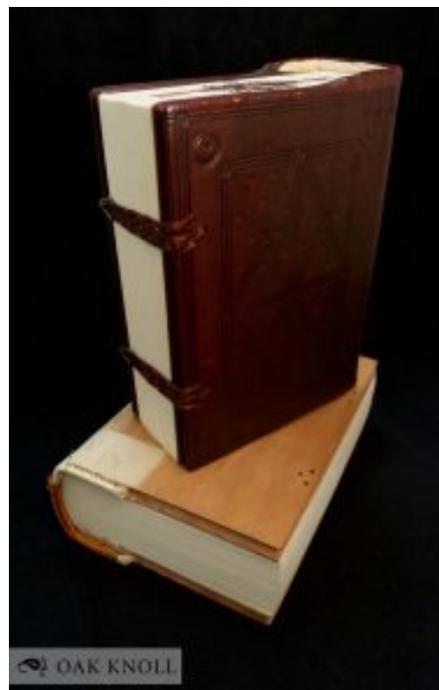


*John Carter's ABC for Book Collectors*, revised and enlarged by Nicolas Barker and Simran Thadani, 9<sup>th</sup> edition. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2016. 264p., 32 illus. (22 colour and 10 halftones). ISBN 9781584563525. US \$29.95 (hardcover).

*John Carter's ABC for Book Collectors* is without question a book that all serious book historians must read and a book that almost everyone with a genuine interest in books should own. It typically sits nicely on our reference shelves with such staple volumes that remain in the affordable range for all book-aficionados and bibliophiles as Philip Gaskell's *A*

*New Introduction to Bibliography* (1972, latest 1995), Fredson Bowers's *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (1949, latest 2012), and one or more generalist or specialist study, such as D. C. Greetham's *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (1992) or David Pearson's *Provenance Research in Book History: A Handbook* (1994). Probably, the very serious book historian will own more than one edition of the Carter, as early prints are to be had very easily at book fairs, even at a price agreeable to those of us "poor scholars" (Alan Thomas's turn of phrase, 86) on a modest income. With this 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the book, the first to upgrade Carter's name from author to title, Nicolas Barker (involved from the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition) and Simran Thadani (new to this edition) maintain much of the succinctness and opinionated humour of Carter's prose, which has kept the book a classic for generations (for example, Carter's very expressive dislike of "issue-mongers" [153], his turn of phrase with such dainties as "hugger-mugger" [59], or his sneaky terms acquired over years of trade to mislead buyers in item descriptions [84-87]). All the while, they bring into the twenty-first century the scope, relevance, and utility of what began in the 1950s as a tiny corporate ABC.



A modern reconstruction of an À La Grecque / Alla Greca binding (28).



John Carter's ABC for Book Collectors, revised and enlarged by Nicolas  
Barker and Simran Thadani

There are major enlargements to be found in this edition, particularly in the abbreviations, coverage of the graphic arts, and in the new respect expressed for the practical necessity of online tools in the quick-change world of book selling and book buying. In precise metrics, relating this new volume to the 8<sup>th</sup>, 40 abbreviations have been added to the "Abbreviations" section of the book (17-22), with this "proliferation of acronyms" (11) raising the total to 184. Some of these are technical, conveying to the ordinary, novice bookseller / bookbuyer advances and developments in the field of book cataloguing systems in libraries, such as "AACR," referring to "Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules" (17), or its replacement adopted in 2010, "RDA," referring to "Resource Description and Access" (21). Many are indicative of sensitivity to multilingualism in the consumer culture that surrounds book buying and selling — an awareness that expansion of networks of communication and globalism has put new demands upon the ordinary Rare Book purchaser: the "CPSCM" denoting "*Cum privilegio Sacrae Caesaris Maiestatis*," a privilege within "the jurisdiction of the Holy Roman Emperors" (18), or the German "Gez.," for "*Gezeichnet*, drawn by" (19). Beyond the abbreviations, the revisers and enlargers of this edition have added 57 entries (see below), growing the book from 235 pages to a still-slim 264. Such entries treat, for example, "AbeBooks," the essential web resource for "buying and selling used, rare, and out-of-print books" on-line (23), "Floriated Initial," to distinguish clearer the large in-set initials of "floral or formal designs" (121) from those of "men and animals" ("Historiated," 142), and "Red Rot," defined as "Leather degraded by exposure to gas-lighting and other environmental pollutants" (211), a term hard to find precisely defined in any such clearly understandable way on the web. In this edition, both "Arber" (32) and "Bowers" (61) receive name-entries, which exemplifies why, although the commercial viability of the all-purpose reference volume is in peril, the specialist handbook is not dying away any time soon. (Edward Arber's surname commonly appears without explanation in auctioneer catalogues and is thrown around casually among sellers, buyers, and scholars to denote his masterful *A Transcript of the Registers of the Stationers' Company, 1553-1640* [1875-].)

In Barker's words for his special "NOTE TO THE NINTH EDITION" (11; 11-12) our revisers and enlargers highlight the other great appeal, justifying the creation of this fresh chapter of the ABC's history: "But the most significant difference between the present edition and its predecessors lies in the illustrations, added here for the first time" (12). He continues:



John Carter's ABC for Book Collectors, revised and enlarged by Nicolas  
Barker and Simran Thadani

"Previous editions relied on the printed word alone. But facts and ideas about old books need images as well as words" (12). I could not agree more. With 32 illustrations (22 colour and 10 halftones) wisely selected "to reflect the diversity of material forms that books and their parts have taken over the last millennium" (12), Barker and Thadani offer the most persuasive justification for laying out the asked sum to invest in a copy of the new edition. Although one of the illustrations is kind of cheeky, a self-congratulatory pat on the back (the inscription from Barker's copy of the 8<sup>th</sup> edition, donated to the Rare Book School, 34), and more than one also appear in the ubiquitous Gaskell (the printing press [198]; the rolling press [197]; and the letter / sort [159]), others add generously to the clarification of obscure jargon of a field renowned for its impenetrable terminology and its confounding retail expressions. I challenge anyone to find easily, through Google, an example of *À La Grecque* binding as beautiful and clarifying in its features as that selected for illustration on page 28 of this ABC. Similarly enlightening to even those of us beyond the "novice" book-lover, this ABC depicts "a cathedral binding in cloth" (73), "a binding with gilt and gauffred edges" (131), "a book bound in calf with raised bands, gilt" (205), and "a binding in Roxburghe style" (219). I say with confidence that a purchase of this edition is a wise, time-saving decision for any student, apprentice, or would-be Rare Book collector.

All of this being "new," though, must not in any way be perceived as a detraction by the traditionalist worrying that the volume has strayed away from classic "Carter." Indeed, Carter is alive, and stronger than ever, for Barker and Thadani's wise preference for addition over subtraction, for restraint instead of re-drafting. All the entries of the 8<sup>th</sup> edition re-appear in this 9<sup>th</sup>. A few examples of the more prominent edits can be found in the titling of the entries: "Large Paper Copy" becomes "Large (or Fine) Paper Copy" (157); "Fakes" (117) has been inserted to direct readers to "Facsimiles and Fakes" (114), as "Facsimiles" were more closely associated with forgery when Carter wrote his book. Parts have been properly alphabetized from the previous edition: "Breaking copy or Breaker," "Breaking up" (61-62); "Imperial Paper Copy" before "Imposition" (145-46). Most important of all, as with Carter's intention and previous editions, the physical features of the volume are named, and their presence or absence referred to in the text. Subtly and not-so-subtly, all physical features demonstrated in earlier editions are better highlighted, often with cute little manicules, in this edition: broken type (63), a printer's blank (51-52), a guide letter (135), a running head (141), inner



John Carter's ABC for Book Collectors, revised and enlarged by Nicolas Barker and Simran Thadani

and outer margins (167), a shoulder and a side note (230), a device [264], etc. The close reader will find especially amusing the 12 variant spellings of "misprint" in that entry (169-70), the beginner-student, that this edition preserves real signatures (i.e., "A" unsigned, "B" 33, "C" 65, "D" 97, "E" 129, "F" 161, "G" 193, "H" 225, "I" 233). Many of these examples are chopped from the PDF of the 8<sup>th</sup> downloadable online for free from the website of the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers ([here](#)).

Of course, there is substance enough for a 10<sup>th</sup> edition still, and I have a few suggestions for this. I think that booksellers and bookbuyers might benefit from entries on: the so-called "Rule of Gregory," "the practice in medieval manuscript creation by which the hair side faces the hair side and the flesh side faces the flesh side" (see below for the reference), "Kettle-Stitch," since Barker and Thadani preserve this word in their revised entry on "Headband" (141), and "Antiphonals." The entry on "Re-Backed" (209) might be enlarged to define "sympathetically re-backed," meaning "to imitate the style of the original binding" (see below for the reference). As "Volvelle" (257) are usefully defined and illustrated, so might a definition and illustration be included of "Fugitive Pieces," which are physically similar. Justifying the entry on "Numerals" (174), Barker and Thadani might include an illustration of the deceptive "ID" or "C|D," used in early imprints to denote the numerals "D" and "M," for 500 and 1,000. They might further separate out the second meaning of "Deposit Copy" (94), a book belonging to a private owner but on loan to an institution for a period of fixed or indefinite duration (see below for reference).

Now *John Carter's ABC for Book Collectors* by Nicolas Barker and Simran Thadani instead of *ABC for Book Collectors* by John Carter and Nicolas Barker, this 9<sup>th</sup> edition of a classic deserves serious attention. A copy of this book merits a place on your shelf. And this is the best edition, so far, of the book.

Joshua McEvilla  
*Independent Scholar*

Entries added: "AACR" 22; "AbeBooks" 23; "Addenda" 23; "Advance" 23; "Album Amicorum" 27; "Alibris" 27; "Arber" 32; "Artist's Book" 33; "Binder's Sample" 48; "Book-Worms" 60;



John Carter's ABC for Book Collectors, revised and enlarged by Nicolas  
Barker and Simran Thadani

"Calendering" 64; "Catalogue Slip" 72; "Censorship" 73; "Centrepiece (Binding)" 73; "Condemned" 84; "Deposit Copy" 94; "De Ricci" 94; "Derome" 94; "Dime Novel" 96; "Disjunct" 97; "Drypoint" 99; "Entry (into the Stationers' Register)" 107; "Etching" 110; "Expurgated" 112; "Factotum" 117; "Fakes" 117; "Festschrift" 118; "Flip Book" 120; "Floriated Initial" 121; "Fore-Edge Title" 125; "Initial" 148; "Juvenilia" 155; "Leatherette" 159; "Marginal Marks" 167; "Mercury Women" 168; "Mezzotint" 168; "Mutilated" 172; "Numerals" 174; "Phillipps" 187-88; "Planographic" 189; "Pochoir" 190; "Price Clipped" 197; "Price Code" 197; "Printing Press" 197-98; "RDA" 208; "Ream" 208; "Red Rot" 211; "Roman Numerals" 217; "Scabboard" 223; "Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts" 224; "Self-Publication" 226; "Shagreen" 227; "Spaces" 234; "Stoddard" 239; "Uncorrected, Unrevised" 251; "viaLibri" 256-57; and "Wood Letter" 261. (Capitalization, my own.)

Sources: The definitions provided in paragraph 5 are given verbatim or paraphrased from handouts provided by P. J. Carefoote in his class "Rare Books & Manuscripts," University of Toronto, September-December 2014, compiled from multiple sources and refined by years of practicing librarianship.