

The **STYLE** of Period Printed Materials and how to reproduce these such that you may give *Delight & Edification* to the populace.

A very brief taste of printing history

There are many and varied claims for the invention of printing. China gets the nod, as with so many things, for the oldest printed book, the Diamond Sutra of the fifth century, made up of woodblock pages. However, as with so many of those inventions, there seems to have been relatively little knowledge transfer outside the borders of the empire. This handout deals with printing in Europe from the 1400s onwards.

Block printing was well established in Europe in the 13th century, primarily for decorating cloth. It wasn't a big jump to printing on paper, once that became readily available in the 1400s and soon everything from religious images to playing cards were being produced. Carving lettering and illustrations into woodblocks was not very efficient, and the blocks didn't last too long either. When Gutenberg and others started experimenting with movable type, that caught on because of the uniformity it made possible, and the flexibility and robust nature of the technology.

The uptake of the technology was very very rapid and spread very quickly throughout most of Europe. Thanks to Gutenberg, from 1439 the Germans had the early lead, but by 1500, Venice boasted over 400 printers and had become a recognised powerhouse for elegant humanist printing which still commands attention and admiration. Aldus Manutius and Nicolas Jenson produced beautiful works in very high quality typefaces, and found a ready market in small format books and softbound covers. Printers in Paris, which eventually become a major centre, started up in 1470. Even the New World had a press operational in Mexico City by 1540, and the Spanish were printing in the Philippines in 1593.

Gutenberg had been very nervous that his new approach would not find favour with the Powers That Be. So he did his very best to try to make his printed Bibles indistinguishable from the traditional manuscript ones of the day. He initially had large capital letters filled in by hand, but quickly developed the concept of two-colour printing. Pre-1500 works by Gutenberg and others are referred to as incunabula, as they formed the "cradle" of printing. By 1500, it is estimated that 1,700 printers, operating in 300 towns, had produced around 15 million volumes.

Print houses saw a combination of artisan skills and enthusiastic marketing. Master printers were assisted by apprentices. If the latter learned Latin, they might aspire to become compositors, setting the type; or become journeymen -- literally spreading the knowledge with them as they travelled from printing house to publishing outlet across Europe. It was strenuous work, involving preparing the new oil-based inks, dampening paper, working the hefty presses (themselves said to be adapted from olive oil presses).

Specialisation came early, with the printers working in tandem with booksellers, who always had their eye out for a successful pitch. Caxton's first print job in England was the Indulgence of 1476, which had gaps for the names of the purchasers to be written in. Like Gutenberg's Bible, it was designed to look as if it has been written in blackletter. Latin grammars and instructional books were popular, and many books had lengthy prefaces extolling the virtues of a noble (sometimes unwitting) patron. Caxton has the credit for the first printed book in England, his own translation of a history of Troy; he also printed Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

Woodcut blocks developed from fairly crude efforts into fine form, and engraving and etching allowed masters like Albrecht Durer to produce astonishingly detailed illustrations to accompany the poetry, prose and all manner of secular text that started to pour off the presses. Design aspects in use today developed early: page numbering, title pages, tabbed entries and indexes, pointy-hand or leafy dingbats. What didn't change was the technology, not for another 300 years.

Soon the presses were producing pamphlets calling for religious reformation, news stories of monsters and strange occurrences, accounts of tournaments, broadsides with the lyrics of popular or scurrilous songs. Life would never be as quiet again...

Useful Exemplars for SCA Printing

Broadsides/Broadsheets: *useful approach for event announcements, flyers, advertisements etc*

A broadside is printed on one side; a broadsheet on both. Sometimes a large piece of paper was folded to quarto or octavo to produce an unbound, multi-page leaflet. Usually associated with popular ballads, but they also included handbills, proclamations, advertisements and other topical information; warnings; protests or public satires

Format: Ranged from large proclamations (approx 1000 x 500 mm) to small handbills (200 x 150 mm); typically with a multi-sentence title header, a large woodcut illustration and a double-column, right-registered format with a large woodcut initial and smaller woodcut sidebars

Reference: English Broadside Ballad Project: <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/>

Chapbooks: *model for event booklet, ball cheat notebook, song lyrics*

Small, cheap booklets containing reprints of popular ballads, jests, gossip, recipes, horoscopes and rude stories, sometimes illustrated with suitably racy woodcuts (a bit like the tabloid magazines of modern times)

Format: Paper; folded into 4to or 8to; limp bound and pamphlet stitched; covered with recycled paper or poor quality vellum, blue or brown paper wrappers or no covers; stab-stitched with 3/5 holes, untrimmed, not lettered on the outside

Reference: The Scottish Chapbook Project: <http://www.sc.edu/library/spcoll/britlit/cbooks/cbook1.html>

Commonplace books: *model for event booklet, personalised journals, recipe collections etc*

A blank or pre-printed journal with passages collected under common headings: quotes, poems, recipes, lists, laws, prayers, jokes, heraldic blazons, predictions, mathematical tables, astronomical/astrological lore etc, representing the writer's interests or whatever "noble thoughts" the education system or parents through they should have

Format: Sizes vary (period examples: 312 x 200mm, 207 x 140mm). Usually paper, with vellum commonly used as a cover, tied with silk ties; sometimes covered in a leather wallet binding, closed with a strap and buckle.

Reference: Commonplace Books, Yale; <http://www.library.yale.edu/beinecke/compb.htm>

Festival book: *possible model for an event booklet, especially for Crown events*

Festival books were the souvenir programmes of the day, listing who had attended important events, eye-witness accounts of what happened (sometimes even by actual eye-witnesses!), reports of sporting competitions, and ballads and poems in honour of the higher-ups; usually produced after the event

Format: 1520 Cloth of Gold Festival Book: 18 cm x 11 cm, in blackletter, some woodcuts, single or double column

Reference: British Library Festival Book collection: <http://www.bl.uk/treasures/festivalbooks/homepage.html>

Music: *for your singing groups*

Single-page woodcuts of music were printed from the latter part of the 1400s. Moveable type used multiple print runs to first print the staves, then the notes and lastly the lyrics. By the 1520s, individual type had a note, or other musical symbol, along with its section of stave, to allow compositing and single-impression printing.

Format: song books were printed in separate parts, or with four different parts laid out at 90 degrees for the singers to stand around. Church music sometimes had double-impression printing to print the staves in red and the rest in black. Lines often start with large plain caps or initial woodcuts.

Reference: Musicke of sundrie kindes, University of Glasgow: <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/music/musicdex.html>

Playbills: *for theatre and other entertaining activities, advertisements or flyers*

Period playbills were too ephemeral to survive. It seems reasonable to base them on title pages, as these often referenced theatrical performances, including woodcuts from scenes; lists of characters and players; even song lyrics.

Format: typically vertical with a longer aspect ratio (height to width) than standard paper size (eg three bills on A4 landscape); mixed sized fonts, woodcuts, performing company attributions

Reference: Shakespeare and the Book: The Playhouse in Printing House: <http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/shakespeareandthebook/studyenv/play01.html>

Vade mecum (aka girdle book, belt book, folded book): *for ball cheat sheets, event information*

A period filofax, consisting of sheets folded into a small size and bound together so as to be readily tucked into a belt for ready reference; used for astronomical almanacs and doctors' manuals with each sheet holding a different topic

Format: main feature is the stab-stitch binding of a series of folded single sheets

Reference: Boston College example: <http://at.bc.edu/slideshows/dualpurpose/8.html>

Roundels: *for use at feasts, High Table*

Placemats made of thin wood, pasteboard or varnished paper, usually in boxed sets of 6-12, printed and/or painted with songs, riddles, illustrations or heraldry

Reference: Nine sycamore roundels with Aesop's Fables paintings and morals

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/2zOySn2OQxKXmHpkJmJv1A>

Making something look period

Much of what we print for SCA events would be regarded as ephemera – short-term forms of communication which are not designed to stand the test of time. This creates some interesting problems in researching period usage of such materials as they, too, tend to have been thrown away or recycled once their initial utility had passed. Many examples have only been found because of they have been recycled as pasted endpapers in books or somesuch.

Consider the kind of document you want to produce – an event announcement, a playbill, a Ball cheat-sheet. See if you can find examples, and get a feel for the impression they give in terms of layout and design.

What kind of font/typography is used?

Is it **blackletter** – sometimes thought of as German or Gothic, but used across much of Europe for printed materials from the late 1400s on. Or does the period example use a basic Roman font (like the one you are reading now)?

Is there use of mixed font sizes, or the inclusion of italic lettering? Are there large initial capital letters at the beginning of the paragraphs, and what sort of style are these?

While blackletter is the more common in period materials, for SCA use, it is probably better to go with a Roman font as many people have problems reading the more complex letter forms, especially in candlelight! There's good reason why period printers quickly developed Roman typefaces or even imitations of humanist handwriting! There are lots of free fonts available. I highly recommend Geoffrey Shipbrook's font set as a great late-period printing typeface. Pai Frauss has excellent fonts for a more handwritten look. Early printing in italic text often used non-italic capitals. It took a while for the idea of matched typefaces – and even capitals – to catch on.

What orientation is the page? Is it landscape (horizontal) or portrait (vertical)?

You need to bear this in mind if you are wanting to do a multi-page print on one leaf. Folding an A3 page in half will give you two leaves or four pages of A4 area to play with; use an A4 page and you have a smaller, more portable work. A single fold like this is a folio fold and is usually the largest size produced (typically over 13 inches tall in period). Make two folds, and you have a quarto (4to), with four leaves and 8 pages; fold again and you have an octavo (8to) of 8 leaves; 16 pages. Some of the folds will be on the edges, requiring cutting. Start with a big enough sheet and you can have a 64to as with some period printed miniatures. For our purposes an octavo from A4 is about as small as you'll probably want to go.

You can also change the familiar look and feel of modern page sizes simply by going for a different aspect ratio (the height to width proportions) – trim the page to make it narrower or, if you're doing playbills or menus, lay out three copies across an A4 landscape page.

What characterises the layout of the content?

Are titles centred; does the lettering reduce in size; is the text right justified (ie does it line up on the right margin); how wide are the margins; are there notes in the margin (termed a scholar's column)? Early printers played about with their typefaces, mixing them up and often going for a reduction in size as your eye moves down the major title. They sometimes liked to arrange the text to fit shapes, such as reverse triangles or even outlines of things like goblets.

In period printed books, typically you'll see large margins at the outside and bottom edge of the page; narrower margins towards the spine and often jammed tight up against the top. It can take a while to get used to this, as the modern eye is more familiar with a more symmetrical layout. The gutters (the internal white space between columns of text) tend to be narrower than we are used to, even filled with woodcut foliage.

What characterises the graphic material?

Are illustrations used; how are they placed within the page; do they have frames around them?

A reasonable amount of copyright-free woodcuts are on the Web. (see resources below). They range from the very rough to the exquisite. It's a good idea to match the quality of the font you use to the illustrations.

What is the paper like? What are the edges like?

Choosing a suitable paper makes a difference; keep away from the bright white bleached modern copy paper if you can. There are cheap papers available which are off-white and comparable to period paper; you don't have to print on vellum! A laid finish can be useful to give the look of a handmade paper – they can be identified by the parallel lines running against the grain of the paper, used to simulate the handmade output (or, easier, check the label of the ream).

Some people like the feathery deckle edging as a Ye Olde Worlde effect; but early bookbinders and printers tended to trim the edges of their pages cleanly. The same holds for fake foxing or the antiquing beloved of things such as maps to pirate treasure. The latter is traditionally done by splashing tea across a page, or the use of printed marbled paper – it's not necessary as period paper was better quality than ours and has tended to stand up to the test of time.

Main things to remember: You can go a long way to making something look more period with a suitable font, a couple of woodcut-style images and some non-bleached paper stock.

References and Resources (all online ones for greatest accessibility)

General Info and Background

Weisner-Hanks, Merry; The World of the Renaissance Print Shop
<http://www4.uwm.edu/libraries/special/exhibits/incunab/incmwh.cfm>

Technologies of Writing in the Age of Print, Folger Shakespeare Library
<http://www.folger.edu/Content/Whats-On/Folger-Exhibitions/Past-Exhibitions/Technologies-of-Writing-in-the-Age-of-Print/Technologies-of-Writing-in-the-Age-of-Print.cfm>

The Dawn of Printing.: Incunabula (pre-1500 printing): <http://www.ndl.go.jp/incunabula/e/chapter1/index.html>

Making the Book, Bryn Mawr: <http://www.brynmawr.edu/library/exhibits/BooksPrinters/making.html>

Grand Gargantua Project: scans of period typefaces, fonts, illustrations
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bookhistorian/>

An Introduction to Printing: <http://www.britaininprint.net/introtoprint/intro.htm>

The Typographics Archives: <http://www.typographia.org/>

Fonts and Typography

Some period fonts would be perfectly acceptable today, and common everyday fonts like Times Roman, Caslon, Bembo, Granjon and others closely resemble what was used 400 years ago, even though they look very modern to our eyes. To avoid that issue and get the Ye Olde look, it helps to have a slightly more "distressed" font to work with.

Geoffrey Shipbrook (Jeff Lee): free JSL Ancient (Roman), JSL Blackletter, and a handy converter to provide ligatures, short and long s etc; based on fonts from the 1680s, but absolutely fine for period use

<http://www.shipbrook.net/jeff/typograf.html>

Dieter Staffman: large selection of fonts, including many in medieval style, blackletter/fraktur, Caslon Antique, and initial caps; free to download; sadly no info on the origins/source or inspiration for the fonts

<http://moorstation.org/typoasis/designers/steffmann/index.htm>

Pia Frauss fonts: lovely freely downloadable fonts based directly on analysis of period manuscripts (rather than printing) such as 1275 Hapsburg, Italian 1490, Danish 1597, using exemplars ranging from a Borgia, Tycho Brahe, Gaston's *Book of the Hunt* and German chancery materials. Great for personal handwriting projects such as correspondence, journals, licenses, patents, without the need to learn the script.

<http://www.pia-frauss.de/fonts/fonts.htm>

Typography Amsterdam: includes scanned collections of works by printers from Italy, Germany, Iberia and more

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bookhistorian/>

An overview of European Typography 1470-1501

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bookhistorian/sets/72157623268349996/>

Milestones in Typography: good overview throughout Europe with brief biographies and examples

http://www.designhistory.org/type_milestones.html

Shakespeare's Sonnets: title pages and links to other printed materials

<http://www.shakespeares-sonnets.com/titlecomm.htm>

Illustrations: woodcuts

There are lots of possible sources, online or in the various Dover collections, ranging from exquisite to very crudely produced. You can also approximate with scanned hand-drawn material.

The Boke of Good Cookery Woodcut Clipart Collection: <http://www.godecookery.com/clipart/clart.htm>

A Heavenly Craft - *The Woodcut in Early Printed Books*: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/heavenlycraft/>

Woodcut Book Illustration in Renaissance Italy: The First Illustrated Books, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/wifb/hd_wifb.htm#thumbnails

Paper Stock (generally readily available from Warehouse Stationery or other major paper stockists)

Stay away from the pseudo-textured marbled papers beloved of scrapbookers. Period paper was surprisingly close to modern paper in both weight and look. The main thing is to find an off-white stock, it doesn't have to be distinctly cream/yellow, just not the usual bleached white of modern laser/copier paper.

Conqueror Bond Laid: 100gsm Oyster: a good approximation for period weight/ colour, (\$100/500), strongly grained and sized on one side so if you are folding it, take that into account

Goatskin Parchment (imitation): an archival paper, A4 120gsm makes a good weight and substitute for light parchment, though a tad pricey for bulk use (\$100/250)

Parchmentine/permagranata (aka vegetable parchment): a high-quality parchment substitute, A4-B2, 120-230gsm; very hard to source these days; the Scribes Guild recommends it for scrolls

Maestro: Vanilla/ Buff, 80gsm, A4, a tad on the yellow side, but a good cheap option for bulk printing (\$15/500)

Watercolour Paper (eg Bockingford): A4-A3, 150gsm, hot pressed is best for a smooth surface, good for presentations but inclined to rub