Listing Format

## **Listing Format:**

## **Author First Last - *Book Title (*Publisher, Publication Date) Edition Info**

### **Item Overview**

* Insert polished description here. No more than 200 words.

### 

### **Bibliographic Details**

* **Author:** P. G. Wodehouse
* **Title:** *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere*
* **Publisher / Place:** Herbert Jenkins Limited, 3 York Street, St. James’s, London S.W.1
* **Year:** 1935
* **Edition / Printing:** **First Edition, First Printing** (*First printing 1935* on copyright leaf with Jenkins device)
* **Book Format:** for example cloth, hardcover, cloth pictorial, hardcover pictorial, leather, series leather, etc..
* **Binding Details:** for example Light tan cloth; black titling to upper board & spine; Jenkins Pegasus to spine; “A Herbert Jenkins Book” crest to rear board
* **Dust Jacket:** No DJ accompanied 1st Ed.
* **Notable Points:** Bookseller rubber stamp to front endpaper (“City Bookstall, Ooty”); small pencil note
* **Series / Universe:** Blandings Castle stories (incl. “Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend,” etc.)
* **Language:** English

### **Condition**

* **Boards/Spine:** Clean, lightly handled tan cloth; spine slightly toned; extremities rubbed; minor bumping to a corner; gentle softening at head/foot.
* **Pages/Textblock:** Even age toning; a few faint spots to prelims; interiors clean and legible; bookseller’s stamp to FFEP; small pencil notation near hinge.
* **Hinges/Binding:** Square and tight.
* **Edges:** Toned with light dust-soil; no edge staining.
* **Dust Jacket:** No DJ was included with the Jenkins 1st Ed
* **Autographs, dedications, markings:** for example handwritten owners name, library stamps, dedications, dates, etc..

**Book Grade:** *Very Good+ / Fine-*

**Dust Jacket Grade:** *Very Good+ / Fine-*

**Shorthand grade: for example** *Very Good+ book, Fine- DJ*

### **Notes for Collectors**

This is section for interesting notes targeted towards a collector.

### **Sellers Notes:**

### **Grading**

Condition and grading is by the seller and based on my father and I’s direct experience. We strive for accurate, honest, non-biased grading standards. When books rarely need inspection we do so.

Please bear in mind:

grading is irrespective of age. Ergo “Good+” condition means the same thing in 1970 and 1925 and is not relative to the quality of other exact editions in the market place. Most collectors know and expect this but it is worth repeating

photos form a large part of the description;

All photos were taken by the seller, in the home location of storage, and of the physical book on offer. Generally this is something you should confirm.

Page by page, intense spine, and sub-bound dustjacket inspections damage the book. That said this is a personal collection stored continuously in good conditions. Water-proof enclosures are used only immediately prior to shipping.

### **Shipping**

Well-packed and boxed. USPS Media Mail (economical) or Priority (faster) is available. For high value offerings, we are generally glad to accommodate individual shipping requests including pick up by the buyer or buyers agent. This includes internation shipping provided it encloses insurance coverage at the amount of the price inclusive of all associated fees and expenses and to be paid upon the item being lost. If it arrives to you, you obviously keep it. If it is returned to us, we obviously send it. These shipping services are similarly scrupulous.

All that said, we hope you love your book. We certainly did.

Terms for Describing Book Condition

Terms For Describing Book Condition

INTRODUCTION

AB Bookman's Weekly, which ceased publication in 1999, was for decades the Bible of the antiquarian book trade. Included in every issue AB Bookman's after 1949 was a set of criteria for grading the condition of used books. AB's definitions of "Very Fine" (or "As New"), "Fine", "Very Good, "Good", "Fair", and so forth have become pretty much the industy standard. One should keep these descriptions in mind when buying old books, or when bringing in books for appraisal or sale.

We have edited and expanded these definitions a little and welcome suggestions for further improvement. We have also added definitions for "Rare", "Scarce", "Uncommon", and "Common". Considering how many inexperienced internet sellers are calling even the most common books "rare", these definitions are of special interest.

For the reader and collector new to catalog and internet book descriptions, here are a few terms (and their abbreviations) in common use with which you should be familiar:

Dust Jacket (sometimes dustjacket, dust cover, or "wrapper". Often abbreviated "DJ") ~ The dust jacket is a paper cover, often colorfully illustrated, that is wrapped around the book itself. Originally designed to protect the book, the dust jacket quickly became a means of attracting attention and then an item of interest among collectors. The dust jacket of a collectible book is often placed inside a transparent cover (sometimes called a "Brodart", so-named for Arthur Brody, the man who invented it.)

Boards. This term refers to the covers (front and back) of a hardcover book, specifically the heavy cardboard which is in turn covered with cloth and or colored paper, and (usually in older books) various types of leather. The term "boards" derives from the early days of printing, when books were bound in leather-covered wood. The term Hardcover is often abbreviated "HC".

Paperback (sometimes called Softcover, Trade Paperback, or simply "Wraps".) A book bound with a paper cover, usually less expensive than a hard bound or hardcover book. The usual abbreviations are "PB" and "TPB", with TPB designating sizes from 5"x8" and up. (There are exceptions, such as Penguin paperbacks, which are smaller than 5x8 but are still called Trade Paperbacks.)

TERMS DESCRIBING BOOK CONDITION

VERY FINE or AS NEW (abbreviated "VF") ~ Very Fine means the book is in the same immaculate condition as when it emerged from the bindery. There are no defects or marks, and the dustjacket (if it was issued with one) must be perfect and without any tears. In short, it is a copy that is close to perfect in every respect. It should be noted that in the real world, Very Fine books are relatively uncommon, and that most Antiquarian Booksellers use Fine as their highest condition grading.

(The term "As New", when it is used, is really an informal grading category, as are the colloquial terms "Mint" and "Gift Quality".)

FINE (abbreviated "F") ~ Fine is marginally less than perfect, and may designate a book that is still new, or a book that has been carefully read. The use of the term Fine (as compared to Near Fine or Very Good) often depends on when the book was published. A recent book should have no notable defects at all. But the dustjacket of a Fine older book may have a small closed tear, or be a little rubbed, even a bit worn at the edges. Such defects, if present, must be minor and should always be noted.

(Note also that a book may be new and unread, but it may have aged on the shelf to the point of being considered Near Fine or even Very Good. Similarly a unique 200-year-old book might be viewed as "Fine", while a recent book in the exact same condition could only be described as "Very Good".)

NEAR FINE (abbreviated "NF") ~ Somewhere between Very Good and Fine. The distinction is usually in the eye of the bookseller and involves minor defects (which must be described). Near Fine is generally meant to inform the customer that the book's condition is excellent but "not quite Fine".

VERY GOOD (abbreviated "VG") ~ Very Good can describe a used book that shows shelfwear and visible signs of having been read. Its dustjacket may be rubbed, chipped, or even missing small pieces, but it should generally be clean and bright, depending on how old it is. The book should always be clean and tight, and the overall appearance should be of a desirable copy. A very old book may show some foxing. The description of a Very Good book ought to include all notable flaws.

GOOD (abbreviated "G") ~ Good describes the average used and worn book that has all pages or leaves present. A Good book may be cocked, have loose joints, and be missing a dustjacket. But it must be complete, clean, and worth keeping. Its value will be a fraction of a Fine copy, unless it is very scarce.

READING COPY ~ A Reading Copy is a book whose principle value is that the text is complete and legible, such that the book can still be read and enjoyed before it is thrown away. There are three descriptive categories that define the condition of Reading Copies -- Fair, Poor, and Ex-Library:

FAIR ~ Fair is a worn book that has complete text pages (including those with maps or plates) but may lack endpapers, half-title, etc. (which must be noted). The binding, spine, and dustjacket (if any) may also be worn or even torn & repaired. At this point internal marks may be acceptable, depending on their quantity and nature (pencil is more acceptable than ink or marker) and the scarcity of the book. Occasionally you will find a book that has marginal notations throughout, but the notations are by a famous person. In that case, the marks increase the value of the book.

POOR ~ Poor describes a book that is sufficiently worn that its only merit is as a Reading Copy because it does have the complete text, which must be legible. Any missing maps or plates should still be noted. This copy may be soiled, scuffed, stained or spotted and may have loose joints, hinges, pages, etc. If your Poor book is a common title, the best thing to do is throw it away and buy a better one.

EX-LIBRARY ~ Ex-library books are notable because they have been defaced by librarians, who love to despoil them with labels, rubber stamps, card pockets, and even inked numbers and shellac on the spine. Sometimes you will find the most beautiful new and unread nonfiction book discarded by a library because no one ever checked it out! The uncirculated copies, while attractive to scholars, generally don't have much value unless they are very scarce or were published in the 19th century and earlier.

BOOK CLUB EDITIONS ~ Book Club editions are notable because many of them use cheaper paper and bindings than the publisher or "trade" edition. The dustjackets are usually printed on cheaper paper as well. But some Book Clubs use the trade edition and simply add a different dustjacket. The one sure sign that a book is a Book Club edition is the lack of a price on the dustjacket flap. Then again, most University Presses and some specialty publishers don't include printed prices, so this isn't a hard and fast rule. It used to be thought that a book with a small indented square, circle, or triangle on lower back cover was definitely a Book Club edition. Then it was revealed in Firsts Magazine that many valuable first trade editions (specifically those of James Michener) came from the publisher with these indentations in place!

BINDING COPY ~ Binding Copy describes a book in which the pages or leaves are complete but the binding is very bad, loose, or the covers entirely missing. One shouldn't assume that a book has no value because its covers are falling off. A rare book or even a scarce book can be rebound and retain considerable or even greater value depending on age, scarcity and the quality of the rebinding.

ARC (Advanced Reading Copy) ~ Sometimes called Uncorrected Proofs, these books are sent out before publication to promote a book to reviewers and bookshops. They are usually bound as paperbacks in slick laminated covers, and sometimes in plain single-color cardstock. The back of the book generally carries information about the intended publication format, date, and so forth.

COLLECTIBLE: In addition to condition, there are several unique attributes that can make a book collectible. They include First Edition (first printing); Illustrator (especially in the case of children's books); Signed (and/or inscribed) by author or illustrator; Association (inscribed by the author to another author or well-known person); Provenance (e.g. bookplate of famous person, or handed down from the library of some famous person; Laid-in items and ephemera (especially holograph or signed letters); Binding (e.g. leather, decorated, foredge painting); Edition (especially Limited Edition, but also Revised or Updated Editions or the problematic "First Thus"); and Relative Scarcity (see below).

ADDENDUM: A book with a dustjacket will quite often be described with separate designations for book and dustjacket, as in "F/VG", where F (Fine) is the condition of the book itself, and "VG" (Very Good) is the condition of the dustjacket. In all cases, the lack of a dustjacket should be noted if the book was issued with one. Pictorial or Decorated boards should also be noted. When in doubt in writing a book's description, "Good" or "Very Good" usually works, along with a brief description of physical condition, textual soundness, and edition.

RELATIVE SCARCITY

COMMON ~ A common book is exactly what it sounds like -- thousands of copies are available and easily purchased. Quite often a common book was once a bestseller. Sometimes it was simply overproduced and then dumped on the remainder market. Common books aren't to be completely scorned, however. Often the demand for fine or better copies of a once-popular book is still strong.

UNCOMMON ~ An uncommon book is one that used to be difficult to find, although in today's market most of the copies available can be easily located and purchased. Condition is a big factor in the value of uncommon books, as is current demand for the title. A book may be uncommon, but if nobody cares about it anymore, it is of little value.

SCARCE ~ A scarce book is one of which an unknown number of copies exist, but which turns up from time to time. You can generally tell if a book is scarce by looking it up on AbeBooks.com. If there are four or fewer copies being offered for sale on ABE, the book can be considered scarce.

RARE ~ A rare book is one of which very few copies still exist, and which is almost never found outside libraries or existing collections. Occasionally rare books do turn up "in the wild", and when they are recognized they end up at auctions where they fetch considerable sums. (Some booksellers consider a book "rare" if they find a copy every five or ten years. Others would call this frequency "very scarce". In any case, such "semi-rare" books can fetch high prices, depending on the current market.)

A WORD TO THE WISE

Readers and collectors should keep in mind that the above descriptions are a general guide to book grading. The condition of each book is in a very real sense unique, and the best and most accurate determination can be given by an experienced bookseller who is holding your unique copy in his hands. You are therefore urged to consult with him or her regarding the condition (and value) of your collectible books.

notes on grading and inspecting

what to look for when inspecting collectible books

When inspecting collectible books, you should look for the book's edition, physical condition, and unique features like signatures, as these are the primary factors that determine value and desirability for collectors.

Edition and rarity

First edition: First editions, especially first printings, are often the most valuable because of their scarcity and historical significance. Look for phrases like "First Edition" or "First Printing" on the copyright page, or a number line that includes a "1".

Limited edition: Books with small, numbered print runs, unique materials, or special illustrations are highly sought after.

Rarity and demand: Not all old books are valuable. A book's rarity becomes a significant factor when there is also high demand for that title, which can be the case for limited editions, certain children's books, or censored titles.

What Should I Look for in an Antique Book? A Collector's ...

Mar 31, 2025 — Why First Editions Matter: \* Scarcity: First editions are usually printed in smaller runs, making them rarer and more sought-after. \* Historical Significance: O...

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The Griffin Mall

What Makes a Book Rare? | Book Collecting Guide - Biblio

The first US printing of JK Rowling's Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows ran to 15 million copies. \* Poetry. Some entire categories of books have a greater ch...

Favicon

Biblio

Physical condition

The physical condition is a critical factor and is often graded using terms like "As New," "Fine," or "Very Good".

Binding and spine: The spine should be firm, with all pages securely attached. Look for a book that opens easily but isn't loose or "shaken".

Fine bindings: Special or unique bindings made from materials like leather or vellum, especially from a noted bookbinder, can add significant value.

Cover and dust jacket: For books published after the 20th century, the original dust jacket is a major component of a book's value. Check for fading, tears, price clipping, and stains.

Pages: Inspect the pages for signs of damage or wear.

Foxing: Look for brown age spots, which are common in older books.

Water damage: Signs of moisture, like wavy or stained pages, can significantly decrease value.

Annotations and markings: While a previous owner's name usually detracts from value, notes from a famous person (provenance) can be desirable. Heavily marked or highlighted books are typically less valuable.

Completeness: Ensure all pages, maps, illustrations, and other inserts that the book was originally issued with are still present.

Smell: A "musty" smell can indicate mold or mildew, which is a major fault.

Unique and historical characteristics

Signatures and inscriptions: Books signed by the author, illustrator, or a notable figure are more valuable. An "association copy," which includes an inscription from the author to a significant person, is even more prized.

Printing errors: Misprints or unique errors in a first edition can sometimes make a book more desirable to collectors. For example, early printings of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone with specific errors have become valuable finds.

Historical and cultural significance: A book's importance in history, its connection to a major event, or its status as a seminal work (like On the Origin of Species) can give it value beyond its physical state.

Provenance: The documented history of a book's ownership, especially if it was owned by a celebrity or historical figure, adds a layer of interest and value.

AI responses may include mista

Rare Book Valuation blog bookkeeper

What Makes a Book Rare? A Collector’s Guide to Valuation

admin | March 7, 2025

Books hold a special place in human history, and over the centuries, certain works have transcended the written word to become rare treasures. Whether they are antique tomes, first editions, or signed copies, rare books have become coveted items for collectors. The value of a book is determined by various factors, including its rarity, condition, historical significance, and demand. This guide aims to provide an understanding of how to identify valuable books and the considerations that collectors should keep in mind when looking to build or expand their collections.

The Factors that Make a Book Rare

When discussing rare books, several factors come into play that determine their worth. One of the primary components is the book’s scarcity. Books that were produced in limited numbers, such as first editions, special printings, or books that were withdrawn from circulation for some reason, are more likely to become rare. A book’s rarity often stems from how many copies were originally printed, how many copies are still in circulation, and whether or not it has been widely circulated. Some books were printed in limited quantities for specific audiences or as part of a special edition, making them valuable due to their limited availability.

The condition of a book also plays a significant role in its value. A book in pristine condition, with little to no wear and tear, will typically fetch a higher price than one that is heavily damaged or worn. Collectors often seek out books that are well-preserved, particularly if they are old. Books with original dust jackets, unmarked pages, and minimal creasing or staining are highly sought after. The rarity of a book is not simply determined by how few copies of it exist, but also by how many have survived in good condition over time.

Another factor that makes a book rare is the significance of the author or the book itself. Books written by famous authors, such as Robert Louis Stevenson, can become valuable for their historical or literary importance. First editions of novels by Stevenson, for example, can be highly prized among collectors, especially if the book is part of a limited edition or has been signed by the author. Additionally, certain books are rare because of their cultural significance or their role in historical events. These kinds of books may be linked to major social, political, or artistic movements and can carry immense value because of their connection to such important moments.

How to Identify a Valuable Book

For those interested in learning how to identify a valuable book, the first step is to become familiar with the different types of editions that may be available. First editions are often the most valuable type of book, especially when they are in good condition. First editions are the original printings of a book and are typically the first to be released to the public. Many collectors look specifically for these editions as they represent the initial presentation of an author’s work. However, not all first editions are created equal. Some books are reprinted several times in their early years, and only certain printings are considered true first editions. It’s important for collectors to research the specific criteria for identifying first editions of a particular book.

Signed copies are another type of valuable book. Books signed by the author are often more desirable to collectors than unsigned editions. A signature adds a personal touch and makes the book more unique. However, the value of a signed book can depend on the rarity of the signature, the significance of the author, and the condition of the book. Signed books from major literary figures or celebrities tend to be more valuable than those from lesser-known authors. Furthermore, the location and date of the signature can also affect a book’s value. A book signed during a specific event, such as a book tour or public appearance, might carry additional significance.

Some books gain value not just because of their edition or signature, but also because of their historical context. Books that were printed during a particular period or represent a specific cultural moment can become rare due to their association with significant events. Books that address important political or social issues, or those that feature groundbreaking scientific theories, may become valuable as they document crucial moments in history. Collectors often seek out these types of books because they offer a glimpse into the past and serve as a reminder of key milestones.

Where to Find Rare Books

When searching for rare books, many collectors turn to used bookstores and antiquarian bookshops. These places are often goldmines for finding valuable books, as they specialize in older or out-of-print titles. Local used bookstores can be a treasure trove of forgotten gems, and with some patience and perseverance, collectors may stumble upon a valuable book hidden among the shelves. Antiquarian bookstores, in particular, focus on rare and antique books and are staffed by experts who can help collectors find what they are looking for. These shops are ideal for those who are serious about book collecting and want to find books with historical or cultural significance.

Estate sales, auctions, and library sales are other excellent places to find rare books. Estate sales often include personal collections of books, some of which may be highly valuable. Auctions, both online and in-person, are another great venue for acquiring rare books. Many auction houses specialize in rare books and manuscripts, and bidding can sometimes lead to the acquisition of priceless works. Library sales, especially those held by university libraries or historical societies, can also yield valuable books that have been carefully preserved for years.

Online marketplaces have made it easier for collectors to find rare books from the comfort of their own homes. Websites like eBay, AbeBooks, and Biblio offer a wide range of rare and antique books, and they allow collectors to search for specific editions or authors. While buying books online can be convenient, it is important to exercise caution and verify the authenticity of the books being sold. Sellers may not always be transparent about the condition of a book or its true value, so it is essential for collectors to do their research and ask questions before making a purchase.

The Role of Condition in Valuation

The condition of a book plays a pivotal role in its value. Even a rare book can lose its worth if it is not in good shape. Collectors are highly attuned to the condition of a book and will carefully inspect it before committing to a purchase. A book that is missing pages, has extensive underlining or highlighting, or shows signs of water damage will typically be worth much less than one that is in near-mint condition. Dust jackets, which protect the cover, are particularly important for maintaining the book’s value. A book without its dust jacket may still have some value, but it will generally be worth significantly less than a similar edition with its original jacket intact.

The binding of a book is another aspect that affects its condition. Books with cracked, torn, or loose bindings are considered to be in poor condition, which decreases their market value. Books that have been rebound, or those that have undergone extensive repairs, are also less desirable to collectors. The presence of annotations, notes, or marks inside the book can also affect its value. Many collectors prefer books with unmarked pages, as they retain their original charm and value.

While a book’s condition is important, it is not the only factor that determines its worth. A rare book in poor condition may still hold significant value if it is one of a kind, such as a limited edition or a copy signed by the author. However, collectors should be prepared for the possibility that the value of a book may be greatly diminished if it is not in excellent condition. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain rare books properly to ensure that they retain their value.

Building a Rare Book Collection

Building a rare book collection is a rewarding endeavor that requires knowledge, patience, and careful planning. A collector should focus on a specific area or genre that they are passionate about, whether it be classic literature, first editions, or books by a particular author, such as Stevenson. Having a clear focus will allow the collector to develop expertise in that area and make more informed purchasing decisions.

Collectors should also stay up to date on market trends and auction results to understand the current value of specific books. This can help them avoid overpaying for a book or make smarter investment choices. Networking with other collectors and attending book fairs or conventions is another great way to learn about rare books and discover valuable acquisitions. As the world of rare book collecting is vast and constantly evolving, it is important to stay informed and be diligent in one’s search for hidden treasures.

Conclusion

The rarity and value of a book depend on a combination of factors, including scarcity, condition, historical significance, and demand. Whether you are searching through used bookstores, auction houses, or online marketplaces, understanding how to identify a valuable book is key to building a successful collection. By learning the ins and outs of rare book collecting and maintaining a passion for the written word, collectors can enjoy the thrill of discovering literary treasures and preserving them for future generations.

Tab 5

TAB 1

## **Listing Format:**

## **Author First Last - *Book Title (*Publisher, Publication Date) Edition Info**

### **Item Overview**

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### **Bibliographic Details**

* **Author:** P. G. Wodehouse
* **Title:** *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere*
* **Publisher / Place:** Herbert Jenkins Limited, 3 York Street, St. James’s, London S.W.1
* **Year:** 1935
* **Edition / Printing:** **First Edition, First Printing** (*First printing 1935* on copyright leaf with Jenkins device)
* **Book Format:** for example cloth, hardcover, cloth pictorial, hardcover pictorial, leather, series leather, etc..
* **Binding Details:** for example Light tan cloth; black titling to upper board & spine; Jenkins Pegasus to spine; “A Herbert Jenkins Book” crest to rear board
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* **Notable Points:** Bookseller rubber stamp to front endpaper (“City Bookstall, Ooty”); small pencil note
* **Series / Universe:** Blandings Castle stories (incl. “Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend,” etc.)
* **Language:** English

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**Book Grade:** *Very Good+ / Fine-*

**Dust Jacket Grade:** *Very Good+ / Fine-*

**Shorthand grade: for example** *Very Good+ book, Fine- DJ*

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photos form a large part of the description;

All photos were taken by the seller, in the home location of storage, and of the physical book on offer. Generally this is something you should confirm.

Page by page, intense spine, and sub-bound dustjacket inspections damage the book. That said this is a personal collection stored continuously in good conditions. Water-proof enclosures are used only immediately prior to shipping.

### **Shipping**

Well-packed and boxed. USPS Media Mail (economical) or Priority (faster) is available. For high value offerings, we are generally glad to accommodate individual shipping requests including pick up by the buyer or buyers agent. This includes internation shipping provided it encloses insurance coverage at the amount of the price inclusive of all associated fees and expenses and to be paid upon the item being lost. If it arrives to you, you obviously keep it. If it is returned to us, we obviously send it. These shipping services are similarly scrupulous.

All that said, we hope you love your book. We certainly did.

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VERY GOOD (abbreviated "VG") ~ Very Good can describe a used book that shows shelfwear and visible signs of having been read. Its dustjacket may be rubbed, chipped, or even missing small pieces, but it should generally be clean and bright, depending on how old it is. The book should always be clean and tight, and the overall appearance should be of a desirable copy. A very old book may show some foxing. The description of a Very Good book ought to include all notable flaws.

GOOD (abbreviated "G") ~ Good describes the average used and worn book that has all pages or leaves present. A Good book may be cocked, have loose joints, and be missing a dustjacket. But it must be complete, clean, and worth keeping. Its value will be a fraction of a Fine copy, unless it is very scarce.

READING COPY ~ A Reading Copy is a book whose principle value is that the text is complete and legible, such that the book can still be read and enjoyed before it is thrown away. There are three descriptive categories that define the condition of Reading Copies -- Fair, Poor, and Ex-Library:

FAIR ~ Fair is a worn book that has complete text pages (including those with maps or plates) but may lack endpapers, half-title, etc. (which must be noted). The binding, spine, and dustjacket (if any) may also be worn or even torn & repaired. At this point internal marks may be acceptable, depending on their quantity and nature (pencil is more acceptable than ink or marker) and the scarcity of the book. Occasionally you will find a book that has marginal notations throughout, but the notations are by a famous person. In that case, the marks increase the value of the book.

POOR ~ Poor describes a book that is sufficiently worn that its only merit is as a Reading Copy because it does have the complete text, which must be legible. Any missing maps or plates should still be noted. This copy may be soiled, scuffed, stained or spotted and may have loose joints, hinges, pages, etc. If your Poor book is a common title, the best thing to do is throw it away and buy a better one.

EX-LIBRARY ~ Ex-library books are notable because they have been defaced by librarians, who love to despoil them with labels, rubber stamps, card pockets, and even inked numbers and shellac on the spine. Sometimes you will find the most beautiful new and unread nonfiction book discarded by a library because no one ever checked it out! The uncirculated copies, while attractive to scholars, generally don't have much value unless they are very scarce or were published in the 19th century and earlier.

BOOK CLUB EDITIONS ~ Book Club editions are notable because many of them use cheaper paper and bindings than the publisher or "trade" edition. The dustjackets are usually printed on cheaper paper as well. But some Book Clubs use the trade edition and simply add a different dustjacket. The one sure sign that a book is a Book Club edition is the lack of a price on the dustjacket flap. Then again, most University Presses and some specialty publishers don't include printed prices, so this isn't a hard and fast rule. It used to be thought that a book with a small indented square, circle, or triangle on lower back cover was definitely a Book Club edition. Then it was revealed in Firsts Magazine that many valuable first trade editions (specifically those of James Michener) came from the publisher with these indentations in place!

BINDING COPY ~ Binding Copy describes a book in which the pages or leaves are complete but the binding is very bad, loose, or the covers entirely missing. One shouldn't assume that a book has no value because its covers are falling off. A rare book or even a scarce book can be rebound and retain considerable or even greater value depending on age, scarcity and the quality of the rebinding.

ARC (Advanced Reading Copy) ~ Sometimes called Uncorrected Proofs, these books are sent out before publication to promote a book to reviewers and bookshops. They are usually bound as paperbacks in slick laminated covers, and sometimes in plain single-color cardstock. The back of the book generally carries information about the intended publication format, date, and so forth.

COLLECTIBLE: In addition to condition, there are several unique attributes that can make a book collectible. They include First Edition (first printing); Illustrator (especially in the case of children's books); Signed (and/or inscribed) by author or illustrator; Association (inscribed by the author to another author or well-known person); Provenance (e.g. bookplate of famous person, or handed down from the library of some famous person; Laid-in items and ephemera (especially holograph or signed letters); Binding (e.g. leather, decorated, foredge painting); Edition (especially Limited Edition, but also Revised or Updated Editions or the problematic "First Thus"); and Relative Scarcity (see below).

ADDENDUM: A book with a dustjacket will quite often be described with separate designations for book and dustjacket, as in "F/VG", where F (Fine) is the condition of the book itself, and "VG" (Very Good) is the condition of the dustjacket. In all cases, the lack of a dustjacket should be noted if the book was issued with one. Pictorial or Decorated boards should also be noted. When in doubt in writing a book's description, "Good" or "Very Good" usually works, along with a brief description of physical condition, textual soundness, and edition.

RELATIVE SCARCITY

COMMON ~ A common book is exactly what it sounds like -- thousands of copies are available and easily purchased. Quite often a common book was once a bestseller. Sometimes it was simply overproduced and then dumped on the remainder market. Common books aren't to be completely scorned, however. Often the demand for fine or better copies of a once-popular book is still strong.

UNCOMMON ~ An uncommon book is one that used to be difficult to find, although in today's market most of the copies available can be easily located and purchased. Condition is a big factor in the value of uncommon books, as is current demand for the title. A book may be uncommon, but if nobody cares about it anymore, it is of little value.

SCARCE ~ A scarce book is one of which an unknown number of copies exist, but which turns up from time to time. You can generally tell if a book is scarce by looking it up on AbeBooks.com. If there are four or fewer copies being offered for sale on ABE, the book can be considered scarce.

RARE ~ A rare book is one of which very few copies still exist, and which is almost never found outside libraries or existing collections. Occasionally rare books do turn up "in the wild", and when they are recognized they end up at auctions where they fetch considerable sums. (Some booksellers consider a book "rare" if they find a copy every five or ten years. Others would call this frequency "very scarce". In any case, such "semi-rare" books can fetch high prices, depending on the current market.)

A WORD TO THE WISE

Readers and collectors should keep in mind that the above descriptions are a general guide to book grading. The condition of each book is in a very real sense unique, and the best and most accurate determination can be given by an experienced bookseller who is holding your unique copy in his hands. You are therefore urged to consult with him or her regarding the condition (and value) of your collectible books.

TAB 3

Terms For Describing Book Condition

INTRODUCTION

AB Bookman's Weekly, which ceased publication in 1999, was for decades the Bible of the antiquarian book trade. Included in every issue AB Bookman's after 1949 was a set of criteria for grading the condition of used books. AB's definitions of "Very Fine" (or "As New"), "Fine", "Very Good, "Good", "Fair", and so forth have become pretty much the industy standard. One should keep these descriptions in mind when buying old books, or when bringing in books for appraisal or sale.

We have edited and expanded these definitions a little and welcome suggestions for further improvement. We have also added definitions for "Rare", "Scarce", "Uncommon", and "Common". Considering how many inexperienced internet sellers are calling even the most common books "rare", these definitions are of special interest.

For the reader and collector new to catalog and internet book descriptions, here are a few terms (and their abbreviations) in common use with which you should be familiar:

Dust Jacket (sometimes dustjacket, dust cover, or "wrapper". Often abbreviated "DJ") ~ The dust jacket is a paper cover, often colorfully illustrated, that is wrapped around the book itself. Originally designed to protect the book, the dust jacket quickly became a means of attracting attention and then an item of interest among collectors. The dust jacket of a collectible book is often placed inside a transparent cover (sometimes called a "Brodart", so-named for Arthur Brody, the man who invented it.)

Boards. This term refers to the covers (front and back) of a hardcover book, specifically the heavy cardboard which is in turn covered with cloth and or colored paper, and (usually in older books) various types of leather. The term "boards" derives from the early days of printing, when books were bound in leather-covered wood. The term Hardcover is often abbreviated "HC".

Paperback (sometimes called Softcover, Trade Paperback, or simply "Wraps".) A book bound with a paper cover, usually less expensive than a hard bound or hardcover book. The usual abbreviations are "PB" and "TPB", with TPB designating sizes from 5"x8" and up. (There are exceptions, such as Penguin paperbacks, which are smaller than 5x8 but are still called Trade Paperbacks.)

TERMS DESCRIBING BOOK CONDITION

VERY FINE or AS NEW (abbreviated "VF") ~ Very Fine means the book is in the same immaculate condition as when it emerged from the bindery. There are no defects or marks, and the dustjacket (if it was issued with one) must be perfect and without any tears. In short, it is a copy that is close to perfect in every respect. It should be noted that in the real world, Very Fine books are relatively uncommon, and that most Antiquarian Booksellers use Fine as their highest condition grading.

(The term "As New", when it is used, is really an informal grading category, as are the colloquial terms "Mint" and "Gift Quality".)

FINE (abbreviated "F") ~ Fine is marginally less than perfect, and may designate a book that is still new, or a book that has been carefully read. The use of the term Fine (as compared to Near Fine or Very Good) often depends on when the book was published. A recent book should have no notable defects at all. But the dustjacket of a Fine older book may have a small closed tear, or be a little rubbed, even a bit worn at the edges. Such defects, if present, must be minor and should always be noted.

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EX-LIBRARY ~ Ex-library books are notable because they have been defaced by librarians, who love to despoil them with labels, rubber stamps, card pockets, and even inked numbers and shellac on the spine. Sometimes you will find the most beautiful new and unread nonfiction book discarded by a library because no one ever checked it out! The uncirculated copies, while attractive to scholars, generally don't have much value unless they are very scarce or were published in the 19th century and earlier.

BOOK CLUB EDITIONS ~ Book Club editions are notable because many of them use cheaper paper and bindings than the publisher or "trade" edition. The dustjackets are usually printed on cheaper paper as well. But some Book Clubs use the trade edition and simply add a different dustjacket. The one sure sign that a book is a Book Club edition is the lack of a price on the dustjacket flap. Then again, most University Presses and some specialty publishers don't include printed prices, so this isn't a hard and fast rule. It used to be thought that a book with a small indented square, circle, or triangle on lower back cover was definitely a Book Club edition. Then it was revealed in Firsts Magazine that many valuable first trade editions (specifically those of James Michener) came from the publisher with these indentations in place!

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SCARCE ~ A scarce book is one of which an unknown number of copies exist, but which turns up from time to time. You can generally tell if a book is scarce by looking it up on AbeBooks.com. If there are four or fewer copies being offered for sale on ABE, the book can be considered scarce.

RARE ~ A rare book is one of which very few copies still exist, and which is almost never found outside libraries or existing collections. Occasionally rare books do turn up "in the wild", and when they are recognized they end up at auctions where they fetch considerable sums. (Some booksellers consider a book "rare" if they find a copy every five or ten years. Others would call this frequency "very scarce". In any case, such "semi-rare" books can fetch high prices, depending on the current market.)

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What Makes a Book Rare? A Collector’s Guide to Valuation

admin | March 7, 2025

Books hold a special place in human history, and over the centuries, certain works have transcended the written word to become rare treasures. Whether they are antique tomes, first editions, or signed copies, rare books have become coveted items for collectors. The value of a book is determined by various factors, including its rarity, condition, historical significance, and demand. This guide aims to provide an understanding of how to identify valuable books and the considerations that collectors should keep in mind when looking to build or expand their collections.

The Factors that Make a Book Rare

When discussing rare books, several factors come into play that determine their worth. One of the primary components is the book’s scarcity. Books that were produced in limited numbers, such as first editions, special printings, or books that were withdrawn from circulation for some reason, are more likely to become rare. A book’s rarity often stems from how many copies were originally printed, how many copies are still in circulation, and whether or not it has been widely circulated. Some books were printed in limited quantities for specific audiences or as part of a special edition, making them valuable due to their limited availability.

The condition of a book also plays a significant role in its value. A book in pristine condition, with little to no wear and tear, will typically fetch a higher price than one that is heavily damaged or worn. Collectors often seek out books that are well-preserved, particularly if they are old. Books with original dust jackets, unmarked pages, and minimal creasing or staining are highly sought after. The rarity of a book is not simply determined by how few copies of it exist, but also by how many have survived in good condition over time.

Another factor that makes a book rare is the significance of the author or the book itself. Books written by famous authors, such as Robert Louis Stevenson, can become valuable for their historical or literary importance. First editions of novels by Stevenson, for example, can be highly prized among collectors, especially if the book is part of a limited edition or has been signed by the author. Additionally, certain books are rare because of their cultural significance or their role in historical events. These kinds of books may be linked to major social, political, or artistic movements and can carry immense value because of their connection to such important moments.

How to Identify a Valuable Book

For those interested in learning how to identify a valuable book, the first step is to become familiar with the different types of editions that may be available. First editions are often the most valuable type of book, especially when they are in good condition. First editions are the original printings of a book and are typically the first to be released to the public. Many collectors look specifically for these editions as they represent the initial presentation of an author’s work. However, not all first editions are created equal. Some books are reprinted several times in their early years, and only certain printings are considered true first editions. It’s important for collectors to research the specific criteria for identifying first editions of a particular book.

Signed copies are another type of valuable book. Books signed by the author are often more desirable to collectors than unsigned editions. A signature adds a personal touch and makes the book more unique. However, the value of a signed book can depend on the rarity of the signature, the significance of the author, and the condition of the book. Signed books from major literary figures or celebrities tend to be more valuable than those from lesser-known authors. Furthermore, the location and date of the signature can also affect a book’s value. A book signed during a specific event, such as a book tour or public appearance, might carry additional significance.

Some books gain value not just because of their edition or signature, but also because of their historical context. Books that were printed during a particular period or represent a specific cultural moment can become rare due to their association with significant events. Books that address important political or social issues, or those that feature groundbreaking scientific theories, may become valuable as they document crucial moments in history. Collectors often seek out these types of books because they offer a glimpse into the past and serve as a reminder of key milestones.

Where to Find Rare Books

When searching for rare books, many collectors turn to used bookstores and antiquarian bookshops. These places are often goldmines for finding valuable books, as they specialize in older or out-of-print titles. Local used bookstores can be a treasure trove of forgotten gems, and with some patience and perseverance, collectors may stumble upon a valuable book hidden among the shelves. Antiquarian bookstores, in particular, focus on rare and antique books and are staffed by experts who can help collectors find what they are looking for. These shops are ideal for those who are serious about book collecting and want to find books with historical or cultural significance.

Estate sales, auctions, and library sales are other excellent places to find rare books. Estate sales often include personal collections of books, some of which may be highly valuable. Auctions, both online and in-person, are another great venue for acquiring rare books. Many auction houses specialize in rare books and manuscripts, and bidding can sometimes lead to the acquisition of priceless works. Library sales, especially those held by university libraries or historical societies, can also yield valuable books that have been carefully preserved for years.

Online marketplaces have made it easier for collectors to find rare books from the comfort of their own homes. Websites like eBay, AbeBooks, and Biblio offer a wide range of rare and antique books, and they allow collectors to search for specific editions or authors. While buying books online can be convenient, it is important to exercise caution and verify the authenticity of the books being sold. Sellers may not always be transparent about the condition of a book or its true value, so it is essential for collectors to do their research and ask questions before making a purchase.

The Role of Condition in Valuation

The condition of a book plays a pivotal role in its value. Even a rare book can lose its worth if it is not in good shape. Collectors are highly attuned to the condition of a book and will carefully inspect it before committing to a purchase. A book that is missing pages, has extensive underlining or highlighting, or shows signs of water damage will typically be worth much less than one that is in near-mint condition. Dust jackets, which protect the cover, are particularly important for maintaining the book’s value. A book without its dust jacket may still have some value, but it will generally be worth significantly less than a similar edition with its original jacket intact.

The binding of a book is another aspect that affects its condition. Books with cracked, torn, or loose bindings are considered to be in poor condition, which decreases their market value. Books that have been rebound, or those that have undergone extensive repairs, are also less desirable to collectors. The presence of annotations, notes, or marks inside the book can also affect its value. Many collectors prefer books with unmarked pages, as they retain their original charm and value.

While a book’s condition is important, it is not the only factor that determines its worth. A rare book in poor condition may still hold significant value if it is one of a kind, such as a limited edition or a copy signed by the author. However, collectors should be prepared for the possibility that the value of a book may be greatly diminished if it is not in excellent condition. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain rare books properly to ensure that they retain their value.

Building a Rare Book Collection

Building a rare book collection is a rewarding endeavor that requires knowledge, patience, and careful planning. A collector should focus on a specific area or genre that they are passionate about, whether it be classic literature, first editions, or books by a particular author, such as Stevenson. Having a clear focus will allow the collector to develop expertise in that area and make more informed purchasing decisions.

Collectors should also stay up to date on market trends and auction results to understand the current value of specific books. This can help them avoid overpaying for a book or make smarter investment choices. Networking with other collectors and attending book fairs or conventions is another great way to learn about rare books and discover valuable acquisitions. As the world of rare book collecting is vast and constantly evolving, it is important to stay informed and be diligent in one’s search for hidden treasures.

Conclusion

The rarity and value of a book depend on a combination of factors, including scarcity, condition, historical significance, and demand. Whether you are searching through used bookstores, auction houses, or online marketplaces, understanding how to identify a valuable book is key to building a successful collection. By learning the ins and outs of rare book collecting and maintaining a passion for the written word, collectors can enjoy the thrill of discovering literary treasures and preserving them for future generations.