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A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

VOLUME II

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CONTENTS

Introductory Note

I  The first Minute Book of the Curators of the Press  1

II  Vice-Chancellor’s Accounts  30

III  Annual Press Accounts  41

IV  Vouchers  73

Index  355
INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The records reproduced here cover the years 1696–1712. They fall into four main groups: the first Minute Book of the Curators of the Press; the series of University Accounts prepared annually by the Vice-Chancellor; the detailed Annual Press Accounts; and the Printing-house Vouchers. With the exception of the Minute Book, which is kept at the University Press, they are all deposited in the Cambridge University Archives.

In the Minute Book of the Curators of the Press are recorded, in a variety of hands, the deliberations of the managing body for the years 1698–1714, 1725, and 1739–48. These deliberations were of two kinds: orders governing the management of the Press, and orders prescribing the prices to be charged to the undertakers for the composition, printing and correction of books produced. This first Minute Book is undoubtedly the ‘Register of ye Preff’ mentioned at M. 7 (the ‘Paper book for ye Curators’ of VCA.98). It may gradually have been supplanted by the ‘Journal-Book’ mentioned below, or by a second Minute Book brought into use about 1713 or 1714. This would explain the few entries for 1713–14 and the gaps for 1715–24 and 1726–38. The co-existence of two Minute Books at this time is not improbable: another was certainly begun in 1737, eleven years before the first ceased to be used, and continued in service intermittently until 1824.

The University Accounts, prepared each November by the retiring Vice-Chancellor and audited normally during the following March or April, include a statement of the annual income and expenditure of the Press. The information which they provide is fullest for the first two or three years of its existence (1696–8); thereafter only the bare statements of income and expenditure are given, the more detailed information appearing in the Annual Press Accounts.

These statements of the amount and cost of work done during the Vice-Chancellor’s year, of expenditure on supplies and maintenance, and of income received from booksellers, run from 1698 to 1742. They were prepared by the University Printer, Cornelius Crownfield, for the auditors of the Common Chest, and were expected to provide an exact and comprehensive summary of the financial position of the Press. That for 1698–9 is rudimentary; those for 1703–4 and 1704–5 are clearly rough and incomplete drafts; and for nine years—1699, 1700, 1700–1, 1705–6, 1706–7, and 1712–13 to 1716–17—the Annual Press Accounts have failed to survive in any form.
INTRODUCTION

The final group of records, the Vouchers, is by far the most valuable; it is also the most voluminous. The Vouchers are, generally speaking, of two kinds. On the one hand there are the bills submitted by the tradesmen or merchants who provided goods and services for the printing house, principally carpenters, bricklayers, smiths, masons, plumbers, painters, joiners, and glaziers, as well as carriers, inkmakers, typefounders, fellmongers, and so on. This class of Voucher starts with the construction in 1696 of the new printing house and continues with hardly any gaps for the whole of the eighteenth century. On the other hand there are the receipts or receipted bills made out on scraps of paper by the printing-house employees. This second class of Voucher has survived only for the period from 1698 to 1744. For the years 1699 and 1700 they were normally prepared weekly; in the opening years of the eighteenth century they were prepared less frequently, usually monthly or three-monthly; by 1709 they may be prepared six-monthly or even annually; and after 1712 it is rare to find Vouchers made out for any period shorter than the half-year. Crownefield numbered almost every Voucher, starting afresh for each Vice-Chancellor’s year, so that it is not only possible to arrange them in their original sequence but it is also a simple matter to tell if any are missing.

Some other kinds of Press records of the early eighteenth century have failed to survive. The first Minute Book, for instance, was clearly not the only record of the Curators’ activities, for we learn from it that Crownefield, ‘in ye presence of the Delegates for ye weekly meetings’, was to prepare an account of ‘ye Weight of each Body of Letter, & of all Tooles & Moueables belonging to ye New Printing House’, and that this was to be entered in the ‘Journal-Book by ye person appointed to keep that Book’ (M.9). It is most unfortunate that this ‘Journal-Book’, containing not only the minutes of the delegates’ weekly meetings but also a record of the printing-house stocks, should have been lost. There is also evidence to suggest that the extant Vouchers were not the only record of production. On 18 November 1698, Crownefield purchased ‘A Book to keep the Workman’s Accompts’ (V.99.2). During 1699 Jonathan Pindar made ‘a paper Book for ye Printing Houe’ (V.00.263). And between 14 December 1700 and 3 March 1701 Crownefield further purchased ‘4 quire of Dutch Demy Paper, to make a book for ye Pres’ Accompts’ and this he also had bound and ruled (V.01.38). The book bound by Pindar in 1699 was probably that bought late in 1698, or it may have been the journal book, and that acquired early in 1701 was undoubtedly the ‘booke distincte’ in which William Piers was to enter ‘ye receipts & expences’ (M.17); neither has survived. In 1698 the Registry also supplied a ‘book for ye accts’ (VCA.98). This is probably the volume in the University Archives which is now labelled ‘Botanic Garden’ but which
INTRODUCTION

contains at one end under the heading ‘The Press Book’ a transcription of the Vice-Chancellor’s Accounts relating to the Press for the years 1696–8. Except for one entry of 1751 there are no further references to the Press, and from 1767 on the entries relate exclusively to the Botanic Garden. It is more than likely that some books were kept for daily or weekly entries by the workmen. The Vouchers that cover anything from a month’s to six months’ work must have been based upon day-books of some kind, just as the Annual Press Accounts were compiled from the Vouchers. Crownfield’s correspondence with authors, editors, booksellers, and merchants—a voluminous one, as the Vouchers show—has also been largely lost. Finally, there was probably a paper stock ledger of some kind and, as suggested above, there may also have been an additional Minute Book in use from 1715 to 1738.

This transcription of the documents preserves all spellings, variant forms of figures and abbreviations; but the original lineation is often altered to save space, superior letters have been brought down, and the various forms of £ s d and cwt qr lb have been regularized. Insignificant alterations made in the course of composition have not been noted, although a note is given on any substantial entry which is deleted; and insertions are not normally commented upon unless there is clearly some point in doing so. Readings made doubtful by mutilation are enclosed in pointed brackets; empty pointed brackets are used where a reading is quite illegible or has been utterly lost through mutilation. The more important editorial comments, and the reference symbols adopted for the various classes of document, are set in larger type and, where required for additional clarity, enclosed in square brackets. In the case of the Vouchers, any additional to those numbered by Crownfield will usually be found at the end of the annual series; for ease of indexing, Crownfield’s numeration has been extended to include them. Minor additions for sense and queries on the correctness of the transcription are added in the text type and placed within square brackets.

A detailed index has been added not only to ease consultation and use of the records but, by identifying the persons and books mentioned, and by elucidating obscure words in the documents, to form something in the nature of an editorial commentary upon them.