

valuable contribution to the profession by sharing their experiences and condensing the complex issues surrounding collaborative collection programs into a guide that addresses problems that librarians face daily.—*Terry B. Hill, North Carolina State University.*

Gerits, Anton. *Books, Friends, and Bibliophilia: Reminiscences of an Antiquarian Bookseller.* New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll, 2004. 402p. alk. paper, \$65 (ISBN 1584561386). LC 2004-302015.

In 1950, when 20-year-old Anton Gerits presented himself in The Hague at the bookshop of Martinus Nijhoff to ask for a job from Wouter Nijhoff Pzn, whose family in 1853 had founded the business, he began a career in the antiquarian book trade that would last until 1996, when he retired from his own business in Amsterdam, a shop he had opened fifteen years before.

During the intervening half-century, Gerits worked two spells at Nijhoff's, a "glorious" firm he saw dismantled by Kluwer; spent several years managing the antiquarian department of the publisher Mouton & Co., whom he represented when in the early 1950s Gerits was among the first booksellers from the West to prospect behind the Iron Curtain; put in a short turn at Ludwig Rosenthal's Antiquarian Bookshop, where the "neurotic and egocentric" Hilde Rosenthal-Wolf, who furthered his bibliographical education while undercutting his success in acquiring incunabula, dispatched him in 1973 to Japan, a country that ever after proved fruitful to Gerits; and passed seven years at Dekker & Nordemann, where he directed the firm's international antiquarian department, a short-lived venture established by parent company Elsevier, "as if a very rich man, out of boredom, was spending his money on something new he did not yet possess, just as these people sometimes buy buildings, paintings, old books, or shares."

If Elsevier, Kluwer, and Mrs. Rosenthal-Wolf caused Gerits some painful

moments, he was up to the challenge. In fact, for those readers of this journal who don't work directly with special collections, the one reason to read this book is to meet Gerits. If he tells some decent stories, Gerits is not a master storyteller. If he witnessed epochal changes in antiquarian bookselling, he is not a skilled chronicler. What Gerits does offer in this memoir, which is his own translation from the Dutch original, is an entertaining portrait of himself, that is, of a man blessed with curiosity, wit, and stubbornness, afraid neither to work hard nor to speak his mind, one who began his career as a Nijhoff's junior assistant and reached the top of his profession when, in 1991, he became president of the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers.

Gerits's earliest years at Nijhoff's, 1950–1954, "determined the course of my life." He learned how to describe and price books from mentors who could recall a pertinent detail from some obscure handbook housed in the Nijhoff catalogue-room and who would ask the apprentice if he had thought to consult it. His chapters on this stage of his career, the book's best part, are an evocative picture of a midcentury bookshop where the firm's principals spent their days at adjacent work tables in a room where books covered the walls and cigar and cigarette smoke filled the air; where books were sent to local customers "on approval" by bicycle; and where Wouter Nijhoff Pzn would review the day's mail while department heads stood around his table prepared to explain an action, answer a question, or field a complaint.

Gerits read catalogs and bibliographies until permitted after a year to write his own descriptions. While waiting, he also learned by performing jobs such as carrying stacks of books back and forth, gathering the letters and bibliographic slips associated with orders, finding space for new acquisitions on the crowded warehouse shelves, and overseeing a search service for titles not in stock. This search service, in fact, the entire business in those

days, was of course based on file cards. When he became head of the store's antiquarian department in 1957, during his second Nijhoff tour, Gerits immediately decided to add new details to the record keeping (an innovation that increased profits, he proudly notes), such as buyer's name and date of sale, as well as auction results and listings by other dealers.

Today, of course, these would be new fields in the database. Near the end of his career, Gerits "was confronted with modern automation, which enables the antiquarian bookseller to save long descriptions with just one key and where an efficient search-engine makes it possible to retrieve a title without being obliged to look through long files." This is one of Gerits's few comments on the online world, whose advent simply caused him to ask "whether an excellent way of training the memory of younger assistants had not been lost."

If he was a visionary in opening the Soviet bloc to antiquarian booksellers and their customers, in the daily particulars of business, Gerits, the son of a tailor, liked to think of himself as a shopkeeper, a small businessman who attended to the details of his trade and who in the constant struggle to survive had little patience for the nonsense of those with greater pretensions than his own. "In the course of the history of my country, The Netherlands," he writes, "the lower middle class was and still is the backbone of society."

Such Gerits considers himself, and in episodes wherein the feisty shopkeeper gives fools their due lies the charm of this book. If "Kluwer-vandals" was the author's initial phrase for the managers he suffered, later he thought of them as "elephants: good-natured animals that need much to feed themselves and in the process of getting food trample many small edible plants with their rude feet." When he began work for Elsevier, Gerits was required to write a five-year plan. "Had I arrived," he wonders, "behind the Iron Curtain?" Gerits had a low opinion of

"accountants who do only half their work ... banks that take much longer to credit your account for large checks than for small ones ... requests from the Statistics Office for all kinds of information you have to collect during working hours ... shipping companies that deal with your boxes of books as if they were sacks filled with coal."

Nor do librarians escape unscathed. He found librarians ever more often attending meetings or running automation projects instead of reading catalogues or buying books. "The librarian as a collector," he writes, "had lost importance and had been forced to make way for the librarian as a manager. Absolute decision-makers had disappeared and were replaced by acquisitions committees. Consensus had to be achieved, which took time, with the result that orders ... went out too late and important objects for sale were missed."

Gerits, even so, did a substantial business with libraries for many years. Yet few librarians receive more than passing mention here. The University of Minnesota's John Parker, whom Gerits esteemed as a bookman and valued as a customer, was an exception. Gerits watched the ranks of bookmen such as Parker diminish. When the budgets of North American academic libraries diminished, too, Gerits welcomed the growing market of Japanese academic libraries and found himself often selling to private collectors who were as apt to view his books as works of art as works of scholarly interest. Gerits tried to bolster his antiquarian business by selling new books to libraries. But he saw librarians drawn to the high discounts larger companies gave, not to his own firm's "perfect service," which included leafing through new books to look for defects, faulty bindings, even misprints. This area of bookselling evolved "into a kind of bulk service that lost contact with the artisan side of the work." Eventually, he sold his new books service to what was left of Nijhoff's.

Despite ups and downs with libraries, Gerits made regular visits to North

American campuses. Concerning his first, in 1974, he recalled a tense evening in "Detroit" when, on foot, he searched for a hot meal in the desolate downtown prior to a call the next day at "Western Reserve University." Upon returning to his hotel, a clerk behind bullet-proof glass scolded Gerits for having risked his life on that inner-city errand. Perhaps he had been in Cleveland, or perhaps Gerits actually had been in Detroit, maybe to visit Wayne State University. We may never know. But we do know that Gerits persevered to find his hot meal that evening—"I don't like cold meals," he remarks—just as he persevered in the Nijhoff catalog room and in every day of his career that followed.

Toward the end of this book, a photograph records a stop by a visitor from a prominent U.S. library in Amsterdam at A. Gerits & Son. The librarian, Gerits, and his son stand before a wall of handsome old books. The librarian, dressed American-casual in jeans and a pullover sweater, is posed between the two Gerits. He seems happy to be there, if slightly uncomfortable before the camera. To the right is Gerits's son and successor Arnoud, half-smiling, dressed in chinos, shirt, and necktie, clearly the apprentice. To the left is Gerits himself, wearing a trademark bow tie, his right hand thrust at a jaunty angle, thumb cocked out, into the pocket of a dark, double-breasted suit. He smiles nobly over this scene he has orchestrated. Gerits may never know that his customer-librarian's name is misspelled in the photograph's caption. No matter. In the imperfect world of antiquarian bookselling, Gerits has made a success. Clearly, this is a shopkeeper who is open for business.—*Bob Nardini, YBP Library Services.*

Lee, Stuart D., and Frances Boyle. *Building an Electronic Resource Collection: A Practical Guide*, 2nd ed. London: Facet, 2004. 174p. \$75 (ISBN 1856045315).

This brief, but expensive, book is a welcome expansion of the relatively few pages devoted to electronic resources in

more comprehensive reference or acquisitions texts, such as Richard E. Bopp and Linda Smith's *Reference and Information Services* (Libraries Unlimited, 2001) and G. Edward Evans, Sheila S. Intner, and Jean Weihs' *Introduction to Technical Services* (Libraries Unlimited, 2002). It should not be regarded, however, as the definitive treatise (even for the moment) on creating and managing a collection of electronic resources. Intended for librarians, especially those in collection development and acquisitions, students, and publishers interested in electronic resources, the book outlines and provides advice about the myriad decisions that must occur in connection with acquiring or providing access to electronic resources.

In the first section (chapters 1–3), the authors offer a broad-based approach to electronic resources designed to provide perspective on the issues involved with their acquisition and access. Indeed, chapter 1, "Preliminary Issues," discusses the reasons for buying an electronic resource and the task of integrating electronic resource and traditional collection development. Chapter 2 characterizes the "electronic resources landscape," describing materials currently available electronically and discussing factors that "differentiate them from print publications," such as authentication and user interface. The book emphasizes commercially available electronic products covering all forms of data (e.g., text, numbers, images), but not free, Web-based resources. For the latter, the reader should look at other sources such as Chris Sherman and Gary Price's *The Invisible Web: Uncovering Information Sources Search Engines Can't See* (Information Today, 2001). Chapter 3 describes the differences and similarities between e-books and e-journals in more detail. The second section (chapters 4–5) focuses more specifically on decisions. In chapter 4, the authors develop a process model for decision making related to electronic resources acquisitions, moving methodically through the process to offer a brief exposition of the major steps. Chapter 5 is