



# The Book

Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture  
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## Notes on Research Tools

### INDICES FOR AMERICAN PERIODICALS

[Editors' note: This issue of *The Book* inaugurates a new, occasional column intended to describe specific research tools that researchers in the field may not be aware of. The editors invite submissions from librarians and scholars about other such research tools.]

I have had the pleasure over the past few months of working with several scholars at the Society who are investigating various aspects of the history, thought, and culture of North America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their interests have been diverse: the clergy and economics in colonial New England; discovery rhetoric along the Mississippi River Valley in the eighteenth century; the writings of Samuel Johnson and the reactions of his American readers; revising the canon of the first two centuries of American literature; and issues concerning international copyright. As I introduce AAS fellows and other scholars to the Society's collections and reference sources, I have become aware of just how valuable two particular bibliographical tools can be for studying early American history and literature. These are indexes for periodical literature that I feel should definitely be brought to the attention of readers of this newsletter.

The *Index to Early American Periodicals to 1850*, edited by Nelson F. Adkins, (published in 1964), is a very important bibliographical aid for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history, literature, and contemporary literary criticism. Issued as a microform set by the Readex Microprint Corporation, the *Index* consists of approximately 650,000 Microprint cards and is based upon analysis of some 350 American periodicals published between 1730 and 1860. The Society holds a substantial number of these periodicals. This is a unique source; few of the titles in the index appear in the more widely known Poole's *Index* or its supplements.

The *Index*, compiled by a large staff of WPA workers, has proved to be an invaluable resource for many scholars at AAS. It is divided into several categories, including "general prose," "fiction," "poetry," "book reviews," and "subjects." The subject file is strong for personal and place names, including a good representation of English and European subjects. Broad subject areas range from religion, labor, and law, to literature, publishers, and the postal system, to name but a few.

Separately issued subject bibliographies have been compiled by staff at New York University from this periodical index. The Society has those for Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Edgar Allan Poe. There is also a very interesting bibliography of French fiction, comprising a checklist of American periodical articles on the writings of such French authors as Balzac, Hugo, Sand, and de Kock.

Researchers who have used the WPA index at AAS have frequently located items that were heretofore largely unknown. Kent Ljungquist, professor of English at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, consistently refers to the files for information about obscure authors and reviews of anonymous works. He has also used it extensively for his research on nineteenth-century plagiarism controversies. Recently, two doctoral candidates at the Society found the index to be extremely helpful in their research. Ruth Panovsky of York University, Toronto, is preparing a bibliographical study of Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *The Clockmaker; or, The Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick, of Slickville*. In addition to our very impressive holdings of Haliburton works, Ms. Panovsky found the WPA periodical index an important source for locating several new book reviews for *The Clockmaker*. Meredith McGill of Johns Hopkins University discovered a substantial number of subject entries under "copyright" that led to a significant number of previously untapped nineteenth-century periodical articles for her dissertation on literary property and the rise of the author in antebellum America.

A second useful set of reference tools available at the Society is the recently published, computer-generated indexes to the University Microfilms International (UMI) series, *American Periodicals, 18th Century* (APS I), and *American Periodicals, 1800-1850* (APS II). Computer Indexed Systems has compiled detailed subject guides to APS literature of the 1700s and is currently constructing indexes for the nineteenth-century periodicals. The American Antiquarian Society holds microfilm for APS titles through 1825, as well as many original works in the series beyond that date. Subject entries are not based upon Library of Congress headings; rather, the creators of the indices have selected main topics in each periodical article using keyword phrases and terms that a researcher might be looking for, e.g., "authors," "generation (rising)," "benevolence," "fiction," "criticism," "travel," "clergymen," and a host of personal and geographical names. This is a significant con-

tribution, since many of the early periodicals had no index or one that was exceedingly inadequate.

While scholars with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century research interests may need to expend some time in familiarizing themselves with this index, this effort can lead to discoveries of previously unknown material in early periodical literature. James Basker of Barnard College and a recent AAS fellow, found this *Index of American Periodicals of the 1700's* and the following segments for the early 1800s to be of enormous value for his research on the reception of Samuel Johnson in America during the period 1750 to 1850. He states, in part: "[The indexes] were helpful in themselves, even without going to the periodicals, because they showed the relative frequency with which major literary and public figures were discussed in periodical literature of the period. . . . In their principal function they were even more helpful, as they send you to article after article in the American press which one could only find otherwise by reading through the entire periodical – a process none of us is likely to undertake. So they make accessible information that would otherwise go unnoticed and untouched. . . . They have been some of the most valuable tools for my work over the past two months."

The Computer Indexed Systems volumes, when used in conjunction with the more familiar work, *American Periodicals 1741-1900: An Index to the Microfilm Collections*, published by University Microfilms in 1979, provide superb access to the tremendously extensive and diverse information published in early American periodical literature.

The reference sources described here are certainly widely useful to scholars investigating the history of the book in American culture, and they are particularly instructive for historians and literary scholars who are examining the periodical within the context of American letters. While the indexes may have some bibliographical flaws and inconsistencies, they do provide researchers with a great opportunity to sharpen, enhance, perhaps even change usual perceptions of American history and culture by guiding a user to vast amounts of contemporary literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Microprint set of the *Index to Early American Periodicals to 1850* (published in 1964) is available for purchase from Readex Microprint Corporation, 58 Pine Street, New Canaan, Conn. 06840. The *Index to American Periodicals of the 1700's* (published in 1986) and the *Index to American Periodicals of the 1800's* (published in 1989) are available for purchase from Computer Indexed Systems, 7028 Bexley Drive, Indianapolis, Ind. 46256.

Joanne D. Chaison, *American Antiquarian Society*

## Research Notes

### EARLY PRINTING IN CANADA: THE AMERICAN INFLUENCE

The craft of printing came late to Canada – as late as 1751, when Bartholomew Green set up a press in Halifax – but the influence of the American colonies (later states) is obvious in the background of Canadian printing. There are, seemingly, a myriad of reasons why printing did not spread earlier to Canada – British colonial rule and economic factors, for example. While the history of printing in Canada is a subject warranting further study, the history of these early printers themselves is itself worthy of examination. In her excellent bibliography of Canadian imprints, Marie Tremaine identifies printing offices established in Canada between 1751 and 1800. Of the printers she identifies, there are short biographical sketches of twenty-six. Of these, sixteen (61 percent) are in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, but seventeen (65 percent) learned some aspect of their craft in the colonies to the south. The significant, influential role of American printing is what makes early printing in Canada a unique subject. Of the other nine printers, only five had learned the trade in Canada, two in London, and one, Fleury Mesplet, in France, and even he had passed through Philadelphia.

The reasons for the migration of these American printers include economic opportunity, flight from the rebellion

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in the American colonies, and even opportunities to assume established family businesses. Whatever the reason for their presence in Canadian provinces, men such as Anthony Henry, John Howe, William Brown, and James Humphreys were pioneers in the printing industry in Canada.

The printers who had some level of experience came primarily from the population centers of Boston (five), Philadelphia (five), and New York or Albany (two). Others trained in Virginia, New Jersey, or Newport, Rhode Island. Several learned the trade under established printers such as Isaiah Thomas of Boston and William Dunlop and William Bradford of Philadelphia. In turn, several either learned or polished their skills under a Canadian printer who had learned printing in the colonies. An example of this passing of a trade was William Brown of Quebec. Brown was a Scotsman who came to America around 1753, apprenticed with Dunlop in Philadelphia, formed a printing business there, and finally established the first printing office in Quebec in 1764 with another Dunlop-trained printer. At least four other early Canadian printers worked in Brown's office before setting up their own businesses – Thomas Gilmore; Samuel Neilson; his brother, John Neilson; and William Vondenvelden. Vondenvelden sold his business to Piere Edouard Desbarats and Roger Lelievre, both of whom trained under the Neilsons, thus indirectly owing their craft to Brown. Brown's career as a printer in Canada lasted until his death in 1789. Through John Neilson, Desbarats, and Lelievre, his influence on printing in Quebec lasted until the 1820s.

Another influential printer was Bostonian John Howe, who trained there under Richard Draper and moved to Halifax after 1776 to escape the rebellious colonists. The loyalist Howe purchased printing equipment from Draper's widow and started his own business in 1780, printing the weekly *Halifax Journal*. In addition, Howe did substantial other printing work and became king's printer in 1801. He retired in 1818 in favor of his son. Howe's other influences includes William Minns, his brother-in-law, who worked in Howe's office before establishing his own shop in 1786. Minns operated a successful printing office for the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

The primary printing office in eighteenth-century Montreal was run by Fleury Mesplet. In 1773, he moved to London and, in 1774, to Philadelphia, establishing brief printing offices in both cities. In 1776, with some modest support from the second Continental Congress, Mesplet migrated to Montreal to set up a French printing operation. In constant conflict with Crown authorities in Montreal, Mesplet published newspapers, a handful of books and pamphlets, and operated a small book store. The business apparently did not survive him.

In New Brunswick, early printers included William Lewis and John Ryan. Lewis apprenticed in Albany and Ryan under Draper in Newport, Rhode Island. Both came to Saint John as loyalists. Lewis ran a printing office in

New York about 1780 and moved his equipment with him. Ryan was another product of John Howe's Halifax business and formed a partnership with Lewis in 1783. Lewis returned to the States in 1786 but Ryan remained in printing for over four decades. His major competition came from another Philadelphia-trained printer, Christopher Sower. Sower's family had been involved in the printing trade near Philadelphia (Germantown). He was the third Christopher Sower (the other two were his father and his grandfather) to operate a printing office until his loyalist sentiments forced him out of business in the Delaware Valley. In 1785, he finally landed in New Brunswick as king's printer and deputy postmaster. Like other Canadian printers, Sower published a newspaper as well as an almanac. He died in 1799 in Baltimore after giving up his business to Ryan.

A final eighteenth-century New Brunswick printer was Jacob Mott, who was also Ryan's brother-in-law. He learned the trade in New York, moved with his family to Saint John in 1798, and started his own printing office with Ryan's assistance. He published a newspaper and became king's printer in 1801 – a common pattern of the eighteenth-century Canadian printer.

Printing in Nova Scotia before 1800 was the property of two brothers, James and Alexander Robertson, as well as Alexander's son, James Jr. The Robertsons had a printing office in New York before removing to Shelburne as loyalists in 1783. Two other brothers, Thomas and James Swords, were partners with the younger Robertson. The Swords also learned printing in New York. None lasted long in Nova Scotia. James Robertson, Sr., moved to Prince Edward Island in 1787 because business was poor. Alexander Robertson died in 1784 and his son James left the business after 1786. The Swords returned to New York. James Humphreys, a Philadelphia native trained under William Bradford, ran the most successful early printing office in Shelburne, from 1785 to 1796. Humphreys also returned to printing in Philadelphia from 1787 until his death in 1810.

There are several common threads among the early Canadian printers. The more obvious are the loyalist backgrounds of the American printers, the fact that most printers had as a staple a newspaper, their contracts as king's printer or other government printing business, and the familiar nature of their businesses. In only a handful of instances are there isolated printing offices that had no relationship to another enterprise.

In her introduction, Tremaine mentions several of these – the necessity of printing a newspaper and the economic stability tied to government contract work. In fact, twenty-four of the twenty-six printer (92 percent) identified by Tremaine printed a newspaper. At least fourteen (54 percent) did some governmental printing and five were appointed king's printer – Henry, Howe, Ryan, Sower, and William Alexander Rind in Charlottetown.

There were also ten British loyalists among the twenty-

six (38 percent) who left the colonies to escape the American rebellion. This was perhaps the foremost reason printers found a business home in the Canadian provinces from Quebec to the east. Some of these printers had suffered considerably because of their failure to support the revolution. Sower, for example, was forced from Philadelphia and worked briefly as an undercover agent for the British major John Andre. Humphreys was often denounced for his traitorous printing activity. John Ryan and Alexander Robertson were arrested for their loyalist activities before leaving for Canada.

Finally, seventeen of the twenty-six printer (65 percent) were in the printing trade due to family interests or other similar related activities. The Robertsons were brothers and Alexander's son became a printer in Nova Scotia. Further west, the Neilson brothers printed for some thirty years. In Shelburne, Thomas and James Swords had a seven-year business. Sower was a third-generation printer and several other printers were related through marriages. The conclusion is that only a few of these eighteenth-century printers operated independently of family influence.

The early Canadian printer may differ from his counterpart in American cities – only further study will answer important questions on the role of printing in late eighteenth-century Canada and the complete impact of American printing. But the connection exists, and although perhaps not as surprising as at first glance, the practice of printing in the provinces of Canada deserves further study.

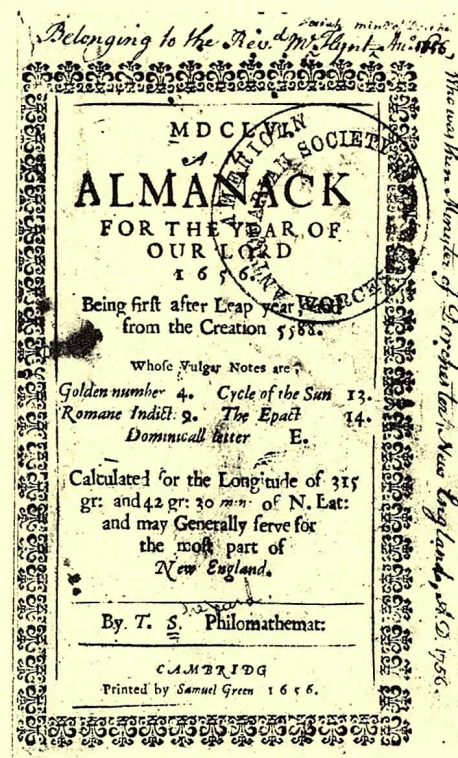
*Boyd Childress, Auburn University*

## *A Cataloguer and His Almanacs*

*[Editors' note: Richard Anders retired last year after more than twenty years' service as a rare book cataloguer at AAS. At the request of the Society's associate librarian, Nancy Burkett, he prepared this highly personal account of his long involvement in cataloguing the Society's superb collection of early American almanacs, that staple item of many a printer.]*

I began to spend part of my time in cataloguing the Society's almanac collection about 1970. At first I found it a disheartening prospect: one of preparing catalogue records for almanac after almanac, by the scores and hundreds and thousands, all much alike, with no prior interest in or feeling for them.

But soon I saw that every almanac or series of almanacs was distinctive, held something new, differed in its archaism or modernity, and was formed by its author's individuality. I saw that their essential subjects were among those most appealing to me: the skies above and the natural world below, the changing weather, day and night, the passing seasons, the revolving calendar, and town and country life in this seamless multiform setting, all graced with passages of verse and with little engravings. Finally, almanacs



*Almanac for 1656, by T. S. [Thomas Shepard], printed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, by Samuel Green.*

stirred my feelings for what is mysterious and secret in the world.

I found that I didn't understand the calendar pages at all, with their calculations and symbols and their astronomical and meteorological and horological notes. It was clear to me that their contemporary readers understood and used those pages, and that those readers lived in a mental world that now is vanished and lost. At the same time, I realized that now and then I was seeing passages in almanacs that explained some of these things, at random as it were. Finally, I saw that I, alone in the United States, was in a one-time position to assemble this scattered revelatory material, for I was working my way through the nation's largest collection of almanacs, one by one, from beginning to end.

Since then, through the years, I have assembled two volumes (i. e., full spring binders) of such passages, copied from almanacs and a few other sources, which explain or illuminate what the matter in them means, to what uses it was put by various readers, how almanacs were made, and even verses and satire about them. When this unique compilation is complete, it will be revised and put in good order and become part of the Society's collections.

At around the same time, I grew conscious of another almanac mystery, that of authorship. Some almanacs have the names of real persons on their title pages, while others mask themselves in the pseudonymous visages of Isaac Bickerstaff and Abraham Weatherwise and the like, and

still others bear no statement of authorship at all. At first I had to take at face value what I saw; but then I noticed a suggestive hint in A. C. Bates's bibliography of Connecticut almanacs. Bates didn't follow through with his intuition, but I took it up, and I learned how to discover the authorship of most anonymous or pseudonymous almanacs.

The calendar pages of an almanac contain columns of times for the sun and the moon, adjusted to the meridian of the locality or region for which the almanac is calculated. They also have a general column of notes giving times of rising, setting, and southing of various planets and bright stars, astrological aspects of the planets, interesting or useful celestial apparitions, equations of clock and sundial time, length of day or time of twilight or sun's declination, together with the weather predictions, anniversaries and church days, and perhaps some gnomonic sayings. These calculations (especially those for the moon) and the accompanying selection of astronomical and horological notes, were as unique to any given almanac calculator as his own fingerprints. Unfailingly, in any two almanacs for the same year and the same locality by two different almanac makers, the calculations and the notes will be different. The times for the sun, moon, tides, bright stars, and the rest will vary, if only by a minute or two, and a wholly different selection of heavenly bodies and astronomical data will appear in the general column. (An exception may occur in gross combined calculations for sunrise and sunset.)

Publishers paid an almanac maker ten dollars for his calculations, which sum would buy a nice cow or several books. He could also double or triple it by selling his work to other publishers who wished to issue almanacs, and these almanacs would usually appear anonymously or under a pseudonym. That is the explanation of most of the early almanacs that name no real person as their author; and I have been able to identify that person in most cases through comparison with signed almanacs for the same year and the same meridian, at the same time very much extending the known range of his work, and, as it were, rewarding him openly for what he did in secret. This is something that has never been done before; and my opportunity is unique, working alone as I am through the most comprehensive of the world's almanac collections.

The Society's collection consists of 15,000 items. All those for the years 1646 through 1821 have been catalogued, and two-thirds of those for 1822 through 1831. I shall now continue, following my formal retirement, in my new part-time volunteer capacity. During the last year alone, I catalogued 600 almanacs at my computer terminal, while doing other things as well, and it seems to me that I ought to be able to finish the whole. In the light of what I have related earlier in this little vocational autobiography, my reader will understand why I conclude by saying that I feel this is my own work, which I was called to do.

*Richard Anders, American Antiquarian Society*

## *Recent Publications*

The seventh annual James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American Culture, Robert Gross's *Printing, Politics, and the People*, is available for purchase. In this lecture, Gross examines the changing role of printing in nineteenth-century American culture, particularly the disjuncture that developed between the worlds of newspapers and books. He argues that, as the century progressed, printing, which had originally served as the medium for the development of American culture, became the measure of the division between "high culture," the world of books, and the culture of "the people" associated with the newspaper and a broader, politically active society.

This 1989 Wiggins lecture may be ordered through the University Press of Virginia for \$8.95, plus postage and handling (\$2.00 for one copy; \$.75 for each additional copy). Send requests to the University Press of Virginia, Box 3608 University Station, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

Scholars and readers who are researching the history of the book in American culture may now purchase, at a special price, the entire series of the James Russell Wiggins Lectures. The set includes all seven lectures, by David Hall (1983), James Wells (1984), Larzer Ziff (1985), Cathy Davidson (1986), Roger Chartier (1987), John Bidwell (1988), and Robert Gross (1989).

The special price for the set is \$34.95, plus postage and handling. Orders may be placed with the University Press of Virginia.

For reader intrigued by feats of magic, the American Antiquarian Society has recently published an exhibition catalogue of materials about the art of conjuring, drawn from the collections of the Society and the Mulholland Library of Conjuring and the Allied Arts. *Many Mysteries Unraveled, or Conjuring Literature in America, 1786-1874* includes an introductory overview of the publishing history of magic imprints in America by famed magician Ricky Jay. The illustrated catalogue provides bibliographical information and commentaries on over fifty books, broadsides, playbills, as well as instruction books on such devices as training a pig to perform mathematical calculations.

*Many Mysteries Unraveled* may be purchased from AAS for \$15.00, plus postage and handling (\$1.50 for one copy; \$.75 for each additional copy). Send requests to Publications Department, American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury Street, Worcester, MA 01609-1634.

*Library Company of Philadelphia Mounts  
"Poor Richard's Books" Exhibit*

The Library Company of Philadelphia has mounted an exhibition of some sixty volumes from the library of Benjamin Franklin, on view at the library from March 23 through August 31. Franklin's collection, the largest and best private library in America of the period, numbered 4,276 volumes at the time of his death in 1790. He willed most of it to his grandson William Temple Franklin, but the majority of the books were sold at auctions in Philadelphia in 1801 and 1803. None of the auction catalogues survive, and since Franklin used no bookplate and seldom signed or annotated his books, there was, until recently, little known about Poor Richard's books.

However, in 1956, Edwin Wolf 2nd, then the librarian of the Library Company, discovered the key to identifying Franklin's books: a cryptic shelfmark that was penciled on each of his books after his return from France in 1785. The

mark consists of a "C" followed by a number, then an "N" followed by another number. The "C" stood for "case" and told on which shelf the book belonged. The "N" stood for "number," the position of the book on the shelf. These marks were transcribed into a now-lost manuscript catalogue, which assured that every book could be found with ease.

With the key to Franklin's books identified, Wolf was able to reassemble a significant part of the "unorthodox jigsaw puzzle" of Franklin's library. To date, Wolf has found over a thousand volumes of the dispersed collection. The largest cache, about 350 volumes, belongs to the Library Company and to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, whose rare books are in the care of the Library Company.

The exhibition offers the general public its first opportunity to learn about Wolf's researches and his feat of reconstruction, and this is the first exhibition of the fruits of Wolf's labors.

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