**COLLECTING MINERAL BOOKS: AN INTRODUCTION**

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*The literature of mineralogy is rich and varied field for the Collector, with an almost unlimited abundance of possible specialties to choose from, discoveries to make and fascinating things to learn. Here is a primer to give the beginning Collector an understanding of the basics.*

Books about minerals and mineralogy have been, with a few exceptions, neglected as a focus for private collectors until the past decade or two. Indeed, the finest such library known to the writer (that of Herbert P. Obodda) has been in the serious stages of assembly only since 1979.

Recent years, however, have seen a strong interest among mineral collectors who are cultivating the collecting of mineralogical literature as an ancillary pursuit. The negative side to this newly awakened interest lies in the fact that some people now invest in such books; they have no intention of studying them and *will probably never read them.* This brings to mind the old adage about whether people who *do* not read their books are any better off than those who *can* not read them.

Of course, certain key works in mineralogy have long been collected by bibliophiles interested in the overall history of science-to name just two, Parker Cleaveland's *Elementary Treatise on Mineralogy and Geology* (Boston, 1816), the first substantive mineralogical work by a native-born American, and Rene Hauy's *Essai d'une Theorie sur la Structure des Cristaux* (Paris, 1784), a groundbreaking work on crystallography. Pioneering works in virtually all fields are collected generally.

There were a few early book-collectors in this field, notably historians of the earth sciences, some of whom built extraordinary private libraries. One of the most notable was Herbert C. Hoover (1874-1964), who, along with his wife, Lou Henry Hoover, collected books as a resource related to their work of translating, into English, Georgius Agricola's *De Re Metallica* (Basel, 1556). The Hoovers continued their book collecting for years after this *magnum opus* was published, nearly doubling the size of their library. Hoover's collection of 912 titles is preserved in the Honnold Library at Claremont College, near Los Angeles.

Frank Dawson Adams (1859-1942), author of the classic *Birth* and *Development of the Geological Sciences* (Baltimore, 1938), also had a significant library. Incidentally, I cannot recommend this work of Adams' too highly to collectors of mineral books, but alas, it has been long out-of-print. Even the poor quality, reduced-page-size paperback reprint has become scarce. So it is particularly fortunate for readers to have the chapter on medieval mineralogy reprinted here in this issue. Adams' books are now part of the Osler Library at McGill University in Montreal.

Mineralogists have typically collected mineralogical books as well, primarily as a professional resource but also as a hobby. The American mineralogist Parker Cleaveland (1780-1858) had a very fine library which survived intact until the 1950's when it was dispersed by a dealer; the extensive library of Frederick H. Pough, especially rich in color-plate books was sold several years ago. George F. Kunz (1856-1932), who, with the clout of Tiffany and Company behind him, conducted one of the greatest mineral and gem businesses of all time, had an extensive library on gems and minerals, almost certainly the finest in his day. It survives today, possibly somewhat reduced in size from what it was originally, at the United States Geological Survey Library in Reston, Virginia. Kunz collected, in depth, everything in his field. His massive work *The Book of the Pearl* (New York, 1908) contains a *22-page* bibliography of pearl- and gem-related literature, along with the statement that "A large number of these works are in the library of George F. Kunz." Kunz was a long-time member of the famed Grolier Club of New York (a distinguished society of bibliophiles), from 1886 (only two years after the founding of the Club) until his death in 1932.

These days, it seems, there are just enough enthusiastic, knowledgeable and affluent collectors of works on mineralogy to compete eagerly for the few rare and valuable books that come on to the market each year and to keep prices quite elevated. There is no telling what will ultimately become of the fine libraries these persons are building, but it is safe to say that mineralogical book collecting is no longer limited to a few eccentric scholars and specialists.

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC GUIDES**

Bibliographies are excellent guides for book collectors. Not only do they inform us which books actually exist, but they often indicate which works the compiler found significant enough to add to the bibliography or to his own library. This writer has recently and fortunately become the recipient of a catalogue of the Obodda library and finds it extremely useful in a number of ways. If a book in question seems significant, and is not listed in the catalog, it is probably very rare.

While the mineral world still awaits the publication of a single, modern, definitive, scholarly bibliography (it is not enough merely to list author, title, date and place of publication. Accurate collations, at the very least by page, must be present, and bibliographers must be certain that the copy they examine and cite is, indeed, *complete as issued,* a lot of good information can be gathered, albeit piecemeal, from many specialized works already in print. An early, but extensive bibliography is Christoph Wilhelm Jakob Gatterer's *Aligemeines Repertorium des Mineralogischen und Salzwerkswissenschaftlichen Literatur* ["General Bibliography of Mineralogical and Salt-mining Literature"] (Giessen, 1798-1799) in two volumes. Gatterer's *Repertorium* is nicely organized into such categories as mineralogical glossaries, systematic mineralogies, geographical mineralogies, mineralogical journals, company and academic publications, collection catalogs, metals, volcanic minerals, and so on. Among the most complete for its time is the well-organized bibliography included by C. C. Leonard, J. H. Kopp and C. L. Gaertner in their *Propaedeutik der Mineralogie* (Frankfurt, 1817). A 32-page list of authors giving brief biographical notes is cross-indexed to a 48-page, folio-sized bibliography arranged by subject.

Some early mineralogical and crystallographical works also include significant bibliographies. Jean Rome de l'Isle's *Essai de Cristallographie* (Paris, 1772 and 1783) is one example. The famous series of editions of James Dwight Dana's *System of Mineralogy* also includes extensive bibliographies the earliest of which appears in the first edition of 1837. Volume one of the seventh edition (New York, 1944) by Charles Palache, Harry Berman and Clifford Frondel includes a 20-page check-list bibliography of works which were "consulted in the preparation of this volume." A few people have had reasonably good success in attempting to collect this 1944 bibliography in its entirety, but they began their efforts in the 1960's and 1970's.

Today, in the current, more competitive market, it would be a daunting challenge indeed, and would surely require many decades, as well as a large sum of money, to gather a significant percentage of the works.

An even more challenging bibliography (a more in-depth and detailed compilation) to collect is the one listing the books in Herbert Hoover's collection, *Bibliotheca De Re Metallica: The Herbert Clark Hoover Collection of Mining & Metallurgy* (Claremont, 1980) by David Kuhner and Thnia Rizzo. It includes many medieval works which today are particularly rare and costly. For collectors of early American mineralogies, there is no better work than Robert and Margaret Hazen's *American Geological Literature 1669-1850* (Stroudsburg, 1980), which lists more than 11,000 titles. Alas, it is out-of-print and has become very scarce. Gem-book collectors can always refer to the modern, but unfortunately, difficult-to-use, *Gill's Index 'le Journals, Articles And Books Relating Gems And Jewels,* by Joseph 0. Gill (Santa Monica, 1978). It naturally includes many mineralogies but lists only works in English. There is also John Sinkankas's recently published work, *Gemology, an Annotated Bibliography* (1993) (see the review elsewhere in this issue).

Eventually the bibliographies or check-lists of some modern collections will become generally available. Already a few have been circulating in typescript form and although they may not be written and composed with the high standards of, for instance, the Hoover Catalog, at least they may inform us of some previously unknown works. And in the case of the most massive of these compilations (as previously mentioned), the lack of a certain title may well be considered a sign of rarity.

Bibliographical data contained in the published catalogs of booksellers are also good references to have at hand, and these catalogs allow pricing trends (and, therefore, the relative rarity of a particular work) to be traced over the years; they sometimes include very interesting tidbits drawn from the vast knowledge of the cataloger. For instance, the bibliophile Carl Krotki, of New York City, presented the writer with more than 40 years of booksellers' catalog entries he had collected on James Sowerby's *British Mineralogy,* which showed, among other things, that incomplete sets (usually four of the five volumes) were offered for sale more frequently than completed sets. Occasionally booksellers' catalogs become reference works and collector's items themselves. One that springs immediately to mind is Bernard Quaritch's *Supplementa Sowerbiana; Or A Catalogue Of Books And Manuscripts Written Or Illustrated By Members Of The Sowerby Family,* compiled by John Collins and issued as a supplement to their Catalog No.894 (London, 1969). Some modern catalogs contain beautiful color prints and therefore automatically qualify as collectible in their own right. I am thinking especially of those of William Patrick Watson of London, whose Catalog Four entitled *Science, Medicine And Natural History* (London, 1993), contains 36 full-page illustrations of which 12 are in *full color.* It offers 101 very rare and expensive books. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that most booksellers are willing to send their catalogs gratis to a prospective buyer for quite a long period of time in the hope of making a sale. The more venerable the bookseller, at least so it seems to this collector, the longer they are apt to keep a person on their mailing list provided they believe that:

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| .The potential customer's interest in what they sell still exists.  .The person is financially capable of buying their wares.  .The person is currently buying from their competitors.  .There is nothing to indicate that a sale in the future is out of the question. |

The above statements are especially true in the case of high-priced books.

SPECIALIZATIONS

The general field of mineral-related books is vast, too vast for most collectors. Consequently, people tend to specialize, and there are several possible directions that can be taken:

(1) Regional mineralogies - M. Forster Heddle's *Mineralogy of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1901) or Samuel Gordon's *Mineralogy of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1922) are two good examples-comprise a very useful specialty for the mineral collector and curator. A great many such titles are available, and new ones are being published regularly. One might take the entire world as fair game, or restrict one's self to the mineralogical literature of a single country, state or region. Mineral bibliographies for states such as Arizona, or mineralized regions such as the Michigan copper country, are extensive. (For help see Smith's article, in this issue, on "Regional mineralogies of the world," the "Collector's Library" articles on mineralogies of the United States in 10, 13-28 and 18, 211-227, and also Spencer's 1948 "Catalogue of topographical mineralogies and regional mineralogies" published as a long article in *Mineralogical Magcizine,* 28, 303-332.)

(2) Systematic mineralogies, except for the most recent, are seldom used anymore as actual mineralogical reference works but are quaint and historically rich books that can prove surprisingly interesting and useful. For example, modern writers (Mitchell, Frondel, *et al.)* have stated that the mineral *columbite* was named for Columbia, an old name for America. But in Robert Jameson '5 *System of Mineralogy* (Edinburgh, 1804) we read that "Mr. Hatchett . . . gave the name Columbium [to the element] in honor of the *discoverer of America. . .* [so] I have with Dr. Thomson denominated [the new mineral) Columbite." (See the essay by Jameson on the early history of systematic mineralogies in this issue.)

(3) Mineralogical travels and narratives are especially satisfying to collect because they can also be read for enjoyment. One such work is John Mawe's *'Travels in the Interior of Brazil* (London, 1812), in which we can read of the author's frustration at not being able to find even one *doubly terminated* topaz crystal from among "at least a cart load" at Ouro Preto.

Another is Edward D. Clarke's *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa* (London, 1816) wherein Clarke tells of collecting gold minerals (including faked specimens) in Transylvania. H. B. Saussure's *Voyages dans les Alpes* (Neufchatel, Geneva and Paris, 1779-1796) and Gustav Rose's *Reise nach dem Ural* (Berlin, 1837 and 1842) are equally interesting for collectors who can read French and German. Some foreign-language works have been translated into English; a good example of this type is John James Ferber's *Travels through Italy in the years 1771 and 1772. Described in a series of letters to Baron Born,* translated from the German by R. E. Raspe (London, 1776). There are many more, and I know of no specific bibliography to go by, except perhaps a very general work, Edward Cox's *A Reference Guide to the Literature of Travel.* This is then a fertile area for collectors to explore, and perhaps compile a mineralogical-travel bibliography of their own.

(4) Illustrated mineralogies are a pleasure to collect for the pure joy of viewing the mineral plates. These can be divided into four basic categories:

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| Uncolored illustrations  Hand-colored illustrations  Illustrations with printed colors  Photographs |

Johann Anton (Prague, 1776), specimens from first type. James Scopoli's *Crystcillographici Hungaria* with its 232 engraved illustrations of Transylvania, is an example of the Sowerby's famous *British Mineralogy* (London, 1804-1817) and *Exotic Mineralogy* (London, 1811-1817) together contain over 700 hand-colored, copper-plate-engraved illustrations of specimens and represent the ultimate in the second category. Category three must be capped by Fabien Gautier dAgoty's *Histoire Naturelle Regne Minetal* (Paris, 1781). Copies contain between 40 and 70 color plates and, because this is a pioneering work in the history of color printing, the general book-collecting fraternity has bid its value to over $25,000! (Please see pricing comments about this work at the end of this article.) A good popular example, with 40 printed colored plates, might be Leonard J. Spencer's *The World's Minerals* (London, 1911). Photographic works, on the other hand, especially those that are known as "coffee-table books," (and are epitomized by Peter Bancroft's lovely productions) are surely the most beautiful, and are the least expensive of all.

(5) any Medieval works constitute an elegant, scholarly and always expensive specialty. They are of three general types: manuscripts, incunabula books printed before the year 1500) and later printed books. Most of these are written in Latin, but despite their incomprehensibility to most people, they can still make a book collector's pulse quicken. Although the average collector can never hope to acquire a significant illuminated manuscript, a color facsimile reprint, done in 1880, of a thirteenth-century work, the *Lapidario* of Alfonso the ~nth, now in the Escorial Library in Madrid, is highly collectible. And just recently magnificent full-color facsimile reprint of the 1556 *Schwazer Bergbuch,* an illustrated manuscript on mining, was produced in Austria. More available, and certainly more readable, are the recent English translations of the medieval writings of Lazarus Ercker, Georgius Agricola, Bernard Palissy, Albertus Magnus and others, not to mention the translations (some available in highly collectible and costly antique editions, some beautifully bound, for the advanced collector) of ancient authors such as Theophrastus, Dioscorides and Pliny. (See the reprinted essay by Adams in this issue, referred to above.)

(6) Mining histories and mining books are a specialty difficult to separate from mineralogy. The earliest examples could also fit equally well into bibliographies of systematic mineralogies or regional mineralogies. William Pryce's *Mineralogia Cornubiensis* (Cornubia being the Latin name for Cornwall), published in London in 1778, is a prime collectible dealing with Cornish mining and its ore minerals. An extensive bibliography of several thousands of entries relating to mining has recently been compiled by Arthur E. Smith of Houston, Texas, but alas, it remains unpublished. Although most works listed in it are relatively recent and easily obtained, others are now quite rare due to limited press runs, and their acquisition, therefore, is a challenge to the collector.

(7) Historically significant copies of books constitute an uncommon specialty that only a few particularly diligent and affluent collectors attempt. An example is the "association copy," so-called because of its association with a prominent or respected person who once owned the book and affixed his signature or bookplate, etc. It is most romantic, for example, to open a copy of Rene Hauy's *Tableau Gomparatzf* (Paris,1809) and realize that Hauy held this very volume in his hands as he inscribed it to the American mineralogist Archibald Bruce in faraway New York City. Bruce only added to the romance by signing and dating it himself, apparently upon receipt, and as a final touch this exquisite volume, currently in the library of Robert Thomas Curran, Jr., also carries the book-label of Parker Cleaveland. (This book is discussed in some detail by its owner in *MATRIX. A Journal Of The History Of Minerals,* Volume 2, Number 6.) Such items are extremely rare and costly, and a collector cannot expect to acquire very many of them, regardless of what he may be able to spend on such books, even over a lifetime of searching. One old-time bookseller called them "precious copies."

Historically significant in a different sense are copies of books that have survived in their "original state." These are also called "unsophisticated copies," that is, copies that exist today precisely as they were originally issued. Many of them are bound or stitched in paper covers known as "wrappers," or cardboard covers called "boards." These covers were intended by the publisher to be merely temporary protection for the pages until the buyer's own bookbinder could place a custom-designed permanent cover on them. The pages in such copies are often found "uncut" (with rough and irregular edges) and sometimes "unopened" (the pages joined at the top and side by a fold which would normally be cut away during binding).

Some books, such as Casimir Christoph Schmiedel's *Erz Stuffen und Ber& Arten* (Nuernberg, 1753) and the previously mentioned Sowerbys, were originally issued serially, in parts resembling periodicals, and were bound into volumes when the subscriber had accumulated a sufficient number of the parts. In such cases the unbound installments (in their original paper wrappers, if they were so issued) represent the minimum "sophistication" inflicted upon the work and, to many serious bibliophiles, the maximum desirability. Many serialized works were later issued by the original publishers complete in a binding, sometimes called "original cloth," and if presented with a choice between the two, many collectors opt to acquire this "first book edition," rather than the parts. This is especially true in the case of the first editions of literary works of authors such as Charles Dickens or William Thackeray.

"Contemporary bindings," that is, those which are approximately coeval with the printing and which were produced shortly after publication, are next best. Successive rebindings, restoration, washing, repair; and other forms of "sophistication" further diminish the level of desirability.

Even non-bibliophiles know that a "first edition" has some significance, although in mineral-book collecting the distinction is often of less importance. For example, of the seven editions of James Dwight Dana's *System of Mineralogy* (and most mineral book collectors of my acquaintance wish to own all seven), it is the second edition, privately published by the author in New York in 1844, which is the rarest and therefore the most difficult to acquire; but the first edition of 1837, in the general book market at least, where the cult of the *first edition* reigns, is still the most expensive (Please see pricing comments about this work at the end of this article.) Mineralogists and students of mineralogical history will surely want to add the third edition of 1850 to their shelves because it was the first to employ the modern "Dana" system of mineral classification as opposed to the old Linnean system used in the first two editions, and therefore can be considered "historically significant" or even a "pioneering work" of modern mineralogy.

Other specialties are also possible. For example, a collector might focus on, to name just a few categories, books about determinative mineralogy, pegmatites or the California gold rush. However, in this last specialty, romantic and highly collected as it is, he will find much competition from general book collectors. He could also, as this writer is doing, try to find all the contemporary English language editions and translations of the early mineralogies of authors such as Cronstedt, Werner Henckel, etc. and mineralogical/geological travels such as Ferber, Lyell, etc.

One of the specialties of the library, to cite just one more general collection catalogs and possibilities are really endless.

**SOME MARKET FUNDAMENTALS**

What is it that a person really needs to know to successfully collect rare mineral books? One needs, first of all, to be comfortable with the jargon of the general booksellers and their catalogs. This is, at least in this writer's experience over the years, because it is from the generalists that he has acquired most of the mineral books in his library, and, surprisingly, not from the specialists. One reason for this is pricing. When books are found out-of-context, as it were, they are often (but not always) underpriced. And, for the time being at least, the general booksellers are much more knowledgeable in their descriptions and discussions. For instance, what really is (and what is not) a "first edition?" Then there are other questions: How important are dust jackets? What about bindings, condition, restoration, rarity and the effect of these factors on value? Rarity in books should certainly not be a difficult concept to nail down.

What is a rare book? According to one widely held opinion, any book printed on the continent of Europe before the year 1500, any book printed in England before 1600 and any book printed in America before 1700 is, *by definition,* a rare book. (This has been expanded a bit at the New York Public Library so that any American book printed before the year 1800 is now considered *rare.)* This approach is interesting, of course, but does not help us much with mineral books. We will often read in a book catalog such qualified descriptions as "rare in this condition," "rare with the half-title," "rare thus" and on and on.

Sowerby's *Exotic Mineralogy,* most will agree, is a difficult book to acquire (the writer has never owned a copy), it is quite expensive when it turns up, but is it rare? Probably not. Twenty-four complete copies are known to this writer so far (there are surely more) and four incomplete ones. One collector of my acquaintance owned, at one time, *five copies.*

Carl Krotki quotes a librarian at the Morgan Library who observed that the Gutenberg Bible is not really a rare book. She said that the Morgan owns two and one-half copies and there are six copies in New York City alone, so it should not be considered rare. Rare-in-the-marketplace, however is something else again. One simply must develop one's own concept of the rarity, or availability, of mineral books (and the pricing connected thereto) through a long-term study of dealers' catalogs and price lists, and auction sales records.

Mineral-book collectors of today are generally not yet inclined to split hairs over the fine distinctions that fascinate and sometimes dominate the lives of those bibliophiles known lovingly as bibliomaniacs. Nevertheless, because the time may come when they will, and because those factors definitely can affect the price of a book (sometimes, shockingly), it is worthwhile to understand some of them. The definition of what constitutes a first edition, for example, may seem patently obvious. If a publisher plans to print a new book in an edition of, let us say, 1000 copies, then these 1000 copies will constitute the "first edition." If, however he discovers an error half-way through the printing, and judges it serious enough to correct in the remainder of the run (but not serious enough to destroy the already-printed copies), he has created a "first issue" and a "second issue" of the first edition, and it will be this "first issue" and *only* this one that the serious collector will covet and pursue.

These minute differences taken so seriously in the general book world can be of extreme importance and can sometimes mean a difference in price of many thousands of dollars. A new issue might also be created by a change in paper stock, ink color or any similar noticeable change.

Should some of the metal type break down after some copies have been printed, and if this problem goes undetected and uncorrected, a "first (or early) state" and a "second (or later) state" would then exist. One could, in theory, have copies of the first edition, that are first issue, first state; first issue, second state; second issue, first state and second issue, second state, with the first edition, first issue, first state copy the *only one* the serious collector would be interested in owning! (This term "state" is sometimes used another way. Editions are sometimes published in which some of the copies have had their plates hand-colored, and some copies have the same plates but without coloring; the work is then said to exist in a "colored state" and an "uncolored state.")

Little work has as yet been devoted to compiling serious mineralogical bibliographies in such fine detail so as to record different issues and states, but these differences or "points" as they are sometimes called, surely exist and may eventually be considered important. Deciding what constitutes an "edition" can sometimes be confusing enough. For example, William Babington's *A New System of Mineralogy* (London, 1799) has been called a second edition of his earlier *A Systematic Arrangement of Minerals* (London, 1796). However a work that changes title, and increases from 26 to 279 pages surely deserves (sometimes to the contrary of the author's wishes) to be designated as a new work and to be called a first edition in its own right. Generally speaking, if a book (especially a mineralogy) does not state otherwise, it is probably a first edition. Exceptions, however, include purposeful deceptions. This may have been what led Rome de l'Isle to entitle his massive four-volume *Cristallographie* of 1783 the "second edition" of his slim one-volume *Essai de Cristallographie* (Paris, 1772). Edgar Allan Poe some 50 years later may have been similarly motivated when he instructed his printer to place the words "Second edition" on the title page of the *first* edition of his *Poems* (New York, 1831). These marketing ploys are taken, apparently, to make a work appear to have been already well received by the public and popular enough to have required a second printing.

When it comes to bindings, mineral-book collectors are, for the most part, not as demanding (again, the disclaimer "as yet" must be added) as general bibliophiles. I have yet to hear of a mineral-book collector paying a significant premium for a book because it was in "original wrappers" and only rarely do I hear of a book in a contemporary binding bringing much more than a nicely rebound copy. Indeed, often the exact opposite is true in the general book world. Under certain circumstances, the former might command a price ten times higher than the latter. Curiously, things were not always so, and a wealthy "gentleman collector" of a century ago would have had most, if not all, of the books in his library routinely rebound in sumptuously gold-tooled, richly colored morocco leathers, sometimes with contrasting leather inlays, onlays, jewels, etc. Today there is a school of bibliophiles who collect, and pay handsome sums for, the best of these "exhibition" bindings.

On the other hand, with paper covers being as fragile as they are, a book bound with old paper cannot safely be read and used for everyday reference purposes. Nor, for that matter can a book which is "unopened" be easily consulted. Here is one of the principal paradoxes faced by the collector of rare books. How can he rationally prefer copies of books which he cannot permit himself to read and use? One's passion for the subject matter is not well served by standard bibliophilic priorities and proprieties, and each collector must decide what is most important to him. Some collectors will aspire to owning two copies of "delicate" works, one suitably bound for reference and one safely ensconced in a custom-made book box. Of course, if a reprint edition should be available, then the reference-copy problem is easily solved.

What of the difference between a contemporary binding (as old as the printing) and a more recent binding? In the general book world, contemporary bindings command prices that can be two to five times, or more, higher, but in the mineral-book world the difference, if any, is slight. This attitude seems to be changing a bit, and may alter drastically if mineral book collectors evolve closer in philosophy to that of the wider community of bibliophiles.

The precise condition of a book, although easier to convey than that of a mineral specimen, can never be perfectly described in words. Abook must be seen to be properly evaluated. Booksellers and auction houses, nevertheless, attempt verbal descriptions in their catalogs, and in general there has been a drift in the use of standard terminology to describe condition; a book called *good* 20 years ago would probably be called *fine* today. There have been many jibes at the details of descriptions typically offered by booksellers. A familiar one is: "Pages foxed, covers detached, titlepage missing, corners mashed, *else fine."* (Italics added.) The term "else fine" is something of a joke among bibliophiles. Another self-contradictory description, this time from a mineral-book catalog issued about ten years ago: "Hinges cracked, spine coming loose, front endpaper torn, light foxing through-out, *otherwise* fine." (Italics added.) What is important, though, is for the collector to study how his favorite booksellers describe their books and learn to interpret their descriptive terms concerning condition, rarity, etc.

**MODERN BOOKS**

Collecting modern mineral-related books can be as enjoyable and challenging as it is inexpensive. The late Paul Desautels, former curator of minerals at the United States National Museum of Natural History, told me that his classic "coffee table" book *The Mineral Kingdom* (New York, 1968) appeared in a first edition of 10,000 copies. Two years later a second printing was produced which differed only in the substitution of a photograph on page 224. Later there was a "Crown Edition" printing and then a softcover edition. There also was a London edition in which, without the author's knowledge or permission, the text on Michigan copper was removed and a new chapter on Cornwall added! In addition, there were French, German and Italian language editions. So, a discriminating collector can, if he wishes, have eight different copies of *The Mineral Kingdom* on his shelf, ideally, *each with* its *original dust jacket preserved* (because dust jackets *should* be preserved), except, of course, in the case of the softcover edition.

**A FEW COMMENTS ON PRICES**

The lack of sophistication in the attitudes of mineral-book collectors relative to that of general bibliophiles is accompanied by (and perhaps related to) extraordinarily lower pricing. The 1781 work by Fabien Gauthier dAgoty, mentioned previously as an early example of color printing, is probably the single most valuable mineralogy book and is worth more than $25,000. Were it not for its significance as a pioneering work in color printing, it would certainly be less costly as a mineral book. The color plates, with one or two exceptions, are not especially attractive. As another example, Wendell E. Wilson *(Mineralogical Record,* Volume 21, page 399) remarked that one of the four known copies of J. E. Hebenstreit's *Museum Richterianum* (Leipzig, 1743) in the colored state, might have sold then (1990) for $5,000 to $10,000. I would guess somewhat higher but even so it would still be insignificant compared with the prices being fetched by comparable books in other fields today. For example:

In 1989 Sotheby's auction house in New York sold the library of the late H. Bradley Martin (1906-1988), generally recognized as one of the finest in the world. Martin's copy of *A Monograph of the Phasianidae or Family of Pheasants* (New York, 1872), two volumes containing 79 handcolored plates, sold for $93,500. *Oiseaubrillans du Brasil* ["Brilliant Birds of Brazil"] (Paris, 1834), with 59 of 60 hand-colored plates (lacking one) and missing the title page, brought $121,000. *Birds of New South Wales* (Sydney, 1813), with 18 handcolored plates, one of 11 known copies, brought $396,000, and, *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida* & *the Bahamas* (London, 1729-1747), two volumes containing 220 hand-colored plates, was hammered down at an impressive $407,000. Finally, it will perhaps be overkill, but it must be mentioned that Mr. Martin's copy of Audubon's *The Birds of America,* with 435 hand-colored, double-elephant-folio sized engravings, brought the sum of $3,960,000!

This disparity in prices is something which mineral-book collectors may point to with relief or despair (depending on whether they are buying or selling), but identifying the cause is a different matter and perhaps some honest soul-searching will provide an answer. Are the color-plates in the classic mineral books *really* beautiful? Are they of sufficiently dramatic coloring to be compared with, and collected by, the same persons who long for a copy of *Brilliant Birds of Brazil?* Probably the answer has to be no. If one looks carefully and objectively at a copy of the recent re-publication of Schmiedel's *Erz Stuffen und Berg Arten (and tries to forget the affection he has for the depicted objects)* he can then see the problem. The prints are exciting, quaint, fascinating to the cognoscenti, but they are not especially beautiful!

Another interesting case in point is Johann Christian Sepp's polyglot (five language) edition of *A Representation of Different Sorts of Marble* (Amsterdam, 1776). This work, depicting polished *rock* samples, of course, and not crystallized minerals, contains more than 500 hand-painted examples of the most beautiful, sensitive, superbly executed, and delicately colored plates imaginable. The three-dimensionality of the paintings is fascinating, and it puts to shame, in this writer's opinion, *any* hand-colored mineral plate book in which the colorists were required merely to fill in the outlines of a printed image. The marble work, which shows up from time to time on the antiquarian market and in the auction rooms, and seems to be collected almost entirely *outside* of the mineral fraternity, is usually priced at retail at around $20,000. Incidentally, Mr. Martin owned no mineral *or marble* color-plate books.

**IN CONCLUSION**

The above caveats and pronouncements should not cause the reader to be discouraged about acquiring old mineral books. *Now* is the time to buy them, because they will never be cheaper, more plentiful, nor more easily obtainable. Indeed, in a recent issue of the *Mineralogical Record,* I counted no less than *six* advertisements offering books on gems and minerals. Over the last 20 or 30 years, books have been as good an investment as fine minerals. They are easier to describe, ship, store and preserve than minerals; they are less prone to tiny, but value-reducing damage and (perhaps most importantly) are easier to liquidate as assets; but in the last analysis, they represent the distillation of the mineral knowledge of the centuries. In my article "Reflections upon perusing a 1942 bookseller's catalogue" *(Mineralogical Record,* March/April, 1980), I observed that "Today, only the most vigorous and vigilant pursuits and pursuers are turning up any good old books on minerals and gems. The standard sources are drying up and prices are going wild." And we all know what has happened since 1980!

A very interesting epilog to the pricing information in this article took place on December 8,1994 at the Swann Galleries in New York City: the auction sale of the "Carl Krotki Library of Gemology & Mineralogy." To my knowledge it was the largest such auction sale ever held. It was not only the very high prices of most of the better books that were notable (dealers present at the sale watched in awe as books sold for prices that, in some instances, were more than *double* those of similar copies for sale in their inventories) it was the broad interest in bidding including much by mail (or as it is called in the auction house jargon "orders"). At the end of the spirited bidding on each lot it usually came down to a contest between only two bidders, but earlier in the competition action seemed to come from all corners of the room as well as over the telephone lines (six were open and they were often all in use simultaneously). A few highlights require comment. The dAgoty (Jean-Fabien Gautier d'Agoty's *Histoire Naturelle Regne Mineral,* Paris, 1781, first edition, second state, containing 60 of 70 colored plates and carrying a pre-sale estimate of $10,000-15,000, which evaluation this writer, at least, knew was well under reality) was the highlight of the sale, going to a New York mineral collector and bibliophile for $48,300! The room burst into applause at the conclusion of the bidding for that lot. The Louderback pamphlet on benitoite went back to California for $1,265 and Sowerby's *British Mineralogy* made $12,075. *(At* the conclusion of the bidding for that item Carl Krotki announced to the room that he had paid $90 for it.) The purchaser of the d'Agoty got a deserved bargain later in the sale when he bought, with virtually no competition, a copy of "Schmiedel" with 21 plates (pre-sale estimate $1,000-2,000) for a very low $825; a copy of my book *Letters to Kunz* (with an original letter) made a very respectable $1,035 and a first edition of Dana's *System of Mineralogy* sold for an amazing $5,060; but the mystery of this sale has to be the reason why the slim, unillustrated first edition of A. H. Chester's *A Catalogue of Minerals alphabetically arranged* (New York, 1886) made $3,910! (Remember, it took a minimum of *two* bidders to reach that sum.) The total for the 347 lots (including many multiple lots or "bunches") with the buyer's premium of 15% added came to an impressive $212,295.

Finally, I should like to leave you with this thought, a quotation, slightly edited for modern readers, from *Gossip About Book Collecting* (two volumes, New York, 1900). It was written by William Loring Andrews (1837-1920), gentleman, bibliophile, author, amateur publisher of books in limited editions and one of the founders of The Grolier Club. (It was one of his publications that was my first "rare book" purchase in the mid 1950's. Mr. Andrews is the subject of an extensive bio-bibliography now being written by me, and it was his style I tried to emulate in my book, *Letters to Kunz.)*

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| Buy books cheaply if you can, dear if you must, but when an opportunity arises to secure a rare book, do not hesitate to pay the price demanded, even if it appears to you excessive. It may be *nunc aut nun quam* [now or never] and the book may *never* pass your way again, or if it should, the chances are ten to one that the demand on your wallet will be still more exacting. After years of patient and persistent collecting, if you have exercised good judgment as to the character and *condition* of the books you have bought, you will inevitably find that the cost of your acquisitions is less than they could be replaced for. |

***GLOSSARY OF BOOK TERMS***

*BEST EDITION. Used in earnest (and of course, occasionally very subjectively) by some booksellers, but often read cynically by collectors to mean that very edition currently in the dealer's stock, or the one in which he has the biggest markup, etc.*

*BIBLIOCLAST. A "book breaker" who disassembles books in order to sell their plates individually.*

*BIBLIOGRAPHER. A person skilled in compiling systematic lists of books relating to specific limited topics, often bringing significant knowledge to bear regarding book history, format, editions, collations, printing, etc.*

*BIBLIOPHILE. A book lover. love of books.*

*BINDING COPY A book whose that it must be rebound to be a "binding copy." The interior able condition and, of course, rebinding.*

*BOOK SIZES. Listed are some of the traditional terms, but they are not usually considered of critical importance today.*

*Folio. Undefined exactly, but a large size that can be 15 x 22 inches or more, sometimes consisting of a very large sheet folded once to form two page sheets.*

*Quarto. (Qto., 4to.) Roughly half the size Often a folio that has been folded once, four page sheets.*

*Octavo. (Oct., 8vo.) Roughly half the size of quarto, sometimes a folio that has been folded twice, yielding eight page sheets.*

*Duodecimo. (twelvemo., 1 2mo.) Usually derived from a sheet folded so as to yield twelve page sheets.*

*Sextodecimo (sixteenmo., 1 6mo) Usually consisting of a folio folded three times to yield sixteen page sheets.*

*BOOKPLATE. A printed label (created as a plate) denoting ownership, usually applied to the inside of the front (sometimes called upper) cover. A bookplate of someone famous affixed to a book is a plus; an ordinary person's bookplate, if small and tasteful has no effect on value, but if it is of large size or garish, and cannot be removed without leaving ugly glue stains, it can definitely detract from a book's desirability and value. (See the article on bookplates elsewhere in this issue.)*

*BREAKER. A book that is usually, but not always, a defective copy, that is more valuable for its plates and is often destroyed to obtain them. The plates are sold individually for framing and the text is discarded. Fortunately (or is it?) this rarely happens to mineral color-plate books.*

*CALF A smooth leather made from the skin of a calf. Calf is the type of leather most often found binding old mineralogies, especially American examples.*

*COLOPHON. From the Greek meaning summit. A page at the end of a book giving detailed informa*

*CONTEMPORARY This term, when applied to book bindings, means that the binding of the book dates approximately to the time of the printing of the book. Sometimes used very loosely. In the world of books it is never used as a synonym of modern.*

*DEDICATION COPY That particular copy of a book (and, by definition, there can be only one unless, of course, the book was dedicated to more than one person) that the author presented, usually with autograph inscription, to the person to whom he dedicated the book. Many years ago I informed a certain geoscience author of my acquaintance that I possessed the dedication copy of one of his books. His reply was that it wasn't significant because he could, with his pen, create any number of them. My answer and correctly, was that all of those later copies would be forgeries.*

*FIRST EDITION. See discussion.*

*FIRST ENGLISH EDITION. The first edition of a book published in England. This term should never be used to denote the first edition of a book in the English language published in another place. Such a book can be referred to as the first edition in English.*

*FOXING. A quaint term for ugly, blotchy brown staining or discoloring that results from a chemical reaction within the paper of the book. It is usually brought on, or hastened, by exposure to dampness.*

*HALF-TITLE. The page before the titlepage, containing the title information, usually in abbreviated form. Many half-titles are discarded when books are bound, but they are important and should be recorded care fully in mineralogical bibliographies.*

*INCUNABULA (singular form: INCUNABULUM). From the Latin meaning, literally, "from the cradle," that is, books produced in the earliest days of book printing. The term applies to books printed in the year 1500 or before.*

*INSCRIBED COPY A copy of a book bearing author's signature only, and not specifying name of the owner or recipient, if any. This also can be called a signed copy.*

*INTERLEAVED. Occasionally mineralogies (and other books, too) are bound with blank leaves alternating with the printed ones, presumably to be used for handwritten notes. Such books are said to be interleaved.*

*KEY BOOK. Usually the earliest or likely, the most important or most desirable in a field.*

*LARGE-PAPER COPY Occasionally, especially in the past, a publisher might print some copies of an edition on sheets that were noticeably larger than his normal stock, resulting in very large margins all around; the paper used may also have been the the can more book heavier than normal. The result is what "large-paper copy" and is different from (which see). thicker or is called a tall copy.*

*MADE-UP COPY A made-up copy is the result of the replacement of a single leaf, a plate, a titlepage, or more, from another, but also defective or incomplete, copy of the same edition. The term is seldom encountered in bookseller's catalogs because of a lack of recognition (or honesty?).*

*MINT. A term describing condition that means as-new, usually used in referring to stamps and coins; it should be avoided in book descriptions. I recently saw the following terms used in describing modern first editions-(M) = Mint; (NM) - Near Mint; (PM) = Pristine Mint, etc. All are inadvisable.*

*MOROCCO. Originally a grained leather made the skin of Moroccan goats. Today the term is leather even calf, has been processed to look like goatskin.*

*OFFPRINT. A separate printing of a part of a larger work, especially articles from scientific journals, using the same type as the original.*

*OUT-OF-PRINT. When a publisher's supply of a particular book is exhausted, that book is said to be out-of-print.*

*PRESENTATION COPY. A gift from an author (or editor or a publisher) to tation inscription. Also (etc.) presentation copy. from used that copy of a book that was a occasionally, an artist, an the recipient, with presenseen described as author's*

*PRIVATELY PRINTED. A term generally used for a book which is not produced for commercial distribution, but usually by the author. This phenomenon is sometimes called vanity publishing. Such a book is usually distributed privately, and not by the standard commercial methods.*

*READING COPY. An apologetic term reserved for a copy of a book definitely not in good enough condition to satisfy the requirements of a discriminating book-collector.*

*REBACKING. Replacing a damaged spine taming the original front and back covers.*

*RECTO. The front of a leaf (two-page sheet). See Verso.*

*RE-HINGING. If a book's outer hinges have broken, a skillful binder can reapply the original spine over a new leather spine in a manner that is almost undetectable. This is called re-hinging and is different from (and preferred to) rebacking, when an entirely new spine is supplied. It is also a much more expensive operation if sympathetically accomplished.*

*SLIP-CASE. An open-front box slightly larger than its occupant volume, into which the book is "slipped." The spine of the book is then visible on the shelf. There are also more elaborate versions that completely encase the book, relying on a newly-made spine on the box to provide the book's title information. In special cases where the friction of sliding a book in and out must be avoided to prevent wear a clam-shell slip-case can be prepared which opens flat for insertion of the book.*

*TALL COPY. A book whose pages have been only slightly trimmed by the binder and whose resultant top, bottom and outer margins are larger than other copies of the same edition, may be called a "tall copy." If the edges have not been cut at all, the book is called "uncut." Not to be confused with a "large-paper-copy" (which see).*

*UNSOPHISTICATED COPY. A book, generally an early one, that retains its original condition and that has not been restored in any way.*

*VERSO. The back of a leaf (two-page sheet). See Recto.*

***SUGGESTED READING***

*For pleasant and sometimes exciting reading I can recommend a few of my favorite books-about-books, but please keep in mind that there are literally thousands of them, and that several booksellers exist who sell only this type of book.*

*CARTER, J. (with corrections and additions by Nicolas Barker) (1980) ABC for Book Collectors. London, Sixth edition. (In print.)*

*JACKSON, H. The Anatomy of Bibliomania. editions.*

*KRAUS, H.P. (1978) A Rare Book Saga. The Autobiography of H.P Kraus. New York.*

*NEWTON, A. E. (1918) The Amenities of Book-Collecting and Kindred Affections. Boston.*

*REES-MOGG, W. (1985) Christie's Collectors.  How to Buy Pare Books. A Practical Guide Antiquarian Book Market. Oxford.*

*WOLF, E., and FLEMING, J. F (1960) Rosenbach. A Biography. Cleveland. This volume is, in my opinion, the single best, and most exciting, book-about-books ever written, and it discusses mineral-collector Clarence S. Bement's book-collecting activities.*

*Various*

*Guides:*

*to the*

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