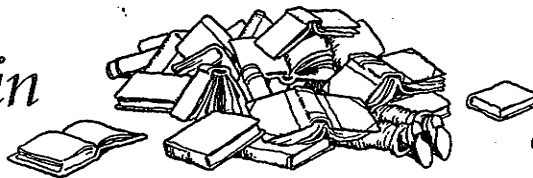


# The Collector's Bin



An opportunity for our readers to ask questions, share experiences, express concerns, or simply comment.

THE COLLECTOR'S BIN is a regular column dedicated to fostering communication and understanding among the FABS community of over 8,000 bibliophiles around the globe. ■ Our column serves as a forum addressing questions submitted by readers, similar to online blogs and Internet forums, only that many FABS readers prefer things the old-fashioned way . . . ink on paper.

■ While the world changes at a dizzying pace, the antiquarian by his/her nature values and celebrates the old. Our "old books" offer stability in this changing and uncertain world.

AS THIS COLUMN moves into its fifth year, The Collector's Bin reaffirms its mission of fostering communication and understanding among the FABS community of over 8,000 bibliophiles. This column belongs to you, the FABS reader. Your questions and comments, an essential part of the column, generate discussion and debate amongst members of the world's leading bibliophilic societies.

Since the last column, we received letters from readers in Cleveland, New York, and San Francisco all addressing similar topics. One reader, not surprisingly, points out "The book collecting game has changed. In the past, I found great joy and satisfaction in hunting for scarce books that were missing from my collection. I would make a point of visiting out-of-the-way bookshops in out-of-the-way towns, always in the anticipation of finding that special book. Today, I look on the Internet and I find the world flooded with books, any book I may want can be "bagged" with a few keystrokes and on my shelf in days. Some may find this extremely gratifying. I for one do not. In this brave new world, who is a book collector?" Another writes, "What is a collectable book?" And our last reader asks, "What (books) should I collect?" Although paradigm change continues in

the world of books at a dizzying pace, these questions at least are familiar; we have been asking them since the beginning of this book collecting game.

Of course, the short answer to all three questions is, "I can't tell you." Alas, this truth is neither informative nor does it make for an interesting column. Therefore, with the intention of starting debate and at the risk of offending, this author presumptuously and unabashedly offers his **Ten Rules of Book Collecting**.

1. Bibliophiles pursue quality in all areas of their lives. Their books are no exception. If one does not possess an "eye" for good books, then seek professional advice.
2. Book collectors go for first editions (preferably signed), limited editions, and private press books.
3. The book collector demands books in fine condition. Exceptions made only if a book is genuinely rare. In book speak, very good means average and good is bad.
4. The book collector does not allow inferior books into his library. Mass-market paperbacks, ex-library, text books, book club editions, and common books are *liber non grata*.
5. Diamonds and gold are for the philistines; book collectors prefer leather. A book collector is always on the hunt for fine bindings.
6. A book collector never removes the dust jacket from a book . . . no matter what the decorator says.
7. A collector's books are housed in a setting befitting their importance. Glass fronted bookcases, kept out of direct sunlight, are 5-star hotels for books.
8. When circumstances dictate between keeping the spouse happy or buying more books, the collector always chooses the latter.
9. A book collector does not discuss the purchase price or value of the books in his/her library. A gentleman never tells.

10. Finally and most importantly . . .

A book collector **does not read** his books.

I suspect some readers are smiling, while others are upset. I offer the rules to ignite debate about questions raised by our readers: Who is a book collector? What is a collectable book? What should I collect? Admittedly, the rules paint a rather narrow picture of book collecting.

As our world goes digital, book collecting instead of facing a slow extinction predicted by many, will continue and possibly thrive. Yes, the world's books will be converted into digital text available online. Yes, new books will be distributed electronically, *sans* paper. Now, readers seeking only information and text inhabit a separate world apart from the collectors. Until now, collectors and readers shared the book, but arguably for very different reasons. Readers are forever confounded as to why collectors pay outrageous sums of money to own first editions when the words are the same as in a paperback copy purchased for a quarter at the local library sale. Meanwhile, collectors believe the value, both monetary and aesthetic, of first editions to be a self-evident truth. Readers and collectors will no longer share books but Amazon Kindles or similar devices. Yes, contrary to popular opinion, collectors do read.

Fortunately, for the future of the book and book collecting, certain aspects of the book remain immune from these Faustian technological undertakings. The book as physical object, a beautiful object, an object capable of beguiling our hearts and minds will always be valued. An important text along with hand-made paper, letterpress printing, artist plates, and hand binding define a type of book that will always be *de rigueur*. In the future, good books may become scarcer than diamonds and collectors will ensure that . . . books are forever.

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