literary agents might have been enhanced with, for example, a sample enumerative listing illustrating the volume and variety of texts that passed through their hands in a given time span. Similarly, although Watt’s and Pinker’s literary acumen and editorial contributions are very well established by Gillies, refuting once and for all Heinemann’s allegations of agents’ purely mercenary motives, little is learned about the middlemen’s actual part in the material editing process, or their working relationships with publishers and editors.

Literary agency can provide an excellent framework for transnational, pan-textual print culture studies because agents’ work was inherently international and dealt with all kinds of writing. A comparative study of agency outside Britain, where offshoots of the profession developed differently, seems indispensable. Gillies has broken important ground in her field, but there is still a need for studies of literary agency which transcend the restraints of national and disciplinary boundaries. Such new work would do well to emulate the consistent focus and depth that Gillies has achieved in her book.

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Probably because of the cinema, the bearded, bispectacled, pipe-smoking gentleman in his worn tweed jacket sporting a British accent has become, in the eyes of the public, the epitome of the antiquarian book dealer. The present scholarly collection of essays goes far beyond this popular image.

Following in the footsteps of the numerous national book-history projects, this impressive publication celebrating the centenary of the Antiquarian Booksellers’ Association (ABA) is a most welcome addition to the growing list of books about the rare-book field. The essential role of antiquarian booksellers, often overlooked by scholars of the history of the book, is finally being recognized. Close to twenty-five contributors – booksellers, curators, university professors, and collectors – outline the history of antiquarian book buying and
selling by British book dealers, their role in creating taste, and their contribution to scholarship. What emerges, finally, is a description of some of the more outstanding personalities of the trade. Of course it is impossible to discuss in detail all the contributions but I will attempt to underline the main topics.

Auctions have always been a favourite buying tool for the bookseller. Frank Hermann describes some of the great sales (Huth, Britwell, and Morrison), the incursion of American booksellers into the British market in the 1920s, the rise in institutional auction purchasing in the 1960s and finally the Japanese “invasion” of the '70s and '80s. The author’s description of “rings” involving some household names during the famous sales of the pre-1970 era is frank and informative. Private buying has changed drastically since the introduction of the Internet and people are more aware of the value of rare books. Richard Ford deals extensively with all aspects of buying from private collecting and booksellers’ acting as agents to advertising and international competition.

Paul Minet begins the section on selling books, by far the longest, with a chronological history of bookshops from the hard times of the Depression and the Second World War to the golden era of the 1950s and '60s when libraries bought entire collections and American booksellers were frequent visitors. The last quarter of the century saw a decline in shops due to high rents, the rise of book fairs between 1975 and 1995, and the appearance of the “book town” concept of Richard Booth. Michael Harris gives a nostalgic and entertaining account of the street trade which mainly took place on Farrington Road. Other writers describe London bookshops and the Scottish trade. Paul Minet has another entertaining account of the West Country shops in the 1960s. H. R. Woudhuysen writes one of the best essays on booksellers’ catalogues, their role, their evolution, format, and design. The legendary Anthony Hobson describes his participation in dispersing some of the Phillips manuscripts between 1965 and 1982. His writing style alone – he speaks of an “Americanum” – is worth the read.

Chris Kohler describes the bookselling practice of building collections over time and selling them en bloc to an institution. These collections would find their way to American university libraries and to Japan mainly in the 1980s and '90s. Michèle Kohler develops the relationship between the British trade and institutional libraries. During the 1960s, British dealers began to visit American, Canadian, and Australian libraries and later librarians would return the favour.
and organize buying trips to the U.K. Collectors David Chambers and Robert S. Pirie give their take on the relationship between the dealer and the specialist collector which leads Pirie to write, “you weren’t a collector unless you were in debt to the trade” (198).

The third section begins with David Pearson’s insightful essay on patterns of collecting and trading in antiquarian books. Pearson acknowledges that there were more books at the beginning of the century before libraries began to buy heavily and that the giant collector of those times has been replaced by the more specialized buyer. In comparing two catalogues published at both ends of the century, Pearson clearly shows the development of descriptions and the emphasis on bibliographical research in more recent catalogues. “For the antiquarian book trade, the key point was the creation of an ever more detailed framework of knowledge within which to fit the books they were offering for sale, and to validate the importance, scarcity or interest in their wares” (209). Angus O’Neill’s piece on the patterns of collecting modern literature is very funny. Through the humour, he writes seriously about the heavy purchasing of modern firsts by libraries in the 1980s, which has since been replaced by a collector-driven market. He compares different catalogues to show trends, writes about book-collecting guides that he does not find very useful, and deals with the influence of literary prizes and the cinema on the popularity of modern first editions.

In the last section dealing with personalities, Arnold Hunt writes extensively on three very important foreign dealers who joined the British trade: Wilfrid Michael Voynich (1864–1930), Maurice Leon Ettinghausen (1883–1974), and E. P. Goldschmidt (1887–1994), whom Hunt describes as the greatest scholar-bookseller of the twentieth century. Scholar-booksellers were plentiful and A. S. G. Edwards gives examples of the contributions of many through their catalogues, their work in auction houses, and the career moves from dealer to curator and vice versa. “There is no reason why someone who sells books should be able to write them, any more than a picture-dealer needs to know how to paint,” writes Marc Vaulbert de Chantilly about booksellers’ memoirs (281). Although he maintains they are generally not very well written, he does review some of the most important contributions. Anthony Rota concludes with a short history of the ABA and its effects on regulating the trade.

Some useful appendices contain a list of book-trade archives, the founding members of the ABA, and a bibliography of booksellers’ memoirs. A general index is followed by an index of books mentioned.
and of booksellers. This scholarly but accessible publication will be useful and entertaining reading to all those who come in contact with rare books and even to the general readership interested in the marketing of antiquarian objects. Let us hope it will persuade other national associations to follow suit.

MICHEL BRISEBOIS

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It’s hard to know where to start with a book like this. Perhaps this way: I saw it listed in a catalogue and bought a single copy to see if I liked it. I wasn’t twenty pages in before I ordered another twenty copies, most of which I gave to friends and clients. I’m now on my second lot of twenty copies.

If anybody wants to know what antiquarian booksellers are really like, he or she can find out in this wonderful book, a book which exists almost by accident.

Sheila Markham, herself an antiquarian bookseller, had been writing a column for a British trade magazine. She became bored and started interviewing her colleagues at book fairs and in their premises. This book is the result. As the interviews were conducted for a trade magazine, the booksellers no doubt assumed that only other dealers would see their comments, so they spoke candidly and bluntly. The details are fascinating, even for another dealer. A first edition of five hundred copies done in 2004 sold out quickly and this, the second edition, contains follow-up reports by the subjects (except in those sad entries where, instead of an update, we find a death date.)

Markham wisely deleted the questions and each interview – of which there are fifty – generally runs from three to four pages and reads like an extended monologue.

Anyone who hasn’t mixed much socially with the book trade will find here perhaps the most delightful introduction imaginable. What a bunch! Given the circumstances, most dealers interviewed are British, but Markham includes a few foreign ones, mostly American, who regularly attend British book fairs or live in Britain. Our own Helen Kahn, probably the Canadian dealer most frequently seen at