

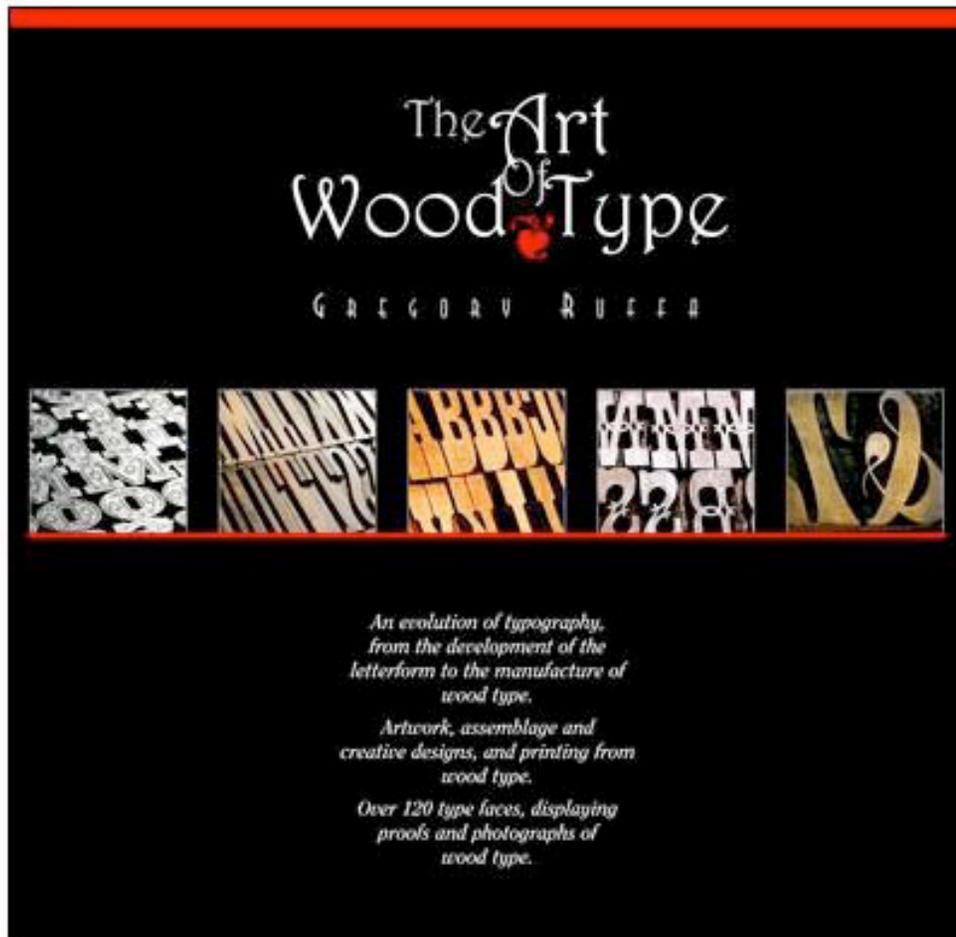
## APA's Dave Greer featured in newly published book on wood type

*Text and photos by* GREGORY RUFFA

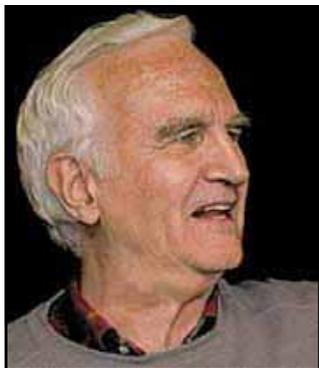
**D**AVE GREER WAS BORN IN NEW York City in 1936. His father did job printing to make ends meet, in addition to his work at Standard and Poors. When an opportunity to transfer to S&P's printing operation in Orange, Conn. arose in 1941, just prior to WWII, his family moved there. The family originally lived on an island in Long Island Sound, in the Thimble Island group, and his father commuted to work

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This article is reprinted (with permission) from the book, *The Art of Wood Type*. The photos in this article are but a few of the photos shown in the book of Dave Greer's wood type and his printing, using some of his wood type. [The website.](#)



every day in a small boat. Prior to the hurricane season, they moved to a shorefront property in Milford, Conn. It was here that the small press from New York was



Dave Greer

first seen and later remembered by Greer. His first exposure to printing was helping his father pull the press-handle. At this time, none of his father's love of printing rubbed off.

After high school and engineering college in the 50s, Dave spent five and a half years in the Navy and two years after that as a civilian pilot/flight instructor, eventually working 25 years with a major airline. During his early years of standing reserve for his base in New York, he approached his father and inquired about a hobby that would fill his needs at that time. Since his father had been in associated fields of printing for a lifetime, he recommended letterpress printing.

At that time many letterpress shops were being sold at bargain prices. Within one week of looking in the local papers, Dave found a small shop that was for sale for \$150. It included a 10"x15" Gordon New Style press, a 7"x11" Model 3 Pearl press, a Model 9 Linotype, a saw, two 24-case Hamilton cabinets with type from the early 1900s and many other items. With this modest purchase, his collection began. Dave attended auctions, where whole cabinets of antique foundry type were sold, for less than scrap prices. During this period, he obtained his first font of early wood type and became determined to acquire more before it became fire wood. This happened often before it was bought and saved. In 1983, he was introduced to Tom (T. J.) Lyons, a well-known Boston job printer. Tom agreed to sell his wood type holdings. Among Tom's treasures were some of the earliest manufactured wood type Dave had ever seen.

After T. J. Lyons' death, Dave acquired all of the metal type as well, since it was Lyons'



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welcomed. The publication is published as the spirit moves the editor but a monthly schedule is hoped for. [Contact the editor.](#)

APA's web site:

[Amalgamated Printers' Association](#)



An annual tradition is the keepsake *Printer's Almanac*, hand set with meticulous care and attention, it is crammed with information.

desire to keep his original collection as complete as possible. Over the past 35 years, Dave Greer has assembled one of the largest and most desirable collections of wood and metal type in the country.

He printed six different specimen books, showing full alphabets where possible. His favorite avocations are setting the type and printing as well as searching for new and interesting fonts.

When Dave Greer's collection of wood type grew too large to be stored in type cabinets, he designed an ingenious custom box with a platform and liftout tabs to store fonts in two layers. A proof section of each font was cut and pasted on each carton for the font, with one full font often

requiring several cartons. This provided a quick visual of the type. He also created reference cards indicating the location of the boxes, the font name, size, maker, date and other pertinent information. Dave used his skills to hand cut his own type to fill in missing letters with meticulous perfection. Boxes stacked on custom wood shelves conserved

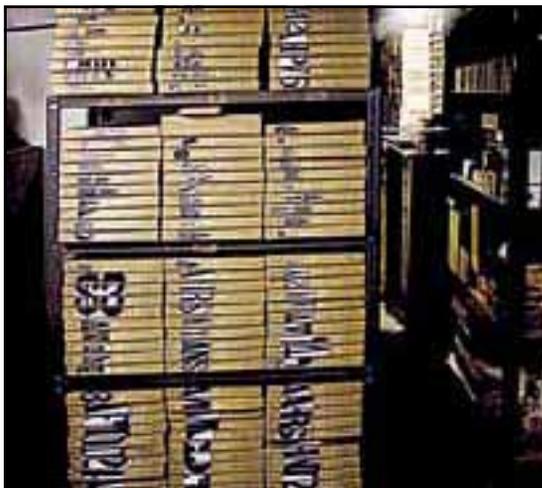
space and virtually tripled the holding volume. The vast stores remind one of the ancient archives of the Vatican.

To further help catalog the collection, a

full font proof was pulled on his press and assembled into one of many books. A feat in itself for more than 900 fonts.... The view of the books and shelves is awesome, probably the best organization of storage and reference for type I have ever seen.

If this were not heroic feat enough, another 20+ tons of vintage metal type in another location is being catalogued this same way. After years of unscrambling piles of miniscule metal border pieces, they were restored into their proper families.

This article does not do justice to all the photos in Dave's section of the book. But you have to see the book! Go to the [website](#) and my advice—get your own copy. It's great!



To handle Dave's wood type collection, he devised an ingenious custom box



with a platform and lift-out tabs to store fonts in two layers.



First, let me wish you all a Happy New Year!

As the new president of the APA, I would like to welcome all our new members who just joined us this month.

We have new officers and directors. They are as follows:

**PRESIDENT:** Howie Gelbert; **VICE-PRESIDENT:** Ezma Hanschka; **SECRETARY-TREASURER:** Mike O'Connor; **MAILER:** Don Tucker; **DIRECTORS:** Dick Niehaus, Jim Daggs, Ernie Blitzer; **ARCHIVIST:** David Kent

This will be a great year for the APA. After the great success of the 'large format mailing' last year, the board had voted to have this special mailing every other year, starting with 2010. The minimal increase in the dues will allow for the additional postage. On that note, please remember to send in your dues, to be a member in good standing.

Our new mailer, Don Tucker, is anxiously

awaiting your 155 copies each month for the bundle. You must print 4 pieces a year, but, please print more! Also make sure you identify your work.

The Iowa Wayzgoose will be September 16th, 2009 in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. Hosted by Chuck Wendel, Rick von Holdt, Jim Daggs, Steve Alt, John Henry, and Craig Starr. Watch for more information in your bundles and the following journals. I hope to meet you all there.

Nine months later, June 10th 2010, we will meet in Huntington, West Virginia for the Heritage Goose. It will be held at the Heritage Farm Museum, and will be hosted by Austin Jones.

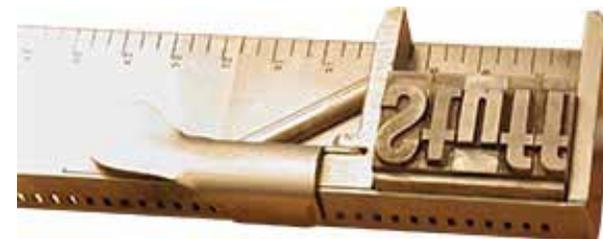
If you have not attended a Wayzgoose, you don't know what you're missing; new letterpress friends, seminars, tours, a swap meet, an auction, and a chance to talk about letterpress!

My background in the printing industry for the last 40 years had brought me back to letterpress about 11 years ago. I have been a member of the APA since 1997.

I served as secretary treasurer and vice-president and I am also a member of the Westchester Chappel in New York.

Please stay involved and print. Let's keep letterpress alive!

Questions or suggestions, [e-mail](#) me.



Here are some "Tricks of the trade" originally published in *Type & Press*:

Never risk bending copper hair spaces by forcing them into a tight line. Instead, remove the end type character in the line, then place the copper into place and replace the end type character that was removed.

A bar of ordinary laundry soap, rubbed over the edge of a paper knife, will prove to be advantageous when cutting, soft pulpy stock.

No need to wipe off misprints on the top sheet with solvent saturated rags. Instead rub a small amount of ordinary talcum powder on the top sheet. This will prevent offsetting on the back of the printed work.

A wire coat hanger twisted into a hook and fastened to the lower frame of any platen press will make a handy holder for the gripper wrench.

When proofreading, first begin at the bottom of the article and read backward. In this way one will be more apt to catch typos. Then, to detect grammatical errors, read proof from beginning.

## OUR NEW MEMBERS—THERE'S HOPE!

One of the perks of being APA Secretary (well, it's the only perk) is that I receive printed specimens from prospective APA members. A number of great efforts were received this year but the one shown here—a poster—by new member, APA 835, [Jeff Pulaski](#) was a standout. You can get more information on Jeff at his [website](#) (and the site is truly worth a look!) Below is Jeff's explanation on how he did the poster. I am sorry that the reproduction doesn't really do it justice.

"For this poster, I started with a black and white photograph in Adobe Photoshop. I posterized the image to just three shades of grey. I separated each gray shade to its own channel, then printed each one out. I adjusted and cleaned up the printouts and then transferred the shapes by pencil to linoleum and cut each one with an Xacto knife and linoleum cutter. I used the Xacto for the small details and the cutter for the rest. I thought about having metal plates made, but was too impatient to wait three or four days to get them back.

"The linoleum cuts were glued to scraps of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch plywood and then built up a bit more with paper to be type-high. I printed the piece on my Challenge 15GP proof press. The poster was printed on Carnival Black and took five trips through the press, purple, dark brown, medium brown, light brown then yellow. I tried to keep the inks somewhat transparent, I wanted them to show up on the black but not be too strong. I thought this would be an interesting effect, kind of a ghosted effect. I do wish the yellow ink was a little more opaque.

"This is the last poster of a series of four I printed to commemorate Black History Month. Each poster features a quote from a well-known African-American. The other posters feature quotes from Frederick Douglass, Malcolm

X and Earnest J. Gaines. It was printed in an edition of 50."

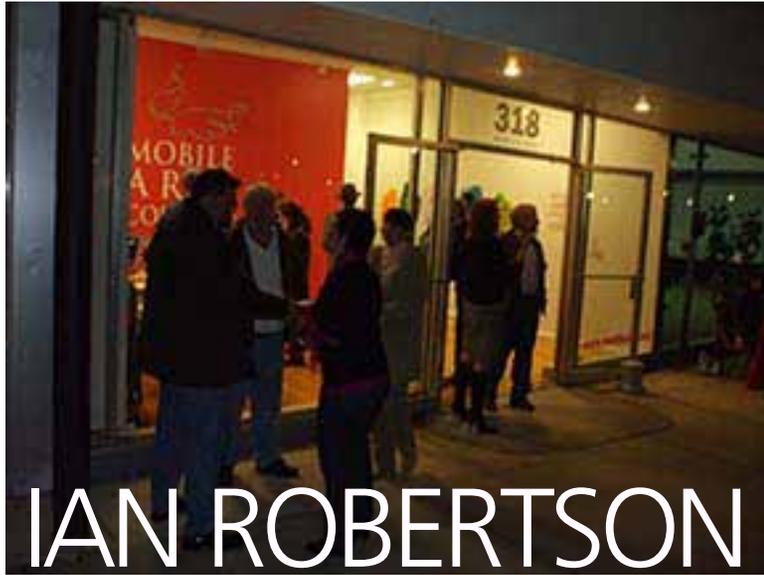
I DON'T CARE MUCH ABOUT MUSIC

what I like is

SOUNDS

DIZZY  
GILLESPIE

Actual size 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ "x20"



# IAN ROBERTSON IS FEATURED IN A MONTH LONG EXHIBIT AT THE MOBILE ARTS COUNCIL GALLERY

APA #111 Ian Robertson is being featured in a month long exhibit at the Mobile Arts Council Gallery. The “retrospective” features his letterpress printing and typography from 1952 until the present. The show covers all aspects of work: commercial printing, ephemera, books, and broadsides. Ian had a number of awards: for the college (Colby College and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago) printing, and from Strathmore and Champion paper companies for commercial work. ¶ The curator is Paul Moxon and all the photos taken in this article are by him and reprinted with permission.



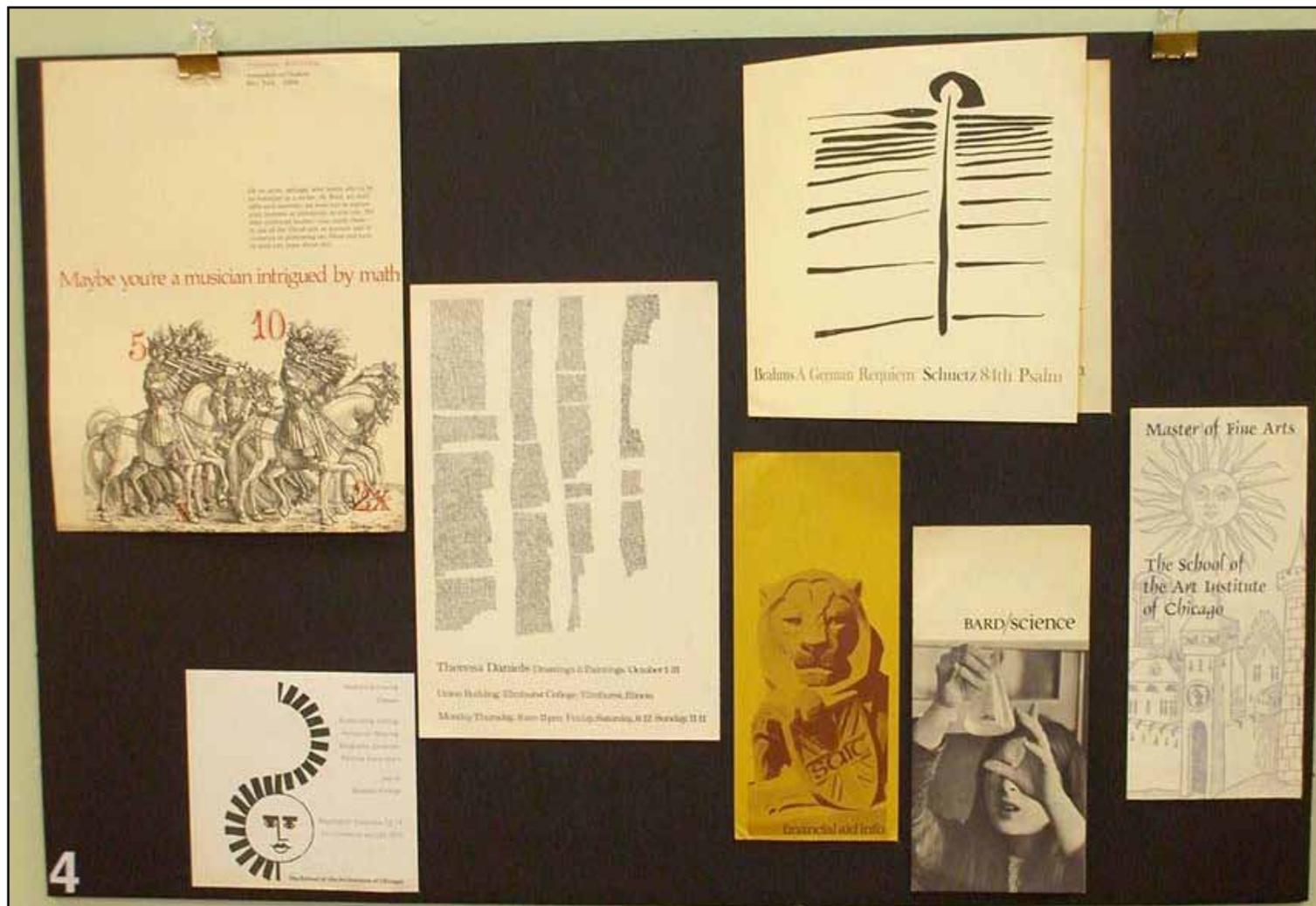
Ian Robertson, 82 next to a photo of his younger self taken in 1955. The photo was on exhibit.



Publications designed by Ian Robertson for Colby College.

Book artists Larry Lou Foster and Mary Ann Sampson chat with Ian Robertson.





Publications designed by Ian Robertson for the Art Institute of Chicago.

A video in the exhibit shows Ian Robertson hand-setting type and printing a keepsake on his 1890s Peerless platen press. The video was made by Margaret Broach and is on [YouTube](#).



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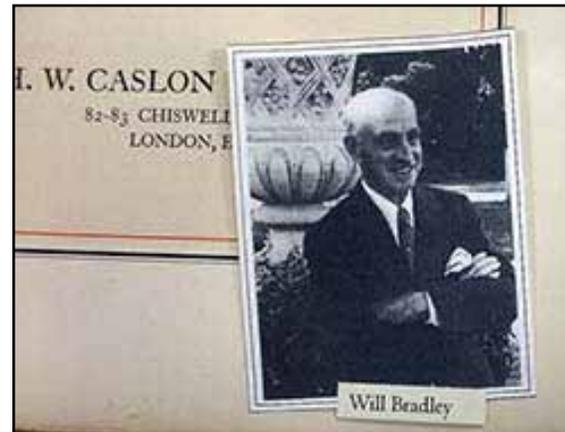
WITH TRIPS TO:  
**Dauphin Isle, Battles' Wharf & Riviere-du-chien.**

ARRANGEMENTS & PASSAGE at the Company Offices on Fairhope Wharf

THE ELECTRIC PRINTING WORKS, in Fairhope, Ala.

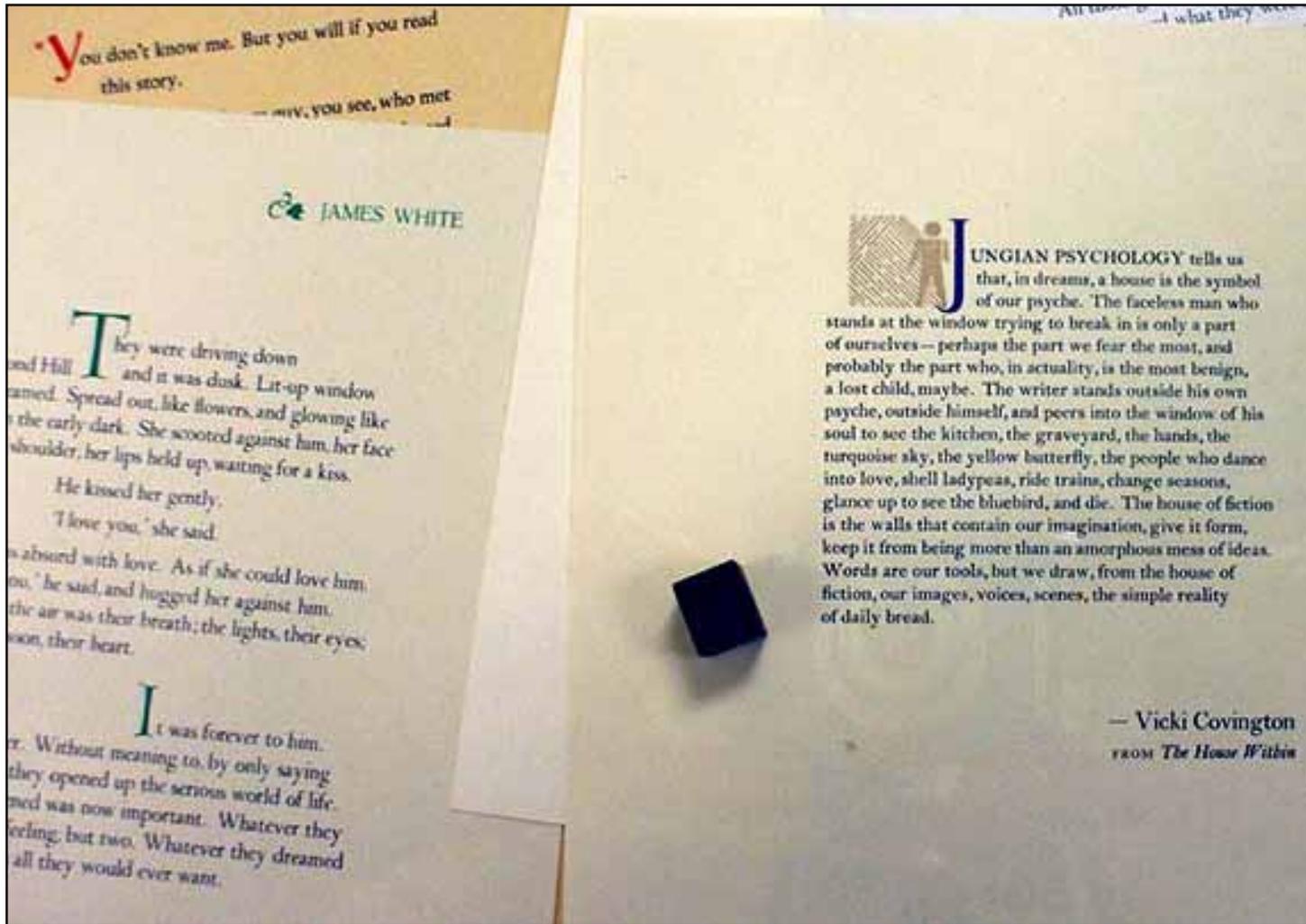


A wood type specimen book...a collaboration with Walter Clement.



In his later years, the renowned type designer Will Bradley encouraged a young Ian Robertson. Ian was also mentored by Arthur Rushmore of the Golden Hind Press.

A Robertson poster...and a sense of humor.



Handset letterpress broadsides printed under the name Slow Loris Press.



Some exhibit attendees.




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## IAN ROBERTSON...LISTENING TO THAT LITTLE VOICE IN HIS EAR FOR 57 YEARS

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By IAN ROBERTSON

Printing has always been for me an elementary exercise. You are given images and a white space. The trick's just this: place the images in the best (really mean the right) position in the white space.

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Above, Ian is standing by his 11½x14½" wooden handpress built for him by Bob Hicks in 1983.

I have a guide: it sits on my shoulder and whispers in my ear “no” and “not there” and “move it this way” and “ye gods, not that type,” and so on, indefinitely and incessantly, until it's satisfied. Other than what must be decided beforehand (size, use, etc.), not a thing is preplanned. As old printers say: you design in the stick.

Anyhow, that's how I dabble in “the black art.” The results have been mixed. Yet each

piece of work represents an experiment that began fifty-seven years ago. Occasionally, I think something I've done has turned out well. But usually a printed piece is flawed in some way or other. And I've strayed once or twice (!) from following my intuition (the voice in my ear) and the results have been dire. Enough said.

I was exceedingly fortunate in having mentors who prodded, poked, criticized and cheered me on my way. Chief among these was Arthur Rushmore, for thirty years head of design and production at Harper Brothers, the publishers. Another was Will Bradley, the noted illustrator who was also called “the dean of American typographers,” and Steve Watts, manager of American Typefounders, and one Dave Howie, a commercial printer in New Jersey. Each in his way contributed mightily to my self-taught craft.

I once asked Arthur why he only said “Hm-m-m” when he apparently approved of something I'd printed (usually he was openly critical). “Why, Ian,” he replied with a sly sort of smile, “Hm-m-m means that it's done right, like it should be — but now, what's next?” Dave was always ready to tell me when my ink was too thin, and why. Steve Watts sold me my first Caslon type, though I still think that ATF package was heavier than what I paid for it. Bradley,

who gave me a number of books and some borders cast for him, once wrote me a letter (in 1955) that was indeed a special boost for a young printer from a grand old man of the trade, then well into his 80s.

All that was in the early 1950s; in 1956 I decided to switch an avocation to a commercial venture. The press went from the cellar in Short Hills to a shop on Franklin Place in Summit, New Jersey. When I told Arthur, he looked at me (sadly) and said “I thought you realized that you had to be out of your mind just to take up printing as a hobby!” Ah, the wisdom coming from age and immersion. Given the opportunity, I’d use those same words myself today.



Putting in the chase in his 8x12 Pearl.

I had begun printing in 1952, after the Navy in WWII, college and graduate school. Until 1960 I operated the Windhover Press in Summit; after that I began my work as an editor and designer, at Colby College in Maine and, in 1970, at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1973 we came to Fairhope, Alabama. Besides printing and freelancing as a designer, I worked at a Mobile printing company and taught design at the University of South Alabama.

My work includes most everything from business cards to books. I don’t think of myself as anything but a printer. (Historically, printers have been editors, proofreaders, typographers, publishers, pressmen — all in one

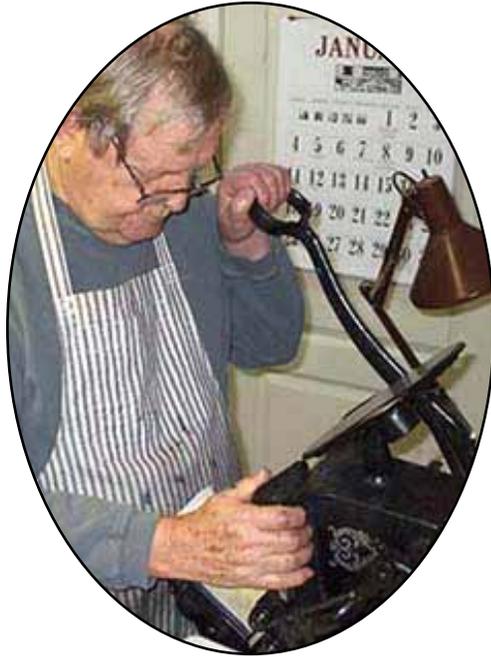
Dec. 12

15 Wyndham Rd., Short Hills, N.J.

Dear Mr Robertson:

Allow me to congratulate you for your Madrigal (Singers) Program. It shows a fine appreciation of white space, type balance and simple directness that makes for readability—all according to the best book traditions. Also it shows that you have a natural feeling for real values in type arrangement and that printing is your true vocation. Continue using Caslon and it will never fail you. It made Berkely Updike, at his Merrymount Press in Boston, the greatest master this country has known. From the time of one job-press little printshop in Newburyport until he became head of the Yale Press, and during that period, it was the first choice of Carl Purinton Rollins. Also it gave outstanding distinction and success to Hal Marchbanks at his Marchbanks Press in New York, and for more than fifty years it was good to me. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote “Success comes while we are having fun.” Study the best in book typography—the only safe guide, be patient and do your best, keep hopeful and have fun, and you will have a fine future with plenty of encouragement along the way. My best to you, lad, and a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year.

Cordially,  
— Will Bradley



“...I’ve strayed once or twice (!) from following my intuition (the voice in my ear) and the results have been dire. Enough said.”

guise.) It has been largely a success, though very seldom financially exciting. And it has been — still is — most of the time, above all, pace Robert Louis Stevenson, fun.

A good many years ago my mother ran into a ‘veddy’ society woman at the local A&P market. (This was told to me afterward by the still amused store manager.) The town had a large population of such types. Anyhow, she asked after me and learned of college

and graduate school and that now I had a printing shop. The woman looked horrified. Why wasn’t I in advertising in New York? Or publishing? One could envision her being threatened by ink-covered hands and dirty aprons and all the horrors of a tradesman. “Oh, no,” my mother said, “Ian’s very happy being a printer.” And, inspired, she added: “He says that if printing was good enough for Benjamin Franklin it certainly is good enough for him.”



Upper left, Ian with his first press, a 6x9 Sigwalt. Above, part of the shop and Ian at work.

**Neither snow  
nor rain nor  
heat nor  
gloom of  
night shall  
keep Don  
Tucker from  
his elected  
duty...**



New Mailer, Don Tucker

## **NEW MAILER REVISITS OLD MAILING BUG-A-BOOS**

By DON TUCKER, APA MAILER

As the mailer, I accept and will endeavor to include everything which arrives before the gathering of the items commences. However, I noticed that the last day or two, saw as many as a dozen items arriving each of the last two days. Several items arrived after the bundles were being sealed and postage applied to them. Folks who really, really want them included in a particular bundle, *need to get them in sooner.*

Another problem I encountered was the use by several members of sending in items printed on different papers. Some of them were large enough in size, and different enough in paper weight to actually make a difference in the final weight of the some of



width (or length) was close, but varied by about  $\frac{1}{8}$  of an inch. While this doesn't make any difference in the weight, they are difficult to pick up to add to the bundle, when the items vary in size. When I have *a lot* of items as in the January bundle, it was difficult to get them all in the bundle if a large number of the pieces are nearly the maximum size allowed.

The penultimate thing I noticed was the use by some, or some papers which did not lend themselves to being picked up singly. For instance, if they were hard to separate while printing, they are still hard to separate while collating. Really rough finish pa-

pers fall in this category, and they can cause doubles to be included in some bundles. The bundles. It doesn't make any difference whatever if some are yellow, and some are orange, or red, or whatever. But, when some are on really light weight paper, and some are on heavy card stock—and the item is nearly the maximum size allowed, it can materially change the overall shipping weight.

Another small problem is having different size items. I had a few where the overall

papers fall in this category, and they can cause doubles to be included in some bundles.

Last but really important. I ran out of a very few items, but when I got down to the end, I had only 1 or 2 left of some others. I also had dozens of some others. Lots of extras is better than 1 short. I know the



by-laws say 155 of each item must be sent in (and I was always guilty of this) but it would sure help if the mailer received 160 to 165 items.

Even if I run out of pieces, they may be assured the archivist does get a copy of *every* item submitted.

I keep most of the extras, and will take them to the Wayzgoose in Mt. Pleasant this fall for potential new members to view and collect some of them.



Don related how it took him about four minutes to collate each bundle and after 15 of them he said his back tells him he needs a rest.

# It isn't all bad news for the new year

The US economy is in the dumpster as we start off the new year. Mortgage foreclosures seem to keep rising. Jobs disappearing. Federal budget deficits are climbing through the ceiling. However, on a bright note, APA looks sensational for 2009!

We have just completed a year where bundle participation has been the highest in years. The January 2009 bundle contained 73 pieces—a hefty number for what's usually a fairly light month. A good omen!

Last year saw our first poster mailing which was a huge success. Because of a slight hike in dues this year, we'll see another such mailing in 2010. Now we can add the poster mailing to other successful APA endeavors such as *Treasure Gems* and our calendar.

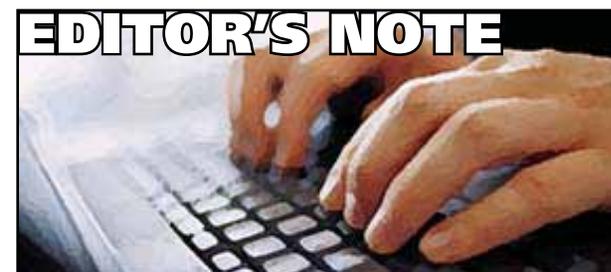
We had 15 new or reinstated members join our ranks in this month; unfortunately we had 15 leave because of inactivity.

Judging from printed samples sent in by new applicants, we have

an excellent group of new members joining APA.

It wasn't that long ago when old-timers such as myself filled the ranks of APA (we're still around of course, but in dwindling numbers). We learned the craft, for the most part, from veteran letterpress printers who printed letterpress for a living and knew the process and followed the traditions. Now, along with the surge in letterpress, we have a new breed of young folks coming along and a good many of them are starting their own traditions. This is really exciting to see when it seems not too long ago, most of us were moaning about the decline of letterpress and truly wondered where it would be in the near future. Now we know—still healthy and ever growing stronger.

I can offer the same advice to the newer members as those who have been with APA for a while: don't be bashful—jump in and be active in the association!



I mentioned above about the exciting influx of new members into APA. By contrast, this issue also features two of our oldest members (I'm referring here to the length of membership in our organization). Dave Geer joined APA in 1971 and Ian Robertson at the start in 1958. Both are fine printers and have contributed much to APA over the years. I think the diversity speaks well for APA and our future...and a future of very interesting bundles!

I couldn't let this issue pass without asking our new mailer, Don Tucker, to comment on his first month on the job. Thankfully, Don's not bashful about giving some of his views after his first mailing and some hints to members when dealing with the mailer. I hope members take his suggestions to heart. The job of mailer is by far the toughest in the association and too many times we take it for granted.

—MIKE O'CONNOR

**SEND IN YOUR APA DUES NOW! Make out \$30 check to APA and sent to:  
Mike O'Connor, P. O. Box 18117, Fountain Hills, AZ 85269**