and then labelled by topic including Religion, Literature, History, Atlases and Map Collections, Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, Geography, Topography, Law, Travel, and Science. Each entry includes a small reproduction of the title-page – valuable since Horvath's title-page transcriptions do not follow any conventional transcription format – and occasional illustrations of bindings, frontispieces, and other decorations. There is a selected bibliography of reference works at the end. The author's annotations to the entries are personal and often very informative, including historical contexts, biographical materials, and notes on language. The illustrations are similarly well-chosen and even entertaining. There is more than one set of engravings showing how to construct a thatched roof from straw dipped in clay slip along with details of the tools to be used; several showing national dress; a pair of elegantly statuesque Hungarian Siamese twins; and an unfortunately very grainy reproduction of what must be an impressive engraving showing the Emperor Leopold visiting the Imperial rare book library in Vienna, with ladders reaching twenty shelves and more above floor level.

The second volume, Maps & City Views 1493-1817, describes Horvath's map and city panorama collection. He includes his own maps summarising a thousand years of changing Hungarian political borders, together with a list of the various ever-changing place names. It must, indeed, be an impressive collection to see although the literally dozens of reproductions here seem little better than photocopies and are in almost every case disappointingly impossible to read. Again the materials are arranged chronologically and with a selected bibliography of reference works at the end.

What is not clear is whether any of these materials are available for scholarly research. As a personal collection and a life's work they are an impressive and no doubt satisfying achievement and cataloguing them has clearly been a labour of love. Their true value may well depend on how they are used in the future.


This so-called multimedia essay claims to provide a general introduction to the history of the book. It was produced by the
Scottish Centre for the Book at Napier University in Edinburgh and supported by funds from the British National Lottery and the Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network. More than £350,000,000 of lottery money was spent on 1,500 projects in 2000 and you have to wonder at examples like this, at the public money used in this way, and at the scholarly time invested in it. Napier University and the Scottish Centre for the Book do fine work in the history of the book but with this CD-ROM it is a case of not that the project was done well or badly but that it was done at all.

Book means printed book in this CD-ROM and is deemed to cover the period from 1500 to 2000, at which point the “triumph of electronic media” overturns it. On the evidence presented here, I doubt that. At best, it can be said that the new medium has a long way to go and that, at least in the transitional stages, it requires the support of its ancestor. What this CD-ROM needs above all is a map, preferably a paper insert in the CD box, to help you find your way around what is available. Without it you are forever turning back upon yourself, following links that lead to links that take you back to where you began. As a series of links it is excellent. What is missing is the promised essay substance to fill in the headings. The focus is Scottish, but not exclusively so. Where a Scottish example exists they use it. Otherwise they are flexible enough to look south of the border. As always, the more you know about a subject the easier it is to find errors: the 130-word entry on the Dictionary of National Biography contains three mistakes.

I began at “Starting points” – Publishing, Production, Typography, Illustration, and Bookselling. It’s difficult to resist the links, that lead to links that lead to links. It all becomes a jumble in your mind: oh for pages to turn one by one in a sequence. “Publishing” led, amongst other things, to “Copyright” and a very general overview. “People” is a series of 35 sketches of individuals and links, including John Baskerville, Thomas Bewick, William Caxton, George Cruikshank, Louis Daguerre, Eric Gill, and William Morris: one of the better sections, however random the subjects. “Publishers” is another random collection of 30. There must be more to say on Macmillan than a dozen sentences but, again, the entry results from links created elsewhere, The Smith, Elder link – here “Smith & Elder” – is just the DNB paragraph and although there is a good Scottish connection here in that the Smith, Elder papers are at the National Library of Scotland – real history of the book – it doesn’t warrant a mention. You would think Blackwoods as an Edinburgh
company would do better but, again, a brief newspaper-width paragraph is enough. A real Scottish connection, John Murray, is mentioned but not followed with a link.

“Five books” promises to be a set of detailed case studies. The first is Chepman and Myllar, printers and publishers rather than a book study. “The Bible” is the second short piece, on the Authorised King James Bible, with links to book sizes and type faces. “Sir Walter Scott” is indeed about the man as much as the books, “James Thompson ‘The Seasons’” is largely about copyright; and really only “Alasdair Gray’s Lanark” is about a particular book.

Twenty pounds is serious money — about $45.00. Two years ago in Italy I collected a weekly CD-ROM supplement to a daily newspaper on the history of the Italian book: six volumes for 45,000 lire, less than the cost of this single CD. It was serious, literary in content, well-produced, and something I turn to again and again as a reference source. The Book’s label says that the CD-ROM is suitable for ages eight and up. I doubt that there’s much of a market among eight-year-olds, and anyone who knows anything about the history of the book is unlikely to gain anything from it. So what is the target market?

The illustrations are, indeed, beautiful. They are mainly taken from materials in the Edward Clark Library at Napier University. The historical photographs, the books and manuscripts depicted, and the general slickness of the presentation are admirable. But I cannot imagine ever recommending anyone to look at this CD-ROM, let alone to buy it.

“Further Reading” is a skeletal list of nine books. Good luck to the eight-year-olds who tackle Philip Gaskell’s A New Introduction to Bibliography or who can make the links at the recommended Scottish Centre for the Book website actually work.


This is a reprint of the classic 1856 edition. In its day it was the definitive guide to printing and publishing practice in mid-nineteenth century America. The seventeen chapters describe the Harper premises and plant in New York and the technicalities of its printing and