ST BRIDE LIBRARY DONATION

The St Bride Library has received a generous donation of £15,300 from departing assistant librarian, Elizabeth Klaiber and her family (including her parents Isabelle and Bruce Klaiber). It will be used to fund the St Bride Foundation’s continuing redevelopment programme, which aims to improve access to the 50,000 books, 3,500 periodicals, catalogues and directories and numerous artefacts including more than 1,500,000 pieces of historical type which the Library holds.

This contribution will be specifically used to increase the capacity of the foundation’s main archive by one and a half times through the installation of new mobile shelving. This will replace the current static shelving, making room for additional shelves and leaving space to create a much-needed demonstration area.

Elizabeth started working at St Bride three years ago as a volunteer, while completing her Masters in the History of the Book at the School of Advanced Study’s Institute of English Studies at the University of London. While at St Bride, she undertook preventive conservation on the collection of historic type, dating back to 1680. In 2007, on completion of her thesis, she began working as assistant librarian. Elizabeth is now leaving St Bride to commence her PhD studies in her native Canada.

Elizabeth said ‘It was my dream to come to London and study. While doing this, I was lucky enough to discover St Bride Foundation and its community. Leading up to my departure from the Library and London, my family saw an opportunity to assist in the long term conservation, preservation and accessibility of the historic books and artefacts in St Bride Library and to be a part of the Library’s future in a way that will benefit the Foundation and its visitors for many years to come.’

Glyn Farrow, clerk to the governors and director of St Bride Foundation said ‘We are deeply appreciative of the Klaiber family for this generous donation. It is indicative of the strong sense of community among the staff, volunteers and visitors to St Bride Foundation’.

The new mobile shelving follows recent renovation work to the library including the construction and opening of the new reading room in 2007. A second phase is also planned, to create even more storage space to house the historic printing collections.

PHS Treasurer

Ken Brooks will retire as Treasurer of the Printing Historical Society at the 2010 AGM next March. The Society is in sound financial shape and the Treasurer advises on new publishing projects and other activities (such as the Grants programme). Membership records are also part of the remit, and arranging for the annual examination of the accounts. A few hours a week is all that is necessary to keep up with the tasks, which are vital to the Society, now in its forty-fifth year. PHS officers are elected for three years. Candidates for this important office should contact the Chairman or the Secretary for further details.

PHS Grants and Prizes

The following have been awarded research grants for 2009:

Diane E. Booton: *Hand-me-downs: (re)use of blocks and plates by brothers Etienne Larcher at Nantes and Jean Du Pre at Paris*. The first and only Book of Hours printed in Brittany, by Larcher, will be studied as an example of the use of certain illustration blocks by different printers, and the role of illustrations in this early printed book.

Pierre Delsaerdt: *The typographic design of C. Plantin’s dictionaries compared with the layout of Robert Estienne’s lexicographic work*. Working with Cornelis Kiliaan, the compiler of the *Dictionarium Tetonico-Latinum*, Plantin had a wider array of typefaces to draw upon to manipulate the macro- and micro-structures of his dictionaries than did Robert Estienne. This work will compare the two in terms of their relative ‘retrieval’ qualities.

Fiona Ross: *Linotype’s letter-drawings for hot-metal Tamil characters (1936): provenance and use*. Drawing on Linotype’s archives at the University of Reading, the work will be a study of the design decisions made in 1936 on the proportions of characters, the shapes of counters, letter-fit and kerning, which affected the resulting Tamil typography.

Sydney J. Shep: *Printers' libraries and the Typographical Press System*. The role of late nineteenth-century typographical journals as ‘nodes in a global network of social and cultural exchange’, in particular for colonial outposts, and the role of libraries parallel to the St Bride Library in educating and informing the trade, are to be studied. This forms part of Dr Shep’s larger project on ‘The Printers’ Web’.

DONALD MILHAM PRIZE

The following people were awarded Donald Milham prizes in the final (2009) round of awards:

1st prize
Mr Brian Hooper (£200)

2nd prizes
Mr Dave Gladwell (£200)
Mr Thomas Fox (£200)
Mr John Geoffrey Turner (£200)
Mr Jack R. Edwards (£200)
Mr Robert A. Hamer (£200)
Mr Robert Oswald Bradley (£200)
EVENTS

Book History Workshop, Lyon

The seventh annual session of the Book History Workshop will be held at Lyon, France, on 1–4 September 2009. It offers four advanced courses aimed at a variety of specialists who encounter questions related to the history of the book, printing and graphic communication in the course of their work. Each course is taught by a leading international expert in the field with emphasis on the study of original documents. The four classes run simultaneously at the École normale supérieure, lettres et sciences humaines, Lyon, with sessions at the Lyon Printing Museum, the rare books department of the City Library and Ensib.

The tuition fee is 490 euros. In order to facilitate access to collections of original documents the number of participants is limited to twelve per class. It is not possible to register for more than one class for the four days. Fifteen rooms are available in the École normale supérieure’s facilities for visiting researchers, which are located in the grounds of the school. Reservations are made on a first-come-first-served basis and are considered definitive only once payment has been received. Lyon also offers a wide range of hotels at all prices. The four courses are:

1. Paper and watermarks as bibliographical evidence (in English). Tutor: Neil Harris
2. Physical (analytical) bibliography (in French). Tutor: Dominique Varry
3. Introduction to the study of incunabula (in English). Tutor: Kristian Jensen
4. Printed ephemera under the magnifying glass (in English). Tutor: Michael Twyman

Further details, and an application form, can be found at ihl.enssib.fr/fichiers/mepIHL-UK.pdf.

Friends of St Bride Library AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of St Bride will be held on Tuesday 30 June at 6:00 p.m. at the Library. Business will be followed at 7:00 p.m. by: Analog source: letterpress in an American design education, an illustrated talk by Professors Ashley John Pigford and William Deering. They will speak about the Raven Press at the University of Delaware as a place of unbridled experimentation and phenomenological education. Many examples of student work from the Visual Communications Program are intended to incite a lively conversation about the value of letterpress in contemporary design teaching. All are welcome. £7.00 on the door (£5.00 concessions, £3.00 FoSB members).

St Bride Exhibition

Breathing broadsheets. 6 June–3 July at St Bride Library. Admission is free but please call ahead to check availability. By the nature of their production, these broadsheets were a cheap and plentiful source of entertainment and information for ordinary people in the nineteenth century. Their typography was typically archaic and their illustrations were re-used time and again. Printed crudely on poor-quality paper, with a short life-span anticipated, the survivals provide a window into British life and popular culture in the 1800s. This exhibition is a rare chance to see some of the broadsheets from the Library’s collection, and complements Broadsheet ballads, a theatre experience by Occam’s Razor Theatre Company and St Bride Foundation, inspired by the Library’s collection and contributing to the ‘Story of London Festival’.

Donald Milham, apprentice and journeyman Printer, 1915–2006
Peter Milham

Editor’s note: This is the third and final part of a serialisation of Peter Milham’s memoir of his father, and consists of an appendix of brief histories of the printing companies Donald worked for. The previous parts appeared in issues 21 and 22.

Amalgamated Press

In 1899 a plot of land at Gravesend which had originally been part of the Rosher estate was sold to the Harmsworth printing works. Alfred Harmsworth, later Lord Northcliffe, founded and published several magazines and periodicals, and formed Amalgamated Press in 1934.

Fine Press Book Fair

The 2009 Fine Press Book Fair will be held again at Oxford Brookes University, Gipsy Lane, Oxford, on Saturday 7 November (11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) and Sunday 8 November (10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.). Some eighty fine and private presses, fifteen specialist book-sellers, ten trade-suppliers and a range of societies (including the Friends of St Bride and the NPHT) will be exhibiting. There will also be a programme of lectures on the Sunday. Admission is by catalogue (£5.00), valid for both days.
Press in 1901. It was, at that time, the world’s largest magazine publishing house. When Alfred Harmsworth died in 1922 his brother Harold (Lord Rothermere) briefly took control, but four years later he sold the company to the Berry brothers from South Wales for £8,000,000 to cover death duties.

In 1911, Northcliffe’s Amalgamated Press had introduced the highly successful and innovative "Woman’s Weekly" in 1926 it added "Woman and Home". Northcliffe had entered the comic market as early as 1890 with "Comic Cuts and Illustrated Chips". He also published serialised novel magazines (such as "The Thriller", which published stories by Edwy Searles Brooks), periodicals and children’s books including "Answers, The Family Journal, Sunday Circle, Forget-me-not novels, Sexton Blake, Nelson Lee libraries, Chick’s own, Rainbow and the Beano."

Gravesend is situated on the Thames only a few miles down river from the London docks, with a number of industries traditionally using the local supplies of clay and chalk. In the first half of the twentieth century, Gravesend was a major centre of British papermaking and printing, with Bowater (a firm which, by 1936, owned sixty per cent of the British, and much of the European, newsprint market) being one of the largest paper companies on the site.

In 1934 the Amalgamated Press at Gravesend was the largest letterpress printing works outside London. It operated twenty-six rotary machines and forty-seven flatbed presses, printing in single colour or up to four colours in one operation. About 700 of the Press’s 1,000 workers were based in the Gravesend works. The London headquarters of the Press was Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, and in 1959 the name of the company was changed to Fleetway Publications. In 1963, the firm was merged with George Newnes and Odhams Press to form IPC Media. The name of Fleetway was still used to identify the comic and magazine publishing arm of IPC.

In 1967 the works was described in a local guidebook as employing some 600 people in one of the largest printing shops in southern England. The works had its own typefoundry and bindery and, at this period, the weekly print order amounted to 3,000,000 copies, plus some 1,500,000 children’s annuals each year.

In 1987 all the comics were collected into the Fleetway arm of the business and sold to Robert Maxwell, and in 1991 the Fleetway division was bought by Egmont, who merged it with their own British-based comic publishing division, London Editions, to create Fleetway Editions. At some point after 2002 the name ‘Fleetway Editions’ ceased to be used by Egmont on its publications.

**Sun Printers**

In the early twentieth century, Sun Engraving produced a huge and ever-expanding rotary gravure facility to produce magazines and catalogues. It has been estimated that by about 1935 the firm was producing seventy per cent of Britain’s mass-market magazines, and undertook pioneering work on such titles as "Picture Post" for Hulton Press. At its peak it was the largest printing company in the world. The owners sold their burgeoning business in 1945, at the end of the war, for just £1,000,000. The purchaser was the family firm of Hazell, Watson and Viney of Aylesbury, which then formed the Hazell Sun Group as a holding company for its various production facilities. Between 1945 and 1965 Sun Printers continued to earn a reputation for innovation, pioneering the application of electronics to rotary gravure printing (including colour scanning to produce separations and electronic register control on the press), and research and development into new kinds of inks. In 1966 Hazell Sun merged with the Purnell Group, and this formidable new printing conglomerate was named the British Printing Corporation (BPC). Sun Printers failed to flourish within the new configuration. After several changes in management and ownership what remained of the original company was merged in 1998 into a new printing conglomerate, Polestar Group.

**Hudson, Buckler and Webb**

The Hudson Group traces its roots back to 1821, when Benjamin Hudson set up as a printer in Birmingham. The company specialised in letterpress, but like many city-centre printers, also moved into the stationery market, opening a stationers’ shop on Edmund Street, Birmingham, in 1899, stocking office supplies and offering a service making rubber stamps.

Hudson acquired the business of W. Rickman King and this boosted the premises to 40,000 square feet, housing some 200 employees. More acquisitions followed. In 1954 the printer Buckler and Webb in Church Street was acquired, and in 1969 Burman Cooper, which occupied a site on Bromford Lane, was bought. Hudson sold the Edmund Street print works to a developer and henceforth Burman Cooper became the print shop for the firm. In 1996 Hudson consolidated the two remaining parts of the business onto the Bromford Lane site, with space for both office supplies and printing. The Hudson Group changed ownership due to a management buyout in 1998, and during 2003 Mervyn Wood purchased shares and relocated the business to the current Gravelly Park site, where the company is enjoying a period of sustained growth.

**Martin Brothers**

Martin Brothers was a small local printer at Acocks Green, Birmingham, running both platen and lithographic machinery. They also ran, as a separate business, Trade Forms, producing pre-printed stationery on continuous paper. After several changes, the premises in Acocks Green is now used by Specialist Print Services Ltd.

**Acknowledgements.** Many thanks to those who helped me put together this summary, and to the websites (notably www.sunprintershistory.com, www.hudsongroup.co.uk and Wikipedia) which supplied information.

Special thanks to Sandra Soder of the Gravesend Historical Society, and Brian Reynolds, formerly managing director of Sun Printers.
OBITUARIES

BRIAN HUBBARD
Tony Smith

Brian Hubbard, who was both a printer (predominantly by letterpress) and a very skilful typecaster, died on Boxing Day 2008.

It would be fair to say that he was fanatical about type. From casting it in metal and then printing from it on his range of letterpress machines to, latterly, becoming involved in the proofing and digitisation of wood letter fonts.

I got to know Brian in the 1980s when we collaborated on a large design project for the Post Office, for which when we collaborated on a large design project for the Post Office, for which

VIVIAN RIDLER
Richard Russell

Vivian Ridler died on 11 January 2009 at the age of 95. He was Printer to the University of Oxford between 1958 and 1978. Born in Wales but brought up in Bristol, he bought an Adana press when a schoolboy and later combined with David Bland (later of Faber and Faber) to form the Perpetua Press. He did a short apprenticeship with Robinson’s, the Bristol packaging printer which employed 4,000. He married Anne Bradby (who was T.S. Eliot’s secretary) in 1938, when he was running the Bunhill Press and joined the RAF during the War, serving in the Orkneys, Nigeria and Germany, becoming a Squadron-Leader. He worked as a freelance typographer after demobilisation, lecturing on typography at the Royal College of Art. Charles Batey, Oxford’s first post-war Printer, brought him to the Press as Works Manager in 1948; ten years later he became Printer, retiring in 1978, coincidentally the Quincentenary of Printing in Oxford.

His training and experience, from inky-fingered schoolboy printer through to large-scale industrial production, with his flair for design and wide life-experience, made him the right man for what turned out to be the most prestigious post in the British printing industry. The Press in his time employed some 700 and was not only one of the world’s largest book-printers but also had the most versatile equipment and competent craftsmen. The composing rooms had not only twenty-nine Monotype keyboards but a pair of Linotype cabinets (for University work) and later Monophoto. Materials for hand-setting included the seventeenth-century Fell types and many exotic alphabets. Printing was by letterpress (flattened on fifty machines but also sheet-fed and a web press) and lithography (sheet and web). The lovely, if tricky, collotype department lasted until 1968, Ridler having pioneered fine-screen offset in Britain, which replaced it. There was also a large bindery. The layout department designed books for the Oxford publishers as well as outside customers. This range of equipment and skills was principally to ensure that the learned

and general books published by the OUP were of the highest standards; this included the many millions of dictionaries and Bibles which were fundamental to Oxford’s success.

Ridler examined for City and Guilds; and in 1968 he was President of the British Federation of Master Printers. This was unusual in his going from holding a trade-union card to being the head of the bosses’ union. He was created CBE and was a Fellow of St Edmund Hall. While he had continued to print handsome ephemera in his workshop, on retiring he revived the Perpetua Press imprint, especially for his wife’s poetry. He belonged to the Double Crown Club for sixty-six years and the Wynkyn de Worde Society for forty-nine. His menu for the former, printed by colotype, showed the tonsures of two monks, while that for the latter had the imprint ‘Smoother to the University’.

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