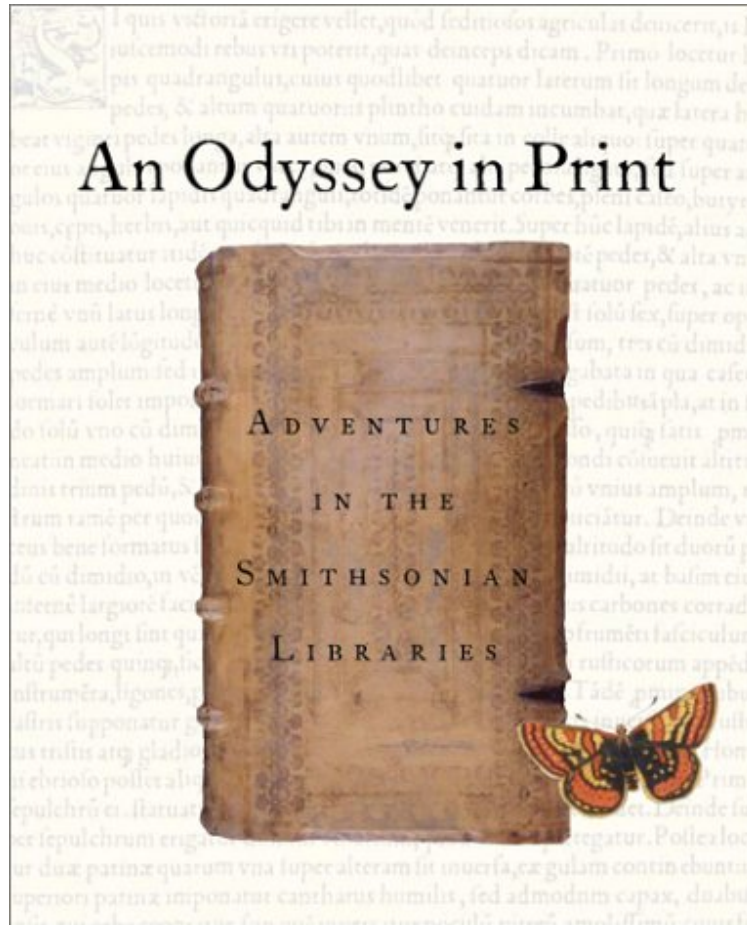


An Odyssey in Print: Adventures in the Smithsonian Libraries

Mary Augusta Thomas

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Mary Augusta Thomas : An Odyssey in Print: Adventures in the Smithsonian Libraries before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An Odyssey in Print: Adventures in the Smithsonian Libraries:

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Journey Through the Smithsonian LibrariesBy A Customer"An Odyssey in Print" is primarily the catalogue of an on-going (through May 2003) exhibition at the Smithsonian Libraries. The exhibition highlights some of the rarest, most beautiful and most interesting works in the Libraries' collections, loosely organized around the theme of "journeys" -- real, imagined and metaphorical. Saying the organization is "loose" is being generous -- in fact, the organization is almost haphazard (books that reflect real journeys show up in the section on journeys over land, but also in the section on journeys of the mind) and seems to have been imposed after-the-fact on books that were selected primarily for their historical or aesthetic importance (for example, the trade literature in the final pages probably has historical importance, but it's a tight squeeze to force it into the "journeys" theme). Nevertheless, the books selected are invariably interesting and many are beautiful -- if you

are a lover of books or of natural history, you will enjoy browsing through the catalogue, without regard to the somewhat sloppy curating. A brief paragraph summarizing the background and significance of each book in the catalogue is included along with very nice reproductions of one or more of the book's illustrations. What I found most intriguing were the introductory essays. Michael Dirda provides an eloquent paean to the joys of reading and the mystique of libraries, where everything is possible. Mary Augusta Thomas, the exhibition curator, covers the history of the Smithsonian Libraries and their collections. Most interesting to me was the essay by Storrs Olson, Senior Curator of the Division of Birds, National Museum of Natural History, who discusses the importance of the Libraries and their historical collections to the on-going work of science. It's easy to look at the books exhibited in this volume and see them only as objects, as magnificent illustrations of the book arts or historical curiosities, but Olson makes it clear that these books have continuing life and utility for those who care for them. Recommended for anyone interested in the the book arts, the history of the book or the history of science. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Books rouse and stimulate the love of mental adventure--B Russell By Jerry Guild This is a delightful book about books. It was prepared as a catalogue for a touring exhibition of the libraries of the Smithsonian Institution. It limits itself to covering the formation and development of the libraries, the personalities involved and a taste of some of the prized books that have been obtained since its founding over 150 years ago. The book about the exhibition also gives a good insight into the "lore of the book" and the benefits to be derived by anyone who develops a love of reading and a love of books. In dealing with the books; there are three parts. Part 1--Journeys over Land and sea (exploration). Part 2--Journeys of the Mind--Natural History). Part 3--Journeys of the Imagination. Overall, a very brief but good look at some of the great books of the past.

Situated at the center of the world's largest museum complex, the Smithsonian Institution Libraries links the holdings of 22 Smithsonian museums and research centers into one system encompassing 1.5 million books and manuscripts. The expansive collection includes many rare and unusual works equal to the celebrated art and artifacts of the Smithsonian's museums.

From Publishers Weekly Accompanying the Smithsonian Libraries exhibition of the same name, this glossy volume is a catalogue of some of the most noteworthy volumes among the Libraries' holdings of 1.5 million books and manuscripts, beautifully illustrated with reproductions from the materials themselves. Curator of the Smithsonian's exhibition, Thomas organizes this fascinating tour of the collection around the theme of journeys. The first section, "Journeys Over Land and Sea," combines early European texts documenting the New World with later European and American books about air and space travel, like an early German children's book about a zeppelin voyage to "Neuyork," or the signed frontispiece of *First on the Moon*, by Neil Armstrong. The second section, "Journeys of the Mind," reproduces documents by scientists who explored the earth and hypothesized about the heavens, from detailed wildlife illustrations to a page from Johannes Kepler's Prologue to a dissertation on a description of the universe. The final section shows off the work of artists, writers, architects and commercial illustrators who were "explorers of the imagination." Thomas's introductory essay offers a capsule history of the Smithsonian Libraries, as well as details about the conservation and restoration of priceless volumes. The book also includes personal takes on the libraries by Pulitzer Prize-winning literary critic Michael Dirda of the *Washington Post Book World*, and Storrs L. Olson, senior curator in the Division of Birds at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. This is a delight for bibliophiles and general readers alike. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.