

**COMPOSING ROOM  
MANAGEMENT; A SURVEY OF  
PRESENT CONDITIONS AND A  
DISCUSSION IN DETAIL OF  
POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649162802

Composing room management; a survey of present conditions and a discussion in detail of possible improvements by Dorr Kimball

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**DORR KIMBALL**

**COMPOSING ROOM  
MANAGEMENT; A SURVEY OF  
PRESENT CONDITIONS AND A  
DISCUSSION IN DETAIL OF  
POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS**



# COMPOSING ROOM MANAGEMENT

*A Survey of present Conditions  
and a Discussion in detail  
of possible Improvements*

By DORR KIMBALL

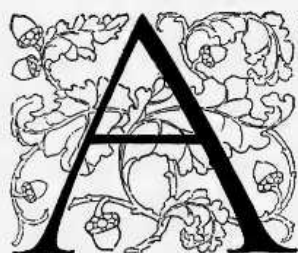


BERKELEY · CALIFORNIA  
1918

Copyright 1918 by DORR KIMBALL



## By Way of INTRODUCTION



As you look over the pages of this Report you have naturally a number of questions in mind such as: What does a Survey and Report of a composing room really mean? Are the recommendations the work of a practical printer? How many of the detailed plans are actually in practice? To what extent can the suggestions for one shop be applied to another? Is the author interested in any way in selling composing room equipment?

Most of these questions, and the many more that might with reason be asked, find an answer in the text itself, but I take the author's privilege of prefacing the Report with a short statement which may serve to answer some of the most natural of your questions.

The Report which follows is the verbatim text of the document which was prepared for a certain printing firm, after making an exhaustive study of the operation of the composing room. The only change in the original wording has been to omit the name of the firm wherever it occurred, and to condense a few matters which have no more than a private interest to this particular shop. As the plans outlined in the Report are suggestions for modification of present conditions, and their carrying out will involve a

considerable period of time, the firm, in granting permission to publish the Report, has naturally desired to remain anonymous.

The need for a Survey and Report of the composing room work originated in the selling end of the business. The author (who was engaged at the time in selling, designing, and planning advertising for the firm) felt the necessity of a closer co-ordination between the sales and manufacturing departments, to the end that work could be produced more economically, and at the same time the quality be improved. To work out his ideas on this subject, he was permitted to devote his entire time for a considerable period to investigating the situation and formulating his findings in the shape of a comprehensive Report.

The author makes no claim for originality in the matter of the different devices and schemes for perfecting the work. His task has been that of assembling good ideas from any and all sources, modifying and adapting them to the work at hand. A few ideas he has perhaps developed along lines that could be called wholly new in the printing industry.

The Report was made solely in the interest and from the standpoint of the management of the business. The author has no interest in any of the detailed plans, or items of equipment, other than to suggest what will prove most effective in operation.

#### SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT

You will find no mention of "scientific management" in the Report, and the reason is obvious to anyone who is familiar with the working out of the ideas originated by Mr. Frederick W. Taylor. The distance that separates the ordinary work of the



printing trade, especially in the composing room, from the ideal perfection of the art, if all the principles of scientific management were applied, is so great that only the first steps can be discussed at this time.

Mr. Henry P. Kendall, of the Plimpton Press, in discussing scientific management, has given us a classification of management as unsystematic, systematic, and scientific. It must be admitted that, so far as the composing room is concerned, the average shop of today would be classified in one of the first two divisions. In some particulars the Report is dealing with conditions which might be styled unsystematic, in other particulars the conditions are somewhat systematic, but practically nowhere do we find, in present ordinary practice, conditions which can rightly be styled as scientific.

The Report is mainly concerned with the work of developing these present conditions and practices along more systematic lines, and laying the foundation for a real scientific method.

#### THE COST SYSTEM

Under any plan of improving the work of the composing room, the necessity of comparative records of accomplishment is at once apparent. We must know if any attempted improvement is really working a saving in cost. We must have this knowledge quickly too, for next week or next month is too late to correct present mistakes. Likewise this knowledge must be reported clearly and without red tape.

For the purpose of clear, comparative records of production costs, the so-called standard cost system proves inadequate.

In saying this and what follows, I do not wish to be understood as belittling the great work accomplished by the Typothetae and Franklin Clubs. The work accomplished by this organization in introducing cost finding has been a real life saver to the trade. Coming at a time when the only attempts to ascertain costs commonly resulted in regarding the hour's pay of the workman as the cost of the productive hour, or perhaps this cost plus a ten or fifteen per cent addition for a wholly mysterious overhead, it was a great accomplishment to convince printers that the cost of the productive hour might be the hour's pay of the workman plus a hundred or even two hundred per cent. By publishing figures of actual shop experiences and spreading the gospel of estimating jobs at rates based on average cost figures, the trade, or a considerable part of it, has been put on a fairly satisfactory financial footing.

So much the standard cost system has done, but beyond this it does not go. It does not provide the means of knowing whether actual costs are going up or down.

It is sometimes asserted that a comparison of the composing room hour costs of several months shows whether costs are going up or down, but this comparison may be widely misleading. Take this for example:

A firm has established from the previous year's records a composing room hour cost (compiled according to the standard cost system) of \$1.50. The average monthly items on which this was based were as follows:

Number of productive hours . . . . .	1000
Total expense . . . . .	\$1500.00
Hour cost . . . . .	1.50

The first two months of the new year gave the following figures:

January	
Productive hours . . . . .	1100
Total expense . . . . .	\$1575.00
Hour cost . . . . .	1.43
Profit (7 cents on 1100 hours) . .	77.00

February	
Productive hours . . . . .	900
Total expense . . . . .	\$1425.00
Hour cost . . . . .	1.58
Loss (8 cents on 900 hours) . .	72.00

From the reports of these two months in these terms, we might infer that January was a better month than February because it shows a lower hour cost, but these figures prove nothing of the kind. If we knew what was actually produced in those productive hours we might have quite a different story.

Suppose we had the average product per hour for the former year's work in convenient measurable form as representing, let us say, 500 ems of composition. (Actual cost finding of the measured product is not such a simple matter as this by any means, but this will serve for illustration.) Then the average cost of composition per measured unit of a thousand ems would be \$3.00.

Suppose that during January the average efficiency of the men fell off from the average of 500 ems per hour to 455. Then the 1100 productive hours of our report represent a total measured product of 500M ems for the month. The cost per thousand ems is \$3.15. Fifteen cents per thousand ems on each of 500M ems amounts to \$75.00, and this is loss (not profit).