

Rare tomes fetch big price The Hobbit among expensive novels

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Half a million volumes have poured in for the 11th annual Times Colonist Book Drive and Sale, whetting the appetite of would-be treasure hunters on the lookout for rare, signed or first-edition books.

To check out how much old books can be worth, we visited Victoria-based AbeBooks.com -- the world's largest Internet site for used books -- for its priciest books.

For the record, the most expensive book ever purchased by a Victorian on the AbeBooks website was David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812 by David Thompson (edited by Joseph Burr Tyrell), printed in Toronto by the Champlain Society in 1916 and sold for \$4,250 US, says AbeBooks.com spokesman Scott Lyman.

The TC book sale runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday and Sunday in the former Now furniture building, 2269 Douglas St.

The most expensive books ever sold on AbeBooks.com

1. The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien, \$65,000

A first-edition in original dust jacket, one of only 1,500 copies published in 1937. Purchased by an Arizona buyer from a New York bookseller.

2. The pamphlet Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicenc'd Printing to the Parliament of England by John Milton, \$65,000

Dating to 1644, this pamphlet had the author of Paradise Lost defending freedom of the press against the British government. Purchased by a U.K. buyer from an American bookseller.

3. Utopia by Sir Thomas More, \$60,000.

Later beheaded by Henry VIII, he pleaded for religious freedom and universal education in this 1518 fourth edition. Purchased by a U.K. buyer from an American bookseller.

4. Poems by John Donne, \$60,000

This 1633 first edition of his first collection of poems was purchased by a buyer in Pakistan from an American bookseller.

5. Historical, Military, and Picturesque Observations on Portugal by Lt.-Col. George Thomas Landmann, \$57,500

An 1818 first edition described as "the most beautiful illustrated English book on Portugal of the period." Purchased buyer in Hong Kong from an American bookseller.

6. Koran \$46,061

This handwritten holy book was published in 1731 and purchased in Pakistan from a

bookseller in Germany.

7. Historical and statistical information respecting the history, condition and prospects of the Indian tribes of the United States by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, \$38,000

In 1847, Congress asked Schoolcraft to document the history and future of U.S. aboriginal peoples. Purchased by a buyer in California from a bookseller in Philadelphia.

8. Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by J.K. Rowling, \$36,059

Only 500 hardcovers exist of Rowling's debut in 1997. Purchased by a buyer in California from a bookseller in France.

9. Traité d'anatomie et de physiologie, avec des planche, \$27,582

A rare leather-bound medical handbook published in 1786 in Paris, purchased by a buyer in Pennsylvania from a bookseller in Germany.

10. 1984, George Orwell, \$26,500.

Orwell was hospitalized with TB just after publication and died, leaving few signed copies. Purchased by a U.K. buyer from an American bookseller.

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