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The Life and Work of  
Fredson Bowers

by  
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IN EVERY FIELD OF ENDEAVOR THERE ARE A FEW FIGURES WHOSE ACCOMPLISHMENT and influence cause them to be the symbols of their age; their careers and oeuvres become the touchstones by which the field is measured and its history told. In the related pursuits of

analytical and descriptive bibliography, textual criticism, and scholarly

editing, Fredson Bowers was such a figure, dominating the four decades

after 1949, when his Principles of Bibliographical Description was published.

By 1973 the period was already being called :

**in that year Norman Sanders, writing the chapter on textual scholarship**

**for Stanley Wells's Shakespeare: Select Bibliographies, gave this title to**

**a section of his essay. For most people, it would be achievement enough**

**to rise to such a position in a field as complex as Shakespearean textual**

**studies; but Bowers played an equally important role in other areas.**

**Editors of nineteenth-century American authors, for example, would**

**also have to call the recent past as would the writers of descriptive bibliographies of authors and presses. His ubiquity in**

**the broad field of bibliographical and textual study, his seemingly complete**

**possession of it, distinguished him from his illustrious predecessors**

**and made him the personification of bibliographical**

scholarship in  
his time.

When in 1969 Bowers was awarded the Gold Medal of the Bibliographical Society in London, John Cartermajestic,s current projects said that he had on the texts of several authors, described Studies in Bibliography as a and included among his characteristics and Bowers was not unaccustomed to such encomia, but he had also experienced his share of attacks: his scholarly positions were not universally popular, and he expressed them with an aggressiveness that almost seemed calculated to

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