

Fine BOOKS & COLLECTIONS

BEST COLLEGE COLLECTORS

2006

STORY: SCOTT BROWN | CONCEPT: REBECCA STEWART
PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER HOFFMAN, STUDIO ONE, MARK GREENBERG,
SAM MASINTER, AND REBECCA RUBALCABA

If you didn't think book collecting was a competitive sport, you've never met the winner of a college book-collecting contest. Since the 1920s, universities across the United States, and even a few in Canada, have held book-collecting contests for their students. At last count, thirty-six college libraries sponsor competitions, often with the support of Friends of the Library groups, bookstores, and private collectors. All the contests work in basically the same manner: Students write an essay, compile a bibliography, and bring their books to their college library for judging. At Yale, however, it works the opposite way. The judges troop off to the dorms to see the collections and interview the students. Winners go home with monetary prizes worth a few hundred to a couple thousand dollars.

Often, these contests mark the beginning of a lifetime in the rare-book world. Past collegiate winners include librarians Breon Mitchell, current head of the Lilly Library, and Peter Hanff, deputy director of the Bancroft Library. William Reese, Graham Arader III, and Joseph Bray are all noted booksellers who won the contest held at Yale University. Collectors Kimball Brooker and Dr. Edward Petko and bibliographer

Matthew Bruccoli won competitions as undergraduates and now fund contests at other universities.

This record of success spurred *FB&C* to establish the first collegiate book-collecting championship—a competition among the winners of the existing contests—to further encourage young collectors. The top-three winners take home cash prizes of \$2,500, \$1,000, and \$500, along with airfare and lodging so they can attend the awards ceremony in New York City. First prize also wins a one-year membership in the Grolier Club.

The competition was tough. The judges, Ben Weinstein from Heritage Book Shop (ably supported by James Gannon and Nat Des Marais from his staff), collector George Ong, and librarian and *FB&C* columnist Joel Silver spent several weeks reading and ranking more than 500 pages of entries. Some contestants answered follow-up questions from the judges, who then voted. Here are the 2006 collegiate book-collecting champions.

YOU'RE INVITED

Readers of *Fine Books & Collections* magazine are invited to attend the awards ceremony for our collegiate book-collecting champions. Join us at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 16, 2006, at the Grolier Club, located at 47 East 60th Street (between Park and Madison) in New York City. Call *FB&C* at (707) 443-9562 or e-mail scott@finebooksmagazine.com for more information.

Confessions of a Bradbury Collector

This is an excerpt from the essay William Miglore (Second Place) wrote for the contest at Amherst College.

Ray Bradbury sometimes tells about the time he almost met H. G. Wells. Either the young Bradbury backed out of attending Wells's lecture, or else he went, but was too shy to approach the writer afterward for an autograph. I don't remember which way Bradbury tells it, and I don't have the aplomb required to tell one version or the other as if it were definitely the truth. I lack Bradbury's gift of certainty. His secret, which I'll let you in on, is to write and speak with so much radiant conviction that his audience can't help believing him. He's been called a magician, and I don't disagree, even though I haven't read him in years.

After I heard him tell his story about H. G. Wells, I wrote and told Bradbury how glad I was that I'd been able to meet *him*. At some point, Bradbury had made me one of his many "honorary grandsons," and in my letter, I told Bradbury he could, in turn, be H. G. Wells's honorary grandson. He accepted the offer graciously, though in his busy hurry he misread me, or in some mood made an adjustment, and signed himself, on the title page of my British

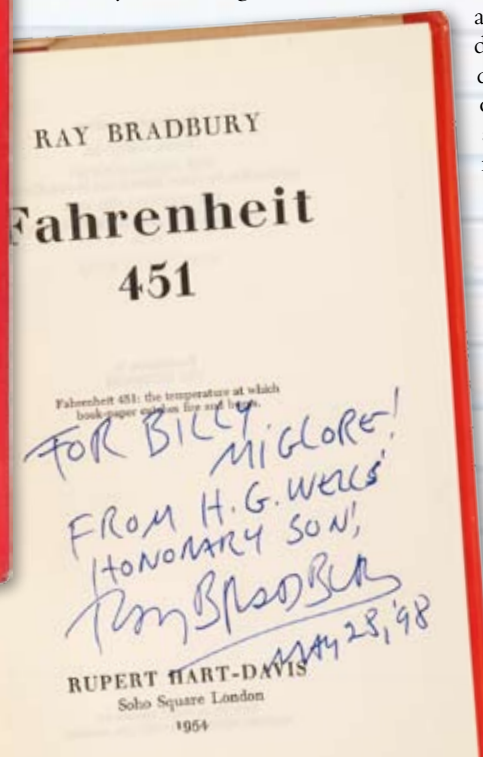
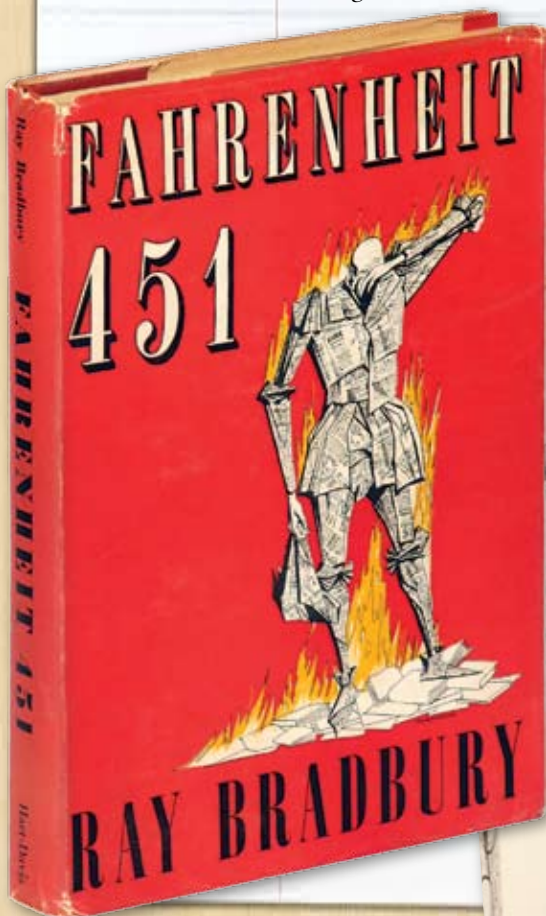
Fahrenheit 451, "Wells' honorary son" instead. Which makes Wells my honorary great-grandfather, by mine and Bradbury's combined presumption.

I started reading Bradbury in fourth grade,

a few years before I met him. I was reading anything then, and reading quickly. Even so, it took me four years to read all of Bradbury's fiction, because I wanted to make it last. It was a sort of sustenance. I loved the confidence of his storytelling; I loved the confidence that it gave me. That's what I remember best about his books, even though most of the details about his writing have left me. I can still recite a list of his books ordered by publication date, but not one in the order that I read them, which suggests the extent to which a collector's instinct has replaced the reader's instinct in me. I remember that the first book I read was my dad's copy of *Long After Midnight* (1976), which I found while ransacking the house for reading material; the last one I finished—at my desk in eighth-grade English, closing the book as if I were closing a frontier, not knowing where I'd go next—was *A Medicine for Melancholy* (1959). How the other thirty or so fit in, your guess is almost as good as mine. The dates written on a few book reports provide the only clues.

I never thought of meeting Bradbury, or collecting him, until the end of elementary school, when I discovered on the Internet that he was still alive. The first few times I saw him were all at the same place, the Phantom Bookshop in Ventura (now an online-only venture). I know why Bradbury was afraid to meet H. G. Wells: the first time I shook Bradbury's hand, I could barely look at him or speak. But

after that I became braver—or more demanding. Bradbury (I still can't call him Ray) and the Phantom's owner, John Anthony Miller, took a liking to me simultaneously—it's possible I was adorable—and they let me bring twenty or thirty books to each subsequent signing. When I showed up with my box, John would say, "He's been asking about you," and push me toward Bradbury's table, where I always had a chair. Every five minutes, Bradbury would take a break from the line, down a swig of wine, and sign a few of my things. He always had wine and a grilled cheese sandwich; my books are stamped with his food and fingerprints, which aren't flaws, but badges.



I remember those signings better than I remember most of Bradbury's books—the crowded enclave of the back room, where (as I saw it) he and I held court. Between Bradbury and John, I was a precocious collector by the age of thirteen; the treatment they gave me was fuel. The more books I brought to the shop, the longer I could sit with Bradbury; the rarer they were, the more he was flattered and praised me. Over the course of just a few years, I brought him all of his American first editions, and most of the British ones; and for good measure, early proofs, books from his own library, books inscribed to his blood relations and celebrity friends—even his business card. All this happened during a short time when I was changing a lot, while Bradbury, personage that he was, remained very much the same: the white hair, the heavy glasses, the endless generosity.

I grew up with him, marking my growth against him just a few times, like a doorframe, and then I grew away from him. The more I knew him and the older I got, the less magical he became, and the more fallible. As I entered high school, I ran out of Bradbury to read, and between those circumstances, my confidence sank away. I stopped writing and thinking in his doubtless way. Over time I bothered him less and less to make room for people who needed him more.

Maybe it's appalling that I still own, in fact still buy, books I no longer read. But I remember loving his writing, so I regard his writing lovingly. My collecting isn't heartless, just a little conflicted. The more I buy, the less it has to do with him; instead it ensures against a loss of myself, the part of my biography that intersects with his, the whole-hearted reader I was and hopefully can become again.

When I write to him now, it's as the grandson he made me, or as a collector, asking for a point of clarification, but never as a reader anymore. My mother makes me stay in touch. She's never read Bradbury, but she always took me to Ventura to see him—an eight-hour drive—and over time she got attached herself. Now she writes him letters of her own. She frames him as a father figure, which fits well into the honorary scheme.

The last time I saw him was two summers ago. It was my mother's idea. I was, of course, afraid he wouldn't remember me, or that worse, he might pretend to. By then the Phantom was

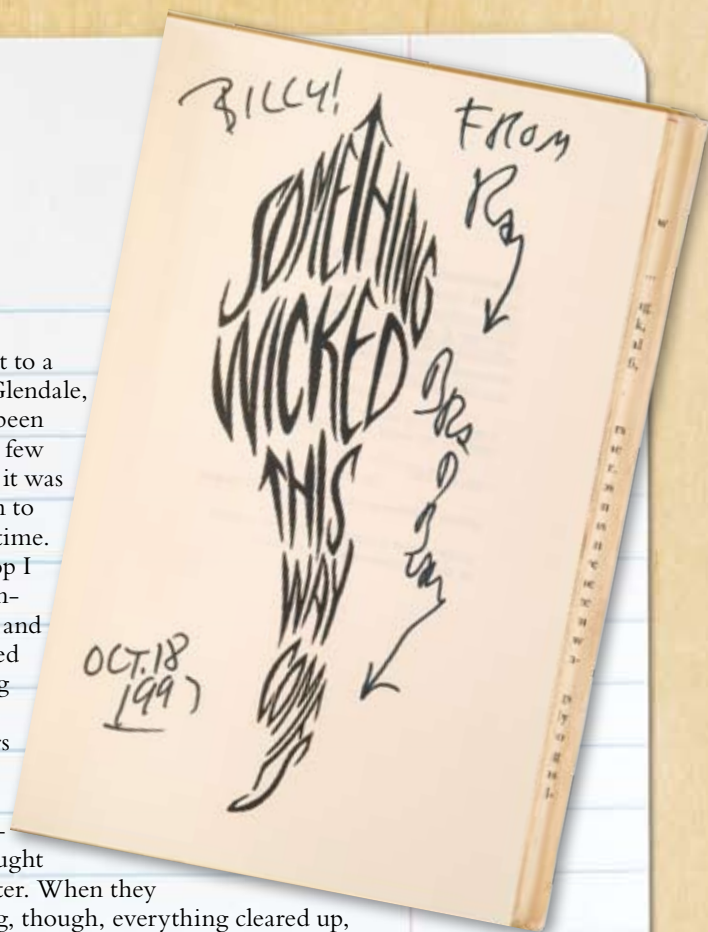
gone. We went to a bookstore in Glendale, one I'd never been to. I brought a few things—okay, it was eight—for him to sign if he had time. In the new shop I got no preferential treatment, and while I slouched around waiting for the line to die, the owners barked at me to hand over my bag of rarities. They thought

I was a shoplifter. When they opened the bag, though, everything cleared up, and their eyes got wide at what I'd brought—the best books from five years of looking, what I'd been stockpiling since the last time I'd seen him. "Of course he'll sign them," they said, vicariously excited, and made an opening for me.

A dozen people stood around him as if around a crater. Forget his dust jacket photos; those are twenty or thirty years old. Five years had passed since I'd seen him, and even that was a long time. He could hardly see or hear now; he'd edged in with a walker. But when it was explained into his ear who I was, he squinted at me, and a dawning look came across him. He shook my hand twice, and pawed through the things I'd brought, exclaiming as he went, "Where did you get this?" Even while we talked about John and the Phantom, I couldn't believe that he knew me, that I meant anything to him like he meant to me. But when the conversation flowed into a silence, he pointed at my mother, who'd been jogging his memory with a photo of me, and proclaimed to the crowd around him: "This woman was the first person I saw after I had my stroke."

It seemed to be a test; everyone turned to her expectantly. *Was it true?* It was true. "You remember!" she said. And he said back, "I always remember," smiling and showing his hands. And my confidence came back to me: There was every reason to believe in him again. He still has a few of his tricks.

♦ William Miglore graduated in May after winning Amherst College's book-collecting contest for a third consecutive year.





FB&C Collegiate Book-Collecting Championship
HONORABLE MENTION

Adam Doskey

MALCOLM LOWRY COLLECTION
**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS,
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN**

“I always really liked books. When I was a kid, my parents took me to library book sales, but I didn’t start collecting seriously until my last year in high school.”

In His Collection

The Selected Poems of Malcolm Lowry. San Francisco: City Lights, 1962. First edition.

Conrad Aiken’s *Blue Voyage.* New York: Scribner’s, 1927. First edition. The inspiration for Lowry’s first novel.

On the Hunt

I like dust jackets that are visually pleasing and the thrill of looking for them.

Want List

I’d like a first edition of *Under the Volcano.* A signed copy would be great.

Current Reading

Nicholas Basbanes’s *A Gentle Madness.*

Life-Changing Book

I read *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* when I was having trouble as an engineering student. The prose was so beautiful, it started me thinking about majoring in literature.

Favorite Website

The *Guardian* newspaper’s book section (books.guardian.co.uk).

Summer Job

I just got a job cataloging some of the 70,000 uncataloged rare books and manuscripts in the college library.

Photography: Peter Hoffman

**FB&C Collegiate Book-Collecting Championship
HONORABLE MENTION**

Sabahat Adil

**TRAVEL WRITING COLLECTION
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**

“I’ve always loved to read. My family encouraged reading, and my dad’s family worked in libraries in India. My grandfather sent us books in Urdu so we would keep up the language. We always thought of it as extra work, but now I’m glad he did it.”

In Her Collection

Murasaki Shikibu’s *The Tale of the Genji* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1977)

On the Internet

I’m not much of an online shopper. I think the people who go to used bookstores will always go to used bookstores. I’d so much rather have a book that I know has a history, than just an anonymous book.

Favorite Book

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith. I’ve read it many times. I love New York, and the immigrant family story was important to me.

Online Hangout

I’m always on my e-mail. I don’t do much else online.

Want List

More hand-written travel memoirs

On the Contest

It was an opportunity for me to reflect about why I’ve bought these books over the years. I wanted to have an essay at the end that would show my family why I’ve read what I’ve read. It was a personal thing for me.



FB&C Collegiate Book-Collecting Championship
THIRD PLACE—\$500

David Rando

FINNEGANS WAKE REFERENCE COLLECTION
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

“My mother is a kindergarten teacher, and she instilled in me a real love of books and reading. In college, I became an English major, and one semester, when I was packing up to go home, I was stunned by how many books I had. I had more books than anything else.”

In His Collection

Tim Ahern’s *Finnegans Wake Chapter One: The Illnesstraited Colossick Idition*. The novel in comic-book form.

Adaline Glasheen’s *Third Census of Finnegans Wake: An Index of the Characters and Their Roles*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. First edition.

About Finnegans Wake

It’s a difficult book and an intimidating book. That’s why I have so many reference books. It is a book that has always led me to community. I have made great friends through this book. I’ve set up two reading groups, and we started out as strangers and became very close through Joyce.

On Hard Books

I’ve always tended toward authors who have a high degree of verbal density. Those are books that reward spending more time with them.

Current Reading

Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*. Her novel *Beloved* stands with *Moby-Dick* and *Huck Finn* as the best we have in American literature.

On Thomas Pynchon

People tend to glorify *Gravity’s Rainbow*. I think as a novelist he became more proficient with *Vineland* and *Mason & Dixon*. They get short shrift from critics, but they are my favorites.

FB&C Collegiate Book-Collecting Championship
SECOND PLACE—\$1,000
& EDITOR'S CHOICE SCHOLARSHIP
TO THE RARE BOOK SCHOOL

William Miglore

RAY BRADBURY COLLECTION
AMHERST COLLEGE

On the Web

It's hard for me to imagine what it was like before the Internet. Abebooks started me collecting in 1996.

Favorite Book

I found a favorite early, and I'm keeping it for life. It's *Tom's Midnight Garden* by Philippa Pearce. I first read it in third grade, and I've read it at least ten times since. It's a simple book that falls back on a lot of clichés, but they're good clichés. It's a beautifully constructed novel.

Most Recent Purchase

Just today I drove out to a little bookstore with a friend of mine, and the guy there was so nice that I had to buy something. I picked up a reading copy of *Laughter in the Dark*. I've been eying a first edition online, and I'm thinking about starting a Nabokov collection.

On Vladimir Nabokov

Right now, I'm trying to immerse myself in him. I'm struggling through *Ada*. It's very fat and heavy and almost 600 pages. I'm on page fifty or sixty, just slogging through it. Its late Nabokov, after he realized he was an important guy. It may or may not be self-indulgent, but at the level of sentences, there's a lot to love.

The Lecture Circuit

I can give pretty good lectures on Ray Bradbury's books and Truman Capote's books. I can also give a three-hour talk on Fleetwood Mac.

"I don't think most of my friends knew anything about collecting or regarded it at all until they got to know me. I'm still a bit embarrassed to bring it up in conversation, but a lot of my friends have started collecting. I'm making it the cool thing to do, one person at a time."



OUR KIND OF COLLEGE PARTY

You're Invited!

Awards Ceremony Collegiate Book-Collecting Contest

*Meet the Winners
Featured Speaker - NICHOLAS BASBANES*

September 16 at 6 p.m. at the Grolier Club

A reception will follow.

The Grolier Club is located at 47 East 60th Street in New York City.

FineBOOKS & COLLECTIONS

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 THE GROLIER CLUB

 PBA GALLERIES

 Heritage Book Shop, Inc.
Heritage Bindery

If you are in New York that weekend, don't miss the book fair sponsored by the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers, to be held Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The fair is at the Jacob Javits Convention Center on 11th Avenue, between 35th and 37th Streets.

2006 SPONSORS

Fine Books & Collections's first Collegiate Book-Collecting Championship was made possible, in part, by:



Founded in 1884, the Grolier Club (www.grolierclub.org) is America's oldest and largest society for bibliophiles and enthusiasts in the graphic arts. Named for Jean Grolier, the Renaissance collector renowned for sharing his library with friends, the Club's objective is to foster the literary study and promotion of the arts pertaining to the production of books. The club maintains a research library on printing and related book arts and its programs include public exhibitions as well as a long and distinguished series of publications. The club is pleased to grant winner Daniel McKee a one-year membership in the organization. *The Grolier Club, 47 East 60th Street, New York, NY 10022. (212) 838-6690.*

Biblio.com

Biblio.com is a preferred online marketplace for buying and selling used, rare, and out-of-print books. Many students rely on Biblio.com for textbooks each year, and shopping online is an excellent way to save money. "The availability of textbooks for sale online and the ease of purchasing this way has really made it easy to get ready for classes," said Kevin Donaldson, the director of sales and marketing. Sponsoring the Championship was an obvious fit for the company. Through its foundation, Biblio.com built a library in rural Bolivia and is especially pleased that its sponsorship makes possible donations to the libraries of the winning students.

PBA GALLERIES

PBA Galleries in San Francisco (www.pbagalleries.com) is the largest auction house on the West Coast specializing in books, manuscripts, maps, and photographs. PBA conducts approximately twenty-five gallery auctions each year. Bidders can subscribe to the printed auction catalogs or visit the website for searchable, illustrated listings from upcoming sales. Potential bidders may sign up for Category Watch to receive e-mail alerts when items of interest appear online, and the BiblioBot instant appraiser will automatically provide estimated values for many books. On the first Tuesday of every month, the public is invited to visit the gallery for free appraisals. *PBA Galleries, 133 Kearny Street, 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94108. (415) 989-2665.*

Heritage Book Shop, Inc. Heritage Bindery

Heritage Book Shop (www.heritagebookshop.com) was founded in Los Angeles in 1963 by Louis and Benjamin Weinstein. It is an internationally renowned antiquarian bookshop with one of the largest and finest inventories of rare books and first editions. Heritage also houses a considerable inventory of original artwork, autographs, and antique maps. The Portland *Oregonian* named it the best rare bookstore on the planet, and William Miglore, our second-prize winner, told *FB&C* that Heritage was one of his favorite bookstores. He said the staff was "incredibly nice whenever I went in there to browse." *Heritage Book Shop & Bindery, 8540 Melrose Avenue, West Hollywood, CA 90069. (310) 659-3674.*

Daniel McKee

**COLLECTION OF EDUCATIONAL BOOKS
FROM JAPAN'S MEIJI PERIOD
CORNELL UNIVERSITY**

“Japan is probably the greatest place in the world to go book hunting. There’s a part of Tokyo, the Kanda district, which is six blocks of nothing but bookstores. One after the other. They have everything from rare, thirteenth-century manuscripts to books stacked on tables for a dollar apiece.”

In His Collection

Kanagaki Robun’s *Sekai toro: Osutoraria* [The World: Australia]. Tokyo: Enoshima Kihei, 1872. Illustrated with captions like “a native cutting human flesh to eat.”

Uchida Tadao’s *Kyochi shiryaku, maki no ju* [A Brief Survey of Interesting Places]. Tokyo: Unchida Tadao, 1877. A book on the Americas, printed just as copperplate printing began to replace traditional woodcuts. This book uses both techniques.

On Japanese Book Fairs

I used to go to a sale every week in the Kanda district. Booksellers from the country would come in and exhibit in a very small room, with books stacked up everywhere. People would wait for an hour to get in. I have literally had people rip books out of my hands at that sale.

On Worn Covers

I love to take a Japanese illustrated book that looks ratty on the outside and open it up and see a beautiful color woodcut. It’s a very tactile experience.

On Bookstores

I love going to a bookstore and finding something. I love poorly organized bookstores and sifting through a stack of books and finding something you’ve been seeking for twenty years. I hope bookstores don’t go away.

And the Socks?

I work in a Japanese museum: No shoes allowed.

