



Bibliographical Research

THELMA EATON

THESE FEW REMARKS on bibliographical research are not concerned with the technique of assembling lists of books on a single subject, or preparing a list of books printed in a given place. They pertain to that kind of research which fits the definition of bibliography in the *Oxford English Dictionary* which reads, "The systematic description of books, their authorship, printing, publication, editions, etc." Since this paper was scheduled to follow one on historical research, I have limited myself to research in the field of books as material objects, the physical volume, the publication, editions, etc.

Countless definitions of bibliography in this sense have been written. One of the earliest and most quoted is Copinger's expression that "Bibliography has been called the grammar of literary investigation."¹ Each scholar working in the field tends to develop a definition that fits his own understanding of his research. One often takes off in a slightly different direction from those who preceded him, although building on the earlier work. For example, Greg said of bibliography:

. . . it is in no way particularly or primarily concerned with the enumeration or description of books . . . bibliography has nothing to do with the subject matter of books, but only with their formal aspect.

. . . Books are the material means by which literature is transmitted; therefore bibliography, the study of books, is essentially the science of the transmission of literary documents.²

To this Bald has added:

. . . if bibliography is the study of "the material transmission of literary texts," it is concerned with the material objects by which they are transmitted—printers' tools as well as books and their components—and with the human activities which transmit them. This is obvious, because the material objects could not have existed without

Thelma Eaton is Professor, Graduate School of Library Science, University of Illinois.

Bibliographical Research

the relevant human activities, which must accordingly be regarded as basic. Now the studies which deal with the various types of organized human activities *per se* are the group loosely known as "history and the social sciences," and it is to them that bibliography belongs.³

Fredson Bowers, reducing the scope of bibliography to the two aspects which he designates as *descriptive bibliography* and *analytical bibliography*, says:

The methods of descriptive bibliography seem to have evolved from a triple purpose: (1) to furnish a detailed, analytical record of the physical characteristics of a book which would simultaneously serve as a trustworthy source of identification and as a medium to bring an absent book before a reader's eyes; (2) to provide an analytical investigation and an ordered arrangement of these physical facts which would serve as the prerequisite for textual criticism of the books described; (3) to approach both literary and printing or publishing history through the investigation and recording of appropriate details in a related series of books.⁴

Analytical bibliography deals with books and their relations solely as material objects, and in a strict sense has nothing to do with the historical or literary considerations of their subject matter or content. The findings of analytical bibliography may be used to clarify these considerations, but literary history or criticism is not in itself bibliographical.⁵

It is, therefore, the basic function of a descriptive bibliography to present all the evidence which can be determined by analytical bibliography applied to a material object.⁶

Although, as I said earlier, each scholar develops his own definition of bibliography, perhaps none would disagree with Curt Buhler's statement:

. . . bibliography is not so much an end in itself as it is an ancillary investigation to the study of the text (be it literary, historical, or scientific); consequently, it seems to me that a complete account of the textual contents of any volume . . . is absolutely required. In short the bibliographer, and in the long run the historian of culture for whom the bibliographer is laboring, expects to be informed of three basic facts: (1) what edition does the book belong to, (2) what are the principles of its physical construction, and (3) what does the volume contain.⁷

It is clear that none of these quotations apply to the kind of bibliography that is most clearly identified by the term "enumerative

bibliography." The bibliographer is not primarily concerned with contents; he considers the contents only if they provide evidence needed in the study of the physical book. The bibliographer is responsible for grouping the books according to editions, variants, issues, and impressions, and for tracing the relationship of one edition to another.

Before turning to an examination of work that is being done in the field of bibliography, as illustrative of the methods of bibliographical research, let us listen once more to the voice of Sir Walter Greg. Greg quotations are numerous, and a common theme runs through all of his writing; in this particular selection he defines the work of the bibliographer in some detail.

Bibliography is the study of books as tangible objects. It examines the materials of which they are made and the manner in which these materials are put together. It traces their place and mode of origin, and the subsequent adventures which have befallen them. It is not concerned with their contents in a literary sense, but it is certainly concerned with the signs and symbols they contain (apart from their significance) for the manner in which these marks are written or impressed is a very relevant bibliographical fact. And, starting from this fact, it is concerned with the relation of one book to another: the question of which manuscript was copied from which, which individual copies of printed books are to be grouped together as forming an edition, and what is the relation of edition to edition.⁸

Modern bibliography is often said to date from the publication of Pollard's *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos* in 1908,⁹ but this was merely the culmination of work that had been in progress for a number of years. In December 1906, a paper written by A. W. Pollard and W. W. Greg, entitled "Some Points in Bibliographical Description,"¹⁰ had been read at a meeting of the Bibliographical Society. In 1914 Ronald McKerrow's "Notes on Bibliographical Evidence for Literary Students and Editors of English Works of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" appeared in the *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*. McKerrow stated as his purpose his desire to provide students with an elementary knowledge of the mechanical side of book-making that could be used for evidence as to the book's history. He said:

. . . bibliographical evidence will help us to settle such questions as that of the order and relative value of different editions of a book; whether certain sections of a book were originally intended to form

Bibliographical Research

part of it or were added afterwards; whether a later edition was printed from an earlier one, and from which; whether it was printed from a copy that had been corrected in manuscript, or whether such corrections as it contained were made in proof, and a number of other problems of a similar kind, which may often have a highly important literary bearing. It will indeed sometimes enable us to solve questions which to one entirely without bibliographical knowledge would appear quite incapable of solution.¹¹

As these quotations indicate, the bibliographer may be looking for specific things as he examines the book, but there is no fixed rule as to how he approaches his work. There is not even any method that can be said to be the most efficient manner of proceeding. To the bibliographer a number of things become evident as he handles a book. His fingers will tell him as he turns the leaves if there is a difference in the weight of paper; his eyes will note any variation in the placement of type on a page even though he is not consciously looking for a variation. But as we are librarians, suppose we begin our consideration of the bibliographic approach with the title page.

Having in hand a book for which descriptions are available, one can sometimes tell from the title page alone that it is a different edition from some other copy he has handled. Although the title page does not always tell the story, it is a good starting point. Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* provides a fascinating study of title pages.¹² The book is supposed to have appeared originally in 1795, but no copy of a printing made in that year is known to exist. What is known as the first edition, first issue, appeared in March of 1796 and bears the date 1796 in Roman numerals on the title page. A year later an edition which carries on the title page the words "The Second Edition," but still with the date 1796, appeared. Bibliographers, who have determined that this is the same book as the first edition, first issue, except that the cancellans title page of the first issue has been replaced by another cancellan, refer to this second work as first edition, second issue. In October of 1796, a slightly different title page, including the name of the author and the designation "Second Edition" was used for the true second edition of the work. Presumably the publication was so popular that a third edition was called for the next year. It was a review of this third edition that led to the suppression of this work. Forbidden to sell his copies, the printer may well have felt that he must find some way to salvage the money he had invested in this publication. Apparently he solved his problem by unearthing the can-

celled title pages for the first issue of the first edition, which must have been stored away when he inserted the cancellans bearing the designation "Second Edition." He used these leaves to replace the title page of the condemned third edition, thus creating a third edition, second state. When he exhausted his supply of first edition title pages, he had new ones printed to use with the rest of his third edition. Oddly enough, he copied his text for this title page not from the title page of the first edition which he was trying to create, but from the title page of the true second edition, omitting the author's name. He thus copied the Roman numeral date 1796. Then he attempted to convert this to the date 1795 by scraping away the final I of the numeral. Bibliographers believe that it was the publisher who was responsible for this attempted alteration because marks of erasure are visible in all existing copies. The success was variable. Sometimes the letter shows faintly, and the scraping of the paper is always visible. However, even perfect scraping could not produce a perfect title page because the removal of the final I necessitated the removal of the period that followed that letter. The copies with the newly printed title pages thus become third edition, third issue, and they exist in both first and second states.

This is not a complete listing of the editions of *The Monk*, but this is enough of the examination of variant title pages. The study of these title pages did not solve the problems of this book; they only indicated that study of the book was necessary and pointed the way to the need for meticulous checking of signatures and pages. This led eventually to complete identification of the various editions, issues, and states.

Page by page and word by word checking is also necessary for the studies which lead to compositor determination. Here the bibliographer searches for the common words and notes their spelling—on the theory that a single printer will use a given form for these common words. The folk tales that spelling had no fixed form and that the printers used any spelling which would properly complete a line are only partly true. No complete study has been made of Elizabethan spelling, and there were variations in spelling, but it has been proved that individual compositors tended to follow a fairly uniform pattern of spelling. Noticeable variations in spelling would, therefore, seem to indicate that more than one compositor worked on a book.

It has been proved that two compositors worked on the Shake-

Bibliographical Research

spere folios. This field of investigation has been developed since 1920 when Thomas Satchell noted that the spelling used in *Macbeth* in the first folio falls into two distinct divisions.¹³ Today the method of determining compositors of the Shakespeare plays by the spelling test is well known to bibliographers. E. E. Willoughby demonstrated that Satchell's theory of the use of two compositors in *Macbeth* could be equally proved by other plays in the first folio.¹⁴ He named the compositors A and B, identifying the work of each. More recently Charlton Hinman has identified a third compositor whom he named compositor E. He suggested that this workman might have been an apprentice since his work was clearly less expert than the work done by A and B.¹⁵

The work of compositor determination goes on steadily. From a study of the first folio, the bibliographers moved on to the quartos and to the works of other Elizabethan dramatists. John Russell Brown presents proof that the two compositors who worked on the second quarto of *Hamlet* were the same as the compositors for *The Merchant of Venice* and identifies them as X and Y.¹⁶ Frank S. Hook identifies two compositors who worked on Peele's *Edward I*.¹⁷

Spelling is not the only means of identifying the work of a compositor but it has been a good beginning point, even though an examination of the page make-up is sometimes a quicker way to tell whether more than one compositor was engaged on a job. Satchell began with a very short list of words that could have different spellings and used them as a test to determine the work done by individual compositors. The number of test words has increased, and the relationships are tested as well as the words themselves. Other techniques are combined with the spelling test in attempting to determine the number of compositors engaged on a work; for example, the running titles set by two compositors in the same volume may vary slightly.

Compositor determination by means of a spelling test and the placing of items on a page is necessarily a slow task. As Dr. Walker pointed out in a study on the understanding of an old spelling edition of Shakespeare, it is an expensive pastime, requiring as it does freedom from other responsibilities and considerable independent means. This is no work for the professor who is urged to publish. Many of the people working in the field are professors, however. Some of them may be research professors who can devote hours to this kind of painstaking research, but others carry on with the work which fascinates them in spite of the difficulties of time.

The material used in the printing of books, the paper on which the book was printed, the press on which the printing was done, the type and the ornaments which filled the printed pages, have long been the subject of investigation by bibliographers and continue to be studied.

Handmade paper was in use until the beginning of the nineteenth century, and until the middle of the eighteenth century it was laid paper marked by wire and chain lines. It might or might not have watermarks and counterwatermarks. Even if watermarks were present originally, they may have disappeared into the folds of the binding or in the course of years have been cut off by careless rebinding. In laid paper the wire and chain lines are a constant record. If a watermark is present, it is useful. Many of the early books contain not one watermark but several. Various elaborate explanations have been offered for this, but the simplest statement is that dealers collected paper from various sources and in responding to a request for so much paper might well send paper from several mills.

The watermark did indicate quality. When the German factor of a trading house in Valencia placed an order with a paper dealer in Genoa for paper bearing the mark of the Moor or the broken column, or paper of a similar quality, he was ordering fine quality paper, suitable for printing a Bible. What kind of a watermark was on the paper sent to Valencia cannot be proved because, although the Bible was printed, it exists today in a single leaf. If a book is a folio, the watermark can be found with ease and can be used as evidence. Service books for the church and Bibles were usually printed as folios, and a discussion of an unsigned service book or Bible will usually present as evidence any information about the paper. One of the arguments advanced for placing the printing of the Constance Missal in Basel was that the paper bore the watermark used by Basel papermakers. Since the bindings of the three extant copies of this work also are characteristic of Basel workmen, there were two kinds of evidence which associated the printing with that city.

One of the chief uses which the bibliographer makes of the lines and watermarks is to examine a leaf that seems to have been added. If the leaf is not conjugate with its proper mate, why isn't it? If the leaf isn't the proper side of the paper, something that can be told by the grooves made by chain lines and ribs made by wire lines, it is clearly suspect. But a single copy will not tell you whether that leaf represents a later addition to the book, or whether all copies have it.

Bibliographical Research

Ordinarily a cancel is quickly indicated by a stub, but in some rebound books the stubs have been removed. The hand-written page substituted for a printed page in the 42-line Bible owned by the General Theological Seminary should have been discovered long before it was. It lacks a watermark and should have had one.

The study of type used by printers has long been used to identify unsigned works and to relate works to given printing establishments. Henry Bradshaw did a great deal of this work and, although most of us are not able to remember type faces as Bradshaw could (it is said that he never forgot a face he had seen), work in this field goes on and unsigned books are placed as to location, printer, and approximate date. The bibliographer who comes across an unsigned book will attempt to identify the type as he searches for the printer. If he discovers that a given printer is using the type formerly used in another printing establishment, he may assume that the printer was trained in the established shop and had some type cast from the matrices used there, or that he bought the type used by some earlier press. When we are told that Meynard Ungut, a German, and Stanislaus, the Pole, arrived in Seville, in answer to a summons from Queen Isabella, with type that had formerly been used by Mattias of Moravia in Naples, we may at least ask ourselves if this is evidence that these printers learned their craft in the shop of Mattias.

Not only the type but the ornaments as well passed from one shop to another. Research has identified the routes followed by some of the wooden blocks which appeared in books printed in different countries. There is still work to be done in this field and some of it is being done. Work is also being done in the field of cast metal ornaments. C. William Miller is working with the ornaments found in English printed books. In an article on Thomas Newcomb, he reproduces the ornaments, factotums, and initials used by that printer and tells who used them later.¹⁸ It can be seen that identifying an unsigned work by the technique of identifying ornaments can be dangerous. These decorative designs could be adopted by any printer who cared to use them. When copies were carved in wood, minute differences were likely to be noticeable, and the same set of blocks showed variations resulting from wear. Cast ornaments presented different problems since the matrix could be used again and again to produce type ornaments which were sold to many printers. Even so, the ornaments scattered throughout the text may yield valuable supplementary information to be used in identifying a work. In a later

article, Miller discusses the stock of ornaments held by Thomas Judson and his successors in the years from 1598 to 1683.¹⁹ Again he has accompanied his article with a useful collection of illustrations.

We have been talking thus far about analytical bibliography; that is, the analysis and examination of the printed volume to determine everything we can about its production. Having discovered this information, we must record it in an acceptable form; that is, in a form which will enable us to visualize the volume. This is a field in which a great deal of work has been done. The incunabulists devoted much time to this because it was essential that they should be able to so describe a book that could be identified as a unique object. Pollard brought the art to a high stage in his *Shakespeare Quartos and Folios*. McKerrow has provided the best guide for the student who wishes to attempt this work, and Sir Walter Greg devoted a lifetime to the production of his masterly bibliography of English drama to the restoration. On this side of the Atlantic, Fredson Bowers has written much about bibliography, but he has not to date produced a lengthy bibliography of this type. Like McKerrow, he is a teacher who inspires the people who work with him to follow out various lines of bibliographical research. It is Bowers who has written the most complete discussion of descriptive bibliography,²⁰ but for the beginner in the field of bibliography it can be almost overwhelming. Pollard and Greg's 1906 article, "Some Points in Bibliographical Description" fills 14 pages in a reprint edition. McKerrow recommends it as a desirable prelude to his 19-page chapter which is called, "Some Points of Bibliographical Technique. The Description of a Book. References to Passages in Early Books." The person who has mastered these two selections will be able to face the 499 pages of Bowers' *Principles of Bibliographical Description*.

What is a bibliographical description? It is a minute and exact description of the physical volume. It is not concerned with the contents but with the form in which the contents are presented to the world. Certain customs are followed, but the bibliographical descriptions have not been standardized to the extent that catalog entries have been standardized. Since the descriptions appear in book form, it is possible for the bibliographer to set up his pattern and use the preface of his book to state what he is doing.

A description does, however, always contain certain parts, and these parts follow a definite pattern. First of all there is the title of the book, copied from the title page exactly as given there. This

Bibliographical Research

means that information concerning the production of the book is not arranged according to a place-publisher-date formula, but is given in the order in which it is found on the title page, including addresses and other additional material as given there. Roman numeral dates are recorded as printed. A really exact transcription, possible only in a printed bibliography, will show large and small capitals, italic and black letter type. In virtually all instances, line endings are indicated. The second part of a description is the colophon if the book contains one. Third is the statement of format, and fourth the collation stated in signatures with the number of leaves in the various gatherings indicated. This much of bibliographical description is fairly easy, even though the bibliographers do not agree as to what is the best collational formula. Bowers spends many pages discussing this. But the real problem of bibliographical description is to prepare a record of an ideal copy. This becomes a more involved matter. A printed book does not exist alone. Every manuscript is unique, but any book is only one copy of a number of books printed at one time, from one setting of type, although even the novice bibliographer soon discovers that not all of the copies of one edition are alike. An examination of all available copies must be made in order to describe an ideal copy.

Anyone who has examined a work such as Greg's monumental *A Bibliography of English Printed Drama to the Restoration* has found considerable material about each title in addition to the transcription of the title page, the colophon, and statements of format and collation. These four things are the bare bones of descriptive bibliography; information concerning many other points may be included in the description. There may be notes relating to the typography and layout of the book, telling the number of lines on a page, the height and width, in centimeters, of the print on a page. A statement may be made concerning the type used. The woodcut or metal cut initials, factotums, type ornaments, borders, etc., may be mentioned. There is usually a contents paragraph which lists the complete contents of the book, and gives the beginning of each section by leaf number. Misprints, catchwords, and peculiarities of type (for example, the use of a swash capital in place of a Roman capital to number a signature) may all be noted as a means of identifying a given copy. Other notes are used as needed. The binding may be described; the provenance of a specified copy is usually given. Anything of special interest, such as watermarks, may be placed in a note.

Copies examined are listed, and a list of known copies may be given.

Bibliography, then, consists of the analysis of the physical volume, an attempt at determining how it reached that state, and the preparation of a description of that physical volume. The spokesmen for bibliography have all emphasized that it was essential knowledge for all literary students. Today its importance is becoming recognized. The book jacket blurb on Bowers's *Textual and Literary Criticism*, a collection of papers delivered as Sanders lectures on bibliography and published by Cambridge University Press in 1959, says:

The literary critic tends to think that the textual scholar or bibliographer, happily occupied in his trivial drudgery, has not much to say that he would care to hear, so there is a gulf between them. Professor Bowers advances to the edge of this gulf and says several forceful things across it; they turn out to be important and interesting, though occasionally they are scathing. . . . This book should be read by any serious student of English; it is a survey of a developing discipline which he ought at least to understand in principle; it gives a new and more rigorous approach to these problems.

In a matter of fifty-five years since the publishing of the *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos*, bibliographers have gone far, and they will make even greater progress.

This brings me to the end of a discussion of bibliography as it is today in the hands of the followers of Pollard, McKerrow, Greg, and Bowers. If I have said rather less about the methods of this work than might be expected at an institute devoted to the methodology of research, let me quote McKerrow in my defense. He concluded his introductory chapter in *An Introduction to Bibliography* with these words:

One thing I would say in conclusion, that nowhere have I attempted to lay down any rules for bibliographical investigation, for none are possible. There is no general course of inquiry to be followed. Every book presents its own problems and has to be investigated by methods suited to its particular case. And it is just this fact, that there is always a chance of lighting on new problems and new methods of demonstration, that with almost every new book we take up we are in new country, unexplored and trackless, and that yet such discoveries as we may make are real discoveries, not mere matters of opinion, provable things that no amount of after-investigation can shake, that lends such a fascination to bibliographical research.²¹

Bibliographical Research

References

1. Copinger, W. A. "Inaugural Address," *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 1:31-34, 1893, p. 34.
2. Greg, W. W. "Bibliography—an Apologia," *Library*, ser. 4, 13:114-115, 1932.
3. Bald, R. C. "Evidence and Inference in Bibliography," *In English Institute Annual, 1941*, Columbia University Press, 1942, pp. 163-164.
4. Bowers, Fredson. *Principles of Bibliographical Description*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1949, p. vii.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
7. Buhler, Curt F. *Standards of Bibliographical Description*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949, pp. 8-9.
8. Greg, W. W. "The Function of Bibliography in Literary Criticism, Illustrated in a Study of the text of *King Lear*," *Neophilologus*, 18:241-262, 1933, pp. 243-244.
9. Pollard, A. W. *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos, A Study in the Bibliography of Shakespeare's Plays, 1594-1685*. London, Methuen, 1909.
10. Pollard, A. W., and Greg, W. W. *Some Points in Bibliographical Description*. (AAL Reprints, No. 3) London, Association of Assistant Librarians, 1950.
11. McKerrow, Ronald. *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students*. London, Oxford University Press, 1928, pp. 1-2.
12. Todd, William. "The Early Editions and Issues of *The Monk*, with a Bibliography," *Studies in Bibliography, Papers of the Bibliographical Society, University of Virginia*, 2:3-24, 1949-50.
13. Satchell, Thomas. "The Spelling of the First Folio," *Times Literary Supplement*, June 3, 1920, p. 352.
14. Willoughby, E. E. *The Printing of the First Folio of Shakespeare*. Oxford, Bibliographical Society, 1932, pp. 56-59.
15. Hinman, Charlton. "The Prentice Hand in the Tragedies of the Shakespeare First Folio: Compositor E," *Studies in Bibliography, Papers of the Bibliographical Society, University of Virginia*, 9:3-20, 1957.
16. Brown, John Russell. "The Compositors of *Hamlet* 02 and *The Merchant of Venice*," *Studies in Bibliography, Papers of the Bibliographical Society, University of Virginia*, 7:17-40, 1955.
17. Hook, Frank S. "The Two Compositors in the First Quarto of Peele's *Edward I*," *Studies in Bibliography, Papers of the Bibliographical Society, University of Virginia*, 7:170-77, 1955.
18. Miller, C. W. "Thomas Newcomb, a Restoration Printer's Ornament Stock," *Studies in Bibliography, Papers of the Bibliographical Society, University of Virginia*, 3:155-170, 1950-51.
19. ———. "A London Ornament Stock: 1598-1683," *Studies in Bibliography, Papers of the Bibliographical Society, University of Virginia*, 7:125-151, 1955.
20. Bowers, *loc. cit.*
21. McKerrow, *loc. cit.*, p. 5.