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Glossary of terms for pre-industrial book
history

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOR PRE-INDUSTRIAL BOOK HISTORY

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Addendum / Addenda - addition / additions to the book after it has been printed.

Bifolium - two conjugate leaves; a sheet prepared for writing or having been written on.

Biting - the fusion of two strokes in two different letters, woven together in textura.

Black-letter type - gothic or textura type.

Boards - the wood, paste-board, straw-board, or other base for the sides of any bound or cased book, i.e. any book in hard covers.

Body of the type - the height of the letter (or point size).

Boss - metal knobs used to protect the surface of the leather sides of the binding.

Bound - A book in which the gatherings are sewn onto horizontal cords, the free ends of which are then drawn through holes in the board and firmly attached so that leaves and binding become a structural entity.

Broadside - a sheet of paper printed on one side only.

Cancels - any part of a book substituted for what was originally printed. It may be of any size, from a tiny scrap of paper bearing one or two letters pasted on over those first printed, to several sheets replacing the original ones. The most common form is a single leaf. Original leaf = *cancellandum*; replacement leaf = *cancellans*.

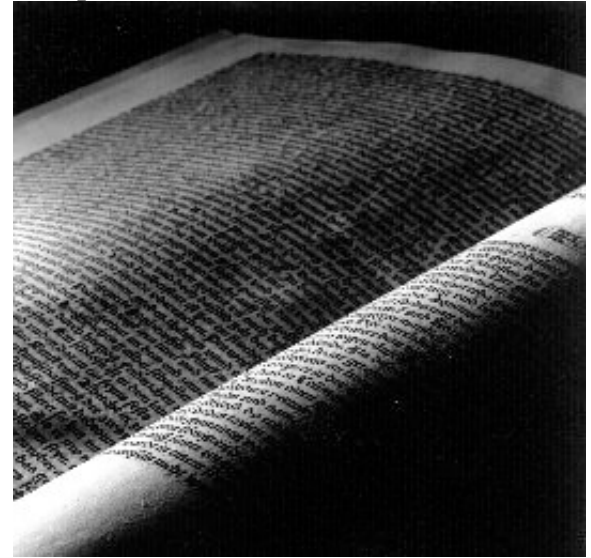
Cased - A book in which the block of stitched signatures, held together by a strip of canvas (called the mull) attached to their backs, is inserted into a ready-made case by machinery. The text-block is attached by gluing the overlaps of the mull - sometimes also tapes or threads - to the inner edges of the boards over which the end papers are then pasted down.

Casting off copy - estimation of the length of a book, page by page, to enable the appropriate amount of paper to be ordered, to allow for the allotment of work, and to make overall decisions about typographical details.

Catchword - the first word of the following page inserted at the right-hand lower corner of each page of a book, below the last line; or the first word or words of a new quire copied at the end of the previous quire.

Chain lines - widely spaced lines (distinct from the lighter, close-set lines which run at right angles to them) visible in the texture of laid paper, made by the wire mesh of the mould in which it is made.

Chase - a rectangular frame (of wood in the earlier period, of iron in the later). Made in pairs, they enclosed the formes, and with the use of wooden furniture and quoins locked in the type.



Codex - originally the trunk of a tree, then a wooden tablet, and finally a book; the common form of book in the Western world after ca. 350 AD, with pages, gatherings, and a binding.

Codicology - the study of a manuscript book or codex as a physical object from the point of view of paleography, format, decoration, and illumination (i.e. the whole book).

Coffin - a shallow box containing the press stone in a wooden press.

Collation - a description of a book or manuscript by its signatures or the number of its quires, and a statement of the number of leaves in each gathering.

Colophon - a note at the end of a book giving all or some of the following particulars: name of work, author, printer, place of printing, date.

Composing stick - a hand-held tray in which pieces of type from the case were assembled.

Compositor - workman who first sets type (and in many instances corrects it at various stages), next imposes the pages into the forme, and finally after printing cleans and distributes the type.

Conjugate leaves - leaves which form a single piece in the book.

Corrector - a workman who, together with a reader, checks proof for errors.

Corrector - one who reads the scribes' work and checks it for accuracy, correcting mistakes.

Coucher - papermaker who turned the mould over the felt and deposited the newly made piece of paper and returned the mould to the vatman.

Countermark - a second watermark which often identifies the mill and/or the quality of paper.

Deckle - a removable wooden rim which can be fitted to the papermaking mould to make it into a tray-like sieve with a raised edge.

Deckle edge - the rough, untrimmed edge of a sheet of hand-made paper.

Decorated initial - a pattern of foliage, etc.; an abstract design with no figures or story.

Decorator - one who does penwork decoration with colored ink round initial letters, paragraph marks, running titles, etc. Usually red or blue ink.

Device - a printer's mark.

Dry point - writing without ink; cf. stylus.

Endpapers - leaves added at front and back by the binder, the outer leaf of each being pasted to the inner surface of the cover (the paste-down).

Errata - mistakes and misprints discovered after the book has been printed (also called corrigenda).

Exemplar - a book from which another is copied.

Explicit - The closing of a textual unit, from the Latin *explicitus* meaning "unrolled."

Face of the type - the design of the letter; the letter itself.

Fly-leaf - binder's blank leaf additional to, and following, the free front endpaper.

Foliation - the consecutive numbering of the folios (or leaves) of a volume.

Folio - a leaf of paper, parchment, etc. (either loose as one of a series, or in a bound volume) which is numbered only on the front. The front and back of the leaf are referred to as recto and verso. Folio also refers to size: a volume made up of sheets folded once; a volume of the largest size.

Fore edge - the edge of a book, opposite the spine.

Format - the shape and size of a book. The size of a volume in terms of the number of times the original sheet has been folded to form its constituent leaves. Folio (fol. or 2°) = folded once; quarto (4to or 4°) = folded twice; octavo (8vo or 8°) = folded three times; duodecimo (12mo or 12°) = folded four times; etc.

Forme - the body of type, locked by the compositor into the chase, which makes up whatever number of pages are to be printed at one operation of the press on one side of the sheet.

Fount (or Font) - a complete set of types of letters, numerals, and other symbols, cut and cast in the same style and size.

Fraktur type - German gothic or textura type.

Frisket - an iron frame hinged to the top of the tympan and covered with parchment or paper cut with holes to let the inked type print through when paper, tympan, and frisket were folded down together onto the forme.

Galleys - large long trays on which lines of type were transferred when the composing stick was full.

Gathering - a certain number of bifolios (with the possible addition of singletons) placed one inside another, or a sheet folded to form folios, making up a group of folios or a quire.

Gloss - a word or words commenting on, elucidating, or translating those of the main text.

Guide letter - a small letter to tell the illuminator which initial or *littera notabilior* to supply.

Gutter - the place where bifolia of writing material are folded and meet in the spine of a codex.

Hair/flesh - refers to the hair or outer side of an animal skin, and to the flesh or inner side of a skin.

Half bound - a book with spine and outer corners of leather (or vellum) while the rest of the sides are covered with cloth or paper.

Half-title - the leaf in front of the title-page which carries on its recto the title of the book.

Hard point - a pointed implement of bone or metal (often a stylus) used for ruling, drawing, and annotation. A hard point leaves a ridge-and-furrow effect on the writing surface rather than a graphic mark.

Headline - a line of type at the top of the page, above the text; or, if it consists of the title of the book (or of a section) on every page or opening, it is sometimes called a running-title or running head.

Historiated initial - one which contains figures or a story within the initial.

Hollander beater - rotary machine for papermaking invented in Holland in the late 17th c. which minced the rags into pulp with revolving knives.

Humanistic - humanism, an important component of the Renaissance, is a system of study characterized by a revival of classical learning that originated in Florence in the late fourteenth century.

Illumination - decorations applied by hand whether in formal, floral, or historiated style, in gold, and/or silver, and/or colored paint.

Imposing stone - flat stone surface upon which imposition takes place.

Imposition - process of arranging the pages for each side of a sheet by placing them on a flat surface, surrounding them with wooden spacing pieces (the furniture) of less than type height, and locking them into the chase with long and short wedges, thus creating the forme.

Imprimatur - "let it be printed"; the formula, signed by an official licenser of the press, authorizing the printing of the book.

Incipit - the opening words of a text, from the Latin verb *incipere* meaning "to begin."

Incunabula - books printed before 1501.

Ink (printing) - printer's ink consists of two parts: varnish and color. Varnish was made of boiled linseed oil with the addition of a small quantity of resinous material. Color for black ink was lampblack; for red ink it was ground vermilion.

Ink (writing) - carbon ink was used in the ancient world, made of soot, and gum. It could easily be washed away. Medieval ink was more often iron gall, made of gall nuts, gum, and copperas. It was permanent, but could be highly acidic and "burn" the writing surface, hence under those circumstances it is called "encaustic."

Ink balls - made of leather pads 15 cm. in diameter, mounted in wooden cups and handles and stuffed with wool or horsehair. The ball pelts, usually sheepskin, were fixed to the handles with nails and were removed daily. Ink was transferred from an ink-block to the surface of the type by the use of a pair of ink balls.

Leaf - a folio, one of the folds of a folded sheet, contains two pages.

Liber - originally bark, a book.

Limp binding - a binding composed of parchment, paper, or fabric, without boards.

Line endings - decorative patterns used to fill up the space left by a short line of text.

Littera notabilior - an enlarged letter within the text, designed to clarify the syntax of a passage.

Lunellarium - a semi-circular knife used to scrape animal skins in the preparation of parchment or vellum.

Make ready - process of preparing the press for printing: 1) making register, i.e., laying the first forme relative to the bed of the press and the press points so that, when the paper was printed on one side, turned over, and replaced on the points, the pages of the second form would fall square on the backs of the first; 2)

fixing the tympan sheet, i.e., pasting a sheet of paper to the face of the tympan where it served as a guide to positioning the sheets on the tympan during the printing of the first forme; 3) finishing the tympan, i.e., wetting the tympan parchment and packing in a folded woolen blanket between the outer and inner tympan; 4) preparing the frisket, i.e., newly covering the frisket, pulling an impression of the forme, and cutting out the printed areas; and 5) finally checking the forme for odd pieces of loose type lying on it.

Manuscript - a book or document written by hand. Abbreviated MS, or plural MSS.

Matrix - an image of a letter stamped into a small block of copper by a punch, which was then fixed into a mold for casting the type.

Metal point - a writing implement, which leaves a trace element on the writing surface. The marks made are more discreet than those made with ink, but more visible than those made with a hard point. Instructions to artists and binder's notes were often executed in this medium.

Miniature - an independent painting, not part of another element such as a border or initial.

Moulds - pair of oblong rectangular wire sieves mounted on wooden frames for papermaking.

Nomina Sacra - abbreviated forms of the sacred names. Ex: XP denotes Christ.

Pagination - the consecutive numbering of the pages of a book or manuscript.

Palaeography - the study of ancient handwriting and scripts.

Paleographical Terms:

Ascender - the part of a letter above the body.

Body - the main part of a letter between two lines excluding ascenders and descenders.

Broken stroke - a stroke of more than one movement, having a sudden change of direction.

Descender - the part of a letter below the line.

Downstroke - direction of the pen; thicker and with more pressure than an upstr

Duct - the distinctive manner in which a particular scribe puts the strokes on the page; this can form a combination of the following: angle of holding the pen, how the pen was cut, degree of pressure in holding the pen, the direction of the stroke, etc.

Hand - the letter forms which the scribe actually writes.

Headstroke - the cross of the letter t.

Limb - part of a letter attached to the mainstroke, as the right part of the letter h.

Lobe - a curved stroke, as in the loop of letters p or b.

Minim - the shortest and simplest stroke, as in the letter i.

Otiose stroke - a superfluous stroke not part of a letter nor an abbreviation mark.

Stroke - a single line made by the pen on the page; it is usually made in a single movement (if no change in direction).

Upstroke - direction of the pen, thinner than downstroke and without pressure.

Papyrus - a substance prepared, in the form of thin sheets, from the stem of the papyrus plant, by laying thin slices or strips side by side, with another layer of similar strips crossing them, the whole being soaked in water, pressed together, and dried; used by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, etc., as a material for writing on. An ancient manuscript written on papyrus.

Parchment - the skin of a sheep or goat, and sometimes that of other animals, dressed and prepared for writing. A skin, piece, scroll, or roll of parchment; a text or document on parchment.

Pecia system - a system used from the thirteenth century on, in which university approved exemplars of texts were divided into sections and were hired out by stationers to scribes (or students) for copying.

Pen - in the ancient world and early Middle Ages usually a reed pen; in the Middle Ages and later usually a quill pen.

Pounce - a substance such as chalk, ash, powdered bone, breadcrumbs, or pumice that is rubbed into a writing surface in order to improve it. Pounce can reduce greasiness, raise the nap, or whiten parchment.

Preliminary leaves - those which precede the actual text.

Pricking - the process of pricking a series of small holes through the sheets of a quire, usually along the side edges of the top bifolium, to provide a guide for ruling the bifolios and to delimit the writing frame.

Proofs - trial prints of newly-imposed formes made so that any errors might be discovered and corrected.

Quarter bound - a book with leather back (spine), sides covered with cloth or paper, and no leather corners.

Quire - cf. gathering.

Quire signature - a letter, number, or figure placed at the foot of the first or last page of a quire, for the purpose of showing the order in which they are to be placed or bound.

Register - a list of signature-letters and perhaps a note of the composition of the gatherings in the book, usually on the last page (also cf. make ready).

Ridges and furrows - refers to the impressions made by a stylus upon the writing surface as a result of ruling.

Roll - a piece, or series of pieces, of papyrus, parchment, paper, or the like, which is written on (usually one side only) and is rolled up; a scroll. The most common form of book in the ancient world.

Rotulus - medieval Latin for roll; cf. roll.

Rubricator - one who writes the rubrics, or instructions to the reader, in red ink.

Ruling - the process of creating the lines upon which to write, and also margins, columns, etc. May be made

with stylus, lead plummet, or ink.

Scribe - one who writes manuscripts. Before the 13th c., scribes were almost always monks (especially Benedictines); after the rise of universities and the spread of secular literature in vernacular languages, scribes were increasingly professional, either laymen or lower ranks of the secular clergy.

Script - the model which a scribe has in mind when he writes.

Scriptorium - a writing room where the production of books took place.

Sheet - piece of parchment, paper, or the like, before folding, pricking, ruling, and writing; cf. bifolium.

Sheet - unfolded, uncut piece of paper.

Signature marks - marks which indicate the leaves of a quire. The quires may be signed from the beginning, e.g. a, b, c, etc., and the leaves numbered a1, a2, a3, etc.

Signatures - the letters printed in the tail margin of the first leaf (at least) of each gathering of a book as a guide to the binder in assembling them correctly.

Singleton - a single leaf, or folio, without a conjugate.

Size - a hot solution of animal gelatin made from vellum or leather shavings boiled in water. Sheets of paper are dipped by the handful into this size, which gives paper a relatively impermeable surface.

Stub - the narrow strip of a leaf remaining after it has been severed from its conjugate, usually before the book was sewn.

Stuff - raw material for papermaking, pounded or macerated into pulp.

Stylus - an instrument made of metal, bone, etc., having one end sharp-pointed for incising letters on a wax tablet, or lines on parchment, paper, or the like, and the other end flat and broad for smoothing the wax of the tablet and erasing what is written.

Three-quarter bound - as half bound, but with wider leather back and corners.

Tympan - a parchment-covered frame of wood and iron hinged to the front end of the coffin.

Vatman - papermaker who dipped the mould and deckle into a vat containing stuff suspended in water, then handed the mould (removing the deckle) to the coucher.

Vellum - the skin of a calf, dressed and prepared for writing.

Volume - originally a roll; a book.

Watermark - a picture or letter fashioned in wire and sewn with knots of fine wire to the surface of the mould so that its image appears in the paper.

Xylographica - blockbooks; essentially a picturebook, the illustration and its accompanying text being cut with the knife on wood and printed on one side of the paper only.