

The Library

The Library Book by Susan Orlean chronicles the mystery of the 1986 Los Angeles Public Library fire while celebrating the vital role libraries play in communities and culture.



AN APOLOGY FOR THE BOOK-HUNTER

****An Apology for the Book-Hunter****

"All men," declares Dr. Dibdin, "like to be their own librarians." This captures the ethos of the bibliophile—a figure who cherishes not merely the content within books but their tangible, historical, and aesthetic qualities as well. The initial pages of "An Apology for the Book-Hunter" delve into the innate desire to collect books, pointing out that while some works of literature stand as universal gems, individual tastes vary immensely beyond these essentials. This divergency in taste cultivates libraries filled with an eclectic mix of classics and curiosities, ranging from broadsheet ballads to scarce editions of contemporary volumes, thereby reflecting the multifaceted interests of their collectors.

The passion for book-collecting is more than an academic pursuit; it embodies a hunt or sport, with "serendipity" as one's guide. It's an adventure where one stumbles upon a rare edition or a sought-after volume, thus realizing the joy of an unexpected discovery. This exploration takes readers through various avenues—be it auction houses, book stalls, or quiet, dusty bookshops—where each venue offers a distinct flavor of the hunt. However, the true essence of collecting transcends the mere act of acquisition; it's steeped in a deeper connection to the books, where personal

annotations, provenance, and historical significance enrich the value of each tome.

The work further outlines the polymorphic nature of collectors: from those entranced by first editions and historical bindings to enthusiasts of specific genres or authors.

This diversity showcases the broad spectrum of what constitutes a "collection" and the myriad ways individuals engage with their bibliophilic interests. Moreover, it addresses the criticisms and challenges faced by collectors, offering rebuttals that highlight the intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic rewards of this pursuit, emphasizing how a collection can serve as a reservoir of knowledge, history, and personal meaning.

As the narrative unfolds, it also pays homage to the heritage of book-binding and craftsmanship, acknowledging the artistry that goes into creating a book that is both a literary and a visual treasure. Such embellishments not only enhance a book's allure but also solidify its status as a collectible artifact.

In summation, "An Apology for the Book-Hunter" is not merely a defense but a celebration of bibliophilia. It articulates the joy, the intellectual stimulation, and the unparalleled thrill of the chase that book collectors relish. By weaving together insights into the practices, challenges, and joys of collecting, it offers a reflective account on the timeless allure of books and the enduring passion they ignite in the hearts of those who seek to preserve them.

THE LIBRARY

Yes.



THE BOOKS OF THE COLLECTOR

The chapter intricately delves into the art and significance of collecting illuminated manuscripts, beginning with an historical overview that emphasizes the allure these items have for collectors, while excluding non-desirable relics such as the clay books of the Chaldeans. It conveys the evolution of manuscript art from ancient times through the Middle Ages, highlighting the destruction of iconographic manuscripts and the revival of the art in Western Europe under Charlemagne. The importance of English manuscripts, particularly those housed in the library of Corpus Christi at Cambridge, is noted, alongside the rarity and expense of acquiring these treasures.

The text advances the notion that while manuscripts pose a challenge due to their uniqueness and the difficulty of determining their completeness, they offer unparalleled value and literary and artistic joy to collectors. The narrative underscores the escalating value of manuscripts through examples, portraying this form of collection as both exceptionally rewarding and demanding profound dedication and study to understand.

Significant advice is provided for collectors, including the necessity of acquiring a foundational understanding of medieval writing styles, the art of collation, and the specific characteristics of various service-books selected for illumination. The discussion extends to the importance of making careful purchases, focusing on specific periods or schools of art, and maintaining detailed records to enhance the collector's expertise and the collection's value.

An intriguing aspect is the account of modern examples of illuminated manuscripts and their cultural significance, stretching into the era of Louis XIV, with specific emphasis on "La Guirlande de Julie" as an exemplary work of the period. The chapter concludes with a message on the paramount importance of authenticity over

restoration, subtly critiquing the modern inclination to 'perfect' manuscripts, thereby diminishing their value and historical authenticity.

This exposition not only captures the technical and historical dimensions of manuscript collecting but also imbues it with a passion and reverence for the art form, encouraging aspiring collectors to pursue this avocation with both caution and fervor.



ILLUSTRATED BOOKS {8}

The chapter from "The Library" titled ****ILLUSTRATED BOOKS**** centers on the evolution of book illustration in England, particularly modern English book-illustration, situating its beginnings in the latter part of the 18th century with Bewick's work in wood engraving and Stothard's illustrative compositions. Despite earlier forms of book illustrations, such as engravings to complement literary works, it argues that the true flourish of imaginative book illustration began with these artists, notably transitioning from metal to wood as the preferred medium.

The narrative highlights several influential figures in book illustration, among them Stothard, Blake, and Flaxman, scrutinizing their distinct styles and contributions to the literature. Stothard is noted for his graceful, albeit somewhat insipid, designs that often featured literary scenes, whereas Blake is celebrated for his visionary, ethereal designs in works like "Songs of Innocence and Experience," and Flaxman for his classical illustrations that captured the spirit of ancient texts.

Additionally, the chapter delves into the decline of metal engraving with the rise of wood as the primary medium, leading into discussions on the "Annuals" – illustrated gift books popular in the early 19th century that played a significant role in the resurgence of wood engraving, largely through the contributions of artists like Turner and various others.

The text also examines the evolution and impact of wood engraving, especially through the innovations introduced by Thomas Bewick, which revived the medium and significantly influenced the field of book illustration. It encapsulates Bewick's mastery in depicting animals and rural scenes with precision and emotion, alongside his notable tail-pieces that often carried a blend of wit and moral commentary.

In the broader scope of book illustration, it touches upon the contributions of Bewick's pupils and the "London School" of engravers that succeeded him, emphasizing the shift in the 19th century towards artist-engravers who brought personal creativity to their works. The chapter concludes by reflecting on modern developments in book illustration, including the rise of color printing and photomechanical processes that enabled more direct reproductions of artists' works, pointing towards a future where technology would continue to shape and redefine the boundaries of illustrated literature.

