In Praise of the Lowly Book
By Patrick LoBrutto

I once heard Isaac Asimov say, "A book turns on when you open it, and automatically turns off when you close it. When I was a child, first learning to read, I believed that books were living things, that they slept when closed, awakened when open."
I believed that then. I believe that still. For me, the truth is this: it's about books and stories.
A book is more than a beautifully crafted work. Even in this bright and glittering digital age, a book remains the most efficient information-retrieval device ever invented. Even now, nothing is easier to use, or more functional.
At the very least, a book is an entertainment. But more -- I believe that the slightly raised, sacred type on the page of a book whispers secrets to the anxious, longing places in our minds and hearts. I believe that the sea sounds of stories speak directly into our souls. Books are our gospels, and through them our lives are changed, informed, diverted, charged. At the best, a book selects from the growling, grumbling collective wisdom that the human race has gathered through much difficulty, with great and tearful strife.
These artifacts, too often relegated to mere commerce, should best be treated with the full dignity accorded any powerful talisman that is at once objét d'art, weapon, mentor, and comforting lap. All the proprieties must be observed.
A book is to be adorned, then, in fine raiment. It should be respected and ritually prepared. But a book done well is more than mere object; it is a lasting and useful friend. It should be made durable, so that it might be used long and often, and still retain its beauty. And like a true friend, a book is not an interchangeable widget to be mindlessly used, then discarded and forgotten. Books should be presented with joy and respect, because of all they do for us and to us, and for the promise at the heart of each. This is the simple truth of it. And anyone who would deign to take their charge and do less should be cleaning out the bathrooms in the Library of Babel.