



Patience and Fortitude: Wherein a Colorful Cast of Determined Book Collectors, Dealers, and Librarians Go About the Quixotic Task of Preserving a Legacy

Nicholas A. Basbanes

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In his national bestseller, *A Gentle Madness*, Nicholas Basbanes explored the sweet obsession people feel to possess books. Now, Basbanes continues his adventures among the “gently mad” on an irresistible journey to the great libraries of the past—from Alexandria to Glastonbury—and to contemporary collections at the Vatican, Wolfenbüttel, and erudite universities. Along the way, he drops in on eccentric book dealers and regales us with stories about unforgettable collectors, such as the gentleman who bought a rare book in 1939 “by selling bottles of his own blood.”

Taking the book’s grand title from the marble lions guarding the New York Public Library at 42nd Street, Basbanes both entertains and delights. And once again, as Scott Turow aptly noted, “Basbanes makes you love books, the collections he writes about, and the volume in your hand.”

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Seth says

My copy is endorsed to me by the late Rolland Comstock. He and his private library are featured in the book. When I was in college, I got a job working as his private librarian. He had a collection of over 50,000 books - many of them signed first editions - filling a two-story wing of his Springfield, Missouri mansion.

Faith-Anne says

A wonderful book about books that any hardcore reader would enjoy!

Laura says

I liked the content of this book, but the way the information is presented is very poor. The author jumps from discussions of one institution or person to another with little more than a double-space to let you know a change in course is taking place. It felt disjointed and abrupt, and did not make for a pleasurable reading experience. The topics that the author covered were interesting, and the sections on book collectors and sellers were particularly fun. Given that the material was good, I wish that the author had done a better job of presenting it to the reader.

margothere says

A whole lot of book about books, book peoples and book places. Even though there have been changes regarding some of the contents, a great read, particularly after Part One: Overture.

Bill says

The author admits in his introduction that book is a continuation of the stories told his book, "A Gentle Madness...". So we have more tales of book sellers, book collector, book hoarders and book finders and the libraries where many meet their end journey. He has a few chapters on the electronic age and its effect on libraries in particular. For someone interested in the subject the volume makes fascinating reading.

Ann says

Patience & Fortitude is like many of Nicholas Basbanes' works: a bibliophiles dream!

It takes the main theme of his earlier work, A Gentle Madness: who amasses book collections and how they amass them and develops it further. How is knowledge and information amassed and preserved to be passed down through generations? Is all informaton worthy of being preserved? If not, why is the information and knowledge that is selected for preservation chosen?

From the great libraries of the past and present, like that of ancient Alexandria, to the internet, from universities to public libraries and private collections, Basbanes covers the subject thoroughly, and with a deep passion for the subject. Of course Basbanes' love of the written word comes through on every page, and makes the book such a great pleasure for this bookworm to read!

Nicholas Basbanes has definitely become one of my favorite authors.

Putu Sita Witari says

Bibliophiles and library lovers, this book is certainly for you.

I am very much impressed with Basbanes's knowledge and writing about books. The author has done such marvelous research that kept in awe of how little I knew about libraries and books. The theme is rich of not about the physical books only, but it goes beyond it such as its history, book lovers who are not collecting books per se, but also the story or journey of the books themselves which carry huge values. Then it follows with a 'drama' of the existence of books and libraries all around the world.

Cooper Renner says

All together I read maybe half the book. Mostly from the second section on book collectors and the third about the New York and San Francisco public libraries.

Andrea Patrick says

Had to skip large parts. It's like Basbanes decided to pull together everything he'd ever written about books and libraries and book collectors and compile it. Okay, if it's maybe three or four essays per section, but I don't need to read about 19 different European bookselling families or 12 guys that donated money to build a library and how they did it. This would have been better as several shorter books, but who in god's name would want to read one book about 25 European bookselling families? Glad to be done with this one.

jennifer says

Oh, the thrill of finally finishing this book! My heart is leaping!!

And that is not to imply that I didn't enjoy this book; it is, in fact, a wonderful book. But I spent 8 months

dipping in and out, reading 10 or 20 pages here and there between other books and it had begun to feel like a permanent fixture on my coffee table so I finally got on with it.

Basbanes travels all over the world to see libraries, collections, book people and anything else that makes the literary world go round. I found some parts especially interesting, such as the history of many of the independent bookstores around Manhattan and the controversy over the San Francisco library. Basbanes has the best job in the world.

Anna says

This book was absolutely amazing, and is a must read for bibliophiles.

Forget "1001 Places to See Before You Die" - all of the places to see should be libraries, and I was thrilled to live vicariously through Basbanes' travels.

Basbanes focuses on every aspect of what is necessary to keep books alive, from private collectors to bookstores to libraries, and everything in between. While I was familiar with most of the bookstores that he referred to, there were a couple that I didn't know, and one I wish he had included but did not: Powell's in Portland.

It's clear that Basbane has a profound love for books and knowledge, and that made this book sheer pleasure to read.

*Note: Page 486 has one minor error: "A future innovation in remote storage could involve the use of robotics for retrieval, an approach being developed at a facility operated by the **University of California at Northridge**." It's the **California State University Northridge**, and I'm happy to say that the Automated Storage and Retrieval System (ASRS) was a success! (http://library.csun.edu/About_the_Lib...)*

Amy says

This took me several years to read, but once I finally committed to reading it, I found it very interesting, if dense. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of book culture, from collectors of antiquities to library design. As a bibliophile, I enjoyed learning more about these various facets of the literary world.

Ensiform says

A look at the world of books, bibliographers and bibliomania, from interviews with various book people (collectors, sellers, university presidents) to tours of libraries past and present. It's a large work (556 pages excluding notes), and wide, perhaps excessively so, in scope. The book lacks anecdotal limits, a sense of pace, cohesion. For example, a solitary, one-paragraph mention of a man who collects Alice In Wonderland material (fine, but if Basbanes couldn't interview him or get some interesting factoid about him, why mention him?) is followed immediately by a lengthy interview with a man who collects everything from the 18th century, for some reason.

Within these pages are histories of past libraries, statistics on universities, trips to national libraries,

biographies of book-sellers, showcases of noted bookstores. There's only the barest order to and no segues between the interviews and anecdotes; they're all just here, like a vast collection of magazine articles unrelated except for falling under the wide rubric of "book culture." This isn't to say there's not a lot that's informative, interesting or even charming here: the trip to Mount Athos, a male-only (not even female tourists allowed) semi-independent monastery in Greece, is fascinating; a story on the Boston library flood has appropriate drama; and a look at less successful stories, such as the San Francisco library that destroyed thousands of books secretly, or the Bibliotheque Nationale's move to a new building that became a debacle, are always enlightening. Basbanes loves his subject, he can write, and he clearly goes where the stories are. He just could use a good editor.

Melissa says

I wanted to love this book, but I didn't enjoy it as much as *A Gentle Madness*. I might have been tired, I might have been busy, I might have been totally burned out on books about books by the time I got to this one, but I just didn't feel the same urgency to finish it coupled with dread it might end that I did with the first book. Still, it was very interesting and -- I mean, it's a book about books. You can't exactly go wrong with those!

Casero says

Love Basbanes books about books. *Patience and Fortitude* uses historical info about libraries and books to argue that libraries are book museums and not storage houses for retrievable and disposable popular info. Anyway book contains such gems as:

1st known library motto was on the entrance to the building Ramses I used to store his scrolls: "House of Healing for the Soul"

The Benedictine order in 1071 AD included a rule that any monk who had not finished the book "entrusted to him for reading . . . fall down on his face, confess his fault, and pray for forgiveness." Yeah verily!

He also encourages touring the great libraries of the world whether they exist as ruins or modern buildings. Right up my alley.
