

Twenty Years After

About twenty years ago, I found myself sitting around a lunch table with a group of academics and librarians in Lawrence, Kansas, where I was paying a pastoral call on Alexandra Mason at the Spencer Research Library. At one point during our conversation, we began talking about rising prices: about how much everything cost now, and about how little everything used to cost. One person at the table remembered when butter was 99¢ a pound; another person, somewhat older, remembered when butter was 49¢ a pound; someone else remembered when the subway in New York City cost a dime; and so on.

Now one of the persons also sitting at this lunch table was a retired University of Kansas English professor, nearly twice the age of anyone else present, and he was a wise old fellow. After listening to us natter on for a while, he stopped our little conversation by saying lazily, “Don’t play this game with me, kids; you’ll lose.”

In speaking about the beginnings of the American Printing History Association, I feel a bit as if I’m still at that table back in Kansas, trying to talk about the way things used to be to an audience that includes persons both much older and much wiser than I am, and with much longer memories. On the other hand, though I am not an English professor and though I am not yet retired, I am beginning to feel that I have more and more in common with the wise old fellow at that lunch table. My parents and their friends always remembered exactly where they were and just what they were doing when they heard the news of the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. I was born in 1941. Persons in my generation can all tell you exactly where they were and just what they were doing on that day in November 1963 when we heard the news about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. My undergraduate students at the University of Virginia (UVa) were born in the early and mid-1970s, about ten years after the death of Kennedy. I suspect that they look upon the Vietnam War the way I look upon World War

II. (Admittedly, the only thing I remember about World War II is ration stamps. The ration stamps for shoes had airplanes printed on them, and I remember dropping our family’s entire supply of shoe stamps, one by one, down the hot-air register into the furnace below, because I wanted to see the airplanes fly; I remember this little air show primarily because I remember the licking I got for launching it.)

I don’t expect my current undergraduate students to remember either World War II or the Vietnam War, but they still have the capacity to surprise me. I have a teaching story I like to use in class that some of you will have heard me tell before (a circumstance, I regret to say, that has never stopped me from telling a story again). I told this story two days ago to my students in an undergraduate history course at UVa called “The Printing Press as An Agent of Change, 1650–1900.” It concerns a German woman who came to New York City for the first time in the 1940s, shortly after World War II. Someone took her out to lunch, where she ordered a cup of tea with her meal. She was startled when the waiter set a pot of hot water in front of her along with an empty saucer and cup containing a teabag. She had never seen or even heard of a teabag before, a Yankee innovation that made its way to Europe rather slowly and not to Germany at all—or at least not to her.

The woman was absolutely delighted with her teabag: so tidy, she said, so American. She dunked her teabag into her pot of hot water, let it steep, poured some tea from the pot into her cup, then looked around for some sugar. Discovering a bowl of wrapped sugar cubes on the restaurant table, she picked one of them up, thought for a second, and then confidently dropped the still-wrapped sugar cube directly into her cup of hot tea.

There was no reaction whatsoever from my students when I finished my story. Then one of them asked me, “What’s a wrapped sugar cube?” Surprise: we don’t have wrapped sugar cubes any more. We have packets of loose sugar now. My students knew about Domino Dots—unwrapped sugar cubes the size and shape of dice—but they didn’t know that any-

body had ever put a paper wrapping around a single little rectangular solid of sugar, water-soluble or otherwise. In Virginia, at least, there apparently hasn't been a wrapped sugar cube on a restaurant table or anywhere else for more than a decade. I think that my students only really began to understand what I was talking about when I told them that the wrapped sugar cubes were about the same size and shape as a wrapped piece of Bazooka bubble gum.

So here I am. I've a feeling I'm not in Kansas yet, in the position of that retired English professor; on the other hand—slowly, slowly—I'm beginning to feel the mantle of old-timer status settling down upon me. In 1963, when I came to New York City to live, the subway cost 15¢. If I don't remember Pearl Harbor, I remember the day Kennedy died, and I remember the Vietnam War, and I know what a wrapped sugar cube is. These reflections, then, from someone who is neither here nor there; I do remember, and remember very well, the life and times of the founding of the American Printing History Association.

II

The biggest national news in the fall of 1973 was the continuing saga of Watergate. Two of the key audiotapes recording conversations in the Oval Room of the White House and subpoenaed by the commission of inquiry had disappeared, and the House Judiciary Committee began investigations into impeachment proceedings. Nixon vowed he would not resign. The Senate began hearings on Nixon's nomination of Gerald R. Ford for vice president, to replace the disgraced Spiro Agnew. Financier Robert Vesco was arrested in the Bahamas. Citibank lowered its prime rate to 9.5 percent. The big movie in the fall of 1973 was *The Exorcist*. Norman Mailer published a biography of Marilyn Monroe, and Erica Jong produced *Fear of Flying*. (That does seem longer than twenty years ago, doesn't it? Now it's *Fear of Fifty*.)

On the international scene in the fall of 1973, Arab nations continued to decrease oil production, embargoing oil shipments to the United States altogether because of our pro-Israel position, thus intensifying a world-wide energy crisis. The United Kingdom declared a fuel emergency because of labor disputes in

the coal and electrical power industries, and the Bank of England raised the minimum lending rate to 13%. Australian Patrick White won the Nobel Prize for Literature; Henry Kissinger won the Nobel Peace Prize, causing a scandal. Walt Kelly, the creator of Pogo, died at age 60; the poet W. H. Auden died at 66.

In California, the Oakland Athletics won the World Series for the second year in a row. In Texas, the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport—the world's largest—was dedicated. In a New Haven court, two unfrocked Byzantine priests pleaded guilty to a conspiracy charge in a case stemming from the theft of rare books and maps from the Yale University Library. In New York City, Philharmonic Hall became Avery Fisher Hall. And in New Rochelle, New York, Dr. J. Ben Lieberman and his wife, Elizabeth, hosted one of their Quiet Evenings (in this instance for 150 persons) on 10 November 1973, to celebrate the 21st anniversary of their hobby press imprint, the Herity Press.

The American Printing History Association has a single founder, though there were other persons who helped. The idea for the organization was very much that of Ben Lieberman, a public relations executive and active amateur printer who owned one of the Albion flatbed platen presses on which William Morris's Kelmscott *Chaucer* was printed. At the November 10 party in New Rochelle, Lieberman announced his intention of founding an American printing historical society on the model of the Printing Historical Society based in London, and possibly as a branch of the British organization. James Mosley, the librarian of the St Bride Printing Library, was present; and he and others encouraged Lieberman to set up an independent organization rather than trying to form a cadet group.

Lieberman began by appointing an organizing committee whose members included the librarian and journalist Catherine Tyler Brody; hobby printer Stuart Dobson; rare book librarian and historian Joseph R. Dunlap; book designer Philip Grushkin; Elizabeth Harris, Curator of Graphic Arts at the Smithsonian; Jean Peters, librarian of the R. R. Bowker Company; the printing equipment collectors Penny and Martin K. Specter; Susan Otis Thompson of the Columbia

University School of Library Service; and me. The committee met twice in the early months of 1974 to discuss what was very briefly called the American Printing Historical Society. My one contribution to the founding of this organization was to beg the other persons present at the organizational meetings to drop the “Historical” in the title in favor of just plain “History” (I had never quite been able to make sense out of the British “Printing Historical Society”), and the American Printing History Association, or APHA, it became. There was some sentiment in favor of pronouncing the acronym AYfa; but AFfa seemed more euphonious, and this was the pronunciation that prevailed.

At the CUNY Graduate Center on West 42nd Street in New York City on 15 May 1974, the organizing committee convened the founding meeting of American Printing Historical Society. The original officers elected at this meeting were J. Ben Lieberman, president; Catherine Tyler Brody, vice president; Joseph R. Dunlap, secretary; and Stuart Dobson, treasurer. Dues were set at \$5 per year. The original trustees were Philip Grushkin; the book designer Herbert Johnson; Elizabeth Harris; Dr Robert L. Leslie, the convener of the celebrated Heritage of the Graphic Arts lecture series in New York City; printing association executive Paul Noble; Jean Peters; Martin K. Speckter; Susan Otis Thompson; and myself.

The objectives of the organization were to encourage the study of printing history, especially but by no means only American printing history, in its whole range—from a world context to national, regional, state, and local interests. The word *printing* was to be understood as including all of the arts and technologies that lead to or stem from printing, the book arts, and letter forms. The organization would encourage the study of printing through publications, exhibitions, conferences, information services, lectures, social events, and so on, at both national and local levels. The organization would also encourage the preservation of the artifacts of printing and support the development and maintenance of libraries and museums for the preservation and use of oral, written, and printed records and other source materials for printing history.

Even before the May 1974 meeting, Ben Lieberman and APHA’s other organizers had established a group of standing committees; their chairs included Morris Gelfand and E. H. (Pat) Taylor, both of whom were to be instrumental in a variety of ways in ensuring the success of the organization.

The founding of a New York Chapter of APHA followed almost immediately after the founding meeting of the national organization, in June 1974, with Chandler Grannis, retired editor of *Publishers Weekly*, as president; Maud Cole, chief of the Rare Book Division at the New York Public Library (NYPL), as vice president; Stanley T. Lewis, of the Library Science Department, Queens College, as secretary; and Mary Ann O’Brian Malkin, field editor for *AB Bookman’s Weekly*, as treasurer. The original NY Chapter trustees included Edward Gottschall, executive director of the American Institute of Graphic Arts; publisher Helen Macy; Jack Golden, of Designers 3; Karl Kup, retired curator of the Prints Division at NYPL; Ephram Benguiat, of the International Typeface Corporation; and James P. DeLuca, Chairman of the Graphic Arts Department at New York City Community College, CUNY.

Well before the end of 1974, APHA inevitably had a newsletter, with a stylish masthead designed by Philip Grushkin and with Catherine Tyler Brody as editor—a position she was to fill with great distinction for the next several years. The first issues of the APHA newsletter began as they were to continue, carrying news not only about APHA itself but also about local and national events in the world of the history of the book. Here you could read that Sandra Kirshenbaum had begun to publish a new journal called *Fine Print* in San Francisco; that the Bowne & Company printing office had opened at the South Street Seaport Museum in Lower Manhattan and that the Center for Book Arts had acquired space on Bleecker Street; or that Jacob Blanck, editor of *Bibliography of American Literature*, had died.

APHA was formally incorporated as a not-for-profit organization under the laws of the State of New York in September 1974. Its first annual meeting was held in New York City in the auditorium of the CUNY Graduate Center in January 1975, by which time the

organization already had more than 450 members.

There were some false starts and growing pains in the early years of the association. At the first annual meeting, President Lieberman announced the formation of APHA chapters in Boston, Philadelphia, Washington DC, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco; but somehow the regional chapters never materialized (a point to which I shall return later). A number of APHA's original standing committees never really got off the ground—the Artifacts Preservation Committee, for example, and the Public Relations Committee and the Research Committee; and a number of the early officers, committee chairs, and trustees both of the national organization and of the nascent regional chapters never became very active in the organization.

During its first year of existence, APHA spent a considerable amount of time and money on the construction of a prototype for a two-thirds-size wooden common press. The idea was that as a Bicentennial project APHA would undertake the manufacture of hundreds of these presses and distribute them widely to schools, libraries, children's museums, and other educational institutions throughout the United States during 1976 and thereafter. It was hoped that presses could be sold for about \$600 each. But purists on the APHA board and elsewhere disliked shortcuts taken in the design of the pint-size press, and external funding for volume production never materialized.

Despite the failure of this project, and despite the non-materialization of regional chapters, the likelihood of the overall success of the American Printing History Association was never in question: the times were right. By the time of APHA's second annual meeting in January 1976, membership stood at more than 700. It was at this meeting that the first annual APHA individual award was given for a distinguished contribution to the history of American printing. Inevitably, the award went to Dr Robert L. Leslie, who had just celebrated his 90th birthday.

The first and very successful annual APHA one-day conference was held in early October 1976 at Columbia University, the result of a lot of hard work by APHA's Education Committee and its founding chair, Morris A.

Gelfand; more than 200 persons attended from all over the United States. The conference theme was "Typographic America: A Bicentennial Perspective"; speakers included Paul Doebler, Joseph R. Dunlap, Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, Leona Rostenberg, Madeleine B. Stern, John Tebbel, and Edwin Wolf 2d. APHA has held a conference every year since 1976, and the annual conference continues to be one of the jewels in the organization's crown.

In 1978, Catherine Tyler Brody succeeded Ben Lieberman as president of APHA. In his farewell address, Lieberman voiced his continuing hope for growth of a system of APHA regional chapters. But his hope was not to be realized. With honorable exceptions, notably the New York- and Boston-based New England chapters, APHA regional chapters resisted formation in the late 1970s, just as—despite encouraging noises from the Chesapeake and elsewhere—they still do. To understand some of the reasons for the failure of an APHA chapter system and some of the alternate courses the organization took (and might still take), we now need to widen our scope to include some of the other events that were going on in the world of book history twenty years ago. I should like to take a look at the broader picture and draw some general conclusions from the past twenty years of American book history, before returning to the fortunes of the American Printing History Association.

III

In the United States and in Europe alike, the 1970s and '80s were characterized by an enormous growth of interest in the history of the book and related fields. The period saw the founding of any number of new printing history and related societies, not only organizations with a general focus such as the American Printing History Association, the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand, and the Institute of Bibliography and Textual Criticism at Leeds, but also specialist groups concerned with paper (the Friends of the Dard Hunter Paper Museum and the Friends of RittenhouseTown in Philadelphia); printed ephemera (the Ephemera Society); type (the American Typesetters Fellowship); and illustration (the

American Historical Print Collectors Association and the Poster Society). This period also saw the founding of the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, the Society for Textual Scholarship, and the Association for Documentary Editing. Various regional groups were founded whose interests include printing history: the Bibliographical Society of Northern Illinois; the Colophon Club in San Francisco; the Minnesota Center for Book Arts in Minneapolis; WASHRAG (the Washington DC area rare book group); and, a little later, the Iowa Center for the Book. Older organizations such as the Bibliographical Society of America, the Guild of Book Workers, and the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the American Library Association all began to increase their level of activity.

It used to be said that whenever three Americans get together, the first thing they do is establish a newspaper. It has certainly been the case over the past twenty years that whenever a society with bibliographical interests has been established in the United States, a newsletter and other publications appear shortly thereafter. The APHA newsletter was established in 1974, several months before the organization's first annual meeting; and its scholarly twice-yearly journal, *Printing History*, followed in 1978 under the founding editorship of Susan Otis Thompson. The Friends of the Dard Hunter Paper Museum produced a newsletter called *Bull and Branch*; the Society for Textual Scholarship sponsored an occasional hard-bound volume of articles called *Text*; the Bibliographical Society of Northern Illinois published a journal called *Analytical and Enumerative Bibliography*; the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ALA produced both a newsletter and a journal called *Rare Book and Manuscript Librarianship*; and so on.

The 1970s and '80s saw the establishment of any number of independent newsletters and journals, as well—both general publications (my own *Bibliography Newsletter* and the Gale Research Corporation's *Pages*) and more specialist publications in such areas as printing (Sandra Kirshenbaum's *Fine Print*, James Moran's *Printing Art*, Michael Phillips's *The Printer*, *Matrix* from the Whittington Press, and W. Thomas Taylor's *Bookways*);

typography (*Visible Language*); papermaking (*Hand Papermaking*); paper marbling (*Ink and Gall*); book collecting (*Bibliognost*, which became *The Book Collector's Market*, which became *The American Book Collector*—which disappeared, *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review*, and—for miniature books—*The Microbibliophile*); bookbinding and conservation (*Abbey Newsletter*, *The Alkaline Paper Advocate*, *Conservation Administration News*, and *Trade Bindings Research Newsletter*); analytical bibliography (Joseph Katz's *Proof* and *The Direction Line* from Warner Barnes and John Horden); book history (Michael Turner's *Publishing History*); and so on. Various institutions and organizations began to issue bookish journals: *The New Bookbinder* from the Designer Binders; *The Paper Conservator* from the Institute for Paper Conservation, the *Guild of Book Workers Newsletter*; the newsletter of the American Typecasters Fellowship; *U&lc* from the International Typeface Corporation; the newsletter of the Rare Books Group of the Library Association in the UK; *Festina Lente* from RIT's School of Printing. Not all of these journals survived, but most of them did; and keeping up with current American publications concerned wholly or in part with the history of the book became an increasingly daunting task.

You could read more and more about the history of the book as the 1970s progressed; you could also hear more about it, for there was a burst of new and revived public lecture series: the Lew D. Feldman Lectures at the University of Texas, the Richard H. Shoemaker Lectures at Rutgers, the Maury A. Bromsen Lectures at Boston Public Library, the Rollins Lectures on the Typographic Tradition at Yale, the Malkin Lectures at Columbia. The annual Bowker lecture was reestablished in New York City. The British Library inaugurated its Panizzi Lectures. APHA itself instituted an annual Lieberman Lecture in memory of our founder.

Libraries began installing in-house book conservation studios, and the field of book preservation took off. A National Conservation Advisory Council was formed. The Smithsonian's Museum of American History unveiled a great Hall of Graphic Arts; Franklin Court, including the recreation of an

18th-century printing shop, opened in Philadelphia. There were great national and international conferences and congresses, perhaps most notably the 1976 Caxton quincentenary in London. But there were also the 1978 Pittsburgh fine bookbinding conference, the four-day 1980 RBMS pre-conference in Boston with its theme of "Books and Society in History," the deaccessioning conference at Brown in 1981, and the fine printing conference at Columbia in 1982.

Bibliographical tools, toys, bells, and whistles began to appear: the Lindstrand Comparator in 1973, for instance, and later the McLeod collator. The Smithsonian instituted a series of foundry printing type revivals, in association with Pat Taylor's Out of Sorts Letter Foundery. Clinton Sisson began to manufacture full-size wooden common presses. You could acquire a full-size Rosetta Stone in styrofoam, or a reproduction of an Albion press, or a T-shirt featuring William Caxton's colophon; you could buy the Elmete Press's *Nature and Making of Papyrus*, with a genuine sheet of papyrus laid in (shepherd's pie peppered with genuine shepherd on top).

The University Press of Virginia began distributing the books of such bibliographically interesting organizations as the American Antiquarian Society (AAS), the Grolier Club, and the Bibliographical Society of America, in addition to those of its old standby, the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia; the twice-yearly appearance of the press's catalog was an eagerly-awaited event. Charles Chadwyck-Healey began issuing massive sets in microform of printers' and publishers' archives. Facsimile texts and translations appeared everywhere you looked: the Gregg series of printing manuals, and Garland's series on the English book trade, on 19th-century printing history, and later, on bookbinding history. Kraus Thompson published the catalog of the American Type Founders Company; G. K. Hall published the catalogs of the Columbia University School of Library Service and the Wing Foundation at the Newberry.

New academic and apprenticeship programs sprang up. Rare books at Columbia, winter and summer, days and evenings; papermaking in Brookston, Indiana; bibliog-

raphy at Leeds; fine printing at the University of Alabama and Mills College; conservation and preservation, at Columbia again; bookbinding and conservation at Iowa. There were new fellowships in bibliography: the Munby Fellowship at Cambridge University, the Bryant Fellowships at Harvard, and the fellowship programs of the Bibliographical Society of America and more recently the Bibliographical Society in London. Short-term fellowships became available for study at the AAS, the Newberry, the Huntington, the John Carter Brown Library.

Important new books seemed to appear almost every week: Philip Gaskell's *New Introduction to Bibliography*, D. W. Krummel's *Guide for Dating Early Published Music*, Maurice Annenberg's *Type Foundries of America and Their Catalogs*, Jean Peters's *Book Collecting: A Modern Guide*, Elizabeth L. Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, and Robert Darnton's *The Business of Enlightenment*. The Pierpont Morgan Library undertook a brilliant series of important exhibitions on bookish subjects, with catalogs to match; and a wonderful succession of bookish exhibitions unrolled at Harvard, NYPL, Princeton, the Library of Congress (LC), the University of Chicago, and elsewhere: *Paper in Prints* at the National Gallery, *Printer's Choice* at the Grolier Club, *A Quarter of a Millennium* and *Legacies of Genius* in Philadelphia, *The Fat and the Lean* and *Printing and Writing for the Blind* at the Smithsonian in Washington DC, *Time Sanctified* at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, a major Audubon show at the National Gallery. It was an exciting time.

Some of the new bibliographical and printing history journals I mentioned earlier were intended to be primarily scholarly in nature: the Society for Textual Scholarship's occasional serial, *Text*, for example, or the American Printing History Association's own *Printing History*. Others had a stronger interest in the contemporary book arts and were only partly oriented towards historical studies; but there was—and in this country there continues to be—considerable movement and overlap between the present-oriented and past-oriented groups: for example, the Friends of Dard Hunter Paper Museum, which began as a support group for a museum of paper histo-

ry established by Dard Hunter located in Appleton, Wisconsin. The museum has since moved south, from Wisconsin to Georgia, where the Dard Hunter materials form the core of a new American Museum of Papermaking located at the Institute of Paper Science and Technology in Atlanta. The support group has given itself a new and broader name, the Friends of Dard Hunter, with the purpose of providing a forum “to exchange information and educate its members and the public about the art, craft, history, science, and technology of papermaking, the book arts, and the other diverse interests which captured the imagination of Dard Hunter.”

The Friends of Dard Hunter demonstrate one of the broad points I wish to make about the progress of printing history in the United States over the past two decades: the intermingling of historical and contemporary book-arts concerns at both scholarly and popular levels. What is true of papermaking is also true of, for example, bookbinding: the *Journal* of the Guild of Book Workers is as likely to review a book on contemporary fine bookbinding as it is a work of historical scholarship in this field; the *Abbey Newsletter*, though primarily concerned with book preservation and conservation, is full of information of interest to binding historians. The newsletter of the American Printing History Association has always contained much of interest to hobby hand printers as well to printing historians. An issue of Tom Taylor’s *Bookways* might feature both an article on active American craft binders and a long report on a scholarly conference. And what does one make of a periodical like *U&lc* (for “Upper and Lower Case”), the quarterly journal of the International Typeface Corporation (ITC)? *U&lc* was founded in 1974 by Edward Rondthaler, one of the fathers of the American photocomposition industry and (with Aaron Burns and Herb Lubalin) co-founder of ITC. This heavily illustrated periodical is published in a tabloid-newspaper format, and its focus is on current trends in typography—especially as revealed in the type designs promulgated by its sponsor, ITC! Nevertheless, no serious student of the history of twentieth-century American typography can afford to ignore this journal—or indeed, would want to: its design and contents in the

1970s and ’80s were irresistible.

Other examples of the combination of popular and scholarly interests come readily to mind: the activities of the American Typesetting Fellowship, for example, a group of several hundred persons interested in hand and mechanical hot-metal type founding. In typography as in binding, in papermaking as in book illustration, historical studies in the United States concerning printing and the allied arts are carried on not only in scholarly journals but also in a more popular press, and the societies and organizations interested in printing history are sometimes scholarly but are more likely to be at least partially social in their instincts.

Even the most scholarly of our printing history societies meet and socialize occasionally, traditionally in New York City but increasingly in other parts of the country as well. Visitors to the United States are often struck by the sheer size of the country: three thousand miles wide, more than a thousand miles deep. Until well after the Second World War, the great distances between east and west and north and south in the United States has been made many kinds of national activity difficult. This brings me to the second broad point I wish to make about the progress of printing history in the United States over the past two decades: increased scholarly and social communication among historians and students of book history *within* the United States, made possible by the development of increasingly cheap and convenient domestic airfares. As you all know, at the end of January each year in New York City now occurs what is popularly known as Bibliography Week, the occasion of the annual meetings not only of APHA but also of the Bibliographical Society of America and other groups with bibliophilic interests. There is always a strong California contingent at these meetings, a phenomenon which did not occur before the introduction of the Boeing 707 and nonstop cross-continental flights in the late 1950s, and the cheapening of airfares in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The point I am making is so commonplace in the United States as largely to escape notice; but I have welcomed a great many European book historians to the United States over the past two decades, and few of them fail to com-

ment on the size of the United States and the isolation of many of its bibliographically-minded inhabitants. Our national conventions and conferences and association meetings have been of the greatest importance in helping to develop interest in printing history and maintain the morale of those who live and work in the more remote parts of the country.

The rapid rise of electronic telecommunications through the Internet can be expected to play an important further role in helping to maintain lines of bibliographical communication within the United States. Many of you with e-mail accounts are subscribers to the electronic bulletin board of SHARP, the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing. Even more of you, I would guess, subscribe to Peter Graham's active and rapidly growing rare-books electronic bulletin board ExLibris, which presently has more than 1600 members worldwide. The implications for increased *international* communications among historians of the book through electronic communication are as yet hard to grasp, but they cannot help but be significant, the more so in that on the electronic Internet, communications charges are not related to the physical distance between the correspondents or users. An Internet message sent from New York to Boston will cost you no more than one of the same length sent from New York to Madrid or Moscow or Canberra or Tahiti.

This is perhaps a useful time to mention other technological advances facilitating the study of printing history in America over the past couple of decades. (For the purposes of this discussion I will ignore two technological developments which have almost certainly had the greatest impact on scholarship both in the United States and elsewhere: cheap photocopying and microcomputer word-processing.) As for scholarly community as a whole, no technological advance has been more important than the development of bibliographic utilities such as OCLC and RLIN, telecommunications networks that facilitate shared library cataloging and related operations such as interlibrary lending. In 1981, the American scholarly community hailed the completion of a massive publishing venture, the 754-volume *National Union Catalog of*

Pre-1956 Imprints. A monument to non-automated bibliographic control, *NUC Pre-56* is still vitally important as a finding tool facilitating the study of the history of printing, but the number of books entered in online bibliographic utilities both new and old is continuing to grow very rapidly, and it is already the case that for certain kinds of research OCLC and the other bibliographic utilities are more useful than the hard-copy *NUC Pre-56*.

Online bibliographic access to pre-1800 English-language imprints via ESTC (we must all learn to stop calling it the *Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue* and start calling it the *English Short Title Catalogue*) is increasingly ubiquitous. Not all technological advances America have concerned library cataloging. Indeed, perhaps the most spectacularly high-tech development is proton milliprobe ink analysis using the cyclotron, a technique developed by Richard N. Schwab, Thomas A. Cahill, and others at the University of California at Davis. The technique can analyze with great exactness the relative percentages of the metals copper and lead in printing ink, and thus provide valuable evidence about the day-to-day working operations of Gutenberg and other early printers. The process is time-consuming, and it has not yet been widely employed for books other than Gutenberg's 42-line Bible; but cyclotron analysis clearly has great promise for students of books produced during periods in which few manuscript records and other kinds of secondary evidence survive.

Another promising technological development is electronic image capture and enhancement. In bibliographical circles in the United States this technique was pioneered by David Woodward of the University of Wisconsin as part of his study of early engraved maps. Using techniques developed for the analysis of photographs taken by satellites and space probes, Woodward studied the evidence provided by ink offsetting from the surface of one map onto the back of another map placed on top of it soon after printing; working from maps of known date and place to those not well fixed in place or time, he was able to draw useful conclusions about what was printed where and when. Electronic scanners and other imaging devices are becoming increasingly commonplace in the United

States; their use will almost certainly encourage the study of watermarks in paper, a field that has been hindered in the recent past by the lack of a sufficiently cheap, safe, and versatile method of making exact reproductions.

Unfortunately, high-tech processes such as Richard Schwab's proton milliprobe ink analysis are expensive; research in such fields thus necessarily depends on institutional support—which for practical purposes means support by American research universities. During the past two decades, both historical and literary studies in American universities have come under increasing financial difficulties, a reflection of the financial troubles of their parent institutions both public and private. I come to you from the Commonwealth of Virginia, which has distinguished itself over the past few years by making the deepest cuts in its education budget of all of the United States. Virginia seems to be coming out of several years of decline, but California's institutions of higher learning are presently under great financial pressure, a circumstance which cannot be good for the study of printing history either in California or in other states experiencing similar educational cut-backs. To mention only one example: institutional support over the past two decades has been essential in facilitating scholarly travel. Relative to the cost of living, transcontinental flights are cheaper now than they were two decades ago, but they are still expensive; our universities' financial constraints may be expected to affect travel budgets in ways which will make it more difficult for the study of printing history in America to proceed along national lines. This is the third broad point I wish to make about the progress of printing history in the United States over the past two decades. I cannot be quite as optimistic about the study of printing history in the United States today as I would have been twenty or even ten years ago—though, this being said, there still would still seem to be some good times ahead for the study of printing history.

IV

I should now like to step back from developments in printing history proper, in order to take another look at national developments. In the late 1960s, we saw a rapid changeover

in our printing industry from letterpress to offset lithography. A great quantity of obsolescent equipment came onto the market very cheaply, fueling the rapid growth of the private press movement in America and encouraging a general awareness and interest in the history of printing. The late 1960s also saw the creation of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), government agencies whose impact on printing history has been substantial.

One of NEH's activities has been to fund rare book exhibitions in libraries and museums. Less well-known is the impact of NEH and various non-governmental funding agencies on the nature of these exhibitions—that is, the manner in which materials are displayed. Throughout the past two decades, there has been a slow but steady movement toward more imaginative ways of displaying books in order to make the result appealing to the largest possible number of viewers. In the 1970s, blockbuster book exhibitions relied for their clout primarily on the quality of the materials displayed and the size and excellence of their accompanying catalogs: one thinks immediately of the remarkable series of exhibitions at the Pierpont Morgan Library I mentioned earlier, including among others Gerald Gottlieb's *Early Children's Books and Their Illustration* (1975), Gordon N. Ray's English and French book illustration shows of 1976 and 1982, and Paul Needham's *Twelve Centuries of Bookbindings: 400–1600* (1979). In the 1980s, more elaborately designed exhibitions began to be common; notable examples (to restrict myself only to exhibitions I've already mentioned) include *Legacies of Genius*, the joint exhibition of sixteen Philadelphia institutions mounted in that city in 1988, and (in the same year) Roger Wieck's *Time Sanctified*, on Books of Hours, at the Walters Art Gallery. The Pew Charitable Trusts Foundation underwrote the greater part of the very expensive *Legacies of Genius*; NEH was a major funder of *Time Sanctified*.

I have already mentioned the AAS in connection with the North American Imprints Program, part of the Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue. Long interested in the history of the American book, the AAS continued to be a major player in our field during

the past two decades, sponsoring an important series of conferences and establishing a Program in the History of the Book in American Culture under the direction of David Hall—inevitably with a newsletter of its own (and an excellent one), the thrice-yearly *The Book*, distributed gratis. Under the program's direction, a multi-volume, collaborative history of the book in America is being drawn up, with planning support from the NEH. Twenty years ago, the starting-up of such a project would have been unlikely; in the interim, there has been a major shift in the way the history of the book has been studied in the United States and an enormous broadening of scholarly interest in the field. This is the fourth and final point I wish to make about the progress of printing history in the United States over the past two decades.

Elizabeth Eisenstein's *Printing Press As An Agent of Change*, published in 1979, had a considerable impact on American historians. Her well-known thesis—that the coming of printing caused qualitative changes in how men thought, how they gained knowledge, and how that knowledge was transmitted—aroused widespread attention among American historians, an attention reinforced by such books as Robert Darnton's *Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775–1800*, published in the same year as Eisenstein's book. This interest was further reinforced by a growing American focus on various aspects of social history: in particular, the sociology of reading, gender studies, and the history of minority cultures. Suddenly in America there were not one but two different kinds of students of book history: the newfangled kind, called historians; and the old-fashioned kind, called bibliographers. The newfangled kind tended to come out of academic history and literature departments; the old-fashioned kind tended to hold positions within research libraries.

The historians claimed that the bibliographers tended to become so lost in a mass of detail that they failed to address the central issues of history; the bibliographers claimed that the historians too often wrote enthusiastic but quite bad books because of their ignorance of the actual facts of printing history.

Clearly the two camps have much to say to each other; there was never a great deal of ani-

mosity between the historians and the bibliographers, and there is less than ever now: students of the history of the book welcome good work wherever they find it, at both the micro and macro level. The general editors of the AAS's multi-volume history of the book in America have relied on both in their search for competent contributors.

And they were able to find them. There are a great many more Americans interested both professionally and avocationally in the history of printing and the allied arts than was the case two decades ago. There are more societies for them to join, more newsletters and journals for them to subscribe to, a steadily growing monographic literature for them to read, and—and perhaps most importantly—a rapidly growing arsenal of electronic tools both bibliographical and full-text for them to use in their work.

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And now, and finally, I want to move back to the American Printing History Association. When APHA was founded in 1974, back twenty years ago when you were all seeing *The Exorcist* and (if your mothers let you) reading *Fear of Flying*, a great many of the organizations and journals I've been discussing had not yet come into existence. APHA precedes *Fine Print* and the *Abbey Newsletter* and the journals *Hand Papermaking* and *Publishing History*; APHA precedes the American Typecasters Fellowship and the Friends of Dard Hunter and the Poster Society and the Society for Textual Scholarship and the American Historical Print Collectors Association; the founding of APHA precedes the founding of the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress and the founding of the Iowa Center for the Book and the founding of the Penn State Center for the Book and the founding of the Toronto Center for the Book; APHA was here before the ESTC and Rare Book School and the Internet.

Some years ago, a man in Minnesota received 57,000 identical bulk-mailed advertisements for *Time* magazine, the Time/Life computer printer having stopped at his name and address for about eight hours, several days earlier in Chicago. The flyers arrived in two trailer trucks—57,000 of them, all inviting the man to subscribe to *Time* magazine—

which he did, saying “Who could resist such pressure?” Over the past twenty years, there is a sense in which APHA, too, has had 57,000 pieces of mail dropped on it. The field has grown so fast, and so many specialist groups with specialist interests within printing history have emerged, that it has been impossible for any single group (let alone any single individual) to keep up with the preposterous influx. Back in the 1970s, when I began putting out the *Bibliography Newsletter*, I used to think that I could pretty much keep up with everything that was going on, not only in the history of the book and its allied arts but with the contemporary book arts as well. I subscribed to everything, I bought everything, and I went to everything. But the expansion of the field in the 1970s was so meteoric that I began to fall behind almost at once; by the mid-1980s, when Rare Book School took over my life, I had to face the fact that properly maintaining a generalist’s interest in book history was simply impossible.

And what was happening to me was happening to everyone else; everybody’s interests began splintering and becoming more specialist. The membership of the American Printing History Association grew handsomely throughout the 1970s, but eventually there was first a membership plateau and then a gentle decline to our present level of around 900. A system of regional APHA chapters never flourished simply because there were

too many other things going on regionally as well as nationally: they weren’t necessary, and I am not convinced that they are particularly necessary now (though by all means let a thousand flowers bloom if new chapters should emerge).

I think that the present size of APHA is appropriate. What APHA does it does successfully. Its journals are useful and elegantly produced; the two annual awards it has presented each year since the mid-1980s, one to an individual and one to an institution, are highly regarded; the Lieberman Lectures benefit all parts of the country; and the success of APHA’s annual conference needs no telling. I have one suggestion for the board and membership of APHA to consider. Precisely because there is so much going on in printing history these days, there’s an increased need for coordination. We still have no national calendar of bibliographical events, for example; we are still all too likely to schedule our events on top of each other. I hope that the APHA newsletter will continue and expand on its tradition of mentioning new journals in our field—they are often much harder to find out about than new books. I hope that APHA will look for other ways in which it can take on a mediating, a coordinating, a synthesizing role among the dozens—indeed, and truly, hundreds—of players now on the field of American printing history.