

Sheppard's confidential

News and events in:
antiquarian and
second-hand books
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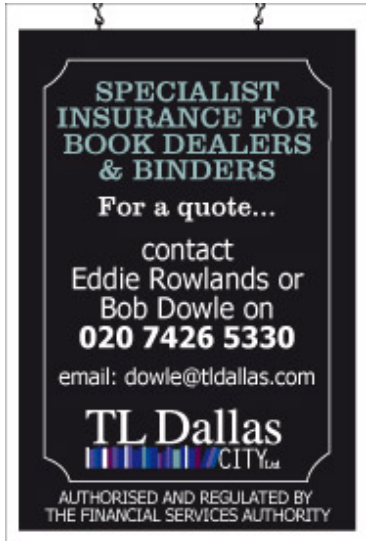
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Comment

One aspect of rare antiquarian books is the high value they attract at auctions. Maybe it's a sign of the times but following the report that a current bid for the first edition of a comic featuring Batman is in excess of \$420,000, we learn that this week a collector has paid \$1m for a 'fine' example' of the first comic that featured Superman! Experts expect the Batman comic will fetch a similar sum. And as you will read in this edition, others forecast a large collection of old UK railway posters will fetch a similar sum too. Are collectors really shunning books which are threatened by e-books and digitisation in favour of posters and comics? Surely not.

With many printed magazines and publications closing, some due to the recession and others due to the Internet, it is good news indeed that Bookdealer has a new owner. (See edition SC 140.) The new owner is Richard Sawyer (who is well-known in the trade trading as Chas J. Sawyer, a business founded in 1894). The May edition will be his first and we wish him and his colleagues every success.

The book trade, has not escaped the effects of the recession and many dealers have closed their shops to trade from other premises. Some have given up, closed and ceased trading. We would like to hear from of our readers who can report those businesses which have closed and ceased trading in the past year which will help to ensure our database is up to date.

NEWS

UK: Bookdealer to continue under new ownership

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The March issue of Bookdealer contains the welcome news that a buyer has come forward and agreed to take over the magazine from the present proprietor, Michael Berry. There had been some dismay among the loyal following of this monthly magazine devoted to 'book news and reviews' that it might disappear alongside similar publications. Michael told his readers in his January Editorial that for personal reasons he would be ceasing publication at the end of April. The new owner is from within the book trade, namely Richard Sawyer [photo left] who trades under the family business name of Chas J. Sawyer.

When asked the reason behind his decision Richard told *Sheppard's Confidential* "Having given the matter much thought and carried out my research I discovered that there is an appetite for a traditional printed journal that gives the facts, figures and general information needed by the bibliophile; that is close to hand on the office desk; that can be popped into the pocket and read on the train or can be enjoyed from the comfort of an armchair rather than hunched over a computer screen. If at the same time a greater interest in 'out of print' volumes and new books can be stimulated so much the better".

"Serendipity of opportunity' has played a large role in my life and Michael's editorial in the January issue of Bookdealer immediately caught my attention. Since then I have spoken to many contributors, subscribers and advertisers and have been much encouraged by the warm response that has been received. I do hope that support for this important publication will continue even if the new editor is on probation! My policy to begin with will be "Steady as she goes - ramming speed can come later".

Richard joined the family business in 1969, at that time located in Grafton Street, London W1, on returning from University. He now trades from home in Kent and has of late been taking a long sabbatical while being the Bursar of a small West Sussex Preparatory School.

An interview conducted by Sheila Markham in 1995 can be found at: [Sheila Markham Rare Books](#) - and for information about the current edition, visit [Bookdealer](#).

USA: E-book sales climb 176% in US, doubling market share

The USA has seen e-book sales rise by 176.6% in 2009, to \$169.5m (£109m), more than doubling its market share, according to Publishers Weekly. The figures come from the 13 publishers that report to the Association of American Publishers. Coupled with a slight decline in sales of print trade books, the jump in digital sales means the market share for trade e-books has more than doubled, from 1.2% in 2008 to 3.3% in 2009. [Read more](#)

USA: Readers Digest US moves out of bankruptcy

Reader's Digest Association (RDA) has moved out of bankruptcy in America after completing its financial restructuring and cutting its debt by 75%. In August last year RDA filed for voluntary pre-arranged bankruptcy under Chapter 11 as part of a restructuring plan. This move does not affect the UK arm which went into administration nine days ago. [Read more](#)

USA: Superman's debut fetches \$1 million

It seems that collectors are prepared to pay handsome money for good examples of comics in which the hero becomes an international star. This week, a fine edition Action Comics (June 1938) which featured Superman fetched \$1m.

This sale precedes Heritage Auction's sale of the comic that included the first appearance of Batman. Experts believe this too will change hands for a similar sum on Thursday. On Wednesday afternoon, the top bid is more than \$420,000. [Read more](#)

UK: Old Railway posters expected to fetch £1m

During the golden age of the steam train they advertised journeys to Paignton, Southport and Cornwall. Part of a vast collection, these posters were saved by a railway enthusiast Malcolm Guest, who died last year aged 66. His hoard of posters filled his terrace house and experts expect the collection to fetch over a £1 million. [Read more](#)