How the RBMS Exhibition Catalogue Awards Got from There to Here, from Then to Now

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In March 1985 the RBMS Exhibition Catalogue Awards Committee issued a press release through ACRL announcing that three annual awards would be granted in the Spring of 1986 for the best catalogues published by American or Canadian institutions in conjunction with exhibitions of books and/or manuscripts. For the first year of the awards, catalogues published between January 1, 1983, and August 31, 1985, were eligible and would be divided into three budget categories—expensive, moderately expensive, and inexpensive—based upon production costs, thereby allowing institutions of similar publishing resources to compete within the same category. This call for entries in the competition was the culmination of an idea whose origin goes back to July of 1982, when, at the RBMS Preconference, a lively conversation between Beverly Lynch and various members of the Section resulted in the suggestion of an award for exhibition catalogues. Because many librarians devote considerable time and effort in the preparation of public exhibitions which are accompanied by catalogues of scholarly, typographic or aesthetic distinction, it seemed logical to recognize this activity. This and other ideas were transformed by the RBMS Executive Committee into an ad hoc committee which was charged with developing criteria for judging published catalogues and suggesting a mechanism for receiving entries, selecting winners and presenting awards.

In June 1984 the Ad Hoc Committee recommended to the RBMS Executive

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Committee that the “Policies and Procedures for RBMS Standing Committee for Awards for Exhibition Catalogues” be adopted, that a Standing Committee be appointed to administer the awards, and that the Ad Hoc Committee be discharged. All recommendations were accepted and the Standing Committee was appointed. After approval by ACRL and the ALA Awards Committee, the RBMS Exhibition Catalogue Awards Committee was ready to adjudicate the first competition.

By the end of September 1985, seventy entries from twenty-seven institutions had been submitted to the Committee. These catalogues ranged in unit cost from $24.00 to practically nothing, from elegant illustrated tomes to xeroxed pamphlets. They covered all centuries of recorded history and manuscripts and books in numerous languages and alphabets (see list following this article). By the time the Committee members met in January 1986, all the catalogues had been evaluated by each member according to criteria developed the previous summer. Catalogues were rated on a scale of 0 to 5 on such points as originality, overall informational content, choice of items exhibited, choice and quality of illustrations, visual impact, appropriateness of design, typography, durability, success with intended audience, quality of contributors’ work, literary style, accuracy of detail, and usefulness of bibliography or index if applicable. The three categories based on unit cost ranged from $0 to $2.49, $2.50 to $9.99, and $10 up. Thirty-three catalogues fell in the inexpensive category, twenty-eight in the moderately expensive, and nine in the expensive. Naturally the final delibera-

American Library Association
Association of College and Research Libraries
Rare Books and Manuscripts Section

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE
AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

The following catalogue: The Mikado: A Centenary Celebration

Submitted by: The Pierpont Morgan Library

Has been chosen for First Place Award for Excellence

Exhibition Catalogue Award certificate, designed and printed by Jerry Kelly, New York.
tions, which were emphatic but friendly, must remain confidential. However, it can be stated that consensus on the top contenders within each category was usually reached quickly and the better part of two two-hour meetings was spent sorting out the very best from the quite good.

The winning catalogue in the first division (expensive) was *Renaissance Painting in Manuscripts: Treasures from The British Library*, submitted by the J. Paul Getty Museum, published by Hudson Hills Press, New York, and copublished by the Getty in association with The British Library. The exhibition represented by this excellent catalogue opened at the Getty Museum (October 6, 1983–January 8, 1984), traveled to the Morgan Library (January 20, 1984–April 29, 1984), and ended its tour at the home of the manuscripts, The British Library (May 25, 1984–September 30, 1984). A truly international effort, the catalogue was edited by Thomas Kren who, along with Janet Backhouse, Mark Evans and Myra Orth, also contributed essays. The introduction is by Derek H. Turner, Deputy Keeper, Head of Exhibitions, Dept. of Manuscripts, The British Library.

As stated in the foreword to the catalogue, "the selection focuses on a single period in the history of manuscript illumination, 1450 to 1560, and its three major schools, Flemish, Italian, and French." Until this exhibition and catalogue the subject had not received the scholarly attention it deserves. One important contribution of the catalogue, therefore, is to call attention to Renaissance painting in manuscripts, a topic which has often been ignored in favor of panel painting, sculpture, and other more "major" media. It also brings together the idea of Renaissance painting in manuscripts from both northern Europe and Italy, so the entire field can be compared.

The presentation of information in the catalogue is outstanding. Each introductory essay not only gives a good survey of the material but also confronts some of the particular problems of the subject. It is interesting that although each section was written by a different expert, the editing and quality of the writing maintain an integrity in the catalogue as a whole. Each catalogue entry is thorough and contains clear documentation without becoming overly detailed. The illustrations are extraordinarily fine, both in quality and in choice of comparative illuminations. The Committee particularly commends the richness of the black and white illustrations. In addition, the supplementary maps and genealogical charts are helpful in sorting out the entangled historical situation. *Renaissance Painting in Manuscripts* sets a formidably high standard for elaborate, scholarly productions in this field.

In the second division (moderately expensive), the winning catalogue was *The Survivors: An Exhibition of Russian Rare Books*, sponsored by the Slavic and East European Library of the University Library of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. One of the more unusual entries in the competition, this catalogue is an example of what can be produced in a publicly supported institution
THE MIKADO

THE PIERPONT MORGAN LIBRARY
through the generosity of private donation, the expertise of several departmental offices and the activity of an enthusiastic Library Friends organization.

Published to commemorate an exhibition (July 16–October 5, 1985) of what were considered by the curator, Marianna Tax Choldin, and staff to be "truly rare" volumes selected from one of the largest collections of Slavica outside the Soviet Union, the catalogue serves to remind the Western World that "during the course of the first World War, the revolution and civil war, and the second World War, with their legacy of purges and arrests, not only were millions of human lives lost, but millions of private libraries were requisitioned, plundered, and destroyed." The answers to the questions of scope and method of identifying rare works in the midst of extensive collections are admirably addressed in this modest, yet refreshingly sophisticated publication, with well-chosen and well-produced illustrations, a straightforward lean text, and a detailed listing of the actual exhibition. Categories for inclusion range from Russian books published before 1801, to Golden Age literature—from Pushkin to Turgenev—to illustrated, limited or associative titles. Room is also allotted to an almost obligatory category—that of items banned or destroyed throughout Russian history. Survivors should encourage all librarians dealing with the growing pains of an expanding body of research materials to make special provisions for security, usage and exhibition of the gems in such collections.

Tying for the award in the third division (inexpensive) were He Has Long Outlived His Century: The 200th Anniversary of Johnson’s Death, submitted by the Houghton Library, Harvard University; and The Mikado: A Centenary Exhibition, entered by the Pierpont Morgan Library. The Johnson catalogue, published on December 13, 1984, is a collaboration of five young Harvard scholars—Joseph Bartolomeo, James Basker, Jean Marsden, Ruben Quintero and David Venturo—and several important collections—the Mary and Donald Hyde, Robert Metzdorf, Houghton Mifflin, Amy Lowell, Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., Harold Murdock and others. The cover illustration, designed by Joseph Reed, is a dramatic montage of Johnson portraits taken from the Wedgewood medallion, the Reynolds portrait and Johnson’s death mask. Fifty-three items in the exhibition are presented in insightful sections beginning with Johnson’s illness and death, including also biography, criticism, poetry and the Dictionary, and ending with Rasselas, his masterpiece of moral writing. All are introduced by Hugh Amory with a verve appropriate to the importance of the occasion and the materials displayed. He Has Long Outlived His Century, designed by Richard Bartlett, is handsome and extremely readable, a fine example of what can be done on a limited budget.

The Mikado is a gratis offering commemorating not only the hundredth anniversary of the most popular of Gilbert and Sullivan’s operas but the thirty-fifth anniversary of the arrival of Reginald Allen’s Gilbert & Sullivan Collection at
He has long outlived his century

Cambridge
The Houghton Library
13 · XII · 1984
the Morgan Library and Mr. Allen's eightieth birthday (May 31–July 31, 1985). The covers are printed in excellent color reproduction, particularly the front cover which beautifully conveys the quality of the original silk screen poster. Inside, Mr. Reginald Allen's incomparable essay preserves his lively voice—that of the dean of collectors and scholars of Gilbert and Sullivan—as he tells the story of "The Life and Times" of *The Mikado*. The catalogue both records the exhibition in memorable Gilbertian style and also tells the world, through the checklist prepared by Frederic Woodbridge Wilson, of the improbably large extent of the Morgan Library's holdings in the field. The large success of *The Mikado* souvenir pamphlet is in inverse proportion to its small size.

Two catalogues were awarded honorable mentions in the first division. These were *Bookbinding in America, 1680–1910*, submitted by Bryn Mawr College Library, and *Nature Disclosed: Books from the Collections of the John Crerar Library Illustrating the History of Science*, entered by the University of Chicago Library. The first of these works will be a valuable reference source for librarians and others interested in bookbinding for years to come. Introducing the work is Frederick E. Maser, who, together with his wife, May Louise Jarden Maser, gave the collection from which most of the books were chosen to Bryn Mawr. William Spawn, a leading authority on early American binding, contributed an excellent, informative essay titled "The Evolution of American Binding Styles in the Eighteenth Century." Reference is made throughout the essay to some of the sixty-two entries which follow. The six color reproductions of the bindings are strikingly clear. Every entry is illustrated either in color or black and white, as one might expect, and the frequent juxtaposition of two bindings by the same binder is particularly useful to scholars and collectors. Selections were made to complement the 1972 Papantonio catalogue. Indexes of binders, places, provenance and authors and titles supplement the incredible wealth of information accompanying each entry. Every detail of this exhibition catalogue is handled with good taste and distinction.

A most compelling aspect of *Nature Disclosed*, designed by Cynthia Susmilch, is its format in which illustrations play a primary role. The wrap-around cover, a colored plate from Salomon Schinz's *Primae Lineae Botanicae* (1775), depicting the parts and varieties of flowers and fruits, is a visual delight. Inside, the diagrams, woodcuts and engravings chosen to illustrate the text are not only well produced but surprisingly witty. Anthea Waleson, the compiler, has done a superb job of selecting and presenting the materials. The contents bear out the statement in the foreword by Robert Rosenthal that the "books have not been selected in any narrow celebratory or antiquarian sense." This is a refreshing approach. In fact, there are many refreshing aspects to the work. Unfamiliar books are found alongside those which shaped modern science. Under the four major Sections of the catalogue—Mixed Mathematics, Natural History, Medi-
cine and Cookery—are the expected subdivisions such as Astronomy, Plants, Animals, etc. and also the somewhat curious—Horology, Flight, Fossils, Women and Children. Ms. Waleson’s introduction acknowledges that one purpose of the exhibition and catalogue is to raise rather than answer such questions as “Why are displays of human anatomy often set in elaborate landscapes? Why do designs of machinery often come crowded with details of local dress and habitation?” Although the subject is weighty this is a delightful catalogue, informative and entertaining, unmarred by pretension, beautiful in design and typography.

In the second division there were also two honorable mentions. The first of these, *The Dark Side of the Enlightenment* by F. Thomas Noonan, is particularly imaginative in its conception, calling attention to a “neglected aspect of the eighteenth century.” The catalogue is a cooperative effort drawing on the resources of six Harvard Libraries, though most of the books, broadsides and engravings are from the Houghton Library. The selection demonstrates a commendable resourcefulness in tracking down enlightening examples and good judgment in arranging them. Thomas Noonan’s commentaries are intelligent and illuminating. This intriguing exhibition catalogue is divided into three parts: “This Vile World,” which includes sections on plague, famine, war, political corruption, crime and punishment, and slavery; “The Other Light,” which deals with the dark side of religion—superstition or unenlightenment; and “Enlightenment’s Own Shadow,” a cogent criticism of the Enlightenment itself and a fitting conclusion. Certainly the theme is an original one which stimulates the reader to discover more—surely one of the main reasons for producing an exhibition.

The second honorable mention in the second division, *Theories of the Earth, 1644–1830: The History of a Genre*, by William B. Ashford, Jr. and Bruce Bradley, accompanied the exhibition displayed at Linda Hall Library, Kansas City, Missouri, in conjunction with the symposium on eighteenth-century theories of the earth, entitled “The Enlightenment and Earth History.” The catalogue chronicles the emergence of the science of historical geology and includes fifty-three representative works of notable and influential philosophical theories from that of René Descartes (1596–1650) to that of Charles Lyell (1797–1875).

Entries include, besides bibliographical data, a descriptive collation followed by a synoptic annotation of the author’s philosophical thought. Of particular note is a broad representation of materials of international focus, both obscure and famous, that displays the Library’s great strength in holdings in the subject area. Contributing measurably to the interest and value of the catalogue, as well as to its attractive appearance, are numerous representative illustrations. Further useful supplements are bibliographical entries for fifty-six additional holdings in the History of Science Collection of Linda Hall Library, a guide to further reading on the topic, and an alphabetical index to authors. A combination of style and design, tasteful typography and illustration, together with the useful and scholarly contri-
bution to knowledge have produced a quality catalogue of lasting value.

Singled out for honorable mention in the third division is *James Joyce at 101: An Exhibition*, compiled by Charles Kemnitz and published by the McFarlin Library of the University of Tulsa. The catalogue was produced for a 1983 exhibition on the occasion of Joyce's one hundred and first birthday. Items selected for display were drawn from several collections at the University of Tulsa, those of Harriet Shaw Weaver, Cyril Connolly, and Edmund Wilson. Joycean memorabilia loaned from Thomas F. Staley's private collection completed the display. The impressive array of materials—serialized installments of chapters from Joyce's major works, British and American first editions, foreign language editions, posthumous and facsimile reprints, phonodiscs, autograph and published letters, contemporary criticism, and collected editions—attests to the strength of the McFarlin Library in this area.

The forty-four page, oblong quarto catalogue is physically appealing and makes good decorative use of Joyce's autograph both on the cover where continuous rows of it are reproduced and inside as a running title. The text divides Joyce's life into five chronological parts with each division introduced by a succinct summary of his activities and writing during that period. A bibliographic list of relevant items, each accompanied by a short description highlighting the significance of the work, follows. Catering to a diverse audience, the lucid well-balanced catalogue successfully introduces the novice to Joyce and his contributions to Western literature while it tantalizes Joycean scholars with intriguing details of the books' publishing histories.

Certificates of award for these winning catalogues were presented to a representative of their sponsoring institutions at the ALA meeting of RBMS on Sunday, June 29th, at 2:00 p.m. in New York City. It is especially appropriate that Beverly Lynch made the presentation both because she was President of ALA and because she participated in that conversation in 1982 which eventually led to these awards.

Copies of each of the seventy catalogues entered in the first year of the competition will be deposited at three libraries in the United States—Columbia University Library; Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin; and Bancroft Library, The University of California at Berkeley. It is hoped that the following list will assist those looking for information on specific subjects and those institutions seeking further dissemination of information on their holdings. The call has gone out for entries for September 1985 through August 1986, and the Committee eagerly awaits the new contestants.*

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LIST OF EXHIBITION CATALOGUES SUBMITTED IN 1985-1986


University of Texas at Austin. *A Visit from Gloria Swanson.* Raymond W. Daum. Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin, Tex. 1984.

University of Texas at Austin. *Gone With The Wind: A Legend Endures.* George Wead. Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Tex. 1983.

University of Texas at Austin. *No Symbols Where None Intended: A Catalogue of Books, Manuscripts, and Other Material Relating to Samuel Beckett in the Collections of the Humanities Research Center.* Carlton Lake with the assistance of Linda Eichhorn and Sally Leach. Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Tex. 1984.


University of Toronto. *Canada in Maps from Early Times to the Present.* Verniece Webber. Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ont., Canada. 1983.


University of Toronto. *Dance—An Ephemeral Art—in Print: An Exhibition of Books, Pamphlets and Ephemera from the Collections of the University of Toronto, the University of Waterloo, York University, the Theatre Department of the Metropolitan Toronto Library,


University of Toronto. *1883: Echoes of the Year.* Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ont., Canada. 1983.


Yale University. *America Emergent: An Exhibition of Maps and Atlases in Honor of Alexander O. Vietor.* Barbara B. McCorkle, with the assistance of George A. Miles and Christa Sammons. The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. 1985.

Yale University. *Friedrich Schiller 1759–1984.* Jeffery L. Sammons and Christa Sammons. The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. 1984. [Jeffery L. Sammons wrote the “essay” and Christa Sammons the “checklist.”]

Yale University. *The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library: The First Twenty Years.* Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn. 1983.
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