Amazon Best of the Month, July 2008: It wasnt enough for Pulitzer Prize-winning author Larry McMurtry to become one of the most prolific, bestselling, and beloved of American writers. Besides writing nearly forty books, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel Lonesome Dove, he has emerged as one this nations greatest bookmen. In Books: A Memoir, McMurtry shares with readers his lifelong passion and dogged pursuit of books. In short, gem-like chapters, he paints a fascinating picture of the landscape of American book culture and book selling over a 50-year period. The story is as dusty, musty and crusty as any of McMurtrys fictionalized Westerns, and filled with characters who seem like they stepped out of central casting. Whether you love McMurtry, books, bookstores or a combination thereof, youll find something to love in Books: A Memoir. Settle in with a cuppa coffee and let McMurtry kindle your passion for physical books. --Lauren Nemroff

Personal Review: Books: A Memoir by Larry McMurtry
I share Larry McMurtry's appetite for books, but haven't acted on it as he has. This is a wonderful book, full of book lore and fine descriptions of a number of eccentric personalities. It is also an excellent memoir.

The ranch house of the author's childhood was built on Montgomery Ward plans. McMurtry's father was a cattleman, not a farmer. The family really didn't have books. Then his cousin Robert gave Larry a box of books before the cousin went into the service in 1942 as he was cutting the second semester of the first grade. Shortly after that the family moved to Archer City and became, he remarks facetiously, middle class. The family acquired THE WORLD BOOK ENCYCLOPEDIA and MY BOOK HOUSE.

The writer started his book hunting by looking into abandoned farmhouses. As an adolescent, McMurtry read what he could scrounge. In the mid sixties he started to collect vintage mass market paperbacks. During his first stay at Rice University for a year and a half, he spent most of the time in the library. He was squeezed out of Rice by freshman math.

During the first twenty years of book hunting McMurtry read nearly all of the books he acquired. He graduated from North Texas State, received an MA from Rice, and was awarded a Wallace Stegner Fellowship at Stanford. His first novel was HORSEMAN PASS BY, (made into the movie HUD), and the second was LEAVING CHEYENNE. McMurtry scouted books in the Bay area, at one time San Francisco had so many antiquarian bookshops he couldn't cover them all, and spent two and a half years in Houston working for Grace David at the Bookman. McMurtry was sent on two buying trips to the East Coast and one to the West Coast.

The author thought he did well when he sold a book for seven hundred fifty dollars at five hundred dollars profit. He found out later the book was sold subsequently for eight thousand dollars. The author's character, Cadillac Jack, was made an antiques scout rather than a book scout because McMurtry knew how hard it is to get the common reader interested in the intricacies of the book trade.

The auction of Lowdermilk's stock in 1970 in the District of Columbia was an opportunity for McMurtry and Marcia Carter to get into book selling. Booked Up opened in Georgetown in 1971. Many secondhand bookshops were closing then, although Powell's, the Tattered Cover in Denver, and the Strand remained viable. In writing talents may exhaust their gifts, but book selling is progressive because it is based upon acquired knowledge.

McMurtry wonders, (with Cyril Connolly), whether reading has become a mandarin pursuit. McMurtry never wanted to be without books. That was his motive in book selling. As Richard Booth brought books to Hay-on-Wye in Wales, Larry McMurtry brought books to Archer City after rents in Georgetown became exorbitant.