David McKitterick, »Paper, Pen and Print«

ABSTRACT
How far is it possible to understand the penetration of books in any society, by using statistical methods? How far are the existing short-title catalogues helpful in this respect? More specifically, if we measure the output of printing and of printed books, are we likely to arrive at a useful conclusion about the circulation of knowledge and opinion? The continuing circulation of manuscripts long after the invention of printing, even down to the twentieth century, is a reminder of the importance of alternatives to print.

David McKitterick is Librarian and Fellow, Trinity College, Cambridge.

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http://lir.gu.se/LIRJ
I wish in this paper to address mainly two issues. Both have been the subject of a number of recent books and articles, and so to that extent they are already questions very much with us: they are not in some unknown future. But both require a great deal of further work. First, I wish to remind ourselves of the question: how much can we know about the penetration of books in any society, if we seek to use statistical methods. Second, how far is our bibliographical fixation with the distinction between manuscript and print actually helpful, or does it retard our historical understanding: indeed, does such a distinction – between the productions of the press and the productions of the pen – actually contribute to many of the questions that we face today in an electronic environment?

**Short-Title Catalogues**

First, the question of penetration. Thanks to the national bibliographies that have been painstakingly constructed over the past hundred and more years, we have a reasonably good idea of what was published in print since the fifteenth century. Of course, some countries and periods are more comprehensively covered than others. There have been bibliographies of incunabula, books printed to 1500, since the seventeenth century, and the *Incunabula short title catalogue* (ISTC) is the latest and most authoritative embodiment of it. While we can be fairly sure that virtually all that survives of printed matter in the British Isles down to the middle of the seventeenth century is now recorded, and we have a very good idea of survivals for the rest of the period down to 1800, we have to turn to a much greater range of resources if we wish to discover the equivalent for France: in this, Andrew Pettegree’s survey of French vernacular books before 1601 is of immense help, but it is not, of course, the whole story: a further survey of the French sixteenth century non-vernacular books is in preparation by the same team. A similar survey of Spanish and Portuguese books is already in print. A Low Countries one has also appeared from the same team. Scandinavia is coming. Many resources are on-line. In Italy, Edit 16 has changed our understanding of a widely scattered book trade, though it remains almost entirely restricted to libraries in modern Italy. In Germany, VD 16 has similarly made new research possible by assembling a great deal of very disparate information respecting surviving copies. In the Netherlands, STCN, for books printed within the boundaries of the modern Netherlands between 1540 and 1800,
is proving of increasing value as it spreads its net more widely, beyond the libraries of the Low Countries to other parts of Europe: since the Netherlands were at the centre of the European book trade in the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, this of especial importance. It is currently reported to contain over 290,000 titles and over 500,000 copies of books printed in the Netherlands or printed abroad (other than in Belgium) in Dutch. For the Flemish-speaking southern Netherlands, the more recent Short Title Catalogus Vlaanderen (STCV) is becoming increasingly useful. We now also face the prospect of a Universal Short-Title Catalogue (USTC), that will bring together the retrospective bibliographies of early modern Europe across national boundaries and so offer the chance really to understand what we mean when we say that the book is the most international of creations.

These are just some of the projects currently under way. None of them claims to be complete, and they need therefore to be treated on that basis. But they place us at an advantage not enjoyed by our predecessors. For European books more generally, the resources of the CERL database meanwhile offer the widest international access in the study of early printed books.

There is of course a further issue. I have drawn attention to these records of printed material because we cannot study the circulation of manuscripts or print in depth unless we take the other medium into account. That has become abundantly clear over the last few years. It is not only that we possess no surveys of manuscript production such as we have for printed books. The more we study the history of the book, the less certain we become of what exactly it is we should be looking for as a context. Indeed, it sometimes seems that it is increasingly difficult to define a »book«, where we face not just print, or not just manuscript, but an amalgam of the two, with one glued or sewn to the other. When does a book become, for example, an album? What do we understand by newspapers, when so much news was circulated in the past in manuscript, either private or commercial?

The history of literacy and the history of books are old bedfellows. The very word »book«, a term borrowed from French but full of pitfalls once we try and apply dictionary definitions to what exactly it is that we study, has had to be modified – usually silently. It obviously includes books (volumes, livres) and pamphlets (brochures). It also includes broadsides, though the English short-title catalogue (ESTC), for example, excludes most engraved broadsides. The ESTC to 1640 (but not the later periods from 1641 to 1800) also includes ephemera such as bookplates, licences for beggars and the like. Most retrospective bibliographies ignore this kind of ephemera, yet it was an essential part not only of reading, but...
also of the economics of the printing trades. Furthermore, our increasing awareness of visual imagination and representation has led to an increasing interest in the history of engraving and of the woodcut in contexts outside the specialist areas represented by print rooms, *Prentenkabinetten*, etc.\(^\text{12}\) So the world of the rolling-press printer, working from copper plates rather than from type, is increasingly drawn in. If books and other printed matter must always be set in their geographical and social contexts in their widest sense, then we need also to bear in mind work by Peter Fritsche on street signs – painted, printed, written – in nineteenth-century Berlin, David Henkin on similar environments in America, and, most recently and especially rewarding, Anne Béroujon on Lyon in the seventeenth century.\(^\text{13}\)

In using databases, union catalogues and bibliographies, we need always to remember at least four things. First, they are not complete with respect to surviving copies (few copies in private hands are recorded even in what are otherwise the most comprehensive surveys); second, they generally record only what survives; and third, most of them are very much works in progress. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly of all, is a feature that is not obvious from the titles of these works. Most of them are selective in the public collections that they survey: it is not simply that they tend to omit most (albeit not all) private collections. For example, on the one hand the compilers of the survey of sixteenth-century French vernacular books have paid especial attention to collections – both libraries and archives – outside Paris, and they have as a consequence provided a picture very different from any based on the major Parisian libraries. They have had in mind not only the many books published in small towns, but also the nature of what happened to the enormous reorganisation of French collections, both institutional and private, in the 1790s. Thus, they have used techniques very different from those employed by Henri-Jean Martin in his great survey of the French seventeenth-century trade, which was based on the incomplete printed catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale.\(^\text{14}\) They add materially to Baudrier and others on the history of printing in sixteenth-century Lyon, and they add similarly to Renouard and Brigitte Moreau on Parisian printing.\(^\text{15}\) At the other extreme we might cite the CERL database, which on the face of it is the most potentially useful for enumerating and searching the European tradition of printed books and pamphlets. In fact, once one looks at the list of libraries involved, one realises instantly that it is very far from being representative, and it is therefore very far from any hope of being comprehensive. As big national surveys such as Pettigree and his team on France, or the ESTC for Britain, have long since established, the look of the world of books can be very different once one ventures into
smaller libraries, with very different collecting histories from those of the national libraries.

If questions of comprehensiveness are of obvious importance to those who create and use these various union catalogues and databases, other issues are hardly less important as we try to understand the extent and depth of the penetration of print in western European societies. The detailed difficulties of this question, which involves both survival and the much less easily measured losses of thousands of entire editions, lie beyond the space available in this paper, except to mark their existence and central importance, and to note some of the work that has been done by Paul Needham and others on incunabula. Understandably, much less work has been done on later periods.\(^{16}\)

But if we are to understand properly what is meant by such familiar terms as the printing revolution, or the circulation of print, then we have always to bear in mind the questions raised by what has not survived.

There is a further dimension. Retrospective bibliographies of printed books take no notice of manuscripts. In other words, for many kinds of books they provide a very incomplete account of the publication, circulation, reproduction and reception of works, even though printing and manuscript were often closely intertwined.

**MANUSCRIPT TRADITIONS**

So far I have written entirely about the world of print. At this point it is worth reminding ourselves that when in 1983–86 – a quarter of a century ago – H.-J. Martin, Roger Chartier and others gave to the world the inspiring *Histoire de l’édition française* they felt able to concentrate on just some aspects of what we now think of the history of the book, *l’histoire du livre*, *Buchgeschichte* etc. It was a world mostly of print, modified by Martin’s subsequent and illuminating study with Jean Vezin of *Mise en page et mise en texte du livre manuscrit* (1990), a book devoted to medieval manuscripts.\(^{17}\) It is abundantly clear that we need to progress beyond this, and to think of printing not by itself, but in a world where several different forms of communication exist side by side; where several different media for recording that information exist side by side; and where several different media for assembling and ordering our thoughts exist side by side. The same, of course, applies to our own daily experience as we move among various printed, manuscript, electronic, film, audio and other media. If we think about the history of the book in that way, then we can understand better what we are doing, and help others to understand the world better.

Let us draw a metaphor. Historians of the book cannot live in their own world without looking out of the window all the time, to see the landscape round about and to reflect on the
relationship of what they have chosen – I repeat chosen – to keep inside their comfortable quarters – to what they see outside and may or may not like. Bibliographers have sometimes been attacked for being too much concerned with their own confined, inward-looking, self-indulgent and self-sufficient world: a place where we are reminded not so much of another metaphor, Sir Isaac Newton’s remark that «If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants», but more of a place where mere epigones labour in the wake of their greater predecessors.

The late Don McKenzie pleaded for a more generous definition of bibliography in his seminal Panizzi lectures, *Bibliography and the sociology of texts*, published in 1986. In that, and in a subsequent paper on the relationship of bibliographical reading to the ways in which Maori and other peoples read landscapes, he pleaded for a discipline that was engaged with texts of all kinds. Whether out of personal inclination, intellectual conviction, or lack of opportunity, he did not develop these ideas further before his untimely death. Certainly it was not out of a lack of interest in, for example, music and aural texts, for here he was a well-informed listener, and he had an acute visual eye for paintings.

I want here to develop just one aspect of this. In the past few years we have become ever more aware of the juxtaposition of different media. As a result, studies that were formerly thought of as related in some distant way, or in particular and very specific ways, have moved conceptually closer together. This can be seen, for example, in epigraphy, the study of inscriptions. It can be seen in the study of letter forms, whether inscribed on stone, cast in metal, written with pen, brush or point, or printed. Some of these ideas were understood by Stanley Morison, whose interests encompassed lettering in all its forms and were summed up in his Lyell lectures of 1957, later published as *Politics and script*. In 1980, Armando Petrucci examined some of the same issues.

The idea of a *printing* revolution is a powerful one, and that is all the more reason to treat it with some caution. Like all revolutions it has a large element of conservatism. And like many revolutions it was a gradual one whose implications developed only slowly with time. If we are looking for parallels, we might allude to the industrial revolution, whose ideas can be found in the sixteenth century even though many textbooks speak of it as happening in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Or we might think of the Reformation, which did not occur simply with Luther’s 95 theses of 1517, but again had its origins much earlier. Or we might think of changes in social administration in towns in the sixteenth century, in (for example) the management of beggars, or the management of street maintenance. While much has been written about the novelty of
these and kindred activities in German towns in the sixteenth century, in fact some of these features can be found much earlier in towns in other regions, such as York, in England.

But what about manuscripts? In the short space of 1993–98, Harold Love, Henry Woudhuysen, Peter Beal and others demonstrated in an English context the survival and flourishing of the manuscript tradition as a means of publishing, the circulation of texts. Revolutionary at the time, the lessons of their work are still being absorbed; but one lesson is easily learned: that the existence of one medium does not mean the disappearance of another, or even, necessarily, of its weakening. For some activities, be they literary, political, religious, legal or other, the written document can actually be more powerful than print. That printing did not immediately displace manuscripts has long been known: there are plenty of examples of manuscripts copied from printed books, even down to copying out the colophon explaining that so-and-so printed this book in a particular year and in a particular place. Sometimes the reason for copying was aesthetic. Sometime it was practical, in that no further printed copy was available. On other occasions, such as when colophons were copied out in this way, it is difficult to establish what was happening.

The further use of manuscripts, as a means of publication preferable to print, is a more recent theme of study. It has now long been shown that to have a work printed was not to incur a stigma. But to circulate in manuscript provided a medium that was at once economical (if it was not anticipated that many copies would be needed); economical of paper (only as many copies were made as were in demand); spread the cost of publication (it was up to many individuals to obtain their own paper, rather than a single bookseller, publisher or printer have to buy it in bulk before any copies could be sold); and, not least, it offered a measure of control both positively in that at least initial circulation could be controlled by the author, and more negatively, in that it avoided the various processes of censorship and approval that were created to control the output specifically of the printing press.

So, we find manuscript used as a medium of circulation in activities as disparate as poetry, sermons, plays, news, government documents, political and religious dissent, and music. University lectures were taken down and copied out, a process that survives to this day amongst students who are pressed for time or simply lack the energy of their peers.

If, however, we extend our historical investigations to the book trade, we find a situation among historians that can only be described as being in flux. We need, in this, also to look to mainland Europe, for in some parts of Europe the evidence of manuscript use is much richer than in Britain. It is common to place the blame for the loss of manuscripts on well-known
culprits, including fire, the waste paper drives of the nineteen-
ten centuries, and the destruction of the Second World War. All are proven enemies of manuscript and printed paper alike, though in fact attitudes to the need to retain and preserve many kinds of manuscripts, as distinct from print, had already changed by the end of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, to look at the very different fortunes of huge archives in Italy, many of which have been barely touched by historians, is to realise something of how great a lesson we need to understand about the relationship of manuscript and print in environments where the two co-existed, or, not infrequently, when there seemed to be no call for the technology, investment and marketing requirements associated with the press and its associated equipment and skills.

For textual bibliographers, manuscript environments present challenges on a scale quite different from those working in print. While printing rarely produced absolute uniformity between all copies of an edition in the hand-press period, manuscript transmission is almost defined by its variation. The manuscripts of the Earl of Rochester in the late seventeenth century have demonstrated this all too clearly. His bawdy and scurrilous poems, some concerning the King himself, were hardly to be printed in the ordinary way. But they circulated in various versions in manuscript; and in doing so they were adapted or extended, reduced or miscopied to greater or larger extents. Most of Rochester's poems were not published until he was dead. For most of them there was no single reliable manuscript. So, when Harold Love came to edit them for Oxford University Press in 1999 he adopted what he called a process of »recensional editing«, based on transmission history.

Rochester's poetry – lewd, widely circulated in secret and immensely popular thanks partly to its lewdness and partly to its scandalous topicality in dealing with known people – is in some respects an extreme case. But it usefully illustrates the immense textual difficulties in editing variant manuscripts, and the fundamental difference between manuscript and print environments.

Some of the points concerning the misleading change of emphasis between manuscript and print, brought about by what we may call non-bibliographical historical accidents, can be readily illustrated by the book trade of the last few years. In 1977, after a long and successful series of sales by Sotheby's of the manuscripts of the nineteenth-century bibliomaniac Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792–1872), the New York bookseller H.P Kraus acquired the residue of his Italian manuscripts. The deal seems to have come as something of a relief to Anthony Hobson, who had been handling the Sotheby's sales and who could also sense an element of exhaustion in the book trade.
Among the remains, Kraus obtained a substantial group of papers originating in Italy, many of them acquired by Phillipps from the collection of Frederick North, Earl of Guilford (1766–1827). Instead of issuing a catalogue in the firm’s usual style, well printed, copiously illustrated, and with an attractive cover, Kraus produced a typed list, evidently compiled on several office typewriters, bound up in the plainest of grey wrappers and with the title on the outside saying merely »Italian MSS. List 203 Part two«. If ever there was a catalogue that spoke of a rump that needed to be dispersed, this was it. Within were, not surprisingly, autographs and documents of some interest. But there was also a play in manuscript from the mid-seventeenth century, a translation of a work by Pietro Bizzarri on Genoese unrest in the 1570s, a copy of a work by G.B.Vico, an account (apparently otherwise unknown) of elephants by the humanist Giovanni Valeriano, a near contemporary copy of Alessandro Tassoni’s long satirical poem La secchia rapita and much else besides. All were witnesses of a once lively trade, private or public, in manuscripts.

In retrospect, this was not just a rump. Unwittingly, it was a declaration to librarians and collectors, bibliographers and scholars: that in the nether regions between printing and the kinds of high-spot autograph manuscripts that had long been so sought after, there was a world of human activity that history had preferred to forget. It is this world that we are, at last, beginning to investigate. It is being demonstrated in booksellers’ catalogues, which as so often are weathervanes pointing to the future. In 2007, another bookseller, the English firm of Hesketh & Ward’s catalogue 39 had the usual mixture of continental printed books, with an emphasis on Italy. But it also contained items such as a manuscript copy of Tommaso Campanelli’s Discorsi a principi d’Italia, a text not printed properly until 1848 but widely circulated in manuscript in the seventeenth century. The catalogue mentions five libraries readily known to possess copies: that makes it a more common text than many an early printed book.

Or we can move back to England, where (incidentally) collectors in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries well understood the interest of Italian books in manuscript. Here, a group of recent catalogues from Maggs Brothers in London, Books and readers in early modern Britain, provide reminders of manuscripts of a kind long neglected but now, we realise, deserving to be studied alongside the more familiar printed texts. Manuscript transcriptions of sermons can speak of their original oral delivery as much as do manuscripts in print, and sometimes at least as much. Political manuscripts speak of other kinds of complexities. In this world, transcriptions have their own place and their own values in pointing towards the circulation, ownership and reading of texts. If all this seems
over-familiar to students of English poetry, for whom the manuscript miscellany was brought to the fore by Mary Hobbs in 1992, then how much more overdue is the extension of such study of other kinds of literature.29

For many activities, manuscripts remained an essential way of circulating ideas and texts long into the nineteenth century, arguably only to be displaced by the development of amateur lithography, the typewriter and the office copier. The Cambridge lectures of Isaac Newton and the poems of the Romantics, to say nothing of minor drama or of prose essays and extracts copied from the magazines, reflected professional and amateur worlds alike. Manuscript copying lurks behind the publishing statistics – that is, of printed books – in William St Clair’s *The reading nation in the Romantic period* (2004).30 This seems to have been especially true of poetry, if we recall the very large numbers of private autograph albums and anthologies compiled during this period, always supplementing and extending what was in print. In France, they recently published *Répertoire des nouvelles à la main*, a dictionary of the clandestine press between the 16th and the 18th century, which adds further to what is becoming a picture of some complexity and scope.31

The continuing importance of the manuscript tradition in France is clearly displayed in the continuing tradition of formal writing and writing-books – here as elsewhere in western Europe. There was nothing necessarily clandestine about the circulation of texts in writing rather than in print. Nicolas Jarry (d.1666) made his career and his reputation as a calligrapher in the seventeenth century, and he had many an imitator. If few people could attain his skills, plenty used their pen for communications other than social or formal correspondence. In his book *La plume et le plomb*, François Moureau explored this world in the century or so before the French revolution.32 It was not just one of type, vital though this was for the circulation of ideas and literature. When it became difficult to maintain scribal workshops, one alternative was to produce *burinées*, newsletters engraved on copper and printed off. Usefully, Moureau distinguishes between manuscripts that are *immobiles*, destined for the shelves of libraries, and those that are *mobiles*, intended for circulation. By breaking down the subject in this way, he enables us to focus on the different purposes of writing cultures. Anonymous and pseudonymous works pose questions about the status and nature of authorship, and the book trades shaped to deal with printed books need to be seen in different lights.

Moureau’s founding work on the circulation of news in manuscript in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, published in 1999,33 made it possible to speak with some assurance of this phenomenon at least in terms of what has survived,
as our founding evidence: there remains a great deal to be done concerning the exact relationship between different copies of the same news sheets, many of then prepared commercially and in multiple copies rather than the more familiar form of private newsletters. It obviously bears a close relationship to more literary or social correspondence, and to diplomatic reports. Moureau remarked the surprising lack of French survivals of these documents south of the Alps, despite the fact that the manuscript newsletter was in many respects an Italian invention, as Mario Infelise has demonstrated. He further remarked on the increasing professionalisation of manuscript news. Not least interesting, he noted that whereas in Italy, Germany and England these manuscript newsletters were paralleled by a growth in the printed newspaper trade, in France, where there were very few printed newspapers at first, the organized trade in manuscript news was also a late development. The earliest he found was of 1532, now in Charpentras and containing news from Italy. Then there was nothing until 1595. They quickly disappeared after the French Revolution. While no doubt more examples will turn up in local archives, and in the unexplored parts of the Vatican, we now possess a valuable extension to what we think of as book history.

Illustration poses fresh issues again, in the degree to which authors sought to control how their work was presented: Moureau identifies Restif de la Bretonne as a rare example of one who dictated how the engraved illustrations to his books should appear. But authors were also at the mercy of the trade. La Rochefoucauld’s Maximes were printed without his consent in the Netherlands in the 1660s. Yet very many people – far more than an author’s coterie – first read them not in print, but in manuscript. Most importantly, manuscripts not only achieved what the printed book often could not; they also had their own patterns of manufacture and circulation that were defined not by print but by clandestine or personal channels and demands. Sometimes the two forms existed simultaneously; sometimes manuscript circulation was exploited to the full for publicity effect until print simply became the next stage of publication; and sometimes print preceded manuscript.

It is not always easy to unravel the daily routines of authorship and reading in the siècle des lumières. If that seems a rather alarming statement, it is one that derives from the scale of destruction that occurred in 1789 and later. Moureau performed a most valuable task not just in taking us beyond some of the more familiar questions of control and censorship, but also in providing a sense of the variety of publication. He moves between manuscript and print, showing how each affects the other at every point between author and reader. His is by far the end of the story. He is, for example, not much concerned with the sciences or with theology, or with most of the
social sciences: it would be valuable to see comparable studies of subjects other than what we usually term literature. And, as he well realises, much must still lurk in archives, especially in the provinces, that await their explorers. But, vitally, he has provided a sense of nuance as well as a sense of what it is realistic to look for.

The purposes and proceedings of this manuscript culture thrive today in its direct descendants on social networking sites as well as the more obvious self-publishing on websites. But before leaving this question it is worth also reminding ourselves of twentieth century samizdat publishing in the Soviet Union and Communist Europe. It is a wide-ranging term that encompasses everything from manuscript copying to office copying to underground printing, in a world where all means of mechanical copying were strictly controlled. One thinks no further than Pasternak or Solzhenitxin, but they are the tip of a very large iceberg. Second, in the West, the strategies adopted by Ludwig Wittgenstein to share his philosophical ideas offer another model. Here there was no political restriction; the restriction was imposed by Wittgenstein himself, who turned to an office typing agency to prepare top copies and carbon copies of his so-called Blue Book. Copies were given to favoured pupils. Several copies of this now survive, where he has annotated his original typed thoughts. But as he annotated at different times, and in different ways, as his ideas developed, so there is a highly complex textual structure. This is best explored not in any printed edition, but in an electronic edition founded on work carried out in Bergen.35

One result of reading through much of the work I have cited is to appreciate all the more powerfully the contexts, the complexities and the flexible nature of the printed book, whether in the hands of the first bookseller or publisher, in those of different generations of readers, or in the hands of the second-hand trade. A book can be understood often only by reference to what it is not, or to how it has been modified. Printing is relatively straightforward to define, roughly as the multiplication of texts by means of type or other mechanical processes. Printed books cannot be so easily defined. They are subject to constant modification. Even setting aside the ways in which interpretation and understanding are affected by the circumstances of reading, we are still left with questions that can sometimes be best expressed bibliographically, and sometimes require reference to social, anthropological or physiological disciplines. They also always require reference to their manuscript environment.

In all this, the catalogues of booksellers since the eighteenth century bear another reminder. We have already glanced at changes in emphasis in the last few years. Self-evidently, booksellers can only offer what is available; and they will only offer what they think they can sell. This is brought forcibly
home if one looks at the catalogues down to (say), 1815, the end of the Napoleonic wars and the end of the period when the suppression of monastic houses in the Hapsburg Empire and in France, the wholesale reorganization of French libraries and the pillaging or complete dispersal of many private libraries was to lead within a very short time to a revolution in the second-hand market. In a world where so much depended still on manuscript, strikingly little recent, or even comparatively recent, material of this kind was thought to be worth offering by booksellers; and strikingly little was saved. There is a curious dichotomy between the world portrayed by François Moureau and the picture that emerges of libraries after the 1790s. It is not simply one concerned with transfers from private property to the state. No less interesting is the absence of what had once existed. Printed books were assumed to be of interest – so much so that François Guizot was almost casual about them when he set in train his reforms to the French library system in the 1830s. Manuscripts seemed to be more valued, but in practice only some kinds of manuscripts, not writing for its own sake. The statistics gathered by Dominique Varry of printed books and manuscripts removed from ecclesiastical libraries during the French Revolution are revealing in the tiny number of the latter that were thought worth preservation or confiscation, let alone counting. Most private libraries that were dispersed were subject to the same values. We simply cannot measure how much was either destroyed deliberately, or was cast aside as of no value or interest.

—— NEW MEDIA, NEW ACCESS ——

If we seem to have travelled a long way from our starting point, which was partly related to the place of electronic surrogates in our work, let us develop our question. How much do we understand of how different media relate to each other? The answer can be that we understand alarmingly little. This has been amply demonstrated in the very necessary recovery work that has been so effectively presented for the surviving manuscript traditions in early modern Britain and, now, in ancien régime France. The residue sold by Kraus of the vast library of the nineteenth-century bibliomaniac Sir Thomas Phillipps provided a glimpse of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy. Now, we face a world not just of manuscript and print, proffering alternatives and complements to each other, but also a world of electronic substitutes and possibilities. As we look at images of British printed books from before 1801 on EEBO or ECCO, or the French books available on Gallica, the various digitization projects in Germany, the recently established Early European Books, or the millions of books available on Google Books, how much are we not told (let alone how much do we not understand) about some of the most fundamental things in
interpreting a printed book? Some sites are better than others at answering even such basic questions as how large or small it is, or what is its format. Many ignore the question altogether. Is the paper on which it was printed noticeably different from the ordinary run of paper used by this particular printer, or at this particular time? How can we tell, broadly speaking, whether it was cheap or expensive? Why cannot we see the details of the engraved illustrations properly? Even, are we sure that the series of images presented to us represents a complete copy? In all this, some projects are better than others: Early European Books is a very considerable advance on many predecessors, for example. In one small example of how we need to think across boundaries between databases, there is an immediate and pressing need for commercial and public concerns to collaborate so that the details of the ESTC are easily and obviously available alongside the images provided on EEBO and ECCO. ESTC itself has provided a foundation on which much more can eventually be built concerning details of production, distribution and use even of individual copies. That is in the future, and will depend on several kinds of funding and budget structures. And that is just for printed books. The same kinds of questions about surrogates and the materiality of texts apply also to manuscripts.

More immediately, do new kinds of access not only provide stimulus, but also actually discourage some forms of enquiry? It is not unreasonable to ask such questions while at the same time benefiting from the immense possibilities opened up by such resources and by the new access that they provide. The medium will always influence the meaning of a document, be it printed, manuscript or electronic. Nonetheless, if it seems that only bibliographers are those who are likely to ask these questions, and that, generally speaking, few people beyond historians of the book are likely to want to look at originals, then library administrators will understandably tend towards electronic facsimiles at the expense of originals. To do so is profoundly wrong. Such an attitude ignores not just the perils of any electronic publication. It also betrays the very purpose of books, which lies not just in the sequences of words, figures, pictures and maps that they might contain, but in the ways that they are presented to the reading public. Many readers besides historians of the book assume this as a part of their way of thinking. Any original document is a piece of evidence, with all the weight of authority implied by that term. Just as electronic surrogates seek their own publics, so do printed books, and so do manuscripts. All of them require attention, and none can be privileged without imposing our own independent, not always perfectly informed, values. They never displace each other in their distinctive and each equally valuable ways.
ENDNOTES

1 Incunabula Short Title Catalogue (ISTC): http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/
3 Alexander S. Wilkinson: Books Published in Spanish or Portuguese or on the Iberian Peninsula before 1601 (Leiden, 2010).
5 Censimento nazionale delle edizioni italiane del XVI secolo (EDIT16): edit16.iccu.sbn.it/
7 Short Title catalogue Netherlands (STCN): http://www.kb.nl/stcn/index-en.html
8 www.vlaamse-erfgoedbIBliotheek.be/dossier/short-title-catalogus-vlaanderen/stcv
9 www.ustc.ac.uk/. It is anticipated that this will eventually include over 350,000 editions.
10 Consortium of European Libraries (CERL): http://www.cerl.org
11 ESTC: http://www.estc.bl.uk
16 See for example Paul Needham: The printer & the pardoner (Washington, DC, 1986); Paul Needham, »The late use of incunables and the paths of book survival«, in Wolfen-


18 Letter from Newton to Robert Hooke, 5 February 1675/6. A similar phrase can be found in earlier writers, such as John of Salisbury (c.1120–1180).


21 Armando Petrucci: La scrittura; ideologia e rappresentazione (Torino, 1980), transl as Public lettering; script, power and culture (Chicago, 1993).


23 David McKitterick: Print, manuscript and the search for order, 1450–1830 (Cambridge, 2003), 47–8.

24 The association of print and stigma seems to date from the late nineteenth century; see also, for example, J. W. Saunders: »The stigma of print; a note on the social bases of Tudor poetry«, in Essays in Criticism 1 (1951), 139–64.


26 Harold Love (ed.): The works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (Oxford, 1999).


31 François Moureau: Répertoire des nouvelles à la main; Dictionnaire de la presse manuscrite clandestine XVIe-XVIIIe siècle (Oxford, 2002).
32 François Moureau: La plume et le plomb : espaces de l’imprimé et du manuscrit au siècle des Lumières (Paris 2006); see also François Moureau (ed.): De bonne main : la communication manuscrite au XVIIIe siècle (Oxford, 1993).
33 François Moureau: Répertoire des nouvelles à la main; dictionnaire de la presse manuscrite clandestine XVIe-XVIIIe siècle (Oxford, 1999).
34 Mario Infelise: Prima dei giornali : alle origini della pubblica informazione, secoli XVI e XVII (Rome, 2002).
35 For the Blue Book, see O. K. Bouwsma: »The Blue Book«, in Journal of Philosophy 58 (1961), 141–62. For the Bergen website, see http://wab.uib.no/
37 Early English Books Online (EEBO); Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO).
38 Gallica: gallica.bnf.fr
39 http://eeb.chadwyck.co.uk/home.do