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978-1-107-02373-4 - The Cambridge Companion to: The History of the Book

Edited by Leslie Howsam

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK

Throughout human history, the world's knowledge and fruits of the creative imagination have been produced, circulated and received through the medium of the material text. This *Companion* provides a wide-ranging account of the history of the book and its ways of thinking about works from ancient inscription to contemporary e-books, discussing thematic, chronological and methodological aspects of this interdisciplinary field. The first part considers book cultures from local, national and global perspectives. Part two, organized around the dynamic relationship between the material book and the mutable text, develops a loosely chronological narrative from early writing, through manuscript and early printing, to the institution of a mechanized book trade, and on to the globalization of publishing and the introduction of the electronic book. A third part takes a practical turn, discussing methods, sources and approaches: bibliographical, archival and reading experience methodologies, as well as pedagogical strategies.

LESLIE HOWSAM is University Professor in the Department of History at the University of Windsor. She is author or editor of seven significant books and numerous articles, most notably *Old Books and New Histories: An Orientation to Studies in Book and Print Culture* (2006) and *Past into Print: The Publishing of History in Britain 1850–1950* (2009).

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.

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CHRONOLOGY

- c.* 70,000–80,000 BCE. First recorded evidence of human marks made purposefully on a material base – flint knapping on stone and bone, coloured with ochre. In the Blombos Caves in modern South Africa.
- c.* 40,000–50,000 BCE. Until the discovery of the Blombos evidence, cave paintings in Lascaux, France, were thought to be the earliest record of human marks. Pictographs and petroglyphs were painted and incised on stone from about 10,000 BCE in North, Central and South America, Australasia, Asia, Africa and Europe.
- c.* 3200 BCE. Beginning of written language in both ancient Mesopotamia (using clay as a writing surface) and ancient Egypt.
- c.* 3000 BCE. Papyrus (made from reed grown in Egypt) first used as a writing surface.
- c.* 1200 BCE. Beginning of written language in ancient China, using bone and tortoiseshell, later silk, as writing surfaces. Diamond Sutra the first dated book, 868 CE.
- c.* 1000 BCE. Writing on palm leaves in ancient India; palm leaf books called *sutras*.
- c.* 800 BCE. In Assyria, introduction of the wax tablet as a writing surface.
- c.* 600 BCE. Beginning of written Mayan language in ancient Mesoamerica.
- c.* 300 BCE. Foundation of the library of Alexandria, in Egypt.
- c.* 100 CE. Paper first used in China.
- c.* 100–200 CE. In Europe, parchment (sheep or calfskin leather) first used extensively as a writing surface; about the same time, appearance of the first codex, beginning to supplant the papyrus scroll.
- c.* 220. In China, first printing using woodblock technique, on cloth.
- c.* 1000. In Korea, first printing with moveable metal type.
- 1074. First European paper mill established in eastern Spain by Muslims – paper made from linen rags.
- Medieval Europe. Bibles, Books of Hours and other works published in manuscript on parchment, later on paper.

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- 1403. Foundation of the Stationers' Company in London.
- c. 1456. A printed bible issued from Mainz by Johannes Gutenberg using moveable type and letterpress technology (on parchment *and* paper).
- 1450s–1500. The incunabula period, when printing spread from Mainz to other European cities, beginning with Venice, Paris, Krakow and Flanders. Caxton's first press in England established 1476.
- 1522. Luther's German bible issued from a press in Wittenberg.
- 1534. Foundation of the Cambridge University Press; first book printed in 1584.
- 1536. Press founded in Mexico.
- 1593. Press founded in the Philippines.
- 1638. Press founded in British North America (Cambridge, MA).
- 1662–95. Licensing Act controls printing in England.
- 1666. Royal Society (London) founded; publishes the periodical *Philosophical Transactions*.
- 1710. Copyright Act in England, recognizes rights of author.
- 1725. William Ged develops stereotype plates, in Scotland, for printing whole pages of type (technique was reinvented and made commercially viable in 1804 by Stanhope).
- 1730. Benjamin Franklin official printer to the state of Pennsylvania.
- 1751. Diderot begins publication of the *Encyclopédie*, circulating Enlightenment ideas in France.
- 1751. First printing press in Canada (Halifax).
- 1798. Nicholas Louis Robert invents a papermaking machine; 1804 Henry and Sealy Fourdrinier purchase the patent.
- 1798. Lithography developed as a printing technique.
- 1803. Stanhope builds first iron press in England; manufactured New York 1811, Germany 1815.
- 1810. König's steam-powered press patented in England (used to print *The Times* newspaper 1814).
- 1813. First handpress made of iron.
- 1820s. Beginning of binding with book cloth.
- 1842. Copyright Act implemented in Britain.
- 1843. Wood pulp begins to replace rag pulp in papermaking.
- 1847. Introduction of the rotary press by R. M. Hoe.
- 1851. First lithographic power press introduced.
- 1879. First machine to sew book bindings (but handwork by women continues).
- 1870s. Introduction of offset printing.
- 1886. Berne Convention establishes reciprocal international copyright law.

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- 1886. Linotype machine introduced (automates typesetting and composition).
- 1890s. End of the three-volume novel in England (since the 1820s).
- 1891. Chace Act in the US ends literary piracy by Americans.
- 1892. Foundation of The Bibliographical Society (London).
- Early twentieth century. Widespread use of paper made from wood pulp, rather than rags.
- 1903. Offset printing developed (lithographic technique using three cylinders).
- 1904. Foundation of The Bibliographical Society of America.
- 1926. Book-of-the-Month Club founded, US.
- 1935. Launch of Penguin Books in England by the publisher Allan Lane initiates the 'paperback revolution' (1939, Robert DeGraf launches Pocket Books in the US).
- 1937. Xerography introduced.
- 1950s. Beginning of photocomposition.
- 1961. Publication of D. F. McKenzie's first book, *Stationers' Company Apprentices 1605–1640*.
- 1969. Invention of the laser printer; introduced commercially by IBM in 1976.
- 1971. Project Gutenberg begins converting books to digital format.
- 1979. First publication of Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* and of Darnton's *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie*.
- 1983. Foundation of the Rare Book School at Columbia University; it moved to the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA in 1992.
- 1991. Foundation of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing. First conference New York, 1993.
- 2001. Development of e-ink and e-paper, and other new technologies (supports) for making texts available to readers.