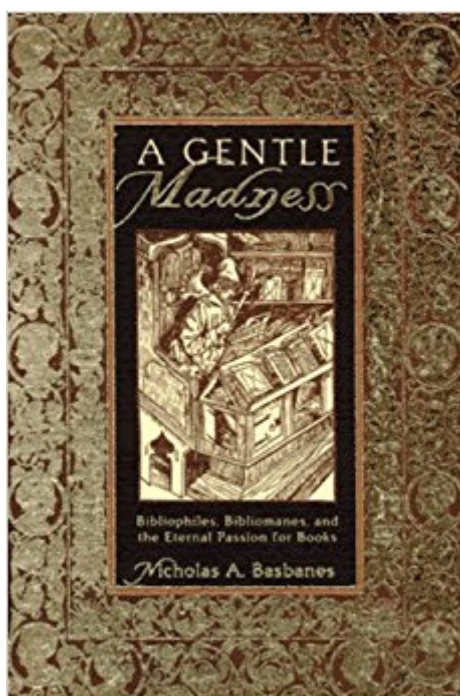


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A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, And The Eternal Passion For Books



Synopsis

This book is an adventure among the afflicted -- those with the passion to possess books. Richly anecdotal and fully documented, it combines the perspective of historical research with the immediacy of investigative journalism. Above all, it is a celebration of books and the people who have revered, gathered and preserved them over the centuries. From the great library of Alexandria, through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to the 20th century, here is a gallery of revealing profiles of past and present collectors. A comprehensive bibliography on books is included.

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Customer Reviews

What a delightful book about books and people who love books! As a second generation bibliophile, a possible bibliomane who had several people move out of my house a year ago because they erroneously believed that my books were taking over the household, and a devout employee of "Earth's Biggest Bookstore," I can vouch that Basbanes accurately describes the glorious role of book collectors as archivists of human knowledge, and -- in continual counterpoint -- sometimes pathologically obsessed book junkies.

In Part 1 of this informative and well-written work, syndicated book columnist Basbanes explores the history of book collecting from antiquity to the 1940s. This ground has been covered before, but Basbanes retells his story well; and, as the extensive notes and bibliography show, he has done his homework. Part 2 portrays the state of collecting in the 1980s, using a series of sketches of notable

figures in the field. The material here derives from extensive interviews and therefore provides information available nowhere else. For instance, Basbanes tells the moving story of Aaron Lansky, who has dedicated himself to rescuing books in Yiddish, and offers the fullest published account of Stephen Blumberg's theft of 23,600 books from 268 libraries in 45 states. Anyone interested in books will want a copy of this. Joseph Rosenblum, Guilford Technical Community Coll., Jamestown, N.C. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

...who craves ownership of a book almost as much as the reading of it. Although I am not sure the colorful characters in this book do indeed read their purchases, and needless to say they spend way, way more than I on their purchases, the fundamental urge to possess an object of one's desire is the same. Monks and spiritualists teach us that our possessions bind us, restrict us, and soon they are not our possessions but we become theirs. Happiness lies not in possessing things. A happy life does not require and indeed may depend on not having many possessions. In fact, the fewer the better, some may say. This book and the list of characters and the lengths they'll go to secure a possession will blow their minds. Our culture tends to be indulgent on collecting books. Sources of wisdom. How else would ancient manuscripts and documents of historic importance be preserved and handed down to next generations? While I appreciate the contribution of many of the high-minded collectors in this book, there are some that have just gone overboard and are lost - as is the case with the famed book thief who made himself sick by licking library identifiers off library books. All in all, a hearty recommendation to anyone who's interested in the topic of book collecting.

A history of various private book collectors going back to Classical Greece. My favorite is a father writing his 10-year-old son: I told you before to quit buying books! Why am I still getting bills from book dealers? And No! I will not go to any more book auctions for you! Needless to say the child grew up and left house full of books in various countries. Or the guy who wanted to collect early California literary material. And later realized he had to gather early Mexican materials for context. And " " " " " Spanish " " " Or they guy who stole \$20 million dollars worth of books to keep in his house !

This is the first in Basbanes series on book collecting and involves the history of the some of the world's great libraries and collections. Liked it a lot.

Really good information for people who love books.

Good read and reference work.

Great, very informative!

I was interested in one of the many collectors and the material on him was fascinating as were the others. Very complete material.

Classic book about book collecting; enjoyable the second time through.

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