



Printed Books to 1640

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BIBLIOGRAPHY IS A TECHNIQUE PROPER to librarians. There are many outstanding exceptions to this resoundingly simple statement, but it nevertheless remains true that the librarian is the principal interpreter and beneficiary of the evidence which books, through their physical features, offer about themselves. One of the librarian's most elementary acts, that of cataloging, is bibliographical in nature, in that it records without comment or explanation, certain evidence offered by the book concerning itself, which must be sufficient to differentiate it from other books. To take an example, if one catalogs a book called *The Shield of Achilles* published in 1955, such information is only sufficient to differentiate this compilation from other books by the same author, and from other books which have on their title pages, "*The Shield of Achilles*, Second edition, 1962" and so on. The information recorded fails to reveal that the book is not about the Trojan War or ancient armor.

The trends to be considered in this article are given fundamental unity by the fact that they all arise from attempts to interpret and use knowledge derived from the differentiation of books by means of their physical characteristics. It is this differentiation which gives unity to the subject called bibliography (historical or analytical bibliography, that is, as opposed to subject "bibliography," the listing of books and articles by their subjects). The various uses made of this knowledge range in complexity from the distinguishing of books, editions, and perhaps issues, which is necessary for the compilation of union and short title catalogs, to the microscopic precision of Charlton Hinman's collation of the copies of the First Folio of Shakespeare in the Folger Library. No survey of bibliographical trends can afford to omit work done at either end of this spectrum, and the present consideration will follow the pattern of increasing complexity; the information derived from bibliography varies with the sophistication of its method. A point

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to insist on, is that the method of bibliography is essentially scientific. Let the collating machine stand as the symbol of bibliography at its most refined.

When once the fundamental unity of bibliography has been conceded, it will be seen that there is scope within the discipline for skills perfected for one use to be transferred to another. Since within one period the technique of printing remained conservative, it is perfectly conceivable that methods to investigate the printing of the First Folio of Shakespeare might reveal much about the printing of the 42-line Bible. The general consistency of printing house practice insures that a corpus of "pure" knowledge with no immediate application can be built up, which may be of vital importance to later investigation. For example, the knowledge that Quartos 2-6 of Shakespeare's *Richard III* are derivative prints, each being reprinted from its predecessor, is of negative importance, but the knowledge of this becomes of positive importance in the consideration of the copy used for the First Folio.

The temptation to see bibliography as a sort of universal guide to culture, economics, and history is one that its practitioners find hard to resist. "Historical bibliography, in short, is the study of books as direct evidence of almost all those various movements towards literacy and self-determination which have constituted the general history of Europe since the Renaissance."¹ True; but one must not place too much weight on one's supporting evidence. To take an extreme example, one might deduce from bibliographical evidence—decline in standards of production, increase in vernacular theological material, the use of false imprints and of surreptitious printing, and so on—that there was a major spiritual and political upheaval in Europe from about the year 1520. But the Reformation is abundantly documented elsewhere. "A book," in Gertrude Stein's immortal words, "is a book is a book."

Short title and union catalogs are probably the products of bibliographical investigation which most readily proclaim and justify their usefulness to the librarian. The best known of them, A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave's *Short Title Catalogue* of 1926 represents the culmination of a whole mass of bibliographical work on the undated (or fictitiously dated and imprinted) or fragmentary books which form a considerable part of the English book production up to 1640, which it seeks to record. The fact that it is now undergoing drastic revision is as much an indication of the volume of bibliographical work

Printed Books to 1640

since 1926 as of the number of books which have been discovered since then.

The uses of this type of catalog are twofold—as the record of literary production during a given time and set of circumstances, and as a guide to the location of information, one of the main interests of the librarian. The comprehensive short title catalog provides a notational shorthand which although it may seem a crude method of labeling the “precious life blood of a master spirit,” yet saves a great deal of tedious repetition in subsequent works—as for instance in the works by J. C. T. Oates and David Ramage to be discussed later. That books should be bought and sold by numbers—a glance at any bookseller’s catalog will show that a book’s possession or lack of a short title catalog number has a considerable influence on its price—may seem to reduce the building of a library to the level of stamp-collecting, and entirely to blunt the librarian’s discrimination between one book and another. Subsequent generations of scholars have usually found the librarian’s discrimination an unmitigated nuisance, however, and the history of the Bodleian Library’s original copy of Shakespeare’s First Folio stands as a grim warning in this respect.

The notational advantages provided by the standard catalogs of incunabula (Hain-Copinger-Reichling, the British Museum Catalogue, Stillwell, etc.) have long been realized, and the fact that incunables commonly have no recognizable title pages makes this precise and economical identification especially desirable. For the recording of incunabula it is now deemed sufficient to give the standard short-title followed by simple references to the standard works. This is the pattern followed by Oates in *A Catalogue of Fifteenth-Century Printed Books in the University Library of Cambridge*, (1954), by Ada Thurston and C. F. Bühler in *Check List of Fifteenth Century Printing in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, (1939), and in Margaret Bingham Stillwell’s *Incunabula in American Libraries*, (1949). That this system of notation has the virtues of scientific nomenclature, in that it is international, may be seen for instance from T. M. Guarnaschelli’s and E. Valenziani’s *Indice generale degli incunabuli delle biblioteche d’Italia*, (1943), etc., and from two recent and welcome works from Yugoslavia, Josip Badalic’s *Inkunabule u Navodnoj Republici Hrvatskoj*, (1952) and Alfonz Gspan and Badalic’s *Inkunabule u Sloveniji*, (1957). A useful feature of nearly all these works is the full description of unique books, where no shorthand reference to a standard

authority is possible. A revision of Stillwell is in an advanced state of preparation and a similar work covering incunabula in British libraries is contemplated.

The most important work in this field has been done in the current revision of Pollard and Redgrave's *S.T.C.* by F. S. Ferguson and W. A. Jackson. This is still in progress, but is expected to add about two thousand titles to those hitherto recorded, in addition to a very much larger number of unrecorded editions and issues.² It is interesting to note that the old *S.T.C.* numbers have become so ingrained in library practice that they are not to be altered, but decimally expanded to admit the titles and editions hitherto unrecorded.

Two works recently published emphasize the limitations of Pollard and Redgrave as a location list. In 1926 the symbols L[ondon], O[xford], C[ambridge], and a similar number of American locations were thought sufficient indication to a scholar that a book was reasonably common. That three or four locations were insufficient for the United States with its vast distances was soon apparent, and was remedied in 1944 by William Warner Bishop's *A Checklist of American 'Short Title Catalogue' Books* (Second edition, 1950). The problem in Britain is somewhat less pressing, but the old *S.T.C.* was perhaps overweighted with the locations in the London-Oxford-Cambridge "triangle." The emergence of the newer universities as collectors of books, as well as the richness of some of the lesser known older collections, is evident from Ramage's *A Finding-List of English Books to 1640 in the Libraries of the British Isles*, (1958).³ This was not intended only as a location list, but as a guide to more systematic purchasing. "I then pointed out that without a survey of our resources libraries did not really know what best to buy, and that in the United States the list compiled by W. W. Bishop has been most successful and valuable."

A slightly less welcome trend is exemplified by the Bristol Public Libraries' *A Catalogue of Books in the Bristol Reference Library printed in England and Ireland up to the year 1640, etc.*, (1954). This is an excellently produced pamphlet, but the fragmentation of effort is to be condemned, and the money and work would be much better spent in buying more books and recording them in a union catalog such as Ramage's. A later production of the same library, *A Catalogue of Books in the Bristol Reference Library which were printed abroad in languages other than English during the years 1473-1700*, (1956) is much more to the point. Too little is known of holdings of sixteenth

Printed Books to 1640

and seventeenth-century foreign books in Britain, though a catalog is being compiled in Cambridge.⁴

A number of useful lists of special categories of English books have been compiled recently:

Folke Dahl: *A Bibliography of English Corantos and Periodical Newsbooks, 1620-1642*, 1952.

W. W. Greg: *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, 3 vol., 1939-57 (in progress).

A. F. Allison and D. M. Rogers: *A Catalogue of Catholic Books in English printed abroad or secretly in England, 1558-1640*, 2 pt., 1956.

The short title catalog is less well known in continental Europe than perhaps it should be; it is strange that the country which gave both printing and the "Gesamtkatalog" to the world has not undertaken an enumerative bibliography of its later work. France, Germany, and Italy have produced many catalogs by towns and by printers, and it may be that Britain in fact owes its centralized union catalogs to the pressing need voiced not only by British but by American scholars for a readily available guide to the whereabouts of English literary documents. The short title catalogs of European books issued by the British Museum (based on holdings which may be as much as a quarter of the known books produced) are therefore especially valuable. Just as the old English *S.T.C.* was based on lists originally issued by Cambridge University Library and the British Museum, it may be possible for European countries to base theirs upon those issued by the Museum. That for France was issued in 1924, and an index of printers is in an advanced stage of preparation. Those for Spain, Portugal, and Spanish America were published in 1921, 1926 (2nd edition 1940), and 1944. A similar volume for Germany is nearing completion.

Italy has perhaps been better served by enumerative bibliographers. In 1958, the British Museum published the *Short title Catalogue of Books printed in Italy and of Italian Books printed in other countries from 1465 to 1600 now in the British Museum*. This differed from its French predecessor in having a list of printers, a feature which will appear in subsequent volumes. An important statistical evaluation of the holdings revealed by this catalog was offered by A. F. Johnson in his article, *Italian Sixteenth Century Books*.⁵ There is a fuller study for the early years of the sixteenth century, F. J. Norton's *Italian Print-*

ers 1501-1520, (1958), and D. E. Rhodes has published a series of local studies on *The Early Bibliography of Southern Italy*, on Cosenza, Bari, Trani, Copertino, Foggia, Manfredonia and Barletta, Brindisi (in proof), and Montefusco, Benevento, and Avellino (in proof). These have been appearing in *La Bibliofilia* from Volume 56 in 1954, onwards. The same writer has also been publishing "A Bibliography of Mantua" in *La Bibliofilia* since 1955.

The Netherlands possesses, up to 1540, a comprehensive and detailed account of their book production in Wouter Nijhoff and M. E. Kronenberg's *Nederlandsche Bibliographie, van 1500 tot 1540*, (1923-1951, vol. 3 pt. 1). This is not a short title catalog, as it is very detailed, but it gives locations for copies. There appears to be little prospect of its continuation beyond 1540.

Some valuable work has recently been done in Russia on early printing, notably by A. S. Zernova (*Nachalo knigopechataniya v Moskve i na Ukraine*, 1947), who has established the existence of earlier printing than that by Ivan Fyodorov. A catalog of early printing has just been compiled by N. P. Kisilev, *Knigi kirillovskoy pechati izdannyye v Moskve v XVI - XVII vekakh. Svodnyy katalog*, (1958). This lists Moscow books in order of printers, gives collations with variants, locations and references to other bibliographies, and has a supplement of books printed outside Moscow. It appears that Russian bibliographers show greater interest in eighteenth-century books, as the earlier books are mostly in Church Slavonic.

The British Museum has in preparation a short title catalog of East European books to 1600.

Allusion has already been made to such significant work as has appeared in the form of short title and union catalogs of incunabula. Many short title catalogs—notably Pollard and Redgrave, and the British Museum series—take no notice of the fine difference between books printed before the year 1500 and those printed after. Of arbitrary distinctions such as this, S. H. Steinberg in *Five Hundred Years of Printing* writes, "Few . . . can have been more detrimental to a real understanding of an important section of human progress than the restriction of the term *incunabula* to the time from Gutenberg's first production to the 31 December 1500."⁶ However, the date is there, and for bibliographers it is the farther limit of a field of specialized study.

The study of fifteenth-century books—there is unfortunately no English equivalent of the precise German *Inkunabelkunde*—is essentially

Printed Books to 1640

introspective; its end-product is more knowledge about incunabula. The literature of incunabula has grown so bulky that it is salutary to recall that it is concentrated on a period of about forty-five years; a period neither richer nor poorer in literary merit than any similar period in history. An unexpectedly high proportion—about thirty per cent—of the authors represented in fifteenth-century books were in fact contemporaries of the first printers. Thus on a literary plane, very many incunables stand condemned by their inevitable mediocrity; many more, such as the *editiones principes* of the classics, so important in their day, have been superseded by recourse to their manuscript sources. Yet one must insist upon the positive value of the intensive study of the book production of these forty-five years. The conspectus of fifteenth-century printing is the minute record of Europe at once medieval and renaissance, on the brink of reformation. At no other period is it known so exactly when a given idea appeared in a given place, and when this idea was voiced in the next town along the road or the river. On another view the study could be justified by the historian of typography, concerned only with the great aesthetic merits of fifteenth-century books. These are the ultimate aims although the manner of their achieving sometimes obscures them, and most research is on a more pedestrian level. With them, however, and with the supremely important historical fact of printing, the bibliographer justifies his research; no one does it better than Bühler did in his address to the Grolier Club in 1952.⁷

During this period and for some time into the following century, printed books are an extension of the manuscript tradition. Printing was regarded as a cheaper and quicker, but less elegant, method of doing what had formerly been done by hand. The use of liturgical, vernacular, and roman type faces is one of the more obvious extensions of manuscript use. It was not until the mid-sixteenth century that the full significance of the discovery of printing was generally understood and measures to harness the new power applied; yet men like Tyndale were well aware of the forces they were invoking.

English incunabula are of an interest considerably disproportionate to their actual numbers. Both ecclesiastical and humanist demands were satisfied by imports from the continent, a fact which has been underlined by the recent discovery of such a book printed for Caxton, Guillaume Maynyal,⁸ and the English press, itself the creation of a man of letters, was left free to concentrate on vernacular work in a way that only foreshadowed London's future eminence as a publishing

center.⁹ Few works of major literary importance were first given to the world as incunabula; an exception is Caxton's publication in 1485 of Malory's *Le Morte D'arthur*. Significantly the discovery of the Winchester manuscript in 1934 revealed that a manuscript tradition existed alongside the printed—as indeed it did for Caxton's text of the "Dictes or sayengis of the philosophres" (e.g. Lambeth Palace MS. 265).

Setting literary interest aside then, the study of incunabula is the detailed documentation by town, printer, book typeface, and date of the spread of printing during the fifteenth century. Steinberg's recent *Five Hundred Years of Printing* is a readable and easily accessible consideration of the historical context of the printing of this period.

The great *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* was designed to be the final compendium of knowledge about fifteenth-century printing. Its failure to progress beyond Bd.8 is usually seen as a result of the war and the insuing partition of Germany. Yet other bibliographical schemes thrive, and the failure of the *Gesamtkatalog* may well be due in part to the fact that it lacks the demand from scholars outside its own highly specialized bibliographical field sufficient to maintain such a grandiose and expansive project.

The issuing of descriptive catalogs of incunabula devolves upon the holders of the greatest collections. The British Museum (whose collections may only be exceeded by those of the State Library in Munich) has so far issued eight volumes of its detailed *Catalogue of Books printed in the Fifteenth Century now in the British Museum*. Only one, *France, French-speaking Switzerland* has appeared since the war, in 1949, but that for Holland and Belgium is in proof, and most of the work for Spain and Portugal has been done.

Enough has now been said to indicate that the major task of the incunabulist lies in the identification, dating, and attribution to town and printer of fifteenth-century books. These are in fact trends which have persisted ever since Henry Bradshaw laid down the "natural history method" in the nineteenth century. All recent issues of bibliographical periodicals testify to the continuing patient work by which fifteenth-century books are described, dated, and assigned to their presses. The great unanswered questions of the bibliography of this period relate to its opening years, and to the fair-sized body of books and lesser prints which appeared in Mainz and perhaps Bamberg before 1460. New evidence is hardly won, and when it appears is put strenuously to work. The discovery of some early fragments at Cracow just before the war led to an important adjustment in the time-

Printed Books to 1640

schedule of early typography, by which the so-called "Astronomical Calendar of 1448" was removed to a date about ten years later, and new light was shed on the early history of the second printed Bible, that with thirty-six lines to the page. The Cracow fragments were considered in a monograph by Carl Wehmer, *Mainzer Probedrucke in der Type des sogenannten Astronomischen Kalenders, für 1448*, in 1948. On the same level of importance as Wehmer's work is Sir Irvine Masson's *The Mainz Psalters and Canon Missae, 1457-1459* published in 1954. An inquirer after bibliographical trends would note that this lucid and convincing study is in part a reconsideration of evidence which was in large part presented over fifty years ago. The chapter, "Digression on Pinholes and their Interpretation"—a novelty in relation to the 1457 Psalter—makes use of information collected about the 42-line Bible by Schwenke in 1900. It is interesting to note as part of this highly sophisticated method of investigation a spontaneous growth of compositor analysis in Masson's work.

Together with this increased information about the Psalters of 1457 and 1459 has come a revival of controversy about their "poor relation," the *Missale speciale Constantiense* which though printed in a type almost identical with the smaller of the two Psalter types, is yet by comparison a far less competently printed book; so much so that it has been claimed as one of Gutenberg's earliest attempts, preceding the 42-line Bible. The controversy has been greatly aggravated by the purchase of a Constance Missal by the Pierpont Morgan Library in 1952.

The controversy hinges on whether the acknowledged primitive quality of the Missal and the fact that it was printed in a type which in a slightly later state appears in the Psalter of 1457—admittedly printed by the Gutenberg-Fust-Schoeffer partnership—means that it was an early experiment by this establishment, or merely a badly instructed piece of work by someone who had acquired types or matrices from this source and used them at a later date. In the recent controversy, an early (i.e. before the 42-line Bible) date for the Missal was rejected by Victor Scholderer.¹⁰ The earlier printing was advocated by Bühler in his reply, "Who Printed the *Missale speciale Constantiense*," in the *Book Collector*.^{10a} Sir Irvine Masson's work on the Psalter of 1457 enabled him to link the type of the Missal closely with that of the earliest printed parts of the Psalter.¹¹ Bühler returned to the attack with "Another View of the Dating of the *Missale speciale Constantiense*."¹² It remains for the observer not to arbitrate between

the experts but to note the extreme sophistication of their method and to point out the object of the controversy—the documentation with the greatest possible accuracy of the very earliest printing with movable types. It is to be hoped that a monograph like Masson's will appear on the Missal, particularly as all the possible questions do not seem to have been asked about the Missal. Masson¹³ offers tentative evidence that it is possible to detect by spelling habits the presence of more than one compositor in the Psalter of 1457, and that similar differences seemed to appear in the 42-line Bible. If Bühler's hypothesis of an early Gutenbergian origin for the Constance Missal is correct, it might be possible to detect compositorial spellings linking the Missal with the 42-line Bible and the 1457 Psalter.

Generally speaking, the incunabulists do not, unlike the textual bibliographer see wide vistas of knowledge opening up before them. Their studies are "ordained in this setting part of time" and they will be content with more incunables to describe, the full description and location of known books—only a resumption of the *Gesamtkatalog* can give this—and perhaps some new evidence on some of the most controverted points.

There is no doubt that the field in which bibliographical method has become most elaborate, and its recent contributions to knowledge correspondingly great, is that of textual bibliography. The name of this species of research is self-explanatory; it is the examination of bibliographical data about the state of a printed text, rather than as a contribution to the science of documentation or to the history of civilization.

In the period under consideration the attention of bibliographers has been principally directed to dramatic literature, to Shakespeare in particular, and within his own corpus of work to the plays in preference to his not inconsiderable output in other literary genres. The reasons for this particularization are not far to seek; apart from the literary importance of the plays, they are as a class much worse printed than any other. This problem is absolutely fundamental to the textual bibliography of this period, and it is sufficient to refer at this point to one of R. B. McKerrow's most illuminating studies, "The Elizabethan Printer and Dramatic Manuscripts."¹⁴ It would be difficult to find any body of literature, at least since the beginning of printing, whose final published form bears such a complex relationship to the author's manuscript as does the English drama, in particular that of Shakespeare, of this period. It is with the nature of this relationship

Printed Books to 1640

that textual bibliography is concerned. The problems of textual transmission are common to all Shakespeare's contemporaries, but the importance, and indeed the great bulk of his work, have insured that far less zeal has been expended on Marlowe, Peele, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Webster.

It may be argued, of course, that while so much remains to be said about Shakespeare, minute reconstruction of even the accidentals of his text is an exercise in pedantry. "Shakespeare's text," the indictment runs, "is perfectly adequate for most purposes. Why bring this enormous apparatus of learning to bear upon the text when it would be so much more profitable to read plays or to watch them in the theatre?" Yet reader and theatergoer alike depend upon a text which has passed through the hands of numerous editors from the eighteenth century onwards, who have all attempted to impose some sort of sense upon passages which were formerly almost unintelligible, or to decide between two readings which are at first sight equally plausible. It may be permissible to argue from an extreme example. Probably the most famous passage in English literature is Hamlet's soliloquy which begins:

To be, or not to be, that is the question,

This is the version published in 1604. There is however an earlier version of it dating from 1603 which runs:

To be, or not to be, I there's the point,
To Die, to sleepe, is that all? I all:
No, to sleepe, to dreame, I mary there it goes,

and so on. One may prefer one version or the other on literary grounds, and the doubt assails one that the earlier may be the poet's first thoughts, as indeed the bookseller thought who sold the text (now in the British Museum) to Halliwell-Phillips. The earliest text of *Henry V* lacks the king's exhortation to his troops before Harfleur, and no one who has read his Dover Wilson can doubt that the First Folio's improved text of this play materially helped us to win the war.

These are extreme examples, but they are repeated perhaps in a descending scale of significance, many thousands of times throughout the Shakespearean canon. It is true that editors have preferred the readings of the 1604/5 quarto in the case of *Hamlet*, but they have always until recently been guided in their choice by their own edu-

cated good taste. It remained for twentieth-century bibliographers to develop a logical and scientific method by which the relation of one substantive text to another can be exactly determined. Short of the discovery of a cache of Shakespeare's autographs, or of a letter from him denouncing the printers of stolen and surreptitious texts, the method can only be that of textual bibliography. It may be stated dogmatically that, given two printed texts of a play, it is possible to determine by bibliographical means, the relation of the one to the other. Bibliography cannot in every case decide which reading is to be preferred, but it can estimate which one is eligible for consideration. This is notable progress from the eclecticism based on good taste of eighteenth-century and later editors described by Fredson Bowers: "This taste was often excellent but it did not save them from blunders, as in the example . . . where up to half a dozen readings from the unauthoritative second quarto of *Othello* were commonly introduced as authentic recoveries of Shakespeare's own words, which they are not."¹⁵

Shakespeare has claimed by far the greater part of the work in this field, as his surpassing literary importance has naturally created a demand for texts which will present no difficulties either to school children or to actors. The works of Shakespeare's most important contemporary, Marlowe, exists in texts infinitely worse; but—apart from the non-authorial additions to *Dr. Faustus*—his plays exist only in one substantive version. A manuscript fragment of the *Massacre at Paris*, probably from the author's foul papers, and providing a much fuller text than that of the "bad octavo" of c. 1595,¹⁶ is the only instance of a problem—the multiplicity of substantive texts—which haunts Shakespearian scholarship. *Hamlet* has presented more difficulty than any other play, as it exists in three differing versions, those of the first and second quartos (1603 and 1604/5) and the folio (1623); and a vamped-up German version, the *Brudermord*, of almost contemporary date, has to be considered at least as evidence.

The editorial problem in Shakespeare then consists, at its simplest, where the play—e.g. *Macbeth*—has come down in a single text, in relating this one text to Shakespeare's original manuscript; at its most complex in establishing the relationship of several texts—e.g. those of *Hamlet*—to one another and thence to the poet's original manuscript. The problem was at once confused by the editors of the 1623 folio, who in stating that previous (i.e. quarto) editions were "diuerse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and

Printed Books to 1640

stealthes of inurious impostors," needlessly disparaged the authority of quarto texts to the general detriment of subsequent editing. It remained for A. W. Pollard¹⁷ to clear the publishers of at least some of the quartos of the slur cast upon them in 1623. The eclecticism of nineteenth-century editors was based upon the inability to decide on the relative merits of two or more readings on any grounds other than those of fallible literary taste. The advent of bibliographical method enabled a mass of lumber—such as the "Pavier quartos" of 1619, to be cleared out of the editor's way. If a new eclecticism has taken the place of the old, it is based on a clearer knowledge of the issues. The new objective is "a critically edited and therefore eclectic text, which, making use of the most advanced bibliographical, critical, and linguistic techniques, will achieve the maximum recovery of what Shakespeare wrote in every possible detail, no matter how minute."¹⁸

The pioneers of bibliographical method were Pollard, McKerrow, and Sir Walter W. Greg, and present trends in textual bibliography largely derive from lines of research which they laid down. To them is due the introduction of the bibliographical principle, here defined by Greg as "that apart from ordinary typographical errors, the corruptions and abnormalities in the print should be traced to peculiarities in the copy rather than blamed on the assumed incompetence of the printer."¹⁹ The relative corruption of dramatic and other texts was discussed by McKerrow: "one of the reasons for the badness of dramatic texts is that they were often set up from the author's original manuscript and not from a fair-copy such as would be usual in the case of other books."²⁰ It was then to the manuscript and its transmission into print that they looked; this involved a two-fold investigation, firstly into the organization of the Elizabethan book trade, the records of the Stationers' Company, and the actual working of a printer's shop, and secondly into surviving dramatic documents in order to ascertain the type of manuscript—foul papers, fair copy, private transcript, memorial reconstruction, prompt-book, etc., that might be presumed to underly a printed text which Greg discussed and illustrated in *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses* in 1931. The section of the manuscript play, *Sir Thomas More*, usually thought to be in Shakespeare's autograph, was of particular importance.²¹ The characteristics of the various types of manuscript copy have been recently described with reference to Webster's plays by J. R. Brown.²² Examination of the printing process and the types of manuscript copy lead to what Alice Walker has called "the focal

point of twentieth century textual criticism—the problem of transmission.”²³

It is necessary here to differentiate between bibliographical and documentary evidence—to be called textual bibliography the method of investigation must be firmly rooted in “the printing process, but it may associate palaeographical evidence with this, as well as evidence of any sort that seems pertinent.”²⁴ Bibliographical evidence may even be expressed as a formula, but it is usually interpreted in the light of contemporary printing house practice which may be derived from historical sources.

The most important contribution to the study of the transmission of Shakespeare’s text has been the technique of compositor analysis. It has been known since 1920 that at least two compositors worked on the First Folio of 1623, and that these might be distinguished by characteristic spellings. The implications of the discovery are of course that the two or more men would not be equally careful, and would have different methods of treating the manuscript or printed copy before them. In the period up to 1640 compositors may be distinguished not only by their spelling, but by other characteristics such as differing treatment of act and scene headings, and of stage directions, different abbreviations for speech headings, and according to whether they split or turn over a line of verse too long for the column. The technique may be seen in action in two articles, *The Compositors of ‘Hamlet’ Q2 and ‘The Merchant of Venice’* by J. R. Brown,²⁵ and *The Printing of ‘Hamlet’ Q2* by Fredson Bowers.²⁶ The former article is of great interest as showing the technique at work; its purpose in this instance is to discover whether these two quartos, printed in the same workshop about four years apart, offer any evidence that the underlying copy was in similar handwriting. The method is not here at its safest perhaps, as compositorial spelling habits tend to change over a period of years. Compositor analysis can also be used to establish whether the copy for one play was heterogeneous with all its implications for authorship, or whether, as in the instance quoted above, the copy for two plays was similar enough to make possible a grouping of types of manuscript; and can, once the characteristics of all the compositors from such Elizabethan workshops as printed dramatic texts are analyzed, help to identify printers and to date undated books or even cancels.

The evidence on authorship provided by compositor analysis has so far proved suggestive rather than decisive. It may be assumed that

two authors providing manuscript copy in a single play for a printer would have characteristic spellings of their own; but a similar effect could be produced by a change of compositor. Spelling variations in the Folio *Henry VIII* are compositorial and according to Philip Williams, apparently will not serve to distinguish the work of Shakespeare from his supposed collaborator, Fletcher.²⁷ The same writer was however able to detect heterogeneous copy in the Folio texts of *1 Henry VI* and *Titus Andronicus*. Williams's former conclusion was accepted by R. A. Foakes, whose more detailed investigations of the stints of the two compositors A and B point to copy in a single hand.²⁸ *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, published as by Shakespeare and Fletcher in 1634, poses another kind of problem. Here the foul papers can be assumed to have been in two hands. As its title suggests, the most recent work on the play, "Printer's Copy for *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," by F. O. Waller²⁹, is more concerned with the copy for the quarto, and only uses compositor analysis as a negative check against speculation on the language forms used by the two authors.

The second quarto of *Hamlet* has been widely discussed since Dover Wilson's monograph of 1934, *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' and the Problems of its Transmission*. The problems it presents range from its relation to the "bad" quarto of 1603—part of the text was demonstrably set up from the earlier print and may have been contaminated by it; whether the nature of the copy or the carelessness or haste of compositors resulted in the high proportion of errors in the text; and whether the folio of 1623 preserves an independent text or was set up from a corrected quarto.

Compositor analysis for the textual bibliographer is a means of classifying the indubitable errors to which a given workman was liable, in such a way that a control is established by which the plausibility of an emendation can be judged. Thus if a compositor in setting up text X from known copy shows himself to be liable to errors, for example of anticipation, it is likely that similar errors will appear in his setting up of text Y, for which no copy has survived. Evidence of this nature must be qualified by the knowledge that compositors generally followed printed copy with greater respect than manuscript copy. A departure from printed copy should always be examined in the light of a compositor's liability elsewhere to error before it is accepted as an editorial correction deriving from a prompt-book.

It cannot be stressed too much that compositor analysis only produces a system of probabilities by which an emendation can be

judged, "and although more knowledge about composers should make it clearer what kind of errors (and how many) they may have made, it will never locate the errors or emend them."³⁰

To the two composers, A and B, whose work has long been evident in the Shakespeare First Folio, Hinman has recently added a third, compositor E.³¹ The evidence for his presence forms part of that used by Hinman to establish the order in which the forms of the Folio were printed. It is inferred from this evidence that E's lack of skill or training was such that with one exception he was not permitted to set up from manuscript or even from heavily annotated printed copy, and that his presence *may* be regarded as evidence for printed copy. Hinman is very cautious of using the work of E on Folio *Hamlet* as evidence for the use of the quarto as copy.

It need not be assumed that copies of all dramatic quartos have survived. The first quarto of *Love's Labours Lost* is generally supposed to have had a "bad" predecessor and the earliest quarto of *1 Henry IV* only survives as a fragment. Some very respectable evidence has now been produced that a printed text of a play called *Love's Labours Won* existed about 1603, and that it may have been Shakespeare's.³² If this play is now represented by any of those in the Folio, one might expect that a quarto, if available, would have been used as copy.

It had until recently been widely assumed that it was customary in Elizabethan printing houses to correct the proof from the copy. Recent work by Hinman, facilitated by his collating machine, has disposed of this assumption, at least with regard to the Shakespeare First Folio. Research on the Folger Library's collection of First Folios—and it is pleasant to learn that some justification for this squirrels' hoard has now been provided—has revealed that extensive correction was made during the course of printing, not necessarily from copy, and that most copies occur with both corrected and uncorrected sheets. In a very few instances the actual sheets marked for correction have been found. In short, no two copies are likely to be exactly the same, and only exhaustive collation made possible by what Greg called the "ingenious optical contrivance," the collating machine, of extant copies can reveal the full extent of variation. Hinman is now engaged upon collation of this kind, and such textual conclusions as he has so far published appear in "Mark III: New Light on the Proof-reading for the First Folio of Shakespeare," and "Variant Readings in the First Folio of Shakespeare." In the latter article he notes that the care bestowed on proof correction tended to vary with the copy; four years

later he points out that large concentrations of press-variants occur in the work of the "prentice compositor he identifies as 'E,'" who did not normally set from manuscript copy.³³

Apart from the added knowledge we have about the printing history of the Folio from this work, there are two significant implications. If individual copies of the Folio contain both corrected and uncorrected sheets, there is technically no standard "Folio text," and it follows that editions cannot now be prepared from facsimiles which represent single copies, unless press-variants from other copies (which should be available from Hinman's collation) are taken into consideration. The second implication is, if anything, more alarming. Since press correction might take place during the printing, with both corrected and uncorrected sheets, containing either authoritative or unauthoritative variants being published, it is possible that where only a very few copies have survived, no copy with the correct reading may have been preserved. It may happen, however, that a later edition, otherwise a derivative print, may have been set up from a copy with an authoritative reading that has not otherwise survived. In view of the high survival rate of First Folios it is unlikely that the Second preserves readings of this sort; but Miss Walker believes that it may have happened with the second quarto of *Lear*, 1619. "Q2's reading may, I think, be a Q1 proof-reader's recovery from the manuscript not found in the Folio collator's copy of the quarto, and overlooked . . . in the course of collation or printing."³⁴

Hinman's intensive study of the printing of the First Folio has borne further fruit in his recognition that type for it was set up, not as had been assumed by pages, but by forms, normally beginning with the inner sheet of a three sheet gathering.³⁵ The evidence for this lies in the recurrence of certain easily recognizable damaged types in positions where they could not occur if the normal method of composition by pages had been followed. Hinman has cataloged a large number of individual defective types to this end. Composition by forms implies fairly accurate casting-off of copy, as if the text is not going to be set up in type in its own logical order it must be marked in such a way that the compositor knows where to begin. If the copy is not cast off with considerable accuracy, as it might be if already printed, but not if the copy was manuscript or contained extensive manuscript additions or corrections, the compositor might easily find it necessary to squeeze the text or fill it out in some way as he came to the end of his page. This might result, if not in more serious addi-

tions or omissions, in the printing of verse as prose, or the splitting of lines of verse. Practices of this kind are useful indications of the kind of copy before the compositor. On a broader view, the order in which the plays were printed, a matter on which Hinman's researches should shed more light, has an important bearing not only on the nature of the copy, but on the availability of texts. It has been recognized for some time that the printing of the Folio *Troilus and Cressida* was abandoned and resumed some time later. It was suggested by Greg that Jaggard was forced to stop printing this play,³⁶ of which the copyright was held by the surviving publisher of the 1609 quarto, Henry Walley, and only resumed when he was in possession of another manuscript. The implications of this for the text are discussed by Miss Walker in *Textual Problems of the First Folio*.³⁷

It will not have escaped notice that the trends in the bibliography of the period in consideration have been progressively parting company from the normal and everyday concerns of the average librarian. It is, however, essential that all librarians should be aware of what work is going on in these important fields and should be sympathetic to it. Librarians are, by the nature of their care, bibliographers, and nothing bibliographical will ever be entirely alien to them.

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JULIAN ROBERTS

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