
This is the catalogue of the Grolier Club’s exhibition held between December 2002 and February 2003. The exhibition presented items from Grolier Club members’ private collections, obviously not regularly available to the general public. In its way the exhibition was a survey of book collecting today, illustrating the many and varied interests of bibliophiles. Although the catalogue is beautifully produced and the items illustrated and described are rare and sometimes unique, this is not a collection of untouchable treasures but rather a collection of books, manuscripts, and other works on paper that have inspired and continue to interest book collectors, not least the owners of the pieces in question. Each one is accompanied by a brief account written by its owner. Sometimes there are details of provenance, sometimes personal insights. Each page-long entry also includes an illustration of the item, sometimes in colour. The sections include Americana, History, Travel, Literature, Association Copies, Printing, Binding, Illustration, Photography, Bibliography, Music, Science and Medicine, and Children’s Literature. Emily Dickinson features twice: once as a poet, her poem printed on top of printed newspaper and sewn into a dress shape, the shirring making the text difficult to decipher – but one way or another isn’t poetry often like that?; and in an earlier entry there is a recipe for coconut cake in Dickinson’s handwriting, written “coconut” cake by her. Elsewhere there is a beautiful 1801 Reay and Bewick book on the farmer’s footman, the invention for tethering a horse in a field without a post or tree. Bewick’s engravings from the Newcastle cattle painter Joseph Atkinson’s original designs are exquisite, as Geraldine Cole, the owner, says, the pony is alive and alert even in this small illustration. The book was printed by Edward Walker in Pilgrim Street, Newcastle. Walker’s was still a print shop there when I was growing up in Newcastle in the 1950s.
You don’t have to be a collector to envy the owners of page after page of beautiful pieces – Edward Gorey’s watercolour of a bibliophile in his library; one of 240 copies of Edgar Allen Poe’s *Le Corbeau*, this one signed by Manet and Mallarmé; and three items associated with Virginia Woolf, one the outstanding Francis Dodd charcoal drawing, and another Woolf’s unique binding of *The House of Seven Gables*, made for her nephew Julian Bell. A collection well worth exploring, even if you missed the exhibition.


This claims to be a twenty-first century text book on research writing, addressing twenty-first century research issues and the particular challenges involved. Inevitably that means there is a strong focus on the internet as a research tool. The manual comes with a CD-ROM and with access to a dedicated web site. The package is aimed at college students, product brochure writers, journalists, and low-level public speakers – it cites school board and community group slide show presenters. Apart from the new emphasis on electronic resources, I found it little more useful than the run-of-the-mill guides to research and essay writing. It gives sound advice on MLA-, Chicago-, and Columbia-style citation, but nothing a student couldn’t find elsewhere. There is advice on web-site creation and design, though probably in too little detail to be really useful. As a backup text book to a real course in research methods it might be useful, though it is heavy-going and dull reading and no replacement for good classroom teaching and practical exercises on the subject.

The CD-ROM is mainly geared towards organising electronic resources. It comes with nice little features like note card that helps you organise downloaded material, and another features helps you create a bibliography of references. But it requires a lot of time to learn the system and obviously involves a commitment, not least of time, that most students would better spend on actual research and writing. In the end we all find our own way to work habits and organisation that best fit our individual requirements and the peculiarities of our research.