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The Heritage of Anesthesia: Patrick Sim's Annotated Bibliography of the Rare Book Collection of the Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.

Edited By Donald Caton, M.D., Kathryn E. McGoldrick, M.D., Pauline Snider, Felicia A. Reilly, M.A.L.S. Park Ridge, Illinois, Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, 2012. Pages: 426. Price: \$175.00.

It is not often that a book is published that can be summed as the one person's life's work and legacy. *The Heritage of Anesthesia* qualifies for this rare distinction. Patrick Sim, M.L.S., the Paul M. Wood Distinguished Librarian of the Wood Library-Museum, spent almost 40 yr working with the rare book collection at the Library-Museum. *The Heritage of Anesthesia* is his annotated bibliography of the rare book collection. Published posthumously, it is a reference book that ought to be on every anesthesiologist's bookshelf.

An annotated bibliography is an interesting historical format. Rather than discuss an incident or a series of incidents, an annotated bibliography tells the story and importance of individual references. Thus, *The Heritage of Anesthesia* does not directly tell the story of the history of anesthesiology, rather it expresses the history in hundreds of stories about the rare book collection of the Wood Library-Museum. For example, in the section on the introduction of surgical anesthesia, the chapter on chloroform and anesthesia lists the reference material available at the Wood Library-Museum alphabetically by the author's last name. Each reference is described, including the reason for the publication, the information it contains, and in the instances of journal articles, the exact edition and pages upon which it was published. By reading this section, an understanding slowly emerges concerning the use and controversies surrounding chloroform. But, unlike a conventional history, the material is not chronologically organized, as a result of which the story meanders in several directions and jumps in time from reference to reference.

Perhaps, the most telling description of the book comes from its author. Written as he struggled with a terminal disease, Patrick Sim wrote a marvelous essay about how this book came to be. He talks about the physicians who inspired him and, in some ways, describes the history of the Wood Library-Museum in broadest terms. His voice, now stilled, is vibrant throughout the essay and is classically Patrick.

Although he would deny it, Mr. Sim was the world's expert librarian on matters anesthetic, and his scholarship was second to none.

The introduction, written by Don Caton, one of the editors, describes the challenges of finishing the book. The matter of organization of the material is raised, for the editors chose to use subject matter or alphabetical listing of authors, rather than chronology. Their choice is a good one; it makes the volume easy to use and its purpose much clearer. This essay clearly sets the tone and purpose of the book and greatly helps the reader understand the importance of the material, and why the book was published. Finally, there is a description of the rare book collection of the Wood Library-Museum, a true treasure of the specialty of anesthesiology. Few, if any, other medical specialties possess such a collection, and it demonstrates the rich heritage of ideas that preceded the discovery of surgical anesthesia in the 1840s.

Furthermore, the editors have added a short essay to each chapter describing more fully the material contained within the heading. This allows the reader to not only understand the importance of the material but also brings understanding out of the organization, as each subject is arranged by the author's last name and, therefore, does not necessarily follow in chronological order of publication. Yet, for anyone interested in doing research about one of these topics, *The Heritage of Anesthesia* is an incredible resource and the definitive place to begin to understand the resources available on the topic in question.

The Heritage of Anesthesia is a book that belongs in every department of anesthesiology. Its contents are important to everyone who practices anesthesiology, for here are our roots. By understanding our past, possible solutions to current problems may be illuminated, and this may help mold our future. Patrick Sim's labor of love, created over almost 40 yr, remains the definitive work on the antiquarian and 19th century documents and, as such, is an important resource for all those interested in the history of our specialty.

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