



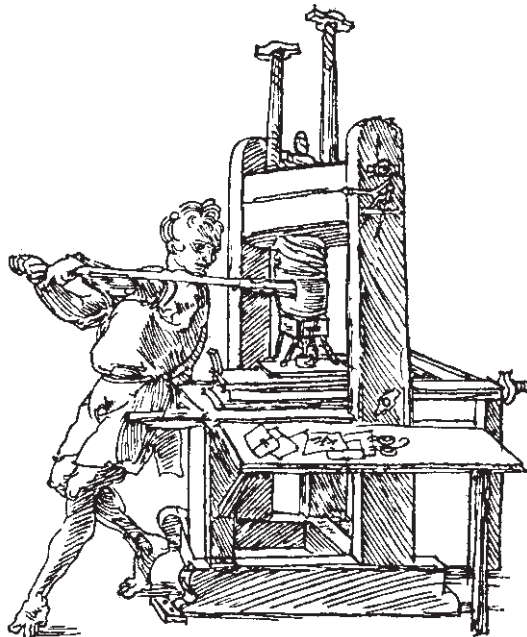
Newsletter  
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Fall 2008

## *“The Machine That Made Us”*

THIS ONE-HOUR DOCUMENTARY about Gutenberg and his invention—the “hands-on story of Johannes Gutenberg and his marvellous machine”—was produced for the BBC and shown this Spring on BBC 4 as part of a series on “The Medieval Mind.” The genial actor and writer Stephen Fry starts with a demonstration of his boyhood “John Bull Printing Set” of rubber type, and then throws himself into a lively view of Gutenberg’s life, his locations in Germany—Mainz, Strasburg, Eltville—and the several elements of his invention. These scenes are interposed with those of present-day craftsmen following the medieval methods of press-building (Alan May), papermaking (Roberto Mazzucchelli at the Basel Paper Mill), and typesetting (Stan Nelson).

For an APHA audience already familiar with the Gutenberg story, it is the craftsmen and their techniques that are most interesting. Alan May, who seems to have been the inspiration for the film, is shown building a common press based on what little is known of Gutenberg’s. No picture of the press, and but a few cryptic sentences, are all that have come down to us. It is Alan May’s conjecture—which seems very reasonable—that Gutenberg’s press, based on the wine presses he was familiar with in the Rhine valley, was a one-pull press. That is, it held the form for a single page, which could be printed with one pull of the bar. The first illustration of a printing press, the Lyons “Dance of Death” woodcut of 1499, shows a two-pull press. May believes that Dürer’s 1511 drawing of a printing press shows one of the earlier, one-pull-presses. (Alan May has written about the project in the Spring 2008 issue of the *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*.) May’s one-pull press conjecture is where this film differs from other Gutenberg histories, and is a valuable contribution in its own right.

Fry good-naturedly helps Alan May in making the most exacting parts of the press, the wooden screw, or spindle, and the nut in which the screw turns. These essentials, like the rest of the press, are produced using only 15th-century



*Simplified version of Dürer’s 1511 illustration of a one-pull press, with threads drawn backwards—a rare slip-up, since the Master was well acquainted with presses and had a common press in his house. (Ray Nash, Dürer’s 1511 Drawing of a Press and Printer. Cambridge: Department of Printing and Graphic Arts, Harvard College Library, 1947.)*

materials and techniques. Fry returns to May’s workshop during the film to help as the press takes shape. Another visit is to the Basel Paper Mill, where paper is made as in Gutenberg’s day, from rags beaten by large water-powered wooden hammers. Fry watches as the proprietor, Roberto Mazzucchelli, stirs the pulp in a huge vat and then makes a sheet of paper and couches it. Then he tries his own hand, and his wonder and excitement is palpable as the beautiful sheet of paper is formed.

Of course the crux of Gutenberg’s invention is neither the press nor the paper, but the casting of interchangeable pieces of metal type of precise measurements. Here Fry is aided by Stan Nelson, who is probably more expert in early methods of typesetting than anyone else. With Stephen Fry looking over his shoulder, we see Stan filing the punch for a lower-case “e,” making a smoke proof, striking a matrix, and finally casting the letter. Stan had proposed that these typesetting scenes be shot at the Plantin-Moretus Museum, but for budget reasons they were finally recorded at an old blacksmith’s shop in England near Alan May’s home. And while the lower-case “e” shown being made is eventually inserted into the final form, the rest of the page was made up from Theo Rehak’s and Alan Waring’s B-42 type, cast in New Jersey at the Dale Guild. This font is the closest we have to the Bible type that Gutenberg produced.

*Continued on page 2*

Between with scenes of the preparation of the press, paper, and type, we follow Stephen Fry as he retraces Gutenberg's steps. We start at the ruins of St. Christopher's Church in Mainz, where Gutenberg was probably baptized. The baptismal font is shown, occasioning a remark by Fry about a "seven thousand point font." After noting that almost nothing is known of Gutenberg's early life, and a discussion of medieval conditions of book making, we follow in the inventor's steps to the bustling trading city of Strassburg. There Gutenberg recruited workmen for the project which had now formed in his mind. John Man, author of *The Gutenberg Revolution*, describes Gutenberg's money-raising plan to make and sell mirrors to pilgrims bound for Aachen—a plan that failed when the pilgrimage was postponed because of an outbreak of the Plague.

With so little known of Gutenberg's stay in Strassburg, the documentary gives us brief glimpses of the city as he would have seen it, before he returned once more to Mainz for the epochal event of the first printing from moveable type in the West. At this point Stephen Fry has already shown us each of the elements that Gutenberg had to gather together or perfect himself: the building of the press, the making of the paper, the casting of the type. (Only the mak-

ing of ink has been neglected.) At last the great day arrives at Alan May's workshop in England. It is clear that Fry and all the assembled experts are eagerly anticipating the pulling of the first proof; and so are we, the viewers.

It does not disappoint. The clarity and beauty of the black text on the white paper is there for all to see; every sheet the same, flawless and majestic. We sense a feeling of accomplishment, and realize how much greater it must have been for Gutenberg, five hundred years earlier.

This is a vivid picture of Gutenberg's work, intelligently fashioned as befits the invention that changed the world. Of course, much has had to be dealt with sketchily, or passed over entirely; but what the viewer is left with is a clear picture of Gutenberg's accomplishment and how it was achieved.

Stephen O. Saxe

## Henk Voorn

HENK VOORN, who died on April 11 this year (he was born on September 29, 1921), was the premier paper historian of his time. In America we accord that honor to Dard Hunter, and Hunter was indeed first when it comes to American paper history. Voorn, who was Dutch, read and spoke many languages, and had a greater knowledge of European paper history. He was the author of major works on Dutch paper history, and was a prolific contributor to the pages of *The Paper Maker* over a 19-year period. Only two issues of that quarterly appeared without an article by Voorn. Henk Voorn also owned and wrote for *Papierwereld*, a Dutch paper-trade journal, and was president of the International Association of Paper Historians. In 1969 I published his *Old Ream Wrappers*, the only book that has dealt with this subject. In 1971 Voorn's extensive collection of papermaking books was purchased by the Royal Library at The Hague, and he was made curator of his own collection. He remained happily at The Hague until his retirement in 1986. In 2003 I published *Henk Voorn to Henry Morris*, consisting of selected correspondence between June 1967 and July 1981. The complete correspondence is now in the archives of the University of Delaware. The three major figures in paper history during the later 20th century were Hunter, Voorn, and Leonard Schlosser. To my knowledge, no one has yet come forward to take any of their places.

Henry Morris

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## APHA 2008 Annual Conference

APHA's 33rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE, "Saving the History of Printing," is being held in New York City, hosted by Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library and the Grolier Club on October 10–12, 2008. The conference will address the preservation of the primary sources of printing history broadly conceived, both material (presses, type, plates, blocks manuals, type specimens, archives), and the practices (the skills and knowledge necessary to operate the equipment, or to make the paper, ink, punches, etc.). Notable speakers from the United States and Europe representing various perspectives and experiences will inform and inspire conversation about current strategies and future plans.

On Friday, October 10, following three optional afternoon events and registration at 3:30 p.m., the conference will feature its keynote address by the distinguished type historian James Mosely, at the Grolier Club at 6:00 p.m. The main proceedings on Saturday, October 11, will be at Columbia University. The special daytime activities just mentioned for Friday include a sneak preview of *Typeface*, a new documentary about the Hamilton Wood Type Museum, and visits to Bowne & Co.'s job printing shop and to the Center for Book Arts' Whittington Press exhibition. At 11:00 on Sunday, October 12, beginning at the front steps of the Grolier Club, 47 East 60th Street, Paul Shaw will give his famous walking tour of architectural uses of type in Manhattan.

Conference attendees are expected to make their own hotel reservations. A complete conference brochure has been mailed to APHA members. Additional details, including maps, guides to public transportation, and restaurant suggestions will be available on site during registration. Full information, as well as conference updates, can be found on the APHA website.

*Gerald Cloud and Jane Rodgers Siegel*

## Babbage's Machine

PAUL SHAW RECENTLY SHARED some fascinating news, taken from an article by John Markoff for *The New York Times* (May 1, 2008), "Charles Babbage's Proto-Brain Comes to America," and the associated NYT blog, BITS (Business, Innovation, Technology, Society):

The Science Museum in London has built two replicas of Charles Babbage's original design for the Difference Engine No. 2. Originally planned between 1847 and 1849, the five-ton, 8,000-part system for calculating polynomials was finally completed in 2002 by a team of engineers who took 17 years to complete the entire project. Difference Engine No. 2 includes a remarkable printing component that almost certainly would have been the world's first automated typesetter, had Babbage completed his original design during his lifetime. The all-mechanical Difference Engine adds with numbers that are 31 digits long, and it can calculate polynomials up to the seventh order. However, it is the printer that appears to be even more strikingly modern. It will produce an ink printout, but also has the capability of producing a mold for a printing plate. It automatically typesets results in columns as well as employing two separate font sizes.

The ... machine will be on display at the Computer History Museum [in Silicon Valley] ... until May 2009 ....

## The Vandercook Book

In 2009 PRINTERS BARBARA HENRY & RONI GROSS will publish a limited edition letterpress printed book celebrating the 100 years since the introduction of the Vandercook proof press. Developed to fill a commercial need, Vandercook presses are now mostly used for the production of fine art.

*The Vandercook Book*, issued in an edition of 100 and housed in a cloth-covered clamshell box, comprises three sections: a pamphlet of essays by Barbara Henry, Fritz Klinke, Henry Morris, Paul Moxon, Michael Peich, and Perry Tymeson; a folder of unbound folios produced by students at the Center for Book Arts on printing-related topics, with additional materials by Roni Gross and Barbara Henry; and another folder of 30 unbound master printer folios. The master printer folios showcase individual artistic sensibilities spanning the whole range of relief printing surfaces from foundry types to collographs on papers both handmade and commercial.

For a prospectus, please write to The Vandercook Book, c/o the Center for Book Arts, 28 West 27th Street, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10001; or e-mail Roni Gross at [rgd6@verizon.net](mailto:rgd6@verizon.net).

*Paul Moxon*

## Chapter News & Upcoming Events

### NEW ENGLAND

ON SUNDAY, JULY 13, we visited the Museum of International Paper History in Brookline, Massachusetts, where Director Elaine Koretsky showed us the facilities and collections focusing on relationships between paper and printing history. A renowned expert and teacher of papermaking workshops, Elaine leads tours to Asia and collects papers and related tools and texts from all over the world. After our tour we stopped at the nearby Washington Square Tavern for cooling beverages and conversation. The trip was a total success.

*Bob Soorian, David Wall, and Alice Beckwith*

### CHESAPEAKE

SIXTEEN MEMBERS of the Chesapeake Chapter gathered on Saturday, June 28, at Mike Denker's home and print shop to assemble a newly acquired Hoe No. 6260 iron hand press. By 1:15 the press was standing, and the tired but proud group of mechanics adjourned to the house and to a home-made potluck luncheon to discuss future activities. We went in shifts to test the Hoe with frisket and tympan. Soon, "She prints!" rang out to end a day of technical and intellectual stimulation. In August the chapter met at the Library of Congress to view examples of children's books of the 18th and 19th centuries, hosted by chapter member Jackie Coleburn. In September Paul Shaw is giving a lecture on W.A. Dwiggins to the chapter at The Catholic University Library.

*Mike Denker and Stuart Bradley*

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

FOR OUR 2008 APHA BOOK CLUB DISCUSSIONS we have looked at early writing systems. Recently NOVA presented a comprehensive look at Mayan hieroglyphics, so we held a special showing of that film on July 12 in the screening room of The CenterPointe Club at Playa Vista, followed by a lively to and fro with further readings suggested.

Our next Book Club event, on August 25, coincided with a reception for old and new members and friends at the California Rare Book School at UCLA. The Book Club focused on the sixth chapter of Kilgour's *The Evolution of the Book*, "Islam, 622-1300," with related readings. Our discussion formed the perfect prelude to our second Collections Visit for 2008, on September 20, to the Los Angeles



*From left: Val Lucas, Franziska Walczak, Pat Manson and Roland Hoover each take a pull on newly assembled Hoe hand press at Mike Denker's home and print shop.*

County Museum of Art's Islamic Art & Manuscripts Collection. Our guide, Chris Jameson, showed us, among other Islamic treasures on display at LACMA, a Qur'an and a 16th-century Persian illustrated manuscript.

On September 13 many of our members attended a 'book-performative' Frederic W. Goudy Lecture given by Susan Share at Scripps College, and the opening of the exhibit, "Performing the Book" at the Williamson Gallery. At the end of October E.M. Ginger from Oakland will present a lecture about her fascinating work digitizing rare and important works at her company, 42-Line. November will bring our Annual General Meeting, with a special presentation (to be announced) and a business discussion.

*Kitty Maryatt*

## *J. Ben Lieberman Memorial Lecture Set for March 12, 2009*

THE NEXT LIEBERMAN LECTURE will be given by John Kristensen of the Firefly Press on Thursday, March 12, at Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts. Arrangements are being made by Katherine McCannless Ruffin, Book Arts Program Director in the Research & Instruction Group of the Margaret Clapp Library at Wellesley College. Further details will be available on the APHA and Wellesley College websites, and general information about the Lieberman Memorial Lecture may be found at the APHA website.

*Alice Beckwith*

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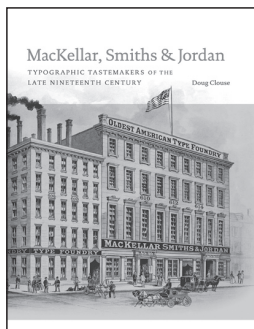
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## *New Members*

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New York, NY

## *Websites, Blogs and Listservs Mentioned in this Issue of the Newsletter*

American Printing History Association: [printinghistory.org](http://printinghistory.org)

BITS (New York Times blog): [bits.blogs.nytimes.com](http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com)

Grolier Club: [grolierclub.org](http://grolierclub.org)

SHARP listserv: [sharpweb.org/archives](http://sharpweb.org/archives)

Wellesley College Book Arts: [wellesley.edu/Library/bkarts.html](http://wellesley.edu/Library/bkarts.html)