Finally, although both are discussed at some length, it would have been nice to see a page from significant copies of Erasmus's Aldine Adagia (1508) and of the two volume works of Plato in Greek (1513) announced in 1497. But a minor cornucopia is already before us. The book was printed in an elegant Bembo by the Stamperia Valdonega in Verona.

In conclusion, I would say that the text and the accompanying illustrations of Martin Davies's Aldus Manutius constitute the best short overview of Aldus and his universe currently available. Such a mature, balanced and well-informed work will be a delight to all interested in Aldus, the Renaissance, western culture, or books.

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The 500th anniversary of the first printed book produced in Venice by Aldus Manutius and his partners in 1495 generated a wide variety of celebrations and commentary in a number of countries. Conferences, publications, and exhibitions were scheduled to commemorate the achievements of the acclaimed scholar-publisher-printer and his impact on subsequent publishing endeavours. Scholars and librarians specializing in classical studies and early printing can certainly appreciate this recent literature. This wealth of information can also be of use to non-specialists, since it allows a direct and synoptic access to Aldus Manutius and his imprints.

Catalogues of exhibitions can be excellent introductory sources. The exhibition catalogue In Praise of Aldus Manutius by H. George Fletcher, Astor Curator of Printed Books and Bindings at the Pierpont Morgan Library, is one such source which succeeds in addressing several audiences simultaneously. The exhibitions, one on each coast, and the catalogue are the product of two major research libraries, the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York and the Department of Special Collections at the Research Library of the University of California, Los Angeles, which combined their efforts to present as complete a picture as possible of the Aldine Press. Indeed, one of the attractions of this particular publication is its extension beyond a discussion of the original founder of the Press to include the heirs and their collaborators, and others who continued to employ the Aldine imprint throughout a whole century, from 1495 to 1599. This quincentenary catalogue, which was granted the Leab Award for exhibition catalogues in the United States, aptly documents all the vicissitudes of the Aldine Press.
The volume is divided into four parts. To begin, there are a few introductory articles, followed by eight pages of coloured reproductions of some exceptional items to be found in the exhibition. Next, there is the actual catalogue, containing brief entries and a discussion of each object in the exhibit. This part contains the main body of the publication, encompassing eighty pages in all, and is illustrated throughout. This is followed by a brief bibliography and finally a Census of Aldines and Related Items at the Pierpont Morgan Library.

The foreword and the preface contain interesting historical sketches of these two major American Aldine collections, one, going back to the turn of the century, held at the Pierpont Morgan Library, the other, built up over the last thirty-five years housed at the University of California. The two accounts reveal entirely different institutional traditions and mandates. It is easy to realize how far these factors affect the very nature of each collection, justifying such a collaborative effort.

The introduction is divided into sections, the first section being a tribute to Aldus. The biographical details fit neatly into a structure limited by specific stages in Aldus’s publishing career. Fletcher emphasizes how Aldus accomplished such an amazing feat in the face of political strife and other trials, thus heightening the reader's interest in his publishing enterprise. In the remainder of the section, the author of New Aldine Studies skilfully summarizes Aldus's lifetime output and ambitions, highlighting the humanist nature of his endeavour.

Starting with the second section, the reader is introduced to the successors to Aldus: Paulus, Aldus the Younger, the Torresani (both partners and in-laws), etc. For these sections, one is thankful to be able to refer to the Aldine genealogical table which appears just a few pages earlier. Since the catalogue goes beyond Aldus's own lifetime, we are led to other locations where the respective Aldine Press collaborators worked. There is also an interesting account of how the Torresani established export connections from Venice to Paris and the consequent development of Aldine imprints in France during the middle years of the sixteenth century.

In one of the final sections entitled 'The Aldine Press,' the history of the Aldine Press as a commercial enterprise is discussed at length. There is some repetition in this section which could perhaps have been avoided. This is followed by a clarification of what exactly is meant by the term 'humanist scholar-printer,' or at least what it all entails.

The final comments in the introduction define the purpose and scope of the exhibition. Both libraries are aware of their distinctive contribution to the Aldine quincentenary by extending the coverage of the exhibition beyond the lifetime of Aldus. This is a welcome decision especially for those whose collections are made up of the later works from the Aldine Press. The 'deliberately American note' to the exhibition is harder to ascertain beyond the fact that it is mounted in two very large American cities.

The selection of coloured illustrations is impressive. The examples highlight magnificent illuminated copies and show the typographical effect of the Aldine Press on blue paper, along with examples of gilt-tooled, contemporary bindings. This is a most appropriate 'lead-in' to the catalogue entries.
The thematically organized catalogue serves to guide one through an interesting variety of material. There are some intriguing subjects such as 'Pseudo-Aldines and Quasi-Aldines,' 'The Battle of the Bibles,' and 'Books on Blue Paper.' Unfortunately, one subject is vaguely labelled 'Other Developments, 1501–29.' Particularly helpful is the section on 'The Aldine Printer's Device,' which reproduces the devices used by the Press and their variants. Indeed, one counterfeit device is also included. Substantial space is allotted to contemporary bookbindings which are treated as a related subject. Each of the seventeen subjects is headed by clear and informative introductory notes.

Each object is identified by a short bibliographical description, including author, title and imprint. In some instances, the object is reproduced next to the description. Forty-two figures depict the high points of the exhibition throughout the catalogue, most of which are from the collection in the Morgan Library. In addition to informative and well-written discussions of each item, a wide range of special details provides the opportunity for a sound understanding of its significance. Next, the respective institutional access numbers are provided. Finally, the last lines of each catalogue entry contain a series of valuable reference relating both to the object and the general discussion. The pertinent references to A.-A. Renouard's classic Aldine bibliography (3rd edition, 1834) are omnipresent.

The bibliography is composed mainly of previously cited references. Its scope, however, is somewhat confusing. A good number of the sources cited in the catalogue discussions and preceding texts are not entered into the bibliography (e.g. Bateman, 'Aldus Manutius' Fragmenta grammatica' in Illinois Classical studies 1, mentioned on p. 35), leading one to wonder what criteria were used to make this selection. On the other hand, the material is up-to-date, even including several important forthcoming publications.

The last part of the catalogue is dedicated to the Aldines and related material located uniquely at the Pierpont Morgan Library. In effect, their entire collection of Aldines is briefly noted in chronological order. This unnumbered sequence serves adequately as an access point to the collections. It would have been more useful to provide additional distinguishing features of each item, or at least a more complete bibliographical description in order to increase its effectiveness. Nevertheless, the hand list, which includes PML numbers, will be useful.

To conclude, In Praise of Aldus Manutius is a valuable source of information for a broad spectrum of readers. Scholars and librarians familiar with the topic are enlightened through the specific details in the discussions, references to further readings, and knowledge about the exceptional items on display. For those as yet uninitiated, the thematic presentation and style of language, concise yet informative, are effective. The illustrations and breadth of coverage undoubtedly represent advantages for every level of readership. In short, George Fletcher's very reasonably priced quincentenary exhibition catalogue will prove to be a learning experience for all.

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