

Build Your Own Inexpensive Masonic Library

Old libraries used to have chains on all the books because it at least stopped readers running off with valuable items. And indeed some libraries feel like that even today, and Masonic libraries are probably darker brown and darker blue than most reference libraries. And ‘theft’ is still going on today

What I do want to do is to get you to ask yourself the question of just what *is* a book – and I will argue that in the past few decades our understanding of a book has changed, and is changing still. We all need to catch up with today’s innovations. The reason for writing this paper was also partly my desire while researching to discover for myself just what was available to me while I was sitting at home in front of my screen - or it could equally be you sitting at home, in an office, or at any university. The needs of any researcher, whether Masonic or not, actually differ little.

And of course the whole world of publishing has been changing at a remarkable speed over the past decade, and those same changes are altering the very idea of books and printers, in a truly practical sense. My voyages through libraries and in writing and publishing a book have opened up new vistas and opportunities for information retrieval.

There are always constraints to any physical library – or rather there have been. It may be a physical shortage of shelving, marital disapproval of an ongoing invasion of books into the cosy home, or simply budgetary constraints. But relief and help are at hand.

Changing Times

But perhaps it is even more important to explore just how things have changed in the last two decades:

- how technology has changed our view of books and
- how we get them and how we use them
- indeed, even to question whether a book must be printed on paper to be called a book

First of all the whole story starts with Johannes Gutenberg (1398-1468), who lived in Mainz in Germany. His innovations were the invention of the printing press, and, even more important, the concept of moveable type and an ink that did not run. This unchained the word, because it became so easy to make multiple copies which, in the past, had been in the control of those in power, and make them available to thinkers. And that is how things stayed for over five hundred years until the close of the twentieth century, except for mechanisation of various sorts. The arrival of the computer changed all that as we know, and suddenly anyone could produce pages of text sitting at home in front of a computer.

Of course, we all have to be able to find the words we want and so the word ‘search’ acquired a totally new dimension. And that too has changed radically. If we go back a mere twenty years to the words of Michael Kaulback, librarian at the library of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts in Boston, in the *Short Talks Bulletin* of February 1996 he talks about the ‘goal of computerising the library to make it more “user-friendly”.’ But, on visiting the site, there was nothing to be downloaded; simply a catalogue to be searched by title or author - and in 1996 of course the words ‘online’ or ‘download’ were terms yet to be invented. A novel, radical objective of twenty years ago today looks positively old fashioned! *That* is some rate of change. However, we need to return to books again, most especially production; and then after that, we will look at buying books.

Print on Demand

The world of words in the last century *was* very largely one of brown or dark blue book spines sitting on dark brown shelves with access through a card index or, recently, if one was lucky a computer-based index. Innovation in the twentieth century had perhaps been the introduction of the four-colour printing press, and later in the century perfect bindings, but that was about it.

Over the last decade and a bit more, book publishing has changed out of all recognition. In the old days, the printing house produced a large pile of books which were shipped to a warehouse where they were slowly consumed as retail bookshops sent in orders. Retail bookshops have now almost vanished from our towns and the majority of books are bought online. Specialist books are mostly now ‘Print on Demand’ and printed pretty much to order, with no longer any stocks in warehouses, and the book can be in print for years. ‘Print on Demand’ is where the market is at (in 2016).

The act of printing used to be ink on paper but today it is increasingly toner on paper – a way of describing such a production line is as an industrial shed where the printing (toner being applied to paper) starts at one end and fifty metres later at the other end a finished bound book with a shiny cover drops off the line. And the whole process is simpler – send the final pdf to the printers and within a few days it can be

ready to print on several continents. You can press the icon to buy at amazon.com and your order can go virtually instantly to the printing machine!

All these innovations in life and work mean that radical changes are on the way, and the process of adaptation has yet to make a real impact on Masonic researchers. I have tried to bridge the gap and in my office (what used to be called the dining room!) I have a traditional fifteen metres of Masonic books but I also have a digital Masonic library which is now almost thirty gigabytes – I have no idea just how many metres of virtual shelf that is, but it must be greater than the physical shelf space.

Books and How to Buy Them

Traditionally one used to buy books at a bookshop, often the one in your local town – but in view of their demise I have invented my own alternative way of explaining how to view the idea of buying books. In principle consider the whole process as being defined by the concept of: **Three As**. I use the idea of the As as standing for amazon.com, abebooks.com and archive.org.

First of all, I have to apologise for the use of brand names, none of them is paying me, but they have the attribute of being memorable and each provides a particular service! Other alternatives are of course available (terms and conditions apply, as they say), and there is no reason to change your personal buying habits. But as names, what they offer really illustrates the points to remember.

A is for www.amazon.com for NEW BOOKS

Sometimes there is simply no alternative to buying a book printed on paper, and indeed that is the only way one can buy a recently published book.

The staple is amazon.com, but I can commend another option which is bookdepository.com. Book Depository is amazing if you live outside the USA or the UK, because for the standard retail price they will airmail the book to almost any country in the world *free of charge* – and that includes Australia and New Zealand! By the way, Book Depository is actually owned by Amazon, although it pursues its own commercial strategy.

A is for www.abebooks.com - 'PRELOVED' BOOKS

There are other places online for second-hand books such as ebay.com and alibris.com but abebooks.com is the most comprehensive, and includes local antipodean book dealers as well.

Abe stands for the Advanced Book Exchange and started in Victoria, British Columbia – their USP (Unique Selling Proposition) was that they could sell their stock of unmoving books cluttering their shelves by putting them on the Internet, and when that worked, they decided that they could do the same for other second-hand bookshops as well. You can almost guarantee to find nearly any book you want, priced between \$1 and \$191,000 (their most expensive sale in 2015). Their catalogue runs to over 250 million book across more than 27 countries. They too are owned by Amazon, but do their own thing.

The important thing to remember is to keep watching for the book you want – there is often a bookseller keen to shift a copy quickly and so cheaper than the competition. A typical example is Pick and Knight's *Pocket History of Freemasonry* - the most expensive copy of the 35 they had, was £24 – the cheapest was £1.81 plus postage. One needs to have patience and be a canny buyer. On a couple of occasions, for slightly more expensive books I have actually bargained with a dealer on the price.

The big strength of abebooks.com is its vast 'virtual' stock physically located across thousands of used book shops around the world, which really makes it the best source of books that are out-of-print but largely still in copyright.

Copyright is difficult and complicated – in the UK it lasts for seventy years from the death of the author, but in the USA it's even more complicated than that. And that really leads me on to the next part of the revolution in technology.

A is for archive.org - OUT-OF-COPYRIGHT and OUT-OF-PRINT BOOKS

Archive.org took up the role of being the protector of out-of-copyright materials and preserving them for free use by the public. Their listing now runs to over 10 million texts of which 8.2 million are in English.

The Internet Archive is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that was founded to build an Internet library. Its purposes include offering permanent access for researchers, historians, scholars, people with disabilities, and the public to historical collections that exist in digital format. Founded in 1996 and located in San Francisco.¹

Some of you may remember, many years ago, a great big row between book publishers and Google - when Google (and also Microsoft) started scanning whole libraries of books. That partly settled down and one

¹ <https://archive.org/about/>

could go to books.google.com and download (free) pdf copies of out-of-copyright books – but it was too good to last. Why so?

Simply because it all got caught up in another advance in a practical application of technology – print on demand! The first company to exploit this, starting in 1988, even before the words ‘print on demand’ were imagined, was Kessinger Publishing LLC of Whitefish, near the Glacier National Park in Montana. Their idea was to produce facsimile copies (on paper) of rare out-of-print books, and they were way ahead of their time in doing so.

It did not take long for entrepreneurial spirits to realise that a copyright-free and gratis pdf could simply be printed from the pdf and bound as a book. Then a whole raft of companies started grabbing pdfs from books.google.com and using ‘print on demand’ to produce copies on paper. And once it was back in print, then Google took the pdf download facility away. All of this was, of course, predicated on the meaning of a book being ‘in print’ if it was on paper?! I happen to think Google made a bad call on that decision, but we all have to live with that.

Some of these pdf reprint companies have literally millions of books on their ‘lists’ – sadly the side effect of that is often indifferent quality. The reality is simple: they have so many books that they could not possibly provide the sort of quality control that would be needed. Also, the prices of these ‘new’ books are often high and very variable – literally anything from £5 to £50 for an old volume of *AQC*. So whenever you look for an old book and see it offered as new - just remember both that you are being duped into a view of the past that says that books are only on paper, and also of course that such publishers have no genuine interest in the books they print, except that each one that drops off the end of the production line is a few more dollars in the bank for them and fewer in your pocket.

Which brings me to ask you a question or two? How many of you have a collection of *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*? The reason for asking that question is that thirty-three of the first forty volumes are all *available for free from* archive.org. That is a handy start to the library of any Masonic researcher! And, of course, there is an index that can be downloaded to all the volumes from www.quatuorcoronati.com or from ‘Count Cagliostro’s Masonic Library’, the site of Brother Keith Carpenter of Essex, England. The act of wanting to preserve the availability of out-of-copyright books online is not only the preserve of large organisations like archive.org, but there is space for individuals as well. You can find details of Keith’s library at <http://countcagliostrosasonicelibrary.blog.com>.

Many of the works by Brothers such as Gould and Hughan are also available – and that includes Gould’s *History*, in several editions. But it is worth taking a slightly closer look at archive.org.

So why not simply consider that having a pdf ‘virtual library’ on your computer in a folder called ‘Masonic Library’, or consider a USB flash drive as a virtual library shelf? Realistically one does not get out a volume of *AQC* and nestle down beside the fire for a cosy evening’s reading, but if you want to be able to answer that nagging question, then it is quick and does not require a physical journey to a physical library to turn paper pages. Use ‘Find’ or ‘Advanced Search’ in Adobe Acrobat: it can search 200 pages far faster than any human.

Before I end I do want to come back to my original question – just what is a book? I think we all know about Kindle books but if one wants rather more specialist books such as Masonic ones, they may not be printed on paper, and will increasingly be in a digital format. I hope I have widened your horizons by demonstrating some of the options that are available – although I am sure that in a few years’ time even more information will be available; but I would hesitate to forecast what the future will offer us all.

The final exhortation is – if you see it, if you like it, then save it. History has proved to me that what is available today may not be available tomorrow.

Appendix 1

A few thoughts by Keith Carpenter (aka Count Cagliostro) given at the conference:

‘John has alluded to the fact that there are a number of places online where we can find electronically-scanned Masonic books to download; the problem is finding them. I have been collecting electronic books on Freemasonry for fourteen years and during that time have discovered many very dubious locations which I would not recommend to the less Internet-savvy user. To the untrained eye, these places are full of virus and hack threats, and this is one of the main reasons behind the creation of my online resource.

‘My library is called Count Cagliostro’s Masonic E-Library and it currently holds over 3,300 books on, or related to, Freemasonry. All of them are in pdf format so can be read on many different platforms and all are freely available to download. It is quite a diverse collection, covering *Books of Constitutions*, Manuals, Aide-memoires, Periodicals, *Transactions* reports, Research, Historical and so much more.

‘One of the big issues when collecting books in this manner is copyright protection, and we must be very careful with what we download or share. ‘Bit torrent’ sites contain many current books that are copyright protected, so one must steer clear of these or face the wrath of the law. The books in my collection are all, I repeat all, out-of-copyright, so there are no worries in this area.

‘The library has both Facebook and Twitter profiles, which I update as often as possible, and provide links to useful sites and information.

‘I have several internationally-renowned Masonic authors that frequent the library: I have assisted whenever possible in research, and have received acknowledgements in a number of works. Electronic books do offer a great deal of assistance in research; having word-search functionality is such a useful tool and can save hours of browsing. This alone is well worth considering.

‘Finally, I would encourage Grand Lodge libraries around the world to start a program of scanning. Not everyone has the good fortune to be able to visit these places’.

Appendix 2

The *Index Rerum* at the Grand Lodge of Iowa Library at Cedar Rapids.²

grandlodgeofiowa.org/library-2

Some years ago, I had the good luck to pass through Cedar Rapids, Iowa and spend a day at the library in the Grand Lodge and get to meet Bill Krueger, the Librarian. There is a bit of history to set the scene that is very relevant.

In the 1840s after a Grand Lodge resolution, the then Secretary, Theodore S. Parvin, bought five books for \$5 and started the library in his own house. It grew until it moved to its own building (the world’s first purpose-built Masonic library) in 1894 and moved again in 1955 to its present site.

It subscribed to a great many Masonic journals and in 1905 started a card index to every article in every magazine to which it subscribed. Over a century this built into a huge card index. You know the sort - rows of small drawers with cards locked in place with a long brass rod.

I visited the library in 2009 and could ‘test drive the card index’ – I found it an amazing resource. In 2010 the idea of digitising those index cards took hold and the process was recently completed. Before writing this Appendix I decided to give it a test. I had recently written a paper about Dudley Wright and had unearthed a vast bibliography which runs to over twenty-five pages of A4. What more might be found was both the question and the challenge. In total I discovered another hundred articles in a variety of Masonic magazines, from the Scottish Rite *New Age Magazine* to the *Sandusky Masonic Bulletin*, the *Square & Compasses* from New Orleans, through to the *Western Australian Freemason*, *Victorian Craftsman*, *New South Wales Masonic Journal*, *South Australian Freemason*, *Queensland Freemason*, *South African Masonic World* and *Masonic Journal of South Africa*.

There seemed not to be any New Zealand magazines in their collection, but to be able to search those Australian Masonic magazines and see what articles were printed is a valuable resource for the researcher, or indeed the simply curious. You still must find a copy of the journal to read it – but as they say ‘Rome was not built in a day’. While the information on each item is sometimes lacking some detail, it gives a panorama of results that is simply unobtainable elsewhere – and clear pointers for more detailed researches.

Perhaps more to the point, the indexes include the British titles *The Freemason*, *The Freemasons Chronicle* (both post-1900), *The Square* and recent volumes of *AQC* and *Heredom*. While the magazines do go back into the nineteenth century, the resource will be most valuable for those engaging in twentieth century Masonic history.³

The only thing missing is that it is not possible to know exactly what the Iowa holdings of any Masonic magazine are, which of course for a researcher would be the icing on the cake. Over a century librarians have come and gone and exercised the styles and norms of each decade, so there is alas no simple, exact way to find what the Iowa holdings are. In cases of necessity the librarian would, I am sure, offer some assistance.

Appendix 3

***Proceedings* of the United Grand Lodge of England (the Quarterly Communications).**

The *Proceedings* of the United Grand Lodge of England will be available online from sometime in 2017, by kind permission of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London and the Secretariat of UGLE. You might ask why anyone would ever want to go and look at these documents? And it is a worthwhile question to ask.

² Here is a definition of an *Index Rerum* from 1839 by John Todd (1800-1873). Used as a book title, it still holds true today: *Index rerum, or, Index of subjects: intended as a manual, to aid the student and the professional man, in preparing himself for usefulness; with an introduction, illustrating its utility and method of use.*

³ The Masonic magazines of Britain can all be viewed online at: <http://mpol2.cch.kcl.ac.uk/Olive/ODE/MasonicLibrary..> up to 1900. After that researchers simply drew a blank. The *Index Rerum* now allows useful searches to be done and useful items noted. This does represent a great step forward for those interested in the Masonic History of the twentieth century.

Let me give you two examples. Back in 1905, the Three Home Grand Lodges changed the terms of their International Compact of 1814 to accommodate the actual Masonic reality in Queensland – and it was all debated at length in the Quarterly Communications. The arguments and the discussion can all be read there. Likewise, the debate about the English lodges and the formation of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand are also there to be read.

All the pages were scanned as tif images back in 2001 by the UGLE Secretariat and collected together as single images in some proprietary software package - one that does not run on Windows 10 computers! The only reason I discovered this was, when I received a set of CDs covering the *Proceedings* from 1813 to 2001, I found I could not run the software to see the images. I decided to rescue all 17,000 and put them into a searchable pdf format; because if I did not, then they would soon become unreadable. They are already saved by year as searchable pdfs, and will probably become downloadable in pdfs, each covering ten years. The fact they are searchable allows your computer to search hundreds of pages in seconds rather than minutes with a paper copy.

These are rare, hard-to-find documents, simply because they were usually only mailed out to Grand Ranks Brothers who mainly read them and, if they saved them at all, probably just stuck them in a drawer. When Granddad passed away, it is most likely that they went onto the bonfire with other miscellaneous paperwork, Summonses, old invoices, and so on. Very few sets ever got properly bound.

Increasingly over the next few years libraries will see their role changing. No longer will they expect a human being to travel to them to sit in front of a paper copy – rather, and more frequently, they will put key materials online to be downloaded. We all need to keep our eyes open for developments and pass the good news around – and the best example of a means of doing this for you is in *Harashim*, the journal of the Australian & New Zealand Masonic Research Council.

This was firstly a paper delivered at the World Conference on Fraternalism, Freemasonry & History, Paris, May 2015; it was subsequently printed in the Transactions of the Manchester Association for Masonic Research in 2016 – and in other places afterwards.