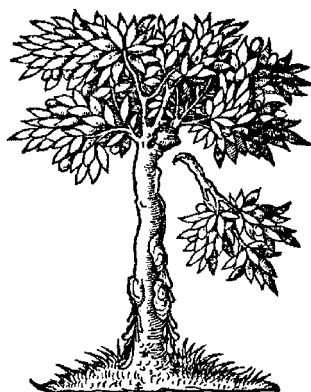


ANN MATHESON
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The European Printed Heritage
c.1450 – c.1830
Present and Future

Three lectures



London 1998

PRIVATELY PRINTED FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF
THE CONSORTIUM OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH LIBRARIES

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Preface

IN NOVEMBER 1997 the Consortium of European Research Libraries had arrived at a point when it could launch the first results of its primary objective which is to establish a database of all European printing of the hand-press period. With six files from very diverse origin loaded on the database hosted by the Research Libraries Group Inc., the Consortium judged that the moment had arrived to assess these results, and to begin discussions on what further developments should be given priority in order to enable users to exploit this new wealth of available material to best effect.

To this end the Consortium invited its members and friends to a small seminar to precede its annual general meeting which took place at the Kaulbach Villa, adjoining the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, on 14 November 1997. In a short programme, lectures and informal presentations concerning the present state, future application and extension of objectives, introduced a productive discussion among the participants. The lectures placed the Consortium's activities in a much wider context of intellectual development, and highlighted the significance and the implications of making this new bibliographical instrument available to scholarship. The Consortium is very grateful to Professor Fabian and Dr Matheson for making these lectures available for distribution in print to its members and its friends.

At almost the same time as the seminar in Munich took place, in October 1997, Professor Luigi Balsamo addressed the history and future of 'universal' (i.e. not nationally determined) bibliography in an even

wider context of the History of the Book, in a lecture presented at the Newberry Center for Renaissance Studies in Chicago. When shown this lecture shortly afterwards I was struck by the way the issues addressed in it, and the conclusion on the vision that universal bibliography entails, are highly pertinent to what the Consortium is undertaking. I am therefore most grateful to Professor Balsamo for his permission, generously given, to include his lecture in this small book.

The Consortium is much indebted to James Mosley and the St Bride Printing Library, and to Tony Kitzinger for their active help and advice for the production of this book which aims to record the discussions accompanying the gradual realisation of the Consortium's aims.

Lotte Hellinga
London, October 1998

The Consortium of European Research Libraries: A Future Vision

Ann Matheson

THOSE Europeans whose mother tongue is English have become very familiar over the last decade or two with the use of the term 'vision'. It has become a term that is richly redolent of the language of the mass of corporate plans and strategic plans that have threatened to engulf our libraries in recent years as Governments and funding agencies have become ever more determined to impose tight financial limits on libraries and other cultural institutions. Those who control the purse-strings always want us to have a 'vision', although it usually means one that costs less money. But when I came to look up the word in the Oxford English Dictionary, I found a vast plethora of definitions under the dictionary article for the term 'vision', which ranged from 'anything seen (including television)' to 'divine revelation'. Of all the available definitions, the one I have selected is that which defines vision as 'a pleasing imaginative plan for, or anticipation of, future events'. What I should like to try very modestly to offer you this afternoon is the beginnings of 'a pleasing imaginative plan' for the future of the Consortium of European Research Libraries in the next stage of its development.

We should begin with a short aide-memoire. We all recall the events that led to the enlightened concept of the Consortium: the first international Conference on Retrospective Cataloguing held here in Munich in November 1990, a year or so after the historic political

events that changed the face of Europe once again and reshaped its boundaries; the decision in January 1992, again in Munich, to set up the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL), a group of European research libraries committed to offering and sharing online records for pre-1830 books, and to collaborating on solving the complex issues posed by a continent rich in printed linguistic heritage but one that until then had been largely bounded by national decisions and national solutions that were essentially different in kind and sometimes irreconcilable; the plan to create the Hand-Press Book (HPB) online file, followed by the subsequent award of the contract to the Research Libraries Group (RLG) to mount the database on the RLIN network; and the work of preparing files and making them suitable for mounting in the HPB database which has been pursued from 1994 until now.

And what was the ultimate purpose of this effort? The aim was to bring together descriptions of printed books covering the period of the hand-press book from the inception of European printing (c. 1450) to 1830: and the purpose was not only to assist libraries but also to offer scholars universality of access to knowledge about the description and location of books of the hand-press period. From the earliest creation of printed books a parallel need has arisen to list them as a means of defining existing knowledge and identifying where its various manifestations are to be found 'in the search to escape from the dark'. The distinguished philosopher, Sir Isaiah Berlin, whose own background was a rich amalgam of European cultural diversity, has described in his philosophical treatise, *Concepts and Categories* how 'men cannot live without seeking to describe and explain the universe to themselves. They look to the models of the past to find the terms in which human beings, groups and societies and cultures, have conceived of their experience'.

The aims of the Hand-Press Book (HPB) database at its inception were, first, to enable Consortium members to share together the records they created as part of their own internal cataloguing programmes, recognizing that some European libraries (for reasons connected with funding) are further advanced than others in the task of making available online bibliographic descriptions of their older book collections; and, then, in the longer-term to create a ‘scholar’s tool’ which would provide researchers with a resource to which they might reliably go to seek descriptions of printed books of the hand-press period held in libraries throughout Europe. I recall vividly from the first Munich conference how Professor Bernhard Fabian told us enthusiastically about the riches of the scholarly collections that he had already glimpsed in libraries in Central and Eastern Europe, and how scholars looked to international co-operation among European research libraries to assist them to secure convenient access to these collections.

Even at the start of the Consortium’s work, I do not think that anyone really doubted the scale of the Herculean task that had been grasped in the interests of scholarship. As we know well, our European history shows that every aspect of our continent is complex. The multi-lingual diversity of Europe is without question one of its great glories, but combining records for early books that had been created according to different cataloguing conventions and in different formats (some of them non-MARC based) across a multi-lingual continent was indeed, to use Shakespeare’s phrase, ‘a long day’s task’. We owe a great debt to all those who have worked with such dedication on behalf of the Consortium, in particular, the Advisory Task Group (ATG), and our colleagues in the Research Libraries Group (RLG), for the efforts that they have put into attempts to solve these technical issues. As you have already heard this afternoon, a number of European files

have now been mounted in the HPB database, and there are many other significant files from European research libraries that are waiting for inclusion. When Neil Armstrong, the United States astronaut, set foot on the Moon in July 1969 he uttered the memorable phrase: 'That's one step for a man, but one giant leap for mankind'. I recall that the Executive Committee felt a little of the same sentiment when the first European files were successfully loaded into the Hand-Press Book database on RLIN.

As a Consortium we have come to the end of the first stage of our development, and we should now consider together how we should proceed to build upon what has already been achieved. The Consortium has thirty members at present, drawn from almost all the countries of Europe and representing the majority of the great research libraries of Europe. In the early period of the development of the Consortium, a cautious staged approach to expansion has been taken to meet the twin objectives of retaining the confidence of the membership and creating a secure financial base from which to advance. What should be the aims for the next period of the Consortium's growth?

I would suggest that development might be concentrated in two main areas: in the first place, we should explore what the Consortium can do with, from and beyond the Hand-Press Book database; and, in the second place, we should consider how the Consortium can expand its membership while, at the same time, maintaining its distinctive identity as a consortium of European research libraries.

If we take the first point, the future role of the Consortium, we must begin by asking ourselves whether the case for a database of books of the hand-press period is as valid now as it was when the decision was first made to create it. In libraries we know that technological developments and new protocols like Z39.50, if they deliver

their promise, will enable researchers to conduct searches transparently across online catalogues. We also know that because most libraries in the developed world realize that state funds on the scale on which they have been available in the past are likely to be difficult to secure for the foreseeable future, steps are being taken in many countries to harmonize not only formats but descriptive cataloguing rules. The harmonization of the MARC formats of Canada and the United States is now at the point of realization, and that between the United States and the UK is well advanced although there are still one or two points to be resolved before full harmonization can be achieved. On descriptive cataloguing, one of the decisions taken at an international conference in Toronto in October 1997 was that the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules should be internationalized, and that in due time the rules should be renamed to eliminate the term 'Anglo-American' from the nomenclature.

So if we will soon have the capacity to search across online catalogues, does this invalidate the case for the Hand-Press Book database? I would argue that it does not. Searches across large distributed databases often yield large results sets, which provide bibliographic information untailored to the scope of the researcher's request, and which must then be refined by the researcher. I really do wonder if this is how a scholar or a researcher seeking specialized materials will wish to work in the future? Just a few days ago I was reading a book which has just been published and deals with the overload of information that the 'Information Society' will bring. Its title was *Data Smog*. In addition, it is already becoming clear that cross-searching of databases will not yield the information sought if the necessary access points have not been inserted at the point at which the book is catalogued. Scholars require full accurate descriptions of the books they seek to consult. Looked at from the scholar's point of

view I think that there is a strong future for the Consortium's work.

So if part of our original plan was to create a database that would bring together records of books from the hand-press period to assist libraries to benefit from sharing these records, has that part of the plan been overtaken by technological progress? I think not. We should not imagine that the task of the retroconversion of our European heritage is nearing completion: a recent investigation carried out in the UK into the scale of outstanding retroconversion work to be accomplished produced the alarming figure of 50 million records or entries still awaiting conversion. Of these, books of the hand-press period are calculated at nine million. It would be illuminating to know the Europe-wide figure. Collaborative effort will be essential not only nationally but also across national borders and internationally if this issue is to be solved for scholarship with the maximum speed and the minimum overall cost. Our early thinking in the Consortium was predicated on the knowledge that most European research libraries share a common European printed heritage, and that we might expect that the national library of each European country in implementing its national responsibilities would apply the highest cataloguing standards to its own national published output. In this way we could derive benefit across Europe and indeed beyond Europe from work undertaken at the national level in each country. We should continue to uphold this aim.

We also took into account in our original thinking the riches of the book collections in Central and Eastern Europe that are still largely unexplored by scholars because they have been unavailable through online catalogues. The provision of records to enable these collections to be made accessible to scholars with the minimum of delay is still a high aim. On the other hand, we all know that there are now other sources of good bibliographic records from utilities and from

commercial organizations. So perhaps it is true that the provision of bibliographic records – important as that facility is and will continue to be – is not the sole and perhaps not even the primary aim of the Consortium's future work. Perhaps the main future purpose for the Consortium's existence is to bring together every aspect of the record of the European book in the historical period and in this way to provide a resource for scholars of books of the hand-press period. When the Royal Societies were established in the United Kingdom, they were set up with the express purpose of reflecting and advancing what was called 'useful knowledge'. There is, of course, a strong case to be made for the value of pure learning but, to my mind, one of the most important purposes of knowledge is to be 'useful' so that the experience of the past can be used to enlighten the knowledge and the civilized values of the present and the future. Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, on a recent visit to Scotland, spoke eloquently about the European Union as a union created 'to improve the lives of people'.

So the aim of the Consortium should be to build up the Hand-Press Book database so that it can become an effective resource for scholars in all disciplines to use in every aspect of research in the period of historical book production. This means building up the database to include as many files as possible, with the maximum achievable speed; and to make it into a resource with a high profile of which scholars are aware and to which they will turn as one of their main research sources. If the Hand-Press Book (HPB) database is to be a valuable resource for scholars, it must be able to offer them confidence in the accuracy of the descriptions that it contains; it must be able to show not only where works are held but also where variant copies are to be found; and it must be able to ensure that scholars have easy and convenient access to the database. So the first aim of

the next stage must be to continue to build up the database by the inclusion of files from as wide a range of European research libraries as possible in order to establish a useful scholar's resource.

A second aim should be to extend work into other areas that link naturally to the work of creating a large specialized database of historical book collections. Once information about historical collections is available in online catalogues, the available evidence shows that increased consultation of these collections generally follows. In turn, increased use of collections brings to the fore the question of preservation issues. Recognizing that libraries are likely to have limited resources for the preservation of collections in the future, co-ordinated national solutions for sharing responsibility for the preservation of collections are beginning to be developed in countries such as Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom. While the first responsibility for co-ordinating the national task of shared preservation will lie with each country, we should also consider – if we accept the concept of a common European printed heritage – how we can co-ordinate trans-national effort for sharing preservation responsibilities across Europe, so that we make the most sensible decisions within the available resources not only within our own national boundaries but also across our continent. In this task the Consortium could profitably work in co-operation with, for example, the European Commission on Preservation and Access (ECPA), the European Register of Microfilm Masters (EROMM) and LIBER's Professional Division for Preservation.

Notwithstanding the rapid pace of digital technology, I hope that we can all accept that for some purposes scholars will continue to wish to consult the originals of books printed before 1830, whatever advances are made in providing surrogate versions of texts. National libraries, for example, will continue both to retain their existing

printed collections and to aim for historical completeness of their own national record, and I suspect that research libraries, whether they are academic or public libraries, will be reluctant to surrender the collections of books that have been built up over centuries by their predecessors or have been consigned to their care over the generations.

While archival-quality microfilm continues to remain the international preservation medium for the present, we should also seek a role for the Consortium in co-ordinating digital versions of texts of European books of the hand-press period. We are all now aware that digital technology offers enormous scope for making texts available to scholars remotely, allowing them to carry out a certain amount of textual work without the immediacy of the need to see the original, however essential it remains for the scholar to be able to have access to the original when this is required. The opportunity to provide digital versions of our historical collections offers us unrivalled scope for making our collections more actively relevant to our own societies and to international scholarship by increasing their accessibility. The scope for access will be even further enhanced when digital versions are capable of being accessed not only in research libraries but in all libraries and public places and in private homes. Digital technology, and in particular the long-term preservation of digital archives, is expensive, and already countries are beginning to consider together within their own national boundaries how they should share the task of creating and preserving digital texts in a way that gives researchers access to the texts they need and provides the most economic benefits from the available resources.

In Scotland, for example, we have a national project among our research libraries which has been set up to identify where datasets of Scottish content or association already exist, or are being created or

planned. The aim is to hold this information online for scholars and researchers and libraries in a way that will allow us to update it conveniently. Then we will hold a conference of scholars at which we will present the results and seek their collaboration in identifying gaps that ought to be filled in the existing or planned provision of Scottish datasets. In regard to books of the historical period, surely there is an important role for the Consortium, linked to the Hand-Press Book database, to record where digital versions of the European printed heritage are created, and to act as a focus and point of co-ordination. Think of the advantage to scholars and researchers if they could look in a single place and find all the information not only about the original book but about the creation of surrogates – and be told reliably where to find them. The Consortium could also create a focus for a closer association between librarians – the custodians of the books of the hand-press period – and the scholars who can interpret them for humanity – so that they can unite in this task.

The second main area of development of the Consortium's work should concentrate on expanding membership. The research libraries of Europe are already well represented, and every effort should be made energetically to bring the remainder into the fold. We are well aware that some of our libraries in Europe find membership difficult solely for funding reasons, although their commitment to the work of the Consortium and to the European ideal is extremely strong. We should seek every means to assist them to play a full part in the Consortium's work both as contributors and as participants. In the second stage of the Consortium's development, we should find a way to make the Hand-Press Book (HPB) database available and accessible to libraries, scholarly institutions and individual scholars in the United States, with its own strong representation and keen interest in the printed heritage of Europe, and in turn to other areas

of the globe with similar interests such as Australia and New Zealand, Japan and South America. This step will offer the ability not only to make the Consortium's work more widely known internationally, but it will also assist in identifying and drawing in parts of the European printed heritage from other parts of the world with strong historical links with the European continent.

We should look positively at bringing into the scope of the Consortium's membership the many museums of the book, of printing, and of other aspects relating to books and the production of books in Europe. We have all become increasingly aware in recent years of the traditional physical formulation of knowledge which was arranged according to different categories of materials in libraries, museums and galleries and so on, and how one of the benefits of the new technology is that it permits us to bring the various materials that a scholar will wish to consult in the course of research into closer proximity. There is an alliance between the work of major research libraries and major specialized museums which often have substantial and rich book collections, possibly little known to scholars, that could profitably enhance for researchers the usefulness of the scholarly resources already offered by the Consortium. We know that in addition to the exploration of the intellectual content of the historical book, there are individual scholars who are concerned with the study of the book as an object or artefact. We also know that the history of the book is an area of study pursued by universities and specialized institutions both in Europe and in North America. In considering the next stage of the Consortium's development we should take a forward-looking approach, and we should have the vision to encourage closer links among all European organizations concerned with the historical book so that the cross-fertilization of knowledge among our institutions can be stimulated and encouraged.

The term 'enlargement' has become familiar to us over recent years in terms of the expansion of the European Union to include a wider range of European countries than those that are currently included. The fundamental concept of 'enlargement' in its political sense in Europe is that the European Union is a union of peoples in Europe but that in forming this union each country should retain its economic and cultural identity. The Consortium, too, I would argue, needs to think positively about 'enlargement' in these same terms of retaining its distinctive identity as it expands. Its expansion should be concomitant with remaining true to its essential goal of creating a scholar's resource for the European printed heritage, which encompasses every aspect of that heritage and its historical evolution. To do otherwise, would be a negation of cultural duty.

We should also aim to have links with national academics and research institutes that support our aims. I was speaking earlier this week to someone from the Royal Society of Edinburgh who explained that they were now having joint meetings with the Scandinavian Academics, so one can see clearly that establishing links and networks is a vital part of encouraging a healthy organization.

And why should we consider that it is important to work together in this way as a consortium of European research libraries? Is it important? I would argue that it is, indeed, vital for two main reasons: in the first instance, because there is a distinctive and distinguished European printed heritage which records the historical achievements and the vicissitudes over the centuries both of the countries of Europe and, more extensively, internationally in those countries that have been influenced by the migration of peoples from the European continent to other lands; and, in the second place, because if we look around us in the world we can see that research libraries are increasingly working together within the boundaries of their continents to

share limited resources, certainly, but also because they understand that their history does more to unite than to divide them, and that at the end of the 20th century society at large is interested in finding and exploring these links.

The writer Benedict Anderson has written a brilliant account of national cultural identity in his book *Imagined Communities*. In the course of it he describes the imaginative leap that led to the concept of national cultural identity: 'the assumption by individuals that thousands or millions of people whom they would never meet shared their particular culture, language and outlook?' Anderson argues that this assumption about solidarity was fostered or encouraged by 'the print revolution' and the circulation of printed literature. In the 18th and 19th centuries there developed the concept of 'the invention of nations', but the act of faith of 'nationhood' predates the creation of the nation state and will, no doubt, outlive it. What we now realize is that with the mixing and mutation of cross-cultures at the end of the 20th century there is an increasing desire to know more about the cultures from which we have evolved, the works that were influential in our history and the authors who wrote them. In this sense, if we believe that the records of our European printed heritage should survive and should act not only as a guide to our past but as a pointer for our future, we Europeans must ensure not only that our printed heritage is recorded and preserved but that it is brought into the light and allowed to shine.

To conclude, the plan I see for the Consortium for the next period is one in which the focus is concentrated round the works of the hand-press period, building up the files, developing a scholarly resource, grafting on functions that follow naturally from this central work, garnering into membership of the Consortium those organizations whose interests match ours, and forming alliance with the like-minded

both in Europe and North America and anywhere else where the printed heritage of Europe is valued. Professor Lehmann has reminded us that 'books have played an influential, and often decisive, role at the turning point of European history'. If we believe in the value of our European inheritance, it is for us to take responsibility for its care and promotion as an intellectual force in a world that we have all come to recognize is now a 'global village' but a village in which we all still seek a distinctive identity.

Pierre Thullier, the French philosopher and historian of science, in his book *The Great Implosion*, which describes western society in the 21st century as having lost its way because it no longer has any true culture or sense of identity, argues that 'a society is not really a society unless it is able to create ideal concepts and beliefs that mobilize individual energies and bind peoples together'. Our historical printed collections give us an indelible link to our past, and the shared work of the Consortium gives us the opportunity to expand and develop on what has been achieved so far. For in the words of Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish historian and writer, who was devoted throughout his life to continental Europe, 'In books lies the soul of the whole time past'.

November 1997

Towards an Integrated European Printed Archive

Bernhard Fabian

I

SOME years ago, I was invited to a conference on library problems in Europe. The meeting took place in Luxembourg on that well-known Plateau de Kirchberg which has more than once provided a platform for panoramic assessments of the European scene. Among the various comments made on that occasion one appeared to be particularly trivial: Coping with Europe culturally was, among other things, a matter of coping with billions of books stored in innumerable libraries.

On second thoughts, I changed my mind about the triviality of this comment. Of course, it is a truism. But it also sums up admirably one of the great problems before us. We have to come to terms with these billions of books. They contain – as Karl Popper has reminded us in his famous thought experiment – the substance of our civilisation. And, collectively, these books make up the basis for any attempt to re-create this civilisation.

Until fairly recently the individual library was regarded as a natural unit. For many practical purposes it still is the unit we deal with, and it is likely to remain so. Over the years library cooperation has become a pre-occupation with librarians; for well-known reasons, various cooperative schemes have been forced on them. More radically, our perception of the book world as an aggregate of individual collections has been changed by the fact that large parts of the printed tradition are threatened by

destruction through acidification and embrittlement. This has brought to our attention the machine-printed book production of more than a century as a unit transcending even the largest individual collections. We have come to realize that this huge segment of the printed tradition poses problems which can no longer be solved in terms of single libraries or even in terms of national printed archives.

Vis-à-vis the machine-printed book the hand-printed book has come to our notice in a new perspective. The concept of the hand-printed book is, of course, a traditional one, though – once more – we have not for a long time regarded it as a unifying concept covering the printed tradition from the beginning to about 1830. Rigid categories were introduced to separate books by period or by language or by other criteria. By now these categories have lost much of their significance and their intellectual stringency, though they still serve as guidelines in various ways. Our view has changed; it ranges more widely, and transcends chronological barriers and also national boundaries. However, the readjustment of our perspective has not been brought about by physical decay, as in the case of the machine-printed book. It has been caused predominantly by a growing sense of a many-faceted unity of the nearly four centuries dominated by the hand-printed book.

As I see it, the database of the hand-printed book, which the Consortium of European Research Libraries has now established, is the bibliographic expression of this sense of the unity of the period. In my view, the *rationale* of the database is that any meaningful re-creation of this period through the efforts of scholarship presupposes ready access to a reservoir of texts of truly European extent. Even if we regard the database as a mere instrument of research, its intellectual achievement is considerable and of far-reaching importance. It establishes the concept of a European printed archive which incorporates the various national printed archives not as separate entities but as integral parts.

II

Librarians frequently anticipate future developments and proceed on the assumption that supply will create demand. Usually, though not invariably, they are right. In the case of the European database the decision to establish it could not have been more timely. It does not anticipate a need which may, or may not, make itself felt in the future. The database will satisfy current demands and immediate requirements.

Traditionally, humanistic research has been carried out within the limits, however defined, of a national printed archive. Many of the major disciplines were established in the nineteenth century, a nationally-minded period. The very concept of the national printed archive took shape in the nineteenth century. Basically, this archive was then envisaged as forming a series of concentric circles around the great works of the national literature. There were central areas, and there were fringe areas comprising material of purportedly lesser importance.

Traditionally, too, humanistic research has focused on the central areas of the national printed archive. Within these areas it tended to concentrate either on a single work or on a smaller or a larger group of works. It was in these contexts that the various national styles of humanistic research gradually emerged. This kind of research (best exemplified by literary studies but by no means confined to them) has not disappeared. It is, however, no longer so dominant as it used to be.

In the past three or four decades new fields of research have been mapped out, and new approaches have been defined. We have witnessed various moves away from the central areas of the national printed archive. Some of these moves were inevitable when the central areas did no longer offer sufficient research opportunities to the rapidly increasing number of scholars. Other moves were deliberate; they were attempts to break away from accepted canons and established procedures.

Let me indicate – briefly and unsystematically – only three of the new fields of research. The first and most obvious is the study of cultural manifestations distinct from, or opposed to, those of high culture. This includes not only popular culture in the narrow sense of the word but also a wide range of social phenomena: alphabetisation, popular reading, educational processes, individual experiences, mass behaviour, the rites and rituals of groups – to name a few at random. The new omnibus discipline of cultural studies claims as its province culture in the widest sense of the word as ‘a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group’ (in Raymond Williams’ well-known definition). How much of the work in this new discipline is serious and how much merely trendy or even trashy is a matter not to be discussed here.

The second field is closely related to the first. It has come into being as the result of what could be called an anthropological turn in various humanistic disciplines. In history the reorientation has led to the establishment of historical anthropology as a distinct approach or methodology; but there are also literary and other anthropologists. The common aim of these anthropologists is the identification of permanent or irreducible elements in human life and the analysis of the cultural implications of these anthropological factors. Philippe Aries’ studies of childhood and death or the recent multi-volume studies of the family and of private life must be seen in this context; likewise the studies of memory and remembrance or of fictionality. The most recent branch in this field are the fashionable gender studies, which involve a variety of disciplines.

A third area to be noticed is the widely ramified field of intercultural studies. Relations between national cultures, particularly between the national cultures of Europe, have been noticed for a long time. But not until recently have receptive processes been scrutinised in such detail as is now mandatory. Comparative studies have been intensified, and

hitherto unnoticed aspects of the impact of one culture on another have been brought to light. Travel literature has received much attention, and translation studies have established themselves as a discipline in its own right. Beyond the realm of the factual the realm of the possible is being explored, as a recent collection of essays on *The translatability of cultures* suggests.

In sum, there is a multiplicity, almost an infinite variety, of new subjects and new approaches. Traditional boundaries between disciplines break down, or are deliberately ignored. Interdisciplinary approaches attract increasing interest, and transdisciplinary work gains attention and recognition. Still more important, national boundaries as suggested by the notion of the national printed archive become meaningless. The further away we move from the 'central' areas of the old-type national printed archive the more essential is the broadening of the textual basis of research. Many of the subjects currently being studied cannot properly be studied except in a transitional context. Childhood or death require, as do many other subjects, either a general approach or a comparative approach.

Increasingly scholarly work is being carried out in a European context, and more and more scholarly works are deliberately set in this context. In other words, Europe has become a scholarly frame of reference. A few titles selected at random may serve as illustrations: *Nations and nationalism since 1780* (a study by Eric Hobsbawm); *Institutions of confinement: Hospitals, asylums and prisons in Western Europe and North America* (a collection of individual studies); *Religious change in Europe, 1650–1914* (a festschrift); finally, *A history of the university in Europe* (a multi-volume enterprise). *Building Europe* is a wide-ranging series of monographs on historical topics published simultaneously in several countries.

What is significant in library terms is that many, if not all, of the

'new' studies make use of material which has previously been relegated to the fringe areas of the national printed archive. Scholars examine popular reading matter, they analyse travel literature; they investigate translations; they look into ephemera such as tracts, pamphlets, brochures. Much of the 'new' research is entirely based on this kind of material. Frequently the material required by scholars is 'international' material in the sense that it is found in more than one national printed archive or is distributed over a number of archives.

Almost invariably scholars complain that the texts they require are either unavailable or, more often, scattered over an inordinately large number of libraries. There is of course a traditional paucity of research material in libraries, even in the largest and most comprehensive libraries. No scholar ever finds all he needs in one library. Even so, there is a new dimension to the problem. Much of the material required is, traditionally, of a low order, and has therefore not been given the attention which it should have been given in view of the significance that is now attached to it. Much of it belongs to the 'trash' which, as Antonio Panizzi was perhaps the first to warn us, should not lightly be dismissed.

A recent German writer on a serious feminist subject stated that the hundreds of books published between 1750 and 1850 which she needed for her study were literally scattered over many libraries throughout Europe. Similar statements occur time and again in the prefaces of scholarly monographs. I wish that someone would make a survey of these prefaces. Collectively, the experiences of scholars in locating or not locating the material required for their researches would form the best argument one can think of for building up a database which comprises an integrated European printed archive.

From my own experience I should like to add that the bibliographical evidence for documenting the cultural impact of England on Germany

in the eighteenth century is distributed over more than 120 libraries both in Germany and in other countries. When, years ago, I complained about this situation to a leading German librarian the answer was: one doesn't undertake a project such as your bibliography. But in my view this is exactly the kind of project we must try to tackle if we want to understand how the national cultures in Europe came to be what they are.

III

Let me change the perspective: what will the database of the hand-printed book be like? What can we expect from it? What should it offer to the research scholar?

The test-file made available on the Internet contains three entries for Alexander Pope. First, a multi-volume German translation of William Warburton's edition of Pope's Works (published in 1751 and translated between 1758 and 1764); second, a Swedish translation of Eloisa to Abélard (published in 1717 and translated in 1767); and, third, an Italian translation of the Rape of the lock, Pope's mock-heroic poem (published in 1712 and translated in 1818). All of these translations appeared after Pope's death.

I was delighted that the Internet did not produce, in the first place, an entry for, say, the first edition of *The Dunciad* or another of Pope's great poems. This would have placed Pope where he properly belongs and where we habitually expect to find him: in the centre of the national printed archive of England. But Pope was not only the greatest English poet of the eighteenth century; he was also an outstanding European author of the period and one of the major literary figures on the Continent. This is what these three entries immediately bring to mind.

The European significance of Pope is best illustrated bibliographically, and that is what the database will ultimately do. The English collection

of Göttingen University Library comprises fourteen editions of Pope's Essay on man, and these fourteen editions are in six languages (in addition to English, Dutch, French, German, Italian and Latin). The edition of Pope's Works in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow was not an English edition but the German reprint of an English edition; it appears to have served as the basis for the first Polish translation of Pope.

Ideally, the integrated European printed archive will incorporate the national printed archives of the individual countries as these are preserved in the major and minor libraries throughout Europe. But the database comprising these archives will present them in a different form from the one we are accustomed to. And this will be so not only for the technical reason that a database is not designed to reproduce hierarchical structures based on literary or intellectual value judgements. In the European printed archive there will be no 'natural' centres and peripheries, as in the various national printed archives. The European archive will bring out the relations between the national cultures. It will make evident the links which connect one culture with another. It will impart new significance to categories of printed material which, in terms of the national archive, are of minor importance or of marginal interest. And this inferior material will again and again function as a cultural indicator of the highest order.

First of all, the database is, as a database should be, a machine-readable catalogue producing information about a multitude of individual titles. Difficult as its construction may be, the database should enable use to search for books in a variety of languages and to move easily from item to item. It is safe to predict that the main function of the database will be to provide scholars with references to single titles and to enable them to construct, for their specialized research projects the 'European' bibliography which they require and which they cannot put together

(or cannot readily be put together) under the prevailing conditions.

But we should not regard the database merely as a large-scale union catalogue making accessible the holdings of many libraries. The database can be more than that and, when completed, will be more than that. All libraries contributing to the database are highly complex creations. They must be regarded as artefacts in their own right. Not only have their collections grown over centuries; they were also brought together with specific intentions. Their development may have been influenced by idiosyncratic motives or by peculiar circumstances. In any case, our understanding of the nature of the European printed archive will be greatly enhanced if we look beyond the individual title and take into account the particular context in which the individual title is found in a library collection.

Let me illustrate this point by an example taken from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Its collection of works by Isaac Newton is of special interest. It is not large when compared to the holdings of the British Library as the library responsible for the national printed archive of England; moreover some of the Munich items were destroyed during the war. The collection contains a first edition of the *Principia mathematica* (1687), which is rare in German libraries, but it does not contain a first edition of the *Opticks* (1704). There are also first editions of two or three minor works. The bulk of the collection – and this is the noteworthy aspect – is made up of continental reprints and of translations. There is an Amsterdam reprint of the *Principia* (1723), a Geneva reprint (1739-42), and a Cologne reprint (1760). There is the Latin translation of the *Opticks* (London 1706) as well as a Lausanne reprint of the Latin translation (1740), in addition to two French translations of the work (Amsterdam 1720 and Paris 1787).

This, then, is a continental collection of the works of Newton, and it is significantly different from an English collection. Whether or not

it is a typical continental collection is difficult to say. At present, our knowledge of library holdings is extremely limited since printed catalogues are not available for the majority libraries. What matters is not the fact that the collection of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek comprises so many prints. What matters is that many of the reprints and translations are edited editions and frequently include commentaries or other additional material. The Geneva edition of the *Principia*, for instance, is a famous example of this kind of enriched edition.

The scholarly interest in a collection of this type is twofold. First, the collection illustrates the complexity of the process of reception even on the most elementary level. The original English editions were of course imported from England; when and how they came into the Library is another matter. But the majority of the books were printed and enriched on the Continent. They originated in four different countries: Holland, France, Switzerland and Germany. Thus the collection testifies to the existence of a book-trade whose structures and mechanisms, if and when explored, are likely to yield important information about the circulation of ideas in Europe. An analysis of the book-trade may help us to understand the essential intellectual unity of Europe in the age of the hand-printed book.

Secondly, the collection illustrates in a general way the key function of reprints and translation in the cultural exchanges which are a major element, and also an indispensable element, in the intellectual history of Europe. From our familiarity with national printed archives we are accustomed to working with first editions or other editions which preserve the original text in as pure a form as possible. In building up a European printed archive we will become aware of the significance of all kinds of other texts – from the bad translation to the competently annotated foreign edition. They all served as carriers. And they may have confronted the reader, through their enrichments, with ‘impure’

texts; and these impure texts may have led to significant and, as modern scholarship has reminded us, creative misreadings of the original.

The point I want to make is this: The primary function of the database will be that of a catalogue serving as a finding-aid for the research scholar, and we should be aware of the fact that more and more scholars are in search of material which is uncommon or rare and frequently not properly catalogued. But the database should also satisfy more sophisticated requirements. In the European context it matters which book is in which library. Collections of hand-printed books are historical collections, and the historical dimension is of their essence. The database should therefore enable us to reconstruct historically significant collections in individual libraries. Users of the database should be able to extract from it the collections of Newton's works in Munich, in Copenhagen, in Milan, in St Petersburg and elsewhere. The presence of particular books or particular editions in libraries is in many ways as illuminating as their absence. It would be a major asset if the database, derived from library holdings, could assist the scholar in identifying not only single titles but also the profiles of individual collections in these libraries – not only (the most famous example) Voltaire in St Petersburg but also Shakespeare in Cracow, Dante in Stockholm, Goethe in London and so on indefinitely.

IV

Let me go one step further: In the period of the hand-printed book Europe was in many ways a closed intellectual system in which ideas were in constant circulation. Libraries were, as they still are, the focal points in this system. Most of them were, in the proper sense of the word, European libraries – international in scope and, moreover encyclopaedic in the range of their collections. The nineteenth-century

notion of the national printed archive often conceals the true character of these libraries from our view. We tend to assume that the book production of a country will best and most fully be preserved in the libraries of this country. Up to a point this is no doubt true.

If we think in terms of a European printed archive, a different picture presents itself. The component parts of the European archive are not neatly arranged country by country, so that each country can contribute the records of its national book production to a larger and more comprehensive archive. The books of Europe, to repeat it, are scattered over Europe and in establishing the database of the hand-printed book an attempt will have to be made to collect significant fragments in unlikely places.

For practical purposes two phases can be distinguished. With a convenient short-hand designation the first can be called the phase of the Latin book. Incunables apart, the Latin book is largely a phenomenon of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when Latin was the lingua franca of European scholarship. In central and Eastern Europe this 'Latin' period extended well into the eighteenth century. A choice example of a latish 'European' book in Latin is the *Account of Sir Isaac Newton's philosophy* by the Scottish mathematician and natural philosopher Colin Maclaurin, originally published in English in 1748. It was translated – from the French version by Lavirotte – into Latin by an Austrian Jesuit to be published by a notorious reprint publisher in Vienna in 1761.

Latin books freely circulated in Europe. More than 85,000 sixteenth-century Latin titles for instance, are in the collections of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. One wonders if this number includes roughly 6,000 titles (predominantly Latin) printed in the German-speaking countries and now preserved in the National Library of Scotland. More than 40,000 sixteenth-century titles can be found in Dresden, most of them

presumably in Latin and published somewhere in 'Europe'.

At least in some countries the book production of the sixteenth-century is well catalogued or in the process of being catalogued, so that the dimensions of a European archive of the sixteenth-century can be seen in rough outline. The situation changes when we move on to the seventeenth century. Latin printing continues on a high level but vernacular printing increases considerably, and provincial and local printing proliferates. The number of Latin printed items in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek is nearly 87,000 (of whatever origin) against only 33,000 in German. There is as yet no way of saying how far these overlap with the over 26,000 items printed in 'Germany' (both in Latin and in German) in the British Library, which have been admirably catalogued by David Paisey; or with the 27,000 items of German origin in the Royal Library in Copenhagen; or with the roughly 30,000 German items (out of a total of 50,000) in the National Library of Poland in Warsaw.

I do not wish to single out the German book. The figures quoted have become available only recently and they happen to be among the very few we have as indicators of the distribution of books throughout Europe. Of course, not all of the large collections are contemporary collections. But the foundations of many of them were laid early and built on later, particularly in the nineteenth century. In any case, the 'European' component is conspicuous in practically all of the older libraries, including many of the smaller ones which may eventually qualify for inclusion in the HPB database.

Although the Latin book predominated in the two centuries after the invention of printing, the presence of vernacular material in libraries other than those of the country of origin should not be overlooked. From the sixteenth century onwards one of the noteworthy features of the intellectual life in Europe was a series of literary and cultural

discoveries. This begins with the ‘discovery’ of Italy, which accounts for the early presence of Italian books in Continental as well as in English libraries. In the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (once more) the number of sixteenth-century Italian titles exceeds 6,000 (as against 3,500 in French), whereas in the seventeenth century 12,000 French titles contrast significantly with under 8,000 in Italian). Again, this is no more than an illustration of what we should keep in mind when we conceive of an ‘integrated’ European printed archive. As for later (mainly nineteenth-century) acquisitions of early foreign books, the Spanish, Italian and other short-title catalogues of the British Library speak their own language.

In the second phase – that of the ascent and, ultimately, the supremacy of the vernacular book – new factors came into play. There was a noticeable shift from Central European to Western Europe. France and, somewhat later, England took on the intellectual leadership in Europe and exerted their influence. The modernizing impact of France and England made itself felt throughout the Continent, first in Germany and, subsequently, in other countries. The English collection of Göttingen University Library is one of the major indications of this re-orientation. Its more than 20,000 titles probably form the best collection of early English books outside the English-speaking world. It includes, between the letters A and O, more than 70 unique titles of the Wing period (1641–1700). The most representative private library of the Enlightenment, primarily composed of French and English works, will be found in Helsinki.

Peter the Great, tsar of Russia, can perhaps be regarded as the first East European to turn physically and symbolically, to the West in search of the future. His small collection of books is kept in St Petersburg. The enormously rich collection of the National Library of Russia in St

Petersburg will turn out to be a major contributor to the European printed archive. There is no need to comment on the Library's Russica collection (to be supplemented by rare Russian books in Göttingen and elsewhere); but attention should be given to its superb collection of Western books in various languages. That the Library owned (again a modest example) the only copy of the first German translation of Richardson's *Pamela* draws attention to the fact that some languages primarily French and German, assumed – from the eighteenth century onwards – a carrier function throughout Central, Northern and Eastern Europe in transmitting texts which had originally appeared in other languages, notably English.

In envisaging the European printed archive we must realise that the National Library in St Petersburg is surrounded by a host of other libraries, from the Library of the Academy (also well-stocked even after the disastrous fire) to smaller libraries such as that of the Academy of Art or the Theatre Library, the oldest of its kind in the world. One of the three outstanding European collections of the early literature on geology and mining is also in St Petersburg; the other two are in Hungary and East Germany.

May I therefore make, in general terms, a plea for including in the HPB database as many libraries as possible in Central and Eastern Europe? Those that come to mind immediately are the National Libraries of the Czech Republic and of Hungary (which can supplement even the printed archive of Bavaria). Those of the Baltic countries with their chequered history and unexpected holdings should not be overlooked. When it comes to old university libraries, that of Leipzig (about to return to the world of scholarship and research after decades of neglect) could contribute more than 100,000 eighteenth-century records. And so on.

V

Let me conclude my miscellaneous remarks by thanking – on behalf of all future users – those who have devised the database, those who manage it, those who have already contributed to it as well as those who will contribute to it. The database of the hand-printed book is bound to be *the* research tool of the twenty-first century. It will not only be helpful; it will be indispensable. Though it is a physically invisible instrument, let us not think of it as a mere accumulation of millions of bibliographical records. Let us think of it as the key to the integrated printed archive of Europe and as the gateway to an almost limitless universe of texts which can be traversed in all conceivable directions.

Towards a Global History of the Book

Luigi Balsamo

I

A STARTING point for discussion could be that important conference held in Boston in 1980 on *Books and Society in History* which brought forward practical samples of research and some interesting suggestions. For example, Robert Darnton, in his talk entitled 'What is the History of Books?', stated that this field of study 'proved to be so rich, in fact, that it now looks less like a field than a tropical rain forest'!¹ Hence, the 'History of Printing', that scholars of my generation were bred upon, was seen to be superseded, a history that had a centuries old tradition in Europe dating back to just a few decades after the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in America. It was an essential phase, because its principal task was to single out and make an inventory of the enormous wealth of printed books with a view to making it accessible to scholars in every field of scientific research by means of those essential data bases, namely catalogues and bibliographic indexes. The first people to take up this task were the librarians, that is, the custodians of such an important heritage, and the 'history of printing' has fulfilled the praiseworthy job of reconstructing the events and identifying the leading actors of the great technological change brought about by Gutenberg in the field of book production.

For a long time, however, the rigorous study of the peculiarities of the materials and methods of working has been neglected; as early

as the beginning of the 18th century some of the first scholars of the subject had already turned their attention to such aspects, in particular a contemporary and emulator of Michel Maittaire, the Bolognese citizen Pellegrino Orlandi who was unfortunately soon forgotten.² Orlandi was the first to put alongside the annals of the origins of printing – including over two thousand editions grouped according to the place of printing – not only the account of the typographical events, but above all the illustration of the materials and the printing process, including the work of the printers. Furthermore, he drew attention to the characteristic features of the incunabula (paper, types, woodcuts, press, printer's devices of which he produced the first inventory containing a hundred or so reproductions with relative descriptions) and also to the tasks of the workers. His approach was indeed a pioneering one without, however, there being an immediate follow-up.

On the part of the historians, in general, in the past there was not a complete awareness of the complexity of a phenomenon whose effects have in many ways spilled over from the technological sphere into the cultural and social one by way of the new product, i. e. the printed book. That's why even today we may sometimes come up against certain labels like 'History of the Book and Printing', current usage even in the academic environment, revealing a lack of conceptual clarity, almost as though printing were something like an adjunct or collateral to the book, instead of being one of the many phases of its existence. Equally, we find ourselves having to accept in common usage a nonchalant switching round of some terms that actually have a distinct meaning: as a matter of fact, many people are accustomed to saying 'a book' when they actually mean a *text* or a *work*, a *volume* or an *edition*. However simplistic it may seem, I think we should ask ourselves what is exactly meant by the term 'book' from a rigorously exact perspective.

A whole entity made up of white leaves bound together at one side is not a book. Instead, a book is a *physical support* (of any kind) *for written texts* ; it is thus a composite object whose purpose is to preserve and transmit to future generations the written evidence of man's intellectual activity (speculative, poetic, fictional, artistic, scientific as well as practical). On the basis of this definition, the meaning of the expression 'history of the book' is clarified: the history therefore of a material object, but a composite one, destined to perform a specific function which over the centuries has been subject to changes connected to developments in its technology.

We are well aware of the changes that have taken place from its origins to the present-day: from the laminae of secondary tree bark (*liber*), from which the name derives, to the papyrus made up in the form of a roll (*volumen*), afterwards to leaves of parchment and later of paper kept stretched and superimposed (*codex*). It should be noted that the original term *liber* (Italian and Spanish 'libro', French 'livre'), that's to say the name of the physical support of primitive writing made from a tree, has survived the successive changes in the 'material' the support was made of, such that today it has only a 'metaphorical' value, an awareness of which is generally lacking. Likewise the English word *Book* and German *Buch* seem to be derived from an ancient German term relating to 'Boko' meaning 'beech'.

Not even the techniques and ways of recording the texts have influenced the current denomination of the support, even though they too have in the course of time undergone substantial changes: thus, in the beginning, the earliest German printers might warn their readers that the book put before their eyes had not been 'written' with a pen or a quill or a stylus but rather with the use of 'metallic letters'. And even today we generically speak of 'hand-written books' or 'printed books' (indications as to the quality of the material of the support: parchment/

vellum or paper are added only in sophisticated bibliographical description).

Today, however, a further structural change of great importance is taking place: another step forward, even more dramatic than Gutenberg's, has been sparked by the application of electronic technology to the communication system, which has supplied a new physical support. In fact, the most recent shape of the book is that of a 'disk' made of a plastic material (CD-ROM) on which the text is 'written' neither with a pen nor with metallic characters but with digitalised electric impulses, the 'bits' etched with the laser.

We could say more emphatically that books written for many centuries in ink are being superseded by books written in light. What makes it very difficult for people to conceptually accept this new reality is precisely the consolidated terminology, as the lexis that has remained unchanged means that in the collective imagination the metaphorical term 'liber/book' – now that the original similitude with the tree bark has been completely obfuscated – is exclusively connected to the present form of an object made up of printed leaves (only learned people think also of 'hand-written leaves'), usually rectangular and bound together.

In practical terms, however, it makes no difference whether we leaf through Dante's *Divine Comedy* in a conventional 'book' or on a luminous screen, which is possible not just sequentially but also with *random access* to a page or to a certain passage or even to a given word, and without any reading difficulty, as the text is reproduced in the typographical types we are already accustomed to. This has been the latest stage in the continuous evolutionary process that has led to the complete obsolescence of Gutenberg's technique of movable metallic types: first by way of the renewed use of a fixed matrix unique to offset printing, and then photo composition.

The computer now emulates the elements and the procedures of

typographical composition, and also offers the chance to print the text on supports other than of a paper kind. So the practical results do not change. If we accept the definition of the book given before – a physical support (of any kind) for written texts destined to be preserved and transmitted to future generations – there is no doubt that the CD-ROM performs a role identical to the one performed in the past by the papyrus roll, then by the parchment codex and by the paper volume. From the standpoint of utilisation clearly what counts is not the material structure of the instrument but rather the social function it performs within the system of communications.

From another point of view G. T. Tanselle has remarked: ‘Computerization is simply the latest chapter in the long story of facilitating the reproduction and alteration of texts; what remains constant is the inseparability of recorded language from the technology that produced it and makes it accessible.’³

2

The history of the book, however, cannot be limited to the events and to the technical modalities of the reproduction of texts on different supports, but must be the overall history of an instrument which for many centuries has been exclusive and, at any rate, pre-eminent in the social system of written communication. Indeed, it has by now lost its former central role in the face of competition from audiovisual instruments that tend to privilege the image and the spoken word. But this latter system may only seem like an absolute novelty, a twentieth-century innovation, in areas that have a cultural tradition that is more recent when compared to Europe’s. For example, in the American civilisation founded by the Pilgrim Fathers at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the system of social communication had the printed book as an essential and virtually exclusive centuries-old

instrument right from the outset.

Instead Europe had a much more articulated centuries-old tradition comprising successive phases of a gradual evolution; for example, before typographical printing made the book the most widespread and important instrument, the Middle Ages had already witnessed a primitive form of remote-vision ('television') as a system of information and learning. In the absence of schools (those of the Cathedrals were reserved to few individuals, destined to an ecclesiastic career), in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries the vast majority of people, illiterate, found in the churches the only place to get educated and receive teachings, naturally of a religious kind. Just think of the faithful seated on the benches of the cathedral of Chartres, or Nôtre Dame in Paris: they would gaze admiringly at the magnificent stained glass windows on which were depicted the characters and the events narrated in the Holy Scriptures, while the priest from the pulpit would recount those facts and provide an interpretation. When he cited David's victory against Goliath or Christ's crucifixion and His resurrection, they would gaze at the glass on which these facts were portrayed with colourful pictures. Thus, it was a system of remote audiovisual communication with static pictures, whereas today's are kinematic thanks to electronic technology. The same, both now and then, whatever the attitude of the spectators, assumed a form of passive reception in which the static image was endowed with an improved capacity for memorisation. The image, as we know, acts more on emotions than on thoughts. It was the printed book, widely distributed, that offered to an ever-growing audience the chance to have a personal reading of 'written words' on which one could dwell and reflect in order to interpret the meaning, perhaps in a different way compared to others, so giving rise to discussions and to controversies.

As we know, the printed book changed the way of learning and of

knowing things, and for many centuries it was indeed the principal medium. In order to better understand the realities and the consequences of the evolution taking place today in the field of communication and information systems, we need to know critically the long journey undertaken by man in this field. Therefore, the history of the book must be the history of its complete life-cycle, in all the phases and all the aspects of an event in which man's technical and creative skills have interacted with the cultural, economic, political and religious interests of the moment.

3

The process of 'printing' constitutes in actual fact only the second phase of this cycle in that it comes after the selection of the texts to be reproduced in a great number of copies. Thus, the first phase is that of planning the book, that is the publishing project which, especially at the outset, was the work of both printers and booksellers, as well as of private clients. The invention of movable types and printing – not unlike that of writing – in actual fact did not have motivations of a primarily cultural nature but rather of a practical and economic kind: it was the result of applied research, made possible by the progress in metallurgical techniques, much more advanced in the Rhine Valley than elsewhere, which had the aim of rapidly multiplying the copies of a written text, so as to cut production costs and increase profits. The first books printed in Mainz in the middle of the fifteenth century were destined for a market that reflected the needs of the ecclesiastic activities and the religious interests characterising social life primarily in the Germanic area, including the collection of funds for the Roman Church through the granting of indulgences. Among the earliest typographical products, as everyone knows, were the 'receipts' which certified the offerings made by the faithful and their right to enjoy certain indulgences and privileges.

However, those market demands were also present in a wider geographical area: wherever a predominantly religious culture prevailed.

Later on, in other geographical areas, the publishing programmes took on a different cultural direction in relation to the market evaluations and the interests of the financier/editor. In Italy, for example, the cult of the classics on the part of the humanists explains why in Rome, See of the Head of the Catholic Church, the first typographical production was made up, unlike Germany, principally of classical 'pagan' works. Apparently an almost paradoxical situation. The history of *publishing* thus regards the first phase of the life-cycle of the book and studies both the organisational forms as well as the economic and cultural motivations that underlie the entrepreneurial programmes in the different geographical areas and in the various historical eras.

In the second place, the production of the typographical book must be studied in the structural aspects of the printing process, bearing in mind that even if the technique has remained constant for over three and a half centuries, nonetheless there were right from the beginning, in different areas and times, variations in the method of work, and even more traditions or particular modalities in the working practices of the individual workshops and printer's habits. In this regard analytical bibliography is indispensable as applied to the material elements (paper, watermarks, types, ink, binding) and to the variations in their use (format, layout, gathering signatures, print run), in other words, to the qualitative and quantitative aspects of production. However, the data thus collected do not always prove to be sufficient, for example, for a dating or an attribution, and thus need to be integrated with other external documentation, such as the archive-keeping of an administrative nature concerning contracts, financial accounts or legal controversies (but this observation also applies to all the other sectors of inquiry).

Naturally, the bibliographer must also take account of the text, in that it is indispensable for a correct description of the identity of the 'contents' of the book and for more complete information, in particular for the benefit of historians of literature, but also for the scholars of philology and text analysis. The latter are interested in identifying the existence of more than one edition or issue or different states of a book in order to investigate the modalities and effects of the transmission of texts, especially in relation to the wishes, evident by the direct intervention, of the author. G. T. Tanselle has also noted: 'The story of books in society is the story of texts and their influence; knowing how published texts came to be what they are, in their varying forms in different copies of editions and different editions, therefore underlies everything else. The fact that printing history has not automatically been swept into prominence by the rising interest in 'the history of the book' shows how little understood, even now, are the connections between the printing and the content of texts.'⁴

Mass production achieved with typographical technology triggered a shock wave in the book market as supply exceeded demand. Publishers and printers, as a consequence, found themselves having to market their products, that is, inform their potential audience of reader-buyers. We can consider then, as a further phase in the book's life-cycle, bibliographical information as a form of communication between producers and readers, initially originating from commercial interests and implemented by the use of notices and publishing catalogues. Very soon there were other forms of such mediation dictated by essentially cultural and scientific intentions through lists of books, variously structured and denominated (*bibliothecae, catalogi*) which were actually the first enumerative and descriptive bibliographies.

However, interests of an ideological nature also played a part in the provision of information: ecclesiastic and political institutions saw a

danger in the free spreading of works that questioned or openly contrasted with their official doctrines, such that they did not hesitate to intervene drastically with censorship, public condemnation and the prohibition of certain books even going to the length as to have them confiscated and publicly destroyed (e.g., the *Index librorum prohibitorum* of the Roman Church as well as the analogous interventions, including pyres of books, in the Protestant area and even centuries later in a political context).

Censorship and control of information, which heavily affected the spreading of the book in the past, are unfortunately enforced today as well, so that there remain problems worthy of inquiry and historical comparison with those precedents, especially in relation to the motivations (religious or political) which have always been the effect of intolerance and fanaticism. In this regard we realise that some statements by Paolo Sarpi, a sixteenth-century Italian historian, are still wholly valid: 'The substance of books – he wrote – might appear unimportant since it is only words. But from those words come the opinions of the world, giving rise to factions, sedition, and ultimately to war. They are words, true enough, but in their train they bring armed hosts.'

This paves the way for another area of research aimed at evaluating the effects of publishing activities, that is, the study of the dissemination of books. It is a matter of identifying the forms and ways in which the book has reached its audience, thus the organisational forms of the book trade, both individual and associative, and the varieties of itinerary and extension. The 'bookshop' has always been the dedicated place where books were put into circulation, but alongside it are also the fairs, local and international, as well as auction sales and today even mail order. They have given rise, amongst other things, to particular forms of information aimed at offering a particular intermediary role,

again for economic motives, in this case between the distributors of the products and the public (catalogues of bookshops, fairs, and auction sales). Thus, in the sector of the book trade there are also events and forms of collecting largely based on antiquarian books, without forgetting that the collections of bibliophiles have played a role of no little importance in preserving and transmitting a priceless heritage that was later channelled, and still is today, mainly into the public libraries. So the ultimate phase of the cycle is that of reception and enjoyment on the part of the reading public. Here we meet both a direct form, that of the single individuals who buy books for personal use and put together private collections, as well as the less direct form of libraries open to everybody, as well as libraries belonging to particular institutions and thus accessible to circumscribed categories of people. From the standpoint of cultural and social history it is interesting to study the historical events behind their creation, the personality of their owners and of the librarians, the evolution of the internal structures as well as the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the funds collected, with a view to finding out evidence relevant towards reconstructing the role they perform in a given historico-geographical setting. Obviously, the history of libraries is also a part of the history of books.

4

I have summarily described the scheme of the book's life cycle so as to highlight its complexity and articulation, from which it first of all appears how in such a broad field – in such a tropical rain forest, to use Darnton's metaphor – investigations require multiple skills in a single individual or collaboration among experts from different disciplinary sectors. We need immediately to point out how the scheme intends to offer an overview of the research field that must be always borne in mind, even

in the case of transversal investigations. It goes without saying that the individual investigations can, actually must, choose limited topics both in regard to the different phases and the geographical and temporal scope. In any case, the researcher must be aware that a specific topic cannot be properly studied overlooking the synchronic inter-relation between the various phases of the cycle or even the knowledge of the local historical context.

Each phase of the cycle, in fact, cannot be isolated in itself, as indeed the making of books is not a strictly linear process – as it is necessarily described for didactic purposes. Rather it presents a close connection between the different phases: suffice to think, for example, how in the formulation of a publishing project one has to decide *à priori*, together with the choice of the texts, for what target groups the book is destined, and, as a consequence, what must be established right from the start precisely in terms of the potential readers – even before the printing process. Thus its main physical characteristics have to be determined in advance: format, types, legibility quotient, paratext, illustrations, plates, price. Ever since the origins of typography it has been necessary to evaluate first of all the market possibilities, as the most skilled publishers have certainly done, while those who have neglected to do so, or have made miscalculations, have always faced a sales crisis or bankruptcy, as if to say that success as well as failure have precise causes which deserve equal attention from the scholar.

Variable also is the extension of the investigations on both the geographical and the physical levels. Individual research is the indispensable starting point and can be limited to circumscribed topics, such as the output of a single publisher or printer, or to the editions of a given work, and even of a single book. What is essential for the validity of the work is that the investigation, within the book's life-cycle, does not overlook the structural connections between the material support

and the textual context. In this regard, I would like to point out a recent investigation as a useful reference for its rigorous and exemplary method. It is a work by Conor Fahy who wrote the story of a curious book printed in Verona in 1622 (*Printing a Book in Verona in 1622. The Account Book of Francesco Calzolari junior, edited with an Introduction ...* Paris, Fondation Custodia, 1993). The initial documentary basis is a straightforward account book that lists the expenses incurred by a spice-trader in order to publish a reasoned and illustrated catalogue of a natural history museum. Moving on from that, the author reconstructed the editorial project, then the laboured events of the typographical production; he analysed the bibliological characteristics of the book and the textual variations collating the surviving copies, and he even identified the intermediaries of its circulation in Italy and abroad, as well as the reception by private citizens and the academic institutions. Fahy also illustrated the linguistic peculiarities of the account book and, using other archive documents as well, managed to reconstruct the figures of a hoard of people involved in the process – from the authors of the text and the illustrations, to the printer, to the external collaborators including an Inquisitor monk – revealing not just the habits of life, the methods of work, the cultural interests, but even the gastronomic tastes. In this case, the history of just one book is in the end a sample of Verona society in the early years of the seventeenth century in its cultural and social aspects, reconstructed in their intrigues and connections, rather like a set of Chinese boxes. It is thus possible, and really this is no small thing, to give a valid contribution to the history of the culture of a city by studying even a simple ‘account book’.

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Another interesting research example is supplied by Robert Darnton, in the paper quoted before, regarding the publishing history of Voltaire’s

Questions sur l'Encyclopédie, 'an important work of the Enlightenment and one that touched the lives of a great many eighteenth-century bookmen'. However, not even Darnton in his valuable 'general model for analysing the way books come into being and spread through society' takes into account the phase of the 'bibliographic information' which I think is indispensable for its multiple significance. In fact, if on the one hand the history of bibliography offers essential evidence for reconstructing the production and the dissemination of books, on the other it is indispensable for studying the history of ideas, in other words the architecture of knowledge in a given society and in a given era. For example, the ideological struggle between Reform and Counter-Reformation was primarily played with the weapons of written information, whose basic instruments were two bibliographies: the *Bibliotheca Universalis* by Conrad Gesner (Zürich, 1545) and the *Bibliotheca selecta* (Rome, 1593) by the Jesuit Antonio Possevino.⁶ Precisely the classification structure of both reveals the schemes of two contrasting visions on the encyclopaedia of knowledge. The former confirms a Humanist framework, Erasmian and Zwinglian, in which the life sciences have their objective validity and are presented in an ascendant system that places Theology at the apex as the most important science: all information and knowledge must be accessible to anyone without restriction or manipulation, simply entrusted to the responsibility of the individual.

Possevino's bibliographical system, on the other hand, presents a descendant construction that reflects the position of the Catholic Church for which the only true science is the one contained in the Holy Scriptures, inspired by God; all the life sciences derive from it and are valid only if they conform to it completely. This is a dogmatic architecture of knowledge that does not allow for discussions or personal choices, and thus 'selects' the works and the authors who are

allowed to be read (thus completing the other restrictive bibliography, the *Index librorum prohibitorum*, in which are listed the forbidden works and authors with the risk of serious spiritual sanctions, at times even physical). The submission of the life sciences to Theology has its most striking example in the condemnation of Galileo's experimental 'new science'. In Possevino's work even practical advice is given as to how to censor and physically expurgate books (a practice of which we find traces in many volumes that bear words crossed out in ink or with pages removed).

Just as important is the appearance, in the second half of the seventeenth century, of the 'current bibliography', represented by the French *Journal des sçavants* (Paris 1665) very soon imitated in Italy and England. Here we find another sample of a historical evidence. It was a new attack against the restrictions imposed by the events of the preceding ideological contrasts, which intended to spread information on 'ce qui se passe de nouveau dans la République des lettres' giving an exact record of the major books printed in Europe, with special attention devoted to science and to the practical experiments conducted in that area.

Among these journals there was the *Giornale dei letterati* (Journal of the men of letters) published in Parma in 1686 by Benedetto Bacchini, a Benedictine monk, who hoped to assist both 'men of letters and those who had plans to become so'. Less than a century later, then, we can observe a significant change by comparing Bacchini's 'indispensable obligation' to be informed about what was published in Europe, in order to pursue 'true knowledge', with the disapproval Possevino expressed in the *Bibliotheca selecta* for the 'dissemination of books' which he saw as one of the means 'under Satan's control to disturb the cultivation of intellects by means of their studies.' (*Coltura de gl' Ingegni*, chapter XLV).

Apart from learning the history of ideas, from a purely bibliographical perspective we can note that these journals provided a brief summary of the books reviewed: it was called *estrait* in French, *ristretto* in Italian, *abstract* in English; that is to say, the ancestors of the present-day *abstracts* and *current contents*, which are so common and useful in our daily work of scholarship, were born back in the seventeenth century.

A reading of Bacchini's presentation is sufficient to show an interdisciplinary vision of the encyclopaedia of knowledge rather in line with that of Gesner. He wrote: 'Being really literate entails, by its own nature, such an encyclopaedia, by means of which the cognitions of the intellect – which, though belonging to different sciences and distinct arts, require among themselves a certain subordination and dependence – come as if hand in hand to help one another and reciprocally perfect themselves'. This vision is indeed still valid at present.

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2. P. A. Orlandi, *Origine e progressi della stampa o sia dell'arte impressoria e notizie dell'opere stampate dall'anno M.CCCC.LVII. sino all'anno M.D.* Bologna, C. Pissarri, 1722 (particularly pp. 218–263).
3. G. T. Tanselle, 'Printing history and other history', *Studies in Bibliography*, vol. 48, 1995, p. 288.
4. G. T. Tanselle, 'Printing History and Other History', cit. p. 278.
5. P. Sarpi, *Scritti giurisdizionalistici* ... edited by G. Gambarin. Venice, 1958, p. 190.
6. L. Balsamo, *Bibliography: History of a Tradition*. Berkeley, Bernard M. Rosenthal, 1990 (chapter 4).