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The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Bibliography: A Personal Reminiscence*

Robin Myers

The start is way back—or rather, even before that, while I was still an undergraduate at Oxford. Three men introduced me to bibliography and stirred my imagination for what many find a dry field. Two of the three were nearing the end of their long careers and the third, just retiring at the age of sixty-one, also seemed old viewed by the young and easily awed. By a coincidence two of them were running, or had run, the Clarendon Press in Oxford; all three were “Press authors.”

Kenneth Sisam, in his last months as secretary (so called) to the Delegates of the Press, had employed me to do a vacation job on the addenda to the Little Oxford Dictionary; I had to explain that MCC stood for Marylebone Cricket Club and the like. Mr. Sisam’s regular staff found him a rigid boss, but he was also very kind. My ignorance was astounding, I now think, even for the very young, and he sought to extend my education in two ways unconnected with the task he set me. He put me before a typewriter, which is rarely done to British students, even today; and, more relevant to my subject, he put into my hands his copy of R. B. McKerrow’s Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students. I have it still, with my name written on the fly leaf in my best attempt at Elizabethan Secretary hand, for which McKerrow gives the alphabet in the appendix. Counseled to read and digest, I soon became enthralled even though I found it quite hard going without previous training. I suppose I should have fallen a casualty on the bibliographical battleground if the volume had been Professor Bowers’s Principles of Bibliographical Description instead, which was just then creating such a furore in Oxford. For it was not alas, with me as with Henry Bradshaw, to whom bibliography, according to his biographer and protégé G. W. Prothero, “was one of [the] earliest pursuits. Mr. Alexander Macmillan,” Prothero
writes, "remembers him well as an undergraduate, often coming into his shop at Cambridge, and looking through his books with a bibliographical eye, counting the signatures, saying, 'This is in sixes, this in eights,' and noting cancelled pages.'"

The following term I attended a seminar on textual criticism given by R. W. Chapman, Mr. Sisam's predecessor as Press Secretary. Chapman was described by Peter Sutcliffe in his recent *Oxford University Press: An Informal History* as a "tall, shambling, awkward man, the reverse of nimble," who rode a "blacksmith-built bicycle." I have to say that I was not captivated by his subject because he himself was so intimidating. He was old and crusty and despised students, above all female ones, and took no pains to disguise his contempt. He was taking this class on sufferance because the younger dons had not yet all returned from the war. I was too mesmerized to take in much of what he told us, but at least I took notes. Years later I came across the late Wilmarth Lewis's *Collector's Progress* and I was entertained by his relation of how, in their transatlantic correspondence, "The steps from 'Dear Sir,' 'Dear Mr. Lewis,' 'Dear Lewis,' 'My dear Lewis,' 'My dear Lefty,' were accomplished in the good time of three years." "Ah," Chapman would murmur when he lighted upon a book on Lewis's shelves that he wanted to examine; and "Ah," I murmured when, two pages later, I read how Chapman listed Lewis's errors in transcription and then wrote to him, "Really, my dear Lewis, it won't do." Nothing we youngsters did for him twenty years later, seemed to do. But I struggled through *Cancels*, and read what Chapman had to say about the textual editing of Dr. Johnson and Jane Austen, and no doubt the accounts made more impact for my being able to catch tones of voice in the printed words.

The third man to influence me in the bibliographical way (to crib a phrase from Professor Bowers) was David Nichol Smith, by then professor emeritus, the oldest of the three, like Chapman a Scot, rather a sad man because he had lost his one son in the war. He seemed more Scottish in his speech than Chapman, I seem to remember. He introduced me to historical bibliography, although I did not know that that was it until years later. He gave us an inspiring series of lectures on the development of the novel and the growth of a reading public. I at once fell in love with the history of the book trade, although I did not know it could ever become my business as well as my pleasure.

About a decade after this, the then Librarian of the National
Book League in London telephoned me to ask if I would be interested in a task of (in her words) "research and bibliography." She could not have chosen her words better for her purpose, and I never dreamt that she was offering me a long drawn out job of what was often the dullest sort of listing. Although I would not have doubted the basic importance of enumerative bibliography as "leading to the very knowledge and existence of books," yet at the same time I still thought that either the transmission of texts, or the history of the trade was the real concern of the bibliographer. I certainly did not realise what I was in for. John Carter has said that all collectors have two things in common; I find that authors of bibliographical and other reference works all share the sentiment voiced by Bigmore and Wyman in the preface to their Bibliography of Printing: "Had [they] realised at the outset half that their task might demand of them, they would never have had the courage to attempt it." None of us does realise until it is too late and we seldom learn from experience either. We always think the next project will be different, or easier, but it never is, and so we fall into the trap time after time. The pitfalls are legion, and, as we shall see, some of them are not strictly bibliographical but are publishing hazards common to all authors.

Some two years before that telephone call, the Pergamon Press in Oxford had advertised in the British Sunday newspaper, the Observer, for ideas for their Commonwealth and International Library. They offered a five guinea prize which was won by a suggestion for a Guide to English Literature. The National Book League offered to take it over, changed the title and scope to a Dictionary of English Language Literature and looked round for an editor. I started work in November 1963, and I soon found the truth of Dr. Johnson's dictum that "A large work is difficult because it is large, even though all its parts might singly be performed with facility; where there are many things to be done, each must be allowed its share of time and labour, in the proportion only which it bears to the whole; nor can it be expected, that the stones which form the dome of a temple, should be squared and polished like the diamond of a ring." I had been given a three-year deadline and did not know that publishers just wait for authors to produce—at least in Britain they seem to—so I reckoned I would have to work from secondary sources and look at the books themselves only when the authorities seemed to be suspect or at variance among themselves. I risked that agreement too often.
betokens mere copying from an earlier source, and thus the dissemination and perpetuation of the same mistake. I hope, nonetheless, that I am not one of those "authors and publishers who rush new volumes into print prematurely," as Dr. Tanselle recently expressed it in reviewing "The State of Bibliography Today." 6

Ian Willison, now Keeper of Rare Books at the British Library (still then the British Museum) was just then editing the 1900-1950 volume of *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*. At one time we used to meet regularly to exchange lists of authors we contemplated including and to debate the more philosophical aspects of literary enumerative bibliography. He later lectured about *NCBEL* and described how "the bibliography of a particular literature has always been dependent on the attempt to compile a definitive general history of that literature . . . whereas (before the *CBEL*) bibliography of a literature—for example Lowndes's *Bibliographer's Manual of English Literature* (1834) tended to be compiled quite independently, often by someone in the commercial book trade." Ian further maintained that some "of the literary historian's techniques are themselves bibliographical . . . the first being that of enumerative or subject bibliography; that is, the identification and listing of the totality of those authors minor as well as major, who may be said to constitute the literature of the period as opposed to its mentality." 7 Here is the difference in conception between *CBEL* and my volumes: mine is alphabetical not historical in arrangement. Also, it goes without saying there are differences in coverage—*CBEL* treats British authors, mine those writing in the English language world-wide; *CBEL* is a bibliography, each entry compiled by a specialist scholar, mine is a finding list compiled singlehanded. Moreover, I do not consider that it is the enumerative bibliographer's task to make critical judgements, even if, as every selection has to have a plan, the question of literary merit must be taken into account in a catalogue of creative writing. The alphabetical, non-historical arrangement was given further prominence when I decided to add a title index.

Fifteen years ago we were not so trigger happy with computers—even for a non-authored book (and mine are not that); and it was surely the inspiration of a certifiable mad woman to consider undertaking single-handed apart from the aid of a copy-typist, the reorganisation onto index cards of sixty thousand titles. Some time after the contract between the National Book League and the
Pergamon Press was signed a new editor had found himself responsible for the Commonwealth and International Library. One morning in 1966 he received a letter from one Mr. (as he supposed) Robin Myers. As it was accompanied by a three thousand page typescript of a literary checklist, he immediately supposed it was meant for the more august people down the road, the Clarendon Press. Mr. Myers further announced airily that sixty boxes of index cards would be arriving by British Rail. After going through that experience you will understand that my editor went overboard for the new technology next time, with the index of the 1940 to 1970 volume. It would, he assured me, mean lightning speed and no drudgery. Computer typesetting would sort title, geographical and chronological indexes in the twinkling of an eye, and allow me to insert material in the main body of the text as we went along. The book would be out in six months. It was not though. Edward Bull, in *Hints and Directions for Authors* (1842) wrote, “If speed is particularly required, two or three volumes may at any time be got ready for delivery within a week or nine days. . . . A pamphlet or short essay . . . may be printed . . . within the space of twenty-four hours, at a trifling additional expense for nightwork, etc.” But technology was held to be speedier than hand-setting. The publishers had my completed typescript in May 1974; at once got it ready for the printers—and three years and three printers later it was still in typescript in their office. Finally, in the autumn of 1977 they agreed to cut their losses and engage a conventional firm of book printers (Cox and Wyman) and a professional indexer who worked in cottage industry conditions at home. The book was out eleven months later. This is the true story behind the dead pan words of the postscript of my preface: “Printing and production difficulties have regrettably caused a four-year delay between delivery of the typescript to the publisher and eventual appearance in print.” To have updated beyond 1974 would have risked ever continuing postponement, and a publisher ties up a lot of capital in bulky books like these (although I must say the publishers were very nice and did not say so). Also, perhaps, I was in William Blades’s case when Henry Bradshaw took him to task for not separating the two editions of Caxton’s *Speculum Vitae Christi*: “What utter nonsense!!” Bradshaw wrote against Blades’s spurious reasoning for omitting to do so, “it is merely the natural laziness towards the end of a long work. Mr. Blades was not willing to reconstruct his list so nearly finished when I pointed out to him the
fact of there being two editions.”

The beginning of that end was the hammering out of a definition of literature as “such writers as might be considered to form part of the literary history of their time.” The definition was to provide a yardstick for inclusion or exclusion of each author. But some always fell outside it, and working alone I had the advantage of being able to bend the rules and change direction without the cumbersome business of getting a team decision. Alone and unencumbered you are free to sift evidence, balance conflicting expert advice and published authorities. Round in a circle you can go and come back to what you decided in the first place. But expediency has also to be a factor. I do not seem to be able to stop users from judging a work on the number and quality of their favourites or their specialties included. Not even professional reviewers seem to consider performance against the terms of reference you set down so carefully in the preface. Thus it would have been an error in tactics to have applied the degressive principle in reverse as I should have liked to do—that is to say, to insert major authors sketchily to act as mere aide-memoires directing the user to specialist author bibliographies and to concentrate my forces on obscure minor figures who are untraceable elsewhere. I was obliged to apportion to each entry “its share of time and labour, in the proportion only which it [bore] to the whole.” However, when Chaucer to 1940 was in galley, my editor telephoned, “Did I really mean to leave out Daniel Defoe and John Donne?” Needless to say I did not. The file of “bibliographical nightmares” did not have them in it, and although I hunted high and low they did not turn up. It would have been all right—but fairly all right—to leave out an obscure author but to forget Daniel Defoe and John Donne and explain that away to irate users and scornful reviewers on the degressive principles I have been preaching! And every time you spot one of those “wild blunders, and risible absurdities,” as Dr. Johnson called them, “from which no work of such multiplicity [is] ever free” you get more neurotic about what you have not spotted.

One of the problems of the large work is that the time of working is always longer than the longest you think, however methodically you apportion your time in the Johnsonian manner. There are acts of God even if the author keeps to schedule, which is not always possible. The disastrous publishing history of 1940 to 1970 culminated when the advance copy arrived on 1 December
1978. I sighed "at last!" and then found there were no illustrations and no list of illustrations in the preliminaries. I rang my editor, "What's happened to the illustrations?" I asked, and she said, "Oh, my God! I can't bear it." A great hunt started. They had had a fire in the office (well, they had had three), but that was not it. The Publicity Manager had left, but when contacted remembered passing them on to the Production Manager. But they had not even got into his production schedule. Luckily I had a spare set, so our bacon was saved (as we say in England), at least by the time that the special offer was finished.

Sir Walter Greg in the "Final Bow" to his monumental Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration explained that his methods were "the outcome of some sixty years' experience and consideration. But during that period they have grown by a natural process of elaboration as fresh problems were encountered and fresh expedients devised to meet them. . . . It has been only too often a case of solvitur ambulando. If, with my present experience . . . I were now starting on my task afresh—which heaven forbid!—I should doubtless adopt a system . . . in some respects different from that followed in these volumes."

In my case, if I had foreseen that I should be talked into doing a companion volume, I should have made the break, as NCBEL does, at 1900. Not only would 1900 to 1970 have given a better balance for size, but more importantly it would have allowed for a fuller and more systematic treatment of twentieth century literature. Since the older twentieth century authors could form but a small proportion of a five-hundred-year span, good writers (better than many who got into the sequel) had to be omitted from Chaucer to 1940. But in the mere thirty-year stretch of 1940 to 1970 I could treat many indifferent, obscure names whose inclusion would be useful for public librarians, at whom the work was partly aimed. In the end I tried to redress the discrepancy in a not too satisfactory way by adding to the second book a sprinkling of pre-1940 names which had been previously discarded. I risked bringing the critics down on me like wolves on the fold, for few seemed to grasp that the modern volume was a sequel not a supplement and that authors in the one would not be in the other—or rather, they did not see that a known twentieth century author not in 1940 to 1970 would be in Chaucer to 1940. A break at 1900 would also have been more satisfactory, because Chaucer did not publish anything in the interval that I was at work, but living authors, old or young, go on
writing. For twentieth century authors 1973, the cut off date for 1940 to 1970 would have been better than 1966 (that for the first work).

Then, I would not have chosen to have "dictionary" in the title, even though the Dictionary of British Authors (1904) was something of a model. Few know this unpretentious, long out of print, little bio-bibliography by another British Museum man, Robert Farquharson-Sharp, and my work was always being compared with the Everyman Dictionary of Literary Biography, where bibliographical data is subordinate to the biography. In mine (and Farquharson-Sharp's) it is the other way around. In the sequel I moved farther from the dictionary by deleting literary schools and putting journals and literary prizes at the end in separate lists. I also tried to persuade my publishers to use "Bio-checklist" in the title. They pointed out, rightly enough, that a sequel needed a title that showed it to be such. And they added: "We are known as publishers of science and technology; if we have 'bio' in the title your book might get into the life-sciences list."

It is my experience that the bigger the publisher, the more the success of a manuscript's transference to print depends on one or two individuals in the publisher's office. I was fortunate in having an old-fashioned craftsman for sub-editor. He had an infallible eye for a fault, and I trusted his judgement above that of any heavily cultured young man who had read the literature. If he thought something looked fishy, I checked it; and he spared me many a post-publication blush. He had been trained, and worked for many years, at the Clarendon Press under that exacting taskmaster, John Johnson. He had "the trade" in his blood, his father and grandfather having been Cambridge University Press compositors, his uncle a binder. "And was his son in the trade?" I once asked him. "Oh, no! Miss Myers," he replied. "My son's an accountant."

An author does not often get the opportunity of meeting the backroom boys, but I persisted. Once he rang me. "Now, Miss Myers," he said, "we've been told there's a great hurry to get this book out. Now, what I want to know is are we to cut corners or do the job properly?" "Oh, properly, Mr. Hine, please," I said, and I think that with this I changed from an incompetent, despised author into someone to be taken seriously, someone with standards. "That's all right, then," he said, "just so long as I know. You see, many authors don't like my pestering them with queries. Just so long as I know what's wanted." Thereafter, until we saw the
back of the revises some ten months later, telephone calls and lists of queries passed between us, sometimes two or three times a week. When I panicked, he would say, “No hurry, Miss Myers, no hurry at all”—even when there was. He just soldiered steadily on and got me doing the same. Once he apologised, “I’m sorry, Miss Myers. I’m too old a dog to learn new tricks.” Thank goodness he was. There are not many like him. The funny thing was that, though we became good friends, and came perilously near to using Christian names, somehow we never did quite. That was part of his background too—I think we both felt the excellence of the relationship partly depended on the formality of the nomenclature. Is that rather English, or at least European?

“Just as biography follows from the existence of human beings,” J. P. Ferguson wrote, “bibliography is the result of the existence of printed books.” Bibliography was in Ferguson’s view the biography of books, and Sir Geoffrey Keynes postulated that bibliography should be readable. It would be difficult to make the enumeration of titles either of these things, except in a preface; but the more expansive kind of subject bibliography, into which my British Book Trade from Caxton to the Present Day developed, offered more scope. The world of historical bibliography in which I now found myself was more to my taste—memoirs and biographies of bookmen to read and books to use, not just titles to be listed. I began work in 1967 between batches of proof from the first dictionary, and was correcting proofs of the Book Trade between bouts on the second dictionary. It was planned as a little thing to be tossed off in spare moments while I was running the National Book League’s library of books about books, and it was largely based on that collection. The contract, signed six months before I was commissioned for the job, spoke of an approximate selling price of one guinea (I think that was about $2.30 at the time), and delivery of a manuscript of some hundred pages, unillustrated, within six months of signature. I was to update and slightly expand a series of six “Readers’ Guides” to aspects of the book, which the National Book League had published with the Cambridge University Press in the late forties and fifties. Each consisted of an elegant essay of a couple of hundred words on printing, bookbinding, bibliophily and the like, by an expert in the field—Michael Sadleir contributed one on book collecting—and each was appended by a list of some thirty or forty titles for further reading. This made a slim, paper-wrapped fifteen-page crown octavo.
I soon found that the booklets grew into thirteen sections and umpteen subsections and that Percy Freer's *Bibliography and Modern Book Production* (Johannesburg, 1954) made a better model than the *Readers’ Guides*, although it was intended specifically for library students, which mine was not, and although it is not annotated. I was not planning a Besterman, nor an 8,221-entry *British Bibliography and Textual Criticism* (by Trevor Howard-Hill, 1979), and so I decided that comments, varying in length and substance from bare summary to anecdote, would give character and utility. I find that the advantages of annotations often outweigh the reduction in number of entries, unless you aim at being completely comprehensive. The National Book League’s collection was an excellent starting point; it is catalogued on a modification of the Bliss classification, which gave me a ready-made, though rough and ready, framework. I also drew heavily on the stock of the St. Bride Printing Library in the City of London which was more up to date at that time (it had more money) and owned a goodly rare book collection which had once belonged to the printer and Caxton scholar William Blades. The London School of Economics’s collection on publishing and book selling is worth consulting, too, and I did so once or twice, but access is terribly difficult. I selected from published catalogues, bibliographies and trade lists, but I did not include books that I had not inspected—and most of them I read. The opinions expressed are my own, although often modified by those of friends who knew a book better. Only once or twice did I include a book I did not see. Professor J. J. Barnes had to tell me what to say about *Authors, Publishers and Politicians: the Quest for Anglo-American Copyright* (Routledge, 1972), because the manuscript was with the publisher and I could not get sight of it; James Moran’s *Printing Presses: History and Development from the 15th Century to Modern Times* (Faber, 1972) was in the same case, so he wrote the annotation himself.

The dictionaries had arranged themselves, but *The British Book Trade* was difficult to organise. Though “Modified Bliss” provided an outline, individual titles and even subsections often had several possible resting places within the scheme. Titles in a subject guide cannot always be placed in the same sequence as books physically on a shelf. It was often a “case of solvitur ambulando.” Definitions were redefined and arrangements rearranged until I reached a formula that was more or less to my personal satisfaction. My
plan, I now realise, is somewhat idiosyncratic but I used plenty of cross-references to assist in retrieval. The sections grew to be more or less like chapters, and the introductory essays, a legacy from the "Readers' Guides," embraced information as well as quotations which I hoped would divert as well as inform.

The illustrations had much more purpose than the purely decorative plates of the dictionaries. I assembled them from many sources, and their loss would have been a disaster indeed. I learnt how important it is for an author to search for his own illustrations, for even the most expert agency could not read your mind and know what would do just as well as what you asked for. The Crowquill line drawings, "Securing a Friend in the Press" (p. 151) and "Longman and Company" (p. 327), turned up during an abortive hunt in the office of Punch for a caricature of the 1850s contretemps over "free trade in books." I recently saw them described as "32 facsimiles" in a bookseller's catalogue. I suppose they are, in a way, but I think it is a bit pretentious to call them so.

André Deutsch did not mislay the illustrations but they went one better and lost the only set of marked revises. You live and learn never to let your publisher be stingy over an extra set of proofs. My editor and I had sat up until three one morning counting spaces to avoid remake; for it had been agreed that I would put in new material at both galley and revise stage so long as there was no remake. The final insult was a bill for author's corrections, but I am glad to say that it was cancelled and good relations restored in the end! What had happened was this. My editor worked from home and collected material from the office twice a week. To avoid trusting the General Post Office with a unique set of marked proofs, which incorporated the corrections and suggestions of specialist friends, I labelled them in large letters, "To Await Collection," and took them to the office. But the idiot presiding over incoming scripts tossed the package, with what address we know not, into the post. We never saw it again, not even on the day after I finished doing the whole thing again—and we never saw the girl again, because she left the next week before we could vent our fury on her.

Every section, subsection and individual entry had to come within the definition of "British," "book" and "trade." Grolier, a Frenchman and a book collector, gave his name to a binding style that had to be included. American copyright and American
publishing went in willy-nilly. But “Paper for bookwork” did not have to include Kleenex. Jobbing was difficult to disentangle from book printing, but I tried. Journalists were separated from book authors, and librarians—well, they are barred from admission to the Freedom and Livery of the Stationers’ Company because they are not “trade.” Commercial circulating libraries, however, are part of bookselling. And what about bibliography? “Some limitations,” I wrote with some relief, “were imposed by lack of materials; no books exist on such relevant topics as sponsored publishing.” Mr. Reuben Heffer, chairman of the Cambridge bookshop founded by his grandfather, was hurt that Heffer’s was scarcely mentioned. I pointed out to him that there was no history of the firm, so he had better write one in time for a second edition.

My publishers gave me an interleaved copy, and I started updating a week before publication. My heart sinks when I think that, for a second edition, I must reconsider my decision to leave out periodical articles. I put in lists of relevant periodicals and left it at that in the first edition but—I recall Stanley Morison’s judgement on John Carter’s A.B.C. for Book Collectors (1952). It would be a good book by the time it reached the fifth edition, he said.

Needless to say I did not keep to schedule with this work, and I learnt how patient publishers can be. Every six months or so for five years they would ask how I was getting on, and I would confess that it was going to be a little longer than we had thought—was that all right? Perfectly, they always said, and from time to time they would ask diffidently if they might put it on their autumn production schedule, or spring, as the case might be. My editor always added courteously, “Please don’t think we are pressing you, Robin,” and I would take him to my filing cabinet and let him look inside just to prove I was actually at work still. I do not think he doubted it, but I was afraid he might. My tardiness pales into insignificance beside that of Professor J. D. Reid, a Cambridge University Press author. Sir Sydney Roberts, in The Evolution of Cambridge Publishing tells how, in 1923, he “called at the Press to say that his edition of Cicero, De Finibus, was practically completed, adding that he feared that he was a little late. Subsequent research revealed that he had agreed to prepare the edition for the Syndics in 1879.” (The Syndics are the Cambridge Press equivalent of the Delegates of the Oxford Press, by the way.) “When the book was published,” Sir Sydney added, “the more
percipient reviewers emphasised its maturity.\textsuperscript{16}

Some writers who had been included in the literary dictionaries now turned up in \textit{The British Book Trade} in a new guise. The creator of the \textit{Fifth Form at St. Dominic's}, Talbot Baines Reed, is also the author of the standard \textit{History of the Old English Letter Foundries} (1887), partner in the Stephenson Blake type foundry, and first Secretary of the Bibliographical Society. Samuel Richardson, ignored in this world as the first English novelist, is here a printer and Master of the Stationers' Company in 1754. His portrait still hangs in our Courtroom though his poor wife was bombed in 1940. Benjamin Franklin always thought of himself as a printer first and foremost, penning his own epitaph in 1728:

\begin{verbatim}
The Body of
B Franklin Printer,
(Like the Cover of an old Book
Its Contents torn out
And stript of its Lettering & Gilding)
Lies here, Food for Worms.
But the Work shall not be lost;
For it will, (as he believ'd) appear once more,
In a new and more elegant Edition
Revised and corrected,
By the Author.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{verbatim}

Isaac D'Iseraeli, if known at all, is usually remembered as a retiring scholar who, in a fit of pique, had his children baptised to spite the rabbi and thus gave his son Benjamin the opportunity (which, as a Jew in those days he would not otherwise have had) to change the course of nineteenth century British history by being Prime Minister. In the \textit{Book Trade} he is the first systematic historian of professional authorship, of those whose "means of subsistence . . . [is] extracted from the quill . . . until disappointed, distressed, and thrown out of every pursuit which can maintain independence, the noblest mind is cast into the lot of a doomed labourer." \textit{The Calamities and Quarrels of Authors} makes pretty melancholy reading.\textsuperscript{18}

Bibliographers in the past were among the unhappiest of authors. Robert Watt, author of the monumental \textit{Bibliotheca Britannica} (4 vols., 1824), died, according to his biographers, a victim to his devotion to bibliography, as did his two sons after him. Poor William Thomas Lowndes, "the first and last man," according to
John Carter, "to attempt singlehanded a bibliographical manual for the whole of English literature," was practically a slave to his master—and later reviser of The Bibliographer's Manual—Henry G. Bohn, who forced Lowndes to pass the latter part of his shortish life in penury and drudgery. And the pleasures, you may ask. You see we get off lightly today and neither Blades nor Bradshaw, let alone poor Lowndes or Watts knew the pleasure of lecturing in the States on the trials of a bibliographer.

But I was taken most severely to task by the late Miss Philothea Thompson, then editor of the English trade paper, The Bookseller, because I included Authorship in my Guide. "We don't consider authors as book trade," she said. "I know that," I answered, "but the fact is, that however much publishers may wish it otherwise, without authors there would be no booktrade." "I know that," she countered stubbornly, "but booksellers don't consider authors as part of the book trade." She did not specify bibliographers.

NOTES

*This article is based on the text of a lecture delivered by Robin Myers in the Gallery of Margaret I. King Library, 10 April 1980.

7Typescript of an unpublished lecture by Ian Willison on The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature.
8Hints and Directions for Authors in Writing and Publishing Their Works (1842).

12A Dictionary of the English Language, I, n. pag.


