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10/05/2004 11:03 AM

To <FJason.Torre@stonybrook.edu>

cc

bcc

Subject Fw: letter to Homer Goldberg and Robert Marsh 2 26 64

----- Original Message -----

From: [Homer Goldberg](mailto:Homer.Goldberg@ms.cc.sunysb.edu)

To: Kristen.Nyitray@stonybrook.edu ; FJason.Torre@stonybrook.edu

Sent: Tuesday, October 05, 2004 10:53 AM

Subject: letter to Homer Goldberg and Robert Marsh 2 26 64

Kirsten and Jason:

This documents the beginning of our attempts to develop Melville Library holdings in preparation for a graduate program in English. Tom Rogers made the first U.K. foray in 1964, and I followed his lead in 1967-8. The letter also offers examples of Tom's inimitable dry wit. I have inserted explanatory notes in brackets.

Transcript of a letter to Homer Goldberg and Robert Marsh (English Department) from Thomas Rogers in London, Feb. 26, 1964.

Bob and Homer,

Ian Willison [British Museum Librarian] was as good as Ronald Crane's word. [A distinguished 18th Century scholar and Goldberg's dissertation director, Crane had recommended Willison as most knowledgeable about the book trade.] He took me up to his office in the Museum (he had to leave me alone at his desk for fifteen minutes, and of course I filled my pockets) and spent most of his afternoon today walking up and down and characterizing the people and the trade in 18th cent. books in a very succinct and sandy-haired way. There are several important points. First, we must get lists, if we don't have them, from RALPH T. HOWEY, 372 W. JOHNSON ST., PHILADELPHIA, PA. 19144. I saw 802, 18th and early 19th century books on lists the British Museum itself is using to order from Howey. He is an 18th cent. specialist, very knowledgeable, fairly new in the business. However, the stuff is expensive and we could easily waste money buying without some idea of where we're headed. Besides, you will spoil my fun if you run us out of money. But we have to establish a connection with Howey. Second, for Rouse [Roscoe Rouse, director, SUNYSB library] and anyone else who needs to know, the fact is that prices in 18th cent. books have inflated 400% in 12 or 15 years, and the 18th is following the 17th into scarcity; if we don't buy what we want now, we never will. Third, we have to be sure our buying makes sense; our faculty and students should have a clear use now or later for what we get. So first editions, for instance, have no value in themselves, but things that can be used in graduate research do. Scattered finds won't help much. (Howey's lists, I noticed, include several obscure novels that may or may not be worth getting.) (I mentioned sermons and

devotional literature to Willison, and he said it was available and fairly cheap and not much worked with; I don't know whether its relation to graveyard poetry, Cowper, etc., makes it worth looking for. It's a possibility.)

Well Clifford [James Clifford, distinguished 18th century scholar at Columbia, whom Goldberg, Marsh, and Rogers consulted] was wrong on all counts. The place to start is London. I have several names here to begin with, and it seems to me that Rouse ought to get catalogues first (he told me of only 4 or 5 English booksellers he is now ordering from); I shall try to persuade people to take his address and send him lists, and I hope he tells you when they come in. Another thing: be sure we have this book at the library: A DIRECTORY OF DEALERS IN SECOND-HAND AND ANTIQUARIAN BOOKS IN THE BRITISH ISLES 1960-1962, LONDON, SHEPPARD PRESS (NO AUTHOR OR EDITOR). There are specialists listed there, for instance, who do not have shops, only a full attic. I should think the library might lay in a stock of catalogues in a systematic way.

Clifford was wrong about the Midlands. They just don't have the capital, Willison says, that southeastern booksellers have. Why, Hall of Tunbridge Wells gets in his Jaguar and drives 500 miles or so right to the Orkneys if there's something to be had there. Willison doesn't know whether Scotland is as badly off as the Midlands, but he suggests Neill of the Bodleian as the best man to talk to about the whole matter, more knowing than anyone at Cambridge, Willison's own University. So I can use Willison's name with Neill, and then Neill's name with others, building everything on my friendship with Ronald Crane, whom I don't know. Also, I should see Blackwell's at Oxford; we are a customer, and on the strength of that I might get into the back room. (One of the specialists, for example, is H.W. Edwards of Ashmore Green, Newbury, Berkshire: tracts and pamphlets. He has a small catalogue listing such things as 'A Sermon preached . . . by Tillotson on . . .'; and I'll bet he has the kind of thing that Clifford pulled out of his bottom drawer. [H.G. can't recall what that was.]

If you get Howey's lists, get me Doddridge on Col. Gardner, and consider Wm. Law, James Hervey, and Sherlock.

None of this is as coherent as Willison was.

They are spading the turf in Russell Square, not spading it up, just letting the air in. And a man stood there telling a bystander: "Now, I was trained for a gardener and that's all I know." I don't know why, But Wilson [Prime Minister] says "PEOPLE MATTER" in all the Labour posters.