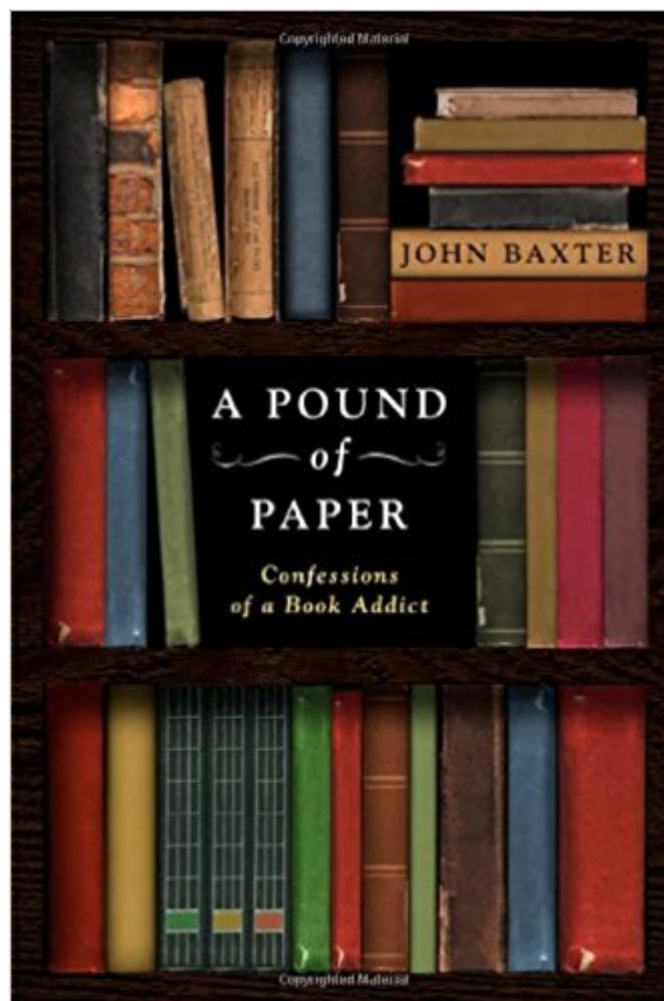


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# A Pound Of Paper: Confessions Of A Book Addict



## Synopsis

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?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an 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

Though I do not believe in censorship, books like *A POUND OF PAPER: CONFESSIONS OF A BOOK ADDICT* need to be hidden from family members. Bibliophiles know the affinity that film biographer John Baxter shares with us. Though not chasing around the world like Mr. Baxter has, book lovers will comprehend the need to hit the obscure bookstore whether on a business trip or a vacation. Going to Europe includes visits to the neighborhood bookstores of Athens and Rome (Greece and Italy not Georgia) as key to the itinerary. Book lovers can commiserate with Mr. Baxter as everyone thinks you're a nut whether one grows up in rural Australia or the urban Bronx. Mr. Baxter provides a bit of book history beyond just the printing press invention and gives insight into proofs and galleys, and limited editions. He also goes into depth of what havoc and destruction the Information Age via the Internet has had on bookstores including the global yard sale of eBay. Though he adds other personal non-book elements of his life, it is his love for the printed media that will hook readers like me whose house displays the destruction of several rain forests (it is hard to be an environmentalist in my abode). Clearly for book hoarders though film addicts might try a spin as Mr. Baxter is part of that community too. Harriet Klausner

I am a book collector and I enjoy my passion very much. Many people would say I'm obsessed but it only takes a book like this one to remind myself that I'm in the minor leagues. Part memoir and part peek into the world of book collecting, Baxter tells of his youth in the wilds of Australia where, like many of us, he delved into the world of comic book and science fiction collecting. He matured along the way with an interest in Graham Greene before dumping that collection and moving onto other literary interests. And he did not stay in the wilds of Australia forever. He travelled and made his way up in the world of film and publishing. Baxter has had the fortune as a film critic, writer and collector to meet a number of interesting people, from the writers he collected to eccentric bookmen like Martin Stone. The book has a definite British flavor, though Baxter has made some forays into the United States. Still, any book collector will see things he recognizes in Baxter's experiences and, in some cases, things we wished we could have experienced ourselves. Let's face it, a person with a passion for book collecting will feel some jealousy when reading of some of Baxter's finds and encounters. Unfortunately, most of us do not have the means and/or opportunity to do some of the things Baxter has done. But this does not totally diminish the fun in seeing how he was able to come to have the experiences he had and it makes for a great read for anyone interested in books.

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.

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