

**STANDARD
SPECIFICATIONS
FOR BOOK PRINTING**

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Standard Specifications for Book Printing by Joseph B. Smarr

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JOSEPH B. SMARR

**STANDARD
SPECIFICATIONS
FOR BOOK PRINTING**

**STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS
FOR
BOOK PRINTING**

FOR THE USE OF

**STATE AND MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS
PUBLISHERS, UNIVERSITIES AND
OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

BY

**JOSEPH B. SMARR
CHIEF CLERK TO THE MAYOR**

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

**MORRIS L. COOKE
DIRECTOR DEPARTMENT PUBLIC WORKS**

PUBLISHED BY THE

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA**

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TO THE
AMERICAN

FOREWORD

A proper purchasing system is an absolutely essential feature of a municipal government. Definite specifications for everything is the prime essential of good buying. Contract graft of every kind results generally from loosely drawn specifications. This is the commonest agency through which municipal officials and methods are corrupted.

The printing industry is approximately four hundred years old, and many of its implements, methods, and practices have remained unchanged during this entire period. It is one of the few industries that has consistently and successfully resisted all efforts toward its systematization. The thoughts of the leading men during the last twenty years have been devoted largely to a propaganda in favor of a highly developed cost system. This industry probably puts a larger percentage of its gross receipts into ascertaining manufacturing costs than any other. In the mind of the average printer, the ascertaining of costs is thought to be fundamental to efficiency and prosperity.

As a matter of fact, the keeping of costs is only comparable to book-keeping or accounting. Cost keeping is, at best, only a history of something that has happened,—recorded data. As practiced in the printing industry it has absolutely nothing to do with efficiency or the improvement of methods; it is little more than a memorandum bearing only indirectly upon the cutting down of manufacturing costs. The inevitable result of a highly developed cost system, maintained in the absence of an active crusade for better methods, is that the charges to the public are constantly increased. This is exactly what has gone on in printing costs all over the country. This has been greatly facilitated during the last ten years by the formation in all

the large cities of printers boards of trade, which organizations have had price control as their special field.

The printing industry has therefore made practically no effort toward standardization. On the contrary, it has resisted all efforts toward a simplification of its practices. It was only a few years ago that there was no standardization in the steel industry. About 25 years ago, the Carnegie Steel company issued its hand-book of standard shapes. Since then, these hand-books have become an indispensable mechanism of every engineering and architectural office. Every designer of buildings has been brought to realize that there is everything to gain and nothing to lose from using standard shapes. In fact, the standardization in the steel industry has gone so far that it is practically impossible to use anything but standard shapes, because deliveries on anything irregular are so uncertain, and so apt to be delayed that architects, builders, contractors and others avoid their use in every possible way.

Obviously, the only people to standardize an industry are the manufacturers in it. The people who buy the materials are in no position to standardize anything except what they, themselves, buy. There is a limit as to how far standardization of this kind brought about by single users of the product can affect an industry. It would not be expected that even a large user of structural iron shapes, who had standardized them for his own use, would have any special influence upon the weight and dimensions of the shapes used by others.

The application of this to the printing industry is obvious. It is only the printers themselves who can standardize the world's printing. Any one user of printing can do little more than standardize what he himself uses. It would be far better if the printers, instead of spending practically all their time in discussing costs, and in conferring with one another as to how to get the public to pay the prices asked would devote their energies towards

standardizing printing. If this were done, before long, the printer would attain the status of a manufacturer. At the present time he is a sort of hybrid—half manufacturer and half artist. He is put in a class by himself. The average printer's credit at the banks, and elsewhere, is far below that of the average manufacturer, for the simple reason that conditions in the industry do not warrant according him any different position.

These specifications for the annual reports of the Mayor and the directors of several administrative departments of the City of Philadelphia were written without any idea that they would be used for actually buying this printing. The author knew nothing about printing and simply made a few months' study of it in the hope of being able to draft a set of specifications that could be generally used by the officials of cities and states and others in buying printing of this kind. As a matter of fact, when the specifications were finished, they were used for buying the printing of the 1913 reports, and through their use, the cost of the printing was more than cut in half. The 1913 bid totalled something less than \$6,000, whereas, for the year preceding, the cost had been \$18,000, and the average for five years before that was approximately \$12,250.

From the standpoint of the printer, these specifications have the advantage that it takes him perhaps a half an hour to make his bid. The old method was to assemble the copy, on the theory that the printer would sit down and carefully analyze it and make his bid after its inspection. By the development of a system of carefully defined unit prices, with a table of approximate quantities for the different kinds of work, based upon past experience, all guess work is eliminated and the printer is enabled to make accurate quotations with the least possible expenditure of time.

These specifications are so drawn that they can be made available for practically any city or state desiring to use

them. Matters of taste as to size of page, etc., can be altered simply by changing a few figures.

There is almost an entire absence of definite specifications in this printing field. Someone before long will doubtless draw up similar specifications for job work. While individual purchases in this job field are small, they represent in total by far the largest amount of money expended for printing. Through the drawing of definite specifications and having free and open bidding for all kinds of printing, a saving of a large amount of money would necessarily result.

Revelations made a few months ago in a report to the Governor of the State of New York, as to the exorbitant prices paid for state printing, makes one question whether there are not a great many cities and states that can profit by this publication. As the preparation of these specifications was undertaken at my suggestion, and as the author has done an exceptionally good piece of work, it is a great pleasure to recommend to printers and purchasing agents a very careful perusal of the following pages.

MORRIS L. COOKE,

August, 1914.

Director.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

INTRODUCTION

The specifications here exhibited differ from those in common use chiefly in this: that they give to bidders information of the work to be done sufficiently detailed and exact to enable them to bid closely, and declare particularly what the printer shall do in execution of the contract. It seems rather surprising to say that the difference between the two is what really is the whole purpose of a specification, but a glance at the forms issued and in use in Philadelphia, Boston and a number of other cities in the country will confirm the statement: so little real information is given on which to base a bid, so much is left to conjecture, that printers who have not done that particular work must make a wide margin, in estimating, for things which they may have overlooked, and for uncertainty in the contractor's requirements. In one city the wording of a clause made it possible for the contractor to receive four times the amount he himself would have charged under properly drawn specifications; and in all the forms examined there is the same looseness of method, the same lack of data which printers must have for a guide, the same lack of means for checking bills. The final consequence has been the elimination of real competition: one firm is awarded the contract regularly, for it is familiar, by experience, with the work to be done; it stands in, perhaps, with the municipal authorities, and, because other firms judge it useless to bid, obtains what is practically a monopoly of the printing work.

This, in itself, while not good business form, would not, perhaps, be detrimental to the City's interests, if it could be assured of honesty on the part of the contractor, and of energy and technical knowledge on the part of those of its