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# Empirical Bibliography: A Decade of Book History at Texas A&M

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A CENTURY AGO, Ronald B. McKerrow argued that in order to understand books from the early modern period, a student or scholar should experience “all the processes through which the matter of the work before them has passed, from its first being written down by the pen of its author to its appearance in the finished volume.”<sup>1</sup> Seeing the work “from the point of view of those who composed, corrected, printed, folded, and bound it” could yield invaluable perspectives about a book’s authorship and the forces that continued to shape it through its material production—even more, perhaps, than other modes of academic inquiry. Though McKerrow’s suggestion appears eminently practical, even readily achievable, scrutinizing the implications of his proposition presents both logistical and conceptual problems. Whether

1. R. B. McKerrow, “Notes on Bibliographical Evidence for Literary Students and Editors of English Works of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 12 (1911–13): 220.

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the investigation is pursued on an individual basis or as part of a pedagogical model, the practical problems of acquiring the necessary range of historical equipment are significant and inevitably demand expenditures of time and resources. If the effort is to be part of an academic program, still other challenges obtain, including the need to garner administrative and budgetary support to conduct the course. Even once that support has been granted, conceptual questions—which form our focus here—remain. Specifically, how can a curriculum be designed that balances necessary components of lecture and experiential learning? How can projects be devised that provide a preliminary introduction to book history technologies while allowing student involvement and creativity? Essentially, how can all the moving parts be balanced—the needs and interests of the students, the safety and well-being of participants, facilities, and collections alike—in order to achieve a rich and meaningful learning experience?

Over time, various classes, institutions, and workshops have answered McKerrow's call and responded to the range of challenges present in fulfilling his vision. The following essay examines the formation and first decade of the Book History Workshop at Texas A&M University in the context of McKerrow's initial prompt and early attempts to fulfill it. Building on the successes and challenges of previous efforts, the Book History Workshop has evolved into one of the most complete and intensive hands-on explorations of handpress book production available to students of bibliography, printing history, and textual studies.

#### THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EMPIRICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

At its center, McKerrow's notion calls for a thorough familiarity with the material processes through which written texts have been transmitted. His work insists that the acts of editing, printing, and distributing a book are inextricably bound up in that work's critical reception and interpretation by contemporary and modern readers. More than merely a pedagogical strategy, his ideas have provided a lasting influence on both bibliographical analysis and literary criticism, and have become part of a larger movement that emphasizes the need for scholars and editors to understand the material complications of the works they analyze. This intellectual endeavor has become, over the past century, not only a critical commonplace but also a discipline of scholarship in its own

right.<sup>2</sup> The methods that McKerrow espoused have come to be viewed as a representative impulse within bibliographical study, significant and distinctive enough to be included within the litany of practices identified by Robert Darnton in his influential essay “What is the History of Books?” In describing the panoply of pursuits included in the “overlapping territories” of book history, he visualizes a scholar “collating editions, compiling statistics, decoding copyright law, wading through reams of manuscript, [and] heaving at the bar of a reconstructed common press.”<sup>3</sup>

Though he may have been the first major voice to emphasize the value of immediate and experiential knowledge of printing history, McKerrow was not the only bibliographer to call for active involvement in period practices as a necessary element of bibliographical study. Perhaps the figure who extended McKerrow’s initial pronouncement most fully is Philip Gaskell, whose *New Introduction to Bibliography* (1972) has become a standard bibliographical text, building upon and expanding McKerrow’s *Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (1927). In addition to echoing McKerrow’s call for experiential bibliography throughout his work, Gaskell argued that the burgeoning of the New Bibliography and the continuing acceptance of the role of active bibliography in textual studies was at least partially initiated by McKerrow’s work. It is now essential, he continued, that any editor or scholar of

2. G. Thomas Tanselle began his 1997 Sandars Lectures by sketching “the idea that books, like all other objects, must bear traces of the physical effort that went into their making, the culture that underlay their craftsmanship, and the treatment they have received since their creation.” In following the growth of analytical bibliography as a field, through the advances of the New Bibliography and beyond, Tanselle argues against those “historically minded readers, including literary scholars, [who] have generally not been interested in pursuing such history, apparently believing—along with the less historically minded—that the utilitarian vessels have no direct relevance to, or effect on, the contents or our knowledge of the past.” He culminates his history with the argument that “the artifacts carrying verbal texts constitute an enormous reservoir of information about the past, quite apart from the meanings of the words themselves; and those who are interested in learning about the past will persist in exploring every conceivable way of extracting that information” (G. Thomas Tanselle, *Bibliographical Analysis: A Historical Introduction* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 7, 30).

3. Robert Darnton, “What Is the History of Books?” *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (1982): 66.

handpress-period texts reckon with the material object of their study, and this expectation and practice “is in great measure due to the teaching and example of McKerrow himself.”<sup>4</sup>

It may appear curious that although prominent bibliographers have emphasized this hands-on practice for over a century, the taxonomy of bibliography does not include a ready position for this long-accepted approach to encountering the printed book. Experiential engagement may be considered a subset of analytical bibliography: the practice of examining the material aspects of a book to explore the competing influences that shape the written copy into its ultimate printed form. However, McKerrow’s notion shifts this focus from the *product* of the finished book to replicating the *processes* of production based on historical models. This bibliographical approach is an effort to understand the manner in which a book was constructed through immediate physical experience (including the systematic and repeatable process of testing and verification based on historical methodology). A companion to analytical bibliography, this mode of investigation, for which we propose the term *empirical bibliography*, originates with information contained in early handbooks of printing, details extracted from woodcuts or other visual representations of printing houses, and evidence discovered through bibliographical analysis paired with practical experimentation.

*Empirical bibliography* is also distinct from Fredson Bowers’s notion of “historical bibliography,” which describes a more general examination of the materials and records of printing establishments. This subcategory, which Bowers places in his taxonomy of bibliography as a “fifth area” of bibliography after the enumerative, descriptive, analytical, and textual varieties, provides a wider contextualization of bibliographical analysis. It is clear from Bowers’s brief introduction, however, that he is not discussing practical or experiential knowledge: “historical bibliography [is] the study of the history of the implements of printing like type, presses, paper, inks; or of the records of printing like the accounts kept by the seventeenth-century Cambridge University Press,

4. Gaskell’s testimonial was that “no one has put the case for practical bibliographical teaching better [than McKerrow]; and it is one which has now gained acceptance with the great majority of those scholars who are directly concerned with textual studies in literature” (Philip Gaskell, “The Bibliographical Press Movement,” *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* 1 [1965]: 4).

the eighteenth-century publisher Strahan, or the nineteenth-century Ticknor and Fields.”<sup>5</sup>

Several great bibliographical figures of the past have argued that the close examination of books alone is not sufficient to test theoretical propositions. Reviving the techniques of book production, based both upon the close examinations of traces left in printed texts and methods described in period manuals and narratives, offers a necessary corrective to purely inductive hypotheses—many of which may not prove historically or practically feasible. In 1913, A. W. Pollard argued that the unwillingness of certain scholars and editors to examine the processes of book production as articulated by McKerrow and others had led to egregious errors: “we may say that if Literary Professors and Editors neglect to acquaint themselves with its principles they do so at their peril, and that by neglecting them in the past they have blundered, and blundered badly.”<sup>6</sup> A similar warning was needed once again in 1963, when D. F. McKenzie presented his landmark lecture on bibliographical methods (published in 1969 as “Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing-House Practices”).<sup>7</sup> In it, he famously excoriated those scholars who based their theories of early modern print production upon overly simplistic and unsupported generalizations. McKenzie’s emphasis upon the details of pressroom practices drawn from the Bowyer ledgers and other documentary evidence, in connection with his exploration of concurrent printing, led to a wholesale re-evaluation of many common presuppositions about production during the handpress period. As Sydney J. Shep and others have noted, McKenzie’s recalibration was based not only upon archival evidence but also upon a closer examination of the practical considerations that empirical bibliography provides:

Many of the bibliographical breakthroughs and explanations of textual cruces in the twentieth century were dependent upon the reconstruction of practice—imaginatively or tangibly—predicated on an intimate knowledge of process

5. Fredson Bowers, “Four Faces of Bibliography,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 10 (1971): 34.

6. Tanselle quotes this passage: “Pollard made similar comments in his October 1913 address on the Society’s twenty-first anniversary (published in 1916 in the thirteenth volume of its *Transactions*)” (*Bibliographical Analysis*, 92).

7. D. F. McKenzie, “Printers of the Mind,” in *Making Meaning: “Printers of the Mind” and Other Essays*, ed. Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez, S. J. (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 13–85.

recovered through the intensive reading of trade manuals and practical experiments. McKenzie's legacy was not only a recognition of the importance of printing house archives in the investigation of the physical remains of those houses—the books themselves—but also the need to understand the processes which created those artefacts, often through simulations in the research laboratory of the bibliographic press with its array of printing presses, type, and industrial realia.<sup>8</sup>

Gaskell, too, argued that this safeguard against error was an essential component of immediate experience with printing methods. Among the possible advantages of empirical bibliography, the “most valuable lesson” to be gained is “a general knowledge of printing techniques upon which a research worker may safely base his theories, for even experienced bibliographers have been known to draw conclusions from premisses [*sic*] which practical work would have shown to be invalid.”<sup>9</sup>

In addition to shaping scholarly knowledge, the experimental method exemplified by empirical bibliography, for McKerrow, has a pedagogical advantage as well: in attempting to produce books using handpress-period methods, students will make mistakes. Indeed, inexperienced, unlettered, or hurried attempts at composition or printing may result in precisely the same errors that appear due to similar conditions in early modern book production. McKerrow claimed that one of the great benefits students receive from the practice of book production includes the realization of “when and how mistakes are likely to arise” in the artifact of the historical book.<sup>10</sup> Such errors serve not only as a pedagogical tool (as students see where and under what conditions such mistakes occur) but also have been instrumental in the emergence of analytical bibliography as a practice, which has developed many of its significant insights by analyzing flaws such as identifiably broken type, characteristic (mis)spellings, or other repeated errors.<sup>11</sup> Following McKerrow, Gaskell

8. Sydney J. Shep, “Bookends: Towards a Poetics of Material Form,” in *Teaching Bibliography, Textual Criticism, and Book History*, ed. Ann R. Hawkins (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), 39.

9. Philip Gaskell, “The First Two Years of the Water Lane Press,” *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 2, part 2 (1955): 178.

10. McKerrow, “Notes on Bibliographical Evidence,” 220.

11. Peter W. M. Blayney's catalogue *The First Folio of Shakespeare* from the Folger Shakespeare Library's 1991 exhibition of the same name provides a valuable introduction to many of these issues, including the pages set by Compositor E, whose work is characterized by an “extreme lack of skill: errors of every kind are far more frequent in his pages than in any others,” as well as the examination of “various

echoed this sentiment in arguing that “even mistakes made by pressmen can have bibliographical significance, and—as with composition—there is no better way of recognizing and understanding such mistakes than that of making them oneself.”<sup>12</sup> In fact, the inevitability—and value—of error could be said to be one of the founding tenets of McKerrow’s empirical bibliographic movement.

#### THE FIRST GENERATION

During the middle of the twentieth century, the combination of a growing critical interest and emphasis upon active experience as a means of augmenting bibliographical study led to the establishment of a number of printing labs dedicated to the teaching of book history, most affiliated with academic institutions or libraries. Gaskell noted that only two decades after the initial publication of McKerrow’s *Transactions* article, the call to provide personal bibliographical experience for students of book history “began to bear fruit,” with the formation of several printing offices based on McKerrow’s recommendation.<sup>13</sup> In a later essay, Gaskell attempted to explain what he termed “the boom in bibliographical presses in the universities of the English-speaking world.” His definition of a “bibliographical press” is the physical embodiment of McKerrow’s idea: “a workshop or laboratory which is carried on chiefly for the purpose of demonstrating and investigating the printing techniques of the past by means of setting type by hand, and of printing from it on a simple press.”<sup>14</sup> In describing the creation of his own printing laboratory, Gaskell contextualizes his motivation in terms of McKerrow’s article, noting that “finally, in 1953, forty years after McKerrow’s essay was published, a third bibliographical press was established at Cambridge . . . the Water Lane Press in King’s College.”<sup>15</sup>

Despite the relative popularity of these sites as documented by Gaskell—numbering twenty-five in the United Kingdom, the United

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recognizable objects [that] reappeared throughout the book: each individual brass rule used in the box-frames around the text (identifiable by tell-tale bends and breaks); each separate setting of the running-titles used in each play; and hundreds of distinctively damaged types in the text itself” (Peter W. M. Blayney, *The First Folio of Shakespeare* [Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1991], 4, 11).

12. Gaskell, “Bibliographical Press Movement,” 3.

13. Gaskell, “First Two Years,” 170.

14. Gaskell, “Bibliographical Press Movement,” 1.

15. Gaskell, “First Two Years,” 170.

States, and New Zealand, based on a census he produced between 1963 and 1964—it became apparent that certain practical limitations were common among the projects pursuing empirical bibliography, particularly with respect to pedagogical practices. While evaluating the successes and challenges of these various efforts is beyond the scope of this paper, an examination of Gaskell's experience at the Water Lane Press demonstrates some of the difficulties that inevitably arise when attempting to provide hands-on experience in early book-production practices, even to advanced bibliographical or literary students. Any attempt at producing an equivalent pedagogical experience in empirical bibliography will need to grapple with similar challenges.

PRACTICAL LIMITATIONS ON EMPIRICAL  
BIBLIOGRAPHY PROGRAMS

Though theoretically attractive, the pedagogical model of empirical bibliography espoused by McKerrow and Gaskell faces a number of conceptual and logistical hurdles, including the establishment of a historically accurate pressroom, the comprehensiveness of curriculum, the balance of demonstration versus participation, the numbers of students involved, and the amount of faculty time required in planning, preparation, and teaching.

The first task facing an empirical-bibliography program lies in the selection and acquisition of printing equipment, in particular the centerpiece of the printing lab: the press. More than any other factor, the selection of the equipment determines the degree to which the pedagogical process will emphasize historical verisimilitude. While Gaskell made efforts to achieve authenticity in the work of his press, he rejected using a common press (as McKerrow had suggested) in favor of the Stanhope and Columbian iron handpresses.<sup>16</sup> These nineteenth-century machines, while anachronistic in terms of handpress-period printing, were also reliable, relatively simple to operate and maintain, and required comparatively light physical labor to operate.

Gaskell claimed there was no significant bibliographical difference between the wooden and iron press, arguing that the process of printing on an iron handpress was “precisely the same as that of working the

16. McKerrow suggested that a student “compose a sheet or two in as exact facsimile as possible of some Elizabethan octavo or quarto, and to print it on a press constructed on the Elizabethan model” (“Notes on Bibliographical Evidence,” 220).



wooden presses which had been used all over Europe from (at latest) the end of the fifteenth century until the end of the eighteenth century.”<sup>17</sup> While the processes may be essentially the same, the ease of use that made the iron handpress attractive may in fact have created certain pedagogical barriers to a more immediate understanding of early modern printing practices; specifically, the exhausting nature of manual labor in the early modern printing house.<sup>18</sup> The physical challenge of repeatedly juggling paper, inking balls, and pulling the bar in order to print—or attempt to print—a hourly token of 240 sheets provided a far more visceral lesson in the life of an early pressman than any textbook could offer. James Mosley described his experience in working with Gaskell at the Water Lane Press as demonstrating to him “the barrier . . . between slow and painstaking reconstruction and reliving the experience. The difference between an edition of a few hundred impressions and two thousand were [*sic*] decisive.”<sup>19</sup>

The taxing labor of composing type at production speed also provided students with only a basic understanding of the issues surrounding the historical pressroom and the opportunity to generate insightful errors. Here too, though, Gaskell’s downplaying of historical methods in the service of ease of instruction may raise pedagogical, if not bibliographical, problems. For example, he opted to ink his formes using brayers rather than ink balls because “the difficulty of keeping the pelts supple in an establishment where they would not be used regularly has so far discouraged experiment.”<sup>20</sup>

Gaskell’s hedges on historical accuracy are linked to the broader question of pedagogical comprehensiveness presented by the endeavor.

17. Gaskell, “First Two Years,” 172.

18. Gaskell found that these laboratories were overwhelmingly populated by iron handpresses and modern platen presses rather than late-eighteenth-century or reproduction common presses, with iron presses outnumbering common presses seven to one (Gaskell, “Bibliographical Press Movement,” 7–13). This represents a significant difference in labor, as the two pulls of the bar for each impression on the common press, which would be reduced to a single pull in iron handpresses, involves a doubling of the workload.

19. From Mosley’s remarks when accepting the American Printing History Association’s 2003 Award for Distinguished Achievement, <https://printinghistory.org/awards/james-mosley/>.

20. Gaskell, “First Two Years,” 173.

Covering all aspects of printing is a daunting challenge, and previous laboratories have responded by narrowing the focus of instruction or the size of the project.<sup>21</sup> Gaskell's use of iron handpresses indicate that Water Lane Press's pedagogical emphasis lay first in composition, and then to a lesser extent, printing.<sup>22</sup> Other trades or technologies that would have been necessary to produce books, including papermaking, typesetting, and bookbinding, are mentioned by Gaskell largely when enumerating the difficulties that prevented their inclusion as part of his experiential curriculum. Though he laments that "it will be difficult to provide practical experience in these subjects," he acknowledges that "with equipment for demonstrations (I have a paper mould, a type mould, and some bookbinders' tools, besides specimens of what they produce) much can be done."<sup>23</sup> The emphasis upon demonstration *of*, rather than experience *with*, other elements of printing, demonstrates the practical impediments that confront any comprehensive empirical introduction to period book production.

Given the limitations of space, equipment, and faculty time, a final consideration for this model of empirical bibliography involves the number of students a workshop can accommodate. Realistically, these workshops can only serve a small number of students well in any one-course offering. Writing of his first effort at creating an experiential model, Gaskell explained that the number of students the premises could comfortably hold was necessarily constrained: "a class of four with its instructor fits in comfortably [in the pressroom], while classes of five or even of six can be managed." The number of hours of interaction was also limited; during a single term, "each student attended eight lectures

21. Mosley notes that even Gaskell's ambitious project, "during a vacation," to produce a facsimile with an edition size of "a thousand sheets," had to contend with these limitations. "Gaskell realistically cut the number of the next sheet to five hundred. And in the event, for various reasons, the third sheet was machined by the University Press" (from Mosley's APHA acceptance remarks).

22. Gaskell's account suggests that these decisions were carefully considered, though they may have originated as a matter of exigency. At one point, he acknowledges that after examining the achievements of the Press, he considered that "the real importance of practical bibliography lies in learning how to set type by hand; and that it does not matter very much what press is used for printing the type ("Bibliographical Press Movement," 3).

23. *Ibid.*, 5.

and eight to twelve hours' practical work," though Gaskell suggests that twice this amount would be necessary to "learn enough bibliography, theoretical and practical, to be of real value in research."<sup>24</sup> Given these constraints, particularly in class size, early models lie well outside the norms of the contemporary college curriculum.

#### ANOTHER GENERATION OF EMPIRICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

In recent decades, other scholars and bibliographers have seized upon the impulse articulated by McKerrow and Gaskell and stressed material encounters in their study of books and printing. Foremost among them, Terry Belanger established an institutional framework for examining the artifactual aspects of literary production. His vision and energy in founding Rare Book School in 1983 derived from the same impulse that propelled McKerrow: the emphasis upon tactile pedagogy while engaging with the history of the book. Belanger's work, and the subsequent contributions of other faculty members of Rare Book School, has influenced critics, scholars of the book, and other programs that have emerged in the past twenty years.

Facing similar practical and conceptual challenges, Steven Escar Smith, then the director of Texas A&M's Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, established the Book History Workshop in 2002 with the objective of meeting McKerrow's pedagogical ideal. Smith described the foundational principles of the Workshop thus: "we use 'hands on' exercises to teach the technical processes that give birth to texts so that we might better understand how these processes bear on textual form, meaning, transmission, and reception."<sup>25</sup> Deliberately modeled after the earlier presses or laboratories described by Gaskell, Smith aimed to offer students an introduction to book history through a combination of lectures, close analysis of Cushing Memorial Library's handpress-period collections, augmented by demonstrations and hands-on projects in a printing lab. Over the past thirteen years, the program has retained its initial imperative while growing to embrace a wider definition of empirical bibliography, involving not only composition and printing, but also an active introduction to a broad complement of book technologies.

24. Gaskell, "First Two Years," 175.

25. Steven Escar Smith, "A Clear and Lively Comprehension': the History and Influence of the Bibliographical Library," *Teaching Bibliography, Textual Criticism, and Book History*, ed. Ann R. Hawkins (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), 33.

In attempting to address the limitations that Gaskell faced, the Workshop's gradual movement from demonstration and partial participation to greater involvement and autonomy has culminated in a more complete, active achievement of McKerrow's vision. Over time, participants in the Book History Workshop cast type in a hand mould, pulled sheets of paper using a laid mould and deckle, created ink from varnish and carbonized vine or bone, and made woodcuts as printers' devices. These elements of book creation are integrated into a final project, a complete facsimile of an eighteenth-century pamphlet, composed using period characters and ligatures in three work-and-turn octavo formes, each of which is corrected by the students, then imposed on the press and printed.

#### ORIGINS: 2002

In its earliest conception, the Book History Workshop was envisioned less as a comprehensive program of study than as a collaboration among scholars, each of whom provided their own unique contribution to the endeavor. The acquisition of equipment, the development of an instructional structure, and the selection of a course project were worked out in partnership, with participating figures providing their own area of expertise.

Prior to the establishment of the Workshop, Smith joined forces with Stephen Pratt, a Utah-based craftsman with expertise in period tools and historical reconstructions.<sup>26</sup> With Pratt's help, Smith assembled the necessary equipment for the laboratory, including a period-accurate English common press,<sup>27</sup> a type mould based upon "the oldest known hand mould, the Plantin-Moretus GI 48,"<sup>28</sup> along with other necessary

26. Originally a wheelwright specializing in period reconstructions of covered wagons, Pratt moved on to build working models of wooden and iron handpresses through his Pratt Press Works.

27. The initial press produced by Pratt was based upon the designs in Elizabeth Harris and Clinton Sisson's *The Common Press: Being a Record, Description, & Delimitation of the Early Eighteenth Century Handpress in the Smithsonian Institution, with a History & Documentation of the Press* (Boston, MA: D. R. Godine, 1978).

28. Note by Steve Smith on the verso of a photograph of two hand-mould reproductions produced by Steve Pratt, unprocessed archive of the Book History Workshop, Cushing Memorial Library.

equipment. Not only did they work to outfit the pressroom, but their interactions also provided a foundation for the methodology of the future Workshop. In a letter Pratt wrote to Smith after a late-2000 visit to Cushing Library, he suggested that Smith's theoretical knowledge of book production and analytical bibliography, combined with Pratt's own knowledge of materials and craft, had led them to a process of informed experimentation in the recreation of printing techniques that would become a hallmark of the Workshop: "a lot of the old processes have been forgotten," wrote Pratt. "We do a lot of rediscovering to figure out what was done."<sup>29</sup>

Following a collaborative structure joining academic lecture to practical sessions, many aspects of the instruction during the first year of the Workshop were contributed by interested faculty members from Texas A&M's English Department. The primary lectures were taught by Smith and a colleague from English, Maura Ives,<sup>30</sup> and consisted of the history of the book divided into chronological sections from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. These sessions were enriched by a series of scholarly evening lectures, offered by members of the faculty of the Texas A&M College of Liberal Arts, which offered case studies in book-history topics. The speakers drew from their current research to present talks on subjects such as early marginalia, female ownership of British piety manuals, and the institution of the King's Printer in England.

The laboratory sessions, taught by Pratt and titled "Printing Labs I-V," began largely with demonstrations in which student involvement was solicited. For example, the first lab allowed students to "observe type casting in [a] hand mould," which they were then able to dress, distribute, and compose.<sup>31</sup> Other sessions focused on format and

29. Letter dated January 2, 2001, unprocessed archive of the Book History Workshop, Cushing Memorial Library.

30. Smith taught Lecture I, "Pre-book structures to Gutenberg" and II, "15th/16th Century"; Ives led Lecture III, "17th/18th Centuries" and "19th Century." Together they handled a one-hour wrap-up session on Friday.

31. Pratt noted in a letterpress broadside that he made to promote the types that the name of the typeface cast from the matrices (owned and used by the Workshop) struck from his punches is "Gutenberg Handcast." Pratt describes "Gutenberg handcast [as] an interpretive typeface. The matrices were designed to print letters very similar to those found in the Book of Judges, chapter 6, Gabriel Wells's

imposition by folding laid paper according to various early practices; dampening paper for printing; mixing ink by grinding and adding pigment to varnish; making ready the forme in preparation for printing; and constructing ink balls by adding teased wool and rawhide pelts to wooden ball stocks.<sup>32</sup>

While the Workshop was devised to allow students an experiential introduction to handpress-period printing, its earliest projects did not combine composition with printing based upon a historical model. The central project involved printing a preset octavo work-and-turn forme from Thomas Sprat's *The History of the Royal Society of London* (1667). The main introduction to typesetting was a much more individually driven exercise. Each student set three to five lines of their choosing, generally verse, in a self-selected typeface. The type and student-designed and cut wood blocks were then locked up on the common press. The work resulted in a collaborative broadside with the type centered in a border of woodcuts. Though the structure of the broadside consciously replicated the folio layout of Gutenberg's 42-line Bible (viewed as a full printed sheet, with two pages imposed side by side), the project is more closely aligned with the book arts (in the sense of emphasis on individual vision, creative illustration, and fine printing) than focused on strictly historical considerations.

#### ADVANCEMENT: 2003–2006

While the collaborative spirit established by the Workshop's inaugural year would remain in place, future iterations would develop greater consistency and continuity of instruction. Rather than inviting external faculty to provide supplemental lectures, the program established a core curriculum based upon Smith and Pratt's expertise, which allowed its pedagogical focus to cohere. Above all, the increasing integration of

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copy of the 42-line Gutenberg Bible. The types are cast 0.918 inches high in a replica Plantin-Moretus GI 48 hand mould dating back to about a century after Johann Gutenberg," unprocessed archive of the Book History Workshop, Cushing Memorial Library.

32. Pratt's experiments, which informed the laboratory sessions, were similarly collaborative. In a fax sent to Smith on 29 November 2001, Pratt noted that he was collaborating with Stan Nelson in helping to support a lecture Nelson was giving in January 2002, and Pratt requested that Smith forward some historical ink recipes, unprocessed archive of the Book History Workshop, Cushing Memorial Library.

academic lecture and hands-on session, coupled with a growing emphasis upon the historicity of printing process and technology, led to growth in the development of projects, the number of students, and the level of participation. One result of the initial success of the 2002 Workshop was ongoing deliberation about how the teaching structure could be transformed to achieve greater student involvement and to delineate a clearer relationship between lectures and experiential projects. On 29 January 2003, Smith wrote a lengthy letter to Pratt, laying out his initial thoughts on “developing a mission statement and a strategy for fulfilling the mission” through such methods as matching the systematic presentation of book history information with Pratt’s Printing Lab sessions. In attempting “to provide students with a grounding in book history through an increased understanding of printing and its allied activities during the hand-press period,” Smith suggested that the topics of his instructional lectures correlate with Pratt’s experiential sessions and focus on “typefounding, composition, paper and its manufacture, ink and its manufacture, illustration, imposition, presswork, [and] binding.” Smith added that “the goal will be achieved through hands-on lab session *augmented by survey/background discussions* [italics added],” signaling the primacy of the active aspects of the Workshop over the lectures. While it is clear that some of the processes were still presented only in demonstration or on a voluntary basis (Smith suggested that where hand casting was concerned, students might be “invited” to participate), greater coordination between active and lecture sessions is apparent. However, Smith’s lecture approach remained chronological rather than thematic or topical.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, the Workshop’s active projects became more highly coordinated, particularly where typesetting and printing were concerned. While the decision was made to keep the composition and printing projects separate, each became more focused on historical models. The typesetting assignment began with each student given a fixed-length composing stick. Separated into teams of three or four, they circled six cases of type to set half a page of copy, which the students chose themselves. In the end, this project was printed using small wooden “parlor presses” designed and constructed by Pratt on the model of

33. Unprocessed archive of the Book History Workshop, Cushing Memorial Library.

nineteenth-century hobby presses.<sup>34</sup> A parallel, large-scale printing job involved producing a complete facsimile of a small pamphlet held in Cushing's collections. Though the students were not involved in setting or imposing the type, they worked together to complete an ambitious project that allowed them a much more involved role in reproducing a historical document. Together, the Workshop participants printed and perfected the half-sheet-imposed duodecimo pamphlet, *A Short Account of the Death of Thomas Hitchens* by James Hitchens (1747).<sup>35</sup> Not only was the Hitchens project more demanding than the earlier efforts, it also utilized period typographical features and culminated in an accurate facsimile of the full pamphlet, printed onto laid paper displaying characteristics of contemporary printing surfaces (including chain and wire lines). The students dampened the paper for printing on Tuesday, began printing on Wednesday, and finished the pamphlet on Thursday. The Workshop participants also were introduced to format and imposition on Thursday as they examined and folded copies of an offset-reproduced four-gathering pamphlet, Samuel Davies's *A Sermon Delivered at Nassau-Hall* (1761).

In the same way that the typesetting and printing components of the Workshop were coordinated, decisions regarding personnel and student involvement were consciously made to allow Smith and Pratt to focus their energies upon active sessions with participants. Recognizing the limitations of space and instructor attention, Smith and Pratt decided to cap workshop enrollment at twenty students. At this early stage, awareness of the Workshop grew as students were drawn from a regional and national audience. In addition to scholars, librarians, and professionals, many of these participants were local graduate students.<sup>36</sup>

In the years that followed, the Workshop continued to build toward a more unified pedagogical experience, with a number of alterations

34. The tabletop models accommodate a  $6\frac{3}{4} \times 8$  inch metal chase upon the bed of the press and a  $6 \times 7\frac{1}{4}$  inch forme.

35. The pamphlet was printed with handmade onion ink on either *Ingres* or *Rives* laid paper, with imitation eighteenth-century pamphlet covers sewn using cotton thread in a manner appropriate to the hand-press period. The text was set in 9-pt. Caslon Original Old Style and imposed as duodecimo work-and-turn.

36. A collaboration was established with the school of Library and Information Science at the University of North Texas. In an arrangement that has continued to the present, the Workshop is offered as a source of three graduate credit hours as a "Maymester" course through UNT.



made to experiential projects, including typesetting and papermaking sessions, in order to increase student involvement. While the rhythms and processes of the pedagogical tasks remained largely the same, these incremental changes focused the teaching and attempted to allow students a fuller introduction to the empirical bibliography ideal.

One of the most significant areas of growth lay in the shift to offering typesetting as an active and inclusive session, rather than as a demonstration or on a volunteer basis. The hesitation of Smith and Pratt to allow (or require) student involvement in this process is understandable—the logistics are challenging and the safety implications obvious. Attempting to move from a controlled demonstration to active group participation where neophyte casters would handle the potentially hazardous molten-lead alloy required planning and multiple levels of safety precautions. Ultimately, by dividing the students into small groups, separating them from the concurrent activities of the remainder of the Workshop participants, staging their experience as one-on-one tutorials with a practiced instructor, and by providing each student with safety equipment (including face masks, aprons, and gloves), the typesetting session became a highlight of the Workshop.

Another improvement to the earlier Workshop model introduced in 2004 was to add papermaking as an active segment, allowing students the experience of dipping the mould, couching the sheet, and finishing paper for use in later Workshop projects.<sup>37</sup> With pre-beaten cotton linters dyed gray-blue to replicate the cheap “blue paper” of period pamphlet wrappers, the students were able to produce serviceable if not beautiful sheets. One logistical difficulty of the process at this stage of the Workshop’s development came with the lack of a paper press; after couching, the sheets were laid flat individually on the linoleum floors of the Library’s basement until they dried completely.

These additional activity sessions influenced the larger Workshop structure through their closer integration with Smith’s lectures, which for the first time were scheduled in the earliest session, with the work in the late morning and the afternoon located in the lab. Instead of approaching book history chronologically, Smith began to organize

37. In June of 2003, Smith had entered into dialogue with artisan Timothy Moore regarding the production of a single-faced antique laid mould and deckle. Moore suggested that he could likely deliver the tool in early September. By the time of the 2004 Workshop, the tool had become part of the printing laboratory collection at Cushing.

his syllabus and display Cushing's collections topically, with lectures devoted to printing and presswork, paper and printing surfaces, illustration techniques, and binding structures. This restructuring allowed much more direct dialogue between the lectures and the day's hands-on sessions.<sup>38</sup> The refocus also gave a single voice to the lecture component of the Workshop. With greater attention paid to the synchronization of morning lectures and afternoon labs, the evening lectures shifted from an integral part of the pedagogical structure of the Workshop to a series of guest talks as Smith invited notable experts to speak about their areas of research expertise.

At this point in the Workshop's development, a supplement to the typesetting and printing projects was added in the form of a secondary composition project for students who had finished setting and correcting their self-selected copy. Smith encouraged students who wanted more experience in composition (particularly those who wished to explore the challenges of line justification) to set the initial lines of "On Composing," the ninth chapter in a historical printing handbook by John Smith originally published in 1755.<sup>39</sup> As a pedagogical exercise, the students were cautioned not to review or correct the type they set, and their lines of type were printed on the interior of the wrappers used to bind the Hitchens pamphlet. Rather than shortcomings, the errors in their set text showed students the value of empirical bibliography by demonstrating the difficulty of setting type.

The greater active experience for students and the closer connection between lecture and experiential projects moved the work toward—but did not fully reach—McKerrow's initial proposal. One perceptive student evaluation in particular, written in 2005 by William Kuskin, then chair of the English Department at the University of Southern Mississippi, provided a largely positive but clear-sighted diagnosis of long-term issues with the Workshop. Kuskin wrote that while "I came to be reminded of the materiality of printing and I was not disappointed," the

38. The revised schedule ran as follows: Monday, typesetting, composition, and inking; Tuesday, press operation, proofing and correction, and folding and binding; Wednesday, inkmaking and illustration processes; Thursday, completion of printing; and Friday, folding, binding, and the Wayzgoose.

39. John Smith, *The Printer's Grammar*, English Bibliographical Sources 3 (London: Gregg Press, 1965).

experience did not entirely achieve the objectives he had anticipated. "To my mind this Workshop is too far slanted to 'book crafts' and, oddly, not focused enough around its chief strength: the common press."<sup>40</sup> His suggestions echo McKerrow in ways that in future years would prompt the Workshop faculty to reconsider projects and scheduling to allow the students much greater autonomy in working on the common press.

In a broader sense, Kuskin's preference for greater student involvement and an emphasis on historical specificity—and away from the artistry of book production—is part of a current visible in the establishment and development of the Workshop from its beginnings. From the abandonment of the first year's block-and-type project to the introduction of a project requiring students to print the facsimile of an eighteenth-century pamphlet in a complex format, and from providing simple demonstrations to allowing much greater student involvement, the Workshop had been developing its focus on historical methods experienced by its participants. It had also been shifting focus away from popular but less-relevant book-arts projects. This movement, however, had not progressed to the point where the Workshop had reached its pedagogical potential, and Kuskin's evaluation of the program, which would be recalled as a guiding vision by Workshop faculty, particularly Smith, over the next several years, provided an important direction for the future.

Despite the faculty's awareness that progress was imperative, finding projects that would provide students hands-on experience with the common press were difficult to achieve. Because their primary project required printing the Hitchens pamphlet on the press (from type which had been previously set), Workshop participants' composition and correction exercises did not meet the degree of historical relevance that it might have. During this period, the setting project lacked structure. While students were eventually told in advance to bring copy to set, many would select poetry, dialogue, quotations, or other passages of personal significance. The lack of consistency left no space for a discussion

40. As Kuskin envisioned it, a more successful Workshop would involve "dividing the group into press teams, which would each set a forme, lock it up, and work with imposition. If the press is spirituality, the forme is an essential part of this spirit that we did not touch!" Permission to cite and quote from this evaluation came in an email conversation between William Kuskin and the authors, 8 September 2012.

of type justification. The typesetting project also caused logistical issues; for example, the short lines set by many students required slugs to be cut so that the type could be locked up tightly. During this period the presence of the book arts was still part of the Workshop.

It should be noted, however, that this conflict between historical methods and products on the one hand, and the allure and accessibility of the artist's book on the other, is an inevitable (and perhaps not entirely undesirable) part of creating an empirical bibliography program. In his narrative of book history pedagogy at the Water Lane Press, Gaskell cautioned that part of the motivation in establishing such a press or laboratory frequently derives from interest in fine or private-press production. In his census of known bibliographical presses, Gaskell identified this tendency among practitioners with the caveat that, as enthusiasts of the "book beautiful" (in T. J. Cobden-Sanderson's designation), the scholars and librarians come to discover that "their main interest is typographical rather than bibliographical."<sup>41</sup> In other words, he diagnosed as a potential problem in print-history pedagogy the fact that many are drawn to the book arts (for example, producing fine press chapbooks) than book history.<sup>42</sup> In making this claim, Gaskell does not suggest that book history and book arts should be seen as mutually exclusive.<sup>43</sup> One aspect of the growth of the Book History Workshop that distinguishes it from others is the degree to which the historical has been emphasized to give participants, as closely as possible, the physical and material experience of handpress-book production. While it may be vastly simpler and bibliographically indistinguishable, as Gaskell argued, to print a project using an iron handpress, a Vandercook, or other twentieth-century proof presses—many of the intangibles of the

41. Gaskell, "Bibliographical Press Movement," 2.

42. He ends the piece by suggesting that the reason for the popularity of such presses is due to "the fact that most of the bibliographical presses are used out of hours by enthusiasts, who may include both teachers and students, as 'private presses'" ("Bibliographical Press Movement," 6).

43. It might be noted that every member of the Book History Workshop faculty during its decade of existence has been involved in what could be termed book-arts endeavors through ownership of letterpress equipment (proof or platen presses, cabinets of type) and other activities such as fine bookbinding. Such interests are likely a natural (and valuable) outgrowth of involvement in historical bookmaking processes.

experience are lost in the replacement of inkballs by brayer or the differences in effort required to operate a wooden versus modern press. Marta Straznicky connected the success of the course to this physical activity. She argued that while “the physical demand is pretty intense—the bar was hard to push . . . and the ink ball must have weighed about five pounds,” the process is necessary to a rich understanding of the material artifact. Plainly put, “unless you made the book, you can’t interpret the book.”<sup>44</sup> These material aspects are the ones that best offer the characteristics McKerrow suggested would be illuminating to the student of early modern (or handpress period) history.

INCORPORATION: 2007–2010

The years that followed witnessed major structural changes in the Workshop that were largely a result of the ongoing conversation among the faculty about its ideal focus and ultimate identity. In 2007, because of a last-moment scheduling conflict, Stephen Pratt was unable to participate in the first three days of the Workshop.<sup>45</sup> Since he was the primary instructor in the printing laboratory, his absence required a re-consideration of the schedule for the hands-on sessions as well as a discussion about the larger contours of the Workshop’s experiential pedagogy. These discussions were focused upon further linking student activities to larger pedagogical goals. Specifically, efforts were initiated to create connections among various Workshop projects to provide students with a comprehensive survey of handpress-period composition, imposition, and printing practices. Certain elements of the pedagogy that had been removed from the larger project—for example, introducing typesetting as a project that did not also provide opportunities for

44. Following the 2005 Workshop, an article appeared in the campus newspaper, *The Battalion*, drawn largely from interviews with participants in the Workshop. Written by Jay Slovacek, it profiled the Workshop for the academic (and particularly the student) community. Many of the comments included references to the students’ growing appreciation of printed material, given their greater awareness of the physical and intellectual challenges of historical book production (Jay Slovacek, “Down and Dirty with Books: Book History Workshop Teaches Printing History Through Experience,” *The Battalion*, Aggie Life Section, 6 June 2005).

45. In 2008, Steven Pratt would retire from the Workshop permanently. With Pratt’s retirement, Morrow and Samuelson assumed the roles of primary laboratory instructors.

teaching historical methodologies and habits—were reintroduced with fuller integration in mind.

Though the greater goal of allowing students to set, correct, impose, and print their work entirely on the common press had not been realized at this point, efforts were made to combine the two major projects in which the participants were engaged. For example, the syllabus was adjusted to align the typesetting and printing components of the Workshop. While printing the duodecimo Hitchens pamphlet from type already set and imposed on the common press continued, a typesetting project was devised that would require the students to focus more upon composing and imposing their work in teams to produce a final product inspired by a bibliographical antecedent.

The inaugural project was a continuation and expansion of the earlier 2005 exercise where students set the opening of the “On Composing” chapter from John Smith’s *Printer’s Grammar*. This time, rather than using the first pages of the chapter as a communal exercise in composition and justification (and an example of typical errors introduced by negligent or unpracticed compositors), Morrow and Samuelson chose to assign each Workshop participant a different passage from the chapter that they set in 12-point Centaur. Ultimately, the copy was combined in a small pamphlet printed on the Workshop’s parlor presses. The size of the presses did not allow for great leeway in format, so the pamphlet was imposed as a small folio in eights.<sup>46</sup>

In a colophon he composed for the pamphlet, Steven Escar Smith explained that though the project was imagined as a reprint of the chapter, the final result should be viewed as a pedagogical process rather than a facsimile or edited text. Like the Hitchens pamphlet, the *Printer’s Grammar* project (comprising two gatherings and a cover that also served as a title page) was bound in printed wrappers made from the students’ handmade paper. Admittedly, the logistics of printing and perfecting Hitchens while also composing and printing the pages of the *Printer’s Grammar* pamphlet were considerably more complex than earlier exercises. Even so, the two projects dovetailed well, and students

46. The relative simplicity of this structure was also necessary because of the ambition of the project itself; with each student given what would become the equivalent of twenty-seven lines of type to set, much of the work of correcting, physically combining the various students’ efforts, and imposing the formes fell to the instructors.

expressed satisfaction in the completion of two demanding efforts. In following years, Morrow and Samuelson were able to gauge the amount of copy that would provide a reasonable challenge to the average Workshop attendee (slightly fewer lines than in 2007), and they assigned participants the later sections of the chapter. By combining the early pages of the 2007 project, still imposed and locked up, with the work produced by the current students, later cohorts were able to produce a complete facsimile of the chapter. The advances in efficiency brought about by experience in handling the *Printer's Grammar* project led to the inclusion of more sophisticated features. A title page was added to the pamphlet, and beginning in 2009, students were required to proofread and correct the work of the previous year's students (which they would build upon to complete the facsimile of the chapter) as a precursor to proofing their own typesetting.

As the projects became more integrated, the Workshop instructors became more adept at anticipating problems that students habitually experienced. The growing experience with balancing the various requirements of the printing and the accompanying sessions (typesetting, papermaking, and illustration) led to more efficient tactics for handling the difficulties inherent in the week's workflow. One challenge that became apparent was that students, with their differing levels of experience and ability, required widely varying amounts of time to finish their allotted tasks. A response to the discrepancy was the introduction of evening "lab nights" on Tuesday, and by 2008, Wednesday as well. These sessions, which replaced the role of evening lectures, were intended to provide the students with additional time to complete their work, which predominately included the composition and correction required to complete the *Printer's Grammar* project. Because of the intricacy of the schedule, in which certain elements were required to be completed before other aspects of the projects could be begun, certain bottlenecks arose. On Tuesday, for example, the first impressions of the Hitchens sheets would need to have been completed to prepare for perfecting the following day; at the same time, the *Printer's Grammar* would have to be completely set, corrected, and imposed. Headlines and direction lines had to be added. Even with the additional buffer of a two-hour open session in the evening, the instructors (along with a few willing Workshop participants) were usually required to stay late into the night finishing the work for the following day. Despite these challenges, the

projects of the Workshop were better integrated with the lectures and more focused on central issues of book history than they had been at any point in the Workshop's history. The incorporation of handpress-period features to the project led the participants closer to the spirit of McKerrow than before.

#### CULMINATION: 2011 AND BEYOND

After several years of focusing the practical elements of the Workshop around the *Printer's Grammar* and Hitchens pamphlets, the faculty felt that the time had come to push forward to a new level of empirical bibliography. In an effort to expand beyond the effective but somewhat overloaded existing projects, members of the faculty had continued to discuss an ideal student project that would center on the common press. In the intervening years, Steven Escar Smith had taken to uttering, almost as a mantra, a comment slightly refracted from Kuskin, "the common press should be the spiritual center of the workshop."

Months before planning for the 2011 Workshop had begun, Samuelson discovered a pamphlet in the Cushing collections that he considered to be a workable foundation for a project achieved, from beginning to end, by the students on the common press. This pamphlet, a London edition of Thomas Paine's *Thoughts on the Peace, and the Probable Advantages Thereof to the United States of America* (1791), was appealing because it contained many of the features associated with the hand-press period (old-style characters like the long *s*, running titles, and full direction lines) but was short enough to be attempted over the course of a week. After determining that the full pamphlet could be reproduced in three work-and-turn octavo formes, and after examining the Workshop schedule to ascertain that the various formes could be set, corrected, imposed, printed, and perfected between the other sessions, Samuelson suggested the adoption of the project to Smith and Morrow. Not only could the typesetting and printing be combined in a single project centered around the common press—a shift that would heighten the historical relevance of the hands-on sessions—but the other elements of the pedagogy could be aligned in this single effort. In the same way that the paper made by students had earlier been used as printed wrappers for the pamphlets, the wood blocks they cut as illustrations would now become printers' devices to individualize each participant's finished work.



In order to ensure that the ambitious project would be within the grasp of students of the 2011 Workshop, the faculty structured the sessions to allow them space to become familiar with pressroom processes as the challenges of setting, imposition, and printing increased.<sup>47</sup> Because the decision had been made to impose the project as a work-and-turn octavo, the composition of each day began slowly and then accelerated.<sup>48</sup> Workflow proved to be a significant and ongoing challenge, as the deadline for each stage of the project would need to be met in order for later aspects to commence. In practice, this meant setting type in the morning to be imposed and printed the same afternoon and then perfected the next day. Thus the A, B, and C sheets were perfected and placed on the workroom's cords for drying on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, respectively. It is true that this schedule left little room for unforeseen complications (or disasters such as pied type). The calendar, however, provided Workshop participants with enough room to practice typesetting, even with period characters and ligatures, and to become proficient in the other necessary skills. The final result, with the three sheets folded and stab-sewn in wrappers using sheets of paper pulled by the students, and displaying their woodcut and wood engraved printers' devices, provided a culmination of the skills and experiences the participants had gained throughout the week.

47. As the faculty worked on the specific implementation of the proposed project, it became apparent that other changes would need to be introduced into the Workshop, particularly in terms of the faculty structure. With Smith focusing upon his increased administrative responsibilities in the Texas A&M University Libraries, and Morrow working as an Assistant Professor of English at Western Illinois University, Samuelson, who had followed Smith as Cushing's Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts, became Director of the Workshop in 2011. Smith would remain Founding Director and the instructor of the lecture sessions, while Morrow would become Senior Instructor of Book History, overseeing the pedagogy of the lab sessions. Other longtime members of the faculty were given specific areas of responsibility: James Stamant became the primary leader of the typefounding session, and Cait Coker of papermaking. Steven Escar Smith retired from the Book History Workshop in 2012.

48. The first forme contained sixty-four lines, the second 113 lines plus forty-seven lines of smaller footnote text, and the final contained 118 lines.

## CONCLUSION

Over the past thirteen years, the Book History Workshop has taken great strides toward achieving a form of empirical bibliography in the spirit of R. B. McKerrow's initial call. Given the flourishing field of book history, print culture, and textual studies, McKerrow's suggestion that participants be exposed directly to the equipment and processes of hand press book production is as relevant today as it was nearly a century ago. That said, many limitations and larger questions remain.

While workshops such as this one are committed to the notion that practical experience produces more tangible understanding of printing, and that this understanding complements knowledge garnered from analytical bibliography alone, questions about the efficacy of empirical bibliography are still relevant. Does this experiential process provide students and scholars of bibliography with greater familiarity than the rigorous examination of printed books and the inductive extrapolation of probable processes and habits? How specifically does attempting these technologies, particularly in an introductory or amateurish manner, heighten a participant's understanding of print history? With over ten years of successful graduates as a resource, the authors plan to survey former students of the Workshop to determine how these participants have implemented this experience in their professional lives, and how their experience with empirical bibliography has affected their approach to and understanding of handpress-period books and printing.

As we have discussed, one limitation with which the Book History Workshop continues to struggle is class size. Though limited to twenty participants annually, faculty consistently tweak and improve the implementation of the project to keep the students active at all times. Even with the smaller groups of four, tasks like imposing, correcting, and even printing require and accommodate no more than two people at a given time. As a result, there are tasks that are not repeated often enough to ensure that everyone has mastered them fully.

A proposed solution to this situation, and perhaps the ultimate end of the Book History Workshop's pedagogical expression, would be an advanced course in which a limited number of students would produce a printed edition of an eighteenth-century manuscript. Through this project, students could edit the manuscript, determine its ideal format, cast off, set, proof, impose, and print a pamphlet. The process of making

printing-house decisions from beginning to end—and having to resolve the same impediments faced by the foreman, corrector, compositors, and pressmen of the hand-press period—would present the participants with a greater challenge, and would instill greater familiarity with a wider range of processes and responses used during the period. The result of this projected advanced Workshop—a first or new edition of an early manuscript rather than a facsimile of an already existing printed work—could provide the culminating achievement of the pedagogy proposed by McKerrow, Gaskell, and the other bibliographers who established the tenets of empirical bibliography.