following so closely upon the restrictions of wartime and post-war England, are entertaining, whether it be the potent, ubiquitous American dry martini, the portions of beef, or the lights of Broadway. It is interesting also to reflect on the mores of the 1950s. Whenever Muir had a commitment which entailed his wife's presence, Kaye dropped whatever it was that she was involved in — her own writing, the political work in which she was locally active, the children — and proceeded to be Percy Muir's wife. This period is pithily described in the book: 'Percy had never been an early riser. He saw no point in getting up and going downstairs to sort out his mail when he could have it brought to him in bed by his wife, who had to get up first anyway to see the children off to school [not the job of a man born in Queen Victoria's time] and feed her hens' (p. 241).

It is, however, the serious aspects of the book that are of significant import. Percy Muir's efforts in bringing about the abolition of the notorious auction 'Ring' that had operated for years renewed the public's confidence in the book trade as a whole. Even more interesting to this reader were the politics involved in the formation of the ILAB, the necessity of each country's giving up some autonomy for the benefit of international harmony, the problems Muir had within the British Association (ABA) in accepting the concept, and the question of how to handle the associations of countries who were on 'the wrong side' in the Second World War. That all of this, plus a constitution, plans for a membership director and a multi-language dictionary, were thought out, worked out, and brought into being was due to the likes of Percy Muir and his colleagues from other countries. Ten countries were represented at the first ILAB conference. This number has since doubled.

The only unfortunate and unnecessary problem with this work is the sloppy editing. 'Andr6 drove Percy and I . . .' and 'the British delegation . . . were' are some of the more egregious errors; even worse is the misspelling of so many foreign words: 'dictionaire,' 'nous avon,' 'anschlus,' and 'librarie.' It is a pity that more care was not taken, for the lack of editorial supervision detracts from this otherwise very engaging book.

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David Pearson's 1987 provenance indices, precursors of this book, are, revised and augmented, at its core in Chapter VII. The surrounding chapters are an additional reference guide to finding out about provenance — the previous ownership of books — from inscriptions, bookplates, binding stamps, sale catalogues, and other secondary sources. The emphasis is on research — how to find out what various
marks on or in books mean and how to trace books dispersed from known or suspected collections. Pearson modestly describes his book as a bibliography, a listing of other books and sources, but it is more than that. His short introduction, for example, deals briefly with the study of provenance and why it is important. He describes it as 'a growth industry,' significant beyond 'association' so long exploited by some booksellers and esteemed by collectors. He distinguishes between the veneration of relics and research on the size and content of libraries, patterns of book ownership, the book trade, and books in society. This is the increasingly familiar territory of the history of the book, the social, economic, and cultural context of books.

But, of course, not all books are conveniently marked by their owners, and, even if they once were, those inscriptions, bookplates and stamps may no longer survive. Pearson tells several horror stories of destruction: Ruskin spending an evening cutting up a missal; the manuscripts of Duns Scotus turned into scarecrows; two pre-sixteenth-century libraries bought for forty shillings and used for wrapping paper. I can confirm his evidence with a modern atrocity of manuscript material from a private library damaged in the 1966 flood in Florence, now, expensively, adorning the covers of address books, recipe folders and photograph albums for sale in a shop near the Ponte Vecchio, the owners having been 'reluctant merely to discard' the leaves.

Even if evidence of provenance survives, not every modern library keeps provenance records, and even those that do may not have the detail the investigator might like. It is clearly unrealistic of researchers to expect rare-book librarians to record the physical properties of every item in their collections, or even, as Nicholson Baker's April 1994 New Yorker article explored, to transfer all the information on typed or hand-written catalogue cards to the sometimes limited fields of the on-line database. Pearson doesn't address this issue, although he does conclude the Handbook with an appendix on describing provenance in catalogues. As he points out, there are no agreed standards for recording provenance, although the nineteenth-century British Museum rules survived well into the twentieth century, with provision only for 'MS. NOTES' and the prefix 'FEW' or 'COPIOUS' if applicable; the Bodleian's 1923 Rules make no mention of material peculiar to a specific copy of a book; and the widely used Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules only note the need to record provenance. Even rule-books on rare-book cataloguing are vague on how and when to document provenance. As Pearson says, cataloguing is largely concerned with text- and edition-specific detail. Thus, the catalogues and indices he lists in the body of the Handbook vary enormously. He, therefore, goes on to suggest some standards for describing inscriptions, bookplates, and armorial stamps. These three chapters are in part a guide to the form the evidence may take.

The owner's name, written in the book, is the most obvious manuscript inscription, but Pearson describes a range of other possibilities — mottoes and maxims, manuscript bookplates, painted heraldic marks, booksellers' codes, and library inscriptions. His section on how to identify manuscript inscriptions is, perhaps necessarily, brief — presumably the researcher either can or can't place them, and, if he can't, guides to palaeography, autographs, and biography are probably...
as frustrating as the marks themselves. Nonetheless, Pearson provides an interesting annotated list of possibilities.

He writes an excellent chapter on bookplates, labels, and stamps, again starting with the fundamentals that the newcomer to the field may need — definitions, descriptions, sources, history — and, a very nice touch, literally dozens of useful illustrations. And, again, there are extensive bibliographies of secondary sources, covering nearly three hundred years of interest and scholarship in the field.

The chapter on armorials, other binding stamps, and external features is as comprehensive and lavishly illustrated as anyone could wish, with sections including identification, lists of references, and coverage of details such as labels, edge markings, and distinctive bindings from particular binders' tools.

The ninety pages of provenance indices are the heart of the Handbook. As Pearson says, such indices are of prime importance for provenance research. He lists British, American, and Canadian libraries, and covers published and unpublished catalogues, exhibition catalogues, and donors' registers. He notes the patchiness of information, advising caution. The absence of data on other European libraries, to say nothing of the omission of rich collections in Japan and Australia, is, for Pearson, an unfortunate necessity. But he feared gaping omissions there, although, it seems, happy to rely on librarians' reports in Canada and the United States. The lists he includes are impressive. Of course, they can really only be evaluated by individuals with knowledge of the contents, and, as Pearson suggests in the preface, this is a book to be written in, annotated and constantly updated by individual users. As bibliographers, we are all specialists in our narrow fields, and only we will spot and correct gaps and weaknesses. Pearson tells us he is pleased to receive news of corrections and additions: a second edition anticipated?

From general directories listing whole collections, he moves to individual libraries. Not all are national or university collections. The British and Irish list also includes public, cathedral, parish, school, and private libraries. It's fascinating, well annotated, useful beyond provenance research, sixty-five pages with 146 entries. The second ends with a bibliography of catalogues with national coverage, again a most useful collection of sources. American coverage is less extensive, done on a state-by-stage basis, and, as Pearson admits, not exhaustively. The Canadian section is little more than a page, listing only six libraries. If Pearson really is planning a new edition, Canadian scholars should be sure to help him fill the gaps.

The final chapter, somewhat oddly placed — I'd have put it before the indices — is a catch-all collection of material on heraldry, palaeography, biography, and works on book collecting, and library history. It's a further guide to deciphering provenance evidence. The heraldry section is the best short guide for book research I have read. It's a highly complex subject, but Pearson's clear explanations and illustrations suggest straightforward ways of identifying marks, and point to further biographical and genealogical sources. Palaeography is also a difficult area, but Pearson gives a brief summary of the history and development of handwriting, and the researcher's problems in deciphering and analysing it. He makes no claims to comprehensive coverage of biography, or even of bibliographies of biography, and he restricts his listings to British subjects. The lists by profession —
clergy, lawyers, officers of state, medics, and scientists — are useful, because so specialized and not often collected together like this. The study of book collecting, both private and institutional, is another burgeoning field where a full bibliography is beyond the scope of the Handbook, although Pearson includes a section on directories from the late nineteenth century onwards.

The value of Pearson's book lies in part in the opportunities for scholarship it suggests. But at that point it begins to fall short of the otherwise high standards he sets. I would have liked a longer introductory essay, for example, on the study of provenance, and particularly its relationship to the history of the book — the wider context of the book trade, market forces, and changing taste. Pearson touches on it in his one-page introductory section and in the chapters on sale catalogues and private libraries, but this must be a subject he knows more about than he reveals here, and it would have given the book a nice balance between techniques and tools for investigation and the wider purpose of provenance research today. Indeed, much as the rigorousness of Pearson's work is to be admired, and up-to-date as it is in terms of where to go to investigate provenance and what to look out for, there is little sense of the new directions book studies have taken in recent years. There's little recognition of D.F. McKenzie's sociological approach. Ten years ago McKenzie was pointing out that theory limps behind practice, and, again, that mere lists never rise to readable history. Pearson's Handbook is more than mere lists, but it seems a pity when there are so few books about provenance that this one, in a History of the Book series, all but ignores this surely vital aspect of the current approach to the subject.

It is a measure of how far interest in provenance has moved in recent years that Pearson's original work, compiled in 1987, was then distributed on a self-published basis, whereas the 1994 version is, lavishly and expensively, published in the prestigious British Library Studies in the History of the Book series. Those original lists are here augmented by work on the tools essential to the study of provenance. But the broader context still needs to be explored. The move from research to application needs to be examined, and Pearson is clearly the person to take it on, placing provenance within the history of the book.

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