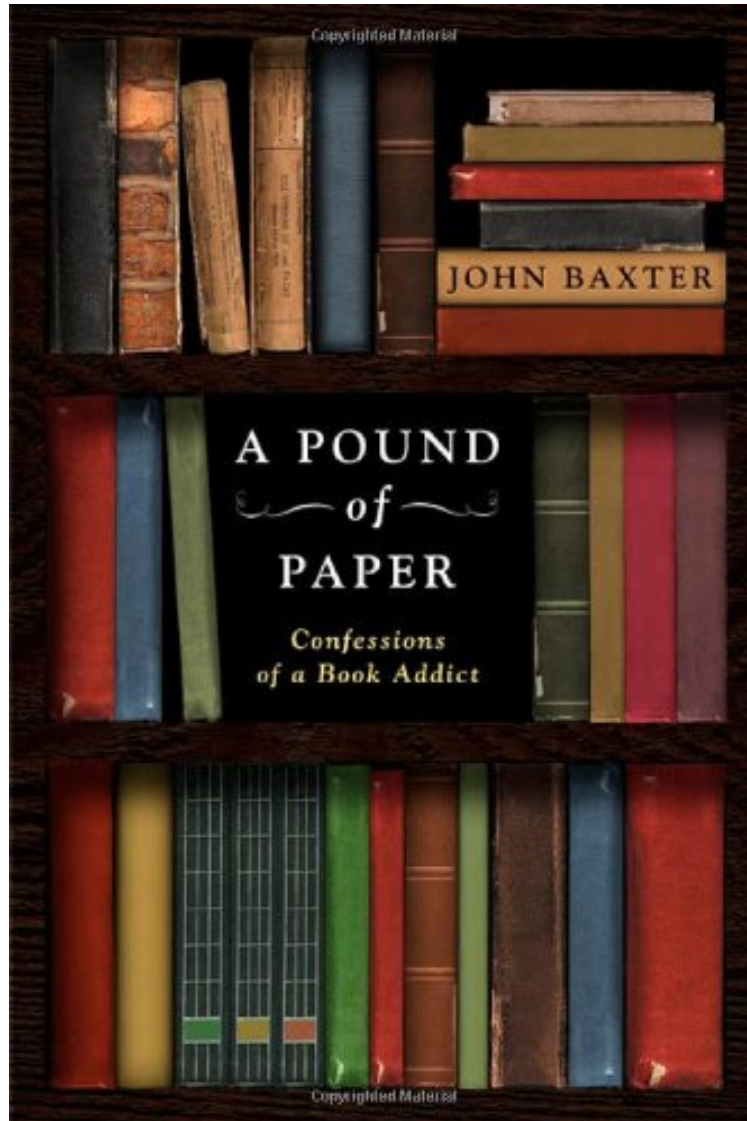


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## A Pound of Paper: Confessions of a Book Addict

*John Baxter*

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**John Baxter : A Pound of Paper: Confessions of a Book Addict** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Pound of Paper: Confessions of a Book Addict:

31 of 32 people found the following review helpful. A True Delight For Every Book Lover By W. C HALL This is a engaging, entertaining memoir by a true book lover. The leisurely, slightly discursive way in which John Baxter unfolds his life story led me into imagining I had struck up a conversation with him in a musty second-hand book shop; and found his story so entertaining that I invited him across the street to a dark, smoky pub to continue the tale over several tall pints of lager. Baxter grew up in Australia, and has since called London, Los Angeles and Paris home.

He's been a broadcaster, novelist, biographer and film critic. The one constant thread in this far-ranging life has been his love of books. As a young adult, he became obsessed with science fiction. While living in London, he stumbled on a rare copy of a Graham Greene children's book, which served as the basis for a Greene collection he spent several years building. In this book, he celebrates some of the most memorable people he's encountered along the way, including book runner Martin Stone (A book runner makes his living, if you can call it that, by buying and reselling books from flea markets, thrift stores and the like); and several literary greats, including Kingsley Amis, Ray Bradbury and Harry Harrison. He also explores collectors of erotica, the difference between Paris and London bookshops, skewers the ignorance of many eBay sellers, and has a grand good time through it all. The closing scene, where he brings all the books he owns together in one place for the first time in his life, had a special resonance for me....it's something I dream of in my own life. For book lovers everywhere.--William C. Hall 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Dust Wrappers are Important By stephanvegoe A Pound of Paper is the book I wish I had read when I was much younger and was just starting to buy and collect books. Back in the late 1970s I started to buy Hemingway at used book stores in Saint Paul, Minnesota, for just a few dollars each. I had read somewhere that the dust wrappers were not all that important and did not add value. I know better now. If you have a collection of books, no matter how large or small, take the time to learn from John Baxter, the earlier in your collecting life the better. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Disjointed By Fred Forbes As much as I love books, this turned out to be fairly boring. A whole lot of "name dropping" and since they are British and Australian, I did not know most of them. Maybe a fun book for Graham Greene collectors as that was his specialty.

In the rural Australia of the fifties where John Baxter grew up, reading books was disregarded with suspicion, owning and collecting them with utter incomprehension. Despite this, by the age of eleven Baxter had 'collected' his first book - The Poems of Rupert Brooke. He'd read the volume often, but now he had to own it. This was the beginning of what would become a major collection and a lifelong obsession. His book-hunting would take him all over the world, but his first real find was in London in 1978, when he spotted a rare copy of a Graham Greene children's book while browsing on a stall in Swiss Cottage. It was going for 5 pence. This would also, fortuitously, be the day when he first encountered one of the legends of the book-selling world: Martin Stone. At various times pothead, international fugitive from justice, and professional rock musician, he would become John's mentor and friend. In this brilliantly readable and funny book, John Baxter brings us into contact with such literary greats as Graham Greene, Kingsley Amis, J.G. Ballard and Ray Bradbury. But he also shows us how he penetrated the secret fraternity of 'runners' or book scouts - sleuths who use bluff and guile to hunt down their quarry - and joined them in scouring junk shops, markets, auction rooms and private homes for rarities. In the comic tradition of Clive James's Unreliable Memoirs, A Pound of Paper describes how a boy from the bush came to be living in a Paris penthouse with a library worth millions. It also explores the exploding market in first editions. What treasures are lying unnoticed in your garage?

From Publishers Weekly As he stooped over a basket full of stuffed animals at a London flea market, Baxter (Robert de Niro; George Lucas) made a discovery that would change his life forever. It was there, in 1978, that he unearthed a children's book by Graham Greene, called The Little Horse Bus, selling for five pence. He snatched it up, then impulsively purchased another Greene novel and one of Greene's African journals as well. Just like that, a book collector was born. Baxter chronicles his growing obsession with books in a way that's utterly infectious, with sharp wit and self-deprecating humor. He flits across Australia, England, the United States and France in pursuit of the perfect collection, always spurred on by the knowledge that book collectors find treasures in the most unlikely places. In his words, "acquiring [books] meant midnight assignments in seedy corners of London, white-knuckle bidding at auctions, speculative drives across England to cities you'd never seen, and nervous knocking on the doors of strangers that, in all probability, would leave you, a minute later, humiliated and empty-handed on the doorstep a hundred miles from home." He takes gleeful pleasure in underpaying those who are ignorant about the worth of their rare books, but he also holds certain texts sacred (like the uncorrected proofs of two James Bond novels given to him by Kingsley Amis). Baxter's memoir will be of great interest to serious book collectors because so much of the book conveys the insider's perspective, but his narrative is truly amusing and rollicking enough to entice book lovers of all kinds. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist There is no small charm to a tale that begins where Baxter grew up, in Middle-of-Nowhere, Australia, and ends in the Paris penthouse above where Sylvia Beach once lived. Bibliographer, biographer, broadcaster, and obsessive book collector, Baxter has lived in London and Los Angeles, married three times, and can't resist a story or a list (the book ends with, among other things, what various folk would take with them if their book collections were afire). Baxter collected Graham Greene (he's quite vibrant on this obsession and its resolution) and reveals that Sarah Michelle Gellar of Buffy fame is one of the new breed of celebrity book collectors. A passion for film (he's written about Spielberg and Kubrick and DeNiro) and a working knowledge of collectible pornography are further nuggets in this sprawling, unedited, but quite engaging memoir. Grace Anne DeCandido Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved Critics Rave About A Pound of Paper Baxter chronicles his growing obsession with books in a way that's utterly infectious, with sharp wit and self-

deprecating humor . . . . Baxter's memoir will be of great interest to serious book collectors because so much of the book conveys the insiders' perspective, but his narrative is truly amusing and rollicking enough to entice book lovers of all kinds."--Publishers Weekly"[An] entertaining account of his admittedly nerdy life. . . . Tasty junk food for book lovers."--Kirkus s"Baxter has written an informative book, and a delightful one, that guides the reader through a specialized and eccentric world with a wink and a smile."--Chicago Tribune"A Pound of Paper leads us on a merry chase in pursuit of books, an undertaking as chancy as betting on the lottery. Baxter . . . prov[es] a most erudite and entertaining guide. . . . Essential to any current or prospective collector who wishes to engage in the hunt for a gem that might be worth a fortune or who simply wants to enjoy the pleasures of the game."--Roanoke Times"Lively and colorful . . . . Baxter tells his stories with humor, suspense and plenty of style."--Virginian-Pilot"Erudite and mirthful . . . told with ornery, self-deprecating wit."--Time Out New York"A Pound of Paper--the weight, more or less of a book-is the peg on which Baxter hangs episodes of autobiography . . . the book collectors who buy this particular pound of paper will profit from it in every sense." --The London Times"Of the making of many books there is no end. But who's complaining, especially when something as entertaining as John Baxter's A Pound of Paper comes along? At the outset he quotes Groucho Marx: " 'Outside a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside a dog, it's too dark to read.' " --Glasgow Sunday Herald"An addictive romp through the unconventional life of an obsessive . . . . John Baxter may claim books lack sex appeal, but he proves the opposite." --Metro [England]