**Ship of Magic: The Liveship Traders**

The untimely death of Old Trader Ephron Vestrit deprives his daughter Althea of her inheritance and places her ambitious brother-in-law Kyle in command of the live ship Viveca and the family fortunes. The author of the Farseer trilogy (Assassin's Apprentice, LJ 3/15/95; Royal Assassin, Bantam, 1996; Assassin's Quest, Bantam, 1997) launches a new series set in a world of sentient ships, merchant traders, ruthless pirates, dangerous treasures, seagoing dragons, and a mysterious elder race. Hobb excels in depicting complex characters; even her villains command respect, if not sympathy, for their actions. Most libraries should purchase this exotic, nonstandard fantasy.  
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