We set ourselves to this project because it promised to be interesting and enjoyable. It has, in addition, turned out to be intensely instructive for us, and we sense that the job will remain permanently unfinished because we have, finally, had to make some coin-toss decisions about rounding out the collection to exactly 100 titles.

We have been aware from the beginning that the mere act of providing such a list is to ask for dissent and disparagement. To start with, what does "important" mean? Does it just mean popular? Is Duke-Elder on the list just because a lot of copies of his book were sold? It is our hope to call a book important when there seems to be some agreement that the book has made a significant contribution to ophthalmic knowledge or practice. We concede that it often takes time for the word to get around about the excellence or significance of a certain book. This means that when a consensus has been reached, there may well have been quite a few copies sold. Some books published in the last decade of the 20th century will continue to be useful and popular well into the 21st century, but so far they have only had time to put their stamp on the 1990s. For this reason, we have found it hard to evaluate them as 20th-century monuments. By the year 2020, a general agreement may have finally been reached about the importance of these books. If our list is slightly weighted toward the first half of the century, this delay may have been a contributing factor. By the same token, some books first written in the 1890s continued, through new editions, to have a major influence into the 20th century, and we have included a few of these on our list.

The result is that our definition of the 20th century is a little fuzzy at both ends.

Another problem with our list is that many of the most significant contributions to ophthalmic knowledge were first offered in professional journals, and the author never got around to writing a book on the subject. Ours is unabashedly a list of books. One might well object that books are just one kind of retrievable information package, so why not consider all such packages in every kind of database? Our first answer is that we are fond of books. Books are not only discrete, compact, and accessible, they also can be attractive because their physical qualities appeal to some of our other senses. The palpable heft of the book, the feel of the binding and the paper, the art and skill of the typography and illustrations are all part of "reading" a book. A book comes saturated with the personality and voice of the author; it is designed to be held in its owner's hands and to be read, shelved, and reread as needed. Our second reason is that we have to draw the line somewhere, and by limiting ourselves to books we have side-stepped the impossible task of writing a comprehensive history of ideas in 20th-century ophthalmology.

We have asked many others to give us their choices, but in the end this is our personal list, tilted inevitably by our own personal American exposure to ophthalmic books and by our inclination toward the English language. We have made no attempt...
to rank all 100 of these books in order of their importance: we are not that foolhardy! We have listed them chronologically within 11 areas of ophthalmology (Table 1). The sequence of these subspecialty areas is, where possible, anatomical, from the front of the eye to the back of the eye. Our belief is that there might be a fairly general agreement that most of these 100 ophthalmic titles deserve mention among the most influential of the century. The remainder will be on someone's list but not on everybody's list. Table 2 contains the same list of books, arranged alphabetically by author.

The full text of our article (a printable 40-page document), containing details about these books, to together with some comments on their

* Multiple publication years indicate either a delay in finishing the set or multiple editions.
Table 2. Checklist of the 100 Books, Arranged Alphabetically by Author*

Arruga H. Cirugía Ócular. 1946.
Axenfeld T. The Bacteriology of the Eye. 1908.
Beard C. Prossis. 1969.
Bender M. The Oculomotor System. 1964.
Bielschowsky A. Lectures on Motor Anomalies. 1940.
Castronuevo R. Keratotomie & Keratoplasty. 1964.
Chandler PA, Grant WM. Lectures on Glaucoma. 1965.
Cibis P. Vitreoretinal Pathology and Surgery in Retinal Detachment. 1965.
Cogan DG. The Neurology of the Ocular Muscles. 1945.
Collins ET, Mayou MS. Pathology and Bacteriology of the Eye. 1918.
Czermak W. Monochromatische Aberrationen am menschlichen Auge. 1932.
Eisenstein S. Ocular Motility. 1930.
Elliot R. Treatise on Glaucoma. 1922.
Fox SA. Ophthalmic Plastic Surgery. 1952.
Francois J. L’Hérédité en Ophtalmologie. 1938.
Fuchs E. Lehrbuch der Augenheilkunde. 1889.
Gomini J. Le Décollement de la Retine. 1934.
Grant M. Toxicology of the Eye. 1962.
Gullstrand A. Monochromatische Anerbietungen. 1900.
Hughes WL. Reconstructive Surgery of the Eyelids. 1943.
Jackson E. Cataract Surgery and Its Complications. 1917.
Kirby DB. Surgery of Cataract. 1950.
Maddox E. Tests and Studies of Ocular Muscles. 1898.
Mandel R. Contact Lens Practice. 1965.
Mann HC. Development of the Human Eye. 1928.
Mustard J. Repair and Reconstruction of Orbital Region. 1966.
Norris WF, Oliver CA. System of Diseases of Eye. 1897-1900.
Obrig T. Contact Lenses. 1942.
Parsons JH. The Pathology of the Eye. 1904-1908.
Peter LC. The Extra-Ocular Muscles. 1927.
Posey WC, Spiller WG. The Eye and Nervous System. 1906.
Ramony C. Anatomy of the Retina. 1894-1933.
Reese A. Tumors of the Eye. 1951.
Salzmann M. Anatomic and Histologie des menschlichen Augapfels im Normalzustande, seine Entwicklung und sein Altern. 1912.
Sheehan JE. Plastic Surgery of the Orbit. 1927.
Shields J. Intraocular Tumors. 1983.
Stellard HB. Eye Surgery. 1946.
Sugar HS. The Glaucomas. 1951.
Traquir H. An Introduction to Clinical Perimetry. 1927.
Waarndenburg PJ. Das menschlichen Auge und seine Erbanlagen. 1932.
Whitnall SE. The Anatomy of the Human Orbit. 1921.
Willbrand H, Saenger A. Die Neurologie des Auges. 1900-1922.
Wolf E. The Anatomy of the Eye and Orbit. 1933.
Worth C. Squint. 1903.

* Multiple publication years indicate either a delay in finishing the set or multiple editions.

special qualities and their publication history, can be found on the Internet (available at: http://webeye.ophth.uiowa.edu/dept/20thCenturyBooks). This is the site of the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, University of Iowa, Iowa City. If you have comments or suggestions for us regarding this project, please record them at this site before the end of the year 2001.