

Chapter 26

The Book Trade Comes of Age : The Sixteenth Century

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Abstract: There was no sharp break with the past, but the sixteenth century saw innovations which give the book its modern appearance. The book trade played a role in all contemporary cultural and social movements: the reformation and the counter-reformation, education, the growth of literacy. Many printers and booksellers were themselves influential figures in these movements. Governments started to exercise control over the operation of the book trade which was spreading from the major commercial centers into the smaller provincial towns. In spite of censorship a market for books was established in all classes of society by the end of the century.

Keywords: post-incunable; liturgical books; vernacular literature; humanism; the Reformation; censorship; press regulation.

Incunables and Post-incunables: Continuity and Innovation

Although it has been traditional among book collectors and printing historians to distinguish the fifteenth century with its own label of “incunable” (and to call the next twenty or so years the “post-incunable” period), the defining date of 31 December 1500 has no real importance in terms of the technologies used nor in the appearance of the books produced. There is no doubt that the typical book of 1530 looked significantly more modern than the typical book of 1490. The changes were however gradual and regional and, even by 1600, the books produced in most countries in Europe retained a recognizable national appearance in typography or in the layout of text as well as in the styles of bindings found on individual copies.

The Italian book had a stylistic reputation among purchasers, collectors and book-trade personnel which encouraged the spread of a more “modern” appearance: increasing use of roman type (and italic type) instead of gothic; greater use of white space in page layouts; greater use of geometrical patterns in layout (centered text, triangular and other shapes); and illustrations in a more “classical” style, with a clean black-on-white-ground appearance.

Although the invention of printing is regularly thought of as a “revolution”, it is clear that the change was in the volume of material available for purchase, not in the nature of the texts offered. Italian printers in the 1470s over-supplied the market with new humanist books and quickly reverted to supplying traditional texts, especially for the professional university-educated market: law, theology, medicine, as well as more basic school and college texts. Rabelais was still complaining in the 1530s of the durability of the old medieval educational texts: “For their learning was mere stupidity, and their wisdom like an empty glove; it bastardised good and noble minds and corrupted the flower of youth” (*Gargantua*).

Older texts gained a wider currency thanks to printing (Goldschmidt 1943). Study of the great scholars of the Middle Ages, theologians and lawyers in particular, was greatly facilitated by

the availability of printed texts of their works and of commentaries on them. Typically produced in very large folio volumes, this aspect of the industry must have been as welcome to the printers as it was to students who had access to easily consultable copies of basic texts, either in their own possession or in the growing libraries of the universities and religious houses of Europe.

Parish clergy and ordinary lay people were also catered for by the growth of printing. In these cases, the texts tended to be smaller and cheaper. Works by (or attributed to) famous names such as St Bonaventura or anonymous texts such as the *Dialogus linguae et ventris* (Dialogue of the tongue and the stomach) received an extra burst of life into the mid-sixteenth century. One of the staples of religious printing in many centers was the production of books of Hours for lay people to use in their devotions. Each diocese had its own variety until the Council of Trent (1545–1563) attempted to impose a standard set of liturgical texts such as the Tridentine Missal (1570), an attempt which was not entirely successful. Printers in Paris, for example, were producing several dozen editions a year of books of Hours with woodcut illustrations in the 1520s, as well as other liturgical texts for churches and religious houses such as breviaries and missals. Several centers specialized in the production of Bibles.

Vernacular literature also received a new lease of life through the printing press. The Arthurian legends, which had been immensely popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were modernized by translation into modern prose versions. These romances of chivalry were often very large books, designed at first for wealthy nobles or middle-class purchasers, but there were also “pot-boiler” versions of medieval tales which were produced in editions of eight or twelve leaves for a more popular market by specialist firms such as the Trepperel and Lotrian families in Paris. In the mid-century, a new vogue for this sort of literature arose with the creation of a range of new works such as the *Orlando furioso* and *Amadis de Gaule*, which unhinged poor Don Quixote.

Paradoxically, the *avant-garde* cultural craze of sixteenth-century Europe was the revival or “renaissance” of the literature of ancient Greece and especially ancient Rome. Colleges and “grammar” schools set up to educate boys for the professions and the universities saw their syllabuses captured by “humanists” who taught the ancient languages and their culture. The publishing industry benefited immensely, first of all in Italy where the movement began, and then across the whole of Europe. New grammar books and other teaching aids were needed and suitable editions of the basic texts in ever-increasing quantities. Popular Latin school authors such as the poets Vergil, Terence and Ovid or the prose writers Cicero and Caesar made the fortunes of printers like Sebastian Gryphius in Lyon or the Wechel family in Paris and then Frankfurt later in the century. Scholars such as Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) or William Lily (c.1466–1522) wrote grammar books, readers and reference works. Erasmus’s *Adagia* was a collection of classical proverbs each accompanied by an explanatory essay; his *Colloquia* provided specimen dialogues to help pupils learn to speak a good classical Latin. These and similar texts were printed in countless editions across Europe through the century and beyond, with print runs of 1,000 copies already at the start of the century.

The emphasis of this “humanist” education was philological: a strong bias towards the study of the languages and literatures of the classical world. A related category of texts (one in which Erasmus also specialized) was the revival of the study of the early church fathers, especially those of the Greek church, and also the study of the original languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek. These topics were looked on with suspicion at first by the ecclesiastical authorities but gradually became part of the mainstream of intellectual activity in the catholic as well as the protestant traditions. Again, the publishers sought to meet a need with the provision of

newly researched editions of the relevant texts, not always a profitable venture, as these were typically very large folio texts with extensive commentaries. Print runs for these more learned works would inevitably be smaller.

So far as we know, the technology of printing was essentially unchanged from that of the incunabular period but its practitioners were tending to specialize more: punch-cutting and type-founding in particular, and also book-binding in the larger centers; paper-making and distribution had always tended to be in the hands of separate tradesmen. The physical appearance of texts on the page did undergo changes which gradually gave the printed book a more modern and less medieval appearance. One of the main developments was the emergence of the title-page, partly for practical reasons to protect the opening page of the text from wear and tear, partly for advertising reasons: the title of the book and the name and location of its producer could be displayed prominently on this otherwise blank first page (Smith 2000). Another development of the modern page-layout was the introduction of page numbers, which did not really become common until the early sixteenth century. This went hand-in-hand with the development of indexes in scholarly works: without a page number, an index reference or a list of errata is very difficult to use.

One consequence of the ever-increasing growth of the consumer market for printed materials was pressure for a reduction in prices. The costs of producing an edition of a printed book depend on three factors: fixed overheads (accommodation, investment in equipment), cost of labor, and cost of paper; of these, the greatest area of flexibility was in reducing the page size and type size of the book so that the same amount of text could be fitted on to fewer sheets of paper. This had the effect of making the large formats (folio and quarto) less popular and the small formats (octavo and smaller) much more common. The producers of classical texts for example, turned away from large format books with text accompanied by multiple commentaries to small format editions with either plain text or texts with simple marginal notes intended for the wider school and college markets. In 1565, the Antwerp printer Christophe Plantin produced 1,250 copies of the Satires of Juvenal and Persius in octavo format (8°) which needed ten sheets; the following year he produced 1,600 copies in the smaller “sixteen-mo” format (16°) occupying six sheets; twenty years later, his Leiden office issued an even smaller 24° edition which took up only two and a half sheets.

Illustrations were found in the earliest days of printing. The sixteenth century saw the development of woodcut and copper-engraved illustrations in a wide range of books, scientific, religious and popular. There was also a spread in popularity of the use of sets of ornamental initials to decorate the starts of chapters, woodcut at first and later produced in type metal. These were accompanied by other ornamental elements: headbands and tail pieces and the development of fleurons, small squares of type with a pattern which could be assembled to make decorative title-page borders and similar ornamental features.

Scholar Printers

During the course of the sixteenth century, hundreds of printers exercised their trade in towns and cities across Europe, their names largely unknown except to specialists in historical bibliography. In fact, the printers increasingly declined in importance in the book trade compared with the bookseller-publishers. In London, for example, it was the booksellers who became dominant in the Stationers' Company. Some printers, however, achieved a celebrity in their day which they have never lost, partly because of their technical and commercial abilities but also because of their own scholarly attainments or those of the circle of collaborators they attracted. Some created family dynasties, such as Manuzio, Estienne, and Plantin.

Aldo Manuzio (in Latin, Aldus Manutius, c.1449–1515) was already known in the 1490s as an innovator in the design of his roman and greek types and the quality of scholarship in his editions of classical texts. In the sixteenth century, he launched a series of small-format editions of classical texts printed in the very first italic type, designed by Francesco Griffo. These innovations in format and type were quickly copied and became fashionable throughout Europe. The celebrated French book collector Jean Grolier (1479–1565) owned several copies of many of Aldus’s pocket classics, often with elaborate ornamental bindings.

Aldus’s trend-setting work extended beyond the vogue for classical texts. He also produced similar editions of Italian literary texts which had themselves achieved classical status by this time: an edition of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* (love sonnets) had been prepared for publication in 1501 by Pietro Bembo (1470–1547), humanist scholar and later a cardinal, who went on to produce an edition of Dante’s *Divina commedia* in 1502. Aldus’s business was carried on after his death by his father-in-law Andrea Torresano (1451–1529) and his sons and eventually by Aldus’s own son, Paolo Manuzio (1512–74), and a grandson, also called Aldus Manutius (1547–97).

Five generations of the Estienne family were engaged in printing and bookselling in Paris and Geneva in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Counting alliances by marriage, at least thirteen members of the family were engaged in the book trade, many of them using the emblem of the olive tree as their device. The founder, Henri Estienne (known as “Stephanus” in Latin), worked in Paris from 1502 until his death in 1520, producing scholarly editions of classical and philosophical texts for the university market, edited by the leading intellectuals of the day, especially Jacques Lefèvre d’Etaples. His son Robert (1503–1559) was more famous still, as a scholar, dictionary maker and editor of classical texts, as well as a printer. His interests in the texts of the Hebrew and Greek Bible led him into disfavor with the catholic religious authorities in Paris; in 1551 he transferred to Calvinist Geneva to be able to carry on this work. Several other members of the family were also important scholars and authors as well as printers or publishers, including Robert’s son, Henri Estienne the younger (1551–1598), who took over the running of the Geneva office where he published his monumental Greek dictionary, the *Thesaurus Graecae linguae* (1572).

Although Christophe Plantin (1520?–1589) was French, it was in Antwerp that he established what was to become one of the largest printing shops of the whole of sixteenth-century Europe, employing 150 men and 16 presses at the height of his career. No scholar himself, he was nevertheless the friend and business partner of many of the greatest names of the second half of the century, classicists such as Justus Lipsius, artists (his grandson commissioned family portraits from Rubens), churchmen like Benito Arias Montano, and statesmen including King Philip II of Spain. The printing house which he established “at the sign of the golden compasses” and which he left to his son-in-law and business partner Jan Moerentorf (Moretus) still stands today in the Friday-Market in Antwerp. It passed through generations of the Moretus family until it was bequeathed to the city of Antwerp as a museum of printing in 1876. Plantin was a highly successful international businessman with offices or agents in all the major European capitals. His enthusiasm for typography has left a double legacy in the quality of the volumes which he produced and in the scope and importance of the historical collections of typographical materials preserved in the Plantin-Moretus Museum.

Many other successful dynasties of printers or publishers could be cited from this period but the emphasis on famous names whose works are sought after by book collectors to this day distorts the true picture of the growth of the book trade in the sixteenth century. The expansion

in the demand for printed books was met, not by the output of the presses of these famous names, but by a much greater army of invisible artisans: small firms, with their journeymen and apprentices, helped by family members, turning out the less well-produced, less well-considered mass of printed material which survives from the period.

Religion

Religion was an inescapable feature of daily life in early-modern Europe and the new publishing industry inevitably derived considerable profit from supplying its varied needs. At first, this meant exclusively the needs of the catholic church: specialist texts for theologians and canon lawyers, practical manuals for parish clergy for preaching sermons or hearing confessions, service books for monasteries, cathedrals, and parish churches, books of Hours for lay devotions, and reading matter in the vernacular languages too, not to mention Latin Bibles. In the 1520s, for example, Latin Bibles were published in Antwerp, Basel, Cologne, Lyon, Nuremberg, Paris and Strasburg. The advent of the Reformation in its various European manifestations inevitably altered the pattern of religious published materials and enormously increased its volume.

It is much disputed as to whether the Reformation could have happened without the power of the printing press to distribute its message. Its development would certainly have been different. Martin Luther (1483?–1546) initiated the German Reformation with his protest against the sale of indulgences (Wittenberg, 1517). The controversies which followed were characterized by floods of pamphlets from all sides of the dispute, many written by Luther himself (two dozen in 1520 alone). In France in the 1520s, the group known as the *évangéliques*, influenced partly by Luther and partly by the work of Erasmus, had their own publishing program, supported by elements at court with intermittent periods of repression, such as the ineffective decree by King François I to ban printing from his kingdom (January 1535) following a spate of anti-sacramentarian pamphlets (the *affaire des placards*); the decree had no noticeable effect on the volume of printed materials recorded for that year.

One of the reformers' goals was to give a better scholarly understanding of the texts of the Bible through study of their Hebrew and Greek originals and to provide direct access to the Bible for the laity. Erasmus's edition of the Greek New Testament first appeared in 1519; his Latin paraphrases of the Greek New Testament (1517 and later) were frequently reprinted. Luther's translation of the Bible into German (New Testament 1522, complete Bible 1534) was the first of a series of new vernacular translations: Dutch (1526), French (1530), Italian (1530), English (1535), Spanish (New Testament 1543), Polish (1561), all opposed officially by the Catholic Church.

If Luther's Reformation was essentially German-speaking, the other main protestant group, led by Jean Calvin (1509–1564), was French-speaking, though based in Geneva, just outside the territory of the French crown and therefore beyond the reach of French ecclesiastical authority. The first edition of Calvin's *Institution of the Christian religion* was printed in Latin in Basel in 1536, with a dedication to the King of France. By the time of Calvin's death, there had been ten editions of the work in Latin, seventeen in French, as well as editions in English, Italian and Dutch. Calvin's Geneva was a publishing phenomenon: from being an unimportant printing town in the 1530s, it became the center of a propaganda industry by the 1550s. Robert Estienne transferred his business there from Paris in 1551, as had Josse Badius's son Conrad in 1549. Another important printer established in Geneva was Jean Crespin (c.1520–1572) who printed much material for the Calvinist church as well as educational and classical texts. His great personal contribution to the Calvinist Reformation was his *Book of martyrs*, which

graphically documented their sufferings at the hands of the catholic authorities. First published in 1554, it was constantly revised and augmented and went through fifteen editions in twenty years. The presence of English protestant exiles in Geneva during the reign of Queen Mary led Crespian to a collaboration with John Foxe (1517–1587), whose own *Book of martyrs* (1563), frequently reprinted, played a similar role in the documentation of the English Reformation and was regularly found among the books in English churches. Another important Calvinist best-seller was the metrical psalms composed by the French royal poet Clément Marot (1496–1544) and often published with copies of the French Calvinist Bible. The English equivalent was the metrical psalter of Sternhold and Hopkins, first published in 1549 and remaining in use until the nineteenth century.

The Council of Trent (1547–1563) was originally intended to address some of the abuses which the Lutherans had protested about but soon embarked on a wholesale restatement of catholic doctrine and liturgy to mark out the ground against the reformers. The three sets of sessions of the Council generated a whole literature of position statements, distributed all over Europe. The new liturgies required the abandonment of old service books and the printing of large quantities of new missals, breviaries, hours, etc. Some printers exploited these opportunities very successfully. Christophe Plantin who, in spite his own apparently unorthodox religious beliefs, held privileges from the Spanish crown for the production of the new liturgies in Spanish territories, including the Low Countries and the New World, was less successful, as his royal Spanish patron was not a good payer of bills.

Another aspect of the Counter-Reformation which had an impact on the market for books was the founding of new religious orders, especially ones with an educational mission. The Jesuit order established colleges all over Europe which attracted the sons of the nobility and gentry. Their educational reforms created an opportunity for whole series of new textbooks and further stimulated the demand for editions of the classical authors who provided the staple reading of the Jesuit schools.

A further characteristic of religious practice at the time was the attempt to control what could be safely read by the populace and to suppress what could not. In the catholic world, the major development here was the creation of a series of Indexes of Prohibited Books (*Index librorum prohibitorum*), the printing of which provided further useful employment for printers. Books surviving from libraries of the period often show the marks of censorship as college or monastic authorities tried to expurgate texts which were otherwise thought to be worth studying.

The religious turmoils of the second half of the century stimulated a flood of printed propaganda. The French Wars of Religion (1562–1598) generated an immense volume of pamphlets from all sides as the focus of the conflict shifted between catholic and protestant, crown and aristocracy, Spain and France. In England, Calvinist literature was smuggled in from Geneva or the Low Countries in Mary's reign; in Elizabeth's, heterodox works had to be imported or produced clandestinely by the protestant Marprelate Press (1588–1589) or the catholic English Secret Presses (1587 onwards).

England's own Reformation also had a role for printed books. Henry VIII and Bishop John Fisher published anti-Lutheran tracts in the early 1520s but by the mid-1530s the beginnings of the English Reformation saw the publication of English-language versions of tracts by German reformers. The history of the English Bible and the English Prayer Book is well-known, but the statistics of publication are worth stressing: the *Short-Title Catalogue of Books printed in England, Scotland & Ireland (1475–1640)* lists twelve editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*

printed in 1549, the first year of publication; fifty years later, four or five editions a year are still being produced. The continuous availability of the Bible in English is similarly impressive: there were seven editions of the Great Bible in 1539 and 1540; in the 1590s, there were twenty-two editions of the Geneva Bible and two of the Bishops' Bible. The existence of the Church of England as an English-language state church ensured a continuous demand for Bibles, prayer books and expository materials, including controversial works published abroad by its Puritan and Catholic opponents.

The book trade also attempted to meet the needs of other religious communities beyond the main areas of Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist Europe. In particular, the liturgical needs of the orthodox churches, both Greek and Russian, started to appear in print, necessitating the preparation of special greek and cyrillic founts. For a long time Venice remained the center for the printing of orthodox liturgical books, mainly in Greek but also in Slavonic. The first cyrillic liturgical text was a book of Hours, printed in Moscow in 1565, the second dated book produced in Russia, the first being an edition of *The Acts of the Apostles* printed in 1564. Jewish religious texts in Hebrew were also produced, especially in Italy and in Eastern Europe.

Regulation

Although the civil and ecclesiastical authorities felt the need to keep an eye on the activities of printers, booksellers and even purchasers of books, members of the book trade often looked to the same authorities for support and protection in their activities.

In Paris, members of the book trade fell under the general jurisdiction of the University, which appointed twenty-four *libraires jurés* (sworn booksellers) as their intermediaries in administering oversight of the trade. In addition to the status which this gave, the *libraires jurés* had exemptions from taxes as members of the University. Authors and producers in France enjoyed protection for their wares through *privilèges* issued by the state authorities: a new work could be protected from reprinting by the award of a privilege for a limited number of years; the award was made by a court, either the royal court, or in Paris by the Parlement or by the Prévôt, or by one of the provincial parlements. Infringement of the privilege could be pursued through the courts but the privileges sometimes stated the maximum price which could be charged for the book. Privileges were first issued by the Senate in Venice and were also found elsewhere in Italy and in Germany; they represented a step in the development of the concept of copyright.

In England the system was somewhat different. The Stationers' Company under its royal charter of 1557 was empowered to regulate the book trade (essentially in London) on behalf of its members and of the civil authorities. The Company kept a register in which its members could pay to have their new publications recorded. This gave them protection against reprinting, with the Company as the body which was empowered to enforce seizures and fines for infringements.

State and religious authorities in a number of countries had a system whereby new books had to be "licensed" before publication to ensure their religious conformity. The role of the *Index* in catholic countries has already been mentioned. The other authority which came to concern itself with book censorship was the Inquisition, especially in Spanish territories.

Geography: the Continued Spread of Printing Centers

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, printers had established themselves in all the major cities of Europe, with Paris, Venice and Lyon as the three main publishing centers. Paris was a university and administrative center; Venice was the hub of an extensive trading empire; and

Lyon had one of the most important European trade fairs, held four times a year, where merchants could arrange deals and settle accounts. By the end of the century, Venice had declined; the Lyon fairs had become less important; Antwerp had become more significant as a trading center; and the German fairs at Frankfurt and also at Leipzig achieved a predominant role in the European book supply system.

In all the major towns of Europe which had a university or college or a significant legal or administrative center, the printing industry had probably already been active since the fifteenth century. Cities such as Strasburg or Basel continued to have a significant presence in the book trade well into the sixteenth century. In the smaller centers, a printer may have done little book printing but would have had work producing material for local needs: pamphlets, administrative documents, etc., and would also have functioned as a bookseller, a bookbinder and often as a more general merchant. As the century progressed, this pattern of diversification into smaller urban centers continued, stimulated by young men looking for new opportunities to establish themselves in the trade and civic pride on the part of municipalities eager to support a modernizing initiative. In France, Toulouse continued to have a significant publishing industry throughout the century, supported by a university and the regional Parlement. Bordeaux likewise had a succession of booksellers who occasionally published titles themselves, even if only edicts of the Parlement or books for the local college; later in the century Simon de Millanges established a successful printing business (1572–1623) which served the needs of the Collège de Guyenne and the new Jesuit college. On the other hand, only a handful of imprints are recorded for a small town like Saumur, and most of these are Religious War pamphlets from around 1590. In Italy and Germany the existence of many smaller independent cities and principalities led to a good spread of regional printing and publishing businesses. The index to the British Library's *Short Title Catalogue* of books printed in Germany up to 1600 shows 150 German and Austrian towns with printing or publishing activities. For Italy the figure is 130 towns.

The situation in England was slightly different. Although spasmodic attempts to establish presses are recorded for provincial towns (York, 1506–1519; Canterbury, 1533–1556; Ipswich, 1548; Worcester, 1549–1553), printing was essentially concentrated in the capital, with some other activity in the two university cities. This situation was formalized with the established of the Stationers' Company when printing and publishing essentially became a monopoly of the Company and its members.

Many towns which did not yet have a printer would nevertheless have a bookshop, especially if there was a college or other local market to be supplied. Although literacy in the early modern period was predominantly an urban phenomenon, chapmen carried small texts into the country districts and even shepherds are recorded as making determined efforts to learn to read, particularly if they had religious interests.

The Book Trades

The book trade had a multiplicity of specializations. If the pressmen and compositors are the most obvious, behind them we find punch cutters and type founders, ink makers and paper makers, all developing into quite distinct crafts by the mid-century. Sale of the output of the presses required the services of bookbinders and of booksellers, and more often than not a distribution network, especially for scholarly works in Latin, which required an international market to recover their costs. In the first half of the century, Parisian printers produced books for distribution in many provincial towns (especially Lyon and Rouen) as well as abroad (e.g. London and Louvain). Already by the early years of the century, the dominant figure in the book trade was the *marchant libraire* or merchant bookseller, what we would call today a

publisher and wholesaler. Even a major figure such as Aldus Manutius needed backers who provided financial support for his operations. Some of these financiers operated on a European scale, such as Anton Koberger in Nuremberg or the Giunti family in Venice or Jean Petit in Paris. As has already been mentioned, the major fairs provided the opportunity for publishers and booksellers to meet, place orders and settle accounts.

The importation of books was usually subjected to control by the state authorities to guard against the introduction of religious or politically seditious works. The inevitable consequence was that such texts would be smuggled: there were cases of smuggling Lutheran writings into East Anglia in 1520s and 30s; printers in Geneva set up extensive networks for getting Calvinist works to their markets in the protestant communities in France; at the end of the century, catholic texts were produced by presses in Douai and Rouen for distribution to recusant communities both in England and on the continent. In Spain, it is generally believed that excessive censorship caused stagnation in the book trade by the mid-century.

Customers

Authors in sixteenth-century Europe had few rights. They owned their copyright so long as they held the only copy of their work. To get a new work printed, they had to persuade a bookseller or a printer to invest capital, labor and materials in its production. This would frequently involve paying some or all of the costs in return for a share in the copies printed. Contracts of this sort survive in increasing numbers from this period, typically specifying payment for the cost of paper (Richardson 1999:58–69).

Purchasers of books dealt with a retail bookseller, as today, either in person or by correspondence. The title page of a book would typically state the address of its publisher and customers no doubt knew who specialized in what. In Paris in the first half of the century, scholarly texts might be bought from Henri Estienne at the sign of St John the Baptist opposite the Law Schools or from Gilles de Gourmont at the sign of the Three Crowns on the rue Saint Jacques. Simon Vostre specialized in books of Hours at the sign of St John the Evangelist on the rue Neufve Nostre Dame. In London and in Paris, the booksellers and printers tended to congregate in one area, the University quarter in Paris, and St Paul's Churchyard in London. In the provinces, a customer would get a local bookseller to order from a supplier in the capital or might get a relative there to buy for him.

Who bought books? A lot can be deduced from the range of titles produced. Three-quarters of the books published in the fifteenth century were in Latin; by the end of the sixteenth century, over half were in the vernacular languages (Hirsch 1967:132). This indicates that a large proportion of book buyers still belonged to the educated and professional classes whose had learned Latin at school and university: doctors, lawyers, clerics, teachers, as well as those from well-to-do families who had received a similar education. Nevertheless, the growing proportion of books in the vernacular languages shows the growth of literacy in the general population, especially in urban areas in the protestant countries which put a high value on the ability to read the Bible.

How much did a customer have to pay for a printed book? In mid-sixteenth-century England, the popular pamphlet-sized *A lytell geste of Robin Hood* cost two (old) pence, whereas Chaucer's *Works* cost five shillings bound or three shillings unbound (Bennett 1950:176–77). Inflation was of course a constant factor at this time and it is difficult to relate prices to wages. Clearly books did sell and in considerable quantities. For the first time, a living author could become aware that he had access to a far wider public than his immediate circle of patrons.

Clément Marot, *valet de chambre* and royal poet to King François I, was also a best seller: his *Adolescence Clementine* went through about forty editions between its first appearance in 1532 and 1538 when he published his collected poems, which had gone through a further twenty editions by the time of his death in 1544.

Look to the Future

Just as the book trade in 1501 was not radically different from that in 1499, so the advent of the seventeenth century would not bring immediate change in trends. The academic world still needed a good range of classical and religious texts; religious controversies continued to flourish; literacy continued to spread and the proportion of Latin books continued to decline. The economics of the printing trade favored the rise of consortia of booksellers such as the Compagnie de la Grand' Navire in Paris (1585–1641), forming what we would consider to be a publishing company specializing in the financing of editions of the church fathers. Scientific and reference publishing was not unknown in the sixteenth century (Nicolaus Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus* was first published in 1543) but was to see a great increase in the next century as the Scientific Revolution progressed. Similarly the demand for news books would develop strongly but was not unknown during the upheavals of the Wars of Religion. Newspaper publication however was still for the future.

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