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## NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

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### ISRAEL PERLSTEIN 1897–1975

Mr. Perlstein, a highly respected dealer in scholarly and rare Slavic books for more than fifty years, died at his home in New York City, March 23, 1975 at the age of seventy-seven. He spent his last day characteristically, examining and preparing a shipment of Slavic serial volumes newly arrived from Prague for the collection of one of his library customers.

Perlstein came to this country from Poland in 1920. In 1926, his first book-buying trip to Moscow and Leningrad led to his most important early acquisition, the purchase of Russian legal and historical sets, including many volumes from the tsar's private library in the Winter Palace. Most of this collection was sold to the Library of Congress. His annual trips to the Soviet Union prior to 1936 helped to provide basic reference works and files of scholarly journals which became the foundation of several of our best Slavic libraries, and the list of notable rarities he sold or donated to American Slavic collections is impressive. Perlstein always referred to his largest customers as "my libraries." In addition to the Library of Congress these included, at various times, Columbia, Harvard (Houghton, Law, and Widener), Illinois, Indiana (especially the Lilly Library), Michigan, the New York Public Library, and Yale.

For the last twenty-five years, Perlstein's major sources were the antiquarian book markets in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. For a long time he was the largest foreign buyer of Czechoslovak publications and acquired a reputation in Prague as Czechoslovakia's major unofficial cultural ambassador to America. In the 1960s he succeeded in obtaining outstanding private collections of superbly designed Czech limited bibliophile editions. These were sold to Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana; Perlstein's portrait is hung in the room which houses the University of Illinois collection of seven hundred volumes called the Perlstein Collection of Czechoslovak Book Design.

Perlstein escaped, at least partially, the usual fate of many outstanding booksellers, for their contributions to the building of library collections are often slighted. Perlstein was recognized as one of the best in his profession, and many of his librarian and scholarly colleagues were keenly aware of the importance of his role in developing their research collections. His knowledge and love of books continued to grow, and his judgment, eminently reasonable prices, and dedication to meeting the individual needs of libraries were deeply appreciated.

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