



# *ANZAAB Aspects of Book Collecting*

## Collecting Books about Book Collecting

Kay Craddock – Antiquarian Bookseller

**Background:** The book arts and the history of printing, publishing and bookselling fall within this genre, as do books that recount the trials, tribulations and triumphs of individual book collectors. Indeed, some book lovers only collect books about book collecting. Books which systematically record the physical and textual components of other books according to a set criterion are known as 'bibliographies'. These can range from simple checklists of a genre or single author, to a line by line account of the printing, paper and binding style of all the books written by and about an author.

**Range:** The first book about book collecting is attributed to a 14th century bookloving bishop, Richard de Bury (1287–1345). His *Philobiblon*—a treatise on the love of books—was first printed at Cologne in 1473. It was first translated into English in 1598–9, edited by Thomas James. Many editions have since been published. The best English translation of *Philobiblon*, published in 1888 with the Latin text and with full biographical and bibliographical introductions, is by E. C. Thomas. In recent decades there has been an increased emphasis on scholarly and popular books on the subject of book collecting, and both out-of-print and new books are important to the collector.

**Availability:** Most antiquarian booksellers keep books about books—commonly known as 'the tools of the trade'—in their own reference libraries. However, many ANZAAB booksellers also stock the subject for sale.

**Price-range:** The majority of books under this subject heading are in the \$30–\$250 price range, but some items can cost many thousands of dollars.

**Footnote:** John Carter's *ABC for Book Collectors* (1952; later editions available for approx. \$45) is a standard reference work. A dictionary of terms relating to books, Carter's *ABC* is widely used by both book collectors and booksellers. On the lighter side is Terry Belanger's *Lunacy and the Arrangement of Books* (1982; later editions available for approx. \$20). The author, a librarian, discusses some of the many ways of arranging a collection of books, beginning with the premise that 'One promising method for detecting madness among book dealers, book collectors, and librarians is to examine the manner by which they arrange their books on their shelves'.