2015

Oregon Trails--Anatomy of a Collection

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Recommended Citation

Leonhardt, Thomas W. (2015) "Oregon Trails--Anatomy of a Collection," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 27: Iss. 3, Article 41.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7112>

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A bigger question: does the crowd as evaluated by Google have it right? So far the graph seems to consolidate Wikipedia information and those sites in the image of the Wiki masters.

Too much knowledge will not be good for ad placement, but we can be sure the search engineers have an acceptable design. Some trade-off.

Browser Wars 2015 Catch-Up:

Web metrics are everything and nothing. Facebook counts over one billion users, one-seventh of the known world population. This means a NASDAQ valuation of 80.00 a share. Twitter is as pervasive as Facebook but with only 300 million registered users can't get the same love from investors.

Of course, it is more complex and subtle than this, but numbers count when they do and don't when they don't. The honest investment brokers admit no one knows potential of users; there is just use and these numbers are closely held.

ZDNET's **Ed Bott** argues persuasively that government numbers are solid and tell us much about browser use. Governments measure ev-

everything; the bigger the government, the more bureaucratic and automatic numbers collecting becomes. No bureaucrat is concerned with number spin — enough to go on CNBC and talk expertly.

The federal government collects incoming use and gathers all the usual data suspects — IP, time of day, other stuff. Part of the other stuff is browser version. **Bott** writes about browser versioning of the Web and comes up with some nontrivial findings.

We find out that Internet Explorer and Chrome for Windows dominate the browsers accessing government sites.

IE translates to Windows desktops and laptops.

Chrome's use is anyone's guess; I'm betting it's all the Firefox users who fought the good fight with Google's support only to have its user base gutted by Chrome's debut in 2007. Until then, Google subsidized Firefox in exchange for Firefox's default use of Google Search in its toolbar.

So it's a Windows 7 (or Wintel) world as far as browsers accessing federal government sites. Chrome and Safari dominate mobile browsers — Android and IOS the likely reasons.

It's good and necessary to know this and balance it against the real and hyped takeover of computing by hand computers.

I'd like to think it means that government data is sensitive and valuable enough to require appropriate tools. These are still the traditional operating systems. It may explain the slow take-up of mobile devices by students and faculty. In an odd and ironic way, desktops are the equivalent or evolutionary extension of pencil, paper, and textbook. Where's the teacher? Checking travel bookings on an iPhone probably.

So it's just government data and services. And yes, it's difficult to identify the real browser.

And it may be moot, fatuous, and lame to conclude anything from this. But no more than the numbers game (or war?) of the big guys.

Take away: the desktop we've known and used is still the tool we use and expect to use. It may be a significant disservice to library users to assume and act otherwise. 🐼

Oregon Trails — Anatomy of a Collection

Column Editor: **Thomas W. Leonhardt** (Retired, Eugene, OR 97404) <oskibear70@gmail.com>

Once you have three of something, you have a collection, and the compulsion begins. By failing to re-cycle (re-sell not destroy) the reading copies of a couple of **C. S. Forester's** Hornblower books, my collection of seafaring books had begun; I just didn't know it at the time.

When I was in high school, the few books that I bought I found on the book racks in the Post Exchange or occasionally in Kiosks outside the Frankfurt/Main main train station. Until I started college, I had no idea that there were stores that sold only books, so I relied on Post and school libraries for most of my reading. I owned *The Portable Steinbeck*, *The Portable Poe*, and a few **Signet Classics** from the PX, a small assortment at best. My family moved so often that books usually got left behind at an Army post thrift shop. But the idea of collecting books had occurred to me. When interviewed for the high school newspaper during my senior year, I was quoted as saying that I wanted a library of my own and at the only high school reunion I have ever attended or want to attend, several former classmates, when told that I was a librarian, commented that I finally got a library of my own. Little did they know what I had really meant or what I ended up with.

For the longest time, my collecting was haphazard but gradually and slowly, as finances improved, several collections began to take

shape — **Wright Morris** and **Christopher Morley** in particular. It wasn't until fairly recently that I felt the urge (an itch must be scratched) to fill in the missing titles from the ten Hornblower novels. In browsing for those books I discovered **Forester's** *The Hornblower Companion: An Atlas and Personal Commentary on the Writing of the Hornblower Saga, with Illustrations and Maps* by **Samuel Bryant** and **C. Northcote Parkinson's** *The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower*, a biography that some people point to as proof that the Hornblower of fiction was an actual person and member of the Royal Navy.

An unintended consequence of my utilitarian gathering of Hornblower books was a growing curiosity about what the ships looked like during the era of **Admiral Nelson** and the Napoleonic wars of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Was I beginning a new collection or merely expanding my Hornblower collection? The answer is a bit of both as the following titles suggest: *Hornblower's Ships: Their History & Their Models*, by **Martin Saville**; *Men-of-War: Life in Nelson's Navy*, by **Patrick O'Brian**; *The Frigates*, by **James Henderson**; *The History of Ships*, by **Peter Kemp**; *The 50-Gun Ship*:

A Complete History, by **Rif Winfield**; *Ships: Visual Encyclopedia*, by **David Ross**; and *The Visual Dictionary of Ships and Sailing*, a **Doring Kindersley** book.

Sailors have their own language, too, and I was delighted to find a dictionary, *A Sea of Words: A Lexicon and Companion to the Complete Seafaring Tales of Patrick O'Brian*, by **Dean King** that works equally well with the Hornblower novels and others of that ilk, for example the Ramage novels of **Dudley**

Pope (I have a dozen paperbacks waiting to be read), and the **Richard Delancey** seafaring tales by **C. Northcote Parkinson**.

It is instructive to compare **King's** definitions with those found in the volume next to it on one of my bookshelves: *The Sailor's Lexicon: the Classic Source for More Than 15,000 Nautical Terms* by **Admiral W. H. Smyth**. A side bar for this book states that it is "Acknowledged Lexicon for Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin Sea Stories." Still, it is good to have **King's** version with its charts and maps that come in handy when reading *Master and Commander*, *Treason's Harbour*, or any of the other 18 **O'Brian** titles on my

continued on page 65

Oregon Trails from page 64

shelves, again, waiting to be read. I tend not to keep the **Parkinson, Pope, or O'Brian** books but pass them on to a grandson.

A supplement to *A Sea of Words*, also by **Dean King** (with **John B. Hattendorf**), is *Harbors and High Seas: An Atlas and Geographical Guide to the Complete Aubrey-Maturin Novels of Patrick O'Brian*.

To round out my collection of books related to the days when ships were actually sailed, I have **Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s** *The Seaman's Friend: A Treatise on Practical Seamanship* and a reprint of the 1637 manual by **Richard Norwood** titled *The Sea-man's Practice*.

No seafaring library would be complete without a copy of *Two Years Before the Mast*, also by **Richard Henry Dana, Jr.** I have two copies; one is a paperback first edition, a **Signet Classic**, with an introduction by **Wright Morris** and, thus, it resides in the **Wright Morris** collection. But the edition I have in my seafaring section is from the **Reader's Digest** *The World's Best Reading* series. It is a faux quarter leather-bound book with illustrations by **E. Boyd Smith** and an Afterword by **Thomas Fleming**. The end papers show the route that **Dana's** ships took around Cape Horn. There is a glossary appended along with "A Ship's Sails" and "The Spars and Rigging of a Ship." So laugh if you will about a book associated with **Reader's Digest**, but it truly belongs with the world's best reading and I wouldn't part with it.

By the time we get to the late Victorian and early Edwardian days of sailing, steamships had supplanted sailing ships, but my fondness for seafaring reading stayed and can be traced to the **Howard Pease** books I read in junior high about tramp steamers. But the appeal of the next two seafaring collections has more to do with the particular authors and their association with ships and sailors even when the sailors are ashore.

If you know the name **W. W. Jacobs** (1863-1943), it is probably because of his eerie tale, "The Monkey's Paw," a story that has been dramatized for radio and television, neither medium of which can capture the horror of the written story, especially when it is read aloud.

But **W. W. Jacobs** mainly wrote short stories (and a few novels) about sailors' lives on shore and not out to sea. There is an **O. Henry** flavor to many of them, but I enjoy reading them. I favor the **Nelson** reprints but am not averse to other editions. If you had to own just a single book by **Jacobs**, I recommend *The Lady of the Barge*, for with it you will get some of his classic short stories and "The Monkey's Paw."

William McFee (1881-1966) was a ship's engineer who liked to read and write, and he wrote very well. I never intended to collect **McFee**, but one of my all-time favorite books is his *Casuals of the Sea*. I had acquired a Modern Library edition many years ago and was not really aware of anything else by **McFee**. One day, browsing in the rare books room of the **North Lamar Half-Price Books** in Austin, Texas, I spotted a three-quarter leather on original blue cloth first edition of *Casuals of the Sea* for \$150. I was sorely tempted but couldn't justify paying that much for a book that I already owned, albeit another, cheaper edition. I wanted

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that book and would check on it each time I visited that Half-Price store, wondering when I would succumb to its lure and shell out the cash. But even when it was reduced to \$120, I resisted. Finally, it was reduced to \$60, and I had a coupon for 50% off of any one item. So now that handsome volume, with marbled endpapers, sits among 29 other books by **McFee**. There are five variant editions of *Casuals of the Sea* (it started the whole thing, after all) including the Armed Services edition. I now have 29 **McFee** books, many of them signed by him, and all because of what became almost an obsession about *Casuals of the Sea*.

As much as I enjoy **Joseph Conrad's** sea stories, I don't collect him. I do own, however, *A Conrad Argosy* because the introduction was written by **William McFee**, and it is a handsome book that fits nicely among other books of the sea.

Rounding out my nautical collection are a few books that just seemed necessary and right to own given the broad appeal of seafaring literature. There is *The Caine Mutiny* and *The Bounty Trilogy* (another mutiny), the *Trader Horn* books and *The Riddle of the Sands*, an espionage story involving a ship and the Frisian islands. And *Anchors Aweigh!* by **Oliver G. Swan** (I have the **Grosset & Dunlap** reprint or the originally titled *Deep Water Days*) in its green, stamped binding and interior woodcuts looks so good, and good reading, too.

Shoulder to shoulder on the shelf are two books by the esteemed naval historian **Samuel Eliot Morison**: *John Paul Jones: A Sailor's Biography* and *The Two-Ocean War*.

If you want to learn about how the United States won the Pacific in World War II, there is no finer work. None of the WWII movies that I grew up watching really did justice to the U.S. Navy and especially the sailors who were trained to do almost every job on a ship if called upon. Curious about that training and thanks to serendipity, **Morison's** account is enriched by my copies of *The Bluejackets' Manual 1943* (official U.S. Navy manual for enlisted men) and *Your Navy*: "This book is written for all enlisted men of the U.S. Navy. As part of the Navy training courses program it is intended to give men an understanding of the history and development of the Navy and an appreciation of the Navy's role in our national history."

And finally, in order to better understand much of what I read in the other nautical works, fact and fiction, I bought a second-hand copy of *Know Your Own Ship* by **Thomas Walton** and **L.M. Charlton**. The subtitle states, "The construction, stability, loading, trim, tonnage and freeboard of ships, simply explained for deck officers, superintendents, engineers and designers: with a fully worked-out set of the usual ship calculations from drawings." The authors might have added that their explanations are for the merely curious.

As you can see, there is no end of nautical material to collect, and there is no end to my desires to buy as many as exist, but I have limited space and capital. A line must be drawn somewhere, and I have drawn that line but with the understanding and freedom to cross it when and if it becomes necessary. 'A sailing we will go... 🌊