
Cathleen Baker’s book *From the Hand to the Machine* is a comprehensive study of nineteenth-century papermaking, describing both historical techniques and the care and conservation of nineteenth-century papers. *From the Hand to the Machine* draws on Baker’s forty years of experience as both a paper conservator and educator. Baker hopes that her book might prove accessible and useful to paper conservators, those involved in the preservation of cultural heritage more broadly, and those wishing to obtain a foundational understanding of papermaking technologies, processes, and history. Baker writes, “it is often easy to dismiss paper as merely the support material for a variety of mediums that comprise the image or words” (94). Baker’s work is predicated upon the belief that paper should not be judged as just support material in the study of book history, but as a medium worthy of its own study.

Baker begins her book with a broad survey of American papermaking history; the opening chapter, “Development of the Paper Industry in the United States, 1690–1900,” is a short introduction to the papermaking history of America. She moves through the book systematically, writing on the various stages in the papermaking process, linking these stages to the more expansive topics of printmaking history and conservation challenges and decision-making.

Baker’s documentation of the papermaking process is written in an absorbing and accessible tone. Each step in the nineteenth-century papermaking process – from rag collection to the use of papers in the print shop – is delineated clearly, with helpful illustrations accompanying these descriptions. These chapters give one a foundational understanding of papermaking technologies, and Baker offers the reader a thorough description of these technologies. Building upon these sections, Baker then links these technologies to the history and workings of nineteenth-century print shops: she describes the hand and machine presses of the era, with a focus on printing techniques – relief printing, intaglio, etching, engraving, and so forth – that were popular at the time. The wealth of material in these particular sections is welcome, but it suffers somewhat from Baker’s organizational strategy. The material in question would
perhaps be easier to digest if the one chapter devoted to presses and printing techniques was broken up into separate sections.

Her final chapter, “Conservation of Nineteenth-Century Paper and Mediums,” ties Baker’s investigation of nineteenth-century papermaking to contemporary conservation practice; this chapter in particular is invaluable to any professional in the book and paper conservation field, whether working in an archive, library, or museum. Baker provides the reader with a necessarily complex description of paper and its deterioration / aging process (including chemical formulas for each major process), as well as a detailed account of addressing problems and particular conservation challenges as they arise, according to the type of material that must be used.

The content and organization of the appendices are worth remarking upon. Baker groups some of the more technical and specific aspects of paper conservation into several sections, and these work as a way to supplement material provided in the main body of the book. She also devotes an appendix to a more detailed description of other print and manuscript materials, specifically papyrus and vellum. Baker’s appendices would prove helpful to those working with multimedia books or manuscripts, and she also provides a glossary that is a helpful resource in understanding the specifics of this technical material.

The one area where I found that there was some material lacking was in Baker’s use of American paper as examples. There is little elaboration on the use of these examples and the way in which they connect to broader topics in American social history. To those interested in papermaking history, such a link would be welcome, especially to those just developing an interest in such history. The brief overview of the American papermaking industry at the beginning of the book is general at best, and one does not necessarily acquire a complete understanding of the industry during its development in the nineteenth century. It seems that in describing the American papermaking industry, Baker dwells too much on the generalities of the industry and processes and situations that apply to the Western world in total, rather than sharpening her focus to look at the American situation specifically. Although she does provide some supplemental material in the appendix, “Contemporary Accounts of Papermaking by Hand and Machine,” this material might serve to contextualize the papermaking processes and be better suited to the main body of the book. More information on the social and political situation in nineteenth-century America would be welcome, as it
Baker’s book is a thorough investigation and documentation of the nineteenth-century papermaking industry and printing techniques. Her focus on conservation is invaluable, and should prove useful for anyone interested in the conservation process, although at times the complexity of the description can be daunting. Lacking, perhaps, is a more detailed discussion of the papermaking industry as it applied to the American situation. Regardless, From the Hand to the Machine is an accessible and engaging reference work, which anyone interested in papermaking should consult.

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The Spacious Margin is a scholarly catalogue accompanying an exhibition of the same name, which was on display at the University of Alberta’s Bruce Peel Special Collections Library from 15 October 2012 to 15 February 2013. Drawing upon the library’s impressive holdings, Brown and Considine, professors of English at the University of Alberta, present sixty-two items that illustrate the wide variety of traces that readers and other users left on their books, including annotations, binding, indexing, and wear-and-tear. This is a familiar theme for the curators: in 1998, Considine presented Adversaria, an exhibition of sixteenth-century marginalia, while Brown and Considine’s 2010 display, Marginated, focused on the seventeenth century.

This work contributes to a growing body of scholarship recognizing that marginalia’s sometimes thoughtful, sometimes extemporaneous production can be a valuable key to decoding readers’ attitudes and environments. It has been nearly thirty years since Roger Stoddard’s influential exhibition and catalogue, Marks in Books, inspired scholars to re-examine these revealing traces. Significant monographs since then include William H. Sherman’s Used Books and H.J. Jackson’s insightful Marginalia and Romantic Readers. These