SEMINAR ANNOUNCEMENT

A seminar on the economic history of the book in the United States will take place in Van Pelt Library at the University of Pennsylvania on seven Friday afternoons in the course of the spring term of 2006. A preliminary program is given below. It begins with early modern origins and runs up through very recent events and informed speculation as to the immediate future.

All are welcome to attend any and all sessions that are of interest.

Three ideas underlie this seminar. The first is that for all the flowering of the cultural history approach to the history of the book, the economic history remains understudied. The second is that the economic institutions of any line of business at a moment in time are probably best studied all together rather than in isolation. The third is that such study should facilitate analysis of the evolution of these sets of institutions over time.

Twenty-odd individuals will make short presentations over the course of the seminar. In all sessions, we aim to place our emphases on considering material together that is generally encountered in a more isolated setting and on vigorous general discussion involving both presenters and attendees.

This venture is supported by the Office of the Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, the University’s School of Arts and Sciences, its University Library, and its Wharton School’s Mack Center for Technological Innovation.

Please address any inquiries to Dan Raff (raff@wharton.upenn.edu) or Dan Traister (traister@pobox.upenn.edu).
The Book in America: Economic Aspects of the Material Text

Organizing Committee: Max Cavitch (English), Daniel Raff (Management and History), Michael Ryan (Van Pelt and History), Peter Stallybrass (English), and Daniel Traister (Van Pelt and English)

Spring Term 2006
Lea Library (Sixth floor of Van Pelt Library, 34th and Walnut Streets, Philadelphia—enter from Locust Walk)
Selected Friday afternoons 3-5:30 or so

Week 1 (January 13): General Introduction, British background, American context
   Daniel Traister, University of Pennsylvania (The social, cultural, and physical environment of print and printers in the Early Modern period)
   James Green, Library Company of Philadelphia (The eighteenth-century British book trade as business)
   Michele Craig, Harvard Business School (The early American economic setting)

Week 2 (January 27): Authorship and authors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries
   Daniel Traister, University of Pennsylvania (Franklin as bookman)
   Meredith McGill, Rutgers University (Practices and cultures of reprinting [including production methods and serial printing])
   Nancy Bentley, University of Pennsylvania (The influences of legal developments)
   Max Cavitch, University of Pennsylvania (The binding of tradition)

Week 3 (February 10): Suppliers, binders, printers/publishers, and a beginning on process and product in the nineteenth century
   John Bidwell, Pierpont Morgan Library (Paper-making, craft to industrial, as craft and as production process)
   Willman Spawn, Bryn Mawr College, and Tom Kinsella, Richard Stockton College (Early bookbinding, craft to industrial)
   James Green, Library Company of Philadelphia (Organization of the early printing trade and the transition to publishing per se, status quo ante in bookselling)

Week 4 (February 24): Nineteenth century transformations
   Daniel Raff, Penn (Scene-setting on nineteenth century shifts in the structure of the American economic activity, infrastructure, and population)
   Michael Winship, University of Texas (The transformation of production and of bookselling from the publishing company perspective)
   Walter Friedman, Harvard Business School (Selling goods, especially books, in places where there weren’t many people)
   Patricia Okker, University of Missouri (Magazines as a vehicle for the dissemination of literature and as an industry)
Week 5 (March 3): Twentieth century transitions to ca. 1975
   Catherine Turner, College Misericordia (Marketing literary modernism)
   Erin Smith, University of Texas-Dallas (Mass market print culture)
   Daniel Raff, University of Pennsylvania (Traditional distribution, retail and
      wholesale, mail order as a sector, and the Book of the Month Club as an
      economic institution)

Week 6 (March 17): Fin de siècle changes
   James English, University of Pennsylvania  (The economy of prestige)
   Daniel Raff, University of Pennsylvania (Two epochs of chains and then Amazon,
      evolution of wholesale trade and its larger significance, and industry
      evolution
      in the long view)

Week 7 (March 31): Panel: The future text, material and perhaps otherwise
   Full slate of panelists TBA