

## Bookie

When Bill Gates wanted to start a serious, anachronistic paper library in his extreme-tech Shangri-La on the shores of Lake Washington, he knew who to turn to: Kenneth W. Rendell, who not only knows a ton about historical letters, documents, and rare books but also knows where to find them. If you've got the cash, he's got the nose.

In his New York gallery and in his catalog, he displays a collection of letters and documents from almost every US president, from Washington to Nixon (\$125,000); an autographed album cover for the Beatles' *Please Please Me* (\$12,500); and an early signed edition of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (\$17,500).

But Rendell's moneyed tech-world clients don't rely on him for the odd objet here and there. He builds entire collections.

The cost can run to what the rest of us would call infinity for a complete library, which Rendell will buy, install, monitor, and update. Starting with wish lists for works by early scientific and technological masters, he has found manuscripts by Isaac Newton and the personal annotated library of Charles Babbage, whose invention of the Difference Engine and the Analytical Engine in the early 19th century makes him one of the fathers of the modern computer. And it isn't just rare pieces of paper that Rendell can locate. For one customer he found a Curta calculator. A mechanical collectible highly prized among techies, it was produced in Liechtenstein from 1948 to 1972 and is the predecessor to today's electronic HP-48GX.



Rendell says he was caught off guard by one thing once he began offering his skills to the geek class. "The stereotypes aren't true," he says. "They read and collect great literature as well as rare scientific works. The world of technology is filled with discerning people who know what they want to collect."

Dramatic satisfactions result from the luxury of spoiling yourself. For one client, a leader in the digital economy and a pianist, Rendell found a handwritten Haydn score. Rendell also developed a unique binding system so that when the client sits down at his piano, he can play directly from this (and other) protected, original manuscripts.

For junior titans, Rendell recommends saving your own computer ephemera: "All the packaging that comes with whatever you buy. Operating manuals, things like that. No one ever keeps them, and there are very few left from the early computer age. Anyone who has such a collection could probably set his own price."

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