reproduction (as the author herself says: if this were not so why
would the British Library seek to own the Sherborne Missal rather
than simply a digital version?): the look of the thing certainly, but
also, if it be written on parchment, the unique feel and unforgettable
smell of carefully-cured animal. We need not agree with some recent
writers, who, taking things quite too far, seem to see in the opening
of a medieval manuscript a substitute for sex, but the fact remains
that there is a tactile quality about medieval books that transcends
any reproduction or facsimile.

Yet medieval books are only the beginning of Siân Echard’s
odyssey. She offers us here a study not so much of what medieval
books were and are, but of how they were and are used. To my
mind, it is a fascinating and timely tale, and I can only recommend
it to others as learned, scholarly, erudite, and, above all, wonderfully
entertaining.

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Janice G. Schimmelman. *Books on Art in Early America: Books on Art,
Aesthetics and Instruction Available in American Libraries and Bookstores
US $65.00 ISBN 9781584562146

Over the past twenty-five years, art historian Janice G. Schimmelman
has collected and collated the literature of art and architecture that
circulated in the United States during the eighteenth century. She
has also made very welcome bibliographic forays into the early years
of photography in America. Her bibliographic scholarship is rare
among art historians at the turn of the twenty-first century, but
its roots run deep in a discipline distinguished for its devotion to
the annals of great artists, great ideas, and great works, and where
art practices are traced for heritage, influence, and legacy. Artists’
bibliographies are not uncommon, but a bibliographic quest like this
is rare, as Schimmelman lays out the range of books available to and
consulted by artists and readers alike, shaping taste, expectations, and
the dominant genres of visual art and architecture in colonial and
post-revolutionary America.

In *Books on Art in Early America*, Schimmelman constructs the
framework of the public circulation history of both seminal and minor
fine art texts and manuals, from the first known catalogue listing in 1719 until the founding of the Library of Congress in 1815. Her work is an essential compendium for book and art historians alike. She has identified 183 publications, ranging from treatises on aesthetics to instruction handbooks, available for consultation or purchase in American libraries and bookstores. The bibliography is meticulous and easily accessed through the multiple appendices that rearrange the master listing. Materials can be sought or explored not only by author, but by date of catalogue reference, number of catalogue references, the libraries and booksellers that listed the books, and by the size of collections (from the venerable Philadelphia Library Company with 104 titles in its collection to twenty titles in both the Library of Congress and the Harvard College Library, and the Yale College Library with just one). There is also a brief appendix of a half-dozen eighteenth-century American artists and some of the books that they are known to have read, information culled from letters and writings amassed by Schimmelman. Sixteen-year-old John Trumbull, for example, borrowed William Hogarth’s *The Analysis of Beauty* of 1753 from the Harvard College Library on 28 February 1772. Schimmelman then draws a connection to Turnbull’s self-portrait painted five years later wherein is seen a book labeled with Hogarth’s name and a colour palette organized according to Hogarth’s study.

As a measure of the cultural sophistication of a city, the collection of art books in early public lending libraries and of the stock traded in bookstores tells book historians and bibliographers as well as social and art historians much about the economic, educational, and class contexts in which artists aspired, studied, and sought private and public patronage. Prior to the founding of art schools in the United States (North America’s first art school and museum, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, was established in 1805, a decade prior to the Library of Congress), artists learned through private tutoring but were largely self-taught through the study of imported mezzotint engravings, journals, and books. As Schimmelman’s work proves, these artists relied on what are now the classic works of eighteenth-century European aesthetics and Enlightenment thought, including Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and Joshua Reynolds’s *Discourses* (1769–90). The most widely-circulated books were those like Hogarth’s that contemplate abstract concepts of visual art and aesthetics. In fact, because of Schimmelman’s diligent scholarship we now know that the most sought-after treatise
(if the number of catalogue entries is an appropriate indication) was Scottish philosopher Henry Home Kames’s *Elements of Criticism* (1762), which circulated in numerous editions over the decades.

Schimmelman’s modest hope is that the bibliography will be useful to students of American culture “in determining those concepts that helped to mold the artistic taste of early American society” (7). Its impact should be greater, however, on two counts. For those with a specialized interest in bibliography and library collections, this will be an essential reference for detailed knowledge of the breadth and focus of interest in fine art literature, publication patterns, and the public and commercial collection and circulation of such books among colonial American readers. For art and book historians, the exemplary primary research that structures *Books on Art in Early America* should contribute substantially to analyses of patterns of distribution of books and ideas to better conceive the historical context of visual and textual literacy and the currency of ideas exchanged among artists, authors, booksellers, librarians, and the political and economic elites that shaped America in the decades bracketing revolution and independence.

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Before codes and forensics became fashionable in popular media, bibliophiles were tracking historical bibliographic evidence. The complex journeys that books can go on have been suggestively recounted by seven authors in *Books on the Move: Tracking Copies through Collections and the Book Trade*. These investigations demonstrate the often perilous displacement of books and the ways in which they survive to become part of new collections. The authors, from various professional backgrounds (librarians, historians, and curators), have a common goal – to demonstrate how books are constantly in motion – and the result is an interesting collection of essays on the acquisition and diffusion of specific libraries in Europe from the sixteenth century to the twentieth.