



ELMER ADLER UNDERGRADUATE BOOK  
COLLECTING PRIZE

The winners of the 2011 Elmer Adler Undergraduate Book Collecting Prize were announced at the Friends of the Princeton University Library's winter dinner on January 29, 2011. The jury awarded first and second prizes as well as two honorable mentions.

The \$2,000 first prize went to Lindsey Breuer, class of 2011, for her essay, "If Only I Could Apparate, My Harry Potter Collection Would Truly Appreciate." Lindsey impressed the jury with her focused collection of foreign-language editions of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the first volume of the Harry Potter series. Buying a copy every time she visits a new country, Lindsey has acquired the British, French, Italian, and Greek editions as well as editions from Australia, Japan, Spain, Morocco, and an Arabic version found in Egypt, among others. What makes her collection special is, in Lindsey's words, that "I can't just purchase *Sorcerer's Stone* in Russian on Amazon; I need to travel there and find it myself in a Russian bookstore. Collecting is all about the experience and the memories that I make in the process of adding to my vast hoard."

The \$1,500 second-place prize went to Connor Martin, class of 2013, for his essay, "The Bookshelf as Biography: On the Lives of Others." Connor explains how his collection of biographies is at the same time a physical manifestation of his own biography: "The books that I have accrued serve as a kind of map that charts the winding intellectual and physical paths I have trodden—a tactile biography which technology can never hope to match." In precise language, Connor walks the reader through his acquisitions, from the first edition of Julian Barnes's *Nothing to Be Frightened Of* to his battered copy of Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That*, which appears, as he writes, "nobler for [its] dilapidation" because its back cover "remained in

West Africa.” Connor concludes, “Just as Barnes said, memory is identity: The bibliophile’s gift is thus the ability to stand before his collection and recognize himself.”

Honorable mention and \$500 went to Brendan Carroll, class of 2011, for his essay, “Tracing Shadows.” Brendan’s description of his collection of theological texts stood out for his scholarly approach and attention to the book as an object of art. His collection spans, in his words, “fact and fiction, scripture and science, in a multidisciplinary attempt to find ‘that shadow which turns the corner always a pace or two ahead of us.’” Brendan’s essay interweaves the history of how he came by his most important books with a broad history of religious thought, recognizing that, “as Dante knew, it takes art—in particular, storytelling—to motivate belief.”

Honorable mention and \$500 also went to Thomas Lowenthal, class of 2011, for his essay, “The End of the World (As We Know It).” Thomas captured the jury with an innovative collection topic centered on rediscovering, in his words, “the skills of our past.” Arguing provocatively that the world is headed for a “zombie apocalypse,” Thomas presented his collection of wilderness guides and zombie combat manuals as the essential survival kit that will guarantee the continued existence of the human species. He concludes, “When zombies knock down my door tomorrow, I know what knowledge is going in my bag.”

Each of the winners also received a certificate from the Dean of the College and a new book, chosen to complement his or her collection, from Princeton University Press. Breuer’s essay will represent Princeton in the National Collegiate Book Collecting Competition, which is sponsored by the Antiquarian Booksellers’ Association of America.

The Adler Prize jury was composed of Friends of the Princeton University Library Richard Levine, Louise Marshall, and Terry Seymour, as well as Library staff members John Logan, Literature Bibliographer, and Stephen Ferguson, Assistant University Librarian for Rare Books and Special Collections and Curator of Rare Books.

—REGINE I. HEBERLEIN  
*Processing Archivist*

IF ONLY I COULD APPARATE, MY HARRY POTTER  
COLLECTION WOULD TRULY APPRECIATE

Looks can be deceiving. In fact, one can change one's appearance completely by drinking polyjuice potion and thus unethically deceive people. I certainly learned this lesson after my first encounter with the future international phenomenon that was Harry Potter, although no such concoction was involved. In the summer of 1999 I traveled abroad for the first time in my life. I was ten years old, and my life could have changed as I stood browsing in a London bookstore. My mother held up a book with a bespectacled boy and scarlet train engine on the cover, casually asking me if I would be interested in this English children's story that had received very good reviews. "No," I scoffed, "it's about a boy!" Famous last words, indeed. If only I had known that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (or *Sorcerer's Stone* in the United States) would sweep the world with its magic and ensnare me—at a later date.

Despite my initial disinterest, I later came to love the Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling. In fact, I eventually began a collection of books that now spans decades and continents. My assortment of Harry Potter books has become exactly what I think of as the ideal collection. Encompassing surprising discovery, pursuit of a goal, and memorable experiences along the way with never-ending rewards, my collection of Harry Potter books is a quest—one that mimics Harry's own quest to defeat Lord Voldemort. I believe that book collecting should be an odyssey for all those who undertake the pastime; like the figures in Homer's *Odyssey*, I have collected a great many valuable experiences on my way to my end goal. My essay will imitate Homer in describing the major steps I have taken on my journey and the importance that I attach to those steps. However, I differ somewhat from Odysseus, for there is no specific end—my collection will never be complete.

My first extensive interaction with the eponymous character was through my mother. When I was ten years old, my mom would read *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* aloud to me. I was already a voracious reader at this age, but reading together was a family habit. Having said that, my mother claims to this day that after a few chapters, I

was so entranced by the magical world Rowling had created at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry that I positively yanked the tome out of her hands and continued to read quietly to myself, turning pages more swiftly than she had read them out loud. Thus, after some sputtering in the London bookstore, I was able to overcome my initial inclinations against the male lead and begin to gobble up the books. Luckily for me, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* as well as *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* had already been published in America by the time my feeding frenzy struck in the fall of 1999. Hence, I acquired my first three hardcover copies of the Harry Potter books.

The release of the fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, was the first instance that I excitedly awaited the issue of a new story about Harry. Although in 2000 there were not yet the massive midnight release parties at every chain store and endless lines, it was still a trial for me to obtain my copy of the book due to my location that summer: Iowa. I was visiting my aunt and cousin in Ames, and there were few bookstores at which I could buy my copy *AS SOON AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE*, or early in the morning. My childish recollection of the situation asserts that there was not a single Barnes and Noble in the entire state and only one Borders (in Des Moines, the capital); after much flipping of the yellow pages, my parents located a small children's bookstore near Ames that would offer fewer than ten copies on the big day.

I am sure that when I got my book, my only concern was devoting as much time to the pages as possible. However, now I can appreciate how much effort my parents made to bring me this childish glee when they could have been spending time with relatives. Perhaps I, too, should have been talking with Aunt Carole and Paul instead of burrowing my nose in a book (indeed, I habitually ignored breathtaking scenery to read in the car). These are complicated decisions to make—fascinating fantastic people or friendly *real* family. However, I think that my life would have been enriched with either option.

In the summer of 2001 I began the first foreign section of my collection. I traveled without my parents for the first time on a student trip to Australia. While there, I happened to be shopping in a bookstore and came across a copy of the first Harry Potter novel. It was different! Because the Internet was not then as widespread and immediate as it is now, I was surprised at the changes: strange title, strange

cover, strange punctuation, and British slang. With this purchase, my collection really took off. I decided to buy the first book, since that seemed most logical. Now, whenever I wish to pick up a new item, I always try to get the first book in the series (sometimes I'm forced to make do with others if the first is not available).

As I mentioned, my mother introduced me to Harry Potter at both of my first encounters. She enjoyed reading the novels as well. However, there was always the problem of having only one copy of the book when it was released in stores. When the fifth Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, was published in 2003, my mother managed to help me get the book as soon as possible and to steal it away at the same time. That summer, I was set to travel abroad to Europe. While at a sleepover with one of my travel friends, the brand new adventures of Harry Potter were released. Because my chum seemed completely uninterested in the boy wizard (back then, there were still many people who hadn't read the books or seen any of the movies—imagine that!), I had to wait until the next day to get my hands on the new tome, with its cover swathed in eerie shades of my favorite color, blue. My mom made sure that I could start reading it on the long car ride home (my friend lived at quite a distance from our house). Once home, I read and read late into the night, barely noticing the passage of time. However, at some point my eyelids drifted closed, not yet able to keep the late hours of a high school or college student. My mother tiptoed into my room and plucked the unfinished book from my slackened hands so that she could read it until I awoke the next morning. Although I was quite miffed, I am still glad that she cared so much about my happiness that she allowed me to read the book first. Even though I had to steal it back from her, our joint love of Harry Potter has remained a strong tie between us as my ever-increasing age made it harder to maintain our mother-daughter bond.

Later that summer I embarked upon a European odyssey that multiplied my collection in one fell swoop. Before I knew it, I had accumulated copies of Harry Potter in the Queen's English (as opposed to that Yankee babble we speak), French, and Italian. Greece was so unaccommodating as to suffer me to buy the second novel in Modern Greek. By now, I intended to acquire a book every time I was in a new country. Not only was I acquiring material goods, but also my mind was forming associations between different Harry Potters, foreign countries, and the fantastic times I had in those places. I remember

comparing the drawings of Dumbledore on the English and Australian versions (similar in every other respect); I bought the French copy at a supermarket with my host family and their cute grandchildren; the Italian hardback was large and heavy in my bag as I dragged it around on a day of sightseeing at Pisa, the only place I had managed to spot a bookstore. When I examined the Greek version, I could not decipher the Hellenic script and the strange little marks that I learned were articles when I studied Ancient Greek in college six years later. It is easy to buy souvenirs in Europe; I bought tons. However, I cannot remember them nearly as well as my Harry Potter books. And none of them are as dear to me.

As providence would have it, the next time there was a Harry Potter book release, I was traveling abroad once more (perhaps Harry Potter is my good luck charm and Rowling a Sibyl for my life!). For the penultimate novel, I finally had the chance to stand in line at midnight and await my new copy of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. At the grand age of sixteen, I felt a little awkward congregating in the store with so many noisy preteens dressed in store-bought wizard costumes. I calmly waited in line for less than half an hour and strode out of Barnes and Noble supplied with my reading material. Zipping to my mom's car, I cracked the new binding and dug in. I think my mom was rather annoyed as I gasped and giggled at passages that she would have to wait to experience herself, but it certainly was enjoyable. I am proud to say that I read the sixth Harry Potter book in nine hours non-stop from when I left the bookstore. I credit this amazing feat to a steady supply of Cheez-Its and Mountain Dew Code Red. However, once I had finished the book, the adventure was not over—I had recently discovered the online world of Harry Potter. My favorite site, Mugglenet.com, was founded by a teenage fan not much older than I was, and that year the site had 27 million visitors. So many fans were online and excited to discuss the books and look forward to the next volume that I was kept occupied for quite a while.

Mugglenet also played an important role in the next international volume that I procured. During a two-week stay in Japan, my host sister helped me get a Japanese copy of *Philosopher's Stone* (it was shelved in the kids' section, right near fireworks!) in Hiroshima. Indeed, I discovered that she and her younger brother were also quite intense fans of Harry Potter. Unfortunately, the Japanese edition of *Half-Blood Prince* had not yet been translated, and they were dying to pull hints about the story's plot out of me. I believe that I told her and

her brother that Snape was no longer the Potions instructor and that Ron played on the Quidditch team. In order to ameliorate their frustration, I introduced the siblings to Mugglenet, which had Japanese viewing capabilities. Harry Potter is just another way that one can make connections that span the globe.

Finally, in 2007, it was time for the pièce de résistance. I was accepted into Princeton. I graduated from high school. And, oh yes, I planned my entire family vacation around the release of the last Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. There was so much buzz for this novel; everyone was ridiculously excited to see how the series would end. Would Harry conquer Voldemort? Who would die? Was Severus Snape evil? (As an aside, I attended a book signing for Mugglenet's *What Will Happen in Harry Potter 7* with the founder of Mugglenet, and boy was I smitten!) After traveling with my parents on a post-graduation trip through Spain and Morocco (where I bought copies of Harry Potter, of course), the last evening of our vacation coincided with the worldwide midnight release of the seventh book. While my parents wandered off to eat dinner and sightsee, I sat in line at the Waterstone's in Piccadilly for more than nine hours to get my copy in England, the home of Harry Potter himself. Those nine hours were quite an experience. I chatted with the English girls next to me, who had taken a train in from the country especially for the occasion, and noted all of the intricate costumes of everyone milling about (the kids at the very head of the line, who had camped out for several days, were dressed very well). One local television station even interviewed me for a few minutes, asking how I, as an American, came to be waiting in line for Harry Potter in London. My answer was straightforward: my parents and I were on vacation, but it was no coincidence that I was in London at that precise time.

Nothing can describe how excited I was while the crowd at Piccadilly counted down to midnight or when I finally received my reserved copies of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (one each of the children's and adult versions). On the walk back to our bed and breakfast in Bloomsbury (ironically, the same name as the British publisher of the books I held in my hands), a drunken, middle-aged man spotted my Harry Potter-themed carrier bag and shouted, "Harry Potter dies!" I was horrified. What if it were true? There were spoilers on the Internet, and so this man could know the genuine fate of Harry! At some point, I believe that I maniacally flipped to the last page of the book and committed sacrilege by glancing at the words, looking

for reassurance yet not wanting to spoil the surprise (I didn't gather anything coherent, the last page is short and vague). However, like so many times before, I began reading as swiftly as possible and tried to remain up late as I lay, somewhat ruffled and very tired, on my bed. My parents wisely forbade me from reading the book in lieu of sight-seeing at Parliament and Westminster Abbey the next day. It was not until we reached the airport that I could dig in once more.

While on the plane, I tried to sob furtively when I thought Harry would die, embarrassed to be crying over a book in front of strangers. However, when I finished the final novel in the Harry Potter series, much-criticized epilogue and all, I began to notice the other passengers on the plane. Moreover, I realized that many of them were reading *Deathly Hallows* as well. All of those other people would not censure me for empathizing with Harry Potter or collecting so many Harry Potter books. I'm sure that they would applaud my efforts to gather so many copies of the books that I hold dear and praise my interest in studying the different languages and cultures as they are manifested in translations of Harry Potter. Over the years, I have grown to appreciate the increasing amount of British slang left untranslated in American editions of the books. *Sorcerer's Stone* was highly edited before Scholastic presented it to the American public; by the final book, little had changed, or needed to be, because Americans were so engrossed in Harry Potter's world. The only thing I had trouble with while reading my midnight English copy was "pants." Who knew that word meant "underpants" in the U.K.?

Although Harry's journey ended with the last book, mine continues. This past summer I was able to add two more books to my collection. During a class and archaeological dig in Greece, I had time to browse about a large chain bookstore in Athens. I was finally able to get a Greek copy of the first book, and this time I understood so much more of the cover and contents, having acquired Ancient Greek and limited Modern Greek. While that was a relatively simple task, finding Harry Potter in Arabic when I didn't know a word of the language was considerably more difficult. Our English-speaking guide in Cairo, Heba, very kindly called several bookstores so that I could have the copy of *Sorcerer's Stone* that I desired. The Arabic translation came shrink-wrapped. If I were collector in the strictest sense, I would not want to ruin the perfection of the items in my collection; however, that is not how I measure the value of my collection. I prize



pleasant memories and joy over pristine original conditions. Thus, I gladly unwrapped my Arabic Harry Potter book so that my current roommate, Kristen, could try to decipher some of the story. Even she has had a chance to learn from my collection, since she was able to compare the Egyptian Arabic (common in media) to the Modern Standard version taught at Princeton.

The narrative that I have presented—half travelogue of my worldwide encounters with Harry Potter, half catalogue of my Harry Potter collection—clarifies what I value in book collecting. First, I think it is important to have a strong motivation for your collection. Amassing hundreds of books as if they were Beanie Babies because you think one day they will have monetary value is not going to give you a truly burning desire to seek books. Additionally, I simultaneously appreciate order and diversity in my collection. Although I always try to purchase the first book in the series, I want as many different languages as possible. However, another key aspect of my collection is the value attached to each additional item. I can't just purchase *Sorcerer's Stone* in Russian on Amazon; I need to travel there and find it myself in a Russian bookstore. Collecting is all about the experience and the memories that I make in the process of adding to my vast hoard.

I own more than just the copies of the Harry Potter series in different languages. I also collect supplementary books, such as *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them* by Newt Scamander and *Quidditch Through the Ages* (Harry's red and green textbooks, respectively, both by Rowling). As previously mentioned, I have a signed copy of Mugglenet's speculative book about the final title in the series in addition to another signed book written by some of the same authors (Emerson Spartz and Ben Schoen), *Harry Potter Should Have Died*. I've picked up Latin and Welsh (from Britain) ones because of their uniqueness. Although I do not own physical copies, I have read some Harry Potter fanfiction online. The content and quality vary, but fanfiction is the fan base's way to express its devotion to Harry Potter in an e-book format. Additionally, I own a DVD of every Harry Potter film currently available. These less canonical items in my collection are evidence that even though Harry Potter's epic quest is officially over, my odyssey continues as long as there are fans like me to keep the experiences coming.

—LINDSEY K. BREUER  
*Class of 2011*

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