



MINIATURE BOOK SOCIETY

February 2020 Newsletter

Mumbai Local – a Series by MBS
Student Grant Recipient Saloni Shah



Dabba Walla Alla



Greetings from the President

Hello to everyone. As the saying “tempus fugit” says, time certainly does march on. As we move into the new year, I want to say Happy New Year to everyone and wish you all the best in health and happiness for you and your families. As always, there are many MBS activities in motion and many members contributing their time, skills, and effort to the organization.

First, I want to say thank you to **Mark Palkovic** and **Tom Shessler** for volunteering to host our 2020 Conclave scheduled for August in Tarrytown New York. If you have not visited the MBS website, please take the time to review the preliminary information posted there. As

the calendar unfolds, more and more details will be posted on the website about the Conclave activities. The Conclave is always about friendship and members sharing, and we hope to see everyone in Tarrytown for this event. The preliminary By-Laws Review Committee finished their initial review and provided suggestions for changes that will help us move the organization into the future. Stay tuned.

Work is also progressing on our student grant program, the Young Bibliophile Writing Contest and annual membership renewal. If you have not renewed your membership, please contact Membership Chair **Donna LaVallee**. The process must be completed before we can proceed with the annual MBS Handbook publication. (*see story elsewhere*) Lastly, we are still searching for a new Treasurer for the organization. While we do have a professional bookkeeper who ensures our

day-to-day accounting and financial records are in order, we do need to have a Treasurer.

The position does not require the high level of accounting and Excel skills, as we have moved most of these functions to the bookkeeper. If you think you can help with this important job, please contact me or Vice President **Tony Firman**. The position is a part of the Executive Committee.

And be sure to visit our website, as there are many interesting features and up-to-date calendar items included, as well as some of our latest outreach activities.

Best Regards,



Jim Brogan, MBS President,
908.803.5647



Did You Know?

MBS member **Joan Boring** recently wrote to tell us that the Folger Library in Washington D.C. publishes an online blog, **Shakespeare & Beyond**.

The December 17, 2019 issue included an article *Six Miniature Books to Delight and Intrigue You*.

They include a castle-shaped copy of “**Hamlet**” and one that is presented in a plastic skull.

Definitely worth a surf!

<https://shakespeareandbeyond.folger.edu/>

Enter “miniature” in the search window.



What is Your Plan?

In our last issue, we emphasized the importance of making a plan to protect our book collections when we are no longer here to care for them. MBM Member Caroline Brandt wrote to reassure us that she has finalized her estate plan for her world-famous collection. What have *you* done?

Creating a Collection of Miniature Decorated Publishers' Bindings

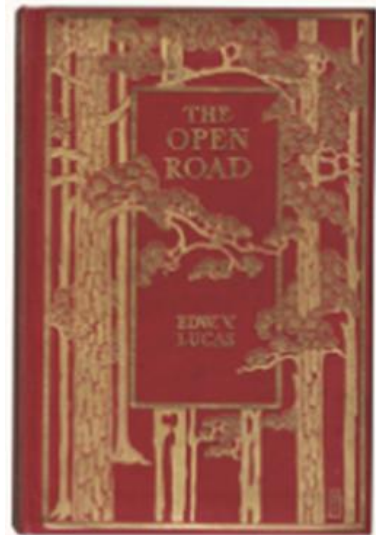
Kathleen Roberts

Long before I attended my first Conclave in Boston in 2015, I had been a book collector. In large part, that is why I became a librarian, specializing in collection development.

I began collecting 19th century publishers' decorated bindings, also known as decorated cloth bindings, with their stunning art nouveau designs, Victorian gilt and silver, exaggerated typography, and tactile feel of the cloth. I displayed them face-out, as the publishers intended – the covers were designed to sell the book, and to inform the owner's visitors that they were in the home of an educated, well-read family who appreciated great art.

From the very first cloth bindings of the 1820-1830s in glazed, smooth, cotton and milliners' ribbon-embossed cloth with paper title labels, to the elaborately gilt stamped

bindings of the prosperous 1850s, to the somber dark colors of Civil War era books of the 1860s, book design changed with the social and historical times.



A publishing revolution occurred in the 1890s with the hiring of artists - mostly women - as cover designers in the glorious art nouveau and deco style. I collected them all.

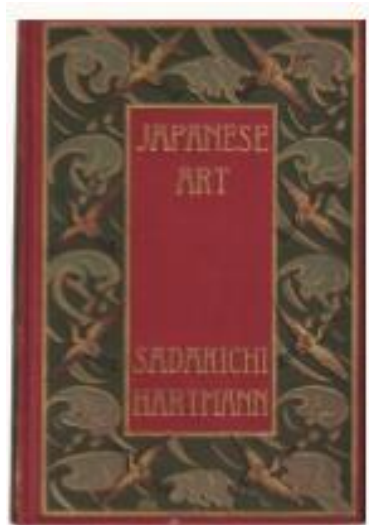
Along the way I had also discovered miniatures. My first cloth miniature acquisition was serendipitous. Viewed online, its clear, crisp image filled the screen. No measurements were provided in the listing and it never occurred to me to ask. I remember unwrapping the layers of careful packaging – it literally took my breath away. It was beautiful, enchanting...and *tiny*. The title was “**Dew-Drops**” and I was entranced.

In 2016, I donated a collection of 500 volumes of decorated publishers’ bindings, to the American Bookbinders Museum in San Francisco. But I kept the miniatures and small format books. I had already decided to replicate the collection in miniature – to build a collection of miniature cloth bindings. I had attended my first Conclave and I was mesmerized and obsessed.

Collecting antiquarian cloth miniatures is also challenging if you are concerned with condition rather than content. Cloth bindings are delicate (the ends fray from wear and moisture and dust stain the cloth). Spines darken (from

dust and grit of wood and coal heat). Pages absorb odor and smoke; the cloth fades in sunlight; and adhesives attract insects and rodents. Condition is a particular issue of thumb Bibles and children’s books of the 1860-1870s, a popular collecting area of miniature cloth: the Annie S. Frost, Aunt Fanny and Aunt Laura books, the moralistic American Tract Society publications. Kids are hard on books they love.

The **Gift Book** era of the 1840-1850s, however, holds much for the miniature collector of decorated cloth. During these years, books were the gift of choice for any event – even deaths,



particularly of children. With a Victorian emphasis on proper form and comportment, the 19th century pocket etiquette book was a common gift and a collector can create subsets of ballroom dancing; courtship and marriage (stressing wifely duties and subservience); the language of flowers; or funeral etiquette. Two to three inches was a common size, and I am particularly fond of the 4.5-inch gift book (a size that disqualifies it as a miniature, but which I choose to ignore).

Religious miniatures are by far the largest subject area of cloth miniatures. Guides of prayer and devotion, hymnals, psalms, Bibles, Korans, missals, Books of Common Prayer, and books of daily Bible verses (including “**Honey Drops**” and the much maligned and dismissed “**Dew-Drops**”). There are also atlases, dictionaries, almanacs, manuscripts and original art – the collecting field of miniature cloth is vast. An abundance of early cloth miniatures exists, including the William Pickering titles of the 1820s, the first firm to publish in cloth, and a

familiar name to those in the miniature book world.

As a collector, I regard what I do as historic preservation. I am not as concerned with primacy—the hunt for the first printing or edition—as much as for a close-to-new example of the binding.

I collect for condition. When I hold a 3-inch cloth and gilt miniature published in 1840’s Boston, the gilt bright, the cloth unmarred, the pages crisp, and with a delicate gift inscription on the front endpaper, I marvel at what this book has survived to end up in my hands. Often, these books were the first book the person had ever owned.



They were precious objects, often handed down through generations.

With this 1840 book, nine generations have passed. This 1840 book has survived the Civil War; the westward movement; two World Wars; the ravages of weather; travel by buggy, auto, train, ship, possibly plane; and

innumerable family reconfigurations, and yet it comes to me pristine.

I marvel at how many people have held this book in their hands and made the conscious decision to value and preserve it, and I am grateful for all the lives that intersected with this tiny object and for the choices they made.



Kathy has donated 450 miniature decorated bindings to the American Bookbinders Museum. We hope you visit and enjoy this beautiful exhibition!

Bound for Beauty

Highlights from the Kathleen V. Roberts
Collection of Decorated Publishers Bindings

December 14, 2019 - April 25, 2020

The American Bookbinders Museum
355 Clementina Street, San Francisco

You're Invited!

Kathy will also present **Bound for Beauty - The Art and Social History of 19th Century Book Cover Design**: an illustrated talk at The American Bookbinders Museum in San Francisco on March 7.

The informal gathering is an illustrated talk about Kathy's collection and research. Join her from 1-4 PM for the lecture, exhibit, and refreshments. The event is open to the public.

Three Questions for... *Josh Flanders*

Q: Josh, your CV and web site include an interesting range of experience, however none of it relates in any way to books of any size! Non-profit management and film, performance, entrepreneurship, and improv... how did these lead you to miniature books?

I grew up surrounded by books; literally, I had to move books just to leave my room....both my parents read to me and I had lots of favorite children's books, many of which I still have because...book hoarder!...along with a collection of children's books that has grown over the years. I went to UW-Madison where I majored in English (and loafing) and Northwestern University where I got my act together along with a Master's in Literature. Before my current career and after being a balloon animal twister, I was a high school English teacher. So, my love of literature and books has only grown. I am also an Anglophile, having traveled to England and London many times since I was 12, seeing tons of theater on the West End (I am now, among other things, a theater critic in Chicago).

There, around 2002, I was walking down Cecil Street and wandered into Stephen Poole Fine Books. There I saw and had to buy a signed copy of Edward Gorey's "**Category.**" Signed rare books? I already loved collecting fragile things—so this a perfect match. That was the first rare, signed book in a long line of rare, first edition and/or signed books that I started collecting, including a set of 4 Pooh books, early editions, bound by the publisher in full leather with gilt animals; several of Gorey's limited editions signed books; some very unique bindings including poems by Kipling, signed, with full leather and elaborate gilt edges by Monastery Hill in Chicago circa 1933, and many others. Favorite authors include Robert Louis Stevenson, Shakespeare, Charles Bukowski, Edward Gorey, Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire, and Daniel Silva.

Q: What was the first miniature book you ever saw? purchased? Do you have a favorite?

I have no idea what the first miniature book I ever saw was, that is like asking what's the first ice-cream you ever ate! But the first miniature books I ever purchased were probably Edward Gorey's "**QRV**" and "**An**

Eclectic Abecedarium,” which I bought from Anne Bromer, who published them. Of course, once I saw Bromer’s bookstore in Boston, and soon after a miniature bookstore in Tokyo, Japan, I was totally hooked. I now have a collection of about 200 miniature books. If I had to choose a favorite, again like picking a favorite ice-cream, nearly impossible! But if I had to, I’d pick **Robert Louis Stevenson’s “Envoy,”** 1992, limited to 65 copies, in a custom leather half-circle case by Poole Press, Berkeley (purchased in Japan). My second would be **Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Pit and the Pendulum,”** 1993 published by Pixie Press with the Miniature Book Society, 58x40mm, full black calf with black and red morocco onlays of a swinging blade, drop-back box with label, text by AR Mason, illus. by Joule Draper (PBA).

Q: What book/s are you reading now?

- **“In Love with the World: A Monk’s Journey Through the Bardos of Living and Dying”** by Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche
- **“How to Fight Anti-Semitism”** by Bari Weiss
- **“Meditations”** by Marcus Aurelius

- **“Ascending Peculiarity”** by Edward Gorey
- **“Suspicious Minds: Why We Believe in Conspiracy Theories”** by Rob Brotherton
- **“Born Standing Up”** by Steve Martin

And several comics including:

- Criminal by Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips
- Black Hammer by Jeff Lemire
- Strange Skies Over East Berlin by Jeff Loveness
- Invisible Kingdom by G. Willow Wilson
- Ascender by Jeff Lemire and Dustin Nguyen
- The Old Guard by Greg Rucka
- Paper Girls by Brian K. Vaughan and Cliff Chiang
- BPRD & Hellboy by Mike Mignola

Josh is the Coordinator of MBS’ Student Grants Committee. He and his wife Sheri live in Chicago.

And yes, he is reading “...several books at the moment...”, including those listed here!



....Calling Young Bibliophiles!

How have you promoted the contest among your network of family and friends? You might also consider your **faith community, local library, grade schools, scouting groups**. Or post on your **Facebook page, Twitter account**; tell your **reading group!**

The topic is **“Why I value my book collection.”** Stories should be 200-500 words.

The prize is \$250 and a one-year membership in MBS. Full information is posted on our website: <https://www.mbs.org/the-young-bibliophile>

...and Authors

We welcome your interesting stories about miniature books and their place in your world... and your library.

Contact the editor any time with a story you want to see... or one you've written but never got around to sending.

MBS Community Library Outreach

On March 28 and May 9, Donna Knoell will present a workshop program **Kids Make Miniature Books** at the Jefferson Madison Regional Library in Charlottesville, VA.

Eight to twelve year-olds will receive kits like the ones we distributed in at the library in Bloomington in 2019.

Contact Donna if you would like copies of her email requests to library staff, materials list and ordering information, and instruction notes. The library staff was *very* enthusiastic to offer this! Here is a link to the listing.

<https://www.jmrl.org/pr-kids.htm#/?i=8>

dmknoell@gmail.com

Deadline for the next issue is August 1

Plan ahead!

Submit **articles for review** to dmknoell@gmail.com

Report from the Student Grants Committee

Josh Flanders, Chair

“Mumbai Local”

MBS 2019 Student Grant

Recipient Update: *Saloni Shah*

Her application letter began, *“Imagine the sun groaning and pelting you with its blistering rays... Streets crammed with ramshackle buildings contrasted with dominating skyscrapers. Wisps of air, heavy with lingering dirt and pollution, coating you. Shrills of honking bawling right at you until it is red in the face. Imagine weaving through this entire ruckus and calling it home... The heavy air becomes a blanket. The honking becomes an upbeat soundtrack. Mumbai becomes home.*

Below: “Shifting Through” (open)

Right: “Taxi Fabric”

Through this project, I want to take others on a tour of my home using the iconic transportation systems as a vehicle for the narrative.”



“Shifting Through”

This year’s MBS Student Grant recipient Saloni Shah went on to explain that, “Redefining what a book can connote, the



series explores [ways to] create unique miniature books that adopt a sculptural appearance. I will celebrate mixed media approaches to investigate the relationship between the small book form and materials selected. The series will use narratives from mundane citizens travelling around Mumbai to offer insight into the city that is removed from the farfetched stereotypes.

“The Miniature Book Society is constantly expanding what a miniature book can be and has thrived with unique structures and designs. The open forum that allows for the exchange of such ideas and gives a platform to artists who relish working in

the miniature scale is a hope realized for a young artist like me who is constantly pushing the boundaries of experimentation with book arts and I would be privileged to be a part of this effort.”

Ms Shah is a student of Fine Arts at The Maryland Institute College of Art. She is seeking a BFA in General Fine Arts and Humanistic Studies with a concentration in Curatorial Studies and Book Arts.

See story/more photos at www.mbs.org



Conclave 2020!

Tarrytown New York

Nestled between Sleepy Hollow to the north and Irvington to the south, the village of Tarrytown is located in the Hudson River Valley 30 miles (50 km) north of New York City. Tarrytown was the home of Washington Irving and an inspiration for many of his works, including “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.”

Jan Becker has kindly volunteered to coordinate the 2020 Auction! Send your goodies to her by July 1
1700 Dix Road, Middletown, Oh 45042.

So of course it’s not too soon to begin planning your **Keepsake!**

And remember, vendors at the Book Fair tend to **prefer payment by cash or check**; not all have provision to accept credit cards.

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The title **To be continued...** is used with the permission of Hope Edison. The **portrait of Julian Edison** was created by **Susan Hunt Yule**.

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Decorative Bindings

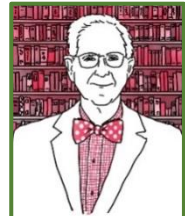
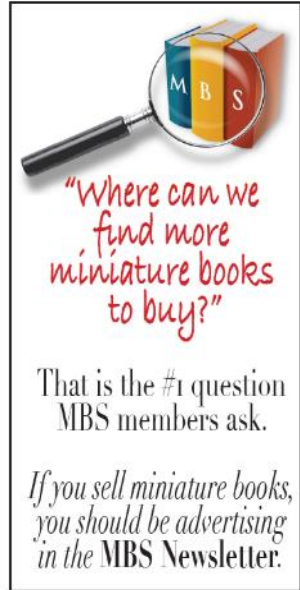
Photos provided by Kathleen Roberts

Other graphics

property/courtesy of the editor.

Errors and Omissions...

In the September 2019 issue, we listed a Black Cat Press publication as “**Shaw’s Sherlock Holmes.**” Thanks to our wonderful Caroline Brandt, who pointed out that the correct title is in fact “**The Whole Art of Detection by Sherlock Holmes,**” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.



Please help US

continue... consider submitting your research so we can share it here.

Submit your research to the editor by email; all submissions will be reviewed and approved by the board and may be edited for style and length.

Miniature Book Society

Board of Governors 2019

President: James Brogan
VP: Tony Firman
Secretary: Gail Faulkner
Treasurer: TBD

Members-At-Large

Christina Amato
Erika Clew
C. Darleen Cordova
Todd Sommerfeld

Membership is open to all individuals, organizations, and institutions with an interest in miniature books.

Membership dues (U.S. dollars)

United States:

\$40-Personal/Family
\$50-Business

Canada:

\$45-Personal/Family
\$55-Business

Other Countries:

\$55-Personal/Family
\$65-Business

Membership inquiries and dues payment contact:

Membership Coordinator

Donna LaVallee
178 Brewster Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-648-1382

donnaMBSmembership@gmail.com

NOTE that we cannot at this time accept PayPal; please mail your dues to Donna LaVallee.

Newsletter

Publisher

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Consulting Editor

Neale Albert

Issued in February, June, September. Items for publication must be family friendly and related to miniature books and should be sent to the editor, Donna Knoell.

MBS, Inc reserves the right to refuse any item deemed inappropriate. Submissions should be made electronically by email. MS Word is preferred (PDF only if no alternatives). Images should be JPEGs and include complete copyright/permissions/credits.

Deadline for the next issue:

August 1

Send articles for review to
dmknoell@gmail.com

Advertisements

Please send **inquiries regarding ad rates** and **print-ready ads** to
dmknoell@gmail.com

Printer

Alliance Printing & Mailing
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MBS in the news...and in demand!



We recently sent a story about our Conclave in Bloomington to MBS member Horst-Dieter Branser (Leipzig, Germany), who requested it as a reprint for the *Miniaturbuch Journal*, of which he is the editor. A friend of MBS translated our story and it is due for publication in the Spring. The Journal is extremely colorful and – if one can read German – seems to contain many interesting and in-depth articles. They also will publish “*How I Became a Miniaturist*,” by Yaroslav

Kostyuk and “*A Trip to the San Diego Public Library*,” by Karen Nieman.

Email the Editor if you would like to receive a PDF copy of the September 2019 issue.

We also sent the Conclave update to the **Fellowship of American Bibliographic Societies** and will let you know when that is published.

<http://www.fabsocieties.org/journalabout.html>

Designer Bookbinders Newsletter was interested in reprinting Sarah Burnett-Moore’s article, “*My Favorite Bookbinding Tool*.” It will appear in their Spring 2020 issue. You can read past issues on their website.

<http://www.designerbookbinders.org.uk/pub/newsletter.html>

Your stories are interesting; please consider submitting one for a future issue. The MBS – and our members – cover the world – let’s keep all our audiences informed!

www.mbs.org

AN INTERNATIONAL NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN 1983