Price Guides: An Assessment

WILLIAM BAKER

This review article surveys what price guides are available for rare book, manuscript, and special collection libraries. The guides will be reviewed indicating their strengths and weaknesses. Guides to the value of books are useful for librarians, who should be mindful of the observation in the recently published Standards for Ethical Conduct for Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Librarians with Guidelines for Institutional Practice in Support of the Standards, 2nd ed. (see bibliography below): “In the course of working with donors, special collections librarians are often required to advise on market value of books and manuscripts. Although it is proper to assist in the use of reference tools for this purpose, special collections librarians must not appraise any rare book, manuscript, or special collection materials, either for compensation or pro bono” (pp. 2–3). What reference books are available, and how useful are they for donors, patrons, and librarians?

American Book Prices Current (ABPC), now available on CD-ROM in addition to its familiar annual red-cloth, hard-copy format, covers auction prices, i.e., what a rare book or manuscript actually realized in hard cash at auction. Listed prices are hammer prices, that is “the price actually called out in the salesroom when the list is knocked down to a buyer.” As the Introduction to ABPC indicates, “What the buyer actually pays for the lot has become complicated.” To be added on are taxes which vary from state to state and country to country. Further, auction houses are not charities and auctioneers do not offer a free service; they charge the buyer and the seller a premium. Swann’s in New York charges the buyer a premium of 15% up to $50,000 and then 10% over the $50,000. In English auction houses premiums vary, with 10% representing a base line for buyers. These percentages may vary from house to house. It is important to remember that the price a book realized on a particular occasion may not represent its intrinsic value at that time; many factors are involved: bad weather; a rival auction or activity; illness; fax or

William Baker is Professor, Department of English and University Libraries, Northern Illinois University, and is Adjunct Professor, Department of Library and Information Studies, Rosary College.
telephone lines that might be temporarily out of order (as might postal services or electronic mail); and the possibility that two dealers might, for personal reasons, run the cost of an item up far in excess of what it has previously realized (I have witnessed this on more than one occasion in London and provincial auction houses, especially in the case of periodical runs). So, if possible, auction prices should be compared for at least a ten-year period, and treated with caution as most books sold at auction frequently are sold to people within the book trade. Auctions may be regarded as a wholesale rather than a retail market.¹

ABPC has two sections. The first covers "Autographs & Manuscripts... original illustrations for printed books, documents, letters, typescripts, corrected proofs, signed photographs, and signatures, as well as manuscripts." The second section, "Books, includes broadsides, single-sheet printings, maps, and charts and uncorrected proof copies of books" (p. xxxi). Book entries are alphabetically arranged by author, or if an author is not known, by title, private press, or obvious associations. Authors using pseudonyms may be found under real names or pseudonyms: fortunately "Eliot, George" is listed as such. In ABPC's British equivalent, Book Auction Records (BAR), for "Eliot, George (Pseud.)" we have to see "Evans, Marian 'George Eliot.'" Subject headings are used for categories such as England, Bibles, Hebrew books, miniature books. Each item listed depends on the detail supplied by the auction house where it was sold; sometimes the information is detailed and sometimes of a perfunctory nature. On the whole, the major auction houses supply detailed bibliographical information, including the condition of the book. Condition is not always included and experience reveals whether the description is to be entirely trusted—after all, the auction house cataloger is only human, working with a time limit, under pressure, and the aim of the house is to sell the item being auctioned. Potential purchasers ideally should attend an auction or ask a third party, someone they trust, to report with fidelity the exact condition of an item. It is important to supplement the auction records by having a knowledgeable and trustworthy representative at the sale both to confirm condition and to bid.

Individual works are alphabetically listed under each heading and include the title, place and publication dates of edition designation, the number of volumes when there is more than one, size, binding, condition of binding, descriptive material, limitation notes, and the sale record. This includes, in code, the auction house, the date or number of the sale, the lot number, price, and purchaser. Buyers' names are given if listed in the price lists provided after the sale by some of the major auction houses. Many provincial houses do not provide these; names might well be fictitious, and items are often bought on commission. The book trade is known for its secrecy. There may be many reasons a buyer may wish not to reveal an identity. There can be cross-references to books bound together, to club or press books, and so on. Here is a randomly chosen sample entry from ABPC—Books on CD-ROM:
Main Entry: Lewes, George Henry, 1817–78
Entry: Female Characters of Goethe, from the Original Drawings of William Kaulbach.
Munich, [1867]. 12 mo, mor. gilt; scuffed. With 22 mtd albumen prints.
Sale Record: Swann, Dec. 14, 1978, lot 96, $35
Note: NUC has 2d ed; BMC has 1874 Folio ed

Most of this information is straightforward. Two words, both related to condition, may not be so straightforward. "Scuffed" and "albumen" are in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. There is a trade terminology and some of its language is not as precise as it may appear: what may be "scuffed" to one pair of eyes may not be to another. Apart from the *OED*, which is cumbersome, if the CD-ROM version is not on hand, where would the librarian go for an explanation? "Scuffed" and "albumen" are not in John Carter’s *ABC for Book Collectors*, 7th ed. (Oak Knoll Books, 1995) but many other useful terms are succinctly explained.

*ABPC*, volume 100 (1995), like *BAR*, is selective: "Only books and manuscripts which sold for at least $50 or its equivalent in another currency" are listed in the former while the latter records only lots which realized £70 ($140) and more—consequently much fascinating activity in the book auction world is not recorded in either. Further, "auction lists consisting of groupings of miscellaneous volumes are not listed," nor are "badly broken runs or seriously incomplete sets of printed books." In *ABPC* "listings of books in non-Western languages realizing less than $100 have been selectively excluded, as have such peripheral works as printings of musical scores, collections of plates, and panoramas" (p. xxxii).

*ABPC* is slightly more expensive than *BAR* on an annual hard-copy comparison even if preordered before a specific date. *ABPC* includes a listing of "Autographs and Manuscript auctions and signed photographs" which *BAR* does not, but excludes a separate printed maps, charts, and plans section. Its size is 8" x 6" compared with *BAR*’s 11.7" x 8". Both are rich sources for bibliographical information, especially when specialist bibliographies may not be so readily available. Both are indispensable reference tools for book buyers, the book trade, and those undertaking research in many diverse fields. Both can mislead. As indicated, prices realized may reflect special circumstances on the day. As accurate as a catalog may be, imperfect copies or defective copies may be missed. Returns are not recorded in subsequent auction catalogs. Often auction houses employ fictitious names to buy items which have not realized their reserves: these reserves are not recorded in *ABPC* or *BAR*. Even so, much may be learned from the records they represent. Individual books are bibliographically described, and in the case of *ABPC on CD-ROM* there are new features. Prices are given in U.S. dollars at a conversion rate operating at the date of the sale, as well as in the original currency. There are references to standard bibliographies such as *STC*, *Goff*, and
others. The history of price fluctuations in the price of a specific edition or manuscript of an author can now be more easily studied on CD-ROM than by going from volume to volume. William Rees-Mogg, in his instructive "Boswell and Adam Smith First Editions," accompanied by statistical tables based on BAR and ABPC, analyzes the relative value of copies of Boswell and Adam Smith first editions in the period 1900 through 1989. Rees-Mogg concludes: "The pattern of the century runs like this: 1900–19, low interest in books; 1920–29, bibliomania; 1930–59, depression in collecting; 1960–89, recovery, but to a level of activity well below the 1920s." This is just one illustration of the use to which price guides can be put.

Volume 100 of ABPC is the century volume. The hard copy and the CD-ROM package include two prefatory essays which testify to and exemplify the value of price guides. In the first, Nicolas Barker writes on "American Book Prices Current 1895–1995," reflecting on why such a record was necessary in the first place and what the purpose of the catalogs was. His emphasis is on the early years of the century, although there is material on the post-1945 years, the last decade, and a salutary citation from Luther S. Livingston: "Woe to him who buys solely as an investment and feels not within him the bibliophilistic spark" (p. xx). Roy David's reflection on 100 years of change, "Auctioneering—Whence and Whither," is written from the perspective of someone who for over a quarter of a century, was actively involved in the auction world as an auctioneer and head of department at Sotheby's in London. For David "the most controversial change in Britain and America... has been the introduction, to cries of collusion by the trade, of a buyer's premium," and in England, "the modification... or complete reversal of the roles and functions of booksellers and auctioneers" so that "auctioneers do seem to have stolen a march on the trade" (p. xxiii). There is much to be learned from David's observations on items failing to find buyers, on catalogs and their faults, the "transmuting" of "auction prices into criteria or benchmarks," and the distinction between price and value. It should be remembered that the price an item sells for at auction can be found in the listing of prices realized issued by major auction houses. The price now includes the buyer's premium. In other words, the small print of auction catalogs, records, and price listings should always be carefully scrutinized. This is especially important when the marketing strategies of auction houses are becoming more subtle, complicated, and aimed at a wider market of potential buyers.

ABPC and BAR are guides to auction records. What about trade price guides, i.e., prices offered by retailers, many of whom have purchased the items at auctions? If auctions have been a significant source of supply for the trade, then traditional booksellers and their catalogs have been the source of supply to the public and libraries. Various price guides are available which list booksellers' catalog prices. These guides create publicity for booksellers and add to their prestige. Some guides such as BPI (Bookman's Price Index) have an authoritative stature. The prices are those asked, not necessarily realized.
Different prices for the same book as quoted by different dealers are given. For instance, in BPI 50 (1995), two copies of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* are cited. Both are three volumes, first editions. The first, offered by Pickering and Chatto (London) has 16 pages of ads found bound in at the end of volume 3: "bound with half titles; original rusty orange diagonal wavy-grain cloth, covers blocked in blind and spines lettered in gilt, new primrose endpapers, some wear to heads and tails of spines, spine of volume III slightly cockled, corners little knocked, still attractive set. Parrish, p. 14; Sadleir 816a.” The volumes are priced at $850. The description is revealing. In some copies of *The Mill on the Floss* there are 16 pages of ads bound in at the end of the last volume and half-titles are present. The condition leaves something to be desired: there is “some wear to heads and tails of spines,” especially in volume III, and the covers are not perfect. More seriously,

... [there is] a salutary citation from Luther S. Livingston: “Woe to him who buys solely as an investment and feels not within him the bibliophilistic spark.”

... the set is damaged internally for the endpapers are not the original ones, they are “new.” Helpful are the references to two bibliographies: “Parrish p. 14,” i.e., M. L. Parrish, *Victorian Lady Novelists, George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell and the Brontë Sisters, First Editions in the Library at Dormy House, Pine Valley, New Jersey, Described with Notes* (1933: rpt. Burt Franklin, 1969; the Parrish collection is now at Princeton University Library); and “Sadleir 816a” refers to Michael Sadleir, *XIX Century Fiction: A Bibliographical Record Based on His Own Collection* (1952), now in the library of the University of California at Los Angeles. (Details relating to Sadleir, but not Parrish, may be found in ABPC.)

The second copy of *The Mill on the Floss* is offered by Blackwell's of Oxford at £250—and is considerably cheaper than the Pickering volumes. The description reads: “half titles in all volumes, without inserted ad (said to be later) in volume 1, Z6 (final blank) in volume 1 present, internally excellent ... contemporary half calf, minor rubbing, black crushed morocco title and volume labels, marbled edges; bookplate of Joseph Chamberlain. Muir 3; Sadleir 816; Wolff 2060.” Much can be learned from this description. Apparently some copies of *The Mill* have in volume one an advertisement which may be a later issue; there may be complications over the collation of the volume which call for a formal blank leaf. The copy is rebound. Copies in the original cloth are more sought after; rebound copies are cheaper. Books from the library of Joseph Chamberlain, the Edwardian politician, are not much sought after or the volumes would have been priced higher. There are other bibliographical references which are useful for George Eliot, in addition to
Sadleir. “Wolff 2060” refers to Robert Lee Wolff’s catalog based on his own collection, Nineteenth-Century Fiction: A Bibliographical Catalogue Based on the Collection Formed by Robert Lee Wolff (1981–86); most of these are now at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin. “Muir 3” refers to “A Bibliography of the First Editions of George Eliot,” Bookman’s Journal Supplement (1927–28). This with Parrish is the most detailed bibliography of George Eliot’s first editions available.

Recent available auction prices for The Mill on the Floss show that four copies went at auction during the 1993–94 auction season: (1) a copy with half-titles, “16 pp. advts at end of Vol. 3, some spotting, original cloth, slightly soiled, Vol. 3 broken,” sold at Bloomsbury Book Auction (London) for £130; (2) a copy with half-titles, the advert-leaf at the end of volume one, Vol. III with book ticket and 16 pages of advertisements at the end, slight staining, foxing and browning throughout, “uncut, original cloth, spines gilt faded,” which sold at the same auction house for £100; (3) a copy without, in the first volume, the inserted advertisement leaf but 16 pages of the publisher’s catalog at the end of volume III, original cloth, “Edmonds-Remnants” (p. 220) binder’s ticket in volume one and Carter’s “binding B” went for $1,600 at Christie’s in New York. The binding variant refers to John Carter’s Binding Variants With More Binding Variants in English Publishing 1820–1900 (1932, 1936; rpt. New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Books, 1989), and the price realized indicates that of the various original cloth bindings of The Mill on the Floss, the “B” variant is sought after and fetches a reasonably high price. However, a fourth copy, another copy of Carter’s binding B “without last advert” and the inserted leaf in volume one with the 16 pages of publisher’s catalog at the end of volume three with Edmonds and Remnants binder’s ticket, realized $325 at Swann Galleries in New York.

Much information can be gleaned from a reading of descriptions in catalogs. A comparison of BPI prices and auction prices reveals that one of the auction prices is out of line with the others and that the markup difference between auction and catalog is in some instances a substantial one. Of course, BPI cannot indicate whether a volume has been sold or not, only what the market value appears to be, or what the bookseller believes he or she may obtain for the book commercially. If a volume remains unsold, its value may depreciate rather than remain static or appreciate. Factors relating to pricing may not relate to the book itself. A bookseller may be reluctant to keep capital tied up in a volume, a bookseller may need ready cash, and the space occupied by volumes may be required. Consequently, BPI does not necessarily “serve as an index of the general market availability of a particular antiquarian book.” If a book is sold it does not necessarily mean that “the book is still to be found on the market,” as is claimed in the Introduction to BPI (p. viii). Books disappear from the market. They may be purchased by other dealers who may store them away for years, often in order to
push up values and increase demand. When the demand increases again, the books are reintroduced into the market. The modern first area is replete with this kind of speculative activity. BPI is a guide to the pricing of the stock selected dealers choose to place in their catalogs at a given time. These dealers may not be representative of the diversity of the book trade in Britain and America. They represent only a fraction of dealers who may, for instance, deliberately be trying to set high prices for books by recording them in their catalogs and then making sure that these prices are recorded in BPI. Further, it is unclear what criteria the compilers of BPI use for inclusion in their compilation. One wonders whether they ever reject a description or price from one of the select list of dealers/booksellers whose entries regularly are included.

The printed version of BPI is arranged in a main author-based sequence. Anonymous classics are listed under title, and books produced by corporate bodies are listed under the corporate name. Collected works are listed at the end of individual works—these are given in alphabetical sequence according to the first word of the title with the initial article excluded. Publication dates determine the listing of different editions of a single work. Books are described in terms of editions, physical size, illustrations, binding, author’s signature, general physical condition, specific flaws, and relative scarcity. Private presses are not listed by name.

There are three additional sections to BPI. The first lists association copies. These are “arranged, according to the name of the person with whom the book was associated rather than according to the name of the author. (The same book is listed in the main body of the BPI under the name of the author).” The second lists “Fine Bindings” where “books are gathered under the name of the binder, when known, and then listed according to author.” These also are included under the name of the author in the main section. The third lists “fore-edge paintings” under the year of publication and then arranges them according to the name of the author; these too are listed in the main section under the name of the author.

BPI was first published in 1964 and contains cumulative indexes. The three sources (BPI, ABPC, and BAR) constitute a gold mine for research into movement in prices and trends in the book trade. Research in BPI’s association copies section may assist in the reconstruction of a personal library. The prices recorded in it range from “$100 to $500, with most clustering between $100 and $200.” Until recently, BPI ruled supreme in the field as a guide to market values—the prices charged by selected booksellers as reflected in their catalogs in the United States, Canada, and the British Isles. Its high cost placed it beyond the reach of all but a few individuals and institutions. Since 1988 an alternative has appeared on the market and is now available on CD-ROM. Michael Cole’s Annual Register of Book Values (ARBV), published by the Clique Ltd., York, England, is divided into six subject-based volumes: Modern First Editions, Literature, The Arts & Architecture, Early Printed Books, Science & Medicine, and Voyages, Travel and Explo-
ration. In ARBV, prices are given in sterling and in dollars, and there are more British book dealers cited than American ones. Descriptions are those from catalogs and, on the whole, there is far less detail given than in BPI. More books at the lower end of the price range are included. Cole writes: “Emphasis is placed throughout on books falling within the lower to middle range of the pricing scale (£10–£250; $20–$500) rather than restricting selections to the unusually fine or expensive. In so doing [ARBV] provides a realistic overview of the norm, rather than the exception, within the book trade” (p. vii). More than 94,000 entries are recorded in the eighteen volumes published in 1992, 1993, and 1994. Association copies, fine bindings, and fore-edge paintings are all separately listed. A wider range of booksellers than in BPI is present in ARBV. The individual volumes rest easily in the hand and are far less bulky than the hardly portable BPI. In both, titles are listed in double columns.

More American-oriented than ARBV is Edward N. Zempel and Linda A. Verkler’s Book Prices: Used and Rare 1995 (Spoon River Press). A bulky volume of just under 800 pages, it costs $69 and is published annually as “a reference for the secondhand and antiquarian book dealer, general and rare book librarian, and the private collector seeking to place a value on a book.” More than 30,000 titles represented in the volume “have been selected from the 1994 catalogs of over 165 book dealers in the United States and Great Britain... 90 percent of the titles listed in this guide are priced between $20 and $300,” and prices are quoted both in U.S. dollars and pounds sterling (p. 5). Entries are given alphabetically by author and notes are included regarding condition. The introduction contains an italicized note of caution: “The prices listed in the guide are not the prices that book dealers will pay for the books listed. The prices listed are the prices at which dealers offered books for sale in 1994. The prices listed are... retail prices” (p. 7). Subject areas covered are as comprehensive as those offered by the six-volume ARBV which costs $125. There is not much difference in quality between them. The British publication may prove to be cheaper if individual volumes, such as Modern First Editions for $28, are published. With Zempel and Verkler you have to buy one rather bulky volume clearly laid out in double columns.

Other price guides are available; some are personal assessments of values. Joseph Connolly’s Modern First Editions: Their Value to Collectors first appeared in 1977 and a fourth edition was published in 1993. Connolly owns a bookshop in London’s Hampstead and is a journalist. His Modern First Editions contains a detailed and useful (although typographically poorly spaced) introduction which is one of the most forthright that I am aware of concerning the speculative nature of the modern first edition business. A comparison of the authors included and excluded and the scale of price values between each of the four editions of Connolly reveals much about where he believes the market has gone and what the fashions are in collecting. There are perceptive strictures on the importance of condition, dust wrappers, storage, and the identification of first editions—not as
straightforward as it might seem. Librarians can learn much from Connolly’s introduction, for instance, in my experience, American library schools, with their increasing concentration on computer applications, rarely spend time drawing attention to the importance of the preservation of dust jackets and the dangers of using ballpoint and fountain pens rather than pencils! Connolly creates an “A–Z grade scale of values.” “A” represents the cheapest or lowest value (these are in £ sterling), whereas “Z” is the highest or most expensive and reserved for Pound’s _A Lume Spento_ (printed for the author by A. Antonini, 1908), “Pound’s first book . . . an edition of only 100 copies. Now extremely rare and near priceless.” Yet we are not told what Joyce, Pound, or Eliot (to name but three) signed and association copies might be worth.

Although printed on thin, rather tawdry paper, Connolly’s book is nicely illustrated with black-and-white and some color photographs on the front dust wrappers but not the spines or backs. The same may be said of _Children’s Modern First Editions: Their Value to Collectors_, also produced by Connolly, now out of print, and containing an “Index to Illustrators.” Both volumes may serve not merely as guides to values based on one person’s opinion but as bibliographical checklists. For instance, books by Norman Hunter, the creator of Professor Branestawm, are listed with their publisher, illustrator, and dates. But such checklists are no substitute for fine author bibliographies such as Donald Gallup’s _T. S. Eliot: A Bibliography_, or Gekoski and Grogan’s _William Golding_, which are detailed and not restricted to books or first editions.

Connolly’s guides are British-oriented. Patricia and Allen Ahearn of the Quill & Brush bookstore in Maryland distribute price guides in folio sheet format containing information which is not available elsewhere. These _Author Price Guides (APG)_ are guides to market values not primarily to auction prices, and their assessments are based on “dealer catalogs, auction records and . . . personal experience buying and selling first editions through” their store. At least 56 APGs are available, author arranged, from James Agee to Virginia Wolf. The Agee APG costs $1.50, the Woolf $9.50. The most expensive APG is that covering the “Limited Edition Club” at $27.50, with Ezra Pound at $20, and with David Markson the cheapest at $0.75. The descriptions in APG are somewhat complicated—much information is compressed into a small space. They contain twelve elements. The numbered entries (001a.: 002a.: 002b.: etc.) are chronologically based and within each are listed “the various printings” of books published _simultaneously:_ “signed lettered copy”; “signed numbered copy”; “hardback trade edition”; “trade edition in paper wraps.” Proofs, uncorrected proofs, and advance reading copies are included. APG also “includes books edited by the authors and books that include introductions or forewords by the author. We do not intend to include anthologies which include the author’s work or magazine appearances.” The inclusion of such data under individual author listings makes APG different from the other available price guides.

Each entry in APG contains the title, publisher, place of publication, date of publication, edition, nature of the binding (wrapper or hardbound or both), number
of copies, issue points and other details, bibliographical reference, and price estimates (estimates are given for both if an item is without its “dust-wrapper or box/slipcase” and “in its original dust-wrapper or box/slipcase”). *APG* deals with books published after 1914. Its sections on the number of copies, issue points, and other details such as the page and line numbers necessary to identify the issue make it invaluable as a reference tool containing information not readily available elsewhere. Its prices are rather arbitrary and personal but do reflect the vast difference in pricing between books with wrappers and those without. For instance, Grahame Greene’s *Rumour at Nightfall*, published by Heineman in London in 1931 in one printing in an edition of 1,200 copies sold, is valued at $300 without a jacket and $3,500 with a jacket. The first American edition published by Doubleday, Doran, New York, 1932, in one printing, with Doubleday reporting 1,018 copies sold, is valued at $150 without wrapper and at $1,500 with wrapper.

At least two of these price guides are available in compact disc form. *ABPC on CD-ROM* from 1975 has a number of features not in the print version. All prices are given in U.S. dollars (conversion as of the date of sale) as well as in the original currency. Users can see the notes made in researching the records, with citations in bibliographies (for instance, *STC* references, references to Goff, and so on). *ABPC on CD-ROM* from 1975 allows searchers to ascertain name-authority work (the word “Britannica” in the Autographs and Manuscripts section, for example), and every word has been indexed. This means that a researcher checking, say, Goethe in the Autographs and Manuscripts section will find letters and manuscripts referring to him as well as letters by him. There are some imperfections, as the compilers, Katharine Kyes Leab and Michael Leab, admit: “for instance . . . some copies of *Eden* are under Sir John Hill and some under Thomas Hale, though we knew better. . . . We used to have to wait for the four-year Index to make such corrections, now they appear in the next release.”

The CD-ROM works on a DOS machine that is not on a network and that has 550K free in base memory (that is the first 640K of the memory). It works on the Macintosh when used with PC software (though slightly more slowly). Updates are promised and cost approximately the same as the hard copy. The old disk is sent back and a new disk received with another volume added. *ABPC on CD-ROM* is straightforward to use and self-explanatory. Each item gets a discrete full or brief record. When *ABPC* is loaded, the opening screen provides the user with several options of which *Search* is one. There are various kinds of searches permitted. There is a browsing facility which gives access to the indexes for the year of sale, the date, the title, the author, and the editor/illustrator. Once a record has been retrieved, the view facility enables the user to view the format in which records are viewed and printed. These can be displayed: The “Main Entry” on one line, followed by the “Entry,” the “Sale Record,” and a “Note.”
ABPC on CD-ROM is a wonderful tool, easy to use and reasonably priced; a great deal of attention has gone into this electronic resource. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for ARBV 1992–1994 on CD-ROM. The printed sheet attached to the ARBV CD-ROM seems clear. ABPC on CD-ROM came with an extensive manual which it has not been necessary to use. In spite of considerable time and effort, and consultation with colleagues, the ARBV CD-ROM is difficult to use and resisted attempts to follow the printed instructions. Once one gains access to the CD-ROM, its ‘Contents’ appear on the screen, including “Important Notes and Hints on Searching.” These are far from clear, and need refining and simplifying. Contrary to what is claimed in the accompanying hard copy to notes and hints, the search procedure is not “precise.” A record consists of author’s last name, e.g., “Abbey,” followed by initials “J. R.,” then the title of the book, place of publication, date of publication, format—e.g., “4 to”—number of plates and textual illustrations, if any, whether in the original cloth, whether a dust wrapper is present, the name of the dealer selling the item, and the price in British pounds sterling and United States dollars. There are apparently no other notes.

CONCLUSION
This survey of guides to monetary value encompasses seven works including the annual American Book Prices Current (also on CD-ROM) and the annual Book Auction Records. These record salesroom auction prices. Assessments of retail values reflect the value booksellers place on a work. Remember, the value may not necessarily reflect what booksellers believe they may sell a work for. The guides do not indicate whether a price has been realized or whether a book has been sold. These guides are: Bookman’s Price Index; Annual Register of Book Values (Cole’s, also on CD-ROM); Zempel and Verkler, Book Prices: Used and Rare. There are other price guides based on market, retail values as opposed to auction-realized values. Some of these are produced by the London dealer Joseph Connolly including the various editions of his Modern First Editions: Their Value to Collectors and his now out of print Children’s Modern First Editions. Others guides on individual authors are Author Price Guides from the Quill and Brush bookshop. These guides are sometimes packed with interesting bibliographical information. It is an old adage that a book is worth what somebody is prepared to pay for it at the time it is offered. So, as with so many other things in life, “the right place and the right time” are crucial.

NOTES


**PRICE GUIDES REFERRED TO**


**OTHER WORKS REFERRED TO**


*Standards for Ethical Conduct for Rare Book, Manuscripts, and Special Collections Librarians with Guidelines for Institutional Practice in Support of the Standards*. 2nd ed. (Chicago: ACRL, 1994).

Bruce Ferrini
Medieval and Renaissance
Illuminated Manuscripts

Medieval and Renaissance Miniature Paintings Catalogue Three - $15.00
Reference Book Catalogue One - Complimentary Upon Request

754 Kenmore Boulevard, Akron, Ohio, 44314
Phone: 330-753-7447 Fax: 330-753-2302

NOUVELLES ANNALES DE MATHÉMATIQUES

Complete series from 1842 to 1927-84 volumes, Ex-Lib, Foxing in volumes before 1860 FINE, shipping at cost, unbelievable series, library bindings, black cloth w/gilt spines, edges & paste-downs heavily stamped
"POLYTECHNIC Inst. etc." $900.00

Bookcell Books, Box 506, Haverford, PA 19041 Ph:(610)649-4933 Fax:(610)658-0107

MAC DONNELL RARE BOOKS
9307 Glenlake Drive
Austin TX 78730
512-345-4139

Literary First Editions, Presentation & Association Copies, and Manuscripts Appraisals & Consultations
The Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America invites you to attend the...

16th International League of Antiquarian Booksellers Fair
San Francisco, September 6-8, 1996

Once in a Generation...
For the first time
in 30 years the
ILAB Fair
returns to California.

PREVIEW: Friday, September 6, 3pm to 10pm

FAIR: Saturday, September 7, 11am to 7pm, Sunday, September 8, 11am to 5pm

TICKETS: $10 preview admission (Fri-Sun), $5 regular daily admission (Sat-Sun)

LOCATION: Concourse Exhibition Center 635 Eighth Street (Eighth at Brannan) San Francisco, California, USA

INFORMATION: Winslow & Associates phone: 415.695.1449 fax: 415.695.8748 e-mail: winslow@slip.net
You don't have to wait a generation to come to another great book fair in San Francisco...

Please join us again next spring for

The 30th California International Antiquarian Book Fair

WHEN:  
Friday, February 21, 1997  
3 pm to 10 pm PREVIEW  
Saturday, February 22, 1997  
11 am to 7 pm  
Sunday, February 23, 1997  
11 am to 5 pm

WHERE:  
Concourse Exhibition Center  
635 Eighth Street (Eighth at Brannan)  
San Francisco, California, USA

SPONSORED BY:  
The Northern California Chapter of the ABAA

INFORMATION:  
Winslow & Associates  
Phone: (415) 695-1449  
Fax: (415) 695-8748  
e-mail: winslow@slip.net
Tell them you saw it in *RBML*

*RBML* would like to take this opportunity to thank those companies that placed ads in the last fiscal year. Their support enables us to deliver articles of interest to archivists and special collections librarians. Please join us in recognizing the following *RBML* advertisers; and be sure to tell them you saw their ad in *RBML*.

Abracadabra Booksearch International
Beasley Books
Bookcell Books
Brunswick Press
Butterfield & Butterfield
James Cummins Bookseller
Dott. Maria G. Fantoli
Bruce Ferrini Rare Books
Forest Books
Gaylord
The Hakluyt Society
Heritage Book Shop, Inc.
International League of Antiquarian Booksellers
Kenneth Karmiole, Bookseller, Inc.
Lawbook Exchange, Ltd.
Ken Lopez, Bookseller
Mac Donnell Rare Books
Walter Miller
Minolta
Omnigraphics, Inc.
Philadelphia Rare Books & Manuscripts
B & L Rootenberg Rare Books & Manuscripts
Rulon-Miller Books
Harry L. Stern, Ltd.
Swann Galleries
University of Toronto Press