

**TRANSACTIONS OF THE  
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL,  
VOL. IX, OCTOBER,  
1906, TO MARCH, 1908**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649108688

Transactions of the bibliographical, Vol. IX, October, 1906, to March, 1908 by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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TRANSACTIONS  
OF THE  
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

VOLUME IX,  
OCTOBER, 1906, TO MARCH, 1908.

186780.  
17.1.24.

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY  
By BLADES, EAST & BLADES.

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DECEMBER, 1908.

# THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.



## JOURNAL OF THE FIFTEENTH SESSION.

*October, 1906, to March, 1907.*

### OCTOBER MEETING.

The first Meeting of the Session was held on Monday, October 15th, at the St. Bride's Institute, Bride Lane, Fleet Street, by the kind invitation of the Governors. Mr. R. A. Peddie, the Acting-Librarian of the Technical Collections, had arranged a very interesting exhibition, which included an old printing press, a fine series of works printed by John Baskerville, some of them lent by Mr. Ralph Straus, and a series of *Books on the Practical Side of the Art of Printing, 1566-1750*, on which, after giving a brief history of the Technical Library, Mr. Peddie read a paper.

SUMMARY.—For some considerable period after the invention of printing, printers were content to practise their art without that wish to rush into print which characterizes the typographer of a later date. This abstinence was practised partly, we may suppose, with the idea of keeping the sacred mysteries of the art within the craft, and partly because the apprentices and journeymen learnt the simple trade of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries without the necessity of study of any kind. But with the increasing complexity of the press and the ever-

increasing numbers of men required, books began to appear which described the processes necessary to be known by the expert compositor and pressman.

I have arranged on exhibition a series of books ranging in date from 1600 to 1750, which are either treatises on practical printing or volumes issued as specimens or samples of type.

There are a few references of an unimportant character to practical printing in Matthias Richter's *De Typographiæ Inventione*, published at Copenhagen in 1566, but the first book describing all the processes of printing and typesetting in detail may be credited to England. Joseph Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises*, projected as a general encyclopædia of arts and sciences, contains in the second volume the first important descriptive general treatise on the art of printing. It was published in 1683.

In 1688 appeared the next attempt. This occurs, curiously enough, in Randle Holme's *Academy of Armory*, issued at Chester in that year. The description is principally from Moxon, with whom Holme was intimate.

The later general books call for very little mention. Ernesti, Gessner, Fertel, are all excellent works of their period. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the introduction of new methods and the invention of printing machines revolutionized the industry, the first good technical work in each country was copied and recopied, generally without acknowledgment.

TYPE DESIGN.—I am only able to show one book on the proportions of letters, Moxon's *Rules of the Three Orders of print letters*, 1676. There were several earlier attempts. In 1509 Luca Pacioli published a work entitled *De Divina Proportione*, which contained woodcuts of the alphabet. Albert Durer, in 1525, attempted to reduce all letters to combinations of circles and straight lines, a similar idea being also the basis of Geoffrey Tory's fantastic *Champfleury*, first issued in 1529. Moxon's attempt was not meant as a guide to punch-cutters, but was more for the guidance of sign-printers.

**TYPEFOUNDERS' SPECIMENS.**—The first English type specimen is found amongst the State Papers at the Record Office, and was issued by Nicholas Nicholls in 1665. It was specially prepared for presentation to the King, and resulted in Nicholls being appointed typefounder to His Majesty. Joseph Moxon also comes to the front as a typefounder. In 1669 he published a specimen sheet, a copy of which is amongst the Bagford papers in the British Museum. It is a poor performance, only one fount, the Pica, having any pretensions to elegance or regularity.

With the early eighteenth century we come to a new era, signalized by the foundation of the Caslon foundry in 1720. Caslon's first specimen, issued in 1734, contains 38 founts, all, with three exceptions, of his own cutting. It shows the first use of the Cicconian denunciation of Catiline (*Quousque tandem*, etc.). The appearance of Latin being much more effective than that of English in a specimen, the phrase was used for many years by all typefounders.

**PRINTERS' TYPE SPECIMENS.**—The earliest printers seem often to have printed a *Donatus* or a *Calendar* chiefly to show their types. On his return to Augsburg in 1486 Erhard Ratdolt issued a magnificent specimen sheet of the types which he had brought with him from Venice. It is very doubtful when the next extant specimen was issued by a printer to show the resources of his office. The first I have been able to trace is one issued in 1616 by Fuhrmann, of Nuremberg. The 1628 specimen of the Vatican press is interesting for the varieties of types shown. The Moncur specimen, issued in Edinburgh in 1709, is curious, as it is composed of a sermon set up in sections, each section in a different type. In 1713 James Watson, of Edinburgh, issued a specimen of types, all Dutch, which was prefaced by a short history of Scottish printing, from the pen of John Spotswood.

**IMPOSITION.**—Some of the earliest books on the practical side of the printing art were devoted to giving plans of imposition. The earliest of which I have record was issued by J. C. Victor in 1664. A copy of this is at Leipzig. Wolffger's work, published nine years later, is the first I can show you.



THE PRESS.—The few illustrations of the press which I can exhibit are very vague and doubtful in their reproduction of the essential part of the mechanism.

Gutenberg and his immediate successors must have adapted the ordinary linen press to the requirements of printing, but some time in the fifteenth century the enormous improvement of the rolling table to take the forme was introduced. The press remained with its wooden screw on the spindle and without a tympan or frisket until 1550, when Danner, a printer of Nuremberg, introduced the metal screw and added the tympan and frisket. Previously the paper must have been laid directly on the type and covered with something like a blanket in order to get an even impression.

In 1620 Blaeu, of Amsterdam, introduced the great improvement of a spring which returned the platen after impression and reduced the work of the pressman by one-half. But for these improvements the press at the end of the eighteenth century was the press of the fifteenth century—300 years with very little to show in the way of inventive capacity.

When we come to consider the rate of production of the old hand press we are face to face with the difficulty of understanding the technical terms of a trade in past years. When it is said that the first press at Mainz produced 300 sheets per day of 14 hours, we suppose this meant 300 fully printed folios, or 600 pulls. But when in 1571, at Lyons, the pressmen complained that they worked from 2 a.m. to 8 or 9 p.m., and were expected to produce 3,500 sheets per day, we cannot believe that this meant more than 1,750 sheets, or 3,500 pulls. In 1760 the production worked out at 250 per hour, and I am informed by Mr. Jacobi, of the Chiswick Press, that 250 pulls per hour is quite as much as it is possible to expect from a hand press.

#### NOVEMBER MEETING.

The Second Meeting of the Session was held at 5 p.m. on Monday, November 19th, at 20, Hanover Square, the President, Mr. Faber, in the

Chair. The Right Rev. Abbot Gasquet read a paper on *Books and Book-making in Chronicles and Accounts*, printed in full in the present volume.

#### DECEMBER MEETING.

The Third Meeting of the Session was held at 5 p.m. on Monday, December 17th, at 20, Hanover Square, the President, Mr. Faber, in the Chair. A paper by Mr. A. W. Pollard and Mr. W. W. Greg on *Some Difficulties in Bibliographical Descriptions*, was read by Mr. Greg. The greater part of it is printed in the present volume.

#### ANNUAL REPORT.

Previous to the January Meeting the following Annual Report and Balance Sheet were circulated among members by means of the Society's *News-Sheet*.

(1.) During the fourteen years of its existence the Bibliographical Society has been deprived by death of many of its most eminent members, both English and Foreign. It has this year to mourn, for the first time, the loss of one of its former Presidents. Dr. Richard Garnett, who succeeded the Founder of the Society, Dr. Copinger, in the Presidential Chair in 1896, had taken an active part in the formation of the Society, was one of its original Vice-Presidents, and had greatly increased the attractiveness of our meetings by his frequent participations in the discussions. In the history of a Society the importance of its second President is only a little less than that of its first, and the confidence which Dr. Copinger expressed that Dr. Garnett's acceptance of office would ensure the prosperity of the Society was well founded. During his term of office he was constant in attendance at meetings both of the Society and of the Council, and after he had laid down the Presidentship, his help could still always be relied on in case of need. He viewed bibliography, as he viewed literature and life, in its largest and most liberal aspect, and the debt which we owe him is one which should be kept in remembrance as long as the Society lasts.

(2.) Save for this great loss the year has been as prosperous and as successful as its predecessors. For a Society of which so large a proportion of the members reside out of London our meetings have been well attended, and many of the recent papers have been of more than usual interest. Mr. Bourdillon's monograph on the *Early Editions of Le Roman de la Rose*, which should be in the hands of members by the time that this Report is circulated, is one of the most important books which the Society has published. Besides this, two small books are in the press, Mr. Strickland Gibson's *Abstracts of the Wills of Oxford Stationers and Bookbinders, 1501-1638*, and Mr. Worman's list of *Alien members of the Book trade during the Tudor period*, abstracted by kind permission of the Huguenot Society from their Returns of Aliens in London.

(3.) For 1907 a Part of *Transactions* is nearly in readiness, and the Council hopes to be able to print Mr. Campbell Dodgson's illustrated monograph on Hans Weiditz, and has commissioned Mr. H. R. Plomer to prepare a Dictionary of English Printers and Stationers at work between 1640 and 1669, at present the most obscure period of English printing. It has also accepted an offer from Mr. Seymour de Ricci, one of the latest recruits to the Society, to prepare a Census of all the known copies of books printed by William Caxton, and members will be glad to hear that Mr. Gordon Duff, who has made Caxton his special study for so many years, has kindly promised his help in making Mr. De Ricci's work as complete as possible. From the annexed Balance Sheet it will be seen that the Society's Finances are in a satisfactory condition. The accounts this year are made up to December 31st, so that in future the Society's financial year will begin on the date when subscriptions become due, January 1st. Hitherto we have had four New Years, almost as many as were in use in the fifteenth century, viz., January 1st for subscriptions, the third Monday in October for the opening of the Session, December 1st for our accounts, and the third Monday in December for the election of officers and members of Council. In future the financial year, subscriptions and tenure of office, will all be reckoned from January to January.