library Friends," *Gazette of the Grolier Club* 47 (1995-1996): 5-31. Reprinted in *A Library-Keeper's Business*, 283-311.

literature that most people didn't care for.⁹ From baroque books, Hofer went, among other places, into Italian illustrated books of the eighteenth century. Heilbrun produced more of these books than the Italian book trade did because he was just as enthusiastic about these books as Hofer. These books don't exist in every library. In other words, if you work in the usual historical library, there are not going to be many Italian eighteenth-century books [in a variety of subject areas]. If the library's focus is architecture or science or whatever, you'll have those books, but you won't have a chance to glimpse books [in other subjects printed] throughout Italy in the eighteenth century. It was [at the time] an assemblage of states or cities, and the books from different Italian cities do not look the same. So it's not like looking at French books in the eighteenth century. The French book looks as if it's the same book made over and over again. It's perfect. There's never a fault in the French book, and the mixture of types and ornaments and engravings is absolute perfection, but every book is really like every other book. You put three or four Italian books on a table, and they're all different and they're fresh. There is not so much copying one from another. Very extraordinary and beautiful, and in a flash you can see what inspired Hofer, once he'd seen some of them, to pursue it and collect them. You can also see what encouraged Heilbrun to go along. It wasn't just that you could buy a book and make a profit when you sold it to Hofer, but when you went looking, that it was fun, and they had fun together. A good book dealer will teach you, and ahead of the purchase will come the lecture, the teaching.

Can you discuss your own teaching?

I've been teaching three courses. In fall term, English 296, Descriptive Bibliography, is the heir to the [William H.] Bond and [William A.] Jackson course. The text now is Gaskell. The idea is to teach the nomenclature so that you can understand the bibliographical description and teach the parts of the book and the makeup of the book so that you can make bibliographical descriptions. The second course which I've been teaching is a medieval studies course in concert with Laura Light, who does the manuscript part. This is for the medieval studies committee and takes as its province printed books in the first century of printing. In this course, the exercise is to make a really detailed description of an early manuscript and one of an early printed book. The third course is

9. Philip Hofer, *Baroque Book Illustration: A Short Survey from the Collection in the Department of Graphic Arts, Harvard College Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Pr., 1951).

a house course. Harvard calls dormitories houses, and I am a member of the senior common room of Adams House here. This course began in collaboration with people teaching letterpress printing in the house. There's a printing outfit there, and students would print there and come here for looking at books. Their project here would be to talk about a genre or a book designer. Then we lost our master printer, and since that time, I've run that course as a course in looking at books. This is in the old Winship model of the fine arts course that he pioneered here. In the first session, we look at twenty-five incunables, some illustrated books as well as books important for their types, for their format, for their illustration. Two dozen books which are giving you a conspectus of that century, [followed by] sixteenth-century books, and then seventeenth-century books. At a certain point, the students are invited to ask for whatever [types of books] they want to see. You can show them the theme and what is common in the genre and how that may differ a little bit from others [printed in other places at different times]. Something I have tried to do in seminars is to show how the book trade in one country will influence the book trade in another country. How a Zola novel in its printed wrapper inspires Portuguese [publishers]. When they print a novel, it looks just like a Zola because that's what they're looking at, that's their ideal, to be "frenchified," although the language, of course, is their own Portuguese and it's their own author.

And in all these courses, there is always an emphasis on the physical aspects of the text?

I was passing on some of that this week in class, introducing students to classic rebacking of books, to distinguish the difference between end papers and fly leaves in the book itself. It's so important that you just collate the printed book as it left the printing house, not what happens to survive on the shelf or what happens to have been added by binders since the sheets left the printing house. That you learn, and if you're lucky, people will help you with that. Of course, a book that's been monkeyed with, that has parts from different sources, is no longer good historical evidence. This is something that is important to teach students, how to work as if they were in a courtroom presenting physical characteristics and evidence. When we once made an exhibition on Samuel Johnson with the graduate students, I said, "You are going to make your case with a label. Why did you put the book on exhibition? What's so great that you chose it? You have to explain what that is for a material reason, not because it's a great piece of writing. It's a material witness to something, so tell us about that."

As a lecturer and author, you have been able to influence students, scholars, and curators. Can you discuss a few of the people who have influenced your own work?

I have a great respect for Richard Copley Christie, a nineteenth-century British scholar who was a bibliographer and an annotator of his material descriptions. I think he was just about as good as they get. The Church catalog is an American bibliographical masterpiece,¹⁰ and you know my feelings on Lawrence Wroth as a bibliographer from my [BSA] presidential address.¹¹ And, of course, Jackson. If you've looked at his *Records of a Bibliographer*, you see the diversity of things that he was doing.¹² I admire his study of provenance, his attempt to locate sometimes all the books out of an auction sale and where they've gone today—some virtuoso pieces there. [Alfred W.] Pollard did everything, the early English books, incunabula, and [was] obviously a great encouragement to his colleagues in the Bibliographical Society of London and in the British Museum. And Brunet, I will never get over Brunet. The part of Brunet I think is compelling is his attempt to get ahead of you to make records of books you would be interested in. They weren't just the books that interested him but were the books of interest to people in his time. He tried to grasp each one and make a proper record of it, in addition to the price that it brought at an auction or two. His *Table Methodique* [volume six of the *Manuel du Libraire* (1860–65)] is simply a masterwork. You can still find books in the *Table*, and those books are not in the *Manuel* necessarily, but they're subjects developing. It is one of the great things, and I will never get over the comprehensiveness and the helpfulness of it. In the end, that's what this is all about, when librarians make lists. It's trying to be helpful to other people, to save time and point out relations.

As your retirement approaches, can you mention some of your future projects?

I am hoping to finish Primo Levi. Now I've got the last version of the list, and I'm working on the biographical note up front. I want to finish up on Andrée Chedid. I've got a pretty good list, but I need to get the latest im-

10. Elihu Dwight Church, *A Catalogue of Books Relating to the Discovery and Early History of North and South America: Forming a Part of the Library of E.D. Church, Compiled and Annotated by George Watson Cole* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1907).

11. Stoddard, "Dear Lawrence," "Dear Bill": William A. Jackson, Lawrence C. Wroth, and the Practice of Bibliography in America," *PBSA* 94:4 (Dec. 2000): 479–505. Reprinted in *A Librarian-Keeper's Business*, 117–47.

12. William A. Jackson, *Records of a Bibliographer: Selected papers. Edited with an Introduction and Bibliography by William H. Bond* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1967).

prints from where she's deposited her archives and her artist books. I need to see a couple of books and talk with a couple of people to finish up a supplement to the Jabès bibliography. I need to finish that up, get it out, and say goodbye to Jabès. I'm also looking for auction catalogs expertized by Brunet. I made the first list in my bibliography in *The Book Collector*,¹³ and I want to go to the Bibliothèque Nationale to see if I can find any more. I hope to bring out a monograph, an edition of Brunet with some pictures of pages and title pages, and then say goodbye to Brunet.

I've applied for a fellowship, which might give me a month of making indexes for a bibliography of American poetry, printed 1610 through 1820. The bibliographics are in good order. There are 1,300 entries and 6,000 copies. I have owners and bindings and engravers, and I bring out the dedicatees in the printed dedications. That stuff will be lost if it's not indexed, and I just have to sit, you know, 9 to 5, six days a week, and work on that. I'll be given a carrel in the Widener stack, so I'll have a place for a laptop and I'll continue to work on projects. I have a search file on American plays before 1870. The copyrights were printed from 1870 forward, and that's a pretty good file, but it means going and making bibliographical notes in various places. I also have a pretty good file on William A. Alcott, the cousin of the Concord Alcotts, who published more books than all the rest of them combined. He wrote for the tract societies, Bible stories, and he got his name on the titles, which in my experience is very rare. Then he wrote health books, little pamphlets on

health hints, and he wrote against tea and coffee, of course. Then he wrote courtesy books [for readers of all ages], and they were printed over thirty or forty years. They were plated and printed over and over again, and he competed with all these women who were writing similar books. But he was a physician, so he could advise you on your health, exercise and diet, as well as on courtesy, in his books. Finally, he did an autobiography. I think he's fascinating, and

INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

ACRL	114
Archival Products.....	122
B&L Rootenberg	83
James Cummins.....	77
Martayan Lan	cover 2
Michael R. Thompson	140
Paratext	81
Philadelphia Rare Books	cover 4
Priscilla Juvelis.....	cover 3
Rulon-Miller Books.....	75
Swann Galleries	73
Tavistock Books	105
University Products.....	113

13. Stoddard, "Jacques-Charles Brunet," (Some Uncollected Authors LVII), *The Book Collector* 42:3-4 (1993): 341-62, 523-46.

I think it's fascinating to see all these editions of his books. He was a good steady-selling author. So I'd like to get that out.

So there are a few things to do, and I look forward to that. But I really don't look forward to leaving this office and the hurly-burly of working in the collection, with the students, the teaching, and with the book trade. The mail comes, and if a certain catalog arrives, you don't do anything else until you check it and you get on the phone or on the e-mail, sometimes before you complete reading a catalog, in order to beat the world. There is a wonderful French multicolor woodblock book which is unknown to the people who make exhibitions of *livres d'artiste* because the makers of the book didn't get twenty copies off. It's too complicated to dab the different colors on each one of those blocks. There's no deposit copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale. That came [listed] in a catalog on a weekend, and I found it on a Saturday night. I had to wait all Sunday and got up at the crack of dawn at 3 o'clock Monday morning to call Paris to get this book. So I'm going to miss that. It will be very hard for me. I wish that I could just stay in this office forever and talk with people and teach people and learn from people and increase the collections. There you are! Don't retire.