

**Editor/President**

Dr Mark Ferson  
4 Sofala Ave  
Riverview NSW 2066  
0401 141 890  
m.ferson@unsw.edu.au

**Secretary**

Bronwyn Vost  
bronwynvost@bigpond.com

**Designer**

Mary Keep  
marykeep@gmail.com



Hand-coloured linocut by  
George Perrottet for  
Marcie Collett, 1941

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**Italian bookplates in the collections of the State Library of Victoria**

By Christine Bell, Melbourne

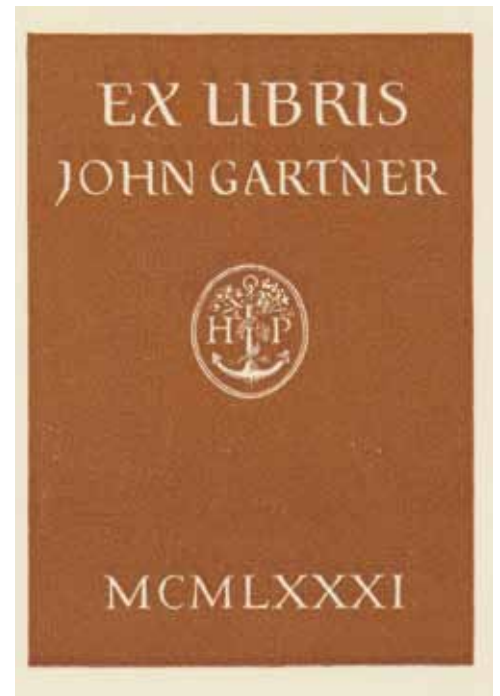
*A version of this paper was published (in both Italian and English) in the June 2020 edition of L'Ex Libris Italiano of the Associazione Italiana Ex Libris.*

Australia has long had a fondness for all things Italian — its people, art, architecture, food and lifestyle. Our art museums hold Italian works of art, and our libraries hold Italian literature and poetry in the original and in translation, and at least one library has a small discrete collection of ex libris designed by 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian artists. The State Library of Victoria's collection of Italian bookplates is a quite recent acquisition, arriving in 2001 as part of a gift of about 45,000 international examples. This international collection was assembled by John Gartner (1914–1998), a printer, bibliophile and collector. Gartner's original collections — books, ex libris, coins and stamps, were destroyed in the deadly bushfires in Victoria in 1983, and he and his wife were lucky to escape with their lives when their house caught fire and burned to the ground. Having lost his entire collections, Gartner began in 1985 to travel to Europe and America, meeting ex libris artists, fellow collectors, and the friends whom he had made over many years of personal collecting, with a view to rebuilding his bookplate collection. After John Gartner died in 1998, the collection passed to a friend, who subsequently donated it to the State Library of Victoria.

Within the State Library, interest in Italian bookplates was expressed early in 1930, when a series of ex libris publications printed in Bologna was ordered from the famous Florentine booksellers, Olschki. They were published by Cesare Ratta early in the 1930s, in an edition of 300 copies. The library holds numbers 1 to 8 in the series, which has a running title of 'Ex-Libris Italiani Moderni'. Like most large

libraries, the State Library has cataloguing backlogs, and while moving some boxes of uncatalogued material, these 8 volumes were re-discovered in 2019. Now fully catalogued, it was to be 70 years before examples of works by the artists listed in the series would be added to the library's bookplate collection. Clearly, the volumes were not acquired as selection aids for purchase, nor do we know which staff member was responsible for the acquisition in the 1930s.

Ex libris collected by John Gartner reflected his preferred medium — wood engraving. This preference was visible across the entire international collection, and stemmed from his own ability to print ex libris from the blocks cut by Australian artists. Gartner's second preference was for plates printed from a linocut. The full international collection includes not only ex libris, but also greetings cards, prints,



Wood-engraved design by Derek Riley for John Gartner, 1982



Wood engraving by Remo Wolf for Lola Roca, 1952

exchange lists, and miscellaneous printings like stamps, if artists also worked in these mediums. It is the same with the selection of Italian prints.

Remo Wolf (1912–2009) was Gartner’s favourite Italian artist and wood engraver. He acquired, through purchase and exchange, 292 of his ex libris, 5 greetings cards and one fine print. He also admired the work of Maria Elisa Leboroni (1934–?), and collected 176 ex libris, 3 greetings cards, 5 fine prints and an exchange folder from her opus. His admiration for the works of Bruno da Osimo



Maria Elisa Leboroni’s wood-engraved plate for Arezzo-based restaurateur and collector Mario de Filippis, 1978.



Wood-engraved design by Bruno da Osimo for Benito Mussolini, 1935



Italo Zetti wood-engraved bookplate for Italian collector Gianni Mantero, 1932

(1888–1962) resulted in his acquiring 52 ex libris and 2 greetings cards from Osimo's wood engraving output. Guiseppe Mirabella (1948– ) is represented by 48 ex libris and 2 greetings cards, all wood engravings. Other wood engravers whose work is held include Armando Baldinelli (1908–2002), Costante Costantini, Tranquillo Marangoni and Gian Luigi Uboldini.

The most recent addition to the Italian collection is work by Italo Zetti (1913–1978). This was a gift from the Bell Bookplate Trust earlier this year, and the library now holds 57 ex libris, 2 greetings cards and one fine print. Zetti's artistic work is underpinned by the 1968 publication of the monograph on his work, *Ex Libris Italo Zetti*, published in Hamburg and Milan (ISBN: 3-920855-01-9). This volume also belonged to John Gartner, whose personal ex libris appears on the front cover. Gartner's extensive library included many publications on those artists whose work he admired and collected. Most of these volumes will eventually form part of the State Library collections.

Zetti studied with Pietro Parigi and Bruno Bramante, and while there are 26 examples of Bramante's work in the collection, only one wood engraving by Parigi is held. Over his collecting life, Gartner commissioned 150 personal ex libris, two of them by Italian artists. Zetti's ex libris of 1959 (op.437) appeared on the front cover of the monograph cited above, and that by Remo Wolf was commissioned in 1990. Gartner's last personal commission was from his friend Frank-Ivo van Damme in 1994.

As honorary curator of the Gartner Collection since 2009, I am keen to develop the Italian section further. There are no examples of Italian work from the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and none from this century. I would be delighted to hear from artists and collectors who might be interested in adding to the collection, either through exchange with Gartner's personal plates, or by purchase. The State Library of Victoria has the largest collection of European bookplates in Australia, now numbering just over 50,000, and I am keen to support its expansion.

## **Petr Herel and his surrealist bookplates**

By Jürgen Wegner, Librarian, Sydney

Petr Herel was born in the small Czech town of Hofice in Bohemia. He studied at the Výtvarná škola (Prague's School of Art) and graduated in 1969 from the Akademie výtvarných umění (Prague's Academy of Fine Arts) with a Master of Arts plus a Diploma of Education. The following year he was awarded the prestigious Arnošt Šaňka Prize for the Czech Artists' Book of the Year. He fell in love with an Australian girl which led him to live and work for a time in France. In 1973, they first moved to Melbourne where he was head-hunted in 1979 by Udo Sellbach, Director of the Canberra School of Art (now part of the Australian National University), to head their Graphic Investigation Workshop. Herel's substantial legacy is preserved in the Petr Herel Collection of Graphic Investigation Workshop archive of 246 book works now deposited at the Australian National University Library.

These days, so-called book arts workshops are everywhere. Which institution does not want the kudos of at least being seen to be a patron of the book arts? But there is a sameness about them all today. Herel not only injected a breath of fresh air into Canberra, but his time there saw a generation of Australian book artists trained to an international sensibility. For Herel was not only interested in the art in the book arts, but in the BOOK in book arts. The German private press printer Werner Enke of the Harrisfelde Wegpresse is an example. Enke was given a guest lectureship during which time he also produced a beautiful hand-printed type specimen book. Herel is still in touch with Enke in a collaborative artistic relationship — I am with both also. They together recently produced a book on the German writer, Friedrich Rückert, with Herel creating the illustrations. The Graphic Investigation Workshop also delved into the possibilities of hand papermaking for artists' books and not that long ago, its 'paper mill' was still to be seen there.

Herel's longest collaboration was with his printer and close friend, Thierry Bouchard,

in France. Together they produced many finely letterpress printed artists' books as the Labyrinth Press (establ. Canberra, 1980). The books have about them all that is great and special about fine book printing in France and Europe generally. Once he had retired to live in Melbourne in 1998, Herel continued with his book works as the Uncollected Works Press (but establ. Canberra, 1991). The untimely death of Bouchard put a stop to their letterpress collaboration but Herel continued with his works using other methods.

A favourite work is his massive set in six volumes 'printed' using pyrography, *i.e.* burning with a red-hot stylus. The work is an anthology of quotations from the French surrealist writer, Antonin Artaud. A text created out of fire, if you will, and one which relates to my own life-long interest as a librarian in the burning of books, book destruction and Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. Herel pulled a book off his shelves while I was talking to him about his bookplates and humans as destroyers of books: Hrabal's *Příliš blučná samota* (Czech, *Too loud a solitude*). It is the story of a man who works destroying censored books in the sense of ripping books physically apart so they cannot be read, turning them into waste paper for pulping. He cannot help himself but rescues what he can, thereby becoming both the destroyer as well as the creator of worlds — a book I'm looking forward to reading.

Herel's works are very much European in the best manner. Surrealism is a strong influence. The State Library of Victoria has purchased many of his works and recently held a large exhibition of them in their 'Mirror of the World' Dome exhibition space. Herel was awarded a State Library of Victoria Fellowship in 2014 to research the French poet and philosopher Paul Valéry's personal book collection, acquired by the State Library of Victoria in 2011. Like all artists, he also worked in the more ephemeral sphere. For example, in my Archive on the Age of Print (the Brandywine Archive) I have a copy of a book of poetry by Dimitris Tsaloumas, published by the University of Queensland Press, which has Herel's delicate artwork





**Wood-engraved bookplate by Petr Herel for Josef Horný, 1977**



**Wood-engraved bookplate by Petr Herel for Dr Robert Finlay-Jones, 1980**

for their cover illustrations. Also, find an artist and you'll find someone who has produced bookplates — Herel has also done some bookplates on commission. A very few. Now wouldn't one created via pyrography be something!

Herel and I have known each other for over thirty years and continue to correspond. Herel has no television nor has he a computer. So, we communicate in that most traditional and haptic of forms, the letter — letters which are often illuminated by him with little sketches in the margins. We recently corresponded about the work of a fellow Czech, Jan Šetek. While Šetek's private press is not a fine press but, rather, an experimental press, he has produced a considerable number of bookplates over the years, largely for himself. This led Herel to send me proofs of two of his beautifully wood-engraved bookplates. One for Josef Horný (1977) and the other for Robert Finlay-Jones (1980).

Herel has told me that in all he would have produced no more than four or five bookplates in his life. The first he did while still in Czechoslovakia. The Horný was done in France though Horný was a Czech-Australian. Dr Finlay-Jones, a forensic psychiatrist, knew Herel because he lived across the road from him in Canberra and had bought some of Herel's prints. While I don't specifically collect bookplates, they are useful additions to my ephemera collection. Now they are filed, along with other 'odds and ends', in the folder of ephemera about Petr Herel and his presses.

Further reading

References obtainable from the author at  
[branntweinarchiv@hotmail.com.au](mailto:branntweinarchiv@hotmail.com.au)

See also the Graphic Investigation Workshop archive at  
<http://library-admin.anu.edu.au/petr-herel-collection/workshop/index.html>

### **Is this a bookplate?**

#### **Phonoplates**

By Bryan Welch, London

*'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
 Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'*

It's nearly a century ago that two students at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, Ernest Morgan and Walter Kahoe, began to print bookplates as a way of using up the waste paper in the College's printing shop. Their enterprise expanded until the Antioch Bookplate Company became the largest supplier of universal bookplates in the USA. 'Universal', meaning ones that could be overprinted for a customer with their name. The company continues to operate from Yellow Springs under the name of Bookplate Ink.

I recently acquired one of the company's catalogues from 1948. There are numerous artistic bookplate designs and seven for 'phonoplates'. These are name plates for phonograph records. At the

# NAME PLATES for PHONOGRAPH RECORDS

Actual  
Size



Design  
No. F-13



F-14



F-19



F-18



F-12



F-17



F-11

"Phonoplates" are an important accessory to any collection of phonograph records. They are printed on gummed paper, and are die-cut. In addition to the designs shown we offer for institutional use others with room for more wording. Samples on request.

## PRICES WITH NAMES

100 . . . .	\$ 3.00
200 . . . .	4.50
300 . . . .	6.00
400 . . . .	7.50
500 . . . .	8.50
600 . . . .	9.50
700 . . . .	10.50
800 . . . .	11.50
1000 . . . .	13.50
2000 . . . .	23.00

## Name plates for phonograph records, Antioch Bookplate Company catalogue, 1948

time in April 1948 these would have been 78 RPM records, as the 33 RPM record only made its first appearance in June of that year, followed soon after by the '45'. Has anyone ever seen one of these plates, on or off a record?

### What is the first English bookplate?

*Abstracted, with kind permission of the author, from a 'bibliographic note' with the above title by David Pearson in The Library, vol. 20, December 2019*

Brian North Lee, the late doyen of English bookplates who published numerous books and articles on the subject based on his immense research and encyclopaedic knowledge of the topic, stated in his *British bookplates: a pictorial history* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1979) that the first English bookplate was a large armorial design recording the donation of books to Cambridge University by Sir Nicholas Bacon in 1574.

In a recent article in *The Library*, journal of the Bibliographic Society (United Kingdom), that other doyen, in this case of the study of provenance in relation to book history, David Pearson, has written of

a bookplate that must be dated no later than 1565, and possibly originates a few years earlier. I have paraphrased David's words:

What has hitherto been less well documented is a set of sixteenth-century hand-painted paper labels, which clearly were pasted in as bookplates, surviving among the library of Bury St Edmunds Grammar School, which has since 1970 been deposited in Cambridge University Library. There are four of them, among a group of books which belonged to Thomas Andrews (d. 1585) who gave them to the Grammar School in 1565.

Thomas Andrews was a successful lawyer, a member of an established Bury St Edmunds family who studied at both Oxford and Cambridge before graduating from the latter as Bachelor of Law in 1542. In the 1560s, he became MP for Sudbury, and the appointed deputy to the Duke of Norfolk as steward of Bury; he was also, by then, a governor of the Grammar School. He was later a justice of the peace for Suffolk, and solicitor to Cambridge University.

Now to turn to the bookplates in more detail, each bookplate is individually hand-drawn and coloured, but the design is uniform — the arms of Andrews,

without any wording, and the heraldic tinctures correctly followed. The surviving examples vary in size between 12 × 10 cm and 18 × 13 cm. They seem certainly to have been made, and pasted in, to function as bookplates in the way we understand them; they are not coats of arms made for some other purpose which found their way into books as an afterthought. They appear in imprints dated between 1528 and 1554 and as the books were given to the School in 1565, there can be little doubt that they were put in well before 1574, perhaps as early as the second quarter of the century.

It seems likely that there may once have been more of them, among the books which have been lost, or removed, from others which are still there. It is surprising, in that case, that none seems to have found its way into the great English bookplate collections like Franks or Viner. We do not know what proportion the Andrews gift comprised of his library as a whole, or what books he left behind when he died in 1585; his will, which reveals extensive property holdings, has no specific mention of books, but left all his 'household stuff good[s] cattells of what[ever] kinde' to his wife.



David Pearson retired in 2017 as Director of Culture, Heritage & Libraries for the City of London Corporation, after a long career managing libraries and collections. He is a Past President of the Bibliographical Society, and continues to teach regularly in the London and Virginia Rare Book Schools. David now concentrates on his academic profile as a book historian, with particular interests in ways in which books have been owned, bound or used, and he has lectured and published extensively in this field.

I cannot recommend strongly enough David's practical and beautifully illustrated guide *Provenance research in book history: a handbook* (Bodleian Library, 2019), which has a very substantial chapter on bookplates, and which otherwise any book lover will find mouth-wateringly delightful.

Further reading

The original article in *The Library* can be found online at <https://doi-org.wwwproxy1.library.unsw.edu.au/10.1093/library/20.4.527>



Hand-drawn and coloured armorial bookplate for Thomas Andrews, pre-1565, in situ in *Prædium rusticum* (Paris, 1554) in Cambridge University Library (courtesy David Pearson)

## Editorial

A newsletter editor's role is, among other things, to assemble suitable content for his or her publication. Modern forms of communication tend to make this much more prompt and 'efficient' even if the romance of letter writing and the excitement of sending and receiving telegrams have faded into the past. Much of the copy in this December issue has come from overseas or concerns international bookplate relations, but generally with an Australian connection. The exception is the item proposing a new candidate for the first English bookplate: I stumbled across the item in a British journal, found an email address for the author, an eminent authority in book history research, and, through exchange of a few emails over the space of merely days, obtained his approval 'to quarry the text of my article however you like'. So I am grateful to David Pearson for this kindness and generosity, and to the other contributors, Christine Bell, Jürgen Wegner and Bryan Welch for their varied and equally fascinating articles. I would also like to thank Tom Ferson for providing copies of his recent holographic bookplate as an inclusion in this issue of the *Newsletter*.

You will soon receive a notice for the next FISAE international bookplate congress, which is to be held in San Francisco — we ardently hope — in September 2022 under the auspices of the American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers and the orchestration of our American friend James Keenan. I hope that at least some of us can make it there, something I am definitely planning to do, COVID-19 and life generally permitting.

December is well underway, but with the exceptional contributions of our designer Mary Keep and printer Siung Tan of Sydney Design & Print, we are committed to getting the *Newsletter* into the post before the year ends. By the way, Mary chose the Marcie Collett bookplate for the December *Newsletter* because it always makes her think of Christmas. I would very much like to thank all members, contributors and readers for their continuing interest in the *Newsletter*, the Society and bookplates generally; and to acknowledge the support during the year provided by Mary and by the other office bearers and committee members — Bronwyn Vost, Jess Le, Ronald Cardwell and Nick Ingleton. And please note that Bronwyn will be in touch with members early in the new year regarding the next Annual General Meeting.

All that remains is for me to wish you all a 'Merry Christmas and Compliments of the season', whatever tradition you might follow, and to hope that you remain well in body and mind despite the challenges of the past year or two.

MF

