



A Splendor of Letters: The Permanence of Books in an Impermanent World

Nicholas A. Basbanes

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In *A Splendor of Letters*, Nicholas A. Basbanes continues the lively, richly anecdotal exploration of book people, places, and culture he began in 1995 with *A Gentle Madness* (a finalist that year for the National Book Critics Circle Award) and expanded in 2001 with *Patience & Fortitude*, a companion work that prompted the two-time Pulitzer Prize–winning historian and biographer David McCullough to proclaim him "the leading authority of books about books."

Basbanes now offers a consideration of the many pressing issues that surround the role of books in contemporary society, such as the willful destruction of books and libraries in Sarajevo, Tibet, and Cambodia, and the spirited efforts to restore them. The matter of "discards" at various libraries takes on an entirely new dimension as well, with fully researched stories about the kind of attitudes that may lead to the loss of "last copies" of important works.

In vivid detail, Basbanes examines the many materials that have been used over the centuries to record information -- among them clay tablets, papyrus scrolls, slabs of stone, palm leaves, animal skins, and hammered sheets of gold and copper. Also discussed are the various debates that continue to rage about preservation, which may mean saving and storing books on paper indefinitely, or as electronic data, which are by nature ephemeral.

In this beautifully packaged edition, Nicholas Basbanes brings to a close his wonderful trilogy on the remarkable world of books and bibliophiles.

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