began in 1752, not 1753 (p. xv). Gent’s comment about there being no printers at ‘Chester, Liverpool, Whitehaven, Preston, Kendal, and Leeds’ (p. 28) relates not to 1724 but to 1714 and was false even then; Gent was forgetting Samuel Terry with whom he himself sought work the next year. Ballads and chapbooks were produced in the provinces not because London ‘could not meet the demand’ (p. 40), but because they were hard to copyright, within the limited capacity of provincial printers, and could be marketed without London help. James Leake, the Bath bookseller was not the son of the bookseller John Leake ‘whose family business could trace its history back to the reign of Elizabeth I’ (p. 88), but of the printer John Leake. And England was not at war with France in 1700 (p. 123).

In sum, this is a useful but very preliminary study of the eighteenth-century provincial book trade. It is all we have, but it must be used with great caution throughout and supplemented constantly with reference not only to the ESTC, but also to the research findings now regularly flowing in from every shire’s end.

MICHAEL TREADWELL


For several years past Robin Myers and Michael Harris have organized an annual conference in London to consider various aspects of the history of books and the book trade. These meetings have always attracted a high level of attendance, and an equally high level of contribution, the papers often being the first public presentation of the results of important research. The papers from previous meetings have been published by Oxford Polytechnic Press, but they were unable to continue this practice, and Chadwyck-Healey, publisher of *Publishing History*, has stepped into the breach.

These are the papers from the 1984 conference, and, as the title suggests, they are primarily concerned with the history of the book trade as a trade. Three of them are directly related to the Stationers’ Company, the corporate body which dominated the London book trade for some two hundred years from the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the eighteenth centuries. Robin Myers, the Company’s Archivist, gives a useful list and account of the Company’s records, the most important single archival source for the historian of the book trade in Britain. She is too modest, for no such systematic account would have been possible without the invaluable work which she herself has done at Stationers’ Hall in recent years. Michael Turner is concerned with the use of such records, both printed and manuscript, in the compilation of a directory of the book trade for the first part of the nineteenth century. He shows, in passing, how the Company retained its importance long after it is gener-
ally supposed to have become little more than a charitable and social club for the trade. John Hetet demonstrates, if demonstration were needed, just how crucial the Stationers' archives are. The title of his paper, 'The Wardens' accounts of the Stationers' Company, 1663-79,' understates the importance of his subject. He has used the accounts to show how the 1662 Licensing Act actually operated, and we are able to follow the Master and Wardens as they went about their work acting as government agents for the control of the press in Restoration London. Never before have we known so clearly how this vital piece of legislation worked in day to day practice, and there is clearly much more to be learned from even comparatively familiar records.

The remaining essays are more diverse. Frank Melton explores the book trade connections of the eighteenth-century bankers, Robert and Francis Gosling. The elder Gosling started his career as a bookseller himself and had many clients from the trade after he changed professions. The Goslings' accounts are a very important and still largely unexplored source for the economic history of both authorship and publishing in the eighteenth century, and we are fortunate in having here a useful account of the firm itself. In recent years, the bank which now owns the documents has been willing to make them available to serious scholars, and they should continue to be a fruitful quarry for investigators for many years to come. Michael Harris, an indefatigable investigator of both the book and newspaper trades, once again shows his mastery of the primary source material from which their history has to be written. He takes as his case study the publisher Moses Pitt, who ruined a successful business by over-ambition, and ended his career in prison. In the course of the study, Harris casts much light on such matters as credit terms, as well as on the general financial structure of the trade in the late seventeenth century. John Hewish, an employee at the Patent Office Library, looks back at the work of his remarkable Victorian predecessors who performed an immense service to both scholarship and industry in nineteenth-century Britain by printing and distributing the specifications of patents of invention.

Two papers are reprints, Mirjam Foot's on seventeenth-century bookbinders' price lists, and James J. Barnes's magisterial survey of British and American publishing in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Although both are familiar, both deserve the additional exposure which this republication will give them.

This admirable collection of essays is to be highly commended, as is the enterprise of the publisher in taking over the series. We must hope that we can look forward to many more contributions to the history of publishing from the proceedings of these conferences.

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