
A stimulating mix of Masonic pocket companions, true crime pamphlets, and editions of Virgil typifies this substantial scholarly collection. From the thematic arrangement of the essays and the quality of the illustrations, to the content footnotes and other evidence of editorial standards and control, *Worlds of Print* marks the coming of age of the Print Networks series which, since 1997, has published papers from the annual British Book Trade History conferences. As Armstrong’s introduction about the range of essays from the 2004 Edinburgh conference reminds us, the series celebrates “the research of scholars, book trade practitioners and enthusiasts…” (vii) with special reference to the provincial and colonial trade. Methodologies, while typically unexplained, range from content analysis through case studies to bibliometrics.

This is the second collection to be edited by John Hinks and Catherine Armstrong and their efforts bear lovely intellectual fruit. While the indexing remains woefully inadequate as a means of search and retrieval in this rich and lively collection, the sixteen, generally very well-researched essays are arranged thematically by Colonial Connections, the Scottish Book Trade, Book Trade People, and the Methodology of Book History. The last is a relatively unusual inclusion in this series and the single essay is masterful. This analytical piece by David Gants (of Humanities Computing at the University of New Brunswick) is methodologically sound, complete with excellent clarity around the limitations, and full of interest for physical bibliographers, intellectual historians, and those interested in the applications of bibliometrics. His work helps place other scholarship (in this volume and elsewhere) in well-grounded context as he uses lists, inventories and catalogues in order to examine “shifting modes of ordered knowledge in the early modern book trade.” This essay brings the reader effortlessly to Gants’s conclusion that “different classification systems produce distinctive portraits of the larger market forces … in the mid-Jacobean book trade.”

Colonial Connections contains four strong essays arranged chronologically and opening with Armstrong’s own strong analytical piece comparing the Scottish and English book trades’ responses to the ill-fated Darien settlement plan at the end of the seventeenth century. The elegantly presented scholarship of Wal Kirsop concentrates on
Cole’s Book Arcade in Melbourne, exploring both the minutiae and the bigger picture about such book emporia then (nineteenth century) and now, in Australia, London and elsewhere. A detailed and very well-illustrated study of a major nineteenth-century New Zealand publisher by Noel Waite contributes to our understanding of New Zealand–British trade connections. The section concludes with a carefully framed study by Nicole Matthews of post-war publicity practices around popular fiction, making the case with William Collins and Sons’ domestic and commonwealth strategies.

Opening the section on the Scottish Book Trade, Lucy Lewis studies the country’s first printers, Chepman and Myllar. It is a perennial challenge to produce new perspectives on the “firsts” in any field, as they are often well-documented already. Lewis does a commendable job of drawing out new insights based on new research deeply informed by judicious use of existing scholarship. A fascinating essay worthy of the attention of Ian Rankin’s John Rebus is by Stephen Brown who combines two of the gifted yet curmudgeonly detective’s interests (freemasonry and Scottish history) in his “Scottish Freemasonry and Learned Printing in the Later Eighteenth Century.” Brown’s essay concludes with helpful selected bibliographies of Masonic pocket companions and songs. I smiled to see Jane Thomas’s fine work on Isaac Forsyth’s and others’ circulating libraries in Elgin – her thorough work would have informed my comparison of book availability in Elgin and other Scottish towns with that in Canadian towns (1998). Thomas’s study of one provincial town across a century illustrates some of the continuities and changes inherent in library provision. Brian Hillyard’s long-term research on David Steuart bears fruit here in a close study of Steuart’s relationship with Giambattista Bodoni, using this case to illustrate the bookselling and publishing interests of some book collectors. Steuart was an Edinburgh banker, businessman, and sometime Lord Provost, whose passion for books resulted in a rich correspondence with Bodoni, the fine printer in Parma. Hillyard’s essay includes wonderful levels of detail, including around the uncertainties of international trade during periods of war. Risk assessment and management was a regular consideration in book shipments across the Mediterranean just as it was across the North Atlantic.

The section on people in the book trade offers several scholarly gems. One of the many applications of book history to other areas of scholarship is that of exploring the development of cultural identities through print. In one of this volume’s shorter, yet incisive, essays,
Caroline Viera Jones examines the content and publication history of *The Australian Encyclopaedia* published in the 1920s by the Scottish-Australian George Robertson. Jones refers to *Chambers’s Encyclopaedia* and the following essay picks up this echo as it is a further contribution to our understanding of the W. & R. Chambers business by Sondra Miley Cooney, this time examining the relationship between the Edinburgh firm and William Somerville Orr in London. While Cooney does not explicitly frame this essay as a case study, it is one of possibly hundreds of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century examples of how ties of friendship and national identity can persuade otherwise fairly astute business people into relatively foolhardy ventures.

Michael Powell’s presentations are typically both scholarly and humorous and his paper here, “Do the Dead Talk?: The Daisy Bank Printing and Publishing Company of Manchester” is laced with gentle humour as Powell discusses the ephemeral and other publications from this little company on magic, music, and other forms of popular entertainment, true crime, children’s books, and much else.

One of the special pleasures of the Print Networks conferences and volumes is seeing new research on relatively well-known topics. Giles Bergel provides new insights on William Dicey’s business in Northampton and London that complement Victor Neuburg’s work from the 1960s and other more recent scholarship. Bergel is clear-eyed about the spatial nature of the book trade and its interconnections. Theoretically, his careful analysis can be viewed through the lens of the debate around the value of the centre-and-periphery model. Bergel’s work supports both John Feather’s and Peter Isaac’s views— in other words a “centre-and-periphery model amended.”

The editors deserve kudos for their very successful work on this splendid volume and the genial ghost of our friend Peter Isaac must surely be beaming on them.

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