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## With the FABS in Russia

Caxtonians join its first international tour



photo/ Alexandr Gromov

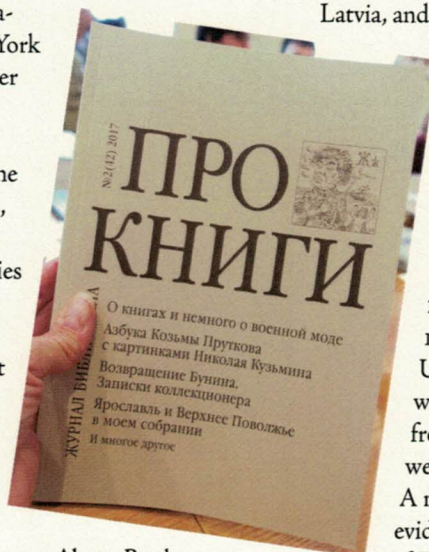
FABS group at the headquarters of the National Union of Bibliophiles in Moscow

By Susan R. Hanes

A recent six-week trip to Russia and the Baltic States was inspired by the decision to attend the first international tour of the Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies to Russia. FABS, as it is known, is a loose association of book-collecting clubs. The group was formally organized at the Grolier Club in New York on November 5, 1993, after an earlier meeting in Chicago at the Caxton Club. Over the years, FABS has sponsored gatherings in many of the member organizations' home cities, but our visit with the Moscow and St. Petersburg bibliographic societies was unique. The idea of a tour to Russia was first conceived by Caxtonian Michael Thompson, current FABS president, and Professor William Butler, FABS international affiliates chair, who led the group. Butler has been the Fowler Distinguished Professor of Law at Penn State University since 2005 and is an eminent authority on the legal systems of Russia. We – myself and my husband, George Leonard – felt fortunate to be part of his tour. Two additional non-resident Caxtonians, Ronald Smeltzer and Greg Krisilas,

also attended.

Although our trip was motivated by the opportunity to join the group, we extended our travels by adding several days in Moscow and St. Petersburg; touring the historic towns of Russia's Golden Ring; and visiting Kaliningrad, the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and



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Russia's rich history and culture endure, and we savored the architecture of its churches, the wealth of its museums, and the thrill of its

performing arts.

We landed at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport just after 3 pm on September 8, and picked up our rental car just in time to head into Moscow's Friday afternoon traffic. We joined the throngs of Muscovites heading out of town for the weekend, driving 90 kilometers to Sergiyev Posad, one of a cluster of cities that comprise Russia's famed Golden Ring. These ancient towns were built between the 11th and 17th centuries and (in many ways) are the birthplace of Russian culture. For the next five nights, we drove to jewels on the Ring, where we visited magnificent kremlins and Orthodox churches that parallel the Volga River, getting a sense of the Russian countryside and its vernacular architecture.

Returning to Moscow, we enjoyed several days on our own before we commenced the FABS tour. We savored opera and ballet at the Bolshoi, visited a number of museums, and immersed ourselves in the capital's remarkable culture. Our book-related visits before the tour included Soviet writer Maxim Gorky's art nouveau home and the graffiti-covered halls of an apartment and museum dedicated to *Master and Margarita* author Mikhail Bulgakov. What follows is my journal from our days with FABS.

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# Caxtonians Collect: Sandra Hindman

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

I've interviewed Chicago Caxtonians who also had homes in Wisconsin, Arizona, and Michigan, and even two (if memory serves) with homes in England. But this month's subject, Sandra Hindman, is the first who also has a home in Paris.

Some members have had exhibits at the Art Institute, and many have addressed the Club on one topic or another. But with Sandra, it's all this and more: we're having an "On the Move" event for the opening of her exhibit at the Art Institute February 1, and she's talking at the dinner meeting February 21.

Hindman grew up in Chicago; her father was a physical chemist at the University of Chicago. She started her college career there (starting with French and then switching to art history), but then moved to the University of California at Berkeley "because they had four medievalists. I wrote my thesis on the palaces of the Duke of Berry with a famous French architectural historian, Jean Bony." Her subsequent doctorate in art history was earned at Cornell, with a thesis on 15th-century illustrated Dutch-language Bibles. She began her teaching career at Johns Hopkins, but by 1984 had moved to Northwestern, where she taught until 2002.

Given her academic reputation, dealers frequently asked her opinion on pieces they were considering for purchase or wanted to sell. She described this with the delightful word "expertising." An Ohio dealer (now deceased) with whom she often worked, generously allowed her to participate in deals as a percentage owner. She started to collect for herself as well. "I didn't call it that to begin, but what I was actually doing was building an inventory."

She founded her manuscript-and-miniature dealership, known as *Les Enluminures*, with a Paris shop in 1991. "It was a tiny 10-square-meter shop, inside a building called Louvre des Antiquaires, with many such shops, near the Louvre. Perfect for me. I could lock the door and it was safe at night unattended." She had started living in Paris part time in the 1980s while working on "Sealed in Parchment": *Reradings of Knighthood in the Illuminated Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes*, published by the University of Chicago Press in 1994.

*Les Enluminures* is one of a tiny handful of dealers in illuminated manuscripts, and the only one with three locations: Paris, New York,

and Chicago. (A fourth city, London, has "just an office," since 2016).

The Art Institute show (open now to May 28), which prompts our Club's attention to Hindman and her collecting, is partly to celebrate a large gift of items she has donated. These constitute about a third of the show of more than 30 manuscript illuminations. (Most of the rest of the items on exhibit are either on loan from her, or already in the Art Institute's



collections.) The show is also occasion for a sumptuously illustrated book *The Medieval World at Our Fingertips: Manuscript Illuminations from the Collection of Sandra Hindman* published by Harvey Miller/ Brepols and written by Christopher de Hamel (who has also spoken to and worked with our club on several previous occasions).

He is the award-winning author of *The Medieval World at Our Fingertips*, and has perhaps cataloged more medieval manuscripts than any other person living today. Yet, he conceived of this original book not as a straightforward catalog, but as a series of short, imaginative essays inspired by the illuminated miniatures, which span the 12th to the 16th centuries and originated in Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and England. Aimed at the general reader, but at the same time of interest to the specialist scholar, this fascinating volume provides a general and

informative guide to the historical, social, and cultural circumstances that influenced medieval art, as well as a unique appreciation of the art of illumination. (Copies of the book will be available at the Hindman dinner February 21 and at the Art Institute book store).

As if Hindman were not busy enough with her Art Institute show and accompanying book, she is also hard at work on another show and book, "*The thing of mine I have loved the best*": *Meaningful Jewels*. It consists of 46 pieces of European jewelry – pendants, reliquaries, amulets, and talismans – from the eighth to the 18th centuries. An Anglo-Saxon glass pendant, a Spanish "magic belt," a Mexican lantern pendant (once adorned with New World feathers), and an Imperial Memento Mori Skull are just a few of the items included. It begins a 10-day run at a fair in Maastricht (TEFAF) on March 8, and will then continue April 5 to 20 at the *Les Enluminures* location in New York.

She has become convinced that images of one-of-a-kind documents should be shared electronically, and has carefully photographed every item which she has temporarily owned. A part of her company website, located at <http://www.textmanuscripts.com/>, has become a repository for shared items. The day I looked, there were 67 manuscripts for sale on display, from England, France, Germany, Italy, and other countries, as well as 737 manuscripts in the archives.

Another fascinating educational project she mentioned is called "Manuscripts in the Curriculum." Although public display of the manuscripts is encouraged, central to the philosophy of the program is the integration of real manuscripts into the curriculum in courses where students can work closely with original material under the guidance of a professor. *Les Enluminures* loans about 20 manuscripts each semester to a different college or university participating in the program. Hindman says "For anyone studying the Middle Ages, there is no substitute for hands-on experience of actual medieval manuscripts."

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