

## Book Reviews

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*RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* reviews books, reports, new periodicals, databases, websites, blogs, and other electronic resources, as well as exhibition, book, and auction catalogs pertaining directly and indirectly to the fields of rare book librarianship, manuscripts curatorship, archives management, and special collections administration. Publishers, librarians, and archivists are asked to send appropriate publications for review or notice to the Reviews Editor.

Due to space limitations, it may not be possible for all books received to be reviewed in *RBM*. Books or publication announcements should be sent to the Reviews Editor: Amy Cooper Cary, Raynor Memorial Library, Marquette University, 1415 W. Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53233-2221, e-mail: amy.cary@marquette.edu, (414) 288-5901.

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*The Pioneer Americanists: Early Collectors, Dealers, and Bibliographers*. J. Kevin Graffagnino, Terese M. Austin, Jayne Ptolemy, and Brian Leigh Dunnigan, eds. Ann Arbor: The Clements Library at the University of Michigan, 2017. 230p. Hardcover, \$50.00 (ISBN 9781881606093).

Editors J. Kevin Graffagnino, Terese M. Austin, Jayne Ptolemy, and Brian Leigh Dunnigan seek to turn Americanists' attention back to the origins of their field, before the titans of twentieth-century industry built our country's major collections with the wealth of the industrial revolution. By devoting a book to the earliest collectors, dealers, and bibliographers of Americana, the editors argue that the field was already motivated by nostalgia; they assert that embedded in this history of bookmen is a narrative of how "middle and upper-class America: white, Protestant filiovietic, and male" chose recent history, an intriguing insight in the time of "Make America Great Again" (11).

Graffagnino, Austin, Ptolemy, and Dunnigan are well situated to provide such an overview. All are administrators at the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan. Graffagnino is the Director; Austin, the Head of Reader Services; Ptolemy, the Reading Room Supervisor and Curatorial Assistant; and Dunnigan, the Associate Director and Curator of Maps. Although the editors are from the same institution, their expertise reaches far beyond their library's doors.

Graffagnino's introduction, "Bibliotheca Americana: The Rise of a Collecting Specialty, 1700–1900," outlines the major firsts of early Americana: the first manuscript (Christopher Columbus letter, 1483), the first printing press (Mexico City, 1539), the

first book auction held in America (Boston, 1713), and the first auction dedicated to Americana (Boston, 1844). Each of the sixteen subsequent chapters, coauthored by the editors, are dedicated to a bookman born between 1600 and 1832: White Kennett, Isaiah Thomas, Peter Force, John Carter Brown, Samuel G. Drake, James Lenox, John Russell Bartlett, William Menzies, Lyman Copeland Draper, George Brinley Jr., Henry Stevens Jr., Joseph Sabin, Samuel L.M. Barlow, Robert Clarke, Henry Harris, and Hubert Howe Bancroft. Each profile includes a portrait or photograph, short biography, excerpts from pieces about the subject's activity in the rare book trade as well as brief recommended reading lists, notes, and bibliographies.

*The Pioneer Americanists'* primary strength is evident in its outlines of the networks connecting dealers, auctioneers, private collectors, and institutions. I was fascinated by the rivalry between collectors James Lenox and John Carter Brown and sympathized with the care that bookseller Henry Stevens Jr. needed to take to maintain his connection with both men and their wallets (92–93). No doubt many contemporary rare book dealers and curators would empathize with Stevens. Furthermore, I appreciated the efforts to ensure that the chapter biographies remained objective. Although every biography felt the need to reaffirm how well regarded each man was within his community, some individuals, like Sabin and Harris, came across as less likable than the others. As a result, this volume would be a welcome starting-off point for a digital humanist interested in network analysis of the early American book trade.

A secondary strength of the volume is its frank acknowledgment of when its subjects engaged in practices that would now be considered unethical or discriminatory. Lyman Copeland Draper, a curator for the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, collected both personally and professionally in “what later generations would consider a clear conflict of interest” (133). Henry Stevens Jr., an American book dealer who settled in London, “marr[ied] damaged pieces of rare items to produce ‘perfect’ copies,” a practice vilified by today’s preservation librarians (153). And few of these bookmen showed interest in collecting materials by or about women, people of color, or the working class (11).

The editors anticipate one inevitable critique: the bookmen they chose to include are not diverse by sex, race, or class. The editors justify their selection, stating that while women “were the backbone of the era’s historical institutions, and a considerable number carved out lengthy and distinguished careers ... they toiled in professional obscurity with no opportunity to rise to leadership positions” (12–13). No people of color are included; readers learn African American participants in the rare book trade collected on behalf of organizations rather than privately. As *The Pioneer Americanists* is dedicated to individuals, identifying and discussing these organizations’ activities fell outside the scope of the volume (16). Class is tricky too; even if

an individual was born into a working-class environment, becoming a notable collector required gaining access to significant disposable income and free time.

Scholars of print culture and practitioners in the field of special collections would find *The Pioneer Americanists* a good starting place to learn more about the subject. This overview of major early collectors and collections serves as an appetizer to meatier tomes such as John Hruschka's *How Books Came to America: The Rise of the American Book Trade* (PSU UP, 2011) and volumes 1 and 2 of *A History of the Book in America* (American Antiquarian Society and Cambridge UP, 2000; UNC Press, 2010) as well as the numerous monographs devoted to regional histories of American print culture. This new volume is of most use to scholars and practitioners who want to learn more about institutional collecting history, as it outlines how historical societies, academic libraries, and other organizations used the dissolution of private collections to enhance their holdings. However, as *The Pioneer Americanists* is the size of a coffee table book and is beautifully illustrated by images from a variety of repositories, its format suggests that it is largely intended for display, possibly in the personal homes of collectors who aspire to compile the next great Americana collection themselves. As the cover image is pixelated, an odd mistake considering the high quality of the images inside the text, those who want to show off the volume might wish to remove the slipcover first.—Amy Hildreth Chen, *University of Iowa Libraries*

**Debbie Lee and Kathryn Newfont.** *The Land Speaks: New Voices at the Intersection of Oral and Environmental History*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2017. 320 p. Paperback, \$34.95 (ISBN 9780190664527).

In his essay “The Land Ethic,” conservationist and writer Aldo Leopold advocates for changing “the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it” (173).<sup>1</sup> *The Land Speaks* challenges readers to not only adopt this land ethic, but to practice it by listening to the land and acknowledging its agency. Authors and editors Debbie Lee and Kathryn Newfont argue that oral history can be used as a tool across fields, not just within the humanities or archival studies, to examine human relationships with the land. Adopting this tool comes with three challenges. First, oral historians need to acknowledge that “the land itself speaks” (10). Second, there are people who can “hear, understand, and translate into human language messages from the land” (10). Third, historians must recognize “that wildlife and wildlands have been marginalized and denied voice in ways that parallel the human disenfranchisement” (12). From national forests to urban landscapes, the fourteen essays in this work address these challenges and

1. Aldo Leopold et al., *A Sand County Almanac & Other Writings on Ecology and Conservation* (New York, N.Y.: Library of America, 2013), 238.